

# ASIAN HISTORY

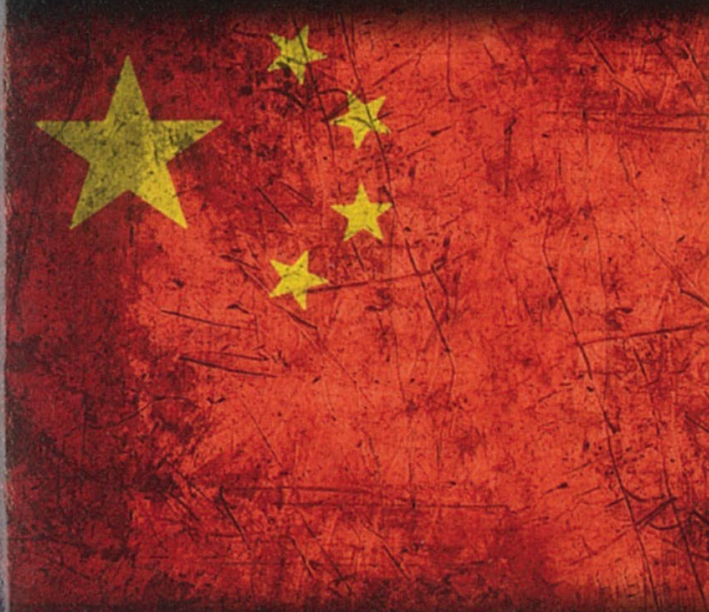
## BUNDLE I

*Asian History: India, China*

### CHINA INDIA

*History of China - History of an Empire  
A Historical Overview of China & East Asia.  
Including Ancient China, Communism & Capitalism*

*History of India  
From Prehistoric Settlements to  
the Modern Republic of India*



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EDWARD PANNELL





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# Asian History, Bundle I

## *Asian History: India, China*

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# India

## *History of India: From Prehistoric Settlements to the Modern Republic of India*



# Introduction

## LEAN STONE BOOK CLUB



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*"India is the cradle of human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and*

*most instructive materials are treasured up in India only.”*  
(Mark Twain)

This quote perfectly summarizes the essence of India, its culture, and its history. The truth is that few countries on Earth have had such an unprecedented pace of development.

India is the place of creativity, is the place of numerous cultures and religions, tongues and races. It represents a unique combination of elements that distinguish it from other nations.

Fortified by constant flows of migration and marauders from other lands, each of them has influenced, to some extent, the Indian's perception of life. India's culture teaches us about the gentleness of the human mind, tolerance, and the importance of promoting an understanding spirit and a pacifying love towards all humans.

In this book, we will briefly present the predominant aspects that shaped India and made it turn into what it is today – the largest democratic country in the world whose unity in diversity concept makes it stand out.

We will take you on a discovery journey starting from ancient India, medieval India, the colonization, its political approach and place in the world, indicating how this country continues to evolve in spite of all the hardships it surpassed throughout the centuries.

How did everything start? What are the very grounds of the Indian society? What are the primary elements that shape their culture and what makes it so special and unique? This brief book aims at answering these questions and many others, enhancing your understanding of India.



# Chapter 1 - Ancient India

India's history is a compelling epic of a unique civilization. The name *India*, in truth, is derived from the Indus River. In the famous Indian epic *Mahabharata*, the name *Bharata* appears, which makes reference to the ancient mythological emperor.

Based on Puranas (historical/religious texts) originating from the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, Bharata was the one that conquered the entire sub-continent of India, governing the land in harmony and peace. Consequently, the land was given the name Bharatavarsha – which means the sub-continent of Bharata.

Considering that the hominid activity in the Indian sub-continent goes back to 250,000 years, it is considered one of the oldest inhabited places on Earth. Numerous archaeological excavations have brought to the light valuable artifacts used by early humans – stone tools included. This indicates a quite early date for human habitation in the region.

## ***The Vedic Period (c.1700 – 150 BCE)***

Around 1500 BCE, the Indo-European people migrated to India. Apart from bringing their spoken language, they also brought their religious beliefs with them.

It is believed that the Aryan influence has determined the rise of the Vedic Period in India. This timeframe is featured by a rural lifestyle, and the locals' devotion to the religious texts known as *The Vedas*. These collect a conglomeration of songs and stories related to Hinduism.

Although the religious beliefs that were typical of the Vedic period are thought to be much older, it was during this timeframe that these ideas were recognized as the religion of *Sanatan Dharma*, whose translation is *Eternal Order*, today referred to as Hinduism. A fundamental doctrine of Hinduism is that there is purpose and order in the universe and every

human's life. If one accepts this order, he/she will live life properly.

This belief was perfectly illustrated in the Vedic period, as during that time, the society flourished considerably. Governments have been institutionalized, and significant social customs were fully integrated into the locals' everyday lives.

During the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, religious reformers Siddhartha Gautama and Vardhaman Mahvira created two religions, namely Buddhism and Jainism, in this way breaking away from Hinduism. These religious changes played an important part in the cultural and social turmoil, which was accompanied by the establishment of city-states and the rise of grand kingdoms – an example would be the Kingdom of Magadha under Bimbisara's government.

The urbanization and civilization raised the attention of Cyrus, the ruler of the Persian Empire. As a result, he invaded India in 530 BCE, initiating a campaign that aimed at conquering the flourishing region. In ten years' time, India was led firmly by Darius I, controlling the regions we know today as Pakistan and Afghanistan. An immediate consequence was the adaptation of Indian and Persian religious beliefs.

### ***People and Society in Ancient India***

In Ancient India, people were typically healthy and fit and pursued various skills and occupations. That is widely attributed to the availability of various means of sustenance and the abundance of fresh drinking water. The land was fertile and had a wide variety of trees, crops, and plants. Apart from that, metals such as gold, copper, silver, and iron were extensively used in order to create weapons, ornaments, jewelry, shields and other useful articles.

The social structure of the time included seven castes, without



promoting oppression or gradation. At that time, there weren't any slaves in the Indian society, as the individual freedom of each man was respected.

The writings from that time highlight a well-functioning, well-established society that has flourished over an extensive period to accomplish its status.

Nevertheless, by the time of Hiuen Tsang (7<sup>th</sup> century), the social structure has changed, becoming a bit more rigid, noting a range of divisions between castes in terms of behaviors and styles. Still, irrespective of this change, no instance of conflict, harassment or oppression has been noted.

Another noteworthy element that featured the society at that time was the significance of the right functioning of the army. Generally, the art of warfare was taught to kids from an early age. Only the bravest and strongest could enter the military service.

### ***The Great Empires of Ancient India***

Persia ruled over northern India until Alexander the Great conquered the land in 327 BCE. One year after that, Alexander took the next step by defeating the Achaemenid Empire, in this way conquering the entire Indian subcontinent. Once again, this change brought a mixture of foreign influences, which determined the rise of the Greco-Buddhist culture. This had a notable impact on all cultural areas in Northern India, from the way people dressed to religion and art.

Relics and statues from this period indicate Buddha and other important figures, and the typical Hellenic pose and dress were commonly met.

After Alexander's departure from India, a new era begins – the era of the Mauryan Empire (322 – 185 BCE), being ruled by Chandragupta Maurya, the first emperor of the Mauryan Empire.



Beforehand, India included a small number of independent states, except the Magadha Kingdom, which was governed by the Nanda dynasty. In this respect, Chandragupta would be the first one that would unify India. Chandragupta's son, Bindusara, expanded the empire, his reign being followed by Ashoka the Great, under whose reign the land attained supremacy from numerous points of views.

For starters, he took action by conquering the Eastern city-state of Kalinga. However, this action resulted in the death of approximately 100,000 people. Being appalled by the level of destruction and death his action brought, he turned to the teachings of Buddha, in this way promoting Buddhist principles and teachings. As a result, he constructed numerous Buddhist monasteries, donating to Buddhist communities.

Nonetheless, his devotement determined a strain in the government, from both political and financial points of view. His grandson – Sampadi, didn't see eye to eye with him on the matter. What is more, by the end of his reign, due to his regular religious donations, the government treasury exhausted. After his death, the decline of the empire followed.

The country was divided into smaller empires and kingdoms – this timeframe became known as the *Middle Period*. During this period, the trade with Rome increased, being followed by Augustus Caesar's conquering of Egypt in 30 BC. Before, Egypt would be India's prime trade partner. This time monitored exceptional individual and cultural developments, which is why this is thought to be the Golden Age of India – under the reign of Gupta Empire.

The founder of the Gupta Empire was Sri Gupta (240-280 CE). It is believed that he was part of the merchant class, which makes his rise to power rather unusual for the time being. His reign would stabilize India from numerous points of view. Domains such as mathematics, technology, architecture, literature, philosophy, science, engineering, astronomy,



religion, art and many other were revolutionized at that time. This resulted in some of the most notable achievements of the era.

Furthermore, the *Puranas of Vysa* were created during this period, just as the renowned caves of Ellora and Ajanta, featuring beautiful vaulted rooms and unique carvings. Aryabhata, the eminent mathematician, discovered the significance of the concept of zero, which he is given credit to have invented. Concurrently, Varahamihira aimed at exploring the vast domain of astronomy.

Considering that the founder of the Gupta Empire wasn't an advocate of Hinduism, it is not wrong to say that Gupta Rulers promoted Buddhism as the official, national belief. As a result, on sites such as Ellora and Ajanta, there is a multitude of Buddhist artwork, instead of Hindu artwork.

### ***The Decline of an Empire and the Beginning of Islam***

Due to a succession of unsuitable leaders, the empire experienced a steady decline, and it collapsed around 550 CE. The rule of Harshavardhan (590-647) replaced the Gupta Empire, who was a well-read man with outstanding achievements. Being a devout Buddhist, he forbade the killing of animals. Nonetheless, he still acknowledged the need to *sometimes* kill in military battle.

Under his reign, the north of India developed beautifully. Still, the kingdom disintegrated after his death. The repeated invasions of the Huns had been successfully held off. Still, after Harshavardhan's death and the fall of the kingdom, their invasion was inevitable. Chaos divided India into a wide range of little states that lacked the power and means to fight against powerful forces.

Another notable moment is when Muslim General



Muhammed bin Quasim subjugated northern India. After the Muslim invasion, independent city-states or communities governed by a city became the standard form of government. In today's region known as modern-day Pakistan, the Islamic Sultanates rose, spreading towards the North West.

As a result, the Islamic Mughal Empire didn't encounter a lot of difficulty in conquering the region. From that point onward, India was influenced, to some degree, by various foreign powers (Portuguese, British, French), until it finally won its independence in 1947 CE.

### ***Misconceptions about Ancient India***

Did it ever happen to you to get into an argument regarding a historical aspect? In such situations, it could be rather challenging to pinpoint the truth and make the difference between a false and real affirmation.

On that note, in this section, I will address the most common myths and assumptions regarding ancient India and the Vedic period.

#### **1. Women Were Conveyed as Being Inferior to Men**

Without a doubt, this is one of the most widespread misconceptions. In truth, in the Vedic society, women were treated with noteworthy respect. As a result, they were included in both social and domestic works, where they co-operated with men. While their main responsibility was to be respectful wives, they benefited from proper education, as well.

That being said, in the Rig-Vedic age, women such as Ghosa, Mamata, Biswabara and others accomplished proficiency in distinct branches of Scripture or Shastra. What is more, some of these women even became renowned composers of Vedic

hymns.

And that is not all, apart from the literary pursuit, women also had the possibility of learning the art of warfare.

As for widow or child marriage, these weren't practiced during that time. The sati burning practice neither. Nevertheless, a common habit at that time was marrying the brother's childless widow. On the whole, the standards of women's moral character were pretty high, and their role in the society was important, contrary to popular belief.

Nevertheless, in the later Vedic period, the women's status was lower than previously. As a result, they didn't have the right to inherit. Apart from that, they didn't have political rights either.

## **2. In the Early Vedic Period, People Were Discriminated**

Discrimination is, until our day, a common concern and source of problems. That being said, it is easy to assume that this was an issue, centuries ago, including in the early Vedic period when the world's countries weren't as civilized as they are today, right? Nevertheless, it appears that in the early Vedic period, there wasn't a caste/color discrimination in the Indian society. The profession wasn't conveyed as something hereditary, and exogamy wasn't frowned upon.

Exogamy refers to the custom of marrying outside of a tribe, community or clan. What is more, there weren't any additional religious or moral restrictions that were imposed on the society.

So, how was the society organized? It was divided into three classes: landed aristocrats and warriors, priests and commonalty.

This division was made to ease the economic and social



organization of the Vedic society, which makes sense.

Nevertheless, the color and class discrimination started to expand as a result of the wars that took place from that point onward. Hence, it appears that the military conflict was the primary root to discriminatory problems.

### **3. Education Wasn't a Priority in Ancient India**

Education has been important in the Indian society since the times of the Vedic civilization. There are two famous renowned universities, which are also known to be the oldest in the world, namely Nalanda University and Takshashila University.

The later was established approximately 2700 years ago. More than 10,500 students came here, from across the world, in order to become specialized in their fields of study. The university provided educational preparation in surgery, politics, agriculture, philosophy, the Vedas, grammar, astronomy, archery, warfare, dance, commerce, music and so on. Chinese travelers make reference to Takshashila University in their writings, which outlines its importance during that time.

As for Nalanda University, it originates from the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It continued to flourish until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, being the first university in the world that featured residential quarters for both teachers and students. This university was acknowledged as a first-class learning center, as students from China, Japan, Tibet, Korea, Turkey, Indonesia, and Persia would come to study here.

Nevertheless, due to the Muslim invasion in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, most universities (Nalanda, Vikramashila, Telhara, Somapura Mahavihara, Odantapuri, and others) were destroyed. Hence, this has led to the decrease of ancient Indian scientific development in astronomy, anatomy, alchemy, and mathematics.



## ***Fun Facts!***

Next, I would like to introduce you to a range of interesting facts regarding ancient India. These will definitely broaden your perspective and comprehension.

- Ayurveda is reckoned as the most ancient school of medicine. Additionally, it was developed primarily by Charaka, an eminent Indian physician, during those ancient times. As you probably already know, it is the only system that conveys medicine from a holistic viewpoint.
- Ancient Indians benefited from effective water harvesting. In truth, the first reservoir and dam for irrigation were constructed in Saurashtra.
- Sushruta was a renowned physician in ancient India and conducted challenging surgeries such as fractures, brain surgery, cesareans, and many others.
- Chess was a widespread game and occupation in ancient India. At that time, it was referred to as *Chaturanga*, which meant four members of an army.

## ***If It Were Your Choice***

- What would you have done if you were Muslim General Muhammed bin Quasim? Would you have chosen to subjugate India because the country was divided into numerous states? Or would you have chosen otherwise?
- If it were your choice, would you have invaded India in 530 BCE (as Cyrus, the ruler of the Persian Empire chose to do)? What would have influenced your decision and why?

## Chapter 2 - Medieval India

The medieval period holds crucial importance in the history of India, as it registered a wide range of developments in the field of languages and art. In addition to that, during this timeframe, the Indian culture was significantly influenced by other religions. The medieval period lasted from the 8<sup>th</sup> until the 18<sup>th</sup> century – being divided into two distinct periods: the early medieval period (8<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century) and the late medieval period (13<sup>th</sup> century – 18<sup>th</sup> century).

The early medieval period noted a number of wars among regional kingdoms from the south and northern India, while the late medieval period witnessed the invasion of Muslims, Turks, Afghans, and Mughals. Some historians consider that the medieval period in Indian history commenced with the arrival of the Turks, who brought a new religion that changed the Indian society on all levels.

This time witnessed the rise of a number of important dynasties such as the Cholas of Southern India, the Mughals of northern India, the Rajput of western India, and many others. Now we would like to present the most notable aspects of Medieval India.

### ***The Chola Dynasty***

Chola Dynasty was one of the leading powers in India who ruled over an extensive timeframe. Originally, their beginnings go as back as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, and they maintained their power and position until the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

From the 9<sup>th</sup> century until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Cholas ruled from Tamilnadu to Southeast Asian nations - Chola mandalam region. Since the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Chola became the strongest dynasty located in southern India. Their army and navy were powerful and well-prepared.



In addition, during their regime, both Jainism and Buddhism flourished beautifully. Apart from that, areas of fine arts, literature, and metal casting reached new accomplishments. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the establishment of Vijayanagara is noteworthy – also known as Karnataka, this state was the proof of Indian development. There are various inscriptions on temple walls that talk of the functioning and organization of village councils during the Chola Kingdom.

## ***Delhi Sultanates***

The Delhi Sultanate was the first Islamic Empire in India's history, ruling from 1206 to 1526. It was made from former Muslim slave-soldiers, known as *Mamluks*, who established the dynasties that ruled in India during that timeframe. In spite of their significant cultural impact, the sultanates weren't that powerful, which is why they didn't last for too long.

Each one of the Delhi Sultanates initiated a process of accommodation and assimilation between the Muslim culture and the traditions and religions of India.

The Mamluk Dynasty was founded in 1206 by Qutub-ud-Din Aybak, who was a Central Asian Turk and also a former general for the Ghurid Sultanate – a Persian dynasty of majestic importance that ruled over the territory today occupied by Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Northern India.

Still, his reign was pretty short, and it was his son-in-law, namely Iltutmish, who would actually put the grounds for the sultanate in Delhi.

The second dynasty of the Delhi Sultanates was the Khilji Dynasty. It was named after Jalal-Ud-Din Khilji, as he assassinated the last ruler of the Mamluk dynasty. However, his fate wasn't a lucky one considering that he was killed by his nephew – Ala-ud-Din Khilji, who would become known as a tyrant.



Nonetheless, he was also the one who kept the Mongols from entering India. During his reign, the country experienced a rapid expansion in its Central and Southern parts, where he grew the taxes to increase his treasury and equip his army. Soon after his rule, the dynasty would crumble.

Moving on, the Tughlaq Dynasty managed to keep control over India from 1320 to 1414. Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq succeeded in expanding the borders of the dynasty, and they reached the south-eastern coast of modern-day India. This way, India was the largest it would be during the Delhi Sultanates.

However, this didn't last for long, as Timur invaded India in 1398, destroying Delhi and massacring the locals. After the invasion, a family claiming to descend from Prophet Muhammad started governing over northern India – in this way establishing the grounds for the dynasties to come – the Sayyid Dynasty and the Lodi Dynasty.

## ***The Mughal Empire***

The Mughal Empire was established by the Mongol leader Babur, in 1526, after he defeated the Ibrahim Lodi, at the first Battle of Panipat. That fight was the very first time when gunpowder was used in India. *Mughal* is the Indo-Aryan version of the word *Mongol*. They retained significant customs of the Mongol culture, and their religion was Islam.

Under the reign of Akbar the Great, the Mughal Empire expanded considerably and consistently, and it continued down this path until the end of Aurangzeb's rule. This was due to more than the military victories he accomplished; the empire under the reign of Akbar is distinguished for the excellent administrative organization and coherent policy – these are the main aspects that sustained the empire for approximately 150 years.

He set the solid grounds for correct provincial administration,