

HISTORY OF ASIAN NATIONS

Gregorio F. Zaide

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By

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“May all the nations of Asia, all the nations
of the world, always remember that all men are
brothers under the fatherhood of the Divinity.”

— POPE PAUL VI
Bombay, December 2, 1964


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PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION

Since the publication of the first edition of this book in 1969 many changes, brought about by the flowing tides of time, have profoundly transformed the Asian world. The long and wearisome Vietnam War (1956-1975) had ended with victory to Communist Vietnamese forces, aided by Red China and the Soviet Union, and the collapse of Democratic South Vietnam. The triumph of communist arms not only in Vietnam, but also in Cambodia (1975) and Laos (1975) marked the dominance of communism in the whole Peninsula of Indochina and the eclipse of America's influence in Asia.

Other wars which rocked Asia and caused deep concern among the nations of the world since 1969 were the Third India-Pakistan War (1971) and the South Arab-Israeli War (1973).

And since 1969, new Asian nations have emerged into the limelight of history, as follows: Bangladesh (May 26, 1971), Bahrain (August 14, 1971), Qatar (September 1, 1961), Oman (September 1, 1971), and the United Arab Emirates (December 2, 1971).

Asia is the battleground of two clashing ideologies — democracy and communism. Two of the world's superpowers — the United States, as the champion of democracy, and the Soviet Union, as the palladin of communism, are presently engaged in a deadly due (sans conventional or nuclear war) for supremacy in the Asian world. For whoever would control Asia shall rule the world.

Many books on Asia have already been written and published by historians, mostly Western historians. Some of these Western-penned books on Asian history, notably Claude A. Buss, Albert Bronson, John F. Cady, D. G. E. Hall, Brian Harrison, Dould Lach, Robert Payne, Jan Romein, and Thomas Welty, are distinguished for their excellent scholarship and impartial judgment. Many, nonetheless, of the Western-written books on Asia are below par, historically speaking.

It is my sincere opinion that Asian history should better be written by Asian historians. For only Asian historians can fully and truly depict Asia's aspirations, feelings, and thoughts. Only Asians, born on Asian soil and of Asian ancestry, can rightly and sincerely feel the heartbeats of Asia and interpret the dreams and yearnings of the Asian nations.

For whatever error or inaccuracy that perceptive readers may find in this book, I am solely responsible. I will welcome and acknowledge with gratitude any constructive criticisms or suggestions which may improve this book for future editions. As Goethe once said: "Errors are made to find the truth."

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CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE TO ASIAN HISTORY

Many people, particularly the Westerners, know so little of Asia that they are woefully unaware of the great role which Asian nations play in the grandiose epic of mankind. As the eminent Italian scholar, Professor G. Tucci, frankly admits: "We, Westerners, full of complacency, are unfortunately ignorant or mistrustful of Asia." It was indeed in Asia where history began and where the earliest civilizations blossomed. Asia, truly, gave the world the first system of writing, the first religions, the first arts and sciences, and the first inventions and discoveries. It is also in Asia where the future destiny of the human race may be determined in God's own time. As rhapsodized by Douglas Mallock in poetic sonority:

"Men look to the East for the dawning things,
For the light of the rising sun . . .
To find the hopes that they hoped of old —
For there in the East, men dream the dreams
of the things they hope to do."

The Orient and the Occident. The world is really one, just as mankind is one. For the sake of convenience, geographers have sliced it into two parts: the Orient and the Occident. The Orient is the East, the Asian world, the region of the rising sun; while the Occident is the West, the European world, the region of the setting sun.

Truly, there is neither Orient (East) nor Occident (West) because Asia and Europe constitute one vast land mass called Eurasia. The map-makers conveniently divide it by drawing an imaginary line from the Caspian Sea northward along the Ural Mountains to the Arctic Sea. Somewhere on that imaginary line, upon the highest pass of the Urals, there stands a big stone cross which bears the word ASIA on the side facing the east and the word EUROPE on that facing the west. The distinction made by the stone marker is, of course, illusory. "But illusions of this sort," comments Dr. Herbert H. Gowen, "have had a very powerful influence on the course of history."

Asia, World's Largest Continent. Of the seven continents of the world, Asia is the largest. Her total area is 16,989,000 square miles, which comprises one-third of the earth's land surface and is bigger than the combined areas of North and South America or more than four times the size of whole Europe. Sprawling like a sleeping giantess halfway across the globe, she is bordered on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the east by the Pacific Ocean, and on the west by the Ural Mountains, Caspian Sea, Black Sea, and Aegean Sea. She is separated from North America by the narrow Bering Strait and from Africa by the man-made Suez Canal. In the

southeast, she is linked by tropical islands which serve as stepping stones to Australia, the smallest continent in the world.

Physical Features of Asia. Asia is the most diversified and most rugged of the world's continents. She has towering snow-capped mountains, land-locked bays, navigable rivers, cool plateaus, arid deserts, verdant valleys, extensive forests, picturesque lakes, and cascading waterfalls.

From Asia's heartland radiate mountain ranges in nearly all directions. Among them are the mighty Himalayas ("Abode of Snow"), the Hindu Kush, the Kunlun, the Altai, and the Zagros. On western Asia are the Ural Mountains and the Caucasus Range. The Caucasus is famous in song and story, for it was on its rocks, according to Greek mythology, where Prometheus was chained by the irate Zeus for giving the fire of the gods to mortal men.

Asia has many peninsulas which stretch out like the arms of an octopus, notably Europe, India, Indochina, Malaya, Korea, and Kamchatka. These peninsulas contain excellent harbors and bays.

God has endowed Asia with numerous rivers that serve as highways of commerce and communication. Three of these rivers drain into the Indian Ocean — Indus River, Ganges River, and Brahmaputra River. Four rivers — the Amur, the Huang Ho (Yellow River), the Yangtze, and the Si Kiang — drain into the Pacific Ocean. One mighty river, the Mekong runs through three of Asia's "rice bowls" (Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam) and joins the South China Sea. The historic twin rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, flow down into the Persian Gulf. Siberia's great rivers — Ob, Yenisey, and Lena — drain into the Arctic Ocean.

Climate and Rainfall. Asia has all kinds of climate known to man, ranging from the freezing cold of Siberia's Arctic region to the scorching heat of Central Asia's deserts. Rainfall is extremely scarce in Central Asia, abundant Southeast and South Asia, and relatively little in the Middle East. The town of Cherrapunji in Assam, India, holds the world's record of the heaviest annual rainfall — 10,417 inches from August 1, 1890 to July 31, 1891. The Philippines however, holds the world's record of the heaviest 24-hour rainfall — 979.4 millimeters on October 17, 1967.

One of the driest deserts on earth is Kara Kum in Turkmenistan (Soviet Central Asia). Water in this arid region is more precious than gold, so that the hardy, desert-bred Turkmens have a popular saying: "A drop of water given freely to a thirsty traveler washes away the sins of a thousand years."

Siberia still holds the record of the lowest temperature known to man — 90 degrees below zero Farenheit registered in 1892. In the United States, the lowest temperature ever recorded is 70 degrees Farenheit below zero at Roger's Pass, Montana, in 1954.

Geographical Regions and Countries of Asia. The Asian world is divided into the following geographical regions and countries:

1. **EAST ASIA.** Western authors with their Europeo-centric mentality, call this region the "Far East," for it is that part of Asia farthest east of Europe. In early times, European navigators had sailed far into the East to reach Cathay (China) and Zipangu (Japan). To Asians, the term "Far East" is irrational, for it has no geographical validity. The countries in East Asia are the People's Republic of China, Taiwan (Nationalist China), Korea (North and South), and Japan.

2. **SOUTHEAST ASIA.** In this region are located the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Burma, Vietnam (North and South), Cambodia, and Laos.

3. **SOUTH ASIA.** The countries in South Asia are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Himalayan kingdoms (Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim), and the Republic of Maldives Islands.

4. **CENTRAL-NORTH ASIA.** The countries in this vast region are Afghanistan, the Mongolian People's Republic, and Soviet Asia (Siberia and Soviet Central Asia).

5. **MIDDLE EAST.** In former years this region was called by Western cartographers and writers as the "Near East" because it lies near Europe. It is located mid-way between the Far East (East Asia) and Europe. The countries in the Middle East are Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, North Yemen (Yemen Arab Republic), and Southern Yemen (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen).

The four countries in the Middle East, namely, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel, are collectively called the Levant, a French term for the lands east of the Mediterranean Sea.

Egypt, by accident of geography, is in Africa. Historically and culturally, she belongs to Asia. As a leading member of the Arab world, she is Asian in religion, language, civilization, aspiration, and destiny.

Asia's Rich Natural Resources. Almost all kinds of plants, animals, and minerals are found in this vast continent. About 50% of the world's coal deposits and 60% of the world's oil reserves lie beneath Asian soil. The oil-rich countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and the Persian Gulf sheikdoms are virtually floating on an ocean of oil.

The People's Republic of China produces one-half of the world's supply of antimony (mineral used in the manufacture of steel) and one-third of tungsten (mineral used in making electric bulbs). Malaysia is the world's greatest producer of rubber and tin. Indonesia is the world's greatest producer of kapok, pepper, and quinine. Among the world's nations, the Philippines ranks first in coconut and hemp production, second in sugarcane, and fifth in tobacco.

About 90% of the world's supply of rice comes from Asia. Burma, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines are among the great "rice bowls" of the world. Most of the world's supply of teak comes from the jungles of Borneo, Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand. Bangladesh is the world's greatest producer of jute, the tough fiber used for making sacks.

Asia contains one-fourth of the world's forests. The boundless forests of Siberia, with a total area of 2,700,000,000 acres, are notably rich in timber

furs, and mineral resources. In Asia are found numerous streams and waterfalls which are capable of producing tremendous hydroelectric power for industrial purposes.

Asia's Natural Wonders. Asia has innumerable wonders of nature which titillate man's imagination. On the Nepal-Tibet border looms in majestic somnolence the world's highest peak, Mt. Everest (29,028 feet high), aptly called the "King of the Mountains."¹ For centuries, many bold mountain climbers from all corners of the globe tried to reach its snow-bound summit, but failed. It was not until May 29, 1953 that this formidable mountain was finally conquered by two men — Tenzing Norgay of Nepal and Edmund Hillary of England.

The world's lowest land depression is the Dead Sea (1,302 feet deep) at the Israel-Jordan border. The mighty Pacific, largest ocean of the world, washes the eastern shores of the Orient. The world's deepest ocean depth is the Philippine Deep (37,782 feet below sea level) along the eastern rim of the Philippines.

The world's largest archipelago is Indonesia, consisting of more than 3,000 islands with a total area of 741,030 square miles. The Caspian Sea² (143,550 square miles in area) in Siberia is the largest lake (inland sea) on earth. Lake Baikal (5,710 feet deep), also in Siberia, is the world's deepest lake. The largest bay in the world is India's Bengal Bay, with a shoreline of 2,250 miles. The world's longest strait is the famous Malacca Strait (between Malaya and Sumatra), which extends for 485 miles. The narrowest strait in the world is the San Juanico Strait between the islands of Samar and Leyte in the Philippines. The world's "most sacred mountain" is Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka which is visited yearly by thousands of Buddhists, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian pilgrims who pay homage to the footprint impression at its summit.³

The Philippines has her share of Asian natural wonders. Among them are Mt. Mayon in Bicolandia, the only volcano in the world with an almost perfect cone; the tamaraw of Mindoro, the smallest and rarest buffalo in the world; the *Pandaka pygmaea*, the world's smallest fish; the fabulous "Pearl of Allah," the world's largest natural pearl, which is 9½ inches long and 5½

¹ Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain, was named after the British explorer, Sir George Everest, who first surveyed the mountain and fixed its location and altitude in the year 1841.

² The ancient Roman conquerors extended their Asian conquests as far as the shore of the Caspian Sea and found its water to be salty. Hence, they named the sea the Mare Caspiu (Salty Sea). Geography-wise, the Caspian Sea is really a lake, for it is a body of water completely surrounded by land.

³ According to Ceylonese tradition, Adam was hurled "from the seventh heaven of paradise for his sin, and alighted on one foot on the mountain, thus leaving the indentation of a foot-print still to be seen on the summit." (Vide Harry Williams, *Pearl of the East*, p. 155.)

inches in diameter, weighs exactly 14 pounds and valued at \$3,500,000;⁴ and the famous Manila Bay sunset, extolled by foreign travelers and writers as "the most beautiful sunset in the world."

Man-made Wonders of Asia. To supplement the God-given wonders of their countries, the Asians built wondrous monuments, temples, palaces, and other structural masterpieces which have survived the ravages of time, to enchant and delight all viewers, including the Westerners.

The Great Wall of China is the most colossal edifice ever fashioned by human hands. It was built two centuries before Christ by Emperor Shih Huang Ti (220-221 B.C.) of the Ch'in Dynasty as a defensive rampart against the marauding Tartars. Extending 1,700 miles long across North China, it took more than ten years to finish, during which period more than 200,000 men labored on the gigantic project. It is called the "Largest Cemetery in the World" because thousands of laborers who died during its construction were buried at its foundation.

Very much older than China's Great Wall are the famous pyramids of Egypt. The greatest of these pyramids is the Great Pyramid of Giza, which was built by Pharaoh Khufu (3098-3075 B.C.). Like China's Great Wall, the pyramids of Egypt have successfully defied the mighty onslaughts of time. "All the world fears Time," says an Arab proverb, "but Time fears the Pyramids." The Great Pyramid was built in 20 years by 100,000 men, mostly Asian captives (Mesopotamians, Hittites, and Jews).

The world-famed Ifugao rice terraces of the Philippines is another of Asia's man-made wonders. Built about 2,000 years ago on the slopes of the towering mountains of Northern Luzon by bare human hands, these terraces escalate like colossal stairways into the clouds. If placed end to end, they would extend more than 14,000 miles, eight times longer than China's Great Wall or more than half the circumference of the earth.

The renowned Taj Mahal (Crown of the Palace), a magnificent marble tomb in Agra, India, is hailed by Western writers as "the most beautiful and most perfect of all buildings in the world." It was built by the Mogul emperor, Shah Jahan (1627-58), in memory of his favorite wife Mumtaz Mahal (Chosen of the Palace), who died in 1631. More than 20,000 artists and craftsmen from Asia and Europe toiled for 22 years to finish it.

Most gorgeous of all royal thrones in the world today is the gem-studded Peacock Throne of Iran. It was made by order of Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834) of the Qajar Dynasty, being a replica of Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan's famous Peacock Throne which was looted in 1739 by Nadir Shah, Iranian conqueror, in Delhi, and later dismantled to defray the extravagances of the Iranian royalty. Exquisitely designed in peacock motif and artistically incrustured with multicolored gems, it was the cynosure of international atten-

⁴ The "Pearl of Allah was originally found by a Filipino Muslim diver in the Palawan Sea in 1934 and gave it to his tribal chieftain. Two years later the Muslim datu gave it as a gift to Mr. Wilburn Dewall Cobb of California for having saved the life of his son. (See "Fabulous Philippine Pearl of Allah," *The Asia Magazine*, June 28, 1964.)

tion during the impressive coronation ceremonies of Shahinshah ("King of Kings") Reza Pahlavi at Tehran on October 26, 1967

In the romantic city of Samarkand in Soviet Central Asia, is the Gur Emir, the imposing tomb of Tamerlane or Timur the Lame (1336-1405), one of the world's dashing conquerors. It is a towering edifice, with a double series of pointed arches on either side of an arched doorway surmounted by a huge onion-shaped dome. Inside is the conqueror's sarcophagus, constructed of solid black nephrite, containing the following inscription: "Were I alive today, mankind would tremble."

Other man-made wonders of Asia are the Borobodur in Java, a massive masterpiece of Indonesia's Buddhist architecture; the Angkor Wat in Cambodia, most splendid of the Khmer temples; the Shwe Dagon, the fabulous golden pagoda in Rangoon, Burma; and the famed Dome of the Rock (also known as Mosque of Omar), a holy Islamic shrine, in Jerusalem.

Asia, Home of More Than Half of Mankind. Asia is the most populous continent in the world. More than half of mankind live in Asia. According to latest demographic statistics, out of the estimated 4,044 billion total population of the world, 2,304 billion live in Asia. By 2,000 A.D, Asia's population will soar to 3,700 billion.

In Asia are found almost all races of man. The black race is represented by the Negritos (Itas) of the Philippines, Chuyees of China, and Semangs of Malaysia. The Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Mongolians belong to the yellow race. The Aryan or Indo-European branch of the white race is represented by the Afghans, Iranians, Hindus, and Pakistanis. The Semitic branch of the white race is represented by the Arabs, Israelis, Iraqis, Syrians, and Yemenis. The Filipinos, Indonesians, and Malaysians represent the brown race. The ancestors of the American Indians, who belong to the red race, were Asians who migrated to North America via the Bering Strait during prehistoric ages.

As children of God, Asians are human beings endowed with universal traits of character, such as bravery in combat; generosity to enemies; hospitality to strangers; love of peace, freedom, and justice; passion for beauty, music, and arts; respect for authority and elders; affection for children; and loyalty to ancestors, family and God.

Asians may have different culture, language, religion, and political philosophy; but, above and beyond these diversities, they are one. They are linked by their common Asian heritage, their common aspiration for freedom, their common pride as Orientals, their common hatred of colonialism, and their common destiny. Like the Westerners, they have their misunderstandings, national jealousies, and regional conflicts; but, they also know how to patch up their quarrels and wars and live together in friendship and peace.

Asia's Contributions to Mankind. Asia is more than the world's largest continent and the home of more than half of mankind. For she was the cradle of man, history, and civilization.

Of all the continents on earth, Asia has contributed the most to mankind. Among her contributions are the following:

1. Asia is the birthplace of the human race. According to the Old Testament, God created the first man (Adam) and first woman (Eve) and let them live at the Garden of Eden, which is believed to be somewhere in the Fertile Crescent. Relics of pre-historic men have been discovered by archaeologists in Asia notably the "Java Man" (*Pithecanthropus erectus*) and the "Peking Man" (*Sinanthropus pekinensis*), both of whom are said to have lived about 500,000 B.C.

2. Asia is the cradle of civilization. Archaeology and history attest that the earliest civilizations emerged in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley of Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley of Egypt, the Plateau of Iran, the Indus Valley of India, and the Huang Ho Valley of China. All these ancient civilizations, with the exception of Chinese civilization, have gone on the wings of Time. The Chinese civilization, still existing, is the oldest civilization of our own times.

3. Asia is the homeland of the world's great religions. Christianity originated in Palestine, Hinduism (Brahmanism) and Buddhism in India, and Islam in Arabia. Other religions of lesser stature are also Asian in origin — Judaism in Israel, Confucianism and Taoism in China, Shinto in Japan, and Zoroastrianism in Persia (Iran).

4. Asia produced the first inventions and discoveries. The ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia invented the first plow and first wheel and they also invented the first writing called cuneiform (from Latin *cuneus* meaning wedge and *forma*, form). The Babylonians invented the sexagesimal system in mathematics (calculation by sixties) and devised the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac. The ancient Egyptians invented the first calendar and discovered the science of embalming to preserve the human cadaver for centuries. They also built the first pyramids. The Hittites were the first people in history to mine iron and to manufacture iron tools and weapons. The Lydians were the first people to use gold and silver coins. The Phoenicians invented the alphabet which the Greeks later improved. The Hindus of ancient India invented the zero sign and the numerals in mathematics. These Hindu numerals came to be known as the "Arabic numerals" because the Arabs spread them to Europe. The ancient Chinese invented the compass, gunpowder, printing, and paper money. They also introduced the use of silk, ceramics, tea, and rockets in warfare.

5. Asia had spawned great personalities, whose names now adorn the pages of world history. Among them were the founders of the world's great religions — Buddha (ca. 566-486 B.C.), Christ (4 B.C.-A.D. 29), and Muhammad (A.D. 570-632); sagacious philosophers, notably Ptah-hotep of Egypt, Confucius of China, Patanjali of India, and Avicenna (Abu Ali ibn Sina) of Iran; gifted men-of-letters, such as Li Po and Tu Fu of China, Kalidasa of India, Firdusi and Omar Khayyam of Iran, and Chikamatsu Monzaemon of Japan; magnificent monarchs, notably Nebuchadnezzar of Mesopotamia, Pharaoh Thutmose III of Egypt, Cyrus the Great of Iran, King Solomon of Israel, Emperor Yung-lo of China, Emperor Asoka of India, King Parakrama the Great of Sri Lanka, Caliph Haroun al-Raschid of Baghdad, Sultan Suleiman the Great of the Ottoman Empire; and Emperor Mutsuhito of Japan; mighty thunderbolts of war, such as Attila the Hun, known as the "Scourge of God," Genghis Khan of Mongolia, Tamerlane of Samarkand, Sultan Muhammad II of the Ottoman Empire, the conqueror of Constantinople, and Hideyoshi of Japan; and also fabulous women — Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt, the world's first woman ruler; Empress Wu Ti, China's "Woman Warrior;" Queen Balkish of Sheba;

Pan Chao, greatest woman historian of China; Tzu Hsi, famous Chinese Empress Dowager; Lady Murasaki, Japan's famous woman novelist; Mumtaz Mahal of India, for whom Emperor Jahan built the renowned Taj Mahal at Agra, which is acclaimed as "the most beautiful of all the world's tombs;" and the celebrated Trung sisters (Trung Trac and Trung Nhi), the two "Joans of Arc of Vietnam."

The Greatness that Was Asia. Western authors, owing to ignorance or bias has denigrated the history of Asia in order to glorify the history of the West. The truth of the matter is that the role played by Asia in world history is no less fruitful and more exciting than that of Europe.

History began in Asia, where the earliest civilizations bloomed. At the dawn of recorded time, when Europe was a *terra incognita*, the first empires emerged in the Asian world — Babylonia, Assyria, and Chaldea at Mesopotamia; Egypt at the Nile Valley; Persia at the Iranian Plateau; and China at the Huang Ho Valley. When the ancestors of the Europeans were still naked savages in the howling wilderness of their homelands, the Asians were already basking in the splendor of their civilizations, making and writing the history of their times, and piling up vast material treasures (gold, precious gems, and art objects) which centuries later dazzled the eyes of European adventurers and colonizers.

The first Asian invasion of Europe was launched by Persia during the so-called Persian Wars (492-497 B.C.). It was however, repulsed by the Greeks in Marathon (490 B.C.), Thermopylae (480 B.C.), Salamis (480 B.C.), and Plataea (479 B.C.). In retaliation, Alexander the Great, youthful Macedonian king, invaded Asia and conquered Asia Minor, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, and North India. But he himself was conquered by the Asian civilization which he admired and adopted. After his death, the empire which he founded crumbled to pieces. An enduring effect of his conquests was the Asianization of the European culture. Out of the blending of the Hellenic and Oriental civilizations arose the Hellenistic culture.

Many years after Alexander, Rome became the mistress of the Western world. Her daring legions conquered Western Asia (except Arabia), but were checked by the Parthians, superb Asian warriors, near the Tigris River. These Parthians annihilated the Roman army led by Crassus in 53 B.C. and proudly exhibited Crassus' head and the captured battle-standards of the vanquished Romans in Ctesipon, capital of the Parthian Empire. In 36 B.C. Mark Anthony, in an attempt to avenge Crassus' humiliating defeat, invaded Parthia but was disgracefully driven back.

More than two centuries later, another Asian conqueror, Shapur I of the Sasanian Dynasty of Persia, routed the Roman army near Edessa in A.D. 265 and captured its commander, Emperor Valerian. Both Parthians and Sasanians checked the expansion of imperialist Rome in Asia.

Western historians do not give due attention to the fact that at the time the Roman Empire was dominating Europe, another empire — the Chinese Empire — was flourishing in Asia. This Asian empire was more durable than the Roman Empire, for it outlived the latter by many centuries. According to ancient records, an embassy sent by the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius,

arrived at Loyang in A.D. 166. Long before this date, China was already having trade intercourse with the Levant via the famous "Silk Road" which passed through the romantic cities of Bokhara and Samarkand. Her greatest export, silk, was in great demand in the cities of Western Europe, including Rome.

When Rome fell in A.D. 476, the so-called Barbarians, including the Huns and Magyars from Asia, smashed the Roman Empire and plunged Europe into chaos. The centuries following this calamitous event, popularly known as the "Dark Ages" (476-1000), marked the intellectual eclipse and socio-economic stagnation of the Western world. While the Europeans were floundering in the morass of cultural decadence, Asia was ablaze with resplendent civilization and material prosperity. The torch of world culture burned high and bright in China under the T'ang Dynasty (618-907), in India under the Gupta Dynasty (32-647), and in the Arabian Empire under the Muslim caliphs (632-1055).

Asia's Dominance of Europe. Prior to the 16th century, Asia was superior to Europe in military power. At least, four times Asia's dashing conquerors crushed the steel-clad knights of Europe in combat.

First, the Arab hordes of Islam, following Prophet Muhammad's death in A.D. 632, propagated by fire and sword the Islamic faith in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia; and advancing westward, they conquered North Africa and Spain. History shows that Spain was under Moorish rule for almost eight centuries (711-1492).

Next came the fiery Seljuk Turks, who sprang from Turkestan about the middle of the 10th century. After their conversion to Islam, they overthrew the Abbasid Caliphate in 1055 and conquered the Holy Land (Palestine). Their desecration of the Holy Sepulcher and other holy relics of Palestine ignited the Crusades (1096-1291), in which thousands of Christian knights invaded Asia to liberate the Holy Land from the infidel Turks. These Crusades, which were romanticized by Western writers because of the exploits of King Richard the Lion-hearted of England and the Knights Templar, were virtually an armed struggle between Asia and Europe as well as a war between the Cross and the Crescent. The Muslim warriors of Asia triumphed, so that the Holy Land remained in the hands of the Muslim Asians.

During the last century of the Crusades while the European knights were reeling before the smashing onslaughts of the Muslim warriors, the terrible Mongols (Tartars) from the desert wastes of Mongolia erupted to power. Under the able leadership of Genghis Khan (1167-1227), they galloped across Asia's heartland, conquering fortified kingdoms and burning rich cities. In due time, they established a vast empire which extended from China and Mongolia in the east to Russia, Poland, and Hungary in the West. No European armies could stop the avalanche of Mongol conquests in Eastern Europe. So frightened were the European nations by the Mongol invasion that Pope Innocent IV, King Louis IX of France, and other European monarchs dispatched envoys bearing gifts and diplomatic letters to the Mongol

Khans, soliciting friendship and peace. The mighty Genghis Khan, "Emperor of All Men," was a greater conqueror than Alexander, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon Bonaparte.

Also from Asia came the Ottoman Turks who swept like a forest fire across Western Asia and assaulted Europe, shaking the very foundations of Christendom. After conquering Asia Minor, the Byzantine Empire, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Arabia, they conquered North Africa, Greece, the Balkan Peninsula, and Hungary. Twice, in 1529 and in 1683, they attacked Vienna but were repulsed. However, they dominated the Mediterranean Sea, which was transformed into an "Ottoman Lake." Their finest hour struck on May 29, 1453 when Sultan Muhammad II captured Constantinople (now Istanbul). The fall of this famous city, Christendom's last bastion on the Asia-Europe border, marked Asia's ascendancy over Europe.

Europe's Dominance over Asia. In the flow and ebb of centuries, the tides of history turned in favor of Europe. In due time the Asians, corrupted by power and wealth, browsed in the glow of their past glories and lost their vigor; while the Europeans, energized by the Renaissance, were busy making better weapons, improving their technology of navigation and warfare, and pushing the frontiers of their scientific knowledge.

Beginning the 16th century, Europe plunged ahead and grabbed from Asia the mantle of leadership in global affairs. Her bold navigators crossed the seas to the East, followed by traders, missionaries, and colonizers. So it came to pass that the imperialist Western powers — Portugal, Spain, England, Holland, France and Germany — conquered the countries of Asia, looted their wealth, and imposed their rule and civilization on the helpless Asians.

By the early decades of the 20th century, the Western powers were luxuriating in their colonial empires in the Asian world. Poor Asia, deprived of her freedom, agonized in shame and humiliation. Her manpower and natural resources were exploited by her colonial masters for the glory of the West.

Contributions of Asian Colonies to Western Powers. The colonies of Asia contributed to the economic prosperity, political grandeur; and imperialist prestige of their Western masters.

First, Asian colonies supplied the much needed raw materials for the burgeoning manufacturing industries of Great Britain, France, the United States, and other Western powers, thereby enabling them to expand their economy, to give jobs to millions of their laboring masses, and to grow richer.

Second, Asian colonies served as lucrative markets for the manufactured products of their colonial overlords. India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Hong Kong, and other British colonies east of the Suez Canal became Great Britain's best markets in the Asian world. The Netherlands East Indies was Holland's best market in Asia, with Indochina for France and the Philippines for the United States. The subjugated Asians learned to wear Western clothes, to smoke Western cigarettes, to drink Western wines, to eat