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China: A Woman's Role *(continued)*

Another source of guidance for Chinese women was the traditional story about the mother of the scholar Mencius. According to the tale, she guided Mencius wisely as he was growing up. Here is her explanation to Mencius of the proper role for women:

A woman's duties are to cook the five grains, heat the wine, look after her parents-in-law, make clothes, and that is all! Therefore, she cultivates the skills required for women in the home and has no desire to manage affairs outside of the house. A woman must follow the three submissions: When she is young, she must submit to her parents. Once she is married, she must submit to her husband. When she is a widow, she must submit to her son. These are the rules of proper behavior.

Directions: Answer the following questions, based on what you have just read.

1. In what ways do Ban Zhao's advice and the advice of Mencius's mother reflect Confucian values? _____

2. What status would a Chinese wife have in a home that followed Ban Zhao's advice and the advice of Mencius's mother? _____

3. This advice promotes smooth functioning of daily life in the home, but at what cost? Do you think this advice suppresses too much of a woman's individuality and ability to make, or argue for, her own choices in her daily activities? If so, create a different, well-reasoned framework for a more equal arrangement that would also promote smooth functioning of home life.

Extra Challenge: Imagine you are a young Chinese wife in a household that runs on the Ban Zhao model. Your mother-in-law orders you around all day and constantly finds fault with you. Your husband does not treat you kindly and does not interfere in any way with his mother's treatment of you. Outwardly, you follow Ban Zhao's rules, submitting quietly and working hard at all your tasks. Inwardly, however, you resent your mistreatment. Write a series of secret journal entries in which you describe your daily life and express all the feelings you suppress outwardly.

Sita, the Ideal Hindu Wife

The epic *Ramayana* is a classic piece of literature. Its heroine, Sita, has long been considered the image of the ideal Hindu wife. In the epic, the god-king Rama is exiled to the wild forest. His loving, devoted wife Sita insists on going with him, with this declaration:

"For my mother often taught me and my father often spake,
That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make,
As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting life!"*

Later, in the forest, Sita is kidnapped by the evil king Ravan. Rama rescues her, but doubts that Sita has been faithful to him during her captivity. Sita responds:

"Wherefore spake ye not, my Rama, if your bosom doubts my faith,
Dearer than a dark suspicion to a woman were her death!
Wherefore, Rama, with your token came your vassal o'er the wave,
To assist a fallen woman and a tainted wife to save?
Wherefore with your mighty forces crossed the ocean in your pride,
Risked your life in endless combats for a sin-polluted bride? . . .
As a maiden true and stainless unto thee I gave my hand,
As a consort fond and faithful roved with thee from land to land!
But a woman pleadeth vainly when suspicion clouds her name,
Lakshman, if thou lov'st thy sister, light for me the funeral flame.
When the shadow of dishonor darkens o'er a woman's life,
Death alone is friend and refuge of a true and trustful wife.
When a righteous lord and husband turns his cold averted eyes,
Funeral flame dispels suspicion, honor lives when woman dies!"*



*from an 1899 translation by Romesh C. Dutt (Temple Classics, 1900)

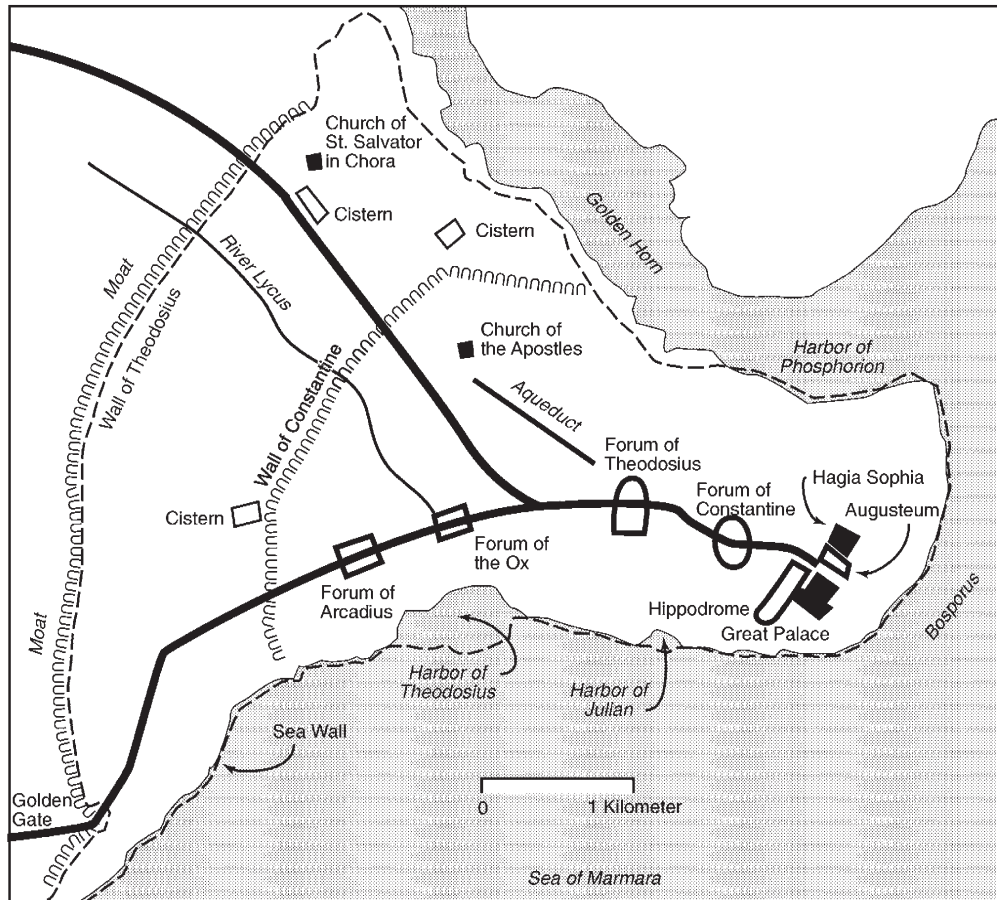
Sita steps into the funeral pyre and is preserved by the God of Fire, who commands Rama to take back his "sinless wife."

Directions: Answer the following questions, based on what you have just read.

1. What are the characteristics of an ideal Hindu wife, as exhibited by Sita?
2. In what ways does the relationship between Sita and Rama conform or not conform to the rules about husband-wife relationships in *The Laws of Manu*?

Defending Constantinople

Directions: The vital center of the Byzantine Empire was its capital city, Constantinople. Study the map of Constantinople below. Then assume the role of a Byzantine military leader. Explain (orally or in writing) the many ways in which Constantinople is well sited and prepared to defend itself against attack. Also note the strategic location of Constantinople relative to world trade.



Challenge Question: What crucial factor finally allowed an attacking enemy to breach Constantinople's defenses in 1453?

Justinian's Character

The major source of information about the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (and his powerful wife, Theodora) is a man named Procopius. He was the private secretary to the renowned Byzantine general Belisarius. Procopius wrote several histories of Justinian's time. They illustrate a difficult problem for all historians: How reliable are contemporary historical records? Here is Procopius's description of Justinian from his *Buildings*.

The Emperor Justinian took control of the state when it was beset by disorder and has not only expanded its territories, but also made it much more renowned. . . . We can justifiably, I think, call Justinian a king by nature as well as by lineage. . . . It was a sign of God's esteem for the emperor that He provided Justinian with the artisans he needed to build the magnificent Hagia Sofia. We can justifiably marvel at the wisdom of the emperor himself in the way that he was able to select just the right men to carry out his plans.

Procopius painted quite a different picture of Justinian in his *The Secret History*. (This book of gossip was, prudently, published only after Justinian's death.)

This man was both an evil-doer and easily led into evil, the sort of a person whom they call a moral pervert. He never willingly spoke the truth to anyone, but had a deceitful and crafty intent behind every word and action. At the same time, he was easily tricked by anyone who wanted to deceive him. . . .

This emperor was insincere, crafty, deceitful, hypocritical, two-faced, double-dealing, cruel, and a perfect artist in acting out an opinion which he pretended to hold. . . . He broke his agreements and his oaths right after making them. . . . He was a faithless friend, a treacherous enemy, an ardent devotee of murder and of robbery, quarrelsome, easily led astray into wrong, but unwilling to listen to good counsel, keen to plan and to carry out base designs, but finding it distasteful even to hear about good things.

Directions: Answer the following questions, based on what you have just read.

1. How would you, or a modern historian, evaluate these two very different descriptions of Justinian? What criteria or evidence could you assemble to make your evaluation?
2. Find another example, from modern times, of two very different personal views of a prominent person, written by the same or by two different observers. Which view, if either, is accurate? On what basis do you make your judgment of this?

An Empress Takes a Stand

In 532, riots broke out in Constantinople between gangs of fans who supported rival chariot-racing teams. The riots spread citywide. Soon, mobs stormed the palace, and the Emperor Justinian prepared to flee. The Empress Theodora changed her husband's mind with this emotional declaration.

Some hold to the belief that a woman ought not to be daring among men or to assert herself boldly among those who are holding back from fear. I consider that the present crisis demands that we ignore such beliefs. Those like us whose interests have come into the greatest danger must settle the issue immediately before them in the best possible way. My opinion, then, is that now, above all other times, is a poor time for flight, even though flight would bring safety. For any man who has been born will also die, but one who has been an emperor cannot endure being a fugitive. May I never be separated from this purple [symbol of imperial status], and may I not live from the day on which I cease to be mistress of all those I encounter. If, now, you wish to save yourself, O Emperor, there is no difficulty. For we have much money, and there is the sea, here the boats. However, consider whether, after you have been saved, that you find you would gladly exchange that safety for death. For as for myself, I approve the ancient saying that royalty is a good burial-shroud.



Emperor Justinian Empress Theodora

Directions: Deliver Theodora's speech orally. Add your own touches to it, and recast the speech in your own words if you prefer.

Extra Challenge: Write your own exhortation, intended to be delivered orally, on the proper course of action for some cause or specific circumstance you feel strongly about. Be dramatic!

Mapping Europe

Directions: On your map of Europe, locate and label the items listed below.

Bodies of Water

Norwegian Sea
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Black Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Atlantic Ocean

Land Forms and Areas

Scandinavian peninsula
Iberian (Spanish) peninsula
Italian peninsula
Balkan peninsula
British Isles
Gaul

Mountains

Alps
Pyrenees
Apennines
Balkans
Carpathians

Cities

Paris	Constantinople
Aachen	London
Tours	Toledo
Rome	Córdoba
Milan	Carthage

Rivers

Loire	Danube
Seine	Po
Rhine	Rhône
Elbe	Ebro

Peoples

Franks
Saxons
Lombards
Slavs
Burgundians
Muslims

Political Divisions

(Use a different colored pencil to outline each one.)

Charlemagne's empire as of 814

The post-Charlemagne division, 843:

- East Frankish Kingdom (Louis the German)
- Central Kingdom (Lothair)
- West Frankish Kingdom (Charles the Bald)
- Papal States



Challenge Questions: What geographical features would favor trade and population-mixing in Europe? What negative effects might these features have?

Tacitus on the Germanic People

Cornelius Tacitus was a renowned Roman historian. His book *The Germania* from 98 C.E. described the Germanic peoples who lived on Rome's frontier in eastern Europe. These peoples soon spread out through Europe. They formed the basis for the new post-Roman society that developed in the following centuries. Here are some of Tacitus's observations about the Germanic tribes.

In the election of kings they have regard to birth; in that of generals, to valor. Their kings do not have an absolute or unlimited power. Their generals command less through the force of authority than of example. If they are daring, adventurous, and conspicuous in action, they win obedience from their admiring followers.

Tradition relates that armies beginning to give way have been rallied by the females, through their earnest pleas, their physical presence on the battlefield, and the pictures they draw of impending slavery, a calamity which these people fear more for their women than for themselves. They even suppose the female sex to have some innate degree of holiness and foresight; and therefore neither despise their counsels, nor disregard their responses.

The Germans transact no business, public or private, without being armed; but it is not customary for any person to assume arms until the state has approved his ability to use them. . . . If their native country is long sunk in peace and inaction, many of the young nobles go to some other state then engaged in war. Peace and inaction are unwelcome to their race, and toils and perils give them a better chance to distinguish themselves. The chiefs are unable, without war and violence, to maintain a large train of followers. . . . Nor are they so easily persuaded to cultivate the earth, and await the seasonal farming produce, as to challenge the foe, and expose themselves to wounds. Nay, they even think it base and spiritless to earn by sweat what they might purchase with blood.

None of the German nations inhabit cities, or even admit of adjoining settlements. They dwell scattered and separate, as a spring, a meadow, or a grove may chance to invite them.



Directions: You will use what you have read here and in your textbook to complete Worksheet 13, “A New Way of Life.”

Challenge Question: What cultural biases do you find in Tacitus's writing?

A New Way of Life

Directions: The way of life in Europe changed dramatically after the Roman Empire fell. Germanic tribes moved in and reshaped society in accord with their customs. Imagine that you have lived through these changes. Each statement below describes an aspect of your life as a citizen of the Roman Empire. For each, describe the change in your life in post-Roman, Germanic Europe.

1. You are loyal to the Roman Empire and its emperor.

Change: _____

2. You speak the universal language of the Roman Empire, Latin.

Change: _____

3. You live in a city with stone and marble buildings.

Change: _____

4. You purchase goods at bustling markets with Roman coins.

Change: _____

5. You are a merchant and travel through the empire on well-maintained, paved roads.

Change: _____

6. You can read and write.

Change: _____

7. You obey the written code of Roman law.

Change: _____

8. You own your own farm, where you live in a comfortable but isolated country farmhouse.

Change: _____

9. As a Roman government official, you travel all through the empire carrying out the emperor's orders.

Change: _____

Europe: A Woman's Lament

Radegund was a princess of Thuringia in the 500s. When she was a child, her people and the Franks went to war. As a young woman, she was forced to marry the Frankish king. Later, she took religious vows and founded a convent. There, she wrote a poem about the violent times of her childhood, a common condition during this period in Europe.

Oh, sad state of war, malevolent destiny
That fells proud kingdoms in a sudden slide!
The rooves that stood so long in happiness are broken
To lie fallen beneath the vast charred ruin.
The palace courts, where art once flourished
Are vaulted now with sad, glowing ashes.
Towers artfully gilded, then shone golden-red,
Now drifting ashes blur the glitter to pallor.
The captive maid given to a hostile lord, her power fell
From the heights of glory to the lowest depths.
The entourage of servants, standing resplendent, her youthful peers
Were dead in a day, besmirched with funeral ashes.
The bright attendant halo of powerful ministers
Now lie still without tomb or funeral service.
The conquering flame belching, reddens the golden hair of her beloved
While the milk-white woman lies on the ground.
Alas the corpses lie shamefully unburied on the field,
An entire people, strewn in a common grave. . . .
A wife's naked feet trod in her husband's blood
And the tender sister stepped over the fallen brother. . . .
Fate was kind to those whom the enemy struck down.
I, the sole survivor, must weep for them all.*



Directions: Answer the following questions, based on what you have just read.

1. Where on your map of Europe are Thuringia and Frankish lands located?
2. How did this war end for the Thuringians?
3. Why was life so violent in Europe during this period of history?

Extra Challenge: Compare the conditions Radegund describes with the turmoil Tsai Yen writes about in her poem on Worksheet 2. What parallels do you find? Were the causes of the violence in both cases similar or dissimilar?

*from Jo Ann McNamara et al., eds., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.