FACTS ABOUT ASIA

Asia is the largest continent in the world. Its size is the combination of Australia, North America, and South America. It measures about 17 million mi². It is also estimated that the total land mass of Asia is about one-third of the surface of the Earth.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING ASIA

✓ Asia is a site of early human settlement
✓ The oldest Neolithic cities were built here
✓ The oldest civilizations sprung here
✓ Great world religions originated here (e.g. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism)
✓ To gain deeper understanding on the nature of Asian societies
CONCEPTS OF ASIA

EUROCENTRISM

The history of Asian nations was seen from the European point of view. This means that European contributions were given more emphasis than the Asian contributions to their own civilization. In eurocentrism, Asia is viewed as a “small tradition” that is only the beneficiary of a “greater tradition” like Europe.

Eurocentrism is the practice of viewing the world from a European perspective. The term Eurocentrism was coined during the period of decolonization in the late 20th century.

Early Eurocentrism can be traced to the European Renaissance, during which the revival of learning based on classical sources were focused on the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, due to their being a significant source of contemporary European civilization.

The effects of these assumptions of European superiority (or white supremacy) increased during the period of European imperialism, which started slowly in the 15th century, accelerated by the Scientific Revolution, the Commercial Revolution, and the rise of colonial empires in the “Great Divergence” of the Early Modern period, and reached its zenith in the 18th to 19th century with the Industrial Revolution and a Second European colonization wave.

HERODOTUS – “Rivalry between Asia and Europe existed”

In European literature, Asia is usually associated with luxury, vulgarity and temporal authority. On the other hand, Europe is associated with weaponry, scientific instruments and Christian symbols.
CHARLES - LOUIS DE SECONDAT AND BARON DE MONTESQUIEU:

Both men linked Europe with progress and Asia with backwardness.

HOMER – referred to Asia as the continent that prevents eastward journeys of Aegean seamen

One of the factors that led to Eurocentrism is the literary works of Greeks such as “The Iliad and The Odyssey”.

ASIA - CENTRISM

Asia-centrism is the practice of viewing the world from the Asian perspective.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Bengali (India); he welcomed Asian scholars

The spread of Buddhism served as a catalyst in unifying Asian cultures

CHAO JU KUA (13TH CENTURY)

China, Commissioner on Foreign Trade

There was a cultural link which can be seen through the spread of Chinese influences and Confucianism

SWAMI VIVEKANDA (13TH CENTURY)

India; travelled through Europe to spread Asian ideals

Europe is the center of materialism in the modern times, while Asia has been the center of spirituality since the beginning
ETYMOLGY OF ASIA AND EUROPE

ASIA

Asia came from the Aegean word “Asu” which means “place of the rising sun” or “dawn” or “the east”

EUROPE

In contrast, the word Europe came from the Aegean word “ereb” which means “a place where the sun sets”, or “the west”.

AEGEAN

This term refers to the region where Greece and other places near the Mediterranean Sea are located.

The Europeans became used to the idea that Europe is WEST and Asia became known as EAST since it is located eastward of Europe.

This proves that the geographical location of Asia served as a factor in determining its identity based on the European perspective.