

Rudyard Kipling's observation that "East is East and West is West and ne'er the twain shall meet" just isn't true anymore. West meets East more and more as travel becomes increasingly convenient.

THE WESTERN PACIFIC

E
a
s
t

M
e
e
t
s

W
e
s
t

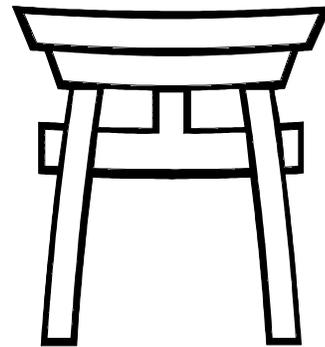
Religion and Cultural Philosophy

You will find that in the Orient religion plays a prominent part in the total philosophy. The five major religions of Asia are Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Islam and Hinduism. Western Christianity does exist in many countries but is not the dominant religion. By learning a little of the various religions of Asia, you will better understand the basis of many taboos and customs whose observance will make your tour of duty easier and more interesting. Respect temples as you would churches and observe the respect shown by the local people. Remember that footwear is forbidden in pagodas. The Asian people are very sensitive to sacrilege so do not display religious symbols of the host country in your homes as art objects.

For more information contact the Relocation Assistance Program located at your nearest Family Service Center

Closer but still different

Rudyard Kipling's observation that "East is East and West is West and ne'er the twain shall meet" just isn't true anymore. West meets East more and more as travel becomes increasingly convenient. The Western Pacific is an immense area, rimmed by very complex countries. Their climates vary from wintry days to the steaminess of the tropics. The people range from natives still living in tribal fashion to highly educated urbanites. The languages and the religious sects are numerous. The different foods range from sashimi and tempura in Japan to kimchee in



Korea to the hot and spicy foods of Thailand. The list is endless and you'll have a chance to experience much

of it during your tour of duty.

Through travel, our understanding of the Orient is increasing, but Western and Eastern philosophies are still basically different.

No matter where you may be stationed, your new friends' outlooks on politics, material comforts morals and social justice are not the same as ours. While ours is a young culture, that of Asia is ancient, and the link between Asia's heritage and life today is very strong.

"Loss of Face"— It's for real!

"Loss of face" is not treated lightly. In the Orient, people will not want to offend you if you ask a question they do not understand or cannot answer positively; so, instead, they will be evasive, smile politely or agree with you. They will avoid a heated discussion and will

continue to be vague, which may irritate you when you want a direct answer. So, count to ten. No matter what happens, DO NOT lose your temper and DO NOT continue to press for an answer. Smile, say thank you and either let the subject drop or walk away.

see other side



"...cup sets will have either three or five in a package, but not the unlucky number four!"



A Different View of

Throughout much of the world you may find that deadlines are considered unimportant and this is also true in the Far East. Depending upon which country you are in, a furniture repair or dressmaking deadline may or may not be met. The same is also true about business meetings except that most businessmen like you to be prompt. The best method is to check the norm for the country you are in and start any project considerably in advance of the date you may want it completed. Keep checking on the progress but do not harass and do not make loud demands. It is most

Customs

Home entertaining styles vary from country to country. For example, if you are stationed in Japan and call on a Japanese family, it is customary to bring a small modest gift. Don't be hurt if it is not opened right away - your hosts will open it after you are gone. Also, you may be given a gift in return. If you take flowers to a Japanese home, please keep in mind that white flowers are used for funerals. Also, most small cup sets will have either three or five in a package, but not unlucky number four! As you enter a Japanese style home, be sure to remove your shoes and, if offered, put on a pair of slippers. Most homes may have tatami floor and it can be damaged by our western shoes. In the main living area, note a small alcove where a family art treasure may be displayed. This is called the "tokonoma" and the seat nearest is the place of honor, so do not sit there unless asked to do so. It would be most respectful of you to offer the seat back to either the eldest Japanese present or your host. Whether you are being entertained in a private home or are savoring a local restaurants fare, if you have a question as to what to do or how to eat a certain food, watch your host and others will follow the lead. Do not pour liquid into your own glass, always into another's. Someone will take care of you.



The Asian people love festivals and holidays. New Years is the time of greatest celebration. Enjoy yourself, realizing that little or no work will be done during the week long holiday. Don't hesitate to invite some of your new host country friends to join you in celebrating some of our traditional holidays such as Thanksgiving. Even though most of the people may not be Christians, several countries do allow some celebration of Christmas. Once again, invite some friends over and share the eggnog!

Party Time

Gender Gap

Although you may not like it, fact is that women hold a second place to men in most other cultures. In the Orient, men are given the place of honor, may be served first and are given the most attention.

Women have made major strides forward in the more modern countries with some women now allowed into politics and big business. But a discussion of women's rights either pro or con is not a topic to be discussed in general.

Also, don't be surprised if the wife does not sit with you. It is custom for her to serve the meal and/or refreshments and to sit apart from the guests.

Always Respect the El-

Another particularly important aspect of life in the Orient is the respect given to the elderly. You would be respectful and courteous to the elderly here at home, but it is important to be especially gracious to them in the Orient. Speak only of things you enjoy and admire. Show them pictures of your family but don't boast and brag. Allow them to brag of their family and agree with them. When traveling on a train or bus, if you offer your seat to an elderly woman don't be surprised if an elderly man takes the seat instead.

