

A History of ASIA

8th Edition



Rhoads Murphey with Kristin Stapleton

ROUTLEDGE

A HISTORY OF ASIA

A History of Asia is the only textbook to provide a historical overview of the whole of this region, encompassing India, China, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia. Engaging and lively, it chronicles the complex political, social, and intellectual histories of the area from prehistory to the present day.

Taking a comparative approach throughout, the book offers a balanced history of each major tradition, also dedicating coverage to countries or regions such as Vietnam and Central Asia that are less frequently discussed in depth. This eighth edition has been streamlined and updated to reflect the most recent scholarship on Asian history, bringing the book up to date with recent events and key trends in historical research. Highlights of the book include close-up portraits of significant Asian cities, detailed discussion of environmental factors that have shaped Asian history, quotes from Asian poetry and philosophical writing, and attention to questions of gender and national identity.

Highly illustrated with images and maps, each chapter also contains discussion questions, primary source excerpts, and in-depth boxed features. Written clearly throughout, *A History of Asia* is the perfect introductory textbook for all students of the history, culture, and politics of this fascinating region.

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A HISTORY OF ASIA

Rhoads Murphey with Kristin Stapleton

EIGHTH EDITION

This edition published 2019
by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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First edition published by Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Incorporated 1992
Seventh edition published by Pearson Education Inc. 2014

Reprinted seventh edition published by Routledge 2016

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-8153-7859-4 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-8153-7860-0 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-351-23191-6 (ebk)

Typeset in Minion Pro
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Visit the eresources: www.routledge.com/9780815378600

To my lifelong teacher and friend, John Fairbank,
who died on September 14, 1991,
before I had the chance to present him with this book,
so much of which stems from his inspiration and example.



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PREFACE

THIS BOOK IS designed primarily for students taking courses in Asian history, but students taking courses in world history will also find it useful. “Asia” in this book means primarily the areas and cultures east of Persia (Iran) and south of Russia, which are the focus. This vast and varied part of the world is sometimes called “monsoon Asia,” the generally warm and wet parts of the continent, sharply distinct from the desert landscape of the Middle East or the cold areas of Siberia. Its hospitable climate is, of course, responsible for the size and density of its population, in contrast with the far emptier areas of western and northern Asia. So defined, it stretches from the Khyber Pass on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, through India, mainland and island Southeast Asia, to China, Korea, and Japan.

Each of these separate regions has long contained distinctively different peoples and cultures, but nearly all achieved a high level of sophistication two thousand years ago or more. Given the great age of these Asian civilizations and the size of their populations from early times, more people have lived in monsoon Asia than in the rest of the world combined. Together they thus represent the largest, richest, and most varied chapter in the history of the human experience. Any attempt to deal with world history must make a major place for Asia, but the history of Asia is important and rewarding in itself.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

Kristin Stapleton, professor of history at the University at Buffalo, SUNY, contributed her expertise to the latest revision by extensively revising, reorganizing, and updating the text in accordance with the most recent scholarship in the field. Further Readings and Websites were revised and are available on a companion website. She would like to thank the readers who made comments and suggestions on the seventh edition, including Ryan Wolfson-Ford.

INTRODUCTION TO MAJOR ASIAN CIVILIZATIONS

This book is designed either to stand alone or be supplemented by readings chosen by the instructor (a list of supplemental

readings for each chapter may be found on the resource webpage associated with this text). Chapters are of approximately equal length. The book itself can, thus, serve as the text for a one-semester course, a two-quarter course, or a full-year course, or it can be integrated into a larger world history course. Chapter 3 offers a broad comparative analysis of Asian societies including some comparisons with the Western tradition. With Chapter 13, the modern West begins to impinge on the great Asian traditions, and in subsequent chapters the interactions among Asians and Westerners play an increasing role, from colonialism, semicolonialism, and wars of conquest to World War II and the coming of Asian independence and revolution. A final chapter considers major themes in Asian development at the start of the twenty-first century, including its unprecedentedly high economic growth rate, the reasons for this, and the roles of Asian nations and peoples in the contemporary world.

There is a strong argument for studying Asian history as a whole, perhaps especially on the part of undergraduates, but to the benefit of specialists as well. This book is explicitly comparative, as well as offering a balanced history of each major tradition from its beginnings to the present day. The book as a whole draws on the most recent scholarship and reflects the author’s professional involvement with Asia and its history for more than 40 years, including long periods of research, observation, and residence there. It is written for beginning students with no previous background in Asian history, introducing them to its major features in clear, simple language.

FOCUS ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

A major development in the writing of history during the past 30 years or more has been the increased attention to social and cultural history and the effort to recreate as much as possible the lives of ordinary people. This book is especially strong in its attention to such matters, although for the early periods in Asia, as elsewhere, we have only a little information on which to draw. Nevertheless, every chapter includes as much as can be derived about social

and cultural trends and about the everyday life of the common people, in addition to major political and economic events and developments. A further feature is the coverage of all the major Asian religions (Chapter 2) and its consideration of how each religious tradition fit in with and reflected the societies where it flourished. The emphasis on sociocultural developments is especially clearly brought out in the book's wealth of photographic illustrations. Maps in nearly every chapter further illustrate the stage on which the events described took place. An additional feature of this book is its recurrent emphasis on the geographic basis of each Asian civilization, and the role of the environment in the evolution of each. Finally, particular attention is paid in every chapter to the changing role of women, both individually in the case of women who rose to prominence in various fields, and collectively in terms of the changing status of women in each Asian society.

FEATURES AND PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS

Not only to add vividness but also to pursue many of the points mentioned above, most chapters also include an urban portrait of a city during the time of the chapter's coverage, with special attention to the lives of ordinary people, and a biographical portrait with the same objectives; many of the latter are of prominent women, and all help

to make history come alive. Nearly every chapter includes boxed quotations from relevant primary sources that further contribute to putting the reader into the scene in a participatory way as well as providing a sample of the kinds of documents with which historians work. Finally, an associated webpage provides for each chapter a list of relevant websites and an extensive set of suggestions for further reading, selected mainly from the most recent scholarship on each chapter's subject but including also classical or standard works, and usually providing a range of differing interpretations.

The writing of history, like that in any discipline, is continually changing, as our own perceptions of the past change and as each new generation looks for different things in the past. This book reflects those changes, and presents the history of Asia as most professionals in the field view it today. Its currency and its coverage of recent events are strong assets. Asian history is a rapidly growing field, and it is time for a text that covers it as a whole for beginning students, rather than as the history of individual countries, as we have long had for Western history. Asia is at least as rich, as old or older, and as important in the global scene, by any combination of measures. The world of the twenty-first century seems likely to be dominated by Asia, even more than in its glorious past. We need to understand far more about it, and the best way to achieve that, including an understanding of the present and future, is to study its history.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NO ONE REALLY writes alone, and I have been enabled to undertake this presumptuous task by a host of other scholars, some my friends and colleagues at Michigan and elsewhere, and many others whom I have known only through what they have written. My debt to all of these people is incalculable, and I can never hope to repay it. Without in any way regarding it as adequate, I want nevertheless to thank specifically a few of my colleagues and friends who have taken the trouble to read parts, and in a few cases most, of the book in manuscript, have shared their comments with me, and have saved me from many errors: Professors Dilip Basu, Michael Cullinane, Karl deSchweinitz, Roger Hackett, Karl Hutterer, Victor Lieberman, Thomas Trautmann, and Philip Woodruff. Thomas Trautmann and Joyce Madancy, Union College, read the entire manuscript and provided numerous valuable comments and specific changes.

Let me also thank the many readers whose comments were so helpful in preparing previous editions: E. Taylor Atkins, Northern Illinois University; Sue Chung, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Ned Davis, University of Hawaii at Manoa; Roseanne S. DelParto, Old Dominion University; Howard Didsbury, Kean College of New Jersey; June Dinh, Golden West College; Jeffrey Dym, California State University–Sacramento; Ron Edgerton, University of Northern Colorado; Jeannette F. Ford, Bethune-Cookman University; Stephen Garrigues, University of Maryland University College; Edward Glatfelter, Utah State University; Sue Gronewold, Kean University; Gregory Guelcher, Morningside College; Kenneth Hall, Ball State University; Jeff Hanes, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Ann M. Harrington, Loyola University–Chicago; Yong Ho, China Institute; Lisa Hollander, Jefferson College; George Hopkins, Western Illinois University; Yonglin Jiang, Oklahoma State University; Jeff Jones, University of North Carolina–Greensboro; David Kenley, Elizabethtown College; William F. King, Mt. San Antonio Community College; Justin Libby, Indiana University–Purdue University; Paul Lococo Jr., Leeward Community College; Daniel Meissner, Marquette University; Richard C. Miller, University of

Wisconsin–Madison; Sumiko Otsubo, Creighton University; Mingte Pan, SUNY Oswego; Loretta Pang, Kapiolani Community College; Wesley Sasaki-Uemura, University of Utah; Douglas P. Sjoquist, Lansing Community College; Tracy Steele, Sam Houston State University; Chin H. Suk, York College of Pennsylvania; Wing-Kai To, Bridgewater State College; Charles Weber, Wheaton College; William Wei, University of Colorado; John F. Weinzierl, Lyon College; and C.K. Yoon, James Madison University. It should go without saying that errors, infelicities, or imbalances that remain are entirely my own responsibility.

Equally important, I am indebted to all of my fellow Asianists at many universities and colleges in this country and abroad from whom I have learned so much over many years through association and interchange as well as through reading their work. They have been and remain my teachers, but I also owe a special debt to my original teachers: John Fairbank, Edwin Reischauer, Daniel Ingalls, Rupert Emerson, and Norman Brown, each of whom began my apprenticeship in the most exciting ways and from whom I am still learning. To that list of teachers I would add the kind, cheerful, helpful, understanding, wonderful people of China, India, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia, among whom I have lived and worked at various times for many years all told, and without whom I could never have attempted such a book or a career in Asian studies at all. They have been my first and greatest teachers, and they have also given me a love for them and their world, which is what brought me to Asian studies to begin with and which has continued to sustain me. One cannot begin to understand without sympathy, and that they have given me in overflowing measure.

Southeast Asian historian Kenneth Hall wrote nine boxed feature essays, titled “Reading Across Cultures,” that emphasize cross-cultural comparisons and provide expanded treatment of Southeast Asia. They also introduce students to major themes that recur in Asian and world history.

All of these, my teachers and friends, have not only inspired me in this overambitious endeavor but also made it,

quite honestly, a pleasure. My wife Eleanor has also helped to make it so with her encouragement, her often insightful critical readings of what I wrote, and her cheerful support throughout. I can never discharge my debt to all those who have helped me, but I will be richly rewarded if they, and the

readers of this book, find it acceptable, and for those new to the field, an invitation to a further voyage of discovery, to find at least some of the excitement my many teachers around the world have given me in the riches of Asia.

Rhoads Murphey

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO THE READER

NO SINGLE-VOLUME ATTEMPT to write the history of Asia can be more than the briefest introduction. I hope that all who read it will take it as an invitation to explore further. Space limits have made it necessary to foreshorten the treatment of every major aspect of Asian history and to do less than justice to all of them. I have nevertheless tried within these constraints to apportion space more or less in relation to the size, populousness, and level of development of each culture or country at each period. It has been necessary to adjust to the additional consideration that, especially for the earlier periods, we do not have adequate sources for many areas, by comparison with others that are consequently somewhat more fully treated. Thus, for example, Japan before about 1500, Korea before about 1850, and most of Southeast Asia before about 1800 are not treated here as extensively as India and, especially, China, where we have so much more material and many more centuries of literate development on which to draw. It is perhaps some consolation that none of these areas contained more than a small fraction of India's or China's populations, and that what development took place there owed a great deal to the Chinese and/or Indian models and their diffusion. All of these considerations, except perhaps the last, are even more relevant for Central Asia.

Periodization is a perennial problem for all historians, and the same is true for period labels. I have had to be

both sweeping and arbitrary in this book, given its temporal and areal scope. Medieval is a European term and has many connotations for European history. It does not carry those associations for Asia, but one must use some term in so general a treatment to cover the period between "ancient" or "classical" and "modern." *Medieval* means simply "middle era" or "middle period," and I have used it here strictly in that sense, as being simpler and clearer than any alternatives but without implying that European patterns or preconceptions are intended. When one writes about anything beyond the recent past, there is another and more vital problem: We know far too little of the lives of most people, especially the nonliterate who were the great majority everywhere until recently and who thus have left us only indirect evidence about themselves. For much of the past we have records primarily of the lives and doings of the elites and the rise and fall of states and kingdoms, monuments and battles, kings and conquests. Here and there we can catch a glimpse of the lives of ordinary people, and I have tried to draw on some of this material where possible, including what popular literature has survived, festivals, folk religion, and guesses about mass welfare, but I am well aware that I can give only an incomplete picture. The record of major events is important too, and given the limitations of any one-volume treatment, they necessarily take up most of these pages.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BORN IN PHILADELPHIA, RHOADS MURPHEY, a specialist in Chinese history and in geography, received his doctorate from Harvard University in 1950. Before joining the faculty of the University of Michigan in 1964, he taught at the University of Washington; he was also a visiting professor at Taiwan University, University of Pennsylvania, Sichuan University, and Tokyo University. From 1954 to 1956 he was the director of the Conference of Diplomats in Asia. The University of Michigan granted him a Distinguished Service Award in 1974. Formerly president of the Association for Asian Studies, Murphey served as editor of the *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies*, and the Association for Asian Studies' *Monographs*. The Social Science Research Council, the Ford Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Council of Learned Societies awarded him fellowships. A prolific author, Murphey's books include *Shanghai: Key to Modern China* (1953), *An Introduction to Geography* (4th ed., 1978), *A New China Policy* (with others, 1965), *Approaches to Modern Chinese History* (with others, 1967), *The Scope of Geography* (3rd ed., 1982), *The Treaty Ports and China's Modernization* (1970), *China Meets the West: The Treaty Ports* (1975), and *The Fading of the Maoist Vision* (1980). *The Outsiders: Westerners in India and China* (1977) won the Best-Book-of-the-Year award from

the University of Michigan Press. At Michigan he was the director of the Program in Asian Studies for many years. In December 2012, while the work of preparing the seventh edition of *A History of Asia* was in progress, Rhoads Murphey and his wife Eleanor passed away within a few days of each other at their home in Michigan. Professor Murphey was 93 years old.

Rhoads Murphey: An Appreciation

Rhoads Murphey was my teacher at the University of Michigan in the early 1980s. At the time, he was already a well-known and accomplished scholar, and yet among his many students he was most loved for the care he took in teaching us to appreciate Asian history and cultures and the interest he showed in our intellectual growth. When Rhoads invited me to work with him on his textbook projects, I was honored but a little apprehensive—Rhoads was also famous among his students for expressing his opinions openly and with passion. Our collaboration proved to be a challenge, but a delightful one, and I miss him a great deal. I hope the changes I have made to the text, and any future changes, will never obscure the somewhat cantankerous but always enthusiastic and informed voice of my teacher Rhoads Murphey.

Kristin Stapleton



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A NOTE ON THE SPELLING OF ASIAN NAMES AND WORDS

NEARLY ALL ASIAN LANGUAGES ARE WRITTEN with symbols different from the Western alphabet. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean are written with ideographic characters, plus a phonetic syllabary for Japanese and different scripts for Korean and Vietnamese. Most other Asian languages have their own scripts, symbols, diacritical marks, and alphabets, which differ from those in the English language. There can, thus, be no single “correct spelling” in Western symbols for Asian words or names, including personal names and place names—only established conventions. Unfortunately, conventions in this respect differ widely and in many cases reflect preferences or forms related to different Western languages.

Chinese presents the biggest problem, since there are a great many different conventions in use. Most American newspapers and some books and journals now use the romanization system called *Pinyin*, approved by the Chinese government, which renders with greater phonetic

accuracy, as Beijing and Guangzhou, the two cities previously known as Peking and Canton.

The usage in this book follows the Pinyin system because it has become widely used. Readers will encounter both Wade-Giles and Pinyin spellings, plus others, in other books, papers, and journals, and some familiarity with both conventions is thus necessary. A handy guide to pronouncing Chinese, which includes a chart to use to compare Wade-Giles and Pinyin spellings, may be found at Columbia University’s “Asia for Educators” website (http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1000bce_language.htm#pronounce).

In general, readers should realize and remember that English spellings of names from other languages (such as Munich for München, Vienna for Wien, Danube for Donau, and Rome for Roma), especially in Asia, can be only approximations and may differ confusingly from one Western source or map to another.



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MAP: MONSOON ASIA



Map 1a: Monsoon Asia



Map 1b: Monsoon Asia

CHRONOLOGY

| India | China | Korea-Japan | Southeast Asia | Other Civilizations |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| 4000 B.C.E. | | | | |
| Indus culture, 3000–2000 B.C.E. | Yangshao, c. 3000– c. 2000 B.C.E. Longshan, c. 2500– c. 1800 B.C.E. | Jōmon culture in Japan to c. 300 B.C.E. | Early bronze and agriculture | Sumer and Egypt, 4000 B.C.E. |
| 2000 B.C.E. | | | | |
| Aryan migrations, 1700–1200 B.C.E. | Xia (still awaiting clear archaeological evidence) and Shang, c. 1600– 1050 B.C.E. | Chinese civilization spreads to Korea | Sailors apparently from Java reach Africa | Hammurabi’s code, 1750 B.C.E. Hyksos invasion of Egypt Trojan War |
| 1000 B.C.E. | | | | |
| Vedic culture, 1000–500 B.C.E. | Zhou conquest, 1027 B.C.E. | Yayoi culture in Japan, c. 300 B.C.E.–250 C.E. | Nam Viet | Homer, Socrates, Plato |
| The Buddha, c. 563–c. 480 B.C.E. | Confucius, c. 551–479 B.C.E. | | | Greek city states |
| Magadha, 500 B.C.E. | Warring states | | | Aristotle, Alexander |
| Maurya, 322–180 B.C.E. | Qin conquest, 221 B.C.E. | | | Rise of Roman power |
| Ashoka, r. 269– 232 B.C.E. | | | | Julius Caesar |
| C.E. | | | | |
| Kushans, c. 100 B.C.E.–c. 250 C.E. | Han dynasty, 206 B.C.E.–220 C.E. | Paekche, Koguryō, and Silla in Korea | China conquers Nam Viet | Jesus Christ |
| Guptas, c. 320–c. 550 | Northern Wei and “Six Dynasties”; spread of Buddhism | Tomb period, 250–550 in Japan | Early states: Funan, Champa | Roman Empire in Mediterranean and Western Europe |
| Harsha, 606–648 | Sui, 581–617 | Yamato state, c. 550–c. 710 | Northern Vietnam free from China | Fall of Rome by 410 |
| Southern Kingdoms: Chola, Pandya, Pallava | Tang, 618–907 | Nara period, 710–784 | Tang retake N. Vietnam, Song let it go | Muhammad, 570–632 |
| Tamils invade Ceylon | Northern Song, 960–1127 | Heian, 794–1185 | Pagan kingdom in Burma, 850–1280s | Abbasid Caliphate |
| Arabs in Sindh, c. 710 | | Lady Murasaki | | Byzantine Empire |
| | | Koryō in Korea, 935–1200 | | Charlemagne, 768–814 |

1000

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Mahmud of Ghazni, 997–1030 | Southern Song, 1127–1279 Su Shi, Zhu Xi | Mongol conquest of Korea, Chosŏn, 1392–1910 | Angkor Thom and Wat, c. 900–c. 1200, Khmer glory and decline | Mayas in Central America Aztecs in Mexico |
| Delhi sultanate, 1206–1526 | Mongol conquest, Yuan dynasty, 1279–1368 | Kamakura in Japan, 1185–1339 | Rise of Thai state Borobudur, Srivijaya, Majapahit, 800–1400 | Incas in Peru Crusades, 1096–1204 Tamerlane (Timur), 1136–1405 |
| Ala-ud-din, r. 1296–1316 | Ming, 1368–1644 | Ashikaga, 1336–1570 | | |
| Tughluks and Lodis | Zheng He's fleets | Nobunaga and Hideyoshi | | |
| Vijayanagara, 1336–1565 | Ming novels: <i>Water Margin</i> , <i>Golden Lotus</i> | | | |

1500

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Babur, 1526–1530 | Ming in decline | Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea | Southward expansion of Vietnamese | Ottoman Empire Suleiman 1495–1566 |
| Mughals, 1526–1707 (1858) | Manchu conquest, 1644 | Tokugawa, 1600–1868 | Portuguese trade and bases | Western Renaissance 14th–16th centuries |
| Akbar, 1556–1605 | Qing dynasty, 1644–1911 | Expulsion of foreigners | Rise of Dutch power | Copernicus, Galileo, Michelangelo |
| Jahangir, 1605–1627 | Kangxi, 1661–1722 | Rise of Edo and merchant culture | Spanish Philippines, 1521 (1565)–1898 and Spanish America | Rise of the English state Elizabeth I, d. 1603 Shakespeare, 1564–1616 Louis XIV, r. 1669–1715 Peter the Great of Russia, 1672–1725 |
| Shah Jahan, 1627–1657 | | | | |
| Aurangzeb, 1658–1707 | | | | |

1700

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Calcutta, 1690 | <i>Dream of Red Chamber</i> | Nagasaki as “Window on the World” | New Toungoo state in Burma, 1635–1732 | J. S. Bach, d. 1750 American Revolution |
| Plassey, 1757 | Qianlong, 1735–1799 | Daimyo hostages at and visits to Edo | Chakri dynasty in Siam, from 1782 | Mozart, d. 1791 |
| Rise of company power, beginning c. 1760 | Macartney mission, 1793 | Further rise of merchants | Dutch control Java Vietnamese in Mekong Delta | French Revolution and Napoleon |
| British in Ceylon, 1798 | White Lotus Rebellion | | | |
| Cornwallis and Wellesley | | | | |

1800

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| British defeat Marathas, 1818 | Opium in, silver out; Amherst mission | Tokugawa system under threat | Penang founded, 1786 | US War of 1812 |
| First Afghan War, 1841 | “Opium War” 1839–1842 | Perry to Edo Bay, 1853 | Singapore founded, 1819 | Waterloo, 1815 |
| British takeovers | Taiping Rebellion, 1850–1864 | Meiji Restoration, 1868; rise of Tokyo | First Burmese War, 1826 | Reform bills in England |
| British add Punjab, 1849 | Tongzhi Restoration, Arsenals, 1862– 1875 | Japanese industrialization and imperialism in Korea and Taiwan | “Culture System” in Java | Abortive revolutions of 1848 in Europe |
| Revolt of 1857 | French War, 1885 | Korea, a “protectorate” | Second Burmese War, 1852 | Latin American independence |
| Railway building | Japan defeats China, 1895 | “Unequal treaties” end | “Unequal treaties” in Siam | The West enters Africa; US Civil War; German and Italian unification |
| Rise of colonial ports | The 100 Days (1898) and Boxer Uprising (1900) | | French take South Vietnam in 1862, and North in 1885 | |
| Suez open, 1869 | | | Third Burmese War, 1886; Dutch take Sumatra and Bali | |
| India National Congress, 1885 | | | United States takes the Philippines, 1898 | |
| Rising nationalism | | | | |
| Curzon, Viceroy of India, 1899–1905 | | | | |

1900–Present

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| India in World War I | 1911 Revolution | Defeat of Russia, 1905 | US crushes Philippine “rebels” | Boer War, 1899–1902 |
| Amritsar Massacre, 1919 | Yuan Shikai and Warlords | Shandong and 21 Demands | Rise of nationalism in Burma, Vietnam, Indonesia; Philippine collaboration | World War I, 1914– 1918 |
| Gandhi and Satyagraha | May Fourth Movement | Rule of Korea and Manchuria, the “China Incident” | Ho Chi Minh, Sukarno, Manuel Quezon | Russian Revolution, 1917 |
| Independence and partition, 1947 | Guomindang | The “Dark Valley” and Pearl Harbor, 1941 | Japanese conquest | World depression, 1929–1936 |
| Nehru dies, 1964 | Nanjing 1927–1937; Japan invades | Defeat and regrowth | Independence Vietnam War, 1946–1975 | World War II, 1939–1945 |
| Bangladesh, 1971 | Rise of CCP | Korea independent, and at war | Khmer Rouge genocide | Cold War |
| Indira Gandhi assassinated and Bhopal disaster, 1984 | PRC 1949 | South Korean democratization | ASEAN | Persian Gulf War, 1991 |
| Economic opening, 1990s | Great Leap Forward famine, 1959–1961 | North Korean isolation | Deadly tsunami kills hundreds of thousands in Indian Ocean Basin, 2004 | Terrorist attack on the United States, September 11, 2001 |
| BJP in power, 1998–2004; nuclear weapons tests | Cultural Revolution | Kim Il Sung’s grandson Kim Jong Un declared head of state in 2011 on the death of his father Kim Jong Il | Political thaw in Myanmar (Burma), 2011 | Global economic crisis, 2008 |
| Terrorist attack in Mumbai, 2008 | Reform and Opening policies | Park Chung-hee’s daughter Park Geun- hye elected president of South Korea, 2012; forced to step down, 2017 | | US and NATO forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, 2003 to the present |
| Narendra Modi of the BJP elected prime minster, 2014 | China joins the WTO, 2001 | | | Spring 2013, popular uprisings against governments in the Arab world |
| | Beijing Olympics, 2008 | | | Paris Climate Accord signed, 2016 |
| | Xi Jinping as head of Communist Party, 2012 to the present | | | |
| | Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched, 2013 | | | |



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INTRODUCTION

MONSOON ASIA AS A UNIT OF STUDY

HALF THE WORLD LIES in Asia east of Afghanistan and south of Siberia: half of its people and far more than half of its historical experience, for the oldest living civilized traditions grew there. India and China developed sophisticated cultures and technologies long before Europe and led the world for more than two thousand years, economically and politically as well as culturally and technologically. Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia evolved their own high civilizations during the many centuries after the fall of Rome while Europe endured waves of devastating invasions and the long medieval period. The great Asian traditions and the vigorously growing modern states and economies of Asia offer the student a rich and varied record of human experience, in literature, philosophy, and the arts, in statecraft and empire building, in the varied lives of their people, but perhaps most of all in the many different approaches to universal human conditions and problems. India, China, and Southeast Asia, well over one and a half times the size of all of Europe, are all equally rich in their cultural variety. Japan, though smaller than the others, offers still another set of experiences, additionally fascinating because of Japanese success in meeting the modern West on its own terms.

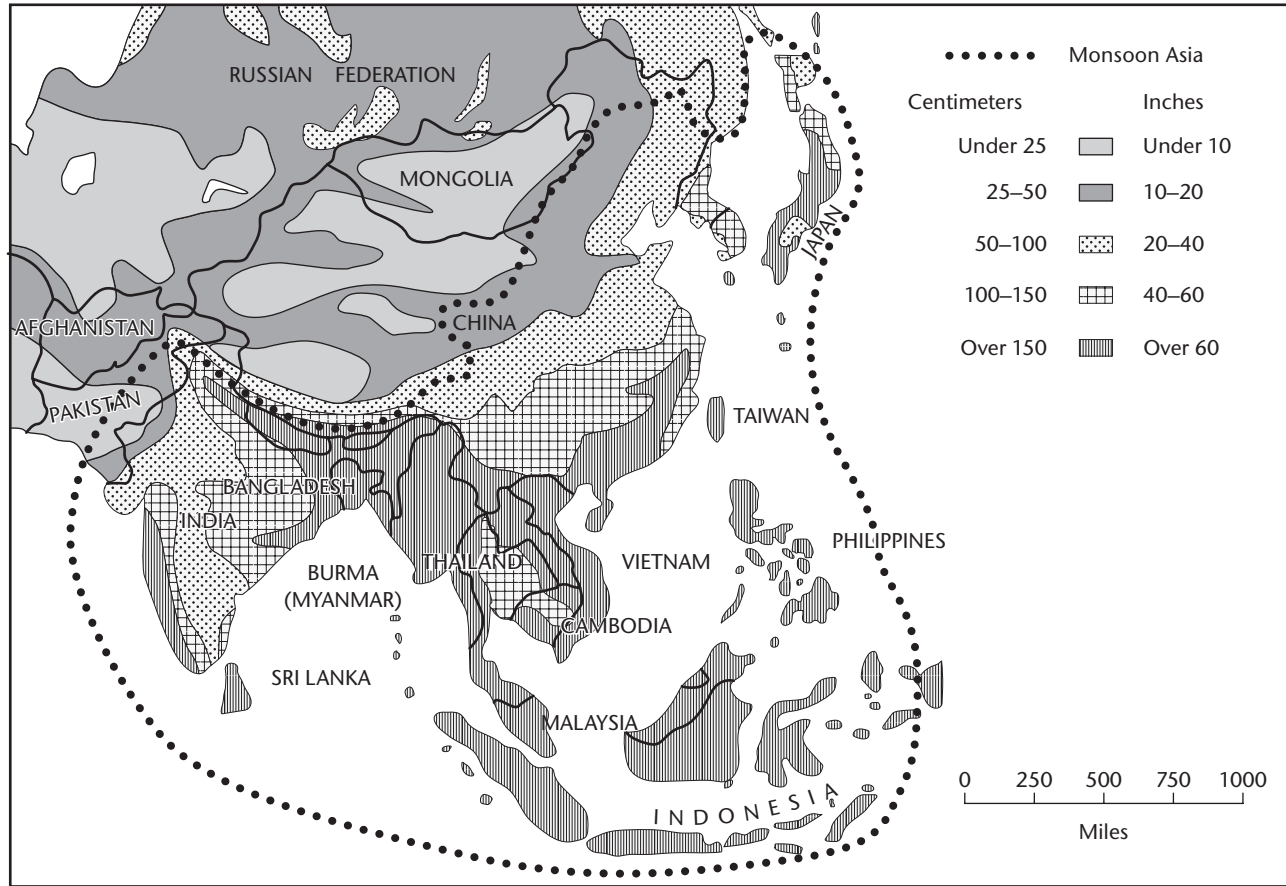
Each of these major civilizations deserves study, and increasingly, their histories are part of the college and university curriculum. But they also need to be seen as part of the larger Asian whole, just as we study, for example, France within Europe and European history as a composite of the history of its parts. This book provides the beginning student with an introduction to Asian history through the histories of its major civilized traditions. As the treatment progresses, successive chapters relate them to each other and to Western history, until the great traditions of Eurasia begin to merge in the age of European expansion at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Knowledge of Asia is vital to understanding the world in which we live, a world where Asia is more and more deeply woven into our lives. But the richness and depth of the Asian experience are perhaps even more important rewards awaiting the student who begins with this book.

GEOGRAPHY

The continent of Asia is bordered in the west by convention at Suez, the Bosphorus at Istanbul, and the Ural Mountains in the Russian Federation; it is, thus, the eastern four-fifths of the single landmass of Eurasia, encompassing over 17 million square miles, and by far the largest of the continents. But these conventional lines do not mark any major or abrupt change in landscape or culture, especially not along the principal line of the Urals. This range is relatively low and easily crossed; on both sides of it the northern coniferous forest that covers much of northern Europe and most of northern Asia continues with few breaks, an area of sparse population, little rainfall, and great seasonal temperature extremes.

The southern third of the former Soviet Union east of the line of the Urals is similarly an extension of what lies to the west, an area of aridity that merges eastward into the sparsely populated desert whose traditional nomadic or oasis cultures still contrast sharply with Russian culture and with those of India, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan. Much of this arid desert area of Central Asia was conquered by Muslim invaders beginning in the eighth century C.E., further establishing the area's similarity with the Arab lands to the west and with adjoining Iran. Most of the inhabitants of Central Asia are of Turkish origin; some of the Turkish groups moved steadily westward and, by the fifteenth century, had conquered Anatolia, modern Turkey.

The southern and eastern rim of Asia is a very different place, both physically and culturally. Rainfall is generally adequate despite occasional dry years in some areas, and temperatures are more moderate, under the influence of the sea. Except in the northern fringes, winters are relatively mild, for the same reason. This is the area called "monsoon Asia," set off from the rest of Asia by high mountain ranges along most of its landward borders, which help to keep the climatic influence of the sea out of Central Asia. The word *monsoon* is of Arab origin and originally meant "season" or "seasonal wind." In summer the huge landmass of Eurasia,



Map 0.1 Precipitation in Monsoon Asia

Note the patterns: heaviest rainfall near the sea and along the Himalayan front.

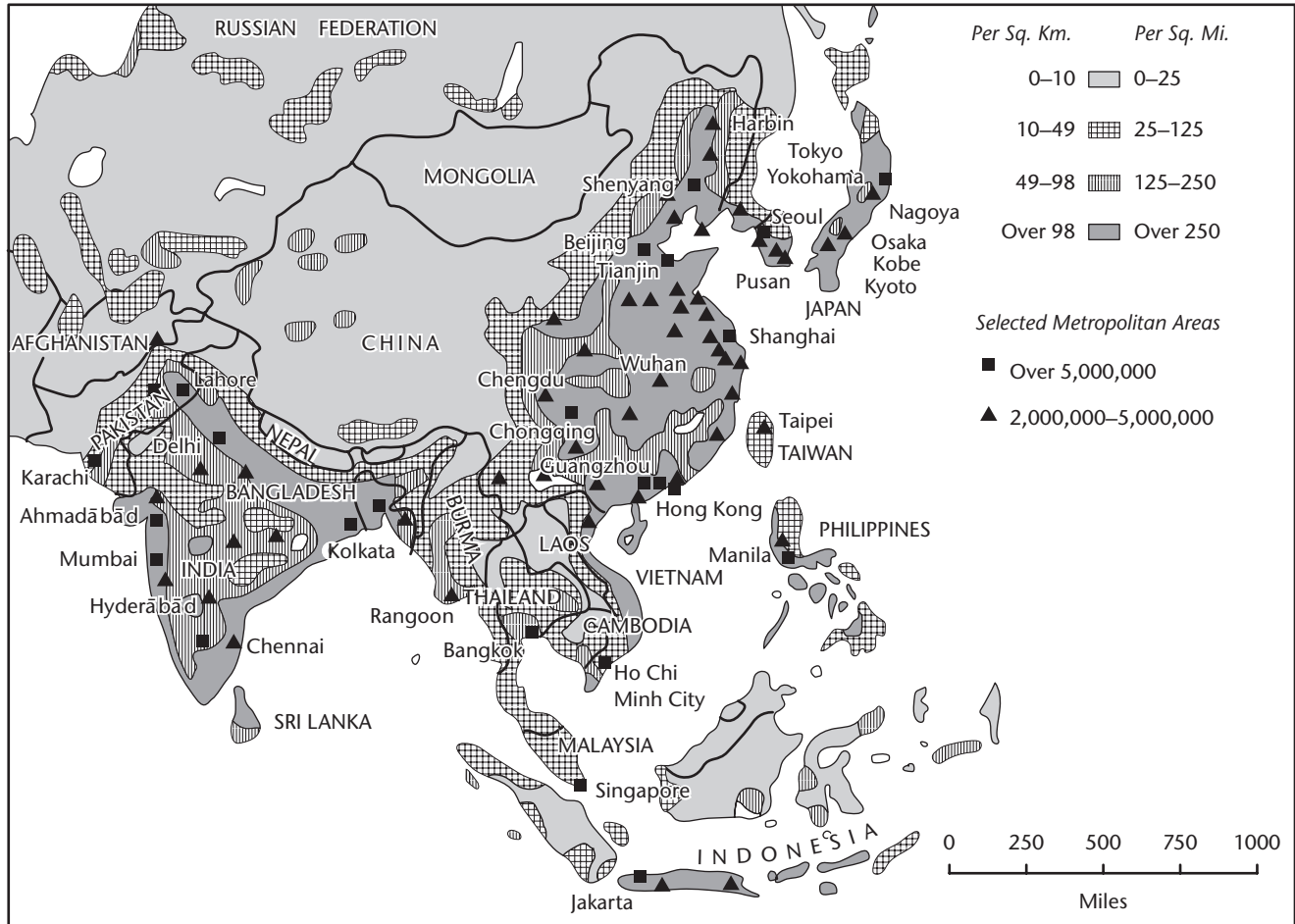
whose center is farther from the sea than any part of the globe, heats up rapidly and generates a mass of hot air. As it rises, cooler air, which in its passage across the water picks up moisture, is drawn in from the surrounding oceans. On reaching the land, these maritime air masses release their moisture as rain, especially where they encounter hills or mountains, which force them to rise and hence cool them enough to produce condensation.

There is thus a pattern of relatively heavy summer rainfall along the southeastern crescent of Eurasia, on the oceanic side of the mountains that divide it from Central Asia. In winter the flow of air is reversed. The center of Eurasia, relatively little affected by the moderating influences of the sea, cools rapidly, and by December a mass of cold, heavy air begins to dominate the area. The sea remains relatively warm, storing the summer's heat, and winds blow out from the cold center toward the sea with its warm, rising air. In the northern parts of monsoon Asia, these outblowing winter winds can produce low temperatures but little or no rainfall, because they originate in dry Central Asia. By May or June, depending on the area, Central Asia has begun to heat up again, and moist maritime air masses are drawn in once more, bringing the monsoonal rains.

The oversimplified description above basically fits what usually happens, but the mechanisms of the monsoon are in fact far more complex. The arrival and duration of the monsoon in spring or summer are notoriously unreliable, varying widely from year to year in many areas and producing floods in one year and droughts in another. The islands of Southeast Asia also derive rain from the winter monsoon, because by the time it reaches them it has passed over large stretches of sea and picked up considerable moisture. The same is true to a lesser extent for Japan.

POPULATION DENSITIES

The general adequacy of rainfall and the generally mild winters under the protection of mountain ranges to landward have provided a basis for the sharpest of all distinctions between what is appropriately called *monsoon* Asia and the rest of the continent: half of the world's people live here, as they have during all of recorded history (although monsoon Asia's preponderance was even greater until a century or two ago), while most of the rest of Asia is one of the most thinly settled areas of the world (see the map above).



Map 0.2 Population Density, Monsoon Asia

Note the coincidence of heavy rainfall and dense population. The major exceptions are northeastern China, where level land takes precedence, and the islands of Indonesia (except for Java), where mountains and jungle exclude dense settlement.

The hilly or mountainous parts of monsoon Asia, including much of Southeast Asia, west China, Korea, and Japan, are in fact rather thinly peopled, while in the lowlands along the coasts and river basins population densities reach the highest levels in the world.

Monsoon Asia developed a highly distinctive set of cultures, based from the beginning on productive agricultural systems in this generally warm, wet area, which also contains extensive plains, river valleys, and deltas. The first Asian civilizations arose on an agricultural base in the great river valleys described in later chapters, and agriculture remains the dominant employment and the major source of production in much of monsoon Asia. It was agricultural wealth that supported the successive empires and brilliant cultures of monsoon Asia, and that kept its people as a whole almost certainly better off materially than people anywhere else. It was richer than Europe until recently, probably sometime in the eighteenth century, as European observers noted from the time of Marco Polo (1254–1324 C.E.) on.

The expansion of the Chinese state and empire beginning under the Han dynasty in the second century B.C.E. progressively incorporated under Chinese control a number of areas that do not fit very closely with the above generalizations about monsoon Asia. Given the absence of effective political or military rivals to the west and north, the Chinese state first conquered the area now known as Xinjiang, sometimes called Chinese Turkestan, a largely desert area still inhabited mainly by Turkic peoples, and then added much of arid Mongolia to protect itself against nomadic raids. Later Chinese expansion with the same motives conquered the huge Himalayan area of Tibet, although its tiny population remained overwhelmingly Tibetan until large-scale migrations from other parts of China in recent years. Finally, in the seventeenth century, an originally nomadic group, the Manchus, conquered China and added their Manchurian homeland to the empire. Manchuria is monsoonal in the sense that it gets most of its sparse rainfall in summer as part of the monsoonal pattern, but it has a long and bitterly cold winter, and much of it is marginal for

agriculture. Most of Mongolia and Xinjiang are too dry for farming and belong both climatically and culturally to Central Asia. Tibet is an alpine desert, too dry, too cold, and too high to permit agriculture except in a few tiny areas.

Taken together, these marginal regions compose over half of contemporary China's area; Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia (only the southernmost section, "Inner Mongolia," is part of today's China) are each nearly the size of Western Europe, but they contain much less than 1 percent of China's population, and even Manchuria contains less than 10 percent. Most of China's people, and the roots and body of Chinese civilization, have always been located in the eastern and southern parts of the country, where agriculture has strong advantages. The empire expanded into the outer areas mentioned above in the absence of major topographic barriers (except for Tibet) but reached its limits roughly along the line formed by the main chain of the Himalayas and its northern extensions, which form the western and northwestern boundaries of Tibet and Xinjiang; other mountain ranges helped to limit Chinese expansion into northern Mongolia. But the cultures of the people of these areas, including their languages, have until very recently remained strikingly different from those found in the heartland of China, as is still the case in Tibet.

The other major area that lies on the margins of monsoon Asia in physical terms, Pakistan, has from earliest times been inhabited by people who belonged to the major stream of Indian culture, and indeed this area saw the birth of civilization on the subcontinent. Much of Pakistan is desert or near-desert, but irrigation since late Neolithic times, especially along the Indus River and its tributaries, has made possible a productive agricultural system and a dense population. Despite its marginality in climatic terms, most of Pakistan gets its limited rainfall in summer as part of the monsoonal system, of which it lies on the fringes, as does northwestern China. The high and steep mountain ranges that form the western and northwestern borders of Pakistan have always drawn a relatively sharp line between the peoples and cultures of the Indian subcontinent and those to the west in the Persian and Arab world of the Middle East. Like the distinction between the monsoon realm and the rest of Asia as a whole, that line is perhaps clearest of all in terms of population density.

COMMON CULTURAL PATTERNS

Apart from the all-important characteristic of population density, monsoon Asia—the area east of Afghanistan and south of what is now the Russian Federation—has other common features that make it an appropriate unit of study. Even the monsoon part of Asia is a very large area, nearly twice the size of all of Europe to the Urals, and it is divided

by mountains and seas into many subregions with different cultures, in many cases also inhabited by ethnically different people. The four major subregions of monsoon Asia—India, China, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia (Korea and Japan)—are divided from each other in all of these ways, and each is further subdivided, to varying degrees, into internal regions. But there is a broad range of institutions, ideas, values, conditions, and solutions that have long been distinctively Asian, common to each of the four major parts of monsoon Asia, different at least in degree from those elsewhere, and evolving in Asia in distinctive ways.

These include, among many others, the basic importance of the extended family and kin network and its multiple roles; the respect for and importance attached to learning, for its own sake and as the path to worldly success; the veneration of age and its real or fancied wisdom and authority; the traditional subjugation and submissive roles of women, at least in the public sphere (although Southeast Asia and southern India are qualified exceptions); the hierarchical structuring of society; the awareness of and importance attached to the past; the primacy of group welfare over individual interest; and many more distinctively Asian cultural traits common to all parts of monsoon Asia.

Agriculture

Most of Asia has traditionally been and many parts remain primarily agrarian. Although Japanese industry developed rapidly in the 1920s, and by 2018, China, India, and South Korea have become major industrial and commercial economies, Asian agriculture, including that of Japan today, has always been distinctive for its labor intensiveness, still in most areas primarily human labor, including that involved in the construction and maintenance of irrigation systems.



Figure 0.1 Rice paddies in south-central Thailand. This scene is typical of warm, wet Asia and of its great river valleys and plains, which are highly productive agriculturally.

(R. Murphey)

This too goes back to the origins of the great Asian civilizations, which arose on the basis of agricultural surpluses produced by labor-intensive, largely hand cultivation supported by irrigation. From the beginning, Asian per-acre crop yields have been higher than anywhere else in the world. With the addition of manuring in later periods and chemical fertilization more recently, they are still the highest in the world, especially in Japan. High yields have always supported large populations in monsoon Asia, concentrated in the plains, river valleys, and deltas, where level land and fertile alluvial (river silt) soils have also maximized output in this region of generally warm temperatures, long growing seasons, and normally adequate rainfall.

Since approximately the first millennium B.C.E. or even earlier, monsoon Asia has contained the largest and most productive agricultural areas in the world. As one consequence, population densities per square mile have also remained high throughout this period, especially on cultivated land, and higher than anywhere else until the present. This was to some degree a chicken-and-egg situation. Productive land supported a growing population, which not only generated a need for more food but also provided the labor required to increase yields still further. This has been the consistent pattern of the agrarian and population history of each of the major regions of monsoon Asia over the past four thousand years.

Social Hierarchy

Very high population densities have had much to do with the equally consistent nature of Asian societies, especially their emphases on group effort and group welfare, their mistrust of individualism, and their dependence on clearly stated and sanctioned rules for behavior. Although the image of the hermit sage emerged early across Asia as a cultural alternative, individuals have almost always been subject to group direction and subordinate to group interest. They were fitted into the larger structure of societies that were hierarchically organized; each individual has always had his or her defined place and prescribed role. Individual happiness and welfare, like those of the societies as a whole, have always been seen as resting on such a structure. Most of these societies remain patriarchal and male dominant, although there are regional variations; the primary institution has always been the family, where the oldest member rules, sometimes a female but usually a male. The chief virtue extolled by all Asian societies is respect and deference to one's elders and to all others of higher status. Age and learning are equated with wisdom, an understandable idea in any agricultural society, where accumulated experience is the best guide to life's problems, and where the few learned men are looked up to by the mass of illiterates.

It has always seemed strange to Asians that others elsewhere do not share to the same degree their own deference to age and to learning—and that they do not put the same high value on education as both the most effective and the most prestigious way for any individual to succeed in life. But individual success is also seen as bringing both credit and material benefit to the family, and family obligation remains an unusually powerful drive for most Asians. From early on, it was possible for those born in humble circumstances to rise in the world by acquiring education, an effort that could be successful only with close family support and much family sacrifice. Those who achieved success, and all those in authority or with education, were expected to set a good example for others. Indeed, society was seen as being held together by the model behavior of those at the top, from the emperor and his officials to the scholars, priests, and other leaders to the heads of families.

The family, the basic cement of all Asian societies, commonly involved three generations living together: parents, surviving grandparents, and children. But its network of loyalties and obligations extended further to include to varying degrees cousins, uncles, aunts, mature siblings, and in-laws. It was a ready-made system of mutual support, often necessary in hard times but seen as a structure that benefited everyone at all times and was hence given the highest value. There were of course strains within it, and within the societies as a whole, especially in the generally subordinate role of women, younger children, and others at the bottom. No society anywhere has ever achieved perfect solutions to all human problems, but these Asian societies seem to have been more successful than most, if only because they have lasted, in fundamentally similar form in these terms, far longer than any others elsewhere.

Except for in parts of Southeast Asia, a notable distinction, when women married they became members of their husband's family and moved to his house and village. New brides were often subjected to tyranny from their mothers-in-law, but when they had borne a son, all-important for continuation of the husband's family line, they acquired some status, and in time could tyrannize their sons' new wives. This patrilocal system was the norm in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and India, or rather it became so as these civilizations matured. In prehistoric times and before the beginning of written records (quite late in Japan), it is likely that relations between the sexes were more egalitarian in these cultures. That seems to have been the case for the Indus civilization of India, before the Aryan migrations. In early Japan the significance of the female is suggested by the fact that their chief deity was a woman: Amaterasu, the sun goddess. In Korea, before Confucian influence in the Chosŏn period (1398–1910 C.E.) compelled changes, matrilocal or uxorilocal marriage, in which the husband

moved in with his wife's family for a substantial period of time, was the norm. Southeast Asia, including Vietnam even after its conquest by the Qin and Han dynasties, remained a world apart in terms of gender relations and is still so, with women more dominant and playing a major role in, for example, trade; there men had to pay, as they still do, a bride price for wives, whereas the rest of monsoon Asia required dowries for the women.

Individual privacy was largely absent, given the dense population, the family structure, and the pattern common to most of monsoon Asia whereby even in rural areas houses were grouped together in villages rather than scattered over the landscape on separate farms, as in much of the Western world. Asian farms were small, averaging less than five acres in most areas, still smaller in the most densely settled parts. Their high productivity as a result of intensive cultivation meant that a family could normally support itself on a relatively tiny plot or plots. These were grouped around each village, housing 20 to 50 families on average who walked the short distance to and from their fields morning and evening, all but the very young and the very old. One was almost never out of sight or sound of others, and learned early to adjust, to defer to elders and superiors, to work together in the common interest, and in general to accept living very closely with, virtually on top of, other people, realizing that clear and agreed-on rules for behavior were and are essential. Marriage partners had to be sought in another village or town; most of one's fellow villagers were likely to be relatives of some degree, and in any case did not offer the widening of the kin network and its mutual support advantages conferred by marriage into another village. In other respects, one village or town was, and remains, much like another, and most people were, until very recently, villagers and farmers.

The chief Asian crop, rice, is the most productive of all cereals under the care that Asian farmers gave it, irrigated in specially constructed *paddies*, or wet fields that are weeded, fertilized, and harvested largely by hand. Rice was probably native to, and first cultivated in, mainland Southeast Asia and southern China and spread somewhat later to India, Korea, and Japan, until by the first few centuries of the first millennium it dominated Asian agriculture. Rice has demanding requirements, especially for water, but where it can be grown it can support, and must employ, large numbers of people. In the drier areas such as north India and north China, wheat largely replaced rice as the dominant cereal, but it too could produce good yields under intensive cultivation. More marginal areas could grow millet, sorghum, or barley; and in the southeast, taro, manioc, sago, and bananas supplemented grains. There was little place for animals, except for draft purposes including plowing and transport, although pigs, chickens, and ducks were raised as scavengers. Cereals produced far more food per acre than

could be obtained by grazing animals or feeding them on crops, and there was continual pressure to have the land yield as much food as possible to support the dense populations. Monsoon Asia has accordingly been called "the vegetable civilization," centered on cereals and other plants (including a variety of vegetables) and minimizing meat in the diet, except for fish in coastal areas. Buildings were constructed primarily in wood, thatch, straw, and mud, with metal used only for tools and weapons, and stone largely reserved for monumental religious or official structures.

In all of these ways, monsoon Asia is a legitimate unit of study, an area with more basic commonality than differences. There is of course a wide range of differences in languages and other cultural traits, how people have lived and still live, supported themselves, and interacted with one another, the institutions they constructed, the basic values they still follow. But they have differed, and differ still, amazingly little from one part of monsoon Asia to another, given its very large size, geographic barriers to interactions, and huge populations. The states and empires of monsoon Asia were built consistently on their common peasant base of intensive, high-yield agriculture, which provided the great bulk of revenues, the manpower for armies, and the highly structured social order. Societies were directed and manipulated by officials and by learned men, whose values were largely echoed by most of those far greater numbers ranked below them, a few of whom joined the ranks of the elite through education. The village worlds were largely



Figure 0.2 South China landscape, Sichuan. This agricultural scene is typical of much of monsoon Asia, where the principal crop is irrigated rice. The rice is grown in fields (*paddies*) that are finely engineered to hold water within their low embankments, letting it trickle down from higher up the slope to each paddy in turn for constant irrigation. The water level is raised as the crops grow, and then is drained in the few weeks before harvest. The gentler hillsides are terraced, as in this picture, to create a staircase of nearly level irrigated fields. The heavy labor required to maintain this system is repaid by high crop yields.

(R. Murphey)

self-governing and self-regulating, thanks to the family system, the kin network, and the basic social institutions common to the area as a whole, but they formed the essential foundation for the building and maintenance of empires.

Trade took place at and far beyond the intervillage level, linking distant provinces or subregions and reaching overseas between the four major areas of Asia and beyond. But until very recent times, and then only in Japan and parts of Southeast Asia, it never rivaled the basic importance of agriculture as a means of employment or a source of wealth. Each Asian area produced rich merchants, who often supported a brilliant urban culture. But nowhere, with few and brief exceptions until modern times, did merchants acquire political power or high formal status. All of these Asian societies continued to be dominated by the pool of educated men and others whose membership in the elite derived from learning in one form or another, including often the arts of warfare, supplemented by ownership of land and the management of the productive agricultural system that underlay everything. In these terms, too, there are few differences between one major Asian culture and another. On such grounds, monsoon Asia has been and remains at least as much a cultural and historical unit as Europe, despite being twice as big as Europe and having far wider variations in language and ethnic mixtures, a far longer recorded history, and an immensely greater population.

THE STUDY OF MONSOON ASIA

European societies and European history have their own undoubted unity, despite regional and temporal differences, and we commonly study them as a whole, including their variations and changes from area to area and period to period. The same kind of approach is at least equally valid for monsoon Asia, although it is less often pursued. The primary reason is that the American and European scholarly worlds still know much less about Asia and its history than about Europe. As knowledge of and attention to Asia have increased, especially since the end of World War II, efforts have perhaps understandably been concentrated on learning Asian languages so that we can read their texts and records, and then on using such materials to study the histories and cultures of each major region separately. This is necessary since knowledge of Chinese, for example, is of marginal help in studying India, as knowledge of Sanskrit or Hindi is of little use in studying Japan. The sheer size of Asia, its great regional variety, and its uniquely long and rich history, or histories, further discourage most scholars, or even students, from trying to understand the whole of monsoon Asia, often even at an introductory level.

But in the twenty-first century, Asia has moved into the global spotlight as the dynamic home of over half of humanity. Its societies and economies are rapidly changing



Figure 0.3 Waterlogged streets of Kolkata during the monsoon cause trouble in everyday living.

(Tuul and Bruno Morandi/Getty Images)

and are acquiring a major position in world affairs in all respects. Study of Asia has matured enough to have produced a still-growing body of published work on the history of each major Asian area. It is both essential and possible to study Asia as a whole. Not to do so leaves us unprepared for the world of the twenty-first century, and at the same time prevents us from benefiting from the insights that almost any comparative approach to the several parts of Asia offers. Before we can usefully compare, it is first necessary to learn something of what happened in the history of each major area. This book not only attempts to do that for each part of Asia but also looks at parallels, differences, and interactions among them and between Asia and the Western world in both ancient and modern times.

Since World War II, the United States has produced more scholarly and popular books on Asia than any other country. US universities are the world's leading centers of Asian studies. Yet as a people, Americans are woefully ignorant of Asia, as they are of the world as a whole, clearly more so than the people of any other developed country and of many of the developing ones. Some Americans know a little about Europe, the origin of many of our people and much of our culture, but there is far less general knowledge or

even adequate awareness of Asia, on the other side of the globe. Yet since about 1970 by far the largest share of US trade, and the most rapidly increasing, has been with Asia. Several of its nations have the highest economic growth rates in the world, and several have become major powers in world affairs. Asian Americans are a fast-growing segment of the US population.

Most important, the Asian cultural and historical experience is well over half of the human experience, now and in the past. We impoverish ourselves if we remain ignorant of it—and we expose ourselves to possible disaster if we try to play a global role in the modern world, where Asian concerns increasingly are shaping the agenda, without some knowledge of its cultures and civilizations. Asia's long history and the importance its modern inhabitants attach to it make it particularly difficult to understand the present or plan for the future without a knowledge of the past. These are all important practical reasons for studying Asian history. But perhaps the best reason for studying anything is that it enriches the life of the student. This book aims to widen its readers' horizons and to make each of them richer because of learning about Asia.

Questions

- 1 What are monsoons, and what are their impact on Asian society and culture? What are Asia's monsoon seasons?
- 2 What distinguishes "monsoon Asia" from the remainder of Asia? What are the consequent differences between the two?
- 3 How has Chinese civilization linked monsoon Asia to Central Asia over time?
- 4 According to the text, what is "exceptional" about south Indian and Southeast Asian civilizations in relation to the rest of monsoon Asia?
- 5 What are the societal consequences of an irrigation wet-rice society?
- 6 Where did the most populous early Asian societies form, and why?
- 7 What is a "vegetable civilization"? What are its consequences?
- 8 What are the common features among monsoon Asia's societies and cultures?

CHAPTER I

PREHISTORIC ASIA

THIS CHAPTER SUMMARIZES what we know about the beginnings of the human species in Asia, the long Paleolithic period or Old Stone Age, the Neolithic revolution, the origins of agriculture in Southwest and Southeast Asia, the beginnings of civilization in India, Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan, and the close connection between Korea and early Japan. It aims to set the stage for our exploration of the literate societies that emerged in Asia in the second millennium B.C.E., when written records provide much richer sources for understanding the history of the peoples of Asia.

EARLY AND PALEOLITHIC CULTURES

The direct ancestors of the human species seem clearly to have evolved first in East Africa some three million years ago. After another million years or perhaps more, these creatures, known as *Homo erectus*, slightly smaller than modern humans but walking erect, using fire, and making crude stone tools, had spread to Asia and Europe. The earliest Asian finds of *Homo erectus* were made in Java (now in Indonesia) in 1891, and near Beijing in 1921, labeled respectively “Java Man” and “Peking Man” (Peking is the old spelling of the Chinese capital city, Beijing, near where the find was made). Both original finds were dated approximately 1 million B.C.E., although subsequent discoveries in Java have now pushed the date of “Java Man” back further, and other finds suggest that this species was reasonably widespread in Asia by 1.5 million years ago. More recently, remains of *Homo erectus* have been found in Yunnan in southwest China dated about a million years ago, and near Xi’an in the northwest dated about 600,000 B.C.E. *Homo erectus* merged with later humanoid species after about 300,000 B.C.E. Given the span of time and the mixing of peoples since, it is reasonable to think of these creatures as

ancestors of modern people in general, rather than as early Asians. They fashioned handheld stone axes with a cutting edge, probably used for chopping, scraping, and digging, and may have been cannibals, or at least have ritually eaten the brains and bone marrow of their own dead.

The hand axes they produced were remarkably uniform and look much the same at sites scattered over most of Asia, Africa, and Europe as far as Britain. After about 150,000 B.C.E., a new species, called *Homo neanderthalis* (from the Neander River valley in Germany where one of the first finds was made), rose to dominance over the Old World of Eurasia and Africa.

In the course of the last glaciation, between approximately 70,000 and 20,000 B.C.E., *Homo neanderthalis*, the chief successor to *Homo erectus*, was gradually displaced or superseded by modern humans, whom we call *Homo sapiens*; since that time *Homo sapiens* has been the only human inhabitant of the globe. Physical differences among *Homo sapiens* communities that flourished in various parts of the world before the age of easy travel are relatively slight; they are most marked in shades of skin and a few other superficial and external features such as hair color and texture, amount of body hair, and facial features. Since few of these minor attributes are discernible for long after death, we cannot date with any precision the emergence of the small physical distinctions on which nineteenth-century scientific racism fixated. It may be that people who lived or remained in hot, sunny climates retained what was probably the original human skin color—dark, as a protection against strong sunlight—while those who migrated into, or were overtaken by, colder or cloudier climates slowly evolved lighter skin in response to the beneficial effects of sunlight on the body, especially as a source of vitamin D.

Until very recently, the inhabited areas of Africa, Asia, and Europe—the units of the Old World divided only by the narrowest of water barriers (the Bosphorus and the Gulf of Suez) and hence sometimes called “the world