

## *Chapter 1*

### INTRODUCTION: GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE SUBJECT OF THIS BOOK is the evolution of the pattern and structure of world trade over the past millennium. If we used the expression “world trade” for the current year or any period in the recent past it would have a clear and unambiguous connotation. The component units would be individual sovereign nation-states and “world trade” would be the goods and services that flow between them, across national borders. The individual nation-states, or “countries,” could be classified in various ways: geographically on the basis of continent or climate zone, “stage of development” in terms of level of per capita income, or by their relative endowments of factors of production. We would then relate some classification of the commodities that enter world trade, say “primary products” and “manufactured goods” or “capital-intensive” and “labor-intensive” goods, to the geographical or other characteristics of the countries and this would constitute what is meant by the “structure and pattern of world trade.”

It is when we turn to the question of the long-run evolution of this “structure and pattern of world trade” that a host of problems arises. What are the beginning and end points over which this evolution is to be examined? What if political boundaries shift, as they undoubtedly do, so that “countries” which exist at the end point did not exist at the beginning, or which existed at the beginning did not at the end? The longer the time span chosen the more acute this problem becomes, and a millennium is a very long time. A bold solution to this difficulty was offered in an influential article by Mauro (1961), who proposed an “intercontinental model” for the study of world trade in the early modern period, in the form of an interregional input–output table or matrix that would record the flows of goods and precious metals between the continents over time. This would eliminate the problem of shifting political boundaries by replacing the evanescent nation-state with the presumably immutable geographic entity of the continent. Toward the end of his article, Mauro explicitly evoked the

invaluable work of the interwar International Scientific Committee on Price History (Cole and Crandall 1964), which collected internationally comparable price data for several countries, and expressed the hope that such a collaborative endeavor would fill in his trade matrix for the early modern period, and presumably other periods as well. While this hope has not as yet been fulfilled, we will adopt Mauro's basic organizing framework throughout this book. While not ignoring flows of goods and services within regions, our main focus throughout will be on interregional and intercontinental flows.

As Lewis and Wigen (1997) have pointed out, however, in the very title of their stimulating work, the notion of continents as fixed and self-evident divisions of the Earth's surface is itself something of a myth. They coin the useful term "metageography" (p. ix), to mean "the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world." Examples of metageography, in addition to the familiar example of the continents, would be the "North-South" division of the world between advanced and developing countries, or the First, Second, and Third World classification that was common during the Cold War. While Australasia, Africa, North and South America, and Antarctica are clearly distinct physical entities with well-defined physical boundaries, the separation of Europe from the rest of the contiguous Eurasian landmass is arbitrary and problematic. The frequently invoked Urals have never been an effective barrier, and it has long been debated whether Russia is in Europe, Asia, or both. Indeed, at the time of writing the question of Europe's eastern boundaries was one of the key political headaches confronting the leadership of that continent.

Some classification of the Earth's surface, however, is obviously essential for our purposes. Lewis and Wigen (p. 13) propose the concept of "world regions," namely "multi-country agglomerations, defined not by their supposed physical separation from one another (as are continents) but rather (in theory) on the basis of important historical and cultural bonds." In what follows we will demarcate seven "world regions" covering the Eurasian landmass and Africa north of the Sahara. These are

- (i) Western Europe,
- (ii) Eastern Europe,
- (iii) North Africa and Southwest Asia,
- (iv) Central or Inner Asia,
- (v) South Asia,
- (vi) Southeast Asia, and
- (vii) East Asia.

The regions are defined and separated not solely on geographical lines but more importantly on social, political, and cultural lines that give each of them at least a modicum of coherence and unity while distinguishing it from the others. Economic integration was more advanced within each region than between the regions, largely as a result of these political and cultural divisions: according to David Northrup (2005) the end of the first millennium marks a turning point when the forces of cultural and political divergence between world regions, as populations adapted to their local environments, began to be overtaken in importance by countervailing forces of convergence.<sup>1</sup>

We initially confine ourselves to this “Afro-Eurasian Ecumene” because our focus is on intercontinental and interregional trade, and prior to the European voyages of discovery in the 1490s the Americas or Australasia were not engaged in trade with other world regions. On the other hand, we will be considering trade flows between our seven regions and an eighth, sub-Saharan Africa, when appropriate, although without analyzing sub-Saharan Africa as a separate region. We acknowledge that the early chapters of our work are thus “Eurasia-centric,” and that this is a shortcoming, although it is an inevitable shortcoming given the limits of our knowledge.

On the other hand, our seven regions accounted for the vast majority of the world’s population in 1000, at least if the figures in the admittedly highly conjectural but nevertheless indispensable *Atlas of World Population History* by McEvedy and Jones (1978) are to be believed. The population figures we obtain on the basis of their work are 25 million for Western Europe, 15 million for Eastern Europe, 28 million for the Islamic World, 9 million for Central Asia, 79 million for South Asia, 9 million for Southeast Asia, and 67 million for East Asia (with China alone accounting for 60 million). This gives a population of 232 million for the essentially Eurasian world with which we begin our study, as compared with a world population for the year 1000 of 265 million. Our seven regions thus accounted for almost 90% of the world total at the beginning of our period. The list of “world regions” that we work with will later be augmented and adjusted in the light of the evolution of the world economy subsequent to the 1490s.

<sup>1</sup>According to Fernández-Armesto (2006), these forces of divergence and convergence have overlapped “for perhaps the last 10,000 years or so” (p. 2). Bentley (1996, p. 750) also proposes periodizing world history “by examining participation of the world’s peoples in processes transcending individual societies and cultural regions.” For him, “cross-cultural interactions proceeded according to [different] dynamics” in the centuries after 1000, which he characterizes as “an age of transregional nomadic empires” (p. 766) that eventually ushered in the modern era.

## WESTERN EUROPE<sup>2</sup>

We use this term to designate the western extremity of the Eurasian landmass, starting roughly at the eastern borders of the contemporary nation-states of Poland, Hungary, and the former Czechoslovakia, including also all the offshore islands in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean (see figure 1.1). The eastern boundary is chosen to reflect the extent of the cultural influence associated with the Roman Catholic Church and the Latin script. Thus the western Slavic nations of the Poles and Czechs are included while the eastern Slavic Russians and the southern Slavic Serbs are not. The Hungarians are also included on the basis of their religious affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church, despite their ethnic and linguistic differences from the rest of Latin Christendom. Our division of Western and Eastern Europe therefore turns on the difference between the heritages of the western and eastern branches of Christianity in the shaping of the political and social institutions of the two regions. Linguistically, our definition of Western Europe includes all Romance languages, except Romanian, all Germanic and Celtic languages, Polish, Czech and Slovak, Latvian and Lithuanian, Basque, Finnish, and Hungarian.

Geographically, this region has many natural advantages that have often been remarked upon. Perhaps the most important is the high ratio of coastline to land area, greater than for any other continent according to Rhoads Murphey (1970, p. 87). Western Europe also has the lowest average elevation and the greatest proportional extent of plains (*ibid.*, p. 90). It enjoys a relatively mild temperature in relation to latitude, due to the effect of the Gulf Stream. The Great European Plain that stretches unbroken from the Atlantic to the Urals has long been highly fertile and productive. The many rivers, draining into the Baltic, the North Sea, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean, have kept transport costs low and market areas connected. The mountain ranges that form the central spine of the peninsula provide valuable woodland and pasture for livestock in the high valleys, and are traversed by accessible passes that connect the shores of the Mediterranean in the south to those of the Baltic and the Atlantic in the north. At the same time, Eric Jones (2003) has observed that there are a sufficient number of natural barriers within the region—the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the English Channel, to name but three—to make its political unification

<sup>2</sup>Sources for this section include Barraclough (1976), Bartlett (1993), Becher (2003), Boussard (1976), Collins (1991), McCormick (2001), McEvedy (1961), McKitterick (1995, parts I and II), Murphey (1970), O'Brien (2002), Reuter (1999, parts I and II), and Riche (1993).



FIGURE 1.1. Western Europe.

militarily difficult. Finally, Murphey (p. 90) notes that Western Europe is “the tip of the great triangle formed by Eurasia as a whole” and is the “point of the land funnel” along which influences of all kinds can flow from east to west.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>On this last point, see Diamond (1997).

Historically, the region has been shaped by the inheritance of the cultural, legal, and administrative institutions of the Roman Empire and the doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church, not only in the southern areas of direct Roman rule but also as they were absorbed by the northern Germanic tribes that overran the empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, as well as by regions that had never been part of the empire in the first place, notably Ireland, Scotland, and Scandinavia. This fusion of the “southern” legacy of late antiquity with the energy and warlike prowess of the northern invaders resulted eventually in the establishment of the Carolingian Empire that extended from the Atlantic and the Pyrenees to the Elbe and the Danube, in other words most of continental Western Europe as we have defined it, except for the Iberian and Scandinavian Peninsulas. This political unity, marked by the crowning of the Frankish ruler Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor by the pope in 800, did not last long, however, and the empire disintegrated into competing kingdoms and principalities.

Charlemagne's grandfather was Charles Martel, the Merovingian “mayor of the palace” who defeated an invading Arab force from Spain at the Battle of Poitiers in 732, marking the limit of their penetration into Europe. His father was Pepin the Short, who deposed the last Merovingian king in 751 and took the Frankish crown for himself. Charlemagne succeeded Pepin as king of the Franks in 768. The new ruler undertook a series of aggressive military campaigns against the Saxons, forcibly converting them to Christianity, and the Avars, nomadic invaders from Central Asia who had established a base in central Europe. The Avars were utterly destroyed and their enormous hoard of looted treasure distributed to the church and his followers by Charlemagne. An appeal from the pope for help against the Lombard king of northern Italy led Charlemagne to cross the Alps and depose the Lombard ruler, after which the grateful pontiff crowned Charlemagne as king of the Franks and Lombards and emperor of the Romans. After Charlemagne's death in 814 the empire was ruled somewhat precariously by his son Louis the Pious until his death in 840, at which time the empire passed to his eldest son Lothar, whose claim to the undivided territory was vigorously challenged by his brothers Charles the Bald in the west and Louis the German in the east. The younger brothers joined forces to defeat Lothar decisively at the Battle of Fontenoy in 841, compelling him to divide the empire between all three of them, while he retained the imperial title.

This division of Charlemagne's empire into three contiguous vertical north–south blocks by the Treaty of Verdun in 843 is often taken as

marking the beginnings of the subsequent nation-states of France in the west and Germany in the east, providing the “birth certificate of modern Europe” as Riche (1993, p. 168) eloquently puts it. The central band, stretching from the North Sea to Italy, was the territory that went with the imperial title to Lothar. The Carolingian line eventually died out, to be replaced in France by the dynasty of the Capetians in 987, and in Germany by the Ottonians of Saxony.

At its height the dimensions of Charlemagne’s empire were undeniably impressive. According to Becher (2003, p. 118) it encompassed 1 million square kilometers with 180 dioceses, 700 monasteries, 750 royal estates, 150 palaces, and nearly 700 administrative districts. Given the available technology and resources, however, it was impossible to impose any unified central administration over such a vast domain. The court could not remain permanently in the capital at Aachen and wandered peripatetically from place to place throughout the year. The administrative districts were under counts, with dukes sometimes overseeing groups of counties. Central control was attempted through the dispatch of royal emissaries, known as *missi*, while diplomatic correspondence and administrative records were in the hands of clerics in the royal chapel. After the breakup of the empire toward the close of the ninth century the various dukes and counts, and even lower-level local leaders, increasingly began to govern independently, tied together only by the looser bonds of feudal vassalage. This tendency was particularly marked in the western sections of the empire, what is now France.

In the eastern or German section of the empire, the unity of the state was preserved to a much greater extent. Here the last Carolingian died in 911, to be replaced from 918 as king by Henry, duke of Saxony, who founded the Ottonian dynasty that lasted until 1024. The German kingdom in this era was a sort of federation of a few great duchies, such as Saxony, Bavaria, Franconia, Thuringia, and Swabia. The ducal ruling houses, as Barraclough (1976, p. 111) noted, were mostly descended from the commanders of imperial frontier armies, with a tradition of loyalty to central authority. They were willing to elect or nominate one among them to be somewhat more than “first among equals” in their own collective interest against barbarian and other enemies. During the long reign of Otto the Great (936–73), the German kingdom was established as clearly the most powerful state in all of Europe, with military victories over the eastern Slavic tribes as well as (and in particular) the Hungarians, who had been ravaging all the settled lands around them for decades, at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955.

Like Charlemagne, Otto also invaded Italy to protect the pope and was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome in 962, a title that survived

until it was abolished by Napoleon in 1806. Despite its prestige, in practice this title did not imply much more than the addition of northern Italy to the territories that Otto and his successors ruled in their native land, and considerable influence over the other states and cities in both Germany and Italy. In addition it involved them in a lengthy and exhausting struggle with the papacy over the investiture of bishops and other issues involving the “separation of church and state.”

Despite the glamor of these Italian incursions, the main thrust of the Ottonians was their relentless pressure and expansion on the open plains to the east against the pagan Slavic tribes. Just as the Franks had done to the Saxons themselves two centuries earlier, the Saxons followed a policy of conquest and forced conversion of the Slavic tribes in their way. The frontier was extended eastwards by the establishment of fortresses and garrisons along the “marches,” and also by episcopal foundations, the most important of which was at Magdeburg. A great uprising of the Slavs in 983 halted the expansion temporarily, but it was resumed after a generation. Support of the church was a major political technique of the Ottonians, enhancing their power not only on the frontier but also within the duchies themselves. Otto the Great’s grandson, Otto the Third, died in 1002 at the age of 21 before his grandiose plans for a reunification of the eastern and western empires and churches through marriage to a Byzantine princess could be realized. The power and prestige of the Ottonians was maintained and preserved by the succeeding Salian dynasty, starting in 1025.

A notable development of the tenth century, reflecting the success of the Ottonians, was the adoption of Roman Catholic Christianity by the western Slavic peoples of Bohemia and Poland and by the previously nomadic Hungarian invaders soon after their defeat at Lechfeld. The Czechs of Bohemia, inhabiting the valley of the Vltava, a tributary of the Elbe, converted under German pressure early in the tenth century, with a bishopric established later at their capital Prague. Bohemia functioned henceforth as a duchy of the German Empire, closely related to Bavaria. The Polish ruler Mieszko the First, of the Piast dynasty, converted in 966 and shrewdly placed his realm under the protection of the Holy See to prevent complete German domination. His successor, Boleslaw Chrobry, the “Brave,” expanded the domain in all directions against other Slavic peoples, while maintaining generally good relations with the empire. Otto the Third assisted him in the establishment of the capital Gniezno as an archbishopric in 1000. The year 1000 also saw the crowning of the future Saint Stephen as king of Hungary, after his conversion together with his father Géza in 995,

followed by the establishment of an archbishopric at Esztergom. Thus by the year 1000 the eastern limits of Roman Catholic Christianity had just about been reached, with only the Prussians, Balts, and Finns still awaiting conversion.

We now look northwest to the British Isles, separated from the mainland by the North Sea and the English Channel, and consequently undergoing a development somewhat different in character but nevertheless reflecting the same broad historical processes. England had been incorporated into the Roman Empire since the first century B.C., with Hadrian's Wall separating it from the Picts in Scotland. The country experienced intensive Roman influence marked by a network of roads and flourishing urban centers such as London and York. By the early fifth century, however, Rome had withdrawn its legions and the island was invaded and occupied by Angles and Saxons from German, and Jutes from Danish, homelands. The native Britons were driven into Wales and other western regions or across the Channel to Brittany. By the close of the sixth century England was effectively divided into about a half-dozen contending Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

Although the invaders were pagans, a Christian presence remained in the western fringes of the British Isles, and particularly in Ireland, which had been converted by missionaries from Roman Britain such as Saint Patrick. The roles were reversed in 563, when the Irish Saint Columba arrived on the isle of Iona in Scotland. From this base Celtic missionaries evangelized in Scotland and northern England, establishing such centers as Lindisfarne in Northumbria in 635. This relatively prominent role for what was subsequently to become something of a backwater was reflected in the fact that Ireland was probably the leading European book producer, in per capita terms, during the eighth and ninth centuries (Buringh and van Zanden 2006). Crucial in reestablishing English links with continental Europe, however, was the decision by Pope Gregory the Great in 597 to send a mission, headed by a monk named Augustine, to bring England back to the Christian faith. An early success was the conversion of the pagan king of Kent, possibly influenced by the fact that he was married to a Frankish Christian princess. Augustine became the first archbishop of Canterbury, and all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were converted to Christianity by 686.

The eighth century saw these kingdoms prospering from the expansion of trade in the North Sea and Baltic regions. The extent of the wealth generated by trade, tribute, and plunder accruing to these Anglo-Saxon kings can be gauged by the sumptuous treasures excavated in 1939 at the famous ship burial of one of them at Sutton Hoo. The Christianity professed by all of these rulers did not prevent

them from waging relentless war against each other, ending in the establishment of the “Mercian Supremacy,” the hegemony of the central kingdom of Mercia over all the others, for much of the eighth and early ninth centuries. King Offa, who ruled from 757 to 796, was notable for the volume and quality of his coinage, the scale of his public works such as the famous Offa’s Dyke that he erected as a barrier against the Welsh, and the trade treaty that he negotiated with his great contemporary Charlemagne, who treated him as an equal. The level of culture attained by Anglo-Saxon England in this period is indicated by the “Ecclesiastical History of the English People” written by the Venerable Bede around 730, and the career of Alcuin of York, another great scholarly cleric.

The ninth century saw England ravaged by the Danish Vikings, who began by raiding monasteries and coastal towns before occupying extensive territory in the northeastern part of the country, which came to be known as the “Danelaw,” with the capital at York. They met stubborn resistance by the English led by King Alfred of Wessex (871–99). He eventually defeated the invaders and confined them by treaty to the Danelaw. His successors eventually recaptured all of the lost areas and by 1000 ruled over a unified England. The Danish king Harold Bluetooth had meanwhile converted to Christianity in 965, followed soon after by Olaf Trygvason of Norway and Olof Skötkonung of Sweden. The Danes returned in force to England soon afterwards and Harold’s grandson Canute ruled England from 1016 to 1035.

What this brief synopsis has attempted to demonstrate is the emergence of the entity that we are calling Western Europe from a fusion of the legacy of the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church with that of the Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic tribes. This fusion is well illustrated by the career of the aforementioned Alcuin, educated at the cathedral school in York, who met Charlemagne in Parma in 781 while the latter was on his way to Rome. Alcuin became Charlemagne’s most influential adviser, and while abbot of Saint-Martin of Tours worked to promote a standardized version of written Latin, the Carolingian minuscule. This provided a means for information to be communicated and stored across the Carolingian Empire, allowing for the more efficient diffusion of both religious and secular knowledge across Western Europe (Blum and Dudley 2003). The process that began with the conversion of the Frankish king Clovis around 500 was brought to a close with those of the Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and Scandinavians in the last century of the first millennium.

## EASTERN EUROPE<sup>4</sup>

The western borders of this region, for our present purposes, will approximately coincide with those of the contemporary states of the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Ukraine, together with the Balkan Peninsula (see figure 1.2). The major formative cultural influences on the region were the Byzantine Empire and the Greek Orthodox Church, so we will also include the entire area of the present state of Turkey, which constituted the core area of the empire, with its capital at Constantinople (now Istanbul). The eastern borders, with the neighboring world region of Central or Inner Asia, will be shifting with the frontier between the settled agriculture of the Russians on the one hand and the forest zone of the northern hunter-gatherers and the steppe of the pastoral nomads on the other, altering with the balance of military power. As defined it is a very large continental area with wide extremes of temperature. It is marked by major, partly navigable rivers such as the Don, the Dnieper, and the Volga, which drain into the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The main mountain ranges other than in the Balkans are the Urals and the Caucasus, bridging the isthmus between these two inland seas.

The first Russian state was the so-called Kievan Rus, a loose federation with its capital at Kiev. The Rus were Scandinavian Vikings, drawn to the east by the prospects of booty, mercenary military service, and the trade in furs, amber, and slaves for luxury products and silver from Byzantium and the Islamic World. They formed a small warrior aristocracy ruling over a mass of Slav peasantry. Between Kiev and the northern principality of Novgorod the Rus maintained a profitable monopoly of the trade routes linking the Baltic to the Black Sea and the Caspian along the rivers and the portages between them. The Rus always had to contend, however, with powerful steppe nomadic peoples such as the Bulgars, Pechenegs, and Khazars for control over these trade routes, and they also had to protect their own sedentary agricultural populations from these predators.

The Russians and other Slavic peoples were initially barbarians on the northern fringes of the Byzantine Empire. By the familiar logic of acculturation they fell under the cultural sway of the more advanced civilization. The Serbs and the Bulgarians in the Balkans were converted in the eighth and ninth centuries and the Kievan Rus Prince Vladimir was baptized and married the sister of the Byzantine emperor

<sup>4</sup>Sources for this section include Christian (1998, chapters 13 and 14), Franklin and Shepard (1996), Hoetzsch (1966, chapter 1), McEvedy (1961), Obolensky (1957), O'Brien (2002), Reuter (1999, part III), and Vernadsky (1948).



FIGURE 1.2. Eastern Europe.

in 988, a date that is even more significant than 1917 in Russian history. Vladimir's dynasty was that of the Rurikovich, descendants of the possibly mythical Viking Rurik of Novgorod, the earliest trading center of the Scandinavians in northern Russia. The first ruler of Kiev was a certain Oleg (882–912), who laid siege to Byzantium in 907 and 911. Although he did not take the city he did obtain notable trading concessions from the empire. The successor to Oleg as the ruler of Kiev was Prince Igor (912–45), a member of his retinue. Despite his operatic fame, Igor's reign did not produce any lasting accomplishments. His son Svyatoslav was an infant when Igor died in 945 at the hands of rebellious tribesmen and the state was ruled by the royal widow, Olga, until the young prince came of age in 962. Olga proved to be a

sagacious and formidable ruler, suppressing the tribe responsible for Igor's death and reforming the tribute collection system on a more centralized basis. She personally converted to Christianity on a visit to Constantinople but insisted on independence for the Kievan church before adopting it as the national religion. The Byzantines balked, prompting her to negotiate unsuccessfully with Otto the Great for the adoption of Roman Catholicism instead. Svyatoslav (962–72) was a staunch pagan and his reign was a whirlwind of military activity in all directions. He destroyed the prosperous and influential empire of the Khazar steppe nomads and intervened actively in Bulgaria and the Balkans both in alliance with and against the Byzantines. He was ambushed and killed by the Pechenegs while returning laden with booty from his Balkan conquests to Kiev.

At the time of Svyatoslav's death his three sons were serving as his lieutenants in key cities and regions. Vladimir, based in Novgorod, prevailed over his brothers with the aid of Viking and Turkish mercenaries in the ensuing struggle for power. He continued his father's support of paganism even though Christianity was spreading among the people. He eventually realized that paganism had no future and apparently considered Islam and Roman Catholicism along with Orthodox Christianity as possible choices for the future state religion. The matter was finally settled when the new Byzantine emperor Basil II (976–1025) urgently requested military assistance from Vladimir against an internal revolt. The inducement was marriage to his sister Anna, provided of course that Vladimir agreed to be baptized. In the royal marriage market of the tenth century a Byzantine *porphyrogenita* such as Anna was a prize catch. She had even been denied to Otto the Great as a bride for his son, the future Otto II, who had to accept another princess not "born in the purple." Vladimir sent a detachment of his Vikings to Constantinople and they promptly suppressed the rebellion. Basil now attempted to renege on the agreement and had to be persuaded by Vladimir's seizure of the strategic port city of Kherson in the Crimea before he dispatched the royal bride for the conversion and marriage, after which Kherson was returned to him by Vladimir as a "bridegroom's gift." Vladimir's conversion, which amounted to that of the entire Rus nation, thus set the seal on the series of such events in Scandinavia, Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary that were one of the most remarkable features of European history in the late tenth century. Vladimir embarked on an extensive program of church building, charitable works, and promotion of education. He died in 1015 and was canonized in the thirteenth century.

Another powerful early state in Eastern Europe was the Bulgarian Empire that mounted a serious challenge to Byzantium itself, even

though its church organization and literary culture were completely derivative from that source. The Bulgars were a Turkic people, a branch of which had settled in the lower Danube basin, dominating the local Slavic peasantry. Under the pagan Khan Krum in 811 they defeated a Byzantine army and killed the emperor, making a drinking cup out of his skull. Krum and his successors conquered much of the Balkans, though checked in the west by the Germans and the Serbs. The cultural attraction and the political and military influence of Byzantium proved too strong, however, and under Boris I (852–89, died 907) the Bulgarians converted to Christianity in 869. A major later consequence of this decision was the adoption by Bulgaria of the Cyrillic script and Slavonic liturgy devised by the monks Cyril and Methodius, originally for the Czech state of Moravia, which, however, rejected it in favor of the Latin liturgy. Moravia's loss was the gain not only of Bulgaria but also of all the Slavic Greek Orthodox Churches, since it gave them linguistic independence from the Greek of Byzantium itself, a political asset of considerable value. This Cyrillic script used by all the Orthodox Slavic peoples, in contrast to the Latin of their western cousins, is a cultural difference between them that has persisted to this day. Despite these conversions, conflict in the Balkans and southern Russia was intense, not only between Orthodox Christians themselves but also with Germans and Poles in the north and west, and with pagan and Muslim nomadic peoples in the east.

Boris I conquered Macedonia and secured an opening to the Aegean Sea in the west of the Balkan Peninsula. His son Simeon I ruled from 893 to 927 and his reign is regarded as the apex of the country's history. He declared himself tsar of the Bulgarians and the Romans, i.e., a rival to the Byzantine emperor. He besieged Constantinople several times but never succeeded in capturing the great city. The Byzantines kept Simeon and his successors in check by inciting incursions by the Hungarians, Pechenegs, and Russians into Bulgarian territory. Basil II, the emperor who converted Vladimir, inflicted a crushing defeat on them in 1018, earning himself the designation of the "Bulgar-Slayer."

We have thus seen that by the year 1000 the Byzantine Empire had firmly established its Eastern European successor states in Russia and Bulgaria. Serbia had already entered the fold in the ninth century while neighboring Croatia went into the orbit of Rome, a dividing line that has persisted to this day. We now turn to the emergence of what can also be thought of as another successor state, though of a wholly different kind, the Arab caliphate.

## NORTH AFRICA AND SOUTHWEST ASIA: THE ISLAMIC WORLD<sup>5</sup>

This is the region generally known today as the Middle East (see figure 1.3). It is the classic core area of the Islamic World, which is a designation that we will also use when there is no danger of ambiguity. It comprises the southern littoral of the Mediterranean, the so-called Fertile Crescent of the Nile Valley, the Levant and Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian plateau, and Afghanistan. A high proportion of the land area of the region is arid or semiarid, with a pronounced scarcity and irregularity of rainfall. The valleys of the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates, on the other hand, have been fertile and productive agricultural areas for millennia. The pure deserts have been uninhabited but the semidesert zone has supported pastoral nomadism, also for millennia. The region's most valuable natural asset, however, was its location relative to the other world regions, particularly prior to the European voyages of discovery. Europe was just across the Mediterranean, only a very short distance at the Straits of Gibraltar; Iran and Afghanistan were in direct contact with Central Asia and hence with the overland trade routes to China; India was reachable by sea, as well as overland along the Makran and Baluchi coasts to the mouth of the Indus, and through the Khyber Pass; spices from the Indonesian archipelago and Chinese products could be brought to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea and either consumed or passed on to Europe at a profit; gold from West Africa could be exchanged for salt in the trans-Saharan caravan trade to circulate within the Islamic World or be exported to Europe or Central Asia.

The rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula and the subsequent rapid Arab conquest of the entire region in the seventh century was clearly one of the most decisive events in world history. The Islamic religion and the Arabic language with which it is indissolubly linked served as a powerful unifying cultural force from the Atlantic coast to the Himalayas. The heritage of classical antiquity and Byzantine and Sassanian methods of administration and statecraft were adopted by the new Islamic dynasties. The fusion of Arabic and Persian culture formed a creative new synthesis that influenced all walks of life. New crops and ideas were introduced from India and Southeast Asia. Just as Christianity civilized Germanic and Slav tribes, so did Islam with the Turks of Central Asia, who increasingly took over the military function in the Islamic states.

<sup>5</sup>Sources for this section include Fletcher (1992), Hourani (1991, part 1), Kennedy (1986), Lewis (1993), McEvedy (1961), O'Brien (2002), de Planhol (1959), Robinson (1996), and Shaban (1976, 1978).

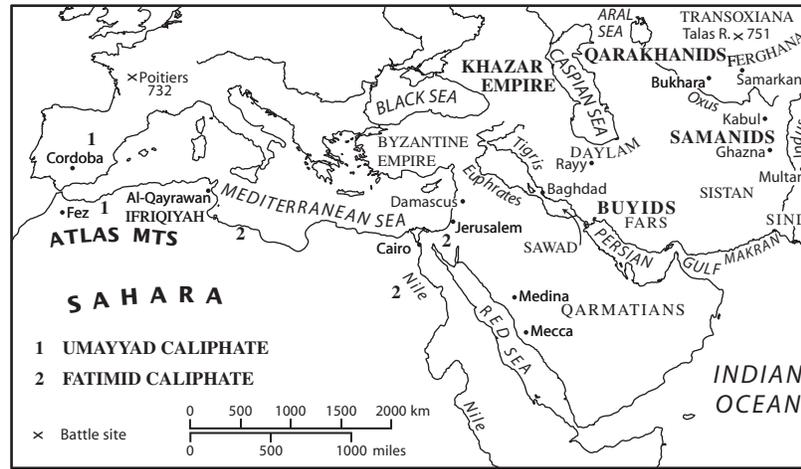


FIGURE 1.3. The Islamic World.

The early conquests were consolidated and extended by the Umayyad caliphate, which ruled from Damascus, the capital of the Islamic World from 661 to 750. It is possibly the oldest city in the world and was a provincial capital for most of the ancient empires up to the Byzantine. Situated east of the mountain of Jabal Qasiyun—from which descend streams that watered the lush oasis of al-Ghutah that served as a market garden of the city, with a rich variety of fruit trees, and close to a plain that could provide the crops to feed it—Damascus must also have appealed to the Umayyads on strategic and economic grounds as a crossroads of the caravan trade. They fortified the ancient citadel and constructed the architectural masterpiece of the Great Mosque on the site of the Christian cathedral. Ashtor (1976a, p. 13) cites an estimate that the Arab population of Syria in 720 was about 200,000 out of a total of about 4 million, or roughly 5%. The population of Damascus was said to have been 100,000 in 1350, when it “was well past its peak” (Watson 1983, p. 133). The peak must have occurred during the reigns of Abd al-Malik and his successors al-Walid (705–15) and Hisham (724–43), under whom the administration became more centralized along with the coinage, with Arabic becoming the language of the civil administration.

Despite intense internal conflicts, the Islamic World thrived economically, with a wide variety of new crops being introduced from the east, leading to the growth of large new towns, from Cordoba in Spain to Al-Qayrawan in Tunisia and Cairo in Egypt, while Damascus

continued to expand. Arab armies advanced across the Oxus into Central Asia, occupying Bukhara and Samarkand in 710, defeating a Tang Chinese force at the Battle of the Talas River in 751, and entering the Ferghana Valley, the easternmost point of their advance. The Indian province of Sind was also conquered early in the eighth century, with Multan in the Punjab taken in 711. All of these areas were in addition to the initial acquisition of about two-thirds of the Byzantine Empire and the entire territory of the Persian Sassanian dynasty. The Arabs also controlled the southern half of the isthmus between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, including the towns of Tiflis and Derbent. The empire in 750 thus stretched from Agadir on the Atlantic coast to the Oxus in Central Asia and the Indus in India.

It was clearly impossible to establish any sort of unified administration over such an extensive terrain. But how was control to be exercised over the conquered lands? One possibility was to disperse the Arab rulers among the local populations, allowing them to extract taxes individually for their maintenance and support. Had such a course been followed it is likely that the Arab elite would eventually have been absorbed socially and culturally into the diverse communities over which they ruled, as happened to ruling-class Vikings in Normandy or Russia. The second caliph, Umar (634–44), made the far-reaching alternative decision of concentrating the Arabs in fortified garrison cities, maintaining themselves out of cash stipends or *ata*, paid out from the central treasury to which all taxes on the subject peoples were transmitted. Since Muslims were exempted from most taxes, this created an ambivalent attitude toward conversion on the part of the Arab conquerors. Local communities were thus relatively free to run their own affairs without bureaucratic interference, provided of course that they paid the *jizya* (poll tax), imposed only on non-Muslims, and the *kharaj* (land tax). The system could work well because the former Byzantine and Sassanian lands were already monetized under their previous rulers. Another major advantage was that by clustering together in their garrison cities the Arabs maintained their own language and culture, which were gradually acquired by the subject peoples instead. The disadvantage was that the new Arab ruling elite was in danger of becoming pure *rentiers*, except when they were called upon to fight against internal revolts or external invaders. Eventually, this crucial military function was increasingly turned over to specialized military slaves of Turkic or other foreign origin, with very adverse consequences for the caliphate.

In 750 the Umayyad caliphate was replaced after a violent overthrow by the Abbasids, who altered the Arabic tribal character of the regime in

the direction of a more formal, bureaucratic, and centralized Persian model. They also gave more scope to the substantial population of converts, the *mawalim*, who were strongly represented in the urban mercantile and artisan classes. There was a notable acceleration of economic activity as a result and less emphasis on conquest and military operations. The second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (754–75), founded the city of Baghdad to serve as the capital of the new dynasty. Al-Mansur, his son al-Mahdi (775–85), and grandson Harun al-Rashid (786–809) were all able rulers, assisted by an efficient *kuttab* or secretariat, prominent among whom was the Iranian family of the Barmakids. The civil and military establishments were kept firmly apart. The Sawad, the fertile region around Baghdad, yielded substantial revenues on the basis of direct taxes on the value of agricultural output at rates of a third to a half, and Egypt was also a major contributor. These revenues enabled adequate military forces to be maintained to preserve internal order and to fight the Byzantines. The very success of the Barmakids in swelling the state coffers, however, and their own lavish lifestyle made them greatly resented by traditional interests and the family was sacrificed and its leader brutally executed by Harun in an effort to placate the opposition.

The horizon darkened with the succession crisis following the death of Harun in 809. He was succeeded by his son al-Amin, with the next in line supposed to be a slightly younger son al-Ma'mun, who was made the governor of the eastern region of Khurasan and other Iranian provinces. The brothers and their partisans soon fell out, however, and a bloody civil war ensued during which Baghdad itself was besieged for over a year by troops of the eastern faction of al-Ma'mun, after which al-Amin was executed by one of his brother's supporters in 813. Al-Ma'mun was obliged to reward the general Tahir, who commanded the contingents that brought him to power, with what amounted to independent and hereditary rule over Khurasan, though with the acknowledgement of Abbasid suzerainty.

The next caliph, al-Mu'tasim (833–42), abandoned Baghdad and built an extensive new capital at Samarra further up the Tigris, which held that position until Baghdad was restored in 889. Al-Mu'tasim was in part motivated by the desire to set up his "new model army" of Turkish and other *ghulams* in a location that permitted them to acquire land and other property, such as commercial concessions, in a setting free of the baggage of past associations in Baghdad. This professional standing army was intended to replace the original militia of Arab and Iranian part-time soldiers, the *Khurasaniyya*, upon which the regime had previously relied as its main military arm. The

stipends that this group continued to draw as rewards for past service were abolished as part of a far-reaching military and fiscal reform. A new orthodoxy in religion was also imposed, holding that the Qur'an (Koran) was "created" and therefore subject to changing interpretation rather than being the unchanging and eternal word of God.

After the death of al-Mu'tasim in 842 the Abbasid regime had some brief periods of achievement and success, but the long-term trend was downward. The main reason seems to have been the difficulty of raising or even maintaining the revenue necessary to preserve the integrity of the state. Hugh Kennedy (1986, p. 189) states that the Sawad generated 100 million dirhems a year in revenue under the early Abbasids up to the reign of al-Ma'mun, but this fell to a mere 30 million a year under al-Muqtadir in 918. There were other prosperous regions such as Egypt and Fars but the center did not have access to these resources, which were largely under the control of local powers. The final blow to the prosperity of Iraq came when the great Nahrwan canal, the main source of water to the Sawad, was deliberately cut by a feuding warlord in 937 in an attempt to impede the march of a rival, thereby ruining the work of centuries (*ibid.*, p. 199).

The tenth century also saw the caliphate fall under the "protectorate" of an Iranian warlord clan known as the Buyids (941–1055) because of their descent from a humble fisherman from the Caspian Sea area who went by the name of Buyeh. The three brothers who founded the fortunes of the clan came to power separately in Fars, Rayy, and Baghdad itself, but pooled their assets in a sort of family federation with each supporting the others. The basis of their power was the armies that they built up of infantry from their home area of Daylam, south of the Caspian, and mounted Turkish *ghulams*. This enabled them to control the Abbasid caliphs in conjunction with allies from the secretarial class, although the Abbasids continued to be maintained as spiritual figureheads. Despite being the "protectors" of a Sunni Arab caliphate, the Buyids had pro-Shia religious sensibilities and displayed an affinity to native Persian and Sassanian royal practices, thus enhancing the Persian cast that the Abbasids themselves gave to their own regime. Buyid officers were granted *iqtas*, lands from which they could enjoy the revenues in return for military service, thus creating a sort of feudalism, with their own role being like that of the Merovingian mayors of the palace or the later *shoguns* of Japan. On the whole their regime was quite an effective one, with the province of Fars in particular enjoying great prosperity. Thus the decline of Baghdad and its environs did not mean that the entire Islamic World or even the Abbasid lands as a whole were necessarily undergoing

a similar experience. The fiscal imbalance between the claims of the army and the ability of the economy to generate the necessary revenue remained, however, and left the system vulnerable to external shocks and threats. Both the caliphs and their “protectors” finally fell victim to the rising new power of the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks.

Not only was there constant conflict at the center of the Arab empire, the initial unity of the empire soon began to disintegrate as a consequence of internal dynastic quarrels, religious schism, and the natural tendency of the segments more distant from the center to go their separate ways. Thus by the ninth century there were independent dynasties in North Africa such as the Idrisids (789–906) of Morocco and the Aghlabids (800–909) of Tunisia. The founder of the Idrisids was from a family of *sharifs* (descendants of the prophet) who fled to North Africa from Medina after a failed revolt against the Abbasids. His lineage attracted a following of Berber tribes who helped him found the city of Fez as the capital of a new kingdom, attracting Arab immigrants from the east and Spain. The Aghlabid dynasty originated as a hereditary fief granted to a military governor of Ifriqiyah (Tunisia and eastern Algeria) by the caliph Harun al-Rashid in return for payment of an annual sum of 40,000 dinars. The capital of this dynasty was at Al-Qayrawan, which was developed as both a religious and cultural center. The Aghlabids also invaded and eventually occupied Sicily and raided the vicinity of Rome.

In eastern Iran and Transoxiana the frontier states of the Tahirids (821–73), Saffarids (873–900), and Samanids (819–999) were independent in all but name of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. All of these dynasties were of Iranian extraction and founded by former Abbasid officials, except for the somewhat socially revolutionary Saffarids from the province of Sistan, founded by a coppersmith (*saffar*) who unseated the Tahirids by leading a band of religious dissidents and bandits against them. The Samanids, who ruled from Bukhara, were a particularly wealthy and well-administered state. The Turkic dynasty of the Ghaznavids (961–1186), based in Ghazna and Kabul in Afghanistan, extended their sway westwards to the borders of Iraq at the expense of the Abbasids and the Buyids that were the de facto rulers of their realm. Another Turkic dynasty, the Qarakhanids, displaced the Samanids in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Transoxiana in 999 and ruled until 1211. The pattern in the east was thus for the Arab Abbasids to lose much of their effective power, first to their Iranian subjects and eventually to Turks, whether as invading tribes or as their own military.

This process could be clearly seen in Egypt, where a Turkish military governor, Ahmad ibn Tulun, made himself into the virtually independent ruler in 868. Ibn Tulun built the magnificent mosque that still

bears his name in Fustat or Old Cairo, which he extended with further encampments and commercial concessions for his army. He seems to have been one of the most enlightened rulers in the long history of Egypt, improving irrigation, reforming taxation in the interest of the peasant, and generally supporting economic development in his domain. Ibn Tulun is said to have had an annual revenue of 4 million dinars, and when he bequeathed Egypt to his descendants he left 10 million dinars in the treasury. However, his profligate son drove the state into virtual bankruptcy before the Tulunid dynasty fell in 905, with the Abbasids regaining control. This restoration proved to be brief, since another dynasty of Abbasid Turkish military governors, the Ikhshidids, seized power in 935. This dynasty essentially continued the policies of the Tulunids under the supervision of an extremely able *wazir*, a black slave eunuch of apparently Sudanese extraction named Kafur.

The most significant of all these rival dynasties was that of the Fatimids, who overthrew the Aghlabids in Tunisia at the head of dissident Berber tribes in 909. The Fatimid base was Ifriqiyah, roughly corresponding to the present Tunisia, where the former Aghlabid city of Al-Qayrawan was greatly expanded by them after its capture. They also established a major port and naval base at the new site of their first capital, al-Mahdiah, where they constructed a massive fleet for use against their enemies, both Muslim and Christian. After building up their power base, the Fatimids then launched the conquest of Egypt in 969, seizing control from the Ikhshidids. The victorious Fatimid general Jawhar, also a slave but of Slavic origin, built the great capital of Al-Qahirah, or Cairo as we know it, north of Fustat as a worthy rival to Baghdad.

The Fatimids were followers of a dissident Shia sect, the Ismailis, claiming to be the true *imams* descended from Ali and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. They thus regarded the Abbasids as illegitimate usurpers and proclaimed their own caliphate after conquering Egypt. They not only carried on warfare and sectarian disputation with the Abbasids, but also made a successful attempt to divert the lucrative Indian Ocean trade from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. With the rich revenues of Egypt and vigorous promotion of foreign trade through the Red Sea, they had the resources to establish Cairo as an imposing new capital, as well as to maintain a powerful army of Berber tribal warriors and regiments of Sudanese and Turkish slave soldiers with which to challenge the Abbasids and the Byzantines in Syria and Palestine. Despite their fervent Ismaili Shia ideology, the Fatimids were very tolerant and open in the freedom they gave to other

sects and faiths. They also relied to a considerable extent on Jewish and Christian advisers such as the *wazir* Yaqub ibn Killis, a Jewish convert of Iraqi origin who had served under Kafur with the Ikhshidids, and who wielded an enormous formative influence on the Fatimid administration of Egypt. Though in principle a theocratic state, the Fatimid Empire tended to be dominated by its military commanders and the various ethnic and regional factions into which they were divided.

In 1000 the Fatimid domains included most of North Africa, the western Arabian Peninsula including Mecca and Medina, and southern Syria and Palestine, including Damascus and Jerusalem. However, this would not last. When the Fatimids set off on the conquest of Egypt they left Ifriqiyah in the care of a dynasty of their Berber allies known as the Zirids. This dynasty, the first of many subsequent Berber dynasties in North Africa, initially served them loyally, transmitting revenues as required, but eventually by the middle of the eleventh century they broke with their masters and began to assert an independent policy. The Fatimid reaction was to unleash on the western regions a nomadic Bedouin tribe, the Banu Hilal, that, according to Ibn Khaldun, devastated the countryside like “a plague of locusts,” a calamity from which these lands never seem to have fully recovered. The Arab nomads were unable to establish any lasting state structures and the way was opened to the emergence of the formidable Berber dynasty of the Almoravids. The consequences for the Fatimids were severe since their empire was now confined to Egypt and parts of Syria, where they also had to contend with a resurgent Byzantium and several assorted Islamic rivals as well. Furthermore, the mentally unstable Caliph al-Hakim (996–1021) may have unwittingly provoked the First Crusade nearly a century later by wantonly destroying the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, to the outrage of all Christendom. The Fatimids, together with their enemies the Abbasids and the Byzantines, were all to suffer at the hands of two new actors on the west Eurasian political stage that were soon to make their appearance: the Seljuk Turks and the Frankish Crusaders.

At the western end of the Islamic World the turn of the millennium saw Muslim Spain at the height of its power. The initial Arab conquest was begun in 711 by a force consisting of seven thousand mostly Berber warriors, led by a governor of Tangier named Tariq, himself a recently converted Berber. They defeated the army of the Visigothic king Roderick, who was killed in the battle. A larger Arab force led by the Umayyad governor of Ifriqiyah reinforced the invaders, with the result that much of Spain was occupied by 714, when both leaders were

recalled to Damascus never to return. The settlement of al-Andalus, as the areas of the Iberian Peninsula under Muslim rule were called in Arabic, seems to have been more a result of local initiative than central direction from the Umayyad capital. The Christian population was allowed to practice its religion under its own clerical establishment and left alone provided it paid taxes. Lands of towns that resisted were distributed among the Arabs and Berbers, with the Arabs generally living in towns on the rents of their estates and many of the Berbers engaged in sheep rearing as they did in their own homelands. The small Jewish population was concentrated in urban areas and seems to have fared much better than under the former Christian rulers. The Muslims themselves began to suffer from internal conflicts between Arabs and Berbers, as well as between tribal factions of the Arabs themselves. A Berber revolt in North Africa and Spain was only quelled by fresh Arab troops from Syria that strengthened the Arab element at the expense of the Berber in al-Andalus.

The violent overthrow of the Umayyads by the Abbasids in 750 led to a young prince of the fallen dynasty named Abd al-Rahman fleeing to North Africa. His distinguished ancestry won him a following of both Arabs and Berbers that enabled him to take power rapidly in Spain as a unifying influence above the existing factions. With his capital at Cordoba, Abd al-Rahman I established a rich and powerful state, symbolized by the palaces and the great mosque that he constructed during his reign (755–88). His court became a refuge for dissident Arabs and Persians wanting to escape his Abbasid enemies. The frontier with the Christians became stabilized along a northeast–southwest axis, with exchanges of raids and probes of each other's defenses (the defeat at Poitiers by Charles Martel in 732 having effectively ended attempts to invade French territory). Subsequent rulers generally maintained the position of the emirate, with the usual variations due to the abilities of the emirs themselves. The pinnacle of achievement was under Abd al-Rahman III (912–61), who felt strong enough to proclaim himself caliph in 929. The core of his regime was a professional army of largely Slavic slave soldiers, independent of the factions and loyal only to himself. He also maintained an efficient centralized bureaucracy.

The long and brilliant reign of Abd al-Rahman III finally ended after nearly fifty years in 961. His son al-Hakam II (961–76) and grandson Hisham II (976–1009) were weak and feeble rulers and the real power of the state, until his death in 1002, fell into the hands of the grand vizier and great statesman known to history by the honorific al-Mansur. He achieved a succession of spectacular victories over the neighboring Christian states, sacking Barcelona, Leon, and Burgos,

burning the shrine of Santiago de Compostela, and bringing its great bronze bells to the mosque of Cordoba. He was similarly victorious against the Fatimids in North Africa. All of this success, however, and his extravagance and ruthlessness, led to a backlash against his son, who had the temerity to suggest himself as the legitimate heir to the puppet Caliph Hisham II. The outraged Arab court notables, who had long resented the Umayyads' reliance on their Berber troops, Slav mercenaries, and Jewish and Christian administrators, revolted and killed him in 1009. However, they were unable to maintain the integrity of the state, which soon broke into a collection of fragments ruled by provincial governors and warlords known as the *taifas* or "party kings," giving this name to the period from 1031, when the caliphate of Cordoba was formally abolished, to 1091. Needless to say, the descent of the mighty Umayyad regime into a handful of squabbling petty states was an unexpected boon to their Christian enemies, who lost no time in taking advantage of the situation. The Andalusis hold on North Africa was also fatally weakened and the Berber Almoravids would soon reverse the direction of hegemony across the Straits of Gibraltar.

The eleventh century can therefore be seen as a critical turning point in the destinies of all three great caliphates, the Abbasids in the east, the Umayyads of Cordoba in the west, and the Fatimids in the center. The Abbasids lost power to the Iranians and eventually to the Seljuk Turks; the Andalusians were squeezed by Berbers in the Maghrib and by Christians in the north of the Iberian Peninsula; and the Fatimids were confined to Egypt by their failures in Syria to the east and North Africa to the west, their millennial dreams of a universal Ismaili Shia state unrealized.

## CENTRAL (OR INNER) ASIA<sup>6</sup>

This is the vast region in the interior of the Eurasian landmass, bounded to the south by towering mountain ranges and to the north by the Arctic tundra (see figure 1.4). The land can be divided into horizontal bands of forest (the so-called *taiga*), steppe, and desert. The primary ecological region is the steppe, the home of pastoral nomads since time immemorial. The eastern and western borders of

<sup>6</sup>Sources for this section include Barthold (1968), Christian (1998, chapters 10 and 11), Golden (1998), Hambly (1969), Lattimore (1973), McEvedy (1961), O'Brien (2002), and Sinor (1990).

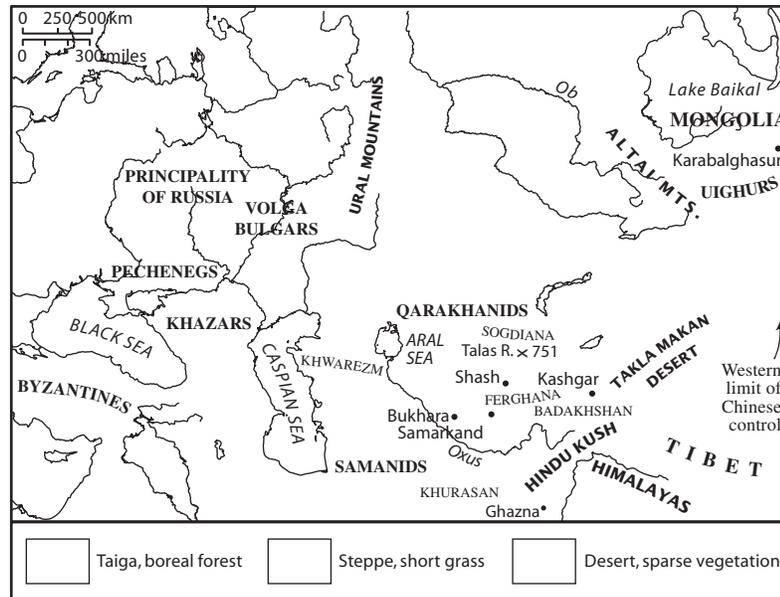


FIGURE 1.4. Central Asia.

Central Asia are shifting with the frontiers of the sedentary civilizations of China and Korea in the east and Russia and Iran in the west. The region as a whole is roughly six thousand miles from east to west and slightly less than half that distance from north to south (Sinor 1990, p. 19). It covers approximately the following areas: the modern post-Soviet states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan; Mongolia; and the parts of China known as Inner Mongolia and the Tibetan and Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regions (Hambly 1969, p. xi).

The interdependence between nomadic and sedentary peoples is one of the most persistent themes in history. The economic systems are complementary, with the possibility of mutual gain from the exchange of cereals and manufactures for animals, such as horses and camels, and animal products. The mobility of the mounted nomads, however, has also always left open the option of raiding and plundering the farms and cities of the settled populations. Outright conquest, on the other hand, has usually resulted in the acculturation and absorption of the much less numerous nomadic rulers by the subject populations. The Greeks and Romans had to contend with the Scythians and the Parthians, while the Huns, Avars, and Hungarians

ravaged medieval Europe. The Han dynasty in China engaged in a long struggle with the Hsiung-nu, and various Turkic dynasties ruled parts of China after the fall of the Han in the third century A.D.

This is the region that Sir Halford Mackinder (1904) referred to in the title of his celebrated essay as “the geographical pivot of history.” He saw this Eurasian “Heartland” as controlling, by its successive invasions, the outer crescent of the surrounding “Rimlands” to the east, west, and south. The ascendancy of the Heartland over the Rimland was halted but not ended, in his opinion, by the European voyages of discovery. The invention of the railway opened up the possibility of integrating the Heartland between China and Russia, thus once again imposing its domination over the surrounding Rimlands, and ending the era of Britannia ruling the world by ruling the waves.<sup>7</sup> In the year 1000, however, the greatest of all the nomadic invasions, that of the Mongols, was still in the future.

Central Asia should not be looked upon solely as the staging area for successive waves of nomadic invaders bursting into the peaceful sedentary civilizations on its borders. It has also served for millennia as a crossroads traversed by the flow of goods, technical inventions, art forms, and religions between the widely separated settled regions themselves. The fabled Silk Road, or rather Roads, have served for millennia not only to send silk, porcelain, and Chinese techniques westward but also to transmit Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam from the west and Buddhism from India to China, Korea, and Japan. Taxing the caravans that crossed the region was usually more profitable than simply plundering them. Even more profitable, however, was obtaining key commodities such as silk at the source in China and then trading it westwards, if this was possible by force of arms. This is precisely what a nomadic steppe empire attempted successfully in the middle of the sixth century.

This was what is known as the First Turk Empire, which was at its height in the second half of the sixth century. The steppe peoples linguistically form part of the Altaic group, subdivided into Turkic and Mongolian branches. The people who established this empire were known as the Gok, or Blue Turks, with blue the color of the sky having the connotation of “heavenly” or “divine.” They were a confederation of tribes with one clan, the Ashina, recognized as dominant over all the others and providing the supreme ruler, known as the *kaghan*, and the

<sup>7</sup>As was presciently pointed out by Leopold Amery in his discussion of the essay at the Royal Geographical Society, however, it was control of the air, not land or water, that would determine the dominant hegemonic power of the new century, the last of the second millennium.

deputy, known as the *yabghu*. The tribe had a tradition of ironworking that may have been based on mines in their ancestral lands in the Altai mountain range. Their main striking force was armored cavalry that was possibly equipped by this industry.

At the time of their rise China was not unified and the single most powerful state, that of the Sinicized nomadic Northern Wei dynasty, was itself divided between a western branch with its capital at Chang'an and an eastern branch with its capital at Lo-yang. The Turks were able to extract enormous amounts of silk in exchange for horses at very favorable terms of trade in the light of the military pressure that they were able to apply. The silk was then sent westwards in the hands of Sogdian and other mercantile communities of the Silk Road, at great profit to the Turks themselves since they were successful in extending their control all the way to the frontiers of the Sassanian and Byzantine Empires in the west. They did not attempt any direct rule over other areas or peoples but exercised a loose form of suzerainty over the oasis cities and tribes along the Silk Road. Even so the realm was still so vast that it was divided between a senior eastern and a junior western branch. The empire fell when China became unified under the short-lived but powerful Sui dynasty (581–617), which had the military power to reassert Chinese command over the steppe. The vigorous emperors of the new Tang dynasty completed the work of the Sui in this respect, so that the suzerainty claimed by the Turk Empire over the entire length of the Silk Road passed to China itself.

The next contender for supremacy over the Silk Road was the Arab caliphate. The Arab forces overwhelmed the Sassanian Empire and occupied Iraq and western Iran very rapidly, but they took much longer to pacify the large eastern province of Khurasan and longer still to extend their authority across the Oxus to Bukhara, Samarkand, Shash (Tashkent), and other rich mercantile centers of Sogdiana. The merchant class seems to have been willing to reach an accommodation with the Arabs so long as they could continue to trade, but the landowners resisted more stubbornly along with their former Western Turk overlords. They also appealed for help to Tang China, their acknowledged suzerain, but not surprisingly in view of the distances got no effective assistance. The Arabs themselves sent diplomatic assurances to the Chinese that they would keep trade open. The Arabs and the Chinese were drawn into direct hostilities, however, when the ruler of Tashkent, an Arab client, attacked Ferghana, a Chinese client state. This led to the famous Battle of the Talas River in 751, where the Chinese were defeated when their Karluk Turkic allies switched sides. One notable consequence of the battle was that Chinese prisoners

taken to Samarkand taught their captors the art of making paper. The two sides were never to confront each other directly again.

Transoxiana, and the associated provinces of Khwarezm and Khurasan, remained under Islamic influence and reached a peak of economic and cultural progress under the Iranian dynasty of the Samanids (819–999), who had their capital at Bukhara. As already noted, they acknowledged the spiritual authority of the Abbasid caliphate but were sovereign rulers in every other respect. They maintained the physical infrastructure of irrigation works for agriculture, water supply for the cities, and caravanserais for the great caravans that left in all directions toward Russia, China, and India, and supported religious and educational establishments to an unprecedented extent. Silver mines in the Badakhshan province in what is now Afghanistan were exploited and were the basis for a coinage of high quality. The military system was based on recruitment of military slaves from the steppes known as *ghulams* or cadets, who went through a lengthy period of training and promotion before becoming commanders and administrators in their thirties. The demand for military and other slaves stimulated a large trade in humans that was licensed and taxed by the state, with export taxes per slave of 30–70 dirhems as compared with an average price of 300 dirhems. Taxation covered costs of administration and a sumptuous court but was not so high as to discourage trade and industry. It is impressive that all military and civil officers were paid in cash, without the debilitating recourse to feudal land grants that most early states had to resort to.

The Turks of the steppes were becoming Islamicized themselves, however, thereby raising the level of their own social and political organization while maintaining their military prowess. A new dynasty, the Qarakhanids, a Turkic tribe converted to Islam by Sufi missionaries, arose in the vicinity of Kashgar and as we saw overthrew the Samanids just before the end of the millennium, when their state became wracked by internal dissension. Significantly, the *ulama*, the Muslim clergy of Bukhara, instructed the populace not to resist the invaders since they were also good Muslims. The cities of Transoxiana, now in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, have remained within the Turkic orbit to this day. While the Qarakhanids took Bukhara and the Samanid lands north of the Oxus, the area of Khurasan, south of the river, fell to another Turkic dynasty, the Ghaznavids (977–1186), whose leader, Mahmud, made devastating raids on India, returning each time with vast amounts of plunder.

In the east yet another powerful Turkic tribal confederation, the Uighurs, arose in 744 and held sway to 840. They were initially

auxiliaries of the Tang who became increasingly dependent upon them for military assistance, particularly during the disruptive An Lu Shan rebellion of 755. In return they extracted a high price in terms of the familiar exchange of horses for silk, and also by frequently pillaging Chinese cities and provinces during the suppression of the rebellion. They were allied closely with the Sogdian merchant community and their ruler even adopted Manichaeism as a state religion under their influence. A Sogdian script, later adopted by the Mongols, was also introduced and literacy was apparently quite high. Their capital at Karabalghasun in Mongolia was a flourishing trading center for a very wide range of goods, including furs and other forest products from the north. It was surrounded by a considerable agricultural hinterland to feed the large population. Perhaps softened by their commercial success and peaceful religion, the Uighurs eventually fell victim to an invasion by their former vassals, the Kirghiz.

Two other Turkic empires in the western steppes were those of the Khazars in the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and the Volga Bulgars in the middle reaches of that river. Both were actively involved in the north–south and east–west flows of trade involving Slavic captives and northern furs, honey, wax, and amber, as well as silk and other luxury goods from the east, and silver from the Baghdad caliphate and the Samanid emirate of Bukhara. The Volga Bulgars converted to Islam while the Khazars adopted Judaism, presumably to avoid falling under the influence of either their Islamic or Orthodox Christian neighbors. Both states fell to the rising power of Kievan Rus before the end of the tenth century. Another Turkic tribe, the Pechenegs, never formed a state but their ferocity and martial prowess made them feared by all peoples who came in contact with them, whether sedentary or nomadic themselves.

## SOUTH ASIA<sup>8</sup>

Separated from Central Asia by the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush, India constitutes a subcontinental peninsula of the Eurasian landmass that is comparable with Western Europe in many ways (see figure 1.5). A distinctive culture arose out of a synthesis between the original Dravidian inhabitants and the Aryan pastoral nomads that entered from the north over three thousand years ago. An upper caste of

<sup>8</sup>Sources for this section include Arasaratnam (1964), Kosambi (1969), O'Brien (2002), Schmidt (1999), Stein (1998, chapters 1–3), and Thapar (2002).

Brahmins and warriors was supported by the harvests of the richly fertile Indo-Gangetic plain cultivated by the labor of the *shudra* caste. A number of kingdoms arose in the plain while the foothills of the Himalayas were the location of some tribal republics. The kingdom of Magadha on the lower Ganges eventually dominated the entire plain in the middle of the first millennium B.C. because of its favorable location for internal as well as overseas trade. Local deposits of iron ore gave it an edge in weaponry, while forests provided timber as well as a plentiful supply of war elephants. Northwestern India was subject to considerable Iranian influence and Taxila became a center for the fruitful exchange of ideas between the Indian and Persian traditions. The invasion of Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. extended Greek and Persian cultural influences in Gandhara, leaving their distinctive mark in Buddhist statuary. The southern Deccan plateau traversed by a succession of rivers also provided a variety of agricultural possibilities. A wide range of craft specialties and a distinctive cotton textile manufacture was developed from early times.

The Malabar and Coromandel Coasts in the west and east respectively had trading contacts with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea and with both mainland and insular Southeast Asia. Roman coins have been found in considerable abundance, attesting to this trade. The Mediterranean traders also obtained Southeast Asian goods in the Indian ports, thus stimulating Indian relations with the source of those goods. Hindu and Buddhist religious and cultural influences, including fundamental political ideas about kingship and statecraft, were thereby transmitted to the emerging new states in Cambodia, Champa, Java, and Sumatra. The monuments of Angkor Wat, Borobudur, and Prambanan are the most visible evidence of the depth of this Indian influence.

Political unification of the Indo-Gangetic plain and much of southern India was achieved by the Mauryan Empire (321–185 B.C.) founded by Chandra Gupta Maurya that arose in the wake of the invasion of Alexander the Great. Chandra Gupta successfully challenged Alexander's Seleucid heir Nicator for areas in what is now eastern Afghanistan and the two states established peaceful diplomatic relations, with the Greek ambassador Megasthenes leaving a valuable account of India. The next Mauryan emperor made extensive conquests in the south and west. The third ruler of this dynasty was the famous Ashoka, remarkable for his piety and support of Buddhism to which he turned in remorse from his bloody conquest of Kalinga, the last component in the completion of the Mauryan Empire. The empire disintegrated soon after his death in 232 B.C. Seleucid rule in northwest India was followed

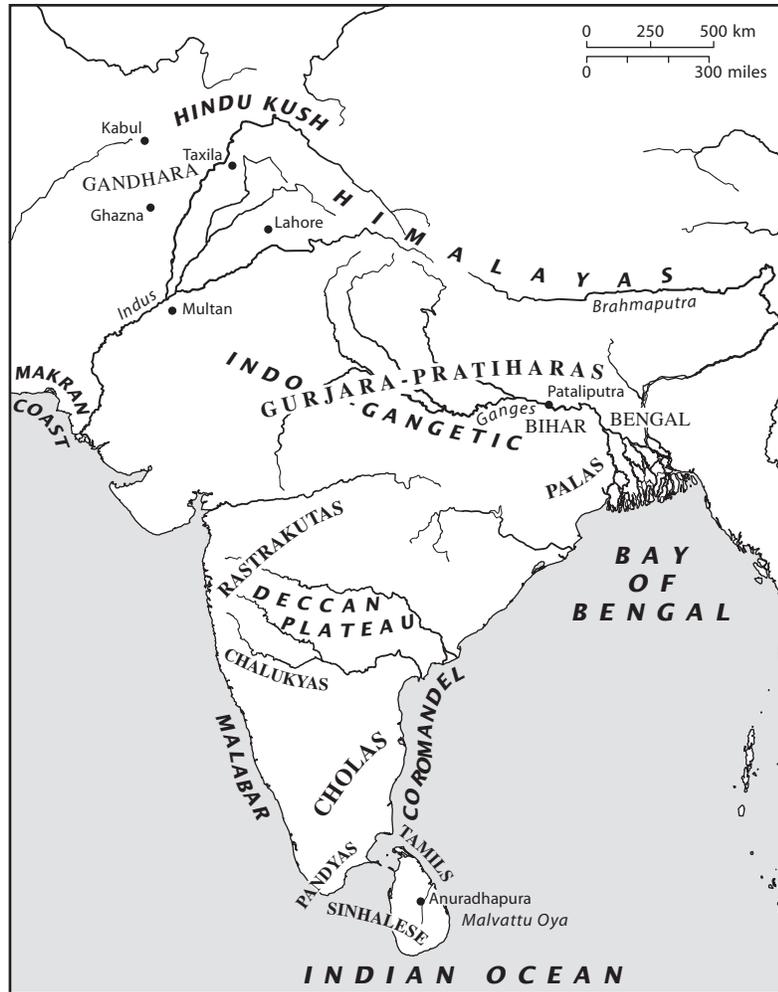


FIGURE 1.5. South Asia

by the emergence of the so-called Indo-Greek kings, of whom the most significant was Menander (155–130 B.C.). Two groups of Central Asian nomads, the Sakas and the Kushans, succeeded the Indo-Greeks and stimulated trade between India and the Silk Road in the first two centuries A.D. The Mauryan Royal Highway from Pataliputra to Taxila, which survives today as the Grand Trunk Road, was one segment of this trade route which then went on to Kabul and through Bactria

to the Black Sea and the Caspian. Trade overseas could go down the Ganges to the Bay of Bengal and thence to Southeast Asia and Ceylon, or Sri Lanka as it is known today.

Another powerful empire, the Guptas, lasted from the fourth to the sixth century A.D. This is generally considered as the “classical age” of Indian civilization, culminating in the reign of Harsha (606–47), whose extensive conquests in northern India fell apart after his death. The age was marked both by material prosperity, at least for the ruling elite, and remarkable intellectual and cultural achievements. Both Hinduism and Buddhism were encouraged by the state and also supported by private donations from individuals and merchant guilds. Buddhism spread to Ceylon and Southeast Asia, as well as to Iran, Central Asia, and eventually to China along the Silk Road. Several Chinese Buddhist pilgrims visited India, such as Fa Hsien and Hsüan Tsang, and left notable records of their experiences and impressions.

After the decline of the Gupta Empire a number of regional kingdoms arose in the north as well as in the Deccan plateau. As in Western Europe, none of them could command the preponderance of resources necessary to dominate all the others and impose a unified empire. The Palas in Bihar and Bengal were notable for their support of Buddhism in the eighth and ninth centuries, and the Gurjara-Pratiharas in northern India resisted the incursions of Huns from Central Asia with some success. In the Deccan the division of the terrain into a number of river valleys running from west to east and the adjoining coastal strips made it difficult for any single power to dominate despite fierce struggles between the Chalukyas, Pallavas, and Pandyas. The Rastrakutas of the western Deccan were a prominent presence but lost power back to the Chalukyas by the close of the tenth century. The south saw notable cultural and religious developments involving the synthesis of Aryan and Dravidian elements and the emergence of a distinct Tamil personality. The south also became actively involved in the trade of the Indian Ocean. Several Arab merchants settled on the western Malabar coast, giving rise to the so-called Mapilla Muslim community that was later to play a significant role in both trade and the spread of Islam to Southeast Asia. By the turn of the first millennium the powerful dynasty of the Cholas rose to prominence, aggressively pursuing its interests not only on land but overseas in Ceylon and Southeast Asia as well.

Immigrants from northern India settled in the island of Ceylon some time around the fifth century B.C., probably sailing down the west coast. The original inhabitants were an Australoid people who do not seem to have put up any resistance. The location of the island made

it a natural entrepôt for east–west traffic across the Indian Ocean. It was well-known to the Romans under the name of Taprobane and was also frequented by Persian, Arab, and Chinese vessels. Further immigration came from south India, specifically from the Pandya kingdom according to the traditional accounts. The first settlements were in the northwest along the Malvattu Oya River, with a capital established at Anuradhapura. Rice cultivation was the mainstay of the economy, supported by what eventually became a very elaborate system of irrigation.

Despite being devout Buddhists the immigrants brought the Indo-Aryan caste system along with them, though it operated in a looser and more flexible way with the main distinction being between agricultural and nonagricultural occupations. Relations with Buddhist centers in India and Southeast Asia were very close; Ceylon was the home of the more austere and pure Hinayana or Theravada school of Buddhism that was adopted in Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand. Ceylon was actively involved in the political conflicts of the southern Indian dynasties. The Cholas invaded Ceylon in 993, sacking the capital and annexing the island to their kingdom until 1070, at which time the Sinhalese recovered it. Ceylon was also involved in conflicts over trade with Burma and the Sumatran trading state of Srivijaya.

### SOUTHEAST ASIA<sup>9</sup>

Southeast Asia can be defined as all of the Eurasian landmass east of India and south of China, together with the extensive chain of islands “flung like a girdle of jade around the Equator” (see figure 1.6). The natural division of the region is between the mainland and the islands of the archipelago. In terms of contemporary nation-states, the mainland comprises Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Malaysia while the islands comprise Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, and East Timor. Malaysia, occupying the long narrow blade of the peninsula known to antiquity as the “Golden Khersonese” (Wheatley 1980), is best considered geographically and culturally as part of the island rather than the mainland world. The most prominent geographical feature of the mainland is the series of long river valleys, generally running north to south: the Irrawaddy, Salween, Maenam Chao Phraya, and Mekong, as well as the shorter

<sup>9</sup>Sources for this section include Coedes (1968), Hall (1968, part I), O’Brien (2002), Reid (1988), Tarling (1992, part I), Wang (1998), and Wolters (1999).



FIGURE 1.6. Southeast Asia.

Red River running west to east. The plains along these river valleys and those of parallel smaller rivers, and particularly the silt-rich deltas, are fertile areas for rice cultivation, the crop that has been the staple of the peoples in this area for millennia. Irrigation in areas of lower rainfall, such as the Dry Zone of central Burma, was, however, responsible for some of the highest yields and formed the economic base of early kingdoms and empires (Stargardt 1986). The river valleys are usually flanked by forested uplands that are more difficult to cultivate except on a slash and burn basis. The main islands of the archipelago are Sumatra, Java, Bali, Lombok, Borneo, Celebes, Mindanao, and Luzon but there are many other smaller islands of great economic and historical importance. The region is fully subject to the play of the seasonal monsoon winds, blowing from the southwest from May to September and the northeast from November to March. The average

rainfall is high and on the mainland is concentrated during the period of the southwest monsoon.

The population of the islands and the peninsula is Malayo-Polynesian, descendants of a stock originally from southern China that migrated first to Taiwan and then to Southeast Asia and Polynesia as far east as Easter Island, and possibly even as far west as Madagascar. The mainland populations of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam are a blend of Malayo-Polynesians and tribes originally from the area of western China and Tibet. The Khmer of Cambodia and the Mon of southern parts of Burma and Thailand have an Austronesian language, in contrast to the Sino-Tibetan languages of the Burmese and the Thai. The stress on the “Indianization” of Southeast Asia, by both Indian as well as European authors of an earlier era, such as George Coedes (1968), has been replaced in current research by an emphasis on the autonomy of the region, for example, in the authoritative work of O. W. Wolters (1999). The indigenous peoples of the region developed wet-rice cultivation, bronze and iron metallurgy, and distinctive cultural, social, and political traits well before historical times, and independently of India and China. Because of their intermediate location they did become subject in historical times to powerful influences from the great civilizations of their Indian and Chinese neighbors, but these have been blended into their own distinctive cultural patterns. The Hindu and Buddhist influences were also probably deliberately sought out by native peoples and rulers, rather than simply transplanted by Indian immigration or conquest.

The earliest political entity in the region to emerge in the historical record is known as Funan, and was located in the southern tip of the Gulf of Siam in an area that now straddles the borders of Cambodia and Vietnam. After the Han dynasty fell in A.D. 220, China entered the period known as that of the “Three Kingdoms” consisting of Wei in the north, Shu in the southwest, and Wu in the southeast (Hucker 1975, map 4). Access to Central Asia and the west through the Kansu Corridor was open only to Wei and the other possible overland route across the Burma–Yunnan border was open only to Shu. As Wang Gungwu (1998, chapter 3) points out, the only option left to the rulers of Wu if they wanted to trade with the west was overseas through ports in Southeast Asia.

The traditional overseas east–west trade route at that time involved transshipping goods and passenger traffic across the Isthmus of Kra, which at thirty-five miles is the narrowest crossing of the Malay Peninsula. The all-sea alternative of going through either the Straits of Malacca or the Sunda Straits would only be developed more than a

century later. The nearest suitable port for Wu to consider was the site known to archaeologists as Oc Eo in the kingdom of Funan, because the fertile Mekong delta in which it was located could provide the necessary rice supplies for merchants and crews while they were waiting for the goods to be transshipped, and also because it was situated on the Gulf just opposite the points at which western and Indian ships unloaded passengers and freight on the Isthmus. The ruler of Wu sent embassies to open trade and diplomatic relations with the barbarian polity of Funan some time before the middle of the third century, and it is to the records of these Wu officials that we owe our knowledge of Funan. The “gains from trade” for the “small open economy” of Funan must have been great and provided the resources for territorial expansion around the rim of the Gulf of Siam to consolidate its control, and also for extensive irrigation works enhancing its agricultural productivity. After the Straits route was developed, however, shipping could bypass Funan, presumably causing its revenues to decline, and it ultimately fell to a Khmer state known as Chenla in the sixth century.

After the shift from the passage across the Isthmus of Kra to the Straits of Malacca and the associated Sunda Straits between Java and Sumatra it was inevitable that control over the new route would pass to a state in one of these islands. From the seventh to the eleventh century, this state was based at Palembang on the southeast coast of Sumatra and is known to history as Srivijaya. In order to fulfill its role as a trading empire, Srivijaya had to secure control over the supplies of the natural resource products of the region demanded by the Chinese, Persian, and Arab merchants, and also feed the merchants and crews during the long stopovers between the shifts in the direction of the winds. The first objective was met by a network of tributary relationships based on alliances backed ultimately by force, using mercenary troops and local levies as well as an informal but effective navy of Malay sea nomads. The rice supplies came across the straits from the allied Javanese kingdom of a dynasty known as the Sailendras. With these methods Srivijaya was able to exercise a degree of monopoly control over the seaborne trade between the west and China, now very lucrative during these centuries because of the prosperity of the Tang and Sung at one end and the Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo caliphates at the other. Sustained by these revenues the rulers were able to maintain a court on elaborate Indianized lines and to support an extensive Buddhist religious establishment.

On the mainland also new states began to emerge around the turn of the millennium or soon thereafter, such as Pagan in Burma,

Dvaravati in Thailand, and Angkor in Cambodia, all of which were heavily influenced by Buddhism and other Indian cultural influences.

#### EAST ASIA (CHINA, KOREA, AND JAPAN)<sup>10</sup>

China, like India, can be considered as a subcontinent of Eurasia (see figure 1.7). It is bounded in the east by the Pacific Ocean, in the west by the steppe, deserts, and mountain ranges of Central Asia, in the south by the tropical jungles of Southeast Asia, and in the north by terrain unsuitable for the settled agriculture that has always been an abiding aspect of Chinese civilization. The fertile valleys of the Yellow River and the Yangtze have provided the agricultural foundation for all subsequent development. Characteristic of the North China Plain of the Yellow River area is the wind-blown loess dust that has built up the “yellow earth” that provided the ancestral home of the distinctive Chinese civilization. The earliest state was that of the Shang dynasty in the second half of the second millennium B.C., marked by its bronze weapons and ritual vessels, and the earliest Chinese ideographic script on the so-called “oracle bones.” The bronze metallurgy and chariot warfare of the Shang are reminiscent of Indo-European parallels further west, but it is still an open question as to whether this is a case of cultural diffusion across the steppes of Central Asia or of independent development within China itself.

The fall of the Shang dynasty was followed by the nomadic Eastern Zhou dynasty, which introduced a more decentralized regime, sometimes characterized as “feudal.” A long period of disunity eventually led to seven large regional kingdoms struggling fiercely for power during the “Warring States” period (403–221 B.C.). An increase in agricultural productivity, associated with the introduction of iron implements, generated larger revenues for the states and supported larger armies, supplemented by cavalry forces in imitation of nomadic methods of warfare. A new class of professional administrators and specialists arose, tending to replace kinship-based nobility with criteria based on merit and achievement. There was also an intellectual ferment, during which the three major Chinese philosophical systems of Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism arose.

<sup>10</sup>Sources for this section include Blunden and Elvin (1983, parts 1 and 2), Ebrey (1996, chapters 1–6), FitzGerald (1966), Gernet (1982, parts 1–5), Hall (1970, chapters 1–6), Huang (1990), Hucker (1975), O’Brien (2002), Pulleyblank (1955), Reischauer and Fairbank (1962, chapters 1–6, 10–11), Ropp (1990), and Twitchett (1973).

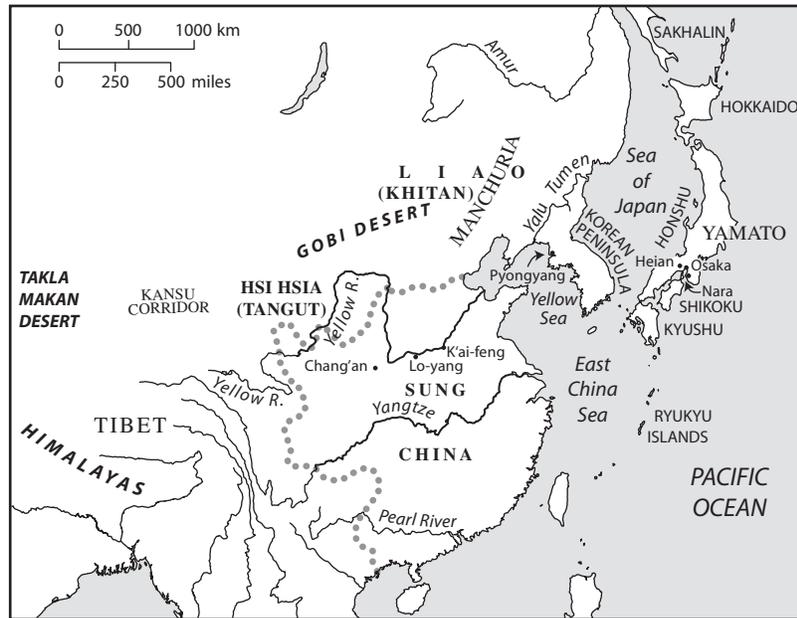


FIGURE 1.7. East Asia.

The protracted power struggles of the age of the Warring States ended with the victory of the western border state of Ch'in in 221 B.C., which Bodde (1981, p. 41) calls "the most important single date in Chinese history before the abolition of the monarchy in 1912." Its ruler took the name of Shi Huang Di, First August Emperor, and was the first sole ruler of the entire country. A centralized despotic regime was imposed, with standardized language, laws, weights, and measures administered by a civilian bureaucracy supported by a powerful army, terra cotta replicas of which are on display in his recently rediscovered tomb in Xian. The Great Wall was built and consolidated, and a number of other massive public works undertaken. The strain on society was so great that the empire fell shortly after Shi Huang Di's death in 210 B.C.

Imperial unity was soon restored, in 206 B.C., by the Han dynasty that took China to a level of achievement that challenged that of the contemporaneous Roman Empire in the west and the Mauryan Empire in India. Frontiers were extended into Korea in the north and Vietnam in the south, and deep penetration made into Central Asia in the west. A unified bureaucratic system, on more moderate Confucian lines rather than the harsh Legalism of the short-lived Ch'in

Empire, was established, modified originally by fiefdoms granted to allies and relatives. By the workings of the familiar dynastic cycle that has marked the pattern of Chinese history the Han eventually also lost the “Mandate of Heaven” after disruptive peasant rebellions and civil war in A.D. 220.

The fall of the Han led to several centuries of disunity. Generals and warlords, many of steppe nomad extraction, contended for power. One Turkic clan, the Toba, established the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), based on the old Han capital of Lo-yang. It attempted to build a unified state by combining its Sinicized Turkic tribal aristocracy with ethnic Chinese institutions and landowning families, but without lasting success. Population shifted from the north to south of the Yangtze Valley, as the native Chinese tried to escape from the perils of civil strife and take advantage of the abundant availability of rice-growing land. People also increasingly turned to Buddhism as a spiritual refuge from temporal insecurity. Eventually, the dynastic cycle came full circle again when a family of generals established the short-lived but important Sui dynasty (581–618), whose main achievement was the construction of a canal system connecting the Yangtze Valley to the north. Just as the brief reign of the Ch’in led to the long and glorious period of the Han, the Sui was immediately followed by the Tang dynasty (618–907), which took China to a level beyond even that of the Han.

The nearly three centuries of the Tang were marked by the spread of Chinese culture and influence to Central Asia, Korea, and Japan. While the bureaucracy was based to a larger extent than before on an examination system, power was also decentralized to local aristocratic families. Economic expansion was considerable, with the spread of a money economy based on silver and the growth of merchant guilds. The center of economic growth continued to shift toward the rice-based economy of the south, with a greater reliance on markets and trade. Artistic styles were more open to Central Asian influences, and Buddhism flourished not only in religious terms but also with considerable amounts of landed and other forms of wealth passing into the hands of monastic institutions.

By the middle decade of the eighth century, however, the familiar signs of dynastic decline and difficulty began to appear. As we have seen, the Arabs defeated a Tang army at the Battle of the Talas River in 751, checking the dynasty’s control over Central Asia, and there followed a devastating rebellion led by a general of Central Asian heritage, An Lu Shan, that was suppressed but only at great cost and loss of prestige by the ruling house. Fiscal crises led to the

sequestration of monastic lands and the confiscation of their wealth. The dynasty lingered on until 907, after which it was succeeded by a period of contesting regimes known as the Five Dynasties, ended by the establishment of the Sung dynasty in 960, with its capital at K'ai-feng.

The Korean peninsula southeast of the Yalu and Tumen rivers that divide it from Manchuria has always had a distinct ethnic and linguistic identity that sets it apart from China, despite millennia of cultural and political influence from its giant neighbor. The Korean people apparently migrated into the peninsula from Manchuria in prehistoric times, speaking a Ural-Altaic language that has some affinities with the Tungusic tongue of some nomadic tribes of northern Manchuria. They developed a sedentary agricultural economy through the Paleolithic and Bronze ages, ruled by a hereditary tribal aristocracy sustained by a peasantry and a large servile class. The country was conquered by the Han dynasty in 108 B.C. and administered by four commanderies or military districts, the largest of which was based at a site close to Pyongyang, the capital of the present state of North Korea. Chinese political control waned after the fall of the Han and three independent Korean kingdoms emerged: Koguryo, ruling over what is now North Korea and southern Manchuria, Paekche in the southwest, and Silla in the southeast, the latter two divided by the mountain chain that forms the spine of the peninsula.

The three kingdoms all prospered on the basis of active trade with both China and the Japanese islands. Buddhism entered from China and was adopted as the popular religion, replacing the earlier shamanism, which still, however, continued to survive in vestigial form. Government and administration were based on Confucian models. Chinese ideographs were adapted, with some difficulty, to the writing of the entirely different Korean language. Ceramic and other arts developed under Chinese influence but with a distinctive local style. Early in the seventh century the second ruler of the Sui dynasty launched a great invasion of Koguryo in an attempt to gain back control that had been lost after the fall of the Han. The invasion was repelled by stubborn Korean resistance, which hastened the collapse of the short-lived Sui dynasty. The Tang also attempted another unsuccessful invasion, but eventually obtained the acknowledgement of Chinese sovereignty after yet another invasion in alliance with Silla. A unified Silla kingdom ruled the entire country within the Tang tributary orbit from 668 to 935, when it was overthrown by a new northern state, a successor to Koguryo known as Koryo, from which the present name of the country is derived. Koryo, and all subsequent Korean regimes,

acknowledged Chinese sovereignty until 1895, which was the year of the defeat of the Manchu Qing dynasty in the Sino-Japanese Wars.

Japan, consisting of the four main islands of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu, from north to south, off the northeast coast of the Eurasian landmass, is a sort of bookend to the northwestern analogue of the British Isles. Unlike the latter, however, it has been much less subject to invasion and immigration in historical times and is unique in the degree of its long relative isolation from foreign influence, in comparison with other major modern nations. This has given its history and development a special cast, as has often been noted.

With the northern tip of Hokkaido at the same latitude as Montreal and the southern tip of Kyushu just above that of Jacksonville, Florida,<sup>11</sup> and washed by the warm Japan current, the climate is relatively mild without extremes of winter cold and summer heat. The land is mountainous, less than a fifth of it being arable. Compensating for this are timber from abundant forests and a rich variety of fish from the surrounding seas. The mountainous terrain has also led to the land being broken up into relatively small cultivable units, making political centralization difficult.

The ethnic composition of the early inhabitants is still a matter of controversy. The language, however, belongs to the same Ural-Altai family as Korean, which would seem to indicate a northeast Asian origin. Archaeology has identified the Jomon culture, exemplified by “corded-ware” pottery, of a population of hunter-gatherers from about 10,000 B.C. Only very much later, around 300 B.C., appears what is known as the Yayoi culture, with irrigated wet-rice cultivation and bronze and iron metallurgy. The first signs of stratified political organization begin with the appearance of large burial mounds of a ruling elite of horse-riding warriors. Similarities with Korea are apparent, but it is not known for certain whether the horse-riders were invaders from the mainland or indigenous adaptations to external influences. Society was composed of hereditary classes, known as *uji*, each of which had a leader associated with an ancestral spirit or *kami*. The dominant class in the Yamato region of the Nara Plain, near Osaka, claimed descent from the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami. The present imperial family of Japan is directly descended from this clan, which traces its undoubtedly mythical beginnings back to 660 B.C.

The Yamato rulers had extensive contacts with Chinese civilization, mostly through the intermediation of Korea. There even seems to

<sup>11</sup>See the interesting map on p. 453 of Reischauer and Fairbank (1962).

have been a Japanese enclave on the southern Korean coast. There is also evidence of considerable Korean immigration around this time. Access to more advanced technology conferred an advantage in the competitive struggle between the various *uji* for power in Japan. The gravitational attraction of Chinese culture was greatly enhanced after the Sui and Tang restored imperial unity early in the seventh century. The next three centuries saw a sustained and massive absorption of influences from China into the emerging Japanese state.

The founder and architect of the program of Sinification was Crown Prince Shotoku, related on his mother's side to the Soga, a great clan of Korean immigrant origin. He promulgated a seventeen-article constitution in 604, adopting the Buddhist Tripitaka and various Confucian principles of loyalty and service to the state and the emperor. Another major and lasting innovation was the adoption of the Chinese calendrical system. He also launched a series of embassies to the Sui, and later Tang, capital at Chang'an, each consisting of several ships and hundreds of men that brought back Buddhist Confucian texts and other artifacts of mainland civilization. The embassies continued long after his death in 622. Several Japanese also studied religion, statecraft, and other arts in China before returning with the benefits of the knowledge that they gained. All this is very reminiscent of Japanese involvement with the West after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. In 646 the so-called Taika Reforms were undertaken, involving a wholesale reform of the Japanese government, legal system, and administration on Chinese lines.

New capitals, on the lines of Chang'an, were set up at Nara from 710 to 754, and later at Heian (Kyoto) from 794, to be the centers from which the new imperial system was to radiate. It was not easy, however, to graft impersonal Confucian principles, based on merit and performance, on to the Japanese reality of personal and regional affiliations. Increasingly, the outward forms of bureaucratic and Chinese imperial logic and efficiency came to be supplemented by the substance of Japanese clan-based and local relationships. The sophisticated metropolitan Heian culture was eventually to give way to the cruder reality of provincial warlords and a Japanese variant of feudalism.