

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**ROBERT W.
STRAYER:**

In Chapter 8, China takes center stage. The rise of China as a major economic and political player on the global stage is surely among the most important developments in the 21st century. This is not really a new role for China. 1,000 years ago, during the era of the Third Wave civilization, China's large population, its prosperous economy, its vibrant culture, and its powerful state allowed China to cast a very large shadow in Eastern Asia and well beyond. This is the central theme of Chapter 8.

For the nomadic people to the north of China, China represented both a threat and an opportunity for enrichment. For the ruling classes of Korea, Vietnam, and Japan, China was a model for the civilization which they sought to imitate. For wealthy consumers all across the Afro-Eurasian world, China was the source of prestigious products such as silk and ceramics. Whether they knew it or not, China was also the source of endless technological innovations-- such as gunpowder, the magnetic compass, and movable type printing.

And China itself was also changed by its relationships to a wider world. Chinese cultivation of sugar and cotton derived from India, and China gained access to a fast-ripening strain of rice from Vietnam. On occasion, parts of China were conquered and ruled by pastoral people from north of the Great Wall, and Buddhism-- born in India-- took root in China and from there, spread to Korea and Japan as well.

So China clearly occupied a very prominent position in the interacting world of Third Wave civilizations. As you consider the give and take of China's historical engagement with its near neighbours and more distant peoples, you may want to consider how that process compares to China's current interaction with the globalizing world of the 21st century.