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## Introduction

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### Peter Horn

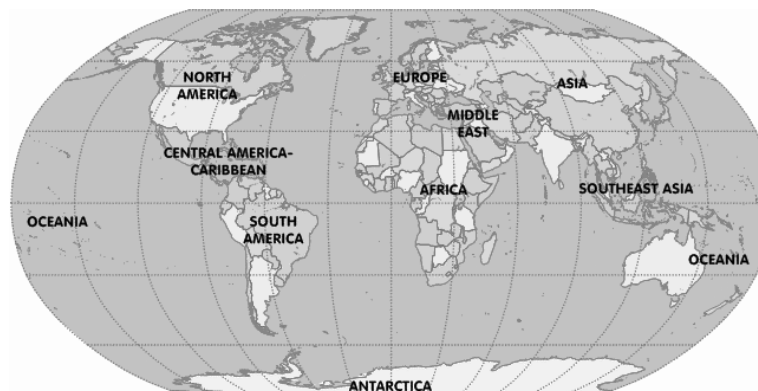
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Asia<sup>1</sup> is the largest of the world's continents, having a geographic area of about 17 000 000 square miles, or about one-third of the world's dry land, and nearly three-fifths of the world's population. It is also the oldest known portion of the globe, the earliest known seat of civilisation, and, in all probability, the cradle of the human race; although scholars differ as to whether the primitive home of mankind should be located in the Middle Eastern Countries, occasionally referred to as South-western Asia, and more particularly in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, or rather in Central Asia, more particularly in the Indo-Iranian plateau. On the north, Asia is bounded by the Arctic Ocean; on the east, by the Pacific Ocean; on the south, by the Indian Ocean; and on the west, by Europe, the Black Sea, the Greek Archipelago, the Mediterranean, and the Red Sea. It is united with Africa by the desert Isthmus of Suez, and with Europe by the Caucasus Mountains and the long Ural range.

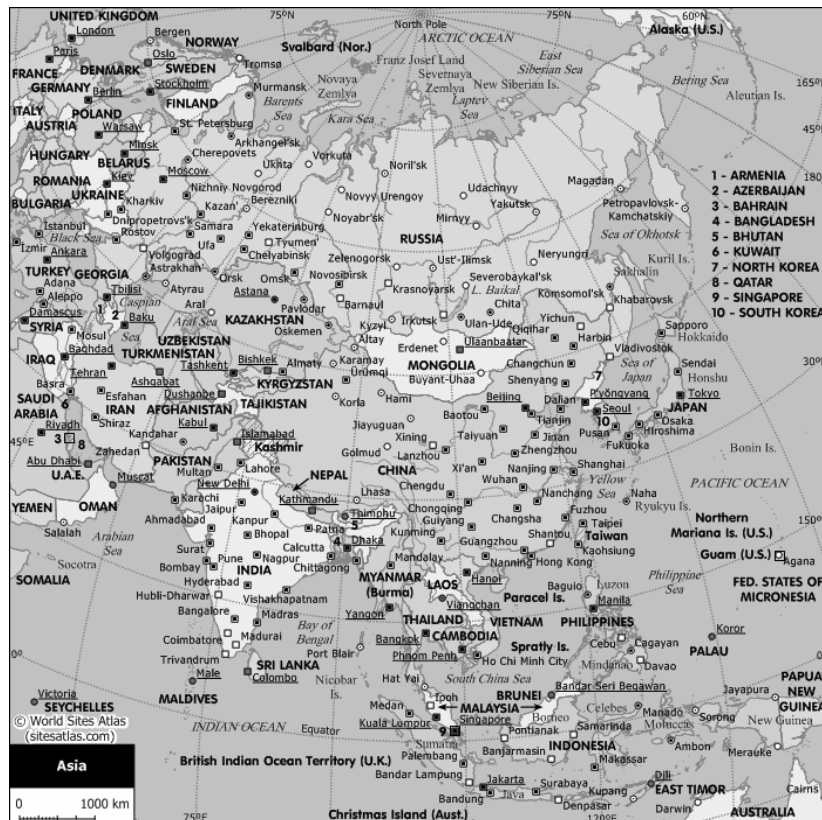
**Figure 1** Map of the world



Source: World Sites Atlas<sup>2</sup>

Lying almost entirely in the Northern Hemisphere, Asia is bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the east by the Bering Strait and the Pacific Ocean, on the south by the Indian Ocean and on the southwest by the Red and Mediterranean seas. In the west, the conventional boundary between Europe and Asia is drawn at the Ural Mountains, continuing south along the Ural River to the Caspian Sea, then west along the Caucasus Mountains to the Black Sea. Many geographers prefer to regard the landmass formed by Europe and Asia as a single continent – Eurasia. The continental mainland stretches from the southern end of the Malay Peninsula to Cape Chelyuskin in Siberia. Its westernmost point is Cape Baba in northwestern Turkey, and its easternmost point is Cape Dezhnyov in northeastern Siberia. The continent’s greatest width from east to west is about 8500 km (about 5300 mi). In Asia are found both the lowest and highest points on the earth’s surface, namely, the shore of the Dead Sea (395 m/1296 ft below sea level) and Mount Everest (8848 m/29,028 ft). To the southeast of the mainland is an array of archipelagos and islands, extending east to the Oceanic and Australian realms. Among these islands are those of Indonesia and the Philippines, Sumatra, Java, Celebes, Borneo and New Guinea. To the north lies Taiwan, the islands of Japan, and Sakhalin. In the Indian Ocean are Sri Lanka and smaller island groups such as the Maldives and the Andaman and Nicobar islands.

Figure 2 Map of Asia



Source: World Sites Atlas<sup>3</sup>

## 1 The natural environment of Asia

Unlike the other continents, Asia has an interior that consists of mountains, plateaus and intervening structural basins. The highland core, located somewhat south of the geometric centre of the continent, is composed of the Himalayas mountain system and its associated ranges and the Tibetan Plateau. Around this central core are arrayed four major plateau regions (Siberia, eastern China, southern India and the Arabian Peninsula) and several great structural basins and river plains.

### 1.1 Geological history

According to the theory of plate tectonics, the earth's surface crust consists of a number of huge continental plates and a number of equally large oceanic plates, most of which are in continuous motion. Of these, the largest is the Eurasian continental plate. Portions of this plate are composed of the most ancient rocks found on Earth, those of the Precambrian age (4.65 billion to 570 million years ago), which are found today in the Angara Shield of eastern Siberia, in much of the Arabian Peninsula and in India, south of the Indo-Gangetic lowland. During most of the Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras (570 to 65 million years ago), a huge sea known as the Tethys covered much of the interior of Eurasia and laid down thick deposits, which in time were converted into sedimentary and metamorphosed formations. Approximately 30 million years ago, the subcontinent of India, which had broken off from south-eastern Africa and drifted northeast, began to thrust under the Eurasian continental plate, creating an enormous 'deep' that later filled with sediments to form the Indo-Gangetic lowland. At the same time it generated tremendous pressure, causing the southern continental margin to crumple into a series of great mountain ranges, of which the Himalayas is the most conspicuous. The plate tectonics theory also helps explain the formation of the arcuate (arc-shaped) ranges, peninsulas, and archipelagos, as well as the volcanic activity and tectonic instability of East and Southeast Asia. In East Asia the primary force results from the under-thrusting of the westward-moving Pacific plate against the Eurasian continental plate. Japan, Taiwan, the Kuril Islands, the Ryukyus and the Philippines are products of these forces. In Southeast Asia, the situation is complicated by the relative movements of the Pacific and Indian Ocean plates, and that movement helps explain the northern-southern trending highlands of mainland Southeast Asia and the volcanic activity that characterises most of the Indonesian Archipelago.

### 1.2 Physiographic regions

Asia's physiographic system focuses on the Pamir Knot, a towering plateau region known as the Roof of the World, located where the borders of India, China, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan converge; several peaks here exceed 6100 m (20,000 ft). Spiralling out from the Pamirs to the west are the Hindu Kush and their extension across northern Iran, the Elburz Mountains, and beyond the latter the Caucasus ranges, between the Caspian and the Black seas, and the Pontic Mountains along the Black Sea in Turkey. To the southeast are the Great Himalayas, paralleled by lesser but still great ranges to the north and south of them. Together these ranges form an imposing eastern-western arc, some 2500 km (about 1550 mi) in length, containing numerous peaks of heights well

more than 6100 m (20,000 ft), including Mount Everest. To the east and northeast of the Pamirs extends the high Karakorum Range, which leads into the Kunlun Mountains, and a branch, the Altun Shan; this line of mountains continues east at lower elevations as the Nan Ling (Nan Shan) to become the Qin Ling (Ch'in Ling) of North China, which marks a major climatic divide between northern and southern China. Between the Himalayan system and the Karakorum-Kunlun ranges lies the Tibetan Plateau, which has average elevations of about 3660 to 4570 m (about 12,000 to 15,000 ft). Extending northeast from the Pamirs is the great Tien Shan, also with peaks rising above 6100 m (20,000 ft) but diminishing in height as it approaches the borders of Outer Mongolia. To the northeast, the Altai Mountains extend into Mongolia, and beyond them are the Sayan, Yablonovy and Stanovoy ranges of eastern Siberia; the last two, however, are not part of the highland core. Several major structural basins are found to the north of the central mountain core. Farthest north, located between the Tien Shan and the Altai Mountains, lies the Dzungarian Basin; to the south of this, between the Tien Shan and the Karakorum and Kunlun, lies the vast Tarim Basin in which is found one of the largest middle-latitude deserts, the Takla Makan; and embraced by the Kunlun and Altun Shan is the deep Qaidam (Tsaidam) Basin. Soil types also vary enormously. Siberia is overlain by acidic forest soils characteristic of the tundra and taiga; permafrost is common here, and drainage is usually poor. These soils merge into dark grassland, steppe and desert soils across a vast band that extends from northern China to the Black Sea and into South-west Asia; the dark steppe soils, among the most fertile in Asia, are found in north central China and south-western Siberia. In eastern and southern Asia, the most valuable soils for agriculture are the alluvial soils that have been deposited in the lower valleys of the great rivers; these soils make up most of Asia's intensively used agricultural land. In low-latitude regions are found mature tropical soils, which are of generally low fertility; these mature soils grade, to the north, into soils with a higher humus content that are somewhat more fertile.

### *1.3 The geographic regions of Asia*

Because of its vast size and diverse character, Asia is divided for convenience into six major regions. These are as follows: Asia of the former Soviet Union, including Siberia, western Central Asia and the Caucasus;<sup>4</sup> East Asia, including China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan;<sup>5</sup> South-east Asia, including Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines;<sup>6</sup> South Asia, including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan;<sup>7</sup> South-west Asia, which includes the countries of the Middle East; and Australasia (often referred to as Oceania) including Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Island Countries and Papua New Guinea.<sup>8</sup> The continent may also be divided into two cultural regions: that which is Asian in culture (East Asia, South-east Asia and South Asia) and that which is not (Asia of the former Soviet Union, and South-west Asia).<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 3** Map of major geographical areas of Asia<sup>10</sup>

Source: Asia Source<sup>11</sup>

#### 1.4 Climate

The climate of the continent is as varied as its surface configuration. Climates in Asia range from that of the equatorial rain forest to that of the Arctic tundra. For the most part, the northern part of Asia is dominated by the movement of polar continental air masses that travel from western Siberia to the northern Pacific. Winters here are long and harsh, summers are short and cool, and the annual precipitation is light. A similar climate is characteristic of the Tibetan Plateau and other uplands. The interior regions have middle-latitude desert or semiarid climates, with harsh winters and warm to hot summers, and an average annual precipitation of less than 230 mm (less than nine inches). The southern and eastern margins of the continent, however, are characterised by monsoonal air movements from the cold interior east and south in winter and from the oceans north toward the warmer land in summer. For the most part, the margins of Asia have cool to cold, dry winters and hot, humid summers, with a strong concentration of rainfall in the summer months. Although the term *monsoonal* is applied to all eastern and southern Asia's climates, the true monsoon is characteristic only of part of the Indian subcontinent and Burma; in these areas the average annual rainfall exceeds 2000 mm (more than 79 in). In other parts of southern and eastern Asia, rainfall is either less heavily concentrated in the summer or evenly distributed throughout the year. Much of eastern Asia experiences the flow of maritime air from the western Pacific in the form of a monsoon effect. In places where the mountains intervene, winter is likely to be wet, as is the case along the eastern coasts of portions of the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia,

and in parts of southern India. The coastal areas of eastern Asia are also subject to destructive typhoons, which originate in the western Pacific and the northern part of the South China Sea. South-west Asia falls into a different climatic regime, which is characteristic of much of the Mediterranean area and dominated by a high-pressure belt of dry, relatively stable air masses that move slowly from west to east, bringing winter rainfall and then passing into northern India. The average annual rainfall is light, and semiarid steppe and desert climates prevail. This climate regime extends into the north-western Indian Peninsula.

### *1.5 Vegetation*

Vegetation in Asia is extraordinarily diverse, bearing an intimate relation to the many varieties of soil and climate. In the far northern reaches of the continent, in Siberia, tundra and taiga vegetation predominate. The former consists primarily of mosses and lichens; the latter is a largely coniferous forest consisting of larch, pine, fir and spruce. South of the taiga, grasslands occur in great eastern-western bands. These blend to the south into a desert scrub where aridity increases, as in the intermountain basins of the highland core and its peripheries, and in much of South-west Asia. In South, South-east and East Asia, equatorial rain forest predominates in the lowest latitudes, where heavy precipitation is characteristic throughout the year. The luxuriant evergreen rain forest is characterised by numerous species, including teak, jackfruit, eucalyptus, oak and various species of bamboo and palm. Farther north of the equator lies a more open tropical forest, often called monsoonal, and this in turn merges to the north into subtropical evergreen forest, as in southern China and Japan. In the middle latitudes, mixed forests of deciduous and coniferous trees predominate, and these merge, to the north, with the region of coniferous forests.

### *1.6 Animal life*

The fauna of Asia is as diverse as the continent's climates, terrain and vegetation. The northern regions are rich in furbearers, such as the brown bear, otter, lynx, sable, ermine and wolf, in addition to a vast array of bird life. The steppe and semiarid regions support antelope and numerous species of burrowing animals such as hare and field mice. Freshwater fish are found in all parts of the continent, and Lake Baykal is notable for its distinctive fauna. Wild sheep and goats are found in the highlands, and Tibet is the home of the wild yak. Wildlife is scarcer in the hot dry regions of Southwest Asia and in parts of South Asia, where the most famous indigenous animal, the Asian lion, is virtually extinct. Jackals and hyenas, however, are common in these regions. In the more humid regions of eastern and south-eastern Asia, native animal life has been much diminished by centuries of human occupancy. Monkeys, however, are ubiquitous in the southern areas, and the Indian tiger is still found in small numbers in parts of South and South-east Asia. Bird life, snakes and lizards abound here, and various types of crocodiles are widely distributed. Wild apes such as the gibbon and the scarce orangutan are found in South-east Asia. Many types of deer and antelope also live in less well-populated areas such as Borneo, where flying squirrels and tree rats are numerous. Among the animals of unusual interest are the rare Southeast Asian rhinoceros, the Asian elephant, the tapir, the anteater, and the wild buffalo of India and Southeast Asia.

### 1.7 Mineral resources

Asia is enormously rich in known mineral resources, even though much of the continent – Tibet, for instance – has not yet been explored geologically. Coal exists in great abundance in Siberia and northern China, in north-eastern India, and in lesser deposits elsewhere. Petroleum and natural gas are also well distributed, but with the greatest concentrations at the head of the Persian Gulf, in parts of Indonesia, in northern and interior China, on the shores of the Caspian Sea and in the western Siberian lowland. Large offshore reserves are believed to exist as well along the coasts of China, Indonesia, Malaysia and western India. Metallic minerals are relatively scarce in Southwest Asia, except in Turkey, which is a major chromium producer. Elsewhere on the continent, metallic ores of various kinds are well distributed; China and Siberia in particular are well endowed. Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia are also extremely rich in tin, and India is rich in iron and manganese ores. Other important mineral resources include gold, silver, uranium, copper, lead and zinc; gemstones, such as diamonds, are found in Siberia, and sapphires and rubies occur in South and South-east Asia.

## 2 The socio-economic aspects of Asia

### 2.1 The people

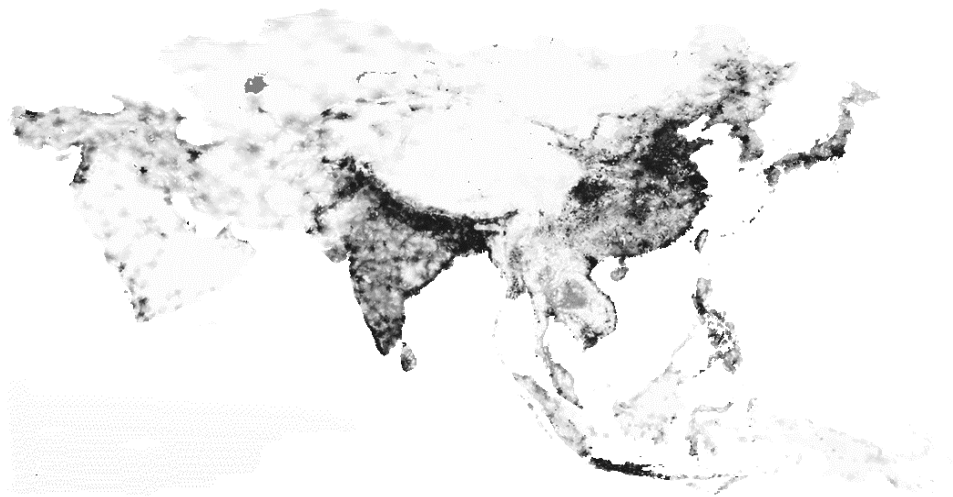
The peoples of Asia are more diverse than those of any other continent, and they are highly concentrated in a small proportion of the total area, chiefly in southern and eastern Asia. Average population densities in the northern and interior areas are low by any standard, as are those in most parts of Southwest Asia. People in these areas live in river oases, such as the Tashkent Oasis, where population densities are quite high. In Siberia, settlements are located primarily along the Trans-Siberian Railroad and its branches. In East Asia, South-east Asia and most of South Asia, people are crowded onto relatively small areas of river lowlands, where population densities often exceed 3900 persons per sq km (about 1500 per sq mi). In China, for example, 90% of the population is concentrated in the eastern third of the country. Even in highly industrialised Japan, most of the populace is concentrated in small lowlands where the largest cities are also located.

### 2.2 Ethnology and languages

Mongolian peoples are predominant in East Asia and mainland South-east Asia, but Malayo-Polynesian stock prevails in the archipelagos of South-east Asia. In South Asia, about two-thirds of the population consists of Caucasoid stocks resembling the peoples of the Middle East; Caucasoid peoples also dominate in South-west Asia and in much of Central Asia. In southern India, darker-skinned people speaking Dravidian languages are the dominant group. Mongolian peoples inhabit the Himalayan and Tibetan area and extend through Mongolia into eastern Siberia. The primary ethnic group in Siberia, however, is Caucasoid, of European origin. Ethnicity rather than race is a more meaningful approach to the population diversity of Asia. Sinitic culture, and cultures that are influenced by China but possess their own languages, is characteristic of East Asia; these peoples include the Chinese, Tibetans, Mongols, Koreans and Japanese. South-east Asia is more diversified, although peninsular and archipelagic South-east Asia is mainly

Malay, Burmese, Thai, Vietnamese and Khmer inhabit mainland South-east Asia along with a number of other ethno-linguistic groups. In South Asia, the peoples residing in the north speak a variety of Hindi-related Indo-Aryan languages; but in the south, the Dravidian languages are most important. Turkic speakers are also numerous in Central Asia and in western China, although Russian is by far the principal language in Siberia.

**Figure 4** Density of population in Asia



Source: The Asia Population Database<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3 Demography

The total population of the continent exceeds 3.2 billion. East Asia alone contains about 1.3 billion people, South-east Asia about 450 million, South Asia about 1.1 billion, South-west Asia about 200 million, and Asia of the former USSR at least 100 million. The overall population density of 71 persons per sq km (182 per sq mi) is the second highest of any continent, but the population is unevenly distributed. For the most part the people of Asia are rural dwellers, but urbanisation has proceeded rapidly in recent decades. The urban population accounts for the majority in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong. The Philippines and Malaysia also have relatively large urban populations. Except in the Sinitic world and in parts of South-west and Central Asia, the large city is an innovation associated with the expansion of European colonisation from the beginnings of the 16th century.

The margins of South and South-east Asia are dotted with large cities that developed as a result of European economic and political domination; among these are Karachi, Bombay, Goa, Colombo, Madras, Calcutta, Rangoon (Yangon), George Town (Pinang), Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, Surabaya, Manila, Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Phnom Penh and Hanoi. Only Bangkok is not a former colonial centre, but it resembles the others in most other respects. Even in China, many of the larger coastal cities were strongly influenced by the European impact. In Japan, modern urbanism was a recent phenomenon, but more than 75% of the population is now urban. In most other countries, the urban population ranges between 20% and 40%. Nevertheless, Asia



accounts for more than half the world's urban population, and that proportion will increase in the future because Asian cities are growing at twice the rate of the overall populations. The urban growth reflects both immigration and rapid population growth in most countries. The annual rate of population increase for the continent as a whole is about 1.8%. Several countries have significantly lower growth rates; these include Japan, China, Taiwan and Singapore. Although the demographic forecast is for large and rapid population increases in Asia, declining growth rates in China, the Philippines and India suggest that a population explosion is unlikely. The populations in all Asian countries are young, however, and that means continued population growth for a long period, as well as large numbers of entrants into the labour market each year in countries ill-prepared to provide them with employment.

#### *2.4 Religion*

Asia fostered all the principal religions of the world and many minor ones as well. Judaism, Christianity and Islam originated in the Middle East – occasionally referred to as South-west Asia; Buddhism and Hinduism in India; and the so-called Chinese religion, composed of Confucian and Taoist elements, as well as ancestor worship, in China. Although its historical impact, both direct and indirect, was great, Christianity is today practised by only a small number of Asians (most notably in the Philippines and South Korea). Buddhism has virtually disappeared from India but, in two quite different forms, extends through interior Asia and into Southeast Asia, where it is the main religion of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos; it is also important in Japan, Vietnam and China. Islam dominates in South-west (middle eastern countries) and Central Asia and is of major importance in South Asia, where both Pakistan and Bangladesh are predominantly Muslim. Indonesia, in South-east Asia, is also predominantly Muslim. Several South-west Asian cities are important centres of religious pilgrimage, most prominently Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.

#### *2.5 Patterns of economic development*

Most of Asia is economically underdeveloped. The majority of the continent's population is employed in agriculture, but most agricultural activity is characterised by low yields and low labour productivity. Relatively few people in Asia are employed in manufacturing. In general, urban centres and their industries are not well-integrated economically with the rural sector. Transportation systems, both within countries and between them, are poorly developed. A number of exceptions exist, and they are important. Japan has successfully modernised its economy, as have Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia and Thailand. All these have shown rates of economic growth of more than 5% per year, well beyond their rates of population growth. The South-west Asian states with large petroleum resources have also done well, although not in the distribution of income. Fueled by large-scale foreign investment, rapid privatisation and industrialisation, the People's Republic of China achieved the fastest growth rate in the region in 2004.

## 2.6 *Agriculture*

Less than one-third of Asia's land is in agricultural use. In general, the basic unit of production is the village rather than the farm. In South, South-east and East Asia, agriculture is characterised by small landholdings in alluvial lowlands, too many people in too little land, production largely for subsistence, high rates of tenancy (except in the Communist countries), a heavy dependence on cereals and other food staples and premodern technologies. Rice is the food-staple crop of South, South-east, and East Asia. It is usually grown under wet conditions. In South and South-east Asia, yields are extremely low, controlled irrigation facilities are poorly developed, and double-cropping is seldom practised. Irrigation schemes in India have helped stabilise annual yields and increase overall production. The example of Japan has shown that small farms and wet-rice agriculture can enormously increase yields and production through the introduction of new high-yielding varieties, careful water management, the application of fertilisers and the elimination of landlordism. Despite a wide distribution of new high-yielding varieties of wet rice in many parts of South and South-east Asia since the late 1960s (the so-called green revolution), production has not risen as hoped. The average rice yields in India, Thailand and Burma are only one-third that of Japan. In India, however, high-yielding varieties of wheat, developed in Mexico, have had, in certain areas, an impressive impact on wheat yields, the country's second crop. Also practised in the lower latitudes, and in marked contrast with the predominantly subsistence types of agriculture, is large-scale estate agriculture, which produces crops for export, such as rubber, palm oil, coconut products, tea, pineapples and abaca fibre. Estate production originated during the colonial period in South and South-east Asia, and many estates remain under foreign ownership and control. In East Asia agriculture is based on wet-paddy cultivation to a latitude of about 35° North in China and about 40° North elsewhere. In contrast to South-east Asia, yields here are high, double-cropping is common, irrigation is highly controlled, and fertiliser inputs are extremely high, especially in Japan. North of the Huai River in China, rice gives way to wheat and other dry grains, especially sorghum and corn, all cultivated in a form of intensive horticulture characteristic of Chinese agriculture. Although China's rural population has been organised into large managerial entities known as communes, cultivation is still basically carried out at the village level within the commune. Swine, poultry, and fish (in ponds) are raised in both the north and south where possible, but the raising of dairy and beef cattle is common only in Japan and Korea. In the drier interior regions, some dry-farming of grains is practised, and the raising of cattle, sheep and horses is important. Oasis-type agriculture is found in favoured locations in Central Asia. Dry-farming of grains, nomadic herding and some irrigated oasis-type cultivation are also characteristic of South-west Asia. For the most part, however, productivity levels are low.

## 2.7 *Forestry and fishing*

The timber industry is an important industry in most Southeast Asian countries, especially in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, teak being the most important product in the latter country. Forest gathering and shifting cultivation in forested interfluvial areas are widespread activities in South-east Asia, as they are in the more remote parts of humid South Asia and southern China. In India and China, however, the original forest cover has long since been removed in the more heavily populated areas. In

Japan, the timber industry is a major industry, and large areas of planted stands, chiefly conifer, have replaced much of the indigenous vegetation. Siberian timber reserves are enormous and have been as yet relatively little tapped, due in part to difficulties presented by the harsh climate, and in part to the predominance of larch, which is less commercially attractive than other species. Marine fisheries are also extremely important in Asia. Japan is the world's leading fishing country, and China is not far behind. The fishing industry is also important in Russia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Pisciculture, the raising of pond fish, is another important activity, especially in China. Although fishing in the poorer countries is largely for domestic consumption, emphasis has increasingly been placed on exports of dried, frozen and canned fish.

### *2.8 Mining*

Mining is an important activity in most Asian countries, and it is a major export industry in several: manganese in India; tin in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia (which, combined, produce most of the world's supply of this metal); and chromium ore in the Philippines. The most important Asian mineral export, however, is petroleum. South-west Asia contains the world's largest reserves of oil outside Russia, and most of the production is exported. Indonesia, and more recently China and Malaysia, are exporters. In South Asia modest petroleum and natural gas deposits are exploited in Bangladesh, Pakistan and off the western coast of India. Coal mining is important in China, central and eastern Siberia, north-eastern India, Iran and Turkey. Other significant mineral products include iron, manganese and tungsten in China; sulphur, zinc and molybdenum in Japan; and gold in Uzbekistan and Siberia.

### *2.9 Manufacturing*

Manufacturing is relatively poorly developed. Japan is the great exception, with a highly diversified industrial sector that employs about 25% of the labour force. Other than Japan, the three major manufacturing countries in Asia are China, Russia and India, each of which has a large manufacturing sector. Manufacturing in China is concentrated in southern Manchuria; in the ports of Shanghai, Tientsin, Qingdao, and Wuhan; and in selected interior regions where raw materials are available. China's steel production is comparable to that of Great Britain, although production on a per capita basis remains low. Manufacturing in India is heavily concentrated in and near Calcutta, in the Bombay area, in the central peninsula and in a number of other resource-advantaged areas. Manufacturing in Siberia is clustered near the Ural Mountains, near major urban areas along the Trans-Siberian Railroad, such as Novosibirsk, and near isolated centres in the Russian Far East. India is now a major industrial power, but its manufacturing sector employs only about 10% of the working population, while China's employs about 15%. Since the 1960s, industry, especially light manufacturing, has developed rapidly in such countries as Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. In other countries, industries tend to be associated with the processing of local agricultural, mineral and forest raw materials, with light manufacturing for domestic markets, and with the assembly of machinery and vehicles imported from other countries. The trend in many Asian countries is to establish manufacturing industries geared for export, thereby taking advantage of the relatively inexpensive labour. This has proven a valuable asset in

attracting foreign direct investment into the region from several multinational companies. Long seen as a very attractive measure in reducing costs, the outsourcing of manufacturing activities to Asia is proving vital for international firms facing increasing international competition.<sup>13</sup>

### *2.10 Energy*

Although overall energy production has increased greatly since the 1960s, energy consumption per capita remains extremely low in most Asian countries. The more economically developed countries have moderate to high consumption levels. These include the former Soviet republics, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Energy sources are, in many regions, dependent on local resources. In South-west Asia few alternatives to petroleum exist as an energy source. Hydroelectric potentials are immense in India, and about half of the electricity generated in that country comes from waterpower. Nonetheless, much of the energy consumed in rural India continues to be derived from the burning of dung and brushwood. In South-east Asia, oil production is substantial in certain countries such as Indonesia and Brunei, but waterpower and fuel wood are the chief domestic sources of energy. Both China and Japan have shown that small-scale hydroelectric plants can be effective providers of energy to small towns and rural areas. China is reported to have some 90,000 small run-of-stream (not dammed) hydroelectric plants in operation, chiefly in southern China, in addition to some 20 large plants. Nonetheless, coal remains China's chief energy source. In Japan petroleum is the largest energy source, and almost all of it is imported. Siberia is immensely rich in hydroelectric potentials that have only recently begun to be tapped.

### *2.11 Transportation*

In most of Asia transportation systems are poorly developed. No comprehensive continental land transportation system exists. Few railways cross international boundaries, and where they do, as between China and the former Soviet republics, they are underused. Much the same is true of roads, and, for the most part, navigable rivers are also not international routes of transportation, the Amur River between Russia and China being a major exception. Most of Asia's international transportation is by sea and air. All major Asian ports are connected with each other by both liner and tramp shipping services. Port facilities are varied, but few ports other than those in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore can handle large cargo. Singapore and Hong Kong are particularly important as entrepôts, to which small shipments are brought from a vast hinterland by small vessels and then shipped abroad. Air services link all major cities. Tokyo is the most important Asian air centre, and Bangkok is the second, by virtue of its crossroads location in South-east Asia. Domestic transportation in most countries is also limited. Rural settlements are poorly connected with one another or with larger towns. Highways are few, and rural roads are usually unpaved. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia and much of the Philippines are the exceptions. Where navigable, rivers are often the main highways of commerce. In China the Yangtze River has long been the eastern-western transportation artery, and it is connected by canal with the North China Plain. In South-east Asia the Mekong, Menam, and Irrawaddy rivers all have acted as the spatial integrators of national territories. In India, however, the rivers have been much less

important. The continent's chief transportation mode is the railroad. Japan has a dense railroad network, and China, which has the world's sixth longest railroad system, had by the mid-1970s linked all of its major manufacturing centres and provincial capitals into one vast network. Korea and Taiwan also are well served. The countries of South-east Asia, except for Thailand and Malaysia, and those of South-west Asia have railroad systems that are small and truncated. In South Asia an integrated railroad system, originally built by the British, was divided by the political separation of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Trans-Caspian and Turk-Sib railroads are the most important rail lines in Central Asia, and the Trans-Siberian Railroad and its branches, such as the Baykal-Amur line, form the main transportation system in Russian Siberia.

### 2.12 Trade

As a whole, the continent of Asia enters into world trade to a greater degree than either Africa or South America. A very high proportion of this trade is extracontinental. The important exceptions are the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to Japan; the lesser flows from Indonesia and Brunei to Japan; the trade of China with Japan and with South-east Asia; and, above all, the flow of raw materials to Japan, chiefly from South-east Asia, and the return flood of Japanese manufactured goods to South-east Asia. Japan ranks among the world leaders in the value of international trade, but only about a third of this is with other Asian countries. China and India both have a large value in international trade, also chiefly outside the continent. Malaysia and Indonesia are major traders in raw materials. In per capita terms, however, all countries other than Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, the major South-west Asian oil exporters and some former Soviet republics rank low on the world scale of international trade.

## 3 The history of Asia

While Africa, for lack of other knowledge, is generally regarded as the birthplace of the human species, Asia is believed to be the cradle of civilisation. Yet this civilisation was not one and uniform, for the sheer size of the Asian mainland made it almost inevitable that several different civilisations would arise, independent of one another.

The history of Asia can be seen as the collective history of several distinct peripheral coastal regions: East Asia,<sup>14</sup> South Asia,<sup>15</sup> and the Middle East<sup>16</sup> (often referred to as South-western Asia) linked by the interior mass of the Eurasian steppe.<sup>17</sup>

The coastal periphery was the first to be home to civilisation, with each of the three regions developing early civilisations around fertile river valleys. The civilisations in Mesopotamia,<sup>18</sup> the Indus Valley<sup>19</sup> and China<sup>20</sup> shared many similarities and likely exchanged technologies and ideas such as mathematics and the wheel. Other notions, such as that of writing, likely developed individually in each area. Cities, states and then empires developed in these lowlands.

The steppe region had long been inhabited by mounted nomads, and from the central steppes they could reach all areas of the Asian continent. The earliest known such central expansion out of the steppe is that of the Indo-Europeans,<sup>21</sup> which spread their languages into the Middle East, India, and in the Tocharians<sup>22</sup> to the borders of China.

The northern part of the continent, covering much of Siberia,<sup>23</sup> was however inaccessible to the steppe nomads due to the dense forests and the tundra.<sup>24</sup> These areas were very sparsely populated.

The centre and periphery were kept separate by mountains and deserts. The Caucasus,<sup>25</sup> Himalaya,<sup>26</sup> Karakum Desert<sup>27</sup> and Gobi Desert<sup>28</sup> formed barriers that the steppe horsemen could cross only with difficulty. While technologically and culturally the urban city dwellers were more advanced, they could do little militarily to defend themselves against the mounted hordes of the steppe. However, the lowlands did not have enough open grasslands to support a large horsebound force. Thus the nomads who conquered states in China, India and the Middle East were soon forced to adapt to the local societies.

### *3.1 Ancient civilisations*

The earliest known civilisations arose in the great river valleys of southwest Asia, northwest India and northern China, and despite their differences, all had certain common features.<sup>29</sup> All were agricultural societies that needed advanced social and political structures to maintain irrigation and flood-control systems. Raiding nomadic herders also forced the farmers in all of them to live in walled cities for defense and to entrust their protection to an aristocratic class of leaders. The invention of the plow about 3000 BC reduced the need for farm labour, freeing workers to become artisans. Increased yield from the land and the work of the artisans in turn provided trade items, and trade brought exchanges between cultures.

### *3.2 Mesopotamia*

The land that fostered the Sumer-Akkad culture of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley – that is, Mesopotamia – is often called the cradle of civilisation. By 3000 BC, the Sumerians irrigated their fields from precisely measured canals, used bronze and polished stone tools, made textiles and wheel-turned pottery, built temples and palaces, and travelled in wheeled carts and sailing ships. Their accurate calendars predicted seasons, and their cuneiform writing was an international script until the 4th century BC. They worshipped a sun god, and they lived by written laws. Although the Sumer-Akkad Kingdom fell to northern invaders, Mesopotamia remained the centre of western Asian civilisation until the 6th century BC. Most important of the later rulers were the Babylonians (circa 1900–1600 BC), the Assyrians (9th–7th century BC), and the Chaldeans (7th–6th century BC). It was the Chaldean Nebuchadnezzar II who destroyed Jerusalem and deported the Jews. (Already, however, Judaism was a major religious force.) About 1600 BC, invaders from south-western Asia and Anatolia swept into Babylonia, sometimes to destroy but overall to build and advance the civilisation founded by the Sumerians.

### *3.3 Indian civilisations*

By 2300 BC, an advanced civilisation in the Indus Valley of north-west India traded its cotton and textiles with Mesopotamia. As in Mesopotamia, irrigation produced crop surpluses and required an advanced social and political system. The two major cities, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, had straight streets lined with large, two-storey homes equipped with plumbing. The Indus peoples had written languages, used wheeled carts,

and exhibited a high level of creativity in their art, jewellery and toys. Between 1500 and 1200 BC, waves of Indo-European speaking peoples – users of horse-drawn chariots – from Central Asia destroyed the Indus cities, afterward settling in the Ganges Valley of north-east India. The oldest preserved forms of their language – an Old Indic speech – are in the Vedic Sanskrit (which flourished about 1500 BC–200 BC), in which Vedic religious scriptures were written. Between 900 and 500 BC, they settled into city-states under absolute monarchs. They depended on irrigated farming, including rice culture (possibly imported from Southeast Asia). Their Hindu religion, as embodied in the Vedas, provided for an elaborate caste system that stratified society.

### 3.4 *The roots of Chinese civilisation*

A river basin also nurtured the early Chinese. Between 3000 and 1600 BC, the Huang He (Yellow River) plain sustained large communities of farmers who raised silkworms and spun silk thread and cloth, which they sent across the camel trails of Central Asia. They had an advanced society, but written records did not appear until the 16th century BC under the Shang dynasty. The Shang ruled over a number of kings of walled city-states. They cooperated to repulse the raiding northern nomads, who then dislodged other tribes, setting off a chain of migrations such as that of the Aryans into India. The Chou, who displaced the Shang, continued the feudal organisation. Under the Eastern Chou (770–256 BC), China advanced in political, economic and social life. Chinese territory more than doubled to include south Manchuria and the Yangtze River Basin, with probably the highest population concentration in the world. The Chou used iron weapons, expanded irrigation, and built roads and canals to improve communication and commerce. An educated civil service was developed to replace hereditary officials. Three major strands of Chinese thought crystallised: Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism.

## 4 **Early cultural interaction and expansion in Asia**

In the 11 centuries from 500 BC to AD 600, the early civilisations expanded and interacted. Expansionist rulers such as Alexander the Great facilitated the cultural exchange. The aggressive Manchurian nomads also caused tribal migrations that brought masses of people into the orbit of civilisation. By AD 500 the major world religions and philosophies, with the exception of Islam, had spread far from their places of origin.

An early expansionist, Cyrus the Great, unified peoples of Iranian descent into the kingdom of Persia. He then built the Achaemenid Persian Empire (circa 550–330 BC), which spread Persian culture from the Mediterranean to the Indus River. The third Achaemenid king, Darius I, centralised the empire's government and supported Zoroastrian worship of Ahura-Mazda, god of light. By 330 BC the Persian Empire had been conquered by Alexander the Great, who dreamed of merging Eastern and Western cultures. Although Alexander's early death interrupted this plan, his generals planted Greek culture in the three kingdoms they made of his empire: this was the Hellenistic Age. The Seleucids ruled the Asian sector, which early on broke into several states. One of these, Bactria, straddled the east-west and north-south trade routes across which Chinese silk and Indian cotton travelled to Greece and Rome in return for glass, manufactured items and gold. Elements of Greek culture were channelled through Bactria

across Asia. Even after nomadic tribes from Central Asia conquered Bactria, Greek influences prevailed, for the new Kushan rulers absorbed Hellenistic culture. Throughout the 1st century AD, Greek was the international language of business and diplomacy. By this time, Hellenised Romans were entrenched in western Asia, from which the Eastern Roman Empire developed. Although Greek influences remained strong long after the Seleucids had declined, much of south-western and Central Asia and north India were actually dominated first by Parthians under the great dynasty of Arsacids (circa 250 BC–AD 226) and then by the Persian Sassanids (AD 226–651). They spread Persian culture widely. Ladies' costumes and cosmetics, for example, were copied throughout Asia, and Persian architecture, art and religion moved both east and west. Both the Arsacids and the Sassanids dominated the transcontinental trade, the terminus of which was in the Eastern Roman, later the Byzantine, Empire.

#### *4.1 The expansion of India*

North India was also conquered by Persians, invaded by Alexander the Great, and ruled by Greek kings and by former 'barbarians' from Central Asia. As international contacts grew, elements of Indian culture spread widely. Both Hinduism and Buddhism may have influenced Greek philosophers. Indians, in turn, felt strong foreign influences, as evidenced by the Greek-style Gandharan Buddha images of the Kushan period. After the Kushans conquered north India in the 1st century AD, they became Indianised, converted to Buddhism, and encouraged its growth in the Central Asian city-states and in China. Although foreigners dominated north India for long periods, two native dynasties gained imperial status – the Maurya (322–185 BC), whose greatest ruler, Asoka, sent Buddhist missionaries throughout India and Asia; and the Gupta (circa 320–c. 535), under whom Indian art, architecture and civilisation reached its pinnacle. Small native kingdoms also ruled central and south India. The Tamil peoples of the south first colonised South-east Asia in the early centuries AD. From these colonies grew the native Indianised kingdoms of Champa (modern central Vietnam) and Funan (modern Cambodia) and the lesser states of Thailand, Burma, Malaya and the Indonesian islands.

#### *4.2 The spread of the Chinese civilisation*

Ambitious emperors of the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) spread Chinese hegemony west across the wide Tarim River Basin. They built military outposts along the enlarged Great Wall and the edges of the desert to protect the long trade caravans against raiding nomad tribesmen. Persian, Arab and Indian traders frequented the Han capital, and the Eastern (Later) Han probably had direct contact with Rome. In 105 BC, the Han colonised northern Korea, and Chinese culture shaped the indigenous Korean kingdoms of Koguryo, Silla, Pakche, and Kaya. To the south, the Chinese Sinicised Vietnam, which they ruled directly for 1000 years. The Han reached new heights in literature, especially after the discovery of papermaking, and in pottery, sculpture, painting and music. Their engineers built roads and canals comparable to those of the Romans, and the prosperous urbanised society tried to live by Confucian moral ideals. As the Han declined, frontier tribesmen were emboldened in their attacks. In the early centuries AD, waves of Turkic, Mongol and Hunnish invaders set off tribal movements that pushed through Central Asia into Europe and eventually to Rome itself. Many Chinese fled south, where a Chinese state ruled by a series of dynasties formed in the Yangtze Valley. Despite



troubled times, however, Chinese civilisation advanced, with Buddhism and native Taoism the dominant religions. Although Chinese rule over Korea ended, Chinese influence remained strong during Korea's period of the Three Kingdoms (4th–7th century). The Koreans became Buddhists, and they used Chinese characters for writing and the Chinese Confucian system of government. This Chinese culture spread from Korea to the island kingdom of Japan, ruled by the Yamato clan, which traced its origins to a legendary sun god. Becoming expansionist, the Japanese conquered parts of Korea in the 4th century but were driven out again two centuries later. By that time the Japanese had embraced Buddhism.

#### 4.3 *The rise and spread of Islam*

From the 7th to the 15th century, two forces dominated Asian events: the spread of the new religion of Islam and the expansion of the Mongols, who conquered much of Asia and threatened Europe. The Mongols warred with and, on occasion, accepted and thus strengthened, Islam.

In 7th-century Arabia, the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, claimed to have received the will of Allah (God) through the angel Gabriel. Muhammad's teachings, collected into the Koran, provided the framework of Islamic governments. To spread the word of Allah, Muhammad set Arab tribes on the road to conquest. He and his successors, the Umayyad caliphs, expanded Islam from India to Spain. The Umayyads and the subsequent Abbasids presided from their respective centres in Damascus and Baghdad over the Islamic states, whose culture combined Byzantine, Persian, Babylonian and Indian elements.

A major link between them was the Arabic language, which all shared through the Koran. The later Abbasids became puppets of their Seljuk Turk soldiers from Central Asia, who threatened Christian Byzantium. Combined with the closing off of Christian holy places in Palestine, this threat touched off 300 years of Crusades, which brought great European armies to western Asia. The Crusaders failed to dislodge the Muslims, but they took back to Europe many elements of Islamic culture. When the Mongols captured Baghdad in 1258, ending the Abbasid theocracy, Islam had already taken root in India. Muslim traders introduced it in 711 to a country still suffering from the Hunnish invasions, which had been interrupted by the benevolent and cultured rule of the native Harsha (reigned 606–47). Muslim Turks and Afghans repeatedly raided India, destroying Hindu and Buddhist centres, until the foundation of the Delhi sultanate. Although slowed by Mongol invasions, the sultanate continued Muslim expansion in India.

While Muslim fanatics were nearly destroying Indian Buddhism, Indian traders and missionaries carried both Buddhism and Hinduism throughout Southeast Asia. There the kingdom of Champa fought both the Sinicised Vietnamese to their north, and the Indianised Khmers of Angkor (modern Cambodia) to their west. Angkor's advanced civilisation with its great stone temples was itself doomed to fall to the Thai, who were pushed out of South China by the Mongols. The Buddhist kingdom of Pagan in Burma felt the direct Mongol force. In Malaya and the East Indian islands, the Buddhist Sri Vijaya kingdom of Sumatra rivaled the Sailendras of Java, who were also Hindu and Buddhist temple-builders. They were followed in turn by the Indianised Singosari and Majapahit kingdoms, whose commerce by the 15th century was dominated by Indian Muslim traders. Although Malaya and the islands thus became Muslim, Buddhism

persisted in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia. Chinese Orbit and Mongol Ascendancy Islam failed to convert the countries within the Chinese orbit, possibly because China experienced a cultural renaissance under the Tang dynasty (618–906).

Chinese Tang influence reached from Japan to the Tarim Basin, where China blocked Islam. The Tang fostered Confucian government, but Buddhism flourished, spawning new sects such as the Ch'an (Zen), which appealed to the Japanese. The subsequent Sung dynasty (960–1279) was pushed out of the north by Khitan and Jurchin tribes and out of the south by Mongols. In Korea, meanwhile, the united Silla Kingdom (660–935), which was allied with the Tang, continued Korean borrowing of Chinese culture and religion. The succeeding Koryŏ dynasty (935–1392), like the Chinese Sung, was beset by Khitans and Jurchens before falling to the Mongols. As Mongol power declined, a Korean general founded the Yi dynasty (1392–1910). China's renaissance also affected the Japanese, who intensified their adoption of Chinese culture.

The 7th-century Taika and 8th-century Taiho edicts adopted Chinese government and socio-economic ideas. The court copied Chinese rituals and customs, and Buddhism spread Chinese ideas countrywide. As the provincial nobility grew stronger, the Fujiwara clan gained control. During their rule, known as the Heian period (794–1185), the Japanese court achieved an extreme of luxury, as poetry writing, music, dancing, painting, landscape gardening and perfume smelling became the primary activities of the courtiers. Ending this dilettantism, the Minamoto clan became military dictators (shoguns) and ruled at Kamakura, while powerless emperors reigned at Kyoto (1185–1333). Repulsing two Mongol invasions so weakened Kamakura that power was seized by the Ashikaga, under whom Japan fell into feudal anarchy.

The Mongols who dominated Asia for two centuries originated in the vast Asian steppe land. They came to power under Genghis Khan, who adroitly used espionage, trickery, terror and talented men of all races to conquer western and North China and parts of Central Asia. His sons and grandsons expanded the Mongol Empire into western and southern Turkestan, Iran, and Russia. After North China and Korea fell, Kublai Khan conquered the south, where he ended the Sung rule and proclaimed the Yüan dynasty (1279–1368). Mongol expeditions against South-east Asia were doomed by the tropical climate, and naval attacks against Java and Japan failed. The use of foreign officials, corruption, heavy taxes, flood, famine and banditry led to the overthrow of the Mongols by the Ming (1368–1644). During their ascendancy, however, the Mongols accelerated cultural exchanges by maintaining an open, thriving intercontinental trade and by encouraging foreigners such as Marco Polo to serve in the Mongol court in China.

#### *4.3.1 Rise of colonialism*

With the fall of the Mongols, rival Asian empires contended for power: the Ottoman Turks, the Iranians, the Mughals of India and the Chinese under the Ming and Ch'ing. The political disintegration closed over-land trade. Then, as Europe's new national states entered an era of exploration and colonialism, the Ottoman Turks cut off the western end of the sea route to the East. The resulting international competition for trade subjected Asia to European encroachment.

### 4.3.2 *Post-Mongol empires*

The Muslim Ottomans, who thus hastened European expansion, had conquered what remained of the Seljuk and Byzantine empires and moved north into Europe. They then took Constantinople, Syria, and the holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina. After 1566, however, there were few strong sultans, and as Ottoman power declined, their empire became subject to European rivalries.

Iran revived under the Safavid dynasty (1502–1736) but then became a battlefield for Turks, Russians and Afghans. The subsequent Kajar dynasty (1794–1925) was a pawn in European power struggles. As did Turkey and Iran, Muslim India experienced an early renaissance under the Mughal dynasty (1526–1858), which claimed descent from Tamerlane and Genghis Khan. Religious toleration and political unity grew during the long reign of the third emperor, Akbar. Later, however, India fell into warring Muslim, Hindu and Sikh states while weak emperors reigned in Delhi. Into this power vacuum moved the empire-building Europeans.

### 4.3.3 *Colonial expansion*

By the mid-19th century, the major colonial powers in Asia were Great Britain and Russia. The Dutch controlled the East Indies (modern Indonesia) and the lucrative spice trade, which they had wrested from the Portuguese; Spain ruled the Philippines; and the French had a toehold in Indochina. The Portuguese, who had been first to bypass the Turks by sailing around Africa, had lost most of their Asian strongholds.

Asia was torn by the rivalry between the great powers. In India, for example, during the Anglo-French wars of the 18th century, both sides used Indian soldiers (sepoys). After defeating the French in the late 18th century, the British expanded in India, annexing some states, offering protection to others, until – by 1850 – they controlled the entire subcontinent. Indian discontent with British rule exploded in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Although bloodily suppressed, the mutiny brought reforms that perpetuated British control for nearly another century. From India, the British moved into Burma and Malaya. Two Anglo-Burmese wars (1824–26 and 1852) cost Burma its seacoast. The British extended protection over Muslim states of the Malay Peninsula and took direct possession of the important trade centres of Singapore, Pinang and Malacca. Although Britain also threatened Siam, the Thai kingdom bargained its claims to several Malay states in order to retain its own independence. The French lost India, but they gained influence in Indochina. After 1400, Vietnam had broken into two states, but it was reunited in the 19th century by the southern Nguyen dynasty, which used French military assistance. The Nguyen move into Cambodia and Laos, and their persecution of Christians, led to French annexations in the south and the extension of French protection over Cambodia. Russian expansion into Asia far surpassed that of the British in area and was much earlier completed. By 1632, Russian traders and cossacks had reached the Pacific. Soldiers and officials followed, building forts and collecting tribute from native tribes. Russia advanced into Turkestan in 1750 and secured claims to the Caucasus by 1828.

## 5 Breaking down the doors in the region

China's experience with the Europeans in this period was quite different. A thriving trade between Europe and China marked both the early Ming and early Ch'ing dynasties. The early Ming added tributaries and sent great fleets as far as Africa, showing superiority over all European nations. But then they withdrew into themselves until pirates ravaged the Chinese coast while Confucianist officials bickered at court. In this crisis, a Sinicised Manchu tribe seized Beijing and proclaimed the Ch'ing dynasty. Their great emperor K'ang Hsi expanded China, met with scholarly missionaries, and welcomed trade, which grew despite China's treatment of foreigners as inferiors, confining them to Canton (Guangzhou) and Macao.

Over Chinese protests, opium became a major trade item in Canton (Guangzhou), where the British predominated. In the mid-19th century, disagreement over opium sales brought armed clashes between the Chinese and foreigners, clashes that forced China to open other ports, cede Hong Kong to Britain and Amur Province to Russia, accept Western equality, and grant other trade and diplomatic concessions. While still independent, China was humbled by the European 'barbarians'. The impact of Western trade hit Japan near the close of its anarchic Ashikaga shogunate, which was ended by a military triumvirate in 1573. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the brilliant general of the group, completed Japan's reunification in 1587 with the aid of Portuguese guns and military advice.

He then unleashed his forces on Korea, but was turned back by a coalition of Chinese Ming and Korean forces. Under the Tokugawa clan, who succeeded to the shogunate, the Japanese faced the full impact of foreign influences, which they viewed with fear and suspicion. First had come the Portuguese and Spanish, accompanied by missionaries who spread Christianity through the islands. Fearing that the missionaries were forerunners of foreign invasion, the shoguns banned Christianity, and when the Europeans ignored the ban, they were expelled from Japan. Western trade stopped, except with the Dutch, who avoided missionary activities and helped suppress a Christian rebellion. For two peaceful centuries, the Dutch were Japan's sole link to the West. Foreigners knocked vainly on Japan's door until 1854, when an American mission under Matthew Perry secured a treaty opening consular relations. In 1858, the first consul, Townsend Harris, concluded a trade treaty. Korea's Yi dynasty also shut off Western trade and persecuted Christians.

As tributary to China, Korea expected protection, but when 19th-century Europeans forced China's doors, Korea only shut its own more tightly.

### 5.1 *Imperial expansion and modernisation*

Colonialism and imperialism brought new problems to Asians, who were previously used to absorbing invaders. The new sea invaders came to trade; but as their technical and military superiority grew, they sought economic and political control.

### 5.2 *Techniques of western exploitation*

In establishing this supremacy the European colonisers generally took the gradual approach. Requests for trade were followed by demands for forts and land to protect the trade, and for concessions to exploit local resources. Government and military advisers were then pressed on local rulers. Weaker rulers were offered protection, which in time

involved some control. Sometimes, as in the East Indies, tribute was demanded, payable in trade goods. In nations such as Iran and China, rival powers carved out spheres of interest. The ultimate result was annexation and direct rule. The imperialists built railroads, roads, canals and some schools, but they also invested in plantations, oil wells and other enterprises linked with the world economy. Most of the profits went abroad. Meanwhile, population growth brought fragmentation of farms, urbanisation and demoralising social problems. Except in Japan and Siam, traditional Asian institutions were too slow in borrowing Western techniques or ideologies to prevent humiliating exploitation, unequal treaties, or foreign rule.

By World War II, nationalism and socialism had spread among the Western-educated native elite, and movements for self-government and independence emerged everywhere. The colonial governments, however, usually responded too slowly to the rising expectations these movements generated.

### 5.3 Responses to imperialism

The training of native armies and the education of an elite produced internal forces that destroyed the existing dynasties and prompted reform and modernisation. In the Ottoman Empire and Iran, for example, foreign-trained army officers seized power. They aroused nationalism and ruthlessly promoted modernisation.

## 6 The devastating tsunami of December 2004

On December 26, 2004, one of the most powerful earthquakes in history triggered a tsunami that swept across thousands of miles of shoreline in Asia, hitting India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar and Somalia.<sup>30</sup>

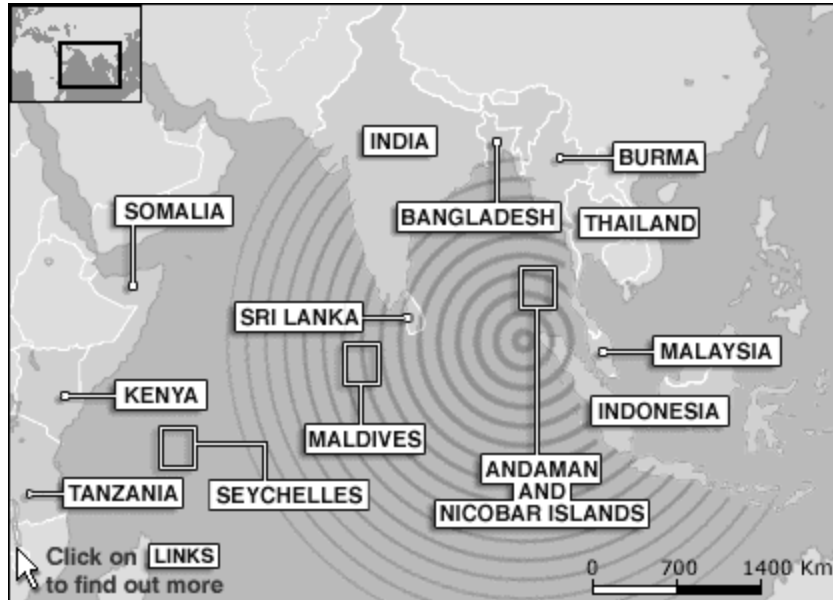
Measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, the undersea quake struck around 7 a.m. Sunday off the coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island. It was reported to be the worst earthquake in 40 years and the fifth strongest since 1900.

The death toll has passed the 100,000 mark, with a large percentage being children, and more than a million have been hurt or lost families in the disaster. Survivors and aid agencies are now struggling to move forward with recovery efforts.<sup>31</sup>

Asian officials conceded that they failed to issue public warnings that could have saved many lives. US officials said that they wanted to warn the countries but that there was no mechanism established. Many experts acknowledged the need for a monitoring system in the Indian Ocean comparable to the one in the Pacific.

Not only has there been severe devastation and loss of lives, but the impact of the disaster will have long-term issues for Asia.<sup>32</sup>

**Figure 5** Map showing the impact of the December 2004 Tsunami<sup>33</sup>



Source: The British Broadcasting Company<sup>34</sup>

## 7 International organisations in Asia

There are a number of international organisations operating in the Asian region. For a partial listing of these agencies please see Appendix 1.

## 8 Embassies, consulates and UN missions

Asia Source has compiled a comprehensive listing of Embassies, Consulates and UN Missions in Asia.<sup>35</sup>

## 9 Government directories

Asia Source also has an excellent compilation of government directories for Asia. These listings are excerpted from the 2003 Worldwide Government Directory published by The World Bureau,<sup>36</sup> a leading publisher of global government directories, both online and in print. The Directory presents comprehensive listings of government agencies and officials in 196 countries and 300 international organisations, and includes additional staff and office listings, mailing addresses, phone and fax numbers, email and internet addresses, and biographical information. The World Bureau can be reached in Washington, DC at [info@worldbureau.com](mailto:info@worldbureau.com) or 1-202-333-1010.

**Notes**

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- 2 <http://www.sitesatlas.com/> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 3 <http://www.sitesatlas.com/Maps/Maps/Asia.htm> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 4 [http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap\\_mp\\_02\\_centralasia.cfm](http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap_mp_02_centralasia.cfm) (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 5 [http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap\\_mp\\_02\\_eastasia.cfm](http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap_mp_02_eastasia.cfm) (Last Accessed June 2005).
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- 8 [http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap\\_mp\\_02\\_australasia.cfm](http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap_mp_02_australasia.cfm) (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 9 You can compare characteristics of individual countries in the region at the following URL, [http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap\\_mp\\_04.cfm](http://www.asiasource.org/profiles/ap_mp_04.cfm)
- 10 This map does not include the Middle Eastern Countries which are often referred to as South West Asia.
- 11 <http://www.asiasource.org> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 12 <http://www.grida.no/cgiar/htmls/asiademo.htm> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 13 The recent success of DuPont in China is just one example, <http://www.outsourcing-asia.com/dupont.html> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 14 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East\\_Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asia) (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 15 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia) (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 16 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle\\_East](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East) (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 17 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steppe> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 18 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamia> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 19 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus\\_Valley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley) (Last Accessed June 2005).
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- 21 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 22 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tocharians> (Last Accessed June 2005).
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- 29 A collection of links for timelines and chronologies includes country histories, significant events, and chronologies of historical individuals, <http://www.asiasource.org/features/timelines.cfm> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 30 Details of a press conference at UN Headquarters by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Envoy for Tsunami-affected countries, former USA President Bill Clinton, <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=1399> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 31 For additional information on the Tsunami and its after effects on the region, see the following websites, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/world/2004/asia\\_quake\\_disaster/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2004/asia_quake_disaster/default.stm), <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2004/tsunami.disaster/>, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tsunami/0,15671,1380306,00.html> (All Last accessed in June 2005).
- 32 [http://www.asiasource.org/news/at\\_mp\\_02.cfm?newsid=122888](http://www.asiasource.org/news/at_mp_02.cfm?newsid=122888) (Last Accessed June 2005).

- 33 This internet link provides details by individual country of the impact of the Tsunami, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/4126019> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 34 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/4126019.stm> (Last Accessed June 2005).
- 35 <http://www.asiasource.org/policy/embassy.cfm> (Last Accessed June 2004).
- 36 <http://www.worldbureau.com/> (Last Accessed June 2004).

## **Appendix 1 International Organisations in Asia**

*About Asia*, <http://members.aol.com/bowermanb/asia.html>

*Animals Asia*, <http://www.animalsasia.org/>

Asia Pacific Economic Organization, <http://www.apecsec.org.sg/apec.html>

Asia Society, <http://www.asiasociety.org/>

Asian Human Rights Commission, <http://www.ahrchk.net/>

Association for Asian Studies, <http://www.aasianst.org/>

Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/dov.nsf/0/fdaa1399f3103cd0c1256c5a002ee219?OpenDocument&ExpandSection=1>

*BBC News – Asia*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/>

International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/>

International Civil Aviation Organization Asia and Pacific Office, [http://www.faa.gov/ats/ato/150\\_docs/RVSM\\_TaskForce\\_Meetings/RVSM15/RVSM15/FINAL%20RVSM15%20Report.pdf](http://www.faa.gov/ats/ato/150_docs/RVSM_TaskForce_Meetings/RVSM15/RVSM15/FINAL%20RVSM15%20Report.pdf)

List of Research Organizations, <http://www.accessasia.org/links/organizations/alpha/index.asp>

South East Asia Treaty Organization, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast\\_Asia\\_Treaty\\_Organization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_Asia_Treaty_Organization)

UNESCO, [http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=6513&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6513&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

UNESCO Bangkok, <http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=95>

World Health Organization, <http://w3.whosea.org/>

World Health Organization's South Asia Quakes and Tsunamis, [http://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/asia\\_tsunami/en/](http://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/asia_tsunami/en/)

World Tourism Organization, <http://www.world-tourism.org/>