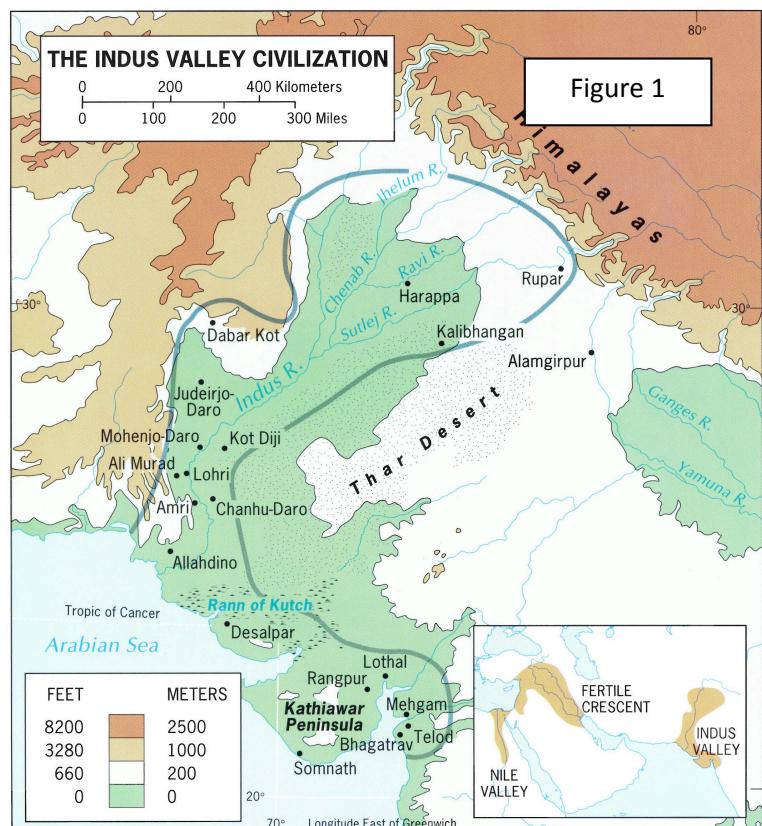


PAKISTAN: ANCIENT HISTORY

The country of Pakistan is quite young. It came into existence in 1947. However, the area in which the present country is located is the heart of one of the oldest civilizations on earth. The agricultural settlements along the Indus River Valley existed thousands of years ago. The culture that grew from this area formed the basis for culture for South Asia as it diffused across the Subcontinent. In this multi-millennial drama, several successive cultures would emerge as invasions and internal modifications united the fortunes of the area with the rest of the Subcontinent. Based on the Indus River, the entire area would long become known as India. Only after the 1947 partitioning would the Indus River become the home of a separate political entity and distinct cultural area. Although this vast span of history does not yield itself to tidy packages of time, below is a brief review of the major epochs in the story of the history of Pakistan.

Early Indus River Valley Settlements 3000 – 1900 B.C.

Settlements along the Indus River (see Fig. 1) have existed for several thousand years, perhaps as early as 6000 years ago.¹ The Indus supplied the water upon which irrigation systems were built. This eventually led to the creation of cities. Harappa and Kalibangan in the Punjab, and Mohenjodaro in the Sindh were three significant centers. Knowledge of the Indus Valley culture is not as extensive as other ancient cultures such as those of Egypt or Mesopotamia. The ruins of Harappa were first investigated only in 1850. Still many propose that the morphology of the ruins excavated, including two story houses, indoor plumbing, municipal granaries and sophisticated water systems suggest that it



¹ Jaffrelot, Christophe, ed. *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins*. London: Anthem Press, 2002.

may have been the first organized urban settlement civilization in the world.²

In both Harrapa and Mohenjodaro early forms of writing have been discovered that have yet to be deciphered. Although trade took place between ancient Sumner in Mesopotamia, the writing is not related to the early cuneiform of Sumner indicating that the Indus Valley civilization was an independent creation.³

The time frame of the Indus Valley civilization is hard to determine. Most likely urban settlement started around 3000 – 2500 B.C. The civilization continued for some time with apparent success. In addition to the trade connections alluded to above, it may have also had connections to Egypt and to the Levant. It went into decline, perhaps because of environmental reasons, and was decaying by about 1900 B.C.⁴

Aryans Migrations

The Sanskrit word Arya means noble or pure. The term Aryan is applied to the people who brought this language to the Indus River Valley. These people originated somewhere in Eastern Europe or South Central Asia. They migrated to the Indus River valley in the centuries after 1800 B.C. Although their culture was not as sophisticated as the Indus, the Aryans did possess an advantage in warfare technology and culture. They were successful in defeating the local peoples and began making the Indus Valley their new home. The migrations occurred over centuries during which time, Aryans intermixed with the local population and Aryan cultures intermixed with local cultures. Perhaps most significantly Aryan gods intermixed with the local gods. The transculturation created what most people would recognize today as the roots of Hindu philosophy. These roots include spiritual texts, gods, and the caste system.⁵ This philosophy with modifications would gradually diffuse to the Ganges River area and to other parts of Northern India. It is the primary culture that first unites the two great river valleys together.

Vedic Cultures 1000- 500 B.C.

This period of time represents the maturation of the Aryan dominated culture to new Indian culture. This was a time of technical, scientific, and philosophic innovations throughout the Indus and Ganges river valleys. Knowledge from South Asia, including the development of “Arabic numerals” and steel making, diffused to the west and to China, and advances in west were transmitted to South Asia. During this time, the center of Indian culture was shifting more

² Ibid.

³ Murphey, Rhoads. *A History of Asia*, 5th ed, Pearson, 2006.

⁴ Murphey, supra.

⁵ Included in the sagas of the invasions from the Aryan perspective was the concept of a superior people conquering an inferior people.

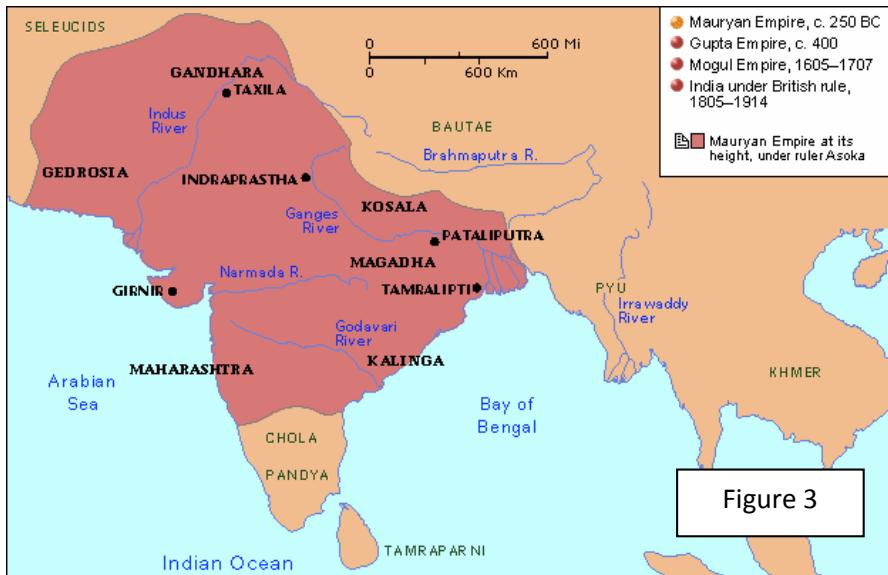
to the Ganges. Then present day Pakistan consisted of small regional governments within a much larger common culture.

Alexander the Great 326 - 325 B.C.

After conquering Persia, Alexander the Great continued his conquests to the East. He expanded his kingdom all the way to the Indus (See Fig. 2). There he encountered one of his hardest battles against Porus, the king of West Punjab. After defeating him, Alexander made him an ally.⁶ Alexander was in Pakistan only two years but his effect was long lasting. Greeks intermarried with local people in the Indus area and Hellenic culture added yet another ingredient to Indian culture in the Indus area.

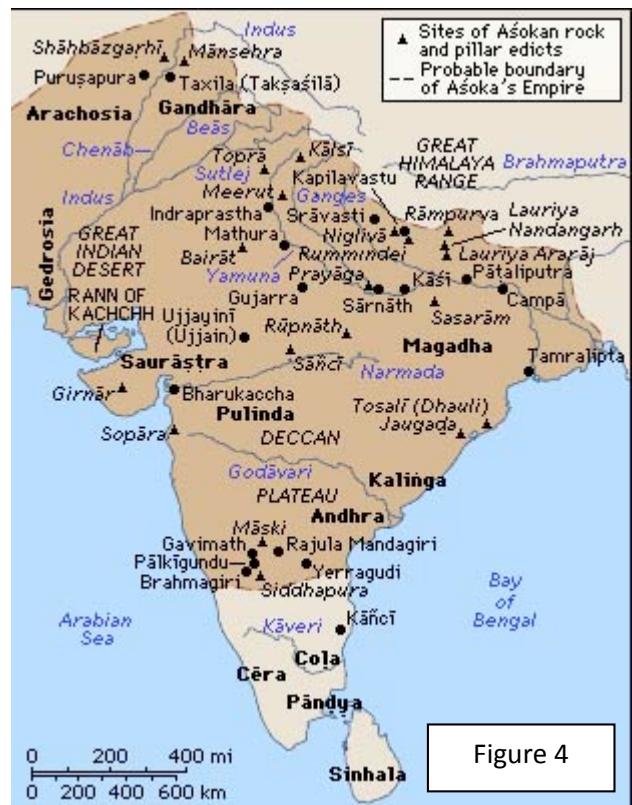


⁶ Macrohistory and World Report at <http://www.fsmitha.com/h1/ch13.htm>



Empire.⁸ He later reinforced his strength by defeating Seleucus I in 305 B.C. who had attempted to take back the Indus region. The Maurya empire had its capital in present day Bihar. However it included almost all of the present day Pakistan in the northwest, even Baluchistan and parts of Afghanistan. (See Fig. 3)

This Maurya empire reached its height under Chandragupta's grandson Ashoka. Early in his reign he was known for leading campaigns of expansion, in fact he was known as a ruthless conqueror. However after one particularly brutal conquest in which 100,000 were killed, he had a change of heart. Thereafter he became famous for promoting co-existence, non-violence and righteous conduct. He also converted to Buddhism and for a short time Buddhism was the integral part of religious practice in India. He is also known for inscriptions of edicts and proclamations on rock pillars throughout India. (See Fig. 4) These remain as reminders of his brilliant reign.



Maurya Empire 322 – 180 B.C.

The first real Indian empire was established by an Indian prince, Chandragupta Maurya following Alexander the Great's withdrawal. When he was young he had met Alexander and it was foretold that he would be royalty.⁷ He conquered the weak local groups in the Indus and established the first true Indian

⁷ *Macrohistory and World Report* at <http://www.fsmitha.com/h1/ch13.htm>.

⁸ *The Bamboo Grove* at <http://thebamboogrove.blogspot.com>.

Greeks and Kushans 180 B.C. – 200 A.D.

After Ashoka's death, the Maurya empire decayed until about 180 B.C. After that time, India fell back to the default system of small local kingdoms and was open for invasion, again from the northwest. Demitrius, a Greek and king of Bactria, invading Western India through the Khyber Pass, controlled the northern Indus River Valley. At this time present day Pakistan was in effect ruled as part of present day Afghanistan. Meander, successor to Demitrius, led an unsuccessful invasion of the Ganges, but in the process converted to Buddhism and brought these ideas back to Bactria.⁹ Pakistan continued to be ruled by Greeks until the time of Hermaeus when the Indus River area was successfully invaded by Parthians and Scythians, known locally as Sakas. Another wave of conquest came from the Kushans in the first century A.D. The greatest Kushan king, Kanishka expanded his kingdom to the middle of the Ganges, uniting Greek, Saka and Indian kingdoms. Like Meander, Kanishka adopted Buddhism. It would later diffuse to China from Bactria.¹⁰

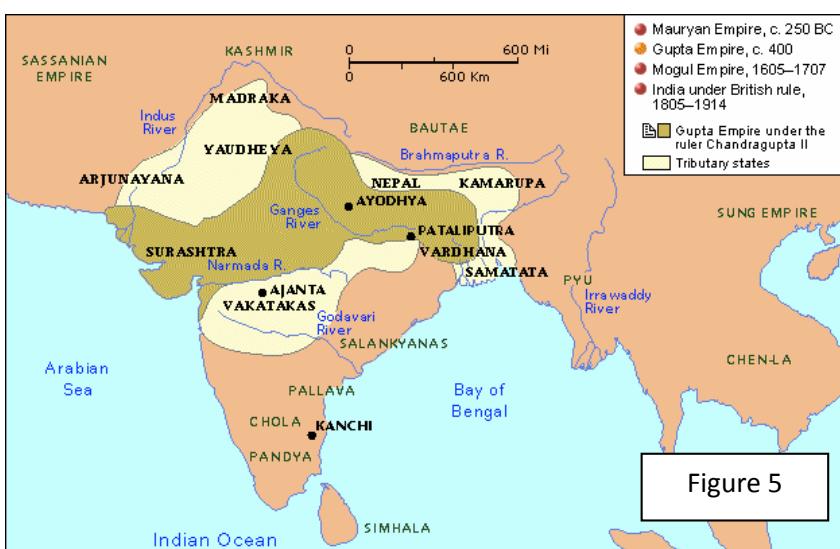
Gupta Empire 320- 550

The Gupta Empire is sometimes known as the golden age of Indian culture. It was a time of extensive cultural achievements especially in religion literature, drama and art. This empire's spatial extent is similar to the Maurya empire. (See Fig. 5) It arose as contact with the Mediterranean world diminished with the reduction of Roman power and the rise of the Sassanid rulers in Persia.¹¹ The empire was founded by Chandragupta I in the lower Ganges River

Valley. It eventually expanded southward (but did not include the far south of India) and westward. The westward expansion under SamudraGupta in the mid-fourth century annexed much of today's Pakistan east of the Indus River. Most of Punjab and Sindh provinces were included in the Gupta Empire.

Harsha 606 - 648

The Gupta empire was overrun by the White Huns from Central Asia around 550 A.D. The next hundred year period was again a time of small kingdoms. A brief period of renewal was had when Harsha Vardhana reunited Northern India for at least a short time. His empire did not



⁹ *Macrohistory and World Report.*

¹⁰ Murphey, *supra.*

¹¹ Murphey, *supra.*

extend beyond his lifetime. His influence also was somewhat mixed in regards to present day Pakistan. Western Pakistan was essentially beyond the Indian realm at this time.

Following the death of Harsha Vardana, South Asia began a period that is called the Medieval Times or the Dark Ages. Like Europe there was little political unification. Rather, there were many regional kingdoms and invasions, usually from Central Asia. A new invasion however would change South Asia forever and set in motion the forces that would eventually lead to a separate Pakistan. This was the spread of Islam to the east.

Islam

The Sindh was the first area to be contacted by the Islamic world. It was conquered in the eighth century. Along with a religious conversion there were economic benefits to the control of this region as well.¹² It wasn't until much later that a Turk, Mahmud of Ghazni,¹³ attacked India and spread Islam. He attacked the upper Indus and Western Punjab from Afghanistan. His raids from 1001 to 1027 did account for some conversions, and even more wealth. Hindus and Buddhists were viewed as pagans by the pious Mahmud. By 1200 the Punjab and the Ganges River valley had been conquered.¹⁴ This first Turco-Afghan Islamic kingdom, ruled from Delhi was known as the Delhi Sultanate.

Delhi Sultanate 1206 - 1526

The Delhi Sultanate ruled at least parts of this area from for 300 years. During this time the power of the sultanate in Pakistan waxed and waned. Gradually, the Muslim rulers allowed Hindus to practice their religion instead of forcing conversion, but they always enforced the second class status due infidels. An impressive feat that should not go overlooked is the defeat of the Mongols at the hands of an oppressive sultan, Ala-ud-din. Other sultans had a less unified kingdom. One was killed in the Sindh region of Pakistan while trying to put down a rebellion. Following Tamerlane's successful invasion, first conquering the Punjab and then entering Delhi in 1398, the sultanate underwent one more revival under the Pashtun Lodi dynasty. The Pashtuns, ruling from Delhi were successful for a time but their rule was effectively ended with the death of Sikander Lodi in 1517. The Delhi Sultanate represents another era of transculturation in which many of the aspects of Hindu culture were influenced by outside forces, in this case Islam and by Persian culture more generally.¹⁵

¹² Murphey, *supra*

¹³ Ghanzi is located in Afghanistan between Kabul and Kandahar.

¹⁴ Murphey, *supra*.

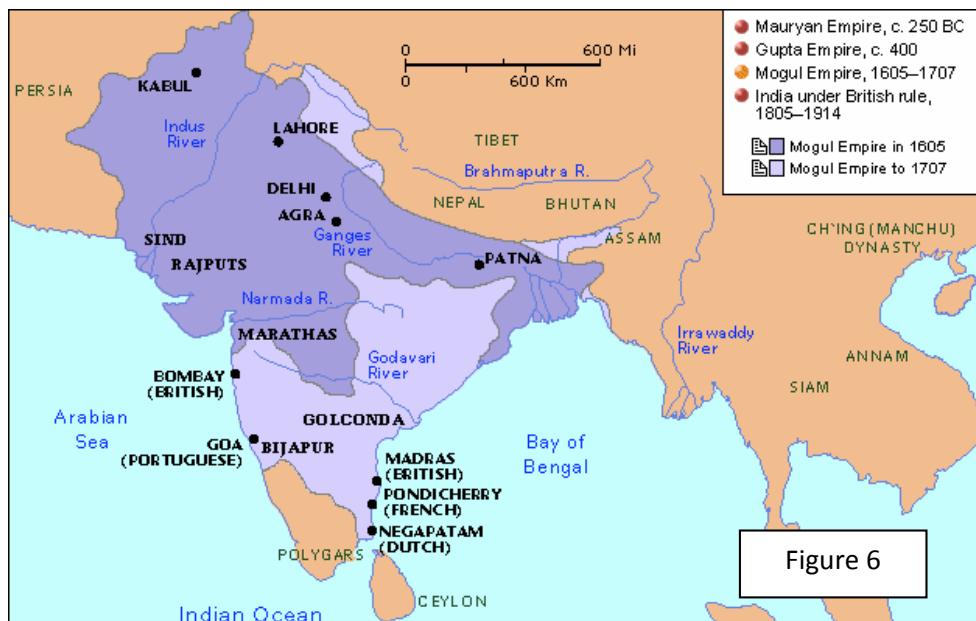
¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Mughal Rule 1526 - 1707

The Mughal period began when Babur, the ruler of Afghanistan, responded to the request of the local governor in Lahore for help from the Lodis. Babur invaded the Punjab and overthrew the Lodis in 1526. He established a new powerful Muslim dynasty called the Mughal dynasty which stretched from Afghanistan to the Ganges Brahmaputra delta. (See Fig. 6). Babur, who claimed to be a descendent of Tamerlane, chose to name the new dynasty, Mughal a term derived from Mongol. The Persian influence of the Mughals was strong. Persian, the language of government merged with local languages evolving into Hindi and Urdu,¹⁶ thus being a very important influence on Pakistan in its modern form.

The Mughals ruled for nearly 200 years. Initially they were very successful under leaders like Akbar who was famous for his interest in learning, tolerance, and wise political judgments. But as time went by the succession to the Mughal throne became a contest in assassination. Perhaps it

was this violence that begat so much oppression of Hindus and others under Mughal rule. The height of the persecution of non-Muslims came under the rule of Aurangzeb who came to the throne in 1658. He tried to suppress Hindu worship, re-imposed the jizya tax,¹⁷ resumed forced conversion, ordered all Hindu temples and schools demolished, renewed military conquests, abandoned alliances with non-Muslims, and was especially brutal to a new religious group that had emerged in the Punjab, the Sikhs. By the time of Aurangzeb's death the economic system was in ruins, the treasury depleted by war, and religious divisions intensified to the point of no return.



¹⁶ Murphey, *supra*

¹⁷ A tax levied on Hindus for not being Muslim.

British India

The conditions of Mughal India coupled with the rise of European powers augmented the ability of European nations to dictate India's future. The most successful European power was Britain. At first their engagement with South Asia came in the form of the British East India Company. The company was able to carry out its commercial mission in a chaotic spatial environment by establishing forts and creating private armies for protection. The British took advantage of local hatred for the Mughals filling the voids of power and economics, sometimes with the willing help of locals who were desperate for order and hoped to increase in their own economic fortunes.¹⁸ They would often secure trading rights by offering protection to Indian princes. Thus, under the auspices of a private company, the British began to expand not only their trade but their control of South Asia.

As the British increased their affairs and control in South Asia, reaction against them increased. This was certainly the case in what would become Pakistan and Afghanistan. In response to Russia's move south into Central Asia, the British tried to expand their territory to the north. They took over the Sindh in 1839 on their way to Kabul. Eventually they were forced to leave Kabul in 1843 and retreat to Peshawar, most of the army and civilians being killed by Afghan tribes along the way. Although they gave up on Kabul, they kept the newly acquired Sind.¹⁹ Punjab was brought under the control of the British in an effort to link their trading areas in the far corners of India.

Following the fiasco in 1843 and the revolt of 1857, the British, in a move to consolidate their power in India, made the Crown more directly responsible for governance in India. Much of the current political structure of Pakistan comes from this move. The province of Punjab²⁰, annexation of Sindh, province of Baluchistan, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir; the Baluchistan Agency, and the Northwest Frontier Provinces were all created during this period. (See Fig. 7.) Some Pakistani cities were founded by the British, most importantly the mammoth city of Karachi, established as a trading port city on the Arabian shore west of the Indus Delta.

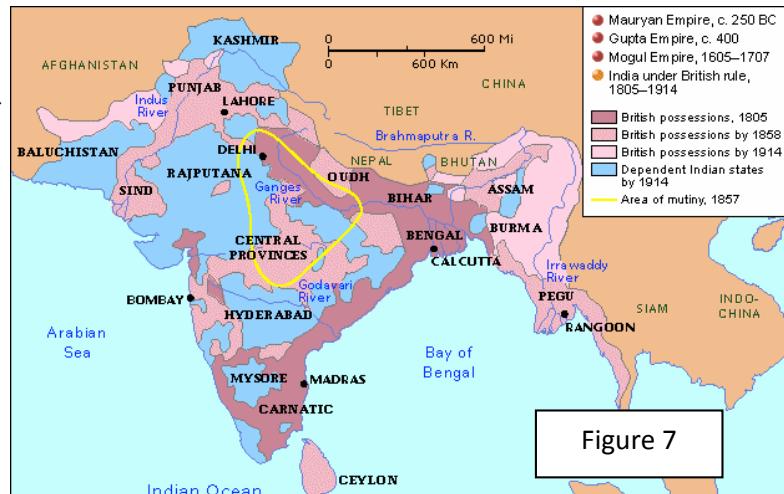


Figure 7

¹⁸ Murphey, *supra* at 290.

¹⁹ Ibid. at 269 (actually re-annexed in 1843).

²⁰ Until 1947 including Indian Punjab.

Additional Resources:

Dig deeper into the early Indus civilizations by reading about Mohenjo Daro excavated in the mid-20th century. Go to <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/ancient/mohenjo-daro.html?fs=travel.nationalgeographic.com>.

Investigate the debate about the Aryan migration. You can also explore other periods of history on this site: <http://www.thenagain.info/webchron/india/AryanMig.html>.

Explore the “Geographic Two Nation Theory” at:

<http://www.zimbio.com/pilot?ZURL=%2FIndus%2BValley%2BCivilization%2Farticles%2F7%2FPakistan%2BBactrian%2BHellenistic%2BParthian%2BGandharan&URL=http%3A%2F%2Frupeenews.com%2F2007%2F11%2F27%2Fthe-geographic-two-nation-theory-pakistan-existed-5000-years-ago%2F> Why is connecting Pakistan with the past important? Would this idea have been common prior to the partitioning? This is not a scholarly journal, but the article and comments reveal two very different views of South Asia.

Look into the fascinating life of Ashoka. Would you sum up his life as good or bad? Check him out at: <http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html> (long version), and at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashoka_the_Great (short version).

Who was Shah Jahan and what has the Taj Mahal got to do with Pakistan? Visit: <http://www.islamicart.com/library/empires/india/shahjahan.html>.

Pashtun or Pakistani? Consider the role of local tribalism and codes of honor that may be more powerful than the national government by going to <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DE6DC1E3EF932A15753C1A9679C8B63&scp=1&sq=Afgan%20and%20Pakistani%20Tribe&st=cse>.