# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Writing in East Asian Studies: An Overview ................................................................. 3  
Requirements ................................................................................................................. 4  
Junior Independent Works ............................................................................................ 6  
  Junior Independent Work Formatting ........................................................................... 6  
Senior Thesis .................................................................................................................. 8  
  Important Dates for Senior Thesis, 2022-2023 ......................................................... 9  
  Senior Thesis Writing .................................................................................................. 10  
  Senior Thesis Adviser .................................................................................................. 10  
  Senior Thesis Prospectus ............................................................................................ 11  
  Guidelines for a Working Bibliography ...................................................................... 12  
Research and Writing Support ..................................................................................... 13  
  Office of Undergraduate Research ............................................................................ 13  
  Funding ....................................................................................................................... 13  
  Writing Center ............................................................................................................. 14  
  East Asian Library and the Gest Collection ................................................................ 14  
  Additional Resources .................................................................................................. 15  
Thesis Formatting, Style, and Structure ...................................................................... 15  
  Table of Contents ...................................................................................................... 17  
  Length ......................................................................................................................... 17  
  Quotations ................................................................................................................... 17  
  Footnotes ..................................................................................................................... 17  
  Romanization .............................................................................................................. 17  
  Bibliography ................................................................................................................. 18  
  Style ............................................................................................................................ 18  
  Final Thesis Submission .............................................................................................. 18  
  Thesis Grading .............................................................................................................. 18  
  Sample Thesis Titles ................................................................................................... 20  
Senior Thesis Prizes and Past Award-Winning Theses ................................................. 20  
  Leigh Buchanan Bienen and Henry S. Bienen Senior Thesis Prize ........................... 21  
  Marjory Chadwick Buchanan Senior Thesis Prize ....................................................... 22
Writing in East Asian Studies: An Overview

As cultural, literary, political, and economic ties with countries in East Asia continue to strengthen, we are witnessing a demand for greater knowledge of the customs, traditions, literatures, and languages of this region. The Department of East Asian Studies provides students with rigorous training in the study of China, Japan, and Korea. Its interdisciplinary curriculum is designed to provide a balance between broad-based knowledge of the region and deeper expertise in the languages and cultures of one or more of the region’s territories. The goal is for our students to gain proficiency with the challenging linguistic and analytical tools needed to conduct conscientious research, as well as to learn about the critical and theoretical models through which the region’s history and culture are interpreted. The core of this training is developed through guided coursework, of which language classes form a central part, and substantial independent work completed under the close auspices of faculty advisers. Regular individual advising sessions with the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) and close communication amongst the faculty are the base upon which the success of these goals is assessed, a crucial process made efficient by the department’s relatively small size.

The independent work that concentrators complete across their four semesters in the department, including two junior papers (20-25 pages) and one senior thesis (60-100 pages, or around 25,000 words of text excluding footnotes), are vital to the overall intellectual goals of the Department of East Asian Studies. These projects, as diverse as the eclectic disciplinary, historical and regional focuses of the department’s faculty members and course offerings, encourage students to pursue their individual interests with the methodological skills developed through their coursework. EAS defines itself by its subject matter, not disciplinary approach or mode of inquiry. Students are encouraged to experiment and explore a wide range of methods and approaches to guide their research, selecting those most suitable to the question they are posing. While there is great flexibility for concentrators in terms of chronology, geography, and methodology, they in all cases should first identify a truly exciting research question and strive to formulate an argument in the process of answering that question.

Training in the most effective research, interpretation and writing methods for independent work begins in earnest with the Junior Seminar, taught by the DUS, which all concentrators must take
in the fall semester of their junior year. Reading exercises and assignments dedicated to advancing analytical and interpretive skills and investigation of intra-regional issues and debates form the core of the seminar’s curriculum. While working through the specific materials germane to the topic at hand, students are taught how to conceive of cultural, social and historical problems, to generate questions with which to address them, to employ tactics and strategies for doing research, and to effectively analyze, interpret, organize, and present their findings.

**Requirements**

- Language proficiency through the third year (at least two courses at or above the 300 level) in one East Asian language
- Eight departmental courses, which must satisfy the following requirements:
  
  - Six EAS-prefix courses including:
    
    - Junior Seminar (EAS 300) as an introductory methods survey course
    - At least one course on premodern East Asia
    - Two of the following transnational courses:
      
      - “History of East Asia to 1800” (HIS/EAS 207)
      - “East Asia since 1800” (HIS/EAS 208)
      - “East Asian Humanities I” (HUM/EAS/COM 233)
      - “East Asian Humanities II” (HUM/EAS/COM 234)
      - “Contemporary East Asia” (EAS 229)
  
  - Two additional courses, which may be:
    
    - EAS courses, including cross-listed courses
    - Cognate courses approved by the DUS
    - Language courses at or above the 300 level (after the three-year proficiency is fulfilled)
    - Any second East Asian language course
A single course may not be used to satisfy two requirements, with the exception of HIS 207 and HUM 233. Either course may be used to satisfy both the premodern and transnational requirements, however, the course will only count towards one of the six required EAS-prefix departmentals. The remaining two may be language courses at or above the 300 level (after the three-year proficiency requirement is fulfilled), or any language courses in a second East Asian language.
Junior Independent Works

Students write their first junior independent work (JIW), or junior paper (JP) under the guidance of the director of undergraduate studies throughout the fall semester in conjunction with EAS 300. Steps toward its completion include formulating a topic, exploring research viability in consultation with specialists in the Gest East Asian Library, drafting a prospectus, submitting an annotated bibliography, circulating full or partial drafts, and a final oral presentation. The final draft is read and evaluated by the director of undergraduate studies.

Students work exclusively with a faculty adviser on their second JIW in the spring semester, though they must adhere to department-wide deadlines for the submission of prospectuses and partial and final drafts (found on the EAS website). The paper may take up the work of the fall JIW or lay the groundwork for the senior thesis or may stand as an autonomous research project.

Junior Independent Work Formatting

Title Page

The title page must include the paper title, author’s name, date of submission, and the following statement (see page 7 for sample image):

A junior independent work submitted to the Department of East Asian Studies of Princeton University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

Honor Code

Please sign and date the honor code for each copy of the paper on the last page with the following text (see page 7 for sample image):

This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations. I pledge my honor that I have not violated the honor code during the writing of this paper.
East Asian Studies: An Analysis of Independent Work

A junior independent work submitted to the Department of East Asian Studies of Princeton University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

John Doe
April 26, 2023

This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations. I pledge my honor that I have not violated the honor code during the writing of this paper.

Signature: John Doe
Date: April 26, 2023

(John Doe)
Senior Thesis

The senior thesis is the culmination of the training students receive in the department. It is researched and written under the close supervision of a faculty adviser, evaluated with detailed reports by the adviser and a second reader, and defended orally in a 30-minute session that is conducted in part in the student’s language of specialization. Most often, the thesis is a classical scholarly research essay, though it may also take the form of substantial and annotated literary translation, documentary film, or other creative genres.

A senior thesis should accomplish the following goals:

- Define a research question and formulate and advance a clear claim (hypothesis) or set of claims.
- Gather, present, and analyze evidence in support of its claim(s).
- Review and engage the scholarship of others on the subject.
- Assess critically the strengths and weaknesses of its own logic, evidence, and findings.
- Relate its conclusions to a larger context.
- Make an original contribution to knowledge.

A thesis must have an argument. It should not be a passive review of the existing literature, a summary of facts, or a mere description of past events. The question it poses should be significant. In other words, the thesis must have and make clear what Princeton’s Writing Program calls “motive.” Motive, to recall, is what explains to the reader why the thesis is worth reading. Or, in still more direct terms, the thesis should have an answer to the question “so what?” As will be discussed below in more detail, motive can come in many different forms. But whatever form the motive may take, a thesis needs it. For example, Richie K. Huynh’s award-winning thesis “Acupuncture Analgesia Considered in Neurophysiological and Traditional Terms: Bridging Traditional Chinese Medicine with Modern Medicine in Asia” raises the question of how acupuncture was or was not integrated into modern practices in Chinese communities in East Asia. His exploration leads to a successful establishment of acupuncture as a unique bridge between traditional Chinese and modern medicine.
Having posed a question and justified why that question deserves to be posed, the thesis should then present an analysis that marshals sound reasoning and ample evidence to arrive at an answer. To be successful, a thesis need not be entirely comprehensive or convincing in every aspect – the faculty recognizes that this is your first attempt at substantial scholarship – but at its core, it must have an argument. A superior thesis, moreover, will address possible counterarguments and objections, as this clearly reveals the depth and range of the student’s thinking and research.

The presentation of the student's own reasoning and conclusions is thus the central part of the thesis.

This is worth emphasizing because all too often students fret excessively about the amount and detail of the information they put in the thesis, operating under the mistaken assumption that more is better. While a thoroughly researched thesis is always preferable to a poorly researched one, a carefully argued thesis that rests on inconclusive evidence is preferable to a sloppily reasoned or logically confused thesis that presents an abundance of details and citations. Work hard, but do not forget to work smart.

The Department of East Asian Studies emphasizes the use of Chinese, Japanese or Korean sources and the EAS major aims to develop students’ abilities to read critically and analyze all kinds of text with subtlety and insight. The thesis writing is an important opportunity for students to demonstrate skills of critical reading and analytical writing.

The EAS department also allows and encourages the writing of a creative senior thesis in which they are evaluated on their ability to produce works of fiction (poetry, short story or novel, or film) or to carry out a translation project.

**Important Dates for Senior Thesis, 2022-2023**

- Deadline to report the name of senior thesis adviser to department: Sept. 19, 2022
- Submit outline of thesis and full working bibliography: Nov. 21, 2022
• Submit partial first draft (of at least 20 pages): Jan. 27, 2023

• Submit the first full draft of thesis: March 10, 2023

• Submit final draft of thesis: April 26, 2023
  o Late submission of the senior thesis will be penalized by a reduction of one-third of a grade for each day late.

• Senior Thesis Oral Defense (to be scheduled individually): May 5, 2023

**Senior Thesis Writing**

Thesis writing is a challenging process. It requires you to call upon the knowledge, skills, and insights you have acquired at Princeton to produce a work of original scholarship. Although you will have a faculty adviser and other resources to guide you along the way, the thesis ultimately is yours and yours alone. Working on your own, you are responsible for conceiving, researching, and writing up a piece of research worthy of an academic year’s effort.

Writing a thesis may be a daunting task. But it need not be, and indeed should not be, an overwhelming one. When approached in the right manner, the process is certainly manageable. It can even be pleasant. Many students find the thesis to be the most rewarding academic experience they have at Princeton. If you take to heart the information and suggestions provided herein, this guide will help ensure that your own experience of writing a thesis is a productive and positive one.

Topics may range anywhere from medieval Japanese history to modern Korean literature and to contemporary Chinese film, though the department’s core requirement is that a **substantial portion of the research must be conducted in the student’s East Asian language of specialization**. Your faculty adviser will help you through this process.

**Senior Thesis Adviser**

It is your responsibility to contact your adviser to schedule meetings on a regular basis. Make the most of your time by making sure you have progress to report. Your adviser has important
insight into the thesis writing process. If any problems arise, you should contact the director of undergraduate studies.

Once you have been assigned an adviser, make an appointment to see them. Adviser-advisee relationships vary as much as the people that make them up. Nonetheless, there are some basic expectations. First, your adviser is there to provide general guidance and advice. It is not your adviser’s responsibility to assign a research question, find sources for you, or to keep you on track. Researching, writing, and completing the thesis are all your responsibility. Your adviser can work with you to set up a schedule for the completion of your research and writing. Keep in mind, however, that the deadlines are your deadlines, not your adviser’s. You owe it to yourself, not your adviser, to complete your thesis. After all, the final product will bear your name, not your adviser’s name.

Because the schedules, working habits, and projects of students and faculty advisers vary so greatly, there is no standard template for advising. You should meet with your adviser at a minimum of twice each semester. For most students, meeting twice per month works well.

Your adviser is obliged to read and comment on one draft of each of your chapters. You should submit the rough draft to your adviser early enough to allow at least three weeks to read and comment. Otherwise, you may not necessarily expect your adviser to read your draft materials.

**Senior Thesis Prospectus**

A senior thesis prospectus is a written outline that communicates your research topic, research question, methods, and state of progress to someone else— typically your thesis adviser, or the selection committee of a funding agency. It should be brief and focused (no longer than two or three pages).

Writing a prospectus is helpful because it forces you to clarify your overarching question and approach before you begin to immerse yourself in the details of your project. It also enables your adviser to understand your ideas and give you more targeted advice. At the same time, the prospectus does not represent a binding contract between you and your adviser. Once you begin
to work with your sources and start writing, your hypothesis or research question is likely to change and evolve.

A senior thesis prospectus should include the following.

- A preliminary title.
- The topic of your thesis. You should also be able to explain why your topic is relevant, important, or interesting to you and other scholars in your field.
- Your central question (alternatively, you may pose a hypothesis or a puzzle). What distinguishes your proposed research from earlier work done on the subject? In this context, it might be useful to mention some of the major works that have been published in relation to your question of interest.
- Your research methods and resources. Are you going to base your project on library research, archival research, observational research, surveys, or interviews? You should identify by name some of the main sources you are going to use. Do not forget to mention how you plan to gain access to them.
- As an East Asian Studies concentrator, you are required to base a substantial portion of your senior thesis on source materials in your language of specialization. Make sure to explain how you are planning to do so.
- Your state of progress. Did you deal with a similar topic in your JIW? If so, how are you going to expand it? Have you already completed parts of your research? Are there any scholars or institutions that you have contacted or will contact in the future?
- Your timetable for completion.

Guidelines for a Working Bibliography

- Each topic has different requirements, but as a rule of thumb, your working bibliography should include at least five titles in your language of specialization, and at least thirty titles in English or other languages.
- You should include both titles that you have already read, and titles you consider relevant for your project and plan to read in the future.
• Make sure to include titles that illuminate your topic from different angles. Try to ensure that there is some variety in their dates of publication. Pay equal attention to recent publications and older classics in the field.
• Do not include titles that are unrelated to your topic.
• Include monographs, journal articles, and if necessary other types of media.
• Be sure to include the East Asian language sources you are using in your research.
• Distinguish between primary and secondary sources. List your primary sources in a separate section at the beginning.
• Keep in mind that this is a preliminary bibliography that will need to be revised and expanded. It may be helpful to consult previous theses (available through the EAS Undergraduate Program Administrator) to get a sense for the scope of a finalized bibliography.

Research and Writing Support

Office of Undergraduate Research

The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) serves to inform, engage, connect, and support currently enrolled undergraduates on matters related to research at Princeton, to enhance independent work through campus-wide initiatives and departmental collaborations and to promote students' research achievements through research symposia and written and video communications. On the OUR website you can find campus resources for research, writing, and specific guidance for junior independent work and senior thesis. Students should also regularly check the Princeton Undergraduate Research Calendar (PURC) for upcoming programing and workshops, which cover topics ranging from preparing funding proposals to note taking, and from making an argument to reviewing a draft.

Funding

A.B. senior thesis funding opportunities are available through the Student Activities Funding Engine (SAFE). Students seeking support for senior thesis research may apply through the Office of the Dean of the College (ODOC). For more information, go to: https://undergraduateresearch.princeton.edu/funding/thesis-funding.
Writing Center

The Writing Program offers support and guidance to complement your working relationship with your adviser and help you find collaborators while you conduct your independent work. The Writing Center offers free one-on-one conferences with experienced graduate students trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. Special 80-minute conferences are available for junior paper and senior thesis writers, who may sign up to work with a Writing Center Fellow from the department of their choice.

East Asian Library and the Gest Collection

Contact: Dr. Martin Heijdra (mheijdra@princeton.edu), Director, East Asian Library

Although the Gest Library was originally begun with the acquisition of many rare books, today it is the working collection that supports all kinds of research done in the Department and Program of East Asian Studies. Emphases in the makeup of the collection reflect the strengths of the department. Thus, the collection is quite comprehensive in works of literature and history, with less stress placed on works in the social sciences. As is appropriate to the Chinese collection, it is also voluminous in philosophy and religion, geography, and the classics; of special note is the collection on traditional Chinese medicine. The Japanese collection has similar areas of strength with the holdings in premodern history being particularly noteworthy. The Korean collection, though much smaller in scale than the other two, provides a basis for scholarly research.

While the East Asian Library contains many works in the field of art history, users can also consult titles in Chinese and Japanese in Marquand Library. Some older works on population statistics may be found in the School of Public and International Affairs. Almost all non-reference Korean, and more than 100,000 Chinese and Japanese works are presently located in the storage Annexes of the Princeton Libraries; you need to fill out a green Annex Library Book Request to receive the book in a day or two. The great majority are older books with Harvard Yenching call numbers. Currently, East Asian Microforms are stored in the Microfilm section in Firestone. The catalog records for such items, however, are only available at the East Asian Library.
Additional Resources

The McGraw Center

The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning offers workshops and individual consultations to support Princeton undergraduates as they take on new academic challenges and develop as learners. https://mcgraw.princeton.edu

The Office of International Programs

https://oip.princeton.edu/

Thesis Formatting, Style, and Structure

Title Page

The title page must include the thesis title, author’s name, date of submission, and the following statement (see page 16 for sample image):

    A senior thesis submitted to the Department of East Asian Studies of Princeton University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

Honor Code

Please sign and date the honor code for each copy of the paper on the last page with the following text (see page 16 for sample image):

    This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations. I pledge my honor that I have not violated the honor code during the writing of this paper.
Table of Contents

A table of contents listing the title and page number of each chapter should follow the title page. On a page preceding the table of contents you may wish to acknowledge any special assistance or support that you received in writing your thesis.

Length

The text must be double-spaced, and 60-100 pages in length (excluding the bibliography).

Quotations

Long quotations should be indented. All quotations from Chinese, Japanese or Korean sources should be translated into English. Inclusion of these sources in their original script is not required. If unavailable in the Gest Library add a copy of the original language text as an appendix.

Footnotes

Footnotes are preferred to endnotes, but either are acceptable. Endnotes should be double-spaced; footnotes may be single-spaced. In annotating, even if you have not made a direct quotation but are paraphrasing, give the reference. Be fair to your sources; acknowledge them.

Romanization

Consult with your adviser well in advance on which romanization system you will use. Then be consistent. Do not simply adopt the spellings in your English-language sources. This is a sure sign that you are out of touch with your Asian language sources.

Provide romanization on the first occurrence of the transliteration of proper titles, etc., or provide a glossary of these characters. Characters for commonly known names (e.g., Tokyo, Beijing, Tokugawa, and Qing) may be omitted. Be consistent.
Bibliography

For book titles, characters must appear in the bibliography, but not necessarily in the notes. In general, the bibliography should consist of a single alphabetized list, irrespective of the language. Give full bibliographical information so the editions you have used can be identified.

Style

Citation and style resources can be found on the Princeton University Library website. In other matters of style, when in doubt follow the MLA style or the Chicago style. The important thing is to be consistent.

Final Thesis Submission

The thesis must be submitted to the department office by 4:00 p.m. on the date noted on the current schedule. A PDF copy of your thesis should be emailed to the undergraduate program administrator at easugadmin@princeton.edu. Late submission of the senior thesis will be penalized by a reduction of one-third of a grade for each day late.

Thesis Grading

The thesis is read by two faculty members, the adviser and another reader selected by the director of undergraduate studies. Each determines a grade independently, and the final grade is the average of the two. A thesis defense will be scheduled individually. The senior thesis represents the culmination of the undergraduate curriculum. It should be an original contribution to scholarship on East Asia, based substantially on source materials in the student's language of specialization.

The Department of East Asian Studies grades all independent work according to the following rubric, which is made available to all concentrators in the Junior Seminar and is published on the department’s website.

A. The A range reflects outstanding work of research and analysis in East Asian studies.
   The work shows originality in conceiving the topic and an ability to develop the
argument in a well-organized and elegant manner. It demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of the relevant texts, grappled with the issues raised across them, and formulated a perceptive, independent argument. An A-level thesis reflects clarity of expression, sensitivity to regional, cultural, and historical contexts, and is supported by a well-chosen variety of primary materials.

B. The B range designates work that demonstrates many aspects of A-level work but falls short in either the organization or clarity of its writing, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the quality of research. Some papers in this category are solid works that contain flashes of insight, while others give evidence of independent thought without maximizing that potential. The lower end of this range is represented by work that comes up short through some weaknesses in writing, organization, argument, or use of evidence.

C. Independent work in the C range reflects poor treatment of a subject. Offering little more than a summary of ideas and information having to do with a chosen topic, the work here is comparatively insensitive to historical and cultural context and lacks complexity and insight. C-level papers often suffer from inadequate primary research.

D. The D range designates seriously deficient work with severe flaws in the writer’s command of research materials and modes of argumentation.

F. F-level papers do not meet the minimal requirements of research in the department.

Once concentrators have completed all their coursework and their independent work, the department calculates all these components according to the following formula:

- Departmental course grades: 35%
- Senior Thesis: 35%
- Fall term Junior Paper: 12%
- Spring term Junior Paper: 12%
- Senior Thesis Oral Defense: 6%
The results of these calculations determine the student’s standing within the department, with the most outstanding awarded Departmental Honors on Class Day.

**Sample Thesis Titles**

- The Better Earth: Contextualizing Contemporary Organic Farming with China's Dynamic Agricultural History
- China, Zhōng Guó, Assessing Michelangelo Antonioni’s Chung Kuo: Cina
- Cold War Crutches: Mao Zedong's "Lean to One Side" Policy and Sino-American Confrontation in Korea
- Ding Ling and the Chinese Woman: From Empowerment to Mobilization
- Identity and Ideology: Religion and Ethnicity in State Formation during the Northern Dynasties
- Japanese Portrayals of African Americans in Literature and Television: 1940-2010
- Japan's Emerging Role on the Korean Peninsula: The Dynamics of Japan-South Korea Relations in the Post-Cold War Era.
- Kpop and Islam in Turkey: The Pious Generation and the Heathen’s Music
- Infected and Deviant: Korean Netizen Responses to Early COVID-19 Outbreaks
- Representations of Modern Japanese Schools: Eyes of a Chick & Maria is Watching
- The White-Clad: Media, Police and Public Imagination in Post-Aum Japan

**Senior Thesis Prizes and Past Award-Winning Theses**

The best theses are eligible for two prizes, the Marjorie Chadwick Buchanan Prize (awarded by the Department of East Asian Studies) and the Leigh Buchanan Bienen and Henry S. Bienen Prize (awarded by the Program in East Asian Studies). These are adjudicated by committees, appointed by the department chair and program director respectively, who read the theses as well as the relevant adviser’s and reader’s reports to make their final evaluations. The Buchanan Prize is awarded to a senior in the Department of East Asian Studies with the most outstanding thesis, based on extensive and appropriate sources in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean as well as
Western language sources. The Bienen Prize is awarded to a senior in any department with the most outstanding senior thesis on an East Asian topic. The thesis must be based at least in part on source materials in an East Asian language. No student can win both prizes.

**Leigh Buchanan Bienen and Henry S. Bienen Senior Thesis Prize**


Katherine McCallum (2022, Co-Winner), “Picking Quarrels and Creating a Disturbance: An Analysis of the Survival of China’s Grassroots Feminist Movement on Social Media.”


Isabelle Chandler (2021), “‘The Spirit of Xiaotangshan.’ An Investigation into the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s Use of the Xiaotangshan SARS Hospital as a Tool of Propaganda, 2003-2021.”

Hyejin Jang (2021, Honorable Mention), “Reassembling a Nation through Art: Korea’s Political and Institutional Approaches to Cultural Heritage, from 1945 to the Present.”


Marjory Chadwick Buchanan Senior Thesis Prize

Edelyn Hoi Lam Lau (2022), “Shanghai’s Seasonal Fantasy: An Analysis of Select Foreign Terms in Mu Shiyiing’s “Shanghai de jijiemeng” via Translation.”


Morgan Anne McGrath (2021), “Korea’s Online Persona.”


Sophie Wheeler (2019), “(Re)Constructing Tohoku: Iterations of Tabi in Post-March 11th Tohoku, Japan.”

Elizabeth Maxey (2018), “’They Are Our Fellow Countrymen’: Koryo saram and the Korean Nation.”
A Guide to Independent Work in East Asian Studies

Near Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kyoto, Japan

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