Chapter 1

Introduction
INTRODUCTION

Chinese porcelain, a lustrous, hard and exceptionally refined white ware remained one of the most significant items of import in India from China between 10th century CE to 18th-19th century CE. A high-fired ware, porcelain was different from the other ceramics both in composition and technique. It was manufactured using two main ingredients, fine white clay - *gaoling* (kaolin) and a white stone - *baidunzi* (petuntse). The refinement and decorations on porcelain made it especially famous amongst the kings, royals and rich merchants, including India. Porcelain was a distinct and precious ceramic which is why kings and royals used to carry it with themselves wherever they travelled. The belief that porcelain can detect poison in the food made it a must-have item in the royal kitchens. Porcelain was very beautiful and could equate with the utensils of gold which is another reason of its high status. The mention of porcelain’s beauty and hardness has been noticed in the literary accounts of Al-Beruni (11th century CE), Marco Polo (12th century CE), and Ibn Battuta (13th century CE).

Porcelain known for its superior quality, shine and polished surface became a trademark of China and was produced in different shapes and sizes during the period of Song (960-1279 CE), Yuan (1280-1368 CE), Ming (1368-1644 CE) and Ch’ing (1645-1911 CE) dynasties. It has different varieties such as white porcelain, celadon ware¹, blue-and-white porcelain, red-and-blue porcelain, over-glaze enamel porcelain, red-and-white porcelain, green-and-white porcelain, red-and-green porcelain, etc. It was one of the most exotic goods reached to India in large quantities, evidence of which has been reported from 117 archaeological sites in India². It proves active trade of porcelain between India and China which continued for more than 800 years.

Historically, the two most ancient civilisations of Asia - India and China had contacts since antiquity. *Cina* referred in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* has been identified with China (Ray 1995: 179). These relations prospered during the rule of Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) when the land route through Central Asia began to develop in 2nd-1st century BCE (Bagehi 1950: 8). The trade interactions between India and China were first carried out through the land route i.e. the Silk Road. The land route was a linkage between east and the west, traced by nomads, traders and travellers...
thousands of years ago (Wood 2002: 13-23). The term Silk Road was first mentioned by a German geographer, Ferdinand Von Richtofen in his book *China* published in 1887 (Wang 2012: 13). The term was accepted universally for the long and strenuous route which was once used by the merchants travelling in large caravans for exporting several precious items including silk and porcelain.

The Silk Road, bifurcating and stretching around 4,350 miles from China to Rome connected India with Central Asia, West Asia and Europe. It passed through the tough terrain of Gobi desert and crossed some of the important trading stations such as Anxi, Dunhuang, Turfan, Kashgar, Khotan, Tashkent, Samarkand, Merv, etc. The Silk Road was a way to enter in India as it connects with pair of roads diverting in different directions.

The Silk Road had two branches, the northern and the southern. Amongst these, the southern Silk Road (*Nanfang Sichou Zhilu*) was more important for India. An internal trade route from Yunnan in China, passing through Myanmar, Sadiya, Kapili, Guwahati, Tezpur connect China with both northeast and east India (Ray 1995: 188). Another internal route from Bactria passing through Taxila connected Silk Road to Barygaza (Bharuch) in India. Bactria which was one of the significant trading stations located on the Silk Road. For centuries, the southern Silk Road remained a colourful corridor between South Asia, Southeast Asia and China because it has been receiving people from different regions of various cultures, religions and languages (Allchin 1968: 23).

The trade activities were also carried out using the Spice Route (maritime route). The sea route started gaining popularity during the 8th-9th century CE when the inland route became dangerous due to constant attacks of the bandits. Literary evidence of travellers, Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta and Friar Jordanus have mentioned about trade between Quanzhou port of China and the Malabar Coast. The ports of Calicut and Kollam on Malabar Coast were frequently visited by the Chinese merchants using large Chinese junks of three to twelve sails (Yule and Cordier 1998: 37; Gibb 1994: 813). The Song and Yuan dynasties traded their goods along with porcelain after discovering ways via Kollam, Khambat and Malwa in India. A wide variety of goods
were exchanged using both the maritime and inland routes such as spices, horses; semiprecious and precious stones, gold, silver, silk, porcelain, etc.

In the 11th-12th century CE, the demand of porcelain increased substantially. Looking at the high demand of porcelain, merchants found it more convenient and safe to export it through the maritime routes. Several shipwrecks carrying porcelain have been discovered between India and China but so far no Chinese shipwreck is discovered in Indian waters. The present knowledge about the maritime trade between India and China is thus based on literature and stray finds.

The discoveries of Chinese porcelains in good quantities reported from the coastal sites in India suggest that there were regular trade between India and China through maritime route. The evidence of a Song period’s celadon jar from Settur in Tamil Nadu (Karashima 2009: 241) and the celadon ware potsherds reported from Arikamedu in Puducherry (Wheeler et al. 1946: 91-92) are the earliest known finds of Chinese porcelain in India. These findings confirm import of porcelain in India in around 10th century CE.

The demand of porcelain was huge that is why potters outside China tried to imitate it though the results could not be equated with the original Chinese porcelain. Till the Ming period, the Chinese potters were manufacturing traditional Chinese porcelain and its demand was high in foreign market. In order to meet this soaring demand, the Chinese potters compromised with the quality. The manufacturing of porcelain as a result started deteriorating during the late Ming period.

In 1645 CE, China was captured by the Manchus who called themselves as Ch’ing. The Ch’ing rulers started manufacturing porcelain according to the styles and shapes preferred by the foreign buyers especially Europeans. The manufacturing of old varieties like blue-and-white porcelain became less and the new varieties of porcelain such as famille verte started becoming popular. By the 18th century CE, the manufacturing of porcelain in Europe also started which broke the monopoly of Chinese porcelain industry. The thesis therefore include the study of different varieties of Chinese porcelain up to the Ch’ing period in general but the porcelain finds in India
Different varieties of Chinese porcelain have been reported from 117 archaeological sites spread across 21 states and Union Territories of India. Finding of Chinese porcelain from such a large number of sites in India, largely reported from port sites/coastal towns, capital cities of medieval period and princely states reflects its popularity and extensive demand among kings and royals.

The Chinese porcelains have been abundantly found in India but are generally neglected assuming a Mughal pottery or glazed ware. The focus on the studies of Chinese porcelain is rather small as compared to its findings on the archaeological sites in India. There is no major work on Chinese porcelain discovered in India besides some initial observations and interpretations. Majority of porcelain collections are simply stored without any analysis.

In most cases, the porcelain types, periods, material, etc. have not been studied. The context of layers on an archaeological site in which porcelains were found was not studied properly. In India, generally, more emphasis is given to pre and proto-historic periods and not adequate attention is paid to the pottery of historical period that particularly foreign pottery. Due to lack of knowledge even systematic documentation of the porcelain has not been done. In the absence of information, often Chinese porcelain has been wrongly identified as Mughal glazed pottery.

This study was undertaken with the objectives of exploration of archaeological sites in India, detailed documentation of finds, systematic classification, minute study of the paintings, symbols and dynastic inscriptions on the pottery, comparative study of the potsherds found at different sites, study of maritime trade between India and China, study of major trading stations in India and its historical significance.

The methodology adopted for the research included exploratory surveys on the coastal and inland sites, re-examination of findings and detailed documentation. Libraries such as Central Archaeological Library and State libraries were utilised. Excavation reports of the sites and other primary and secondary sources were also studied. Data base on
Chinese porcelain of the research centres such as Ashmolean Museum, British Museum, Centre of Asian Studies, Kyoto University of Japan, MMA New York, Oriental Ceramic Society, University of Hong Kong, Victoria and Albert Museum, Washington Museum, etc. were referred for comparative study.

**Chapterisation**

The research has been divided in six chapters.

First chapter includes information on historical contacts between India and China based on the available literary records and previous works done on Chinese porcelain. It also includes literary references on porcelain, other archaeological finds in China of Indian context and vice versa.

According to the literary records of a Chinese historian Ssu-ma Ch’ien written during the Han period and Kautilya’s *Arthasastra*, India and China had trade contacts since 2nd-3rd century BCE which is evident by the use of *cinapatta* (Chinese Silk) and *ki-chok* (bamboo) in India (*Kangle 2000: 74*). Chinese texts written in 1st century CE mentions that a Chinese emperor, Wu-ti (140-86 BCE), had sent a large number of tributes to the king of Huang-che (Kanchi) in India. The trade during this time was carried out both using the land route and the sea route and a variety of goods such as silk, satin, musk, spices, medicinal plants, jewels, glassware, etc. were exchanged. During the Han period, the land route known as the Silk Road was much popular amongst the merchants than the maritime route or the Spice Route.

During the 1st century CE, China expanded its territory but India faced a drastic political change with Kushana dynasty, which caused some interruptions. During the reign of a Kushana king, Kadphises II, the interactions between India and China became unstable for a short period. It prospered again during the T’ang period when Gupta dynasty was ruling in India. It was the period when a Chinese monks, Fa Xian reached India in search of *Vinaya-pitaka* or monastic disciplines. Several Indian monks such as Gunabhadra (435-468 CE), Prajnaruuchi (516-543 CE), Yasogupta (6th century CE), etc. also travelled to China during this period. The Gupta kings maintained strong interactions with China by sending frequent embassies.
During the Pallava period, Xuanzang visited Kancheepuram. In the Chola period, the contacts of India with China proliferated when king Rajaraja I and Rajendra I sent four missionaries to China carrying valuable tributaries which included pearls, ivory, cloves, camphor, rose water, etc. During the Yuan period, eighteen embassies were sent to China from the Malabar Coast. The seven excursions of Zheng He to India in 1405, 1407, 1409, 1413, 1417, 1421 and 1431 CE affirms strong historical connections.

Study of literary records on porcelain includes record of Lu Yu (804 CE) who had described about the origin of tea, methods of preparing it and tea-cups of Chinese porcelain in light bluish tinge. Another important literary record comes from the account of an Arab merchant, Soleyman (8th-9th century CE) who mentioned that vases of porcelain were transparent as glass. Al-Beruni (973-1048 CE) gives a detailed account of the immense care taken by the Chinese potters in the preparation of clay and he also mentions about the apricot coloured porcelain which was translucent. There are a number of Arab, Chinese and European records on porcelain and its trade for example by Wang Dayuan (1349 CE), Marco Polo (1292 CE), Ibn Battuta (14th century CE), etc. They all have mentioned about trade of blue-and-white porcelain between Quanzhou and Malabar Coast. Evidence of Chinese porcelains is also noticed in the illustrations of Mughal manuscripts. The most famous is the Babur-nama, the memoirs of Babur (1483-1530 CE), that were written in around 1590 CE.

A brief review of previous works on Chinese porcelain in India is also included in this chapter. R.L. Hobson (1854) identified pieces of refined white porcelain (10th-11th century CE) with wide flat-footed base found from Brahminabad. He mentioned that the pieces showed similarity with the Chinese porcelain potsherds discovered at Samarra. R.E.M. Wheeler (1945) identified Chinese celadon ware during the excavation of Arikamedu and established a chronology of medieval period in south India. Basil Grey’s work (1964) on porcelain collection of king of Awadh opened a discussion on Chinese ceramics in India. B.K. Thapar (1972) in his paper on excavation at Purana Qila mentioned blue-and-white porcelain. He noted a bowl bearing an inscription in Chinese “made in the great Ming dynasty of the Ch'eng-hua era” dating to the 15th century and another potsherd with a painting and an inscription.
narrating a Chinese tale in verse.

Ellen S. Smart (1976) published her research on the blue-and-white porcelain and celadon ware found from Firozshah Kotla complex. She described these porcelain wares and mentioned that this collection resembled the 14th century Chinese porcelain in the Topkapi Serai in Istanbul, Turkey and those from the shrine at Ardebil in Iran.

John Carswell (1978) surveyed sites such as Champaner, Dhaboi, Gulf of Khabhhat, Bharuch and Surat in Gujarat; Chaul and Koralai in Maharashtra; Old Goa; Sadashirghah, Karwar, Anjediva Island, Honavar, Bhatkal and Mangalore in Karnataka; Cannanore, Tellicherry, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon in Kerala; Virapandiyapattanam, Kayalpattanam, Punnaikayal, Tuticorin, Sadras and Madras in Tamil Nadu, and reported that many of these sites yielded blue-and-white porcelain and celadon, datable to 12th-16th century CE. Noboru Karashima (1980) talks about his extensive work carried out on Chinese porcelain specifically in south India.

The archaeological evidence in the form of Chinese coins, dilapidated structures such as China Pagoda of Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu, bilingual Tamil and Chinese inscriptions found at Quanzhou in China, and porcelain reported at the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts affirms strong historical connections. The details of all the relevant archaeological finds unveil prolific cultural and trade connections which are discussed in this chapter.

Second chapter discusses about the origin of Chinese porcelain, its types and varieties, manufacturing techniques, types of glazes, firing temperatures, shapes and sizes, decorations and designs, inscriptions, etc.

Porcelain, a fine white ware, is famous for its refinement, glaze and hardness. The name 'porcelain' was first referred by Marco Polo as *porcellana*. Polo used this word to describe certain wares he saw in the process of manufacturing. The first record of the use of the term in Europe is in *Maritime Code of Barcelona* (1250 CE), where the Spanish word *porcelanas* also refers to cowrie shells (Carswell 2000: 18).
Porcelain has different varieties such as white porcelain or Hsing which is devoid of any decoration; Yueh celadon, a grayish-green variety which often had moulded rims and decorations; Ting porcelain, white in colour having a golden coloured painted rim decorated with moulded designs of birds and flowers. Other well known varieties were green coloured Longquan celadon bearing moulded designs of lotus petals on outer side; Qingbai celadon with a bluish-white or greenish-blue coloured tinge; blue-and-white porcelain having cobalt blue designs of flora, fauna, religious motifs, landscapes, etc.; red-and-white porcelain having red decoration on white base; blue-and-red porcelain with paintings of red and blue colours on white base; green-and-white porcelain having green coloured design often over the glazed white body of porcelain, etc. The types are also often named on the basis of their manufacturing kilns such as Yuehzhou, Jingdezhen, etc.

The manufacturing of porcelain is a long procedure which requires great effort and time. The technique of porcelain making is still being followed in China. For better understanding, general techniques involved in the manufacturing of porcelain are also included in the chapter.

Techniques of oxidized or reducing were used for firing porcelain to obtain best results. The atmosphere of oxidization was created in kilns to produce clear flame. The reducing technique was commonly used by the Chinese potters. It was created often by closing kiln doors so that the oxygen inside may be reduced. There are a large number of kilns sites in Longquan, Fujian, Dehua, Jingdezhen and Guangdong provinces of China where different varieties of porcelains were manufactured. These sites and the types of different kilns - dragon-shaped, elongated, egg-shaped, etc. are discussed in details.

The aspect of glazing porcelain is an essential part of this study. The transparent glazes as well as coloured glazes were used on porcelain. Green colour glaze consist copper oxide, brown and amber was obtained from iron oxides, and blue from cobalt. The compositions of different glaze types are included in this chapter.

Porcelains are beautifully decorated with different motifs. These motifs have been
classified into flora, animal, mythical creatures, religious symbols, etc. Details and significance of these motifs found on porcelain are also discussed.

During the Ming period, painting and inscribing reign or dynastic inscriptions on the base of the porcelain pieces became a practice. No such dynastic inscriptions are found on the porcelain prior to the Ming period. Every Ming and Ch'ing ruler had dynastic marks which were painted on almost all the porcelain pieces. The Chinese inscriptions were made either by painting in blue under the glaze or by using a stamp seal bearing the impression of the reign mark. The dishes and bowls of porcelain generally bear inscriptions inside the foot-ring of the base. The other large forms such as vases, jars, ewers, etc. bear inscriptions on the neck portion. Sometimes inscriptions are found at more than one place on a single piece of porcelain. The dynastic or reign marks used on porcelain are also listed in the chapter.

Third chapter focuses on trade interactions and contacts between India and China. The trade of a number of commodities between India and China was carried out using the Silk Road and the Spice Route. The Silk Road was not simply one road; it was a pair of roads connecting many important centres such as ancient Tibet, Persia and Mediterranean countries. There were two branches of Silk Road i.e. the northern and the southern. They were further connected with several internal roads. The southern Silk Road starting from the present day X’ian passing through Dunhuang, Kashgar, Samarkand, Merv, etc. connected China and Rome. The internal roads especially the land route from Tamralipti in east and Gujarat in west connected with the southern route which was used for centuries by the merchants, travellers and monks. Although the distance between India and China was shorter than that of Rome and China, but there were many physical difficulties and dangers since the trade had to pass through various regions. The use of Silk Road continued since medieval times but it declined with the invasions of Arabs which made it unsafe. The details of the Silk Road including the trading stations and commodities exchanged are discussed.

The sea route or the Spice Route was in use along with the land route but it developed prolifically when trade on Silk Road declined. The maritime route was also regarded safer. For exporting precious goods such as spices, Chinese porcelain, Chinese silk and
semiprecious and precious stones, sea route was more convenient and profitable.

The Chekiang province of China traded a large number of goods along with porcelain through the maritime trade routes to Quilon (on the Malabar Coast) and Gujarat in India. Travellers such as Marco Polo (13th century CE), Fei Xin and Ma Huan (15th century CE) also speak about the trade between China and the Malabar Coast.

The ships of Arab, South and Southeast Asian origin dominated the maritime lanes between China and the ports in the Indian Ocean. The finds of more than fifteen shipwrecks in Southeast Asia have confirmed the frequent use of maritime route from China to Malabar Coast. The shipwrecks like Belitung (9th century CE), Tanjung Simpang Mengayau (10th century CE), Turiang (1370 CE), Longquan (1400 CE), Xuande (1540 CE), Wanli (1630 CE), etc. traced near Indonesia and Malaysia are some important ones. Details of these shipwrecks, place of origin, probable route and commodities are included in this chapter.

The archaeological finds of Chinese porcelain on the coastal sites of Malabar and Coromandel Coasts corroborates with the literary records of Wang Dayuan (13th century CE), Marco Polo (13th century CE) and Ibn Battuta (14th century CE) confirms India and China strong trade relations during the medieval time. Commodities like silk, Chinese porcelain, perfumes, spices, musk, etc. were imported from China and animals, diamonds, precious stones, spices, silver, gold, ivory, medicines and fine cloth were exported to China. The significant trade items exported from India to China and vice-versa are mentioned in this chapter.

In the background of strong trade links, mutual cultural as well as social relations gained strength. Not only goods, mutual spread of knowledge, technologies, ideas, philosophies, religions and cultures between China and India along with Asia Minor and the Mediterranean were noticed. In about 1st century CE, the Buddhism reached China from India. Buddhist monk Kumarajiva carrying Buddhist scriptures travelled to China in 383 CE along with the missionaries from India. Some other noted monks who travelled to China were Gunabhadra (435-468 CE); Prajinruchi (516-543 CE); Upasunya (6th century CE); and Jnanabhadra, Jinayasas
and Yasogupta (6th century CE). Many Buddhist Indian monks settled in China and spent their whole life preaching Buddhism and translating Sanskrit texts into Chinese. It was Buddhism that influenced the art of China, later on artists painted Buddhist emblems also on porcelain. Other than religion, India has also sent an important thing, music, which had a vogue in the T’ang period, and information on astronomy. The details about the cultural interactions between India and China are discussed in detail.

Fourth chapter deals with the archaeological sites yielding Chinese porcelain in India. There are 117 archaeological sites in India where different varieties of Chinese porcelain have been discovered.

Some of the noteworthy sites are Firozshah Kotla in Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri in Uttar Pradesh, Ambari in Assam, Sekta and Andro in Manipur, Khalkattapatna and Manikapatna in Orissa, Kotapattanam in Andhra Pradesh, Gangaikondacholapuram and Periyapattanam in Tamil Nadu, Arikamedu in Puducherry, Palaiya-Kayal, Kodungallur and Kottapuram in Kerala, Chaul in Maharashtra, St. Augustine Church in Goa, Champaner in Gujarat, etc. A large number of sites yielding Chinese porcelain reflect its popularity and high demand in India. These explored or excavated sites showing remains of Chinese porcelain are studied thoroughly. The idea behind examining the details of excavated sites is to find out the context in which porcelain has been discovered. The un-reported sites such as Sion Fort (Maharashtra), Bandar Fort (Andhra Pradesh) and Prabhas Patan (Gujarat) have also been examined. The finds from these sites are separated according to their period on the basis of decorative motifs and materials. The chapter includes thorough documentation of sites i.e. the present name of sites, their locations, number of Chinese porcelain examined, varieties reported, period, etc.

Fifth chapter includes systematic analyses of porcelain finds in India. There are a large number of porcelain varieties produced by Chinese during different periods of T’ang (618-906 CE), Song (960-1279 CE), Yuan (1280-1368 CE) and Ming (1368-1644 CE). The chapter includes details of Chinese porcelain finds from Song to Ming period.
The porcelain trade of China with India commenced in about 10th century CE. The earliest porcelain finds of 10th century CE are reported from Arikamedu in Puducherry, Sanjan in Gujarat and Settur in Tamil Nadu. There are several sites in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat which revealed celadon ware and white porcelain of 11th-12th century CE.

In India, five varieties of porcelain - white porcelain, celadon ware, blue-and-white porcelain, blue-and-red painted porcelain and over-glaze enamel porcelain have been identified. The plain white porcelain was originated during the late T'ang period. This variety of 11th-12th century CE and 16th-17th century has been reported in India. The variety of celadon is found in different colour ranges of green i.e. olive-green, grayish-green, bluish-green, etc. It was further classified on the basis of designs found on it.

The blue-and-white porcelain is the most extensively found variety in India. This variety was originated during the T'ang period but could only develop during the Yuan period. It was known as export ware and was regarded as one of the most beautiful and sophisticated porcelain variety. The use of blue-and-white porcelain was extensive in the Tughlaq and Mughal kitchens. In India, this variety is found in large quantities on the sites like Firozshah Kotla in Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri in Uttar Pradesh, Naksaparvat in Arunachal Pradesh, Sekta in Manipur, Gaur in West Bengal, Khalkatapattanam and Manikapattanam in Orissa, Periyapattinam and Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu, Pattanam in Kerala, St. Augustine Church and Chandore in Goa, Chaul and Sanjan in Maharashtra, Champaner and Bharuch in Gujarat, etc. Firozshah Kotla complex revealed one of the largest hoards of 14th century porcelain collection in Asia. Rest of sites revealed blue-and-white porcelain of Ming period datable from 15th to 17th century CE.

The blue-and-red porcelain variety began in Yuan period. Like other varieties it couldn't become much popular as heating red colour along with blue on porcelain was difficult. Therefore, it was produced in lesser quantity. This variety has been reported in India from Purana Qila in Delhi, Golconda Fort in Andhra Pradesh, etc. Another significant variety of porcelain found in India is over-glaze enamel porcelain.
A covering of coloured enamel over the glaze is done on this variety and sometimes motifs in other colours were painted over the glaze. This variety originated during the Ming period but it developed largely during the Ch’ing period (1645-1911 CE). Its finds are reported from Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The decline of porcelain commenced right after the end of Ming dynasty when the Manchus from the northeast in Manchuria conquered China and ruled as the Ch’ing dynasty. It was the period of slow decline in the production and quality of porcelain. During the rule of Ch’ing dynasty, the Europe was rapidly catching up in the field of ceramics as they found the techniques of porcelain manufacturing which was a secret earlier.

Thorough examination and comparative study of Chinese porcelains of different varieties reported from 117 sites in India is done in the chapter. The study of porcelain varieties found at different sites has helped in obtaining their accurate time period and distribution. Besides, the changes in the designs and decorations on porcelain particularly floral, faunal, religious emblems, mythical creatures, etc. have been discussed thoroughly. The inscriptions in Chinese, Tibetan and Arabic scripts found on porcelain from Champaner, Firozshah Kotla, Fatehpur Sikri, St. Augustine Church, Chandor, Chaul, Sanjan, etc. have been studied and identified.

Last chapter deals with the conclusion of the research. The demand of porcelain in India was high as evident by the porcelain finds at several medieval sites in India. During the course of study several new sites were identified which revealed porcelain in good quantity. These unexplored sites yielding porcelain have been thoroughly studied and documented. The comparative study has also been done with the reference collections around the world. Types, varieties and kilns have also been identified. As a result a data base of porcelain is created which would be useful for all the future studies on porcelain.

A number of shipwrecks have been explored in the Southeast Asia. Most of these were on the way to India or coming through India for trading goods collected from China, Southeast Asia, Persia, etc. They were carrying Chinese porcelain of different varieties
in huge quantities for export purposes. Documentation of finds from these shipwrecks revealed that export of porcelain was prolifically done using the maritime route which was started during the Song period (960-1279 CE).

**History: India**

India is blessed with excellent geographical setting which includes ranges of Himalaya in north, the Bay of Bengal in southeast, and the Arabian Sea in southwest. Geographical proximity was one of the main reasons of healthy trade connections between India, Egypt and Mesopotamia during the proto-historic period. However, during this time, there were no contacts between India and China. Historically, the earliest mention of China comes in Kautilya's *Arthasastra* written in Mauryan period.

During the reign of Mauryans, India became united and emerged as an empire. The third king of Mauryan Empire, Asoka (273-232 BCE) adopted Buddhism after the devastating Kalinga war. He sent embassies in other countries to propagate Buddhist doctrines. During this time, Mauryans had contacts with Mediterranean regions and Southeast Asia but there is no record of sending envoys to China, a neighbouring country of India. However, Mauryans did know about China as Kautilya in *Arthasastra* mentions that Cinapattaka (Chinese Silk cloth) used to come to India from Cina i.e. China.

After the collapse of Mauryans dynasty in 2nd century BCE India did not remain united and was again divided into different parts. After Mauryans, the Sunga dynasty (1st century BCE) came to rule for a short period. A number of small dynasties like Kanva and Chedi ruled in parts of northern India after Mauryan-Sunga period. In northwest India dynasties of Satvahana or Andhra, Indo-Greeks, Parthians or Pahlavas, Saka or Scythians and Kushana were ruling. The Kushana was one of the strongest empires which developed in 1st century CE. It was a foreign tribe which ruled over northwest India during 3rd-4th century CE. It was the time when contacts between India and China were noticed in literature especially Chinese annals. These connections although between the Kushana kings and Han emperors of China were not
cordial. After Kushana, during 4th century CE, the empire of Gupta developed in India. The Gupta period was termed as the golden age as their dominion flourished in every aspect, political, economical, cultural and religious. The Gupta rulers had healthy contacts with China. The Chinese monk Fa Xian visited India during the reign of king Chandragupta II.

The Gupta rule ended in 6th century CE. Post-Gupta, regional powers developed in India such as Maitraka in Saurashtra (6th-7th century CE), Chalukyan (6th-7th century CE), Rashtrakuta (8th-9th century CE), Pallava (6th-8th century CE), Gurjara-Pratihara (8th-10th century CE), Chola (9th-12th century CE), Pala (8th-11th century CE), Hoyasala (11th-13th century CE), Chandela (10th-11th century CE).

By the 12th-13th century CE, Turkish invaders started establishing their foot-holds in India. In around 1206 CE, Slave dynasty was founded who ruled over India till 1290 CE. They establish their centre in Delhi and declared it a capital. Other dynasties which ruled after them were Khilji (1290-1320 CE), Tughlaq (1320-1412 CE), Sayyid (1414-1451 CE) and Lodi (1451-1526 CE). These Turkish rulers had contacts with China as the trade activities between India and China were prospering during the 13th-14th century CE. The discovery of Chinese porcelain from the hoard of Firozshah Kotla complex is an example of the import of goods from China. The other sites of Delhi like Lal Kot and Purana Qila have also revealed Chinese porcelain datable from 14th century to 16th century CE.

After the decline of Delhi Sultanate, two strong dynasties developed in south India, Bahamani who were Muslim rulers and Vijayanagara who were Hindu. Both these dynasties have well-established trade links with China. Many regions ruled by the Bahamani rulers like Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golconda have yielded Chinese blue-and-white porcelain of Ming period. Likewise porcelain of Ming dynasty has also been evidenced in large quantity from Hampi which was a capital city of Vijayanagara kingdom. In about 16th century CE, the Mughals who were originally Turks came to rule over India. The porcelain continued to fascinate Mughal emperors. There are a number of incidents in Bahur-nama, Akbar-nama and Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri which shows that porcelain was the most loved item in Mughal courts. When Mughal were entering
in north India, the Portuguese were capturing the west and east coasts of India. In India, Portuguese built their first fort at Cochin. In the beginning of 16th century, they captured Goa from the Sultan of Bijapur. After them, then came Dutch, English and French in India. The trade between India and China thus came into the hands of European who tried to monopolise it.

Mauryan Period (3rd-4th century BCE)

During the 4th century BCE, a part of northern India came under Nanda rulers of Magadha. It was also the time when Alexander invaded India. The progress in the region of Magadha reached at its peak when in about 325 BCE, the king Chandragupta Maurya established a new Empire namely Mauryan after defeating the Nanda dynasty. For the first time, India unified under a single power of Mauryans. Chandragupta and other following rulers of Mauryan Empire, Bindusara and Asoka continued to rule over India as a superpower.

The Mauryan Empire reached at a significant level during the rule of Asoka (273-232 BCE). He conquered new regions and expanded his ruling territory. After the Kalinga war in 261 BCE, Asoka adopted Buddhism and propagated it by sending embassies to the regions of Southeast Asia and Mediterranean, however, there is no record of sending envoys to China. But there is no doubt that Mauryans knew about China as mentioned in Kautilya’s Arthasastra that cinapatta or Chinese Silk cloth (Basham 1963: 199) came from cinabhumi (land of Cina or China). He also mentioned that trade route through Irrawady valley was used from India to China (Kangle 2000: 74).

The Mauryan Empire collapsed in 187 BCE succeeded by the Sunga dynasty. It was a short lived dynasty founded by Pushyamitra Sunga who was earlier a minister in Mauryan Empire. The Sunga rule came to an end in 75 BCE. The united India once again divided into different parts by the time Mauryan period ended. In the northern India small dynasties like, Chedi or Cheti, etc. appeared. The region of northwest India was ruled over by Satavahana or Andhra, Indo-Greeks, Parthians or Pahlavas, Saka or Scythians and Kushana. Amongst these Kushana emerged as a strong empire.
**Kushana Period (1st-3rd century CE)**

In about 1st century CE, India noticed the emergence of a new dynasty namely Kuei-shang or Kushana. They emerged from a nomadic tribe of Yueh-chi which was subdivided into five clans amongst which Kushana belonged to Guei-shuang clan (Chakravarti 2013: 176).

Kujula Kadphises (Kadphises I) identified as Chiu Chiu Chueh in the Chinese sources laid the foundation of Kushana Empire. The son of Kujula Kasphises, Wima Kadphises or Kadphises II, called as Yen-kao-ching by the Chinese historians, ruled with his father over a part of India which included the Gangetic valley going as far as Mathura (Smith 1920: 128-129; Singh 2009: 376).

It was the rule of Kadphises II when interactions between India and China became unstable for a short period (Basham 1963: 61). Kadphises II came to know about the strong Han Empire of China, and thus decided to make relations with them. He declared his equality with the son of heaven and sent a marriage proposal for a Chinese princess of Han Empire. The Chinese on other hand treated the proposal as an insult and the Kushana’s envoy was arrested. On this Kadphises II sent a force of 70,000 cavalry under the command of his viceroy Si to fight against Chinese. The Kadphises II was defeated in this war and was forced to pay a tribute to China (Smith 1920: 129).

The incident shows that the political relations between Kushana kings and Chinese emperors were not cordial initially. Their connections improved as the King Kanishka accepted Buddhism and expanded his territory as far as Khotan and Yarkand. The Kushana period was significant in terms of the cultural history as Buddhism from India reached China (Basham 1963: 62). The Buddhism in Central Asia and as far as China developed in the background of trade activities which were carried out through the tough terrains of Silk Road.

The trade overall was expanding and both India and China were progressing in it. Historical Chinese text of 5th century CE, *Hou Han Shu* (History of the Later Han) has mentioned that missionaries from India carrying tributes were sent to China during the reign of Emperor Ho (89-105 CE). Initially envoys from India followed the land route
to reach China. During the rule of Emperor Huan envoys from India in about 159 and 161 CE used sea route for reaching China (Colless 1980: 162).

**Gupta Period (4th-6th century CE)**

During the 4th century CE, India came under the rule of Gupta dynasty which was founded by Sri Gupta. The period showed progress in political and economical conditions, art, architecture, trade, etc. and that is why termed as golden age. The T’ang Empire of China on the other hand was contemporary to Gupta dynasty. The relations between India and China became cordial during this period as envoys were exchanged and Chinese monks reached India for obtaining Buddhist doctrines.

During the reign of Chandragupta II, a Chinese monk, Fa Xian reached India in search of the *Vinaya-pitaka* or monastic disciplines. Fa Xian commenced his journey from Chang’an (present day X’ian) and followed the route to the south of the Gobi Desert. After crossing through Central Asia he reached Taxila followed by Peshawar and finally entered into India. He spent three years at Pataliputra (Patna in Bihar) and two at Tamralipti (Tamluk in West Bengal). Then he sailed back to China from Tamralipti and also visited Sri Lanka and Java on the way (Smith 1920: 153; Sen 2006: 25). The account of Fa Xian travels mentioned details about temples, monasteries but very little about the socio-cultural conditions of India (Basham 1963: 67).

This flow of travellers and monks was not restricted to one way. Between 357-571 CE about ten missionaries were sent to China by the Gupta rulers. Amongst these, one of the earliest travellers to China was Kumarajiva in 383 CE (Smith 1920: 162). Kumarajiva remained in China for fifteen years and translated more than a hundred Buddhist texts from Sanskrit to Chinese (Majumdar 1954: 608). Some other noted monks who visited China during this period were Gunabhadra (435-468 CE), Prajnaruuchi (516-543 CE) and Upasunya (6th century CE) of central India; and Jnanabhadra, Jinayasas and Yasogupta (6th century CE) of eastern India (Majumdar 1954: 610).

During the same period, Gupta kings maintained strong interactions with China by
sending frequent embassies. About eight embassies were sent from the north-western region of India when China was under the rule of Wei dynasty (386-534 CE) (Majumdar 1954: 617). During the later Wei dynasty (500-516 CE), an embassy from southern India was sent to China carrying horses of fine breeds for the Chinese ruler Seuen-woo (Sastri 1939: 83).

The 5th century CE was full of hiccups for Gupta dynasty because of foreign invasions. Huns, a nomadic tribe of Central Asia attacked Gupta but they were defeated by the Skanda Gupta. Though during the late 5th century CE, for about thirty year, Huns declared themselves as an independent kingdom and ruled over western India. These invasions resulted in the decline of Gupta dynasty in about 550 CE. Thereafter, different dynasties came to rule in different regions of India - Maukharis who ruled over north of the Ganga, Maitraka conquered Gujarat and declared Vallabhi as their capital, etc.

Vardhana Period (7th century CE)

The lost glory of Gupta dynasty once again restored when King Harsavardhana came to throne in 606 CE. The records of his fame have been compiled by the poet Bana in Harasacharita (Basham 1963: 69). Harsavardhana rule was extended from present day Gujarat to West Bengal but he established his capital in Kanyakubja (Kannauj). Even though Harsa gained a large territory but it was divided into small feudatories where old kings were retaining their rule (Basham 1963: 70). The only region which Harsa could not retain was Deccan. The region was captured by a Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II who defeated Harsa in about 634 CE. Besides his own region, Harsa had friendly relations with king Bhaskaravarman of Pragjyotishpura (Assam). He knew the importance of international trade and had healthy interactions with the contemporary Chinese dynasty of T’ang.

In the 7th century CE, a number of Indian monks travelled to China. Among them Prabhakaramitra and Vajrabodhi of Nalanda are noteworthy who spent most of their life-time in translating Buddhist texts into Chinese (Majumdar 1954: 620-621).
Xuanzang, a Chinese monk also reached India in about 640 CE (Sen 2006: 29). His travelogue *Si-Yu-Ki* threw a light on his long journey to India, commercial exchanges and healthy relationships between the India and China. He mentioned about his journey in the empire of king Harsavardhana in northern and central India followed by a visit to Kanchipuram which was under the rule of Pallava dynasty (Watters 1961: 185-186).

In about 641 CE, Harsavardhana (606-647 CE) sent a special envoy to the court of a T’ang emperor, T’ai Tsung (627-649 CE). In return, T’ai Tsung sent back a letter through an envoy enquiring about Harsa’s health (Prakash 1985: 1). Thereafter, an embassy was sent to China to reciprocate the gesture. This way the credit of increase in mercantile activities between India and China goes to the improved relations between Chinese and Indian kings of that time. *Harshacharita* mentions use of body armours by the chiefs of Harsa’s army which were made in China.

King Harsavardhana died in about 646 CE, leaving no successor. At the time of his death a Chinese diplomat named Wang-hiuen-tse along with thirty other men was at Harsa’s court. Soon a minister of Harsa declared himself as king and attacked Chinese envoy. Wang-hiuen-tse managed to escape Nepal which was then ruled by a Tibetan king, Srong-tsang Gampo, who was married to a Chinese princess. He explained about the situation of the Harsa’s state to Srong-tsang Gampo. On hearing the incident, Gampo attacked over the city of Tirhut, defeated and captured the minister who had usurped the throne of Kannauj. Till 703 CE, city of Tirhut remained under the control of Tibet (Smith 1920: 169-170).

After the Harsa’s death, the region of northern India especially Kannauj remained disturbed. In 8th century CE, the city of Kannauj was made capital by an independent king Yasovarman who occupied northern India. In about 731 CE, king Yasovarman sent an embassy to China for seeking help against powerful indigenous and foreign forces but no help came from the Chinese emperors (Smith 1920: 182). In 740 CE, the king of Kashmir, Lalitaditya defeated Yasovarman and captured the region of Kannauj.
Thereafter two big dynasties Pratihara and Pala came to rule over the region of northern India. In 725 CE, Pratiharas dynasty, also known as Gurjara-Pratiharas was founded by Nagabhatta I. His successor Nagabhatta II made Kannauj a capital city. Soon the Muhammad of Ghazni attacked Pratihara and conquered Kannauj. The Pala dynasty was founded in about 750 CE. Its centre was eastern India.

**Pallava Period (6th-9th century CE)**

In south India, Pallava was ruling in parts of Tamil Nadu since 6th century CE and their reign continued up till 9th century CE. Pallavas were great temple builders and had strong maritime trade contacts with Chinese rulers of T'ang period during 8th-9th century CE. Xuanzang, a Chinese monk had also visited Pallava's capital at Kancheepuram. The rule of Pallava came to an end when Chola kings of Tanjavur overthrew in the 9th century CE.

**Chola Period (9th-13th century CE)**

The Chola kingdom was one of the greatest kingdoms of Tamil tradition that ruled over the Coromandel Coast and parts of southern India from late 9th to 13th century CE. Two most notable kings of Chola dynasty were Rajaraja I (985-1014 CE) and Rajendra II (1014-1042 CE) (Basham 1963: 76). The Chola dynasty sent a number of naval expeditions to Southeast Asia and occupied parts of Myanmar and regions around it.

The political relations between Chola rulers of south India and Song emperors of China proliferate during 10th-12th century CE. In the 12th century CE, Chinese merchants began to travel to India more frequently through the maritime routes. Besides the other Indian ports, the Chinese merchants started frequently using the Coromandel and Malabar coasts of southern India as major transit points for their journey to the Persian Gulf (Sen 2006a: 422). The archaeological findings of celadon ware and Chinese porcelain belonging to Song period of China on the coastal sites of southern India have attested it.
Discovery of the hoard of more than 1000 Chinese coins on the Coromandel Coast datable from 6th-13th century CE has also provided clues to the presence of Chinese merchants in south India (Bagchi 1951-53: 194-196). Another important record of a 13th century’s Chinese pagoda at the port of Nagapattinam confirms the strong links with China. Though it is no longer exists but a sketch of this Chinese pagoda confirms its existence till 1846 CE (Karashima 2009: 238-239).

The first important record of Chola-China interactions comes from the 12th century CE work of Chou Ch’u-fei, known as the Ling-wai tai-ta (Information on What is Beyond the Southern Passes). This literary record referred Chola as Chu-lien. Other Chinese texts such Chao Ju-kuan written in 1225 CE and Ma Tuan-lin written in 1319 CE also recorded a kingdom in India named Chu-lien i.e. Chola.

According to Chinese annals, around four missionaries from Chola kingdom were sent to China carrying valuable tributaries which included pearls, ivory, cloves, camphor, rosewater, etc. (Wong 1979: 84-85). The first Chola missionary of 50 people was started from Nagapattinam in the year 1015 CE by the orders of Rajaraja I. The envoy crossed through present day Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Myanmar, Java, Malaya Peninsula, Vietnam, Hong Kong and reached Canton in China after 1,150 days (Sen 1995: 28). The Chola envoy presented tributes to the Song rulers which included pearls, ivory, incense and perfumes.

The second Chola embassy reached China in 1020 CE and presented a number of tributes to Chinese emperors. The third Chola envoy sent by Rajendarachola I (1012-1044 CE) reached China in 1033 CE followed by the fourth missionary which was sent by the orders of Chola king, Kulottunga I (1070-1120 CE) (Sen 1995: 28). It arrived in China in 1077 CE. A number of goods from India were given in tribute to China during this time that included pearl, ivory, camphor, frankincense, cotton, etc. Chola records on the other hand are silent about the trade activities and missionaries from China.

In the city of Quanzhou in the Fujian province in south China, about 200 pieces of Hindu relics have been discovered indicating two Hindu temples (Guy 1993-94: 296).
These relics include sculptures of Hindu gods like Vishnu, Krishna and Hanuman; a lingam and various works of Hindu mythology. The discovery of a pair of bilingual inscriptions in Tamil and Chinese in 1956-57 has connected the possible existence of Hindu temple. This inscription is associated with the remains of a Siva temple of Quanzhou which was among one of the two south Indian-style Hindu temples built in China (Filliozat 1966: 115; Guy 1993-94: 298).

Post-Chola Period (13th-16th century CE)

The Chola dynasty fell in the 13th century CE and their territory was ruled over by the Hyosalas of Mysore and Pandya of Madurai. During this period, the Deccan region of India came in the hands of Islamic rulers who were already ruling over northern India (Basham 1963: 77).

Between the 13th-16th centuries CE, the invaders had attacked India and captured the areas particularly in the northern and eastern region. In 1206 CE, Qutb al-Din Aibek founded a new dynasty namely Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526 CE) after inherited territories from Mahmud of Ghazni. In eastern India, Muhammad Bakhtiyar, an Afgan established the Bengal Sultanate (1368-1576 CE) and on the other hand the Bahamani Sultanate (1347-1527 CE) conquered the Deccan and southern India (Sen 2006b: 300). Though India saw many ups and down after the 13th century but the trade activities between India and China remained active.

During the 13th-14th century CE, China was under the rule of a Mongolian tribe, Yuan. The contacts between India and China flourished during this period as Yuan rulers encouraged trade activities. Envoys were exchanged between India and China to improve trade connections. *Yuanshi*, a text on the history of Yuan dynasty mentions that around sixteen embassies were sent to India and in reciprocity India sent eighteen envoys to China carrying tributes (Sen 2006b: 302). Trade of Chinese porcelain increased during this time. One of the best examples of import of porcelain from China is the hoard of a blue-and-white porcelain dishes and bowls which were discovered from the Rose Garden of Firozshah Kotla in Delhi. This hoard consisted about 72 pieces of porcelain belonging to late Yuan period (14th century CE).
A 14th century Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battuta, mentions in his travelogue that Chinese merchants used to visit Malabar Coast regularly (Gibb 1994: 812). He also confirms about Chinese ships sailing in Indian waters. The Chinese travellers, Wang Ta Yuan (1330-1349 CE), Fei Xin (1436 CE) and Ma Huan (1451 CE) have mentioned in their travelogues about the export of blue-and-white porcelain along with other precious goods from China to southern India (Shastri 1939: 293-295, 297-298 and 304).

During the 15th-16th century CE, the trade activities between India and China continued. The porcelain was in great demand during this time. In the beginning of 15th century CE, a Chinese emperor Yung lo sent envoys to India under the direction of a Zheng He. The Chinese admiral, Zheng He performed seven voyages in the Indian Ocean. He visited India in all of his seven expeditions and exchanged a number of goods including blue-and-white Chinese porcelain.

After the 16th century CE, the direct trade interactions between India and China came to a halt when Portuguese captured the trade activities on the Spice Route. The import of porcelains from China continued till 18th century CE but it was done through the Europeans who wanted to earn maximum profits. Moreover, after 18th century CE, monopoly of porcelain was broken up by the Europeans when manufactories for porcelain manufacturing were set up in Europe.

**History: China**

The Chinese civilisation is one of the oldest existing civilisations though developed much later in time as compared to the Indus, Egypt and Mesopotamia. It was a Bronze Age civilisation which developed in the region of Eastern Eurasia. It extends from Beijing in the north to Guangzhou in south and Chengdu in west to Shanghai in east covering a vast area. It has two rivers, the Yellow River in the north and Yangzi River in the centre, around which initially the human settlements developed.

The Neolithic culture in China started developing in about 5000 BCE. There were some famous Neolithic cultures, Yangshao (3200-2500 BCE) in Shaanxi and
Gansu provinces; Hongshan (?) in Liaoning province; and Liangzhu (3300-2250 BCE) in Jiangsu province. These regional cultures increased contacts with each other during the late Neolithic period (3000-2000 BCE) as a result some conflicts occurred. On the other hand, technology improved which gave birth to manufacturing of metal weaponry and other objects. The pottery techniques of different cultures developed and ideas were intermingled and exchanged (Ebrey 1996: 20).

In around 2000 BCE, Shang dynasty developed which had a writing system, religion, art, agriculture, domestication of animals, socio-cultural and political hierarchies. The precise time period of the rule of Shang dynasty is still unknown. A new dynasty, Chou or Zhou was founded in about 1100 BCE after defeating the Shang dynasty in a war. The Chou people were great bronze artisans, poets, agriculturists and firm believers of the powers of heaven. They ruled till 220 BCE when Qin dynasty conquered China. The Qin dynasty survived for a small period but they made grand structures such as the Great Wall of China; Tomb of emperor Shi huangdi which had terracotta chariots, warriors, etc.

In 202 BCE, the Han dynasty originated and during the late 3rd century BCE, China became a unified country for the first time. Poetry, literature, and philosophy flourished during this period. The Han emperors also supported trade with the outside countries. The Silk Road linking China with Rome was used for exchanging a variety of goods. During this period, Han rulers came to know about Shen-tu (India) through Zhang Qian, a Chinese official was sent to Ta-hsia (Bactria) by emperor Wu-ti. On returning back to China, he informed that a country named Shen-tu was located on the southeast of Bactria from where the merchants of Bactria were buying the products of China, bamboo and cloth.

In about 1st century CE, the Buddhism reached China from India when Han dynasty was still existing. The main reason behind flourishing of Buddhism in China was Silk Road. The route was not simply a way to exchange goods but it was also a road for exchanging ideas, culture and religion. The Han dynasty survived till 220 CE after which China was divided into small parts where several short-lived dynasties ruled for different time periods.
During this intermediate period, envoys were sent by China in the nearby regions of Central Asia and Southeast Asia. On their return, those envoys informed that they heard about a country named Shen-tu Tianzhu (India). In the 4th century CE, Chinese monks also visited India for obtaining Vinaya-pitaka (doctrines of Buddhism). One famous monk to visit India during this period was Fa Xian (Fa Hien). In the 6th century CE, the T'ang dynasty (618-906 CE) originated when China reunified. They created two large capitals and favoured both regional and international trade. During the late T'ang period, a number of raids and wars happened from outsiders especially Turks. Between 907 CE and 960 CE, five dynasties (Later Liang, Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han and later Zhou) succeeded one after the other for short periods.

In 960 CE, Song dynasty originated which continued to rule over China till 1276 CE. Song dynasty had ruled over a large area of north and south China but they were forced to shift towards southern China due to outside invasions of Jurchen in 1127 CE. The political relations between Song rulers of China and Chola rulers of south India flourished during 10th-12th century CE. During this period the maritime trade started on a wider scale. The trade of porcelain was carried out both through the land route as well as the sea route. The disintegration of Song dynasty started in 1260 and it completely vanished in 1279 CE due to outside invasion of Mongols.

The Kubulai Khan, a Mongolian entered in China in about 1280 CE and adopted a Chinese name for his dynasty, Yuan. The new dynasty of Yuan encouraged trade and sent a number of envoys to India from the port of Quanzhou. The most popular item of trade during this period was blue-and-white porcelain. Demand of this variety was high in Persia, India, Southeast Asia, etc.

Yuan continued to rule up to 1368 CE followed by the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE). During this period, once again the Chinese took over China and continued to rule for a long period. Ming period showed great advancement in the ceramic industry. New varieties of porcelain developed which were exported in bulks through maritime route. To increase trade and cultural contacts, Emperor Yung-lo (1403-1424 CE) of Ming dynasty sent envoys in other countries. He sent special expeditions as far as Southeast Asia, India and Syria under the command of Cheng Ho (Zheng He). He reached India
after crossing through Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. After the end of Ming rule, a new dynasty Ch’ing ruled over China till 1911 CE. China became a republican state after the decline of Ch’ing period.

Shang Dynasty (2000 BCE)

Shang, the first dynasty of China originated from the Neolithic cultures. They had a political hierarchy, religion, script and their people knew agriculture and domestication of animals. Their settlements were located near the present day Henan, Hebei and Shandong provinces. Their main centres were at Zhengzhou and Anyang where some settlements have been excavated.

Shang ruler had a strong belief on life after death and human sacrifice. They used to pray their royal ancestors. An excavated tomb at Anyang has showed headless skeletons of humans kept in an alignment which is an example of human sacrifice during Shang period (Ebrey 1996: 24).

Shang artisans made a variety of ritual and utilitarian objects in bronzes such as vessels, cups, jars, etc. They had brilliant craftsmanship in making bronze objects. Majorly these bronze artisans used to make zoomorphic images along with the popular pottery forms like tripods. Besides bronzes, the potteries of different type were also made during this period mainly white in colour being made of kaolin. These potteries were also inspired by the shapes of bronzes (fig. 1.1).

Chou Dynasty (1100-220 BCE)

The Chou/ Zhou dynasty succeeded Shang. The customs and religious beliefs of Chou were different from their predecessors. During this period the practices of human sacrifice reduced and the concept of life after death took a back seat. The Chou rulers believed that their rule was directly connected with heaven and they might be punished if any sacred duty was neglected. Their advancement in bronze-casting techniques is
remarkable as they made practical things like weapons, armours other than the ritual objects which were decorated with bold ornamental designs and bird-like features. Other than the bronzes, pottery majorly funerary wares were also made that included red, coarse-bodied wares, red or black-burnished pottery, etc. (Li 1996: 31). The three-legged funerary pots (li) (fig. 1.2) remained popular during the Zhou period also.

They were creative people as the first book on Chinese poetry, Shijing (Book of Songs) containing more than 305 poems written during this period (Ebrey 1996: 33). These poems were sung in the court on special occasions.

For living the Chou people were depend on agriculture. They used to grow rice and millet. During the late Chou period, the coinage system originated. Their earliest bronze coins were made in the shapes of weapons like spades and knives followed by small circular coins with square perforation.

Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE)

Followed by Chou, the Qin dynasty came to rule over China in 3rd century BCE. They lasted for a short period but formed a centralised bureaucratic monarchy (Ebrey 1996: 60). The emperor Shi huangdi, the founder of Qin dynasty was in favour of standardisation and one state therefore he ordered to maintain uniformity in the currency system, writings, weights and measures, etc. Grand structures were built during this period which included lavish palace and tomb for Shi huangdi. The famous life-size terracotta warriors, horses and chariots in thousands of numbers were made as part of emperor’s tomb army. Enormous structures like the Great Wall of China were built to protect the Chinese territory from overseas attacks. The people of China were against the emperor and they started rebelling. As a result emperor tried to control the education. He believed that knowledge should be controlled and only imparted to
future officials (Ebrey 1996: 61). During this time, China was divided into small
feudatories but on the other hand India was united under the Mauryan Empire (322-
183 BCE). There were no official contacts between India and China up to this period.

**Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE)**

During the 3rd century BCE, China united under a new dynasty, Han. The rule of Han
dynasty was much longer in comparison with the previous ruling dynasties. The initial
period of Han dynasty was full of wars, turmoil and raids. The early Han rulers even
gifted a number of goods including silk, rice, cash, etc. to their rivals to avoid
confrontations (Ebrey 1996: 68). The Han rulers could not succeed in wooing the
invaders, as a result, China faced a number of raids.

Some of the later Han rulers like Wu-ti (140-86 BCE) sent their troops to fight against
the invaders. He also sent a number of expeditions and his officials in the nearby areas
of Central Asia to find allies. In about 139 BCE, Emperor Wu-ti sent one of his officials
Cheng Kia to the West in search for allies who can help them in fighting with the
invaders. Soon after crossing the border of China, Cheng Kia was captured and made a
prisoner for ten years by the Huns. He could manage to escape in 126 BCE and made
his way to Bactria and Ferghana. In Bactria, he saw import of some Chinese goods. On
inquiring he found that the bamboo and cotton in Bactria were brought by the Indian
merchants from the provinces of south-western China (Bagchi 1950: 5). When he
returned back, Cheng Kia informed emperor Wu-ti about the import of Chinese goods
in Bactria. The emperor of China thus thought of establishing official trade links with
other countries including India through the land routes. Soon China managed to
capture the land of Ferghana and succeeded in gaining a control over the trade routes
in Central Asia (Ebrey 1996: 69).

By the end of 3rd century BCE, the Han dynasty expanded its territory as far as
Ferghana and Sogdiana in Central Asia. As a result the trading of goods increased
through the land routes of Central Asia. With the beginning of 1st century CE, the Silk
Road was in prolific use which connecting China with Rome. One of the branches of
Silk Road passed through Taxila (now in Pakistan) and bifurcated into two roads. One
of these roads connected Taxila with Barbaricum (now Karachi) located in Pakistan and the other with Barygaza (now Bharuch) in India (Cammann 1956: 1-2).

There is no record of sending envoys to China from India during Han period and vice-versa in the Mauryan period. But the mention of *cinapatta* or Chinese Silk cloth in the records of Kautilya’s *Arthasastra* confirms connections between India and China during the Mauryan period (Basham 1954: 197). There were three probable routes used for exporting Silk from China - through Myanmar; through Xinjiang to Kashmir; or through Bactria going to Multan and then to the regions of Gujarat (Dale 2008: 81).

In about 1st century CE, China with its expanded territory was progressing in trade but India on the other hand was noticing the emergence of a new dynasty namely Kuei-shang or Kushana. But the relations between Kushana and Han rulers were not friendly as Kushana were defeated by the Han emperor Wu-ti during a war.

**T’ang Dynasty (618-906 CE)**

The country of China flourished when T’ang dynasty came in power. The intermediate period between the decline of Han dynasty and beginning of T’ang dynasty was full of hurdles and wars. During this period of about 400 years, the China was divided into small parts which were ruled by several short lived dynasties - the three kingdoms (220-316 CE), Western Jin (265-316 CE), Eastern Jin (317-420 CE), Southern dynasties (420-589 CE), Northern Wei (439-534 CE), Northern Qi (552-577 CE), Northern Zhou (557-581 CE), Sui (581-617 CE).

During this intermediate period, envoys were sent by China in the nearby regions of Central Asia and Southeast Asia. The account of Kang Tai and Zhu Ying, two Chinese officials who visited Vietnam in 3rd century CE is noteworthy. The original records of these two officials are missing but the significant passages from their accounts were copied and cited by other Chinese court historians of later centuries. Kang Tai in his account mentioned about the country of *Shen-tu Tianzhu* (India) and *Hengshui* (River Ganges) about which he heard from others (Ray 2006: 14). The Chinese monks also
visited India during this period for obtaining *Vinaya-pitaka* (doctrines of Buddhism). Amongst these monks, Fa Xian (Fa Hien) who reached India in 4th century CE gave a detailed account of his visit in a book, *Fo-kuo-ki*.

In 618 CE, China once again became a united country. The T’ang rulers opened their doors for other cultures and improved their economy by expanding the trade connections (Ebrey 1996: 108). The international as well as regional trade became priority. During the early T’ang period, the China was applauded for its political and cultural progress even the emperors of other countries like Korea and Japan tried to follow T’ang system both culturally and politically (Ebrey 1996: 130).

![fig. 1.3 South China: White porcelain ewer, late T’ang period](source: British Museum, London)

It was a period of development in the terms of art and technology. During the late 8th or early 9th century CE, a distinct pottery, Chinese porcelain with white shine originated (fig. 1.3). It was prepared by combining kaolin and petuntse and fired at a high temperature of above 1280°C (Valenstein 1975: 57). The export of ceramics started during the T’ang period in around 9th-10th century CE which has been attested by the findings of different types of Chinese ceramics in Iran and Iraq. It is believed that the trade of ceramics during the T’ang period had reached up to the east coast of Africa, Egypt, and India (Valenstein 1975: 61).

During the T’ang dynasty itself Xuanzang, a Chinese monk reached India in about 640 CE (Sen 2006: 29). The *Si-Yu-Ki*, a literary record of Xuanzang, threw a light on his long journey to India, commercial exchanges and healthy relationships between the India and China. In the 7th century CE a number of Indian monks travelled to China. Amongst them Prabhakaramitra and Vajrabodhi of Nalanda are noteworthy who spent several years in China and translated Buddhist texts into Chinese (Majumdar 1954: 620-621).
Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)

The Song dynasty was one of the strongest dynasties in history of China. The period is termed as classical period for polity, economics, art, architecture, trade, etc. Song rulers were in favour of trade and exchange of goods with overseas countries. It was the period when the trade through maritime route took a pace as shipping goods through the sea was more profitable and safer (Medley 1976: 103). Therefore, Chinese merchants preferred trading through sea rather than the land route. Song rulers also provided facilities to merchants such as new harbours and warehouses for storing goods.

Though the period of Song was not quite smooth and there were raids and wars from outsiders but their ceramic industry continued to prosper. Varieties of porcelain were produced during this period which included celadon ware, Ding white porcelain, Qingbai blue porcelain, etc. But the attacks on North China by the Jurchen tartars of Manchuria forced Song rulers to shift towards south China which affected the ceramic production also. Soon new kilns were setup in the southern region of China which flourished magnificently and produced varieties of porcelain pieces.

During the late Song period, China realised that it was essential to build a strong navy. Following the footsteps of northern Song dynasty, the southern established a navy and started advancing in the technologies of ship building, use of fire-arms, etc. The southern Song naval army became the first national navy of China and it even got supports from the trader class (Lo Jung-Pang 1955: 490-491).

During this period, Chola was ruling in southern India who had strong relations with China. The political relations between Chola rulers and Song emperors proliferate in 10th-12th century CE. During the 12th century CE, Chinese merchants began to travel to India more frequently through the maritime routes. In this period, the Chinese merchants started using the Coromandel and Malabar Coasts more frequently as major transit points for their journey to the Persian Gulf (Sen 2006a: 422). The archaeological findings of celadon ware and Chinese porcelain belonging to Song period from the coastal sites of southern India have confirmed it.
Discovery of the hoard of more than 1000 Chinese coins on the Coromandel Coast datable from 6th-13th century CE has also provided clues of the presence of Chinese merchants in south India (Bagchi 1951-53: 194-196). A 13th century Chinese pagoda which once stood at the port of Nagapattinam also confirms the regular visit of Chinese merchants on Coromandel Coast. It no longer exists but a sketch of this Chinese pagoda confirms its existence till 1846 CE (Karashima 2009: 238-239).

Archaeological records in China have also confirmed the trade interactions between Chola and China. In the city of Quanzhou located in the Fujian province of south China, about 200 pieces of Hindu relics were discovered indicating existence of two Hindu temples (Guy 1993-94: 296). The relics include sculptures of Hindu gods like Vishnu, Krishna and Hanuman; a lingam and various works of Hindu mythology. The discovery of a pair of bilingual inscriptions in Tamil and Chinese in 1956-57 has connected the possible existence of Hindu temple. This inscription is associated with the remains of a Siva temple of Quanzhou which was amongst the two south Indian-style Hindu temples built in China (Filliozat 1966: 115) and (Guy 1993-94: 298). The Tamil part of the inscription has been translated as -

“Obeisance to Hara. Let there be prosperity! On the day Chitra in the month of Chittira in the Saka year 1203, the Tavachchakkarvarttigal Sambandhap-perumal caused, in accordance with the firman of Chekachai-khan, to be graciously installed the God Udayar Tirukkadalisvaram Udaya-nayinar, for the welfare of the illustrious body of the illustrious Chekachai Khan” (Subramaniam 1978: 8).

The Chola dynasty fell in the 13th century CE and similarly the political situation changed even in China. By 1280 CE, Mongols established their foot in China. During this period, maritime trade started booming for the merchants of Near East who tried to monopolise the export activities. During the 8th-9th century CE, these traders were already settled on the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts. By the time of Yuan period (13th-14th century CE), they tried to capture the markets of China in Southeast and South Asia (Sen 2006b: 300). Though it took some time and after the mid Ming period, the China slowly decreased the commercial activities with other countries. As a result, Europeans merchants started dominating the maritime trade.
Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368 CE)

By the late 13th century, the rule of Song in southern China and Jurchen Tartars in northern China came to an end when Mongols captured this whole region. In about 1280 CE, the divided China was once again united when Mongols under the rule of Kubulai Khan captured it. Mongol gave themselves a Chinese name, Yuan.

Similarly between the 13th-16th centuries CE, the invaders had attacked India and captured the areas particularly in the northern and eastern region. One of the main reason for well established links between India and China during Yuan period were rule of Arabs, Afgans and Muslims in different regions of India.

In terms of porcelain production, this was a significant time as a new variety of porcelain, blue-and-white originated during the Yuan period. It was one of the finest porcelain varieties which had cobalt blue decoration on white base and its colour never faded unlike other potteries. This quality of blue-and-white porcelain increased its demand in other countries including India and that is why it is also known as export ware.

The Yuan government encouraged trade with India and to develop it a Mongol envoy was sent to India from the port of Quanzhou in about 1281 CE (Guy 1993-94: 300). In response of this, a number of missions were sent to China from the Malabar Coast between 1279 and 1314 CE. An important literary record in this context is Yuanshi (History of the Yuan Dynasty) according to which the Yuan rulers had sent about sixteen envoys to India between 1272 and 1296 CE. Amongst these, an important envoy from the Yuan's court was lead by Yang Tingbi who travelled between 1280 to 1283 CE (Sen 2011: 57). His mission was to reach at the Malabar Coast. Yang’s main motive was to propagate the Mongol’s rule and gaining trade relations with the king of Malabar. In response of the Chinese embassies, about eighteen embassies were sent to China from the Malabar Coast (Sen 2006b: 302).

Wang Dayyuan, a Chinese who wrote a literary text Daoyi zhi lue had specifically mentioned in his text about the presence of Chinese merchants in the coastal regions of India (Sen 2006a: 426; Sen 2006b: 312). The trade between India and China reached at
its peak during Yuan period and not only governmental trade exchanges but private trade was flourishing on a large extent. According to *Yuanshi* (An Account of Yuan Rulers), the Yuan court had banned the private trade of luxury items from China to India as it had become unmanageable during the end of 13th century (Sen 2006b: 312).

**Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)**

China got respite from alien rule when Yuan dynasty declined. This dynasty, Ming was originated by a peasant group who rebel against Yuan and gained their land back. The first ruler of Ming dynasty, Chu Yuan-chang (Hung-wu) (1368-1398 CE) was born in a poor peasant family. He was completely against the trade with the outside world (Vainker 1991: 140). As a result he changed the free trade policies of China and banned all the overseas activities.

These bans directly affected the ceramic productions and its export which was an important medium for generating large revenues during Song and Yuan dynasties. Both financially and culturally, it created a huge loss. Many official kiln sites at Jingdezhen and Longquan which produced huge quantities of blue-and-white porcelain and celadon wares were shut-down for some years (Krahl 1986: 484-485). The production of the porcelain declined and its export was stopped. Porcelains in very less quantity were only prepared for the domestic markets and the emperor. But the production of porcelain once again thrived as new varieties were made and the demand of porcelain from outside China increased.

The trade activities restored again during the 15th century CE. For the purpose of trade and increasing official contacts, Ming emperor, Hung Wu sent embassies to the king of So-li (Coromandel) in about 1369-70. Similarly, emperor Yung-lo (1403-1424 CE) sent envoys in the countries of Southeast Asia, India and Syria, under the command of Cheng Ho (Zheng He). During Yung-lo’s reign, Zheng He undertook six voyages in 1405, 1407, 1409, 1413, 1417, and 1421 exclusively for the commercial benefits of China (Twitchett and Fairbank 1998: 232). It is mentioned in the account of Ma Huan who was an official interpreter in the Zheng He’s journeys that their fleet included Chinese junks with nine to five masts and these were manned by a crew of 27,000 and
the cargoes included silk, embroideries, other luxury items for presentation to local rulers during the course of voyage (Mills 1970: 27-32). In all his six voyages, Zheng He after crossing through Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka reached at the Malabar Coast and traded a variety of goods at Kollam (Quilon), Kochi (Cochin) and Calicut (Kozhikode).

Besides commodities for trade, a large number of precious items including silk and porcelain were presented to the kings in the form of tributes on behalf of Ming emperor. Affirming the huge vessels (fig. 1.4) used by Zheng He, a Chinese record by Fei Xin written in 1436 CE mentioned that a number of commodities were traded including gold, silver, coloured satin, blue-and-white porcelain, beads, musk, quicksilver and camphor.

![fig. 1.4 A modern day rendition of huge Chinese junks (source: http://www.china.org.cn/english/culture/133425.htm)](http://www.china.org.cn/english/culture/133425.htm)

Besides establishing strong trade links, Ming emperors also emphasised on making China a naval power. They built efficient Navy of about 3,500 ships amongst which 2,700 ships were warships (Ray 1987: 65; Lo 1958: 149-150). During Hong Wu’s reign, warships were used to carry guns, bombs, rockets, etc. i.e. a number of armaments for the protection of Chinese dominion.

The period of Yung-lo was certainly a golden age as far as maritime journeys are concerned. His accession was followed by another Ming emperor Xuande or Hsuan-te (1426-1435 CE) who continued the tradition of overseas trade and supported
the ceramic industry of China. Following the footmarks of Yung-lo, the emperor Xuande in 1431 CE ordered Zheng He to command another maritime expedition which was his last expedition.

After the 15th century CE, the mention of Chinese merchants and envoys coming to India and vice versa is very less in the records of travellers and merchants of different countries. According to the record of Abdur Razzak, an Arab - while his journey to Kozhikode in Kerala in 1442 CE, Razzak saw several Chinese merchant ships in Hormuz (Ormuz) but he did not mention about any Chinese in Kozhikode. Razzak used the word “Chini-bachagan” which was translated as the “son of Chinese” (Major 1975: 19). However, its correct meaning is “the inhabitants of Calicut are adventurous sailors” i.e. Tchinibetchegan (Ray 2003: 207-208). The reason behind the sudden disappearance of Chinese from southern India especially from the Malabar Coast was a rage with the Arab traders. These merchants treated Chinese as their biggest competitors and did not want them to trade their goods in India. As a result the Chinese started moving towards Coromandel Coast especially at Nagapattinam which was under the Vijayanagara Empire (Ray 2003: 208).

The competition increased and every country was using the maritime route for trade purposes which greatly affected the trade activities of Ming dynasty.

**Ch’ing Dynasty (1644-1911 CE)**

During the 17th century, China was conquered by the Manchus who came from Manchuria. They took over the region of China and declared themselves as Ch’ing. Initially their rule was prosperous but with the beginning of 18th century Ch’ing dynasty started declining.

Their ceramic industry also slowly started degrading and the production and quality became poor. The Europeans traced the secret of porcelain manufacturing and they started catching up the markets of porcelain. By the end of Ch’ing dynasty, the trade activities came in the hands of Europeans who tried to monopolise it.
China in Indian Literary Texts

There are a number of literary records which gives important references of connections between ancient India and China. Evidence of word *cina* in Indian literary texts such as *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Manusmriti*, etc. have confirmed links of India with China from ancient times.

*Ramayana*

The word *cina* comes in the Kishkindhakanda as *cinanparamadnangsca* in verse 4.42.12 which is translated as the greater Chinese. It is mentioned as ‘The Chinese, the Greater Chinese, Tukharas, the Barbaras and the Kambojas who (the latter) are covered (as if) with golden lotus (that is, the Kambojas) are rich in gold reserves’ (Mankad 1965: 273).

*Mahabharata*

The reference of word *cina* is noticed in the five *parva* out of eighteen. These are *Sahhaparva*, *Vanaparva*, *Udyogparva*, *Bhismaparva* and *Santiparva*. *Mahabharata* refers *cina* as a clan of warrior who lived in the woods beyond the mountains.

स किरातेश्व चीनेश्व वृत्त: प्रागज्योतिषिकोभवत् (Sabhaparva.23.19a)

*Cina* is used here for describing about the soldiers from China. It says that Arjuna went to conquer Pragjyotish (Assam). Bhagadatta, king of Assam, fought against Arjuna with an army which comprises Kirata and Chinese soldiers (or the soldiers from China who lived beyond the mountains) (Ganguly 1896: 110).

चीनान्दृश्यकानोऽभिभवत्तान्तरवासिन: (Sabhaparva.47.19a)

Another reference of *cina* as a tribe living in the woods comes when Duryodhana mentioned that he saw many people coming from different regions with a variety of
tributes waiting at the palace door of Pandava. He mentioned it while describing about the tributes or gifts presented by different kings to Pandava. Duryodhana further mentioned that he saw numberless cina (Chinese), Sakas, Uddras and many barbarous tribes living in the woods, and many Vrishnis and Harahunas, and dusky tribes of the Himavat, and many Nipas and people residing in regions on the sea coast (Ganguly 1896: 114).

Another reference of cina comes when Duryodhana describes different varieties of tributes for Pandava. He mentioned Valhikas presented numerous blankets of woollen texture manufactured in cina (China) and numerous skins of the Ranku deer, and clothes manufactured from jute, and others woven with the threads spun by insects (Ganguly 1896: 114).

In Vanaparva, the word cina is again used for a tribe of China. It reads as - “when Krishna told Yudhishtra that he saw kings of the Vangas, Angas, Paundras, Odras, Cholas, Dravidas, Andhakas, and the chiefs of many islands and countries on the sea-board as also of frontier states, including the rulers of the Sinhalas, the barbarous mlecchas, the natives of Lanka, and all the kings of the west by hundreds, and all the chiefs of the sea-coast, and the kings of the Pahlavas and the Daradas and the various tribes of the Kiratas, Yavanas, Sakras, Harahunas, Cinas, Tukharas, Sindhavas, Jagudas, Ramathas, Mundas and the inhabitants of the kingdom of women and the Tanganas, Kekayas and Malavas and the inhabitants of Kasmira, afraid of the prowess of your weapons will be present in obedience to your invitation” (Ganguly 1896: 112).

Cina is mentioned here as a country which Pandava crossed for reaching the kingdom of Kiratas. It reads that “after living happily at Badri for one month, those warriors of
Bharata (Pandava) proceeded towards the realm of Suvahu, king of Kiratas. After, crossing the difficult Himalayan regions, and the countries of China, Tukhara, Darada those warlike men reached the capital of Suvahu” (Ganguly 1896: 371).

The reference of cina comes in this verse as part of king Bhagadatta’s army troop to participate in the war of Mahabharata against Kauravas. It reads that the king Bhagadatta brought his troops, crowded with Cinas and Kiratas, all looking like figures of gold, assumed a beauty like to that of a forest of Karnikara trees (Ganguly 1896: 32).

The reference of cina comes in this verse when Dhritarashtra mentioned about the tributes that he would present to Krishna. It reads as I will also give him a thousand deer-skins brought from China and other things of the kind that may be worthy of Kesava (Ganguly 1896: 184).

Cina is mentioned here when Sanjay spoke about various countries, provinces and tribes. It reads as “Among the tribes of the north are the Mlecchas, and the Kruras, are best of the Bharatas; the Yavanas, the Cinas, the Kamvojas, the Darunas, and many Mleccha tribes; the Sukritvahas, the Kulatthas, the Hunas, and the Parasikas; the Ramanas, and the Dasamalikas” (Ganguly 1896: 24).
The word *cina* comes in this verse when Mandhatri asked Indra about the duties of certain tribes. It reads as “What duties should be performed by the Yavanas, the Kiratas, the Gandharvas, the Chinas, the Savaras, the Barbaras, the Sakas, the Tusharas, the Kankas, the Pathavas, the Andhras, the Madrakas, the Paundras, the Pulindas, the Ramathas, the Kamvojas, the several castes that have sprung up from Brahmans and Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas, and the Sudras, that reside in the dominions of (Arya) kings?” (Ganguly 1896: 146).

*Cina* is mentioned here as one of the countries visited by Rishi Vyas son, Suka who was also an ascetic. It reads as - “Having seen many countries inhabited by *Cinas* and Huns, the great ascetic at last reached Aryavarta” (Ganguly 1896: 499).

*Manusmriti*

In *Mahabharata*, the reference of China and Chinese suggest that they belong to a warrior tribe and were treated equally while the *Manusmriti* (The Law Book of Manu) relates the Chinese as a lowest stratum tribe. *Cina* is mentioned as one of the tribe who were earlier belonged to Ksatriya clan but later became Sudra. Manu mentioned that some Ksatriya tribes, having no contact with priests, and having lost their profession gradually became Sudras. They are the Paundrakas, the Udras, the Dravidians, the
Kambojas, the Yavanas, the Sakas, the Paradas, the Palhavas, the Chinese, the Kiratas, the Daradas and the Khasas (Jolly 1887: 232).

**Arthasastra**

In Kautilya’s *Arthasastra*, a number of references to different place names along with their products are mentioned. It includes reference of China mentioned as *cinabhumijah* in verse 2.11.114, which means land of *cina* or China (Kangle 2000: 105). It also gives the reference of Chinese Silk which is mentioned as *cinapatta* (Kangle 2000: 74). Trade route from India to China through Irrawady valley is also mentioned in the text.

**Brihat Samhita**

*Brihat Samhita*, an ancient text on astronomy was written by Varahamihira during the end of Gupta period. The reference of word *cina* used for Chinese is noticed in it when different affects of ketu were described. It has mentioned that “a ketu with its crest hit by a meteor or the one visible right from its rising was considered generally auspicious but un-favourable to the Colas, Avaganas, White Huns and *Cinas*” (XI.61) (Shastri 1965: 356).

Other than these significant texts, the mention of *Cina* has also been found in the Puranas. The Vayupurana mentions *Cina* for the Chinese people and describes their territory in Himalayas (Ray 1995: 181).

**India in Chinese Literary Texts**

Close contacts between India and China during ancient times are noticed in various references in ancient texts of both India and China. Among Indian literary texts *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are noteworthy. Similarly, a number of Chinese texts written by some Chinese court historians, monks and travellers are significant.

Reference of India in Chinese literature was first noticed in the writings of Chinese court historians, Ssu-ma Ch’ien in his work *Shih chi*. Other ancient dynastic records of
China such as *Liangshu, Jiu Tangshu* and *Yuanshi, Mingshi* contain significant information on foreign trade connections between China and regions of Southeast Asia, Central Asia and South Asia.

Between 3rd and 7th century CE, a number of Chinese monks reached India for gaining knowledge about Buddhism amongst which records of Fa Xian, Xuanzang and Yijing are worth-mentioning. Records of these Buddhist monks are noteworthy as they give precise information regarding the geography, trade routes and socio-political history of India.

A number of maritime journeys between India and China were undertaken during 13th-15th century CE. Such travel accounts of maritime journeys like *Hsin-Ch’a Sheng-Lan* of Fei Xin and *Ying-yai Sheng-lan* of Ma Huan are informative. Details of the Chinese literary texts are as follows:

*Shih chi (2nd century BCE)*

*Shih chi*, The Records of the Grand Historians, was written by a court historian Ssu-ma Ch’ien in 91 BCE during the reign of a Han emperor Wu Di (140-100 BCE). The introductory chapter of this text was written by Ssu-ma Ch’ien’s father Ssu-ma Cheng (Allen 1894: 269). Ssu-ma Ch’ien carry forward his father’s work and complied it in 130 chapters which included the annals of Chinese emperors, tables, treaties, biographies, etc. He included the history of China and the regions around it from the earliest times till his time on the basis of old documentary sources, chronological tables, treaties, etc. (Hardy 1992: 1)

In this record, he mentioned about Zhang Qian (Chang Ch’ien), who was sent to Bactria by emperor Wu as part of an envoy. During his journey, Zhang Qian travelled in some important countries of Central Asia which include Ta-yuan (Ferghana), Ta-hsia (Bactria), An-hsi (Parthia), etc. After reaching back to China, Zhang Qian submitted details of those countries which he heard about and those he visited.

He reported about the kingdom of Shen-tu (India) which is located on the southeast of
Ta-hsia. Zhang Qian did not visit Shen-tu but heard about it from the people of Ta-hsia. He mentioned that he saw bamboo canes from Ch’iung and cloth made in the province of Shu when he was in Ta-hsia. After enquiring, Zhang Qian came to know that merchants of Ta-hsia go to buy these products in the markets of Shen-tu which lies on a great river several thousand li southeast of Ta-hsia. Zhang Qian also informed that the people of Shen-tu cultivate the land and live much like the people of Ta-hsia. He further mentioned that the region is said to be hot and damp and the inhabitants ride elephants when they go into battle (Watson 1961: 269). Shih chi is the first Chinese work which mentions about India.

Accounts of Kang Tai and Zhu Ying (3rd century CE)

Kang Tai was an official of the Wu Dynasty (220-280 CE) who was sent to Funan (Vietnam) in 3rd century CE. Another official, Zhu Ying, accompanied him. When these two officials returned back to China, they compiled their observations in a book. The original records of Kang Tai and Zhu Ying were lost long back. But their compilations were passed on centuries to centuries by Chinese historians, geographers and encyclopaedists who replicated passages of Kang Tai and Zhu Ying works in their own texts. Important passages from the Kang Tai records were found in Li Daoyuan works of Shuijing Zhu written between 5th-6th century CE and Taiping Yulan written between 977-983 CE. Apart from these two records, there are a number of Chinese texts written in different centuries which include parts of Kang Tai’s work. All the scattered parts of Kang Tai’s works cited in different ancient records were collected and compiled in a book entitled Kang Tai Wushi Waiguo Zhuan Jizhu in 1971 (Ray 2006: 9-11).

His accounts revealed that he travelled up to Funan (Vietnam). During his journey he heard about many kingdoms to the south like River Hengshui means Sadanira or Ganga and Shen-tu/ Tianzhu means India. The details about the Hengshui (the Ganga) and Tianzhu (India) mentioned in the account of Kang Tai is as follows -

“The source of the Hengshui (The Ganga) issues on the extreme north-west from the centre of the Kunlun where there are five great sources; all the rivers
flow in different directions, but all issue from these five great sources” (Ray 2006: 14).

“The Xintao River is in the Tianzhu country. Its water is sweet. There is rock-salt (in the lower valley), as white as crystal.

White and black er (woollen or felt ornaments or tassels) are produced in Tianzhu.

Tianzhu produces fine qushu (a square mat for the emperor to sit on when worshipping) and tadeng (carpet, rug); the fine qushu is called tadeng” (Ray 2006: 14).

Xintao River is Sindhu or Indus.

*Fo-kwō-ki (4th century CE)*

Fa Xian (Fa Hien) was the first Chinese monk who visited India in 4th century CE when China was under the rule of Han Dynasty. He undertook the journey to India for procuring texts related to monastic rules i.e. *Vinaya-pitaka* (Legge 1965: 11). He compiled his journey account in a book, *Fo-kwō-ki*, which is regarded an important record of routes between India and China.

Fa Xian commenced his journey from Chang’an (now Xi’an) located in Shen-si/Shanxi province and followed Silk Road, the difficult and rugged land road. On his way, he visited Buddhist monasteries and reached India after crossing some important trading stations and Buddhist centres in the Central Asia. Among the places visited by Fa Xian - Lanzhou, Dunhuang, Loulan, Karashahr, Khotan, Tashkurghan and Darel are noteworthy. He noticed multicultural societies and mentioned that people living in Loulan follow the customs and rules of India but wear clothes like Chinese (Sen 2006: 25).

After crossing the region of Central Asia, he crossed River Indus and reached Peshawar. Taking the route towards north India, he reached Muttra (Mathura) located on the bank of River Jumna (Yamuna). He mentioned that there were about 20
monasteries in Mathura where more than 3000 monks were residing. While describing the socio-cultural customs of Mathura, he also mentioned that people use cowries for selling and buying goods (Legge 1965: 51-52). After crossing Mathura, Fa Xian reached Sravasti where he stayed at the Jetavana vihara. From Sravasti, he reached Vaishali, stayed there for some days and left for his next destination, Pataliputra. Fa Xian gave significant details about Pataliputra city and its people. He mentioned that this city is the greatest of all in the middle kingdom and its people are rich and prosperous. There is a stupa in the city built by Asoka besides which is a grand and beautiful Mahayana monastery (Legge 1965: 84-85).

From Pataliputra he went to Rajgir, Bodhgaya and reached Sarnath. His objective was to search for the copies of Vinaya-pitaka but after travelling in various kingdoms of north India; he could only find one monk who was orally transmitting rules to another. Therefore, in search of written transcripts, Fa Xian reached Sarnath in the Central India where he found a written copy of Vinaya-pitaka containing the Mahasanghika rules (Legge 1965: 106). Fa Xian stayed at Sarnath for three years and then returned back to Pataliputra. Following the course of River Ganga, he continued his journey and reached at the port of Tamralipti (Tamluk) in eastern India. Fa Xian saw about twenty-two monasteries in Tamralipti and stayed there for two years to write sutras. From Tamralipti he embarked in a large mercantile vessel for his journey to Sri Lanka and further journey for reaching China through the Southeast Asia (Legge 1965: 108).

Hou Han Shu (5th century CE)

Hou Han Shu (History of the Later Han) was compiled in 5th century by an unknown author. The text mentions about India and its contact with Han emperors in chapter 118. It reads as -

"The country of T’ien-chu is also called Shen-tu. It lies several thousand li southeast of the Yueh-chih; its customs are similar to those of the Yueh-chih, but the land is low, humid and hot. This kingdom is on the banks of a great river [the Indus]. The inhabitants ride on elephants in warfare; they are weaker than the Yueh-chih; they practise the way of the Buddha, and it has become customary not to kill or fight."
If one goes south-westwards from the Yueh-chih country of Kao-fu [Kabul] one reaches the Western Sea, while eastwards one reaches the country of Pan-ch’i. All this constitutes the territory of Shen-tu.

Shen-tu has hundreds of separate walled cities, each with an appointed governor, and scores of separate kingdoms, each having its own ruler. Although these kingdoms are somewhat different from one another, they are nonetheless all called Shen-tu. At this time [early in the 2nd century A.D.] they are all subject to the Yueh-chih, who killed their king and installed a general as ruler over this population.

This country produces elephants, rhinoceroses, tortoise shell, gold, silver, copper, iron, lead and tin. On the western side it is in communication with Ta-ts’in [the Roman Empire], and so the precious products of Ta-ts’in are found there. Also available are fine cloths, woollen carpets of good quality, perfumes of all kinds, crystallised sugar, pepper, ginger, and coarse salt.

In the time of Emperor Ho [89-150 A.D.] they sent embassies to offer tribute. Subsequently, the Western Regions having revolted, these relations were cut off. Then, in the reign of Emperor Huan, in the second and fourth yen-his years [159 and 161 A.D.], they came from beyond Jih-nan bearing offerings” (Colless 1980: 170-171).

Liangshu (7th century CE)

Liangshu, The History of the Liang dynasty (502-557 CE) was compiled by two Chinese, Yao Chao and his son Yao Silian in 636 CE. This record of 56 juans or chapters comprises account of the rulers of Liang dynasty and their dealings with the foreign countries.

The record mentioned about the envoys sent from Southeast Asian countries amongst which Funnan and Bali are significant. The details of the products of these regions, people and customs are mentioned in this record. Apart from Southeast Asian countries, references of Tianzhu (India) are also found. It mentions that the country of
India (Middle Tianzhu or Shendu/ Juandu) is located several thousand li southeast of Da Yuezhi, its area being 30,000 li. The record also mentioned details of an old account of Zhang Qian which dates back to Han dynasty (Ray 2011: 9).

*Si-Yu-Ki (7th century CE)*

Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang), a Chinese monk visited India during the rule of T’ang dynasty (618-906 CE). He left China for his journey to India in around 629 CE to procure original records of *Vinaya-pitaka*, learn Buddhist doctrines directly from Indian teachers and to visit all the Buddhist monuments of India (Sen 2006: 29).

Like Fa Xian, Xuanzang also took notes of his journey and compiled them in a book, *Si-Yu-Ki*. This book threw a light on his long journey to India, commercial exchanges and healthy relationships between India and China.

In his account he mentions that how he entered in India through a long route through Central Asia. He commenced his journey from Xi’an followed by a land journey in Central Asia crossing through Anxi, Hami, Turfan, Agni, Kucha, Tashent, Samarkand, Balkh and Bamiyan. Following almost the same route as Fa Xian, he reached Taxila after crossing Central Asia and entered in the northern India through Mathura. While describing about Mathura, Xuanzang mentioned that there were three stupas built by King Asoka and about twenty monasteries where two-thousand monks were living (Beal 1884: 180).

Xuanzang also visited many famous Buddhist sites such as Sravasti, Lumbini, Vaisali, Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, Rajgir and Nalanda. Xuanzang in his record gave detailed description of the Buddhist sites amongst which the description of a Buddhist pagoda located at Bodh Gaya is noteworthy. He mentioned there is a temple at Bodh Gaya which is 48.77 metres high (160 feet), made of bricks and coated with lime but here once stood a small chaitya built by King Asoka (Watters 1961: 116). He also gave a description of his stay at the Nalanda University. He further continued his journey in the Empire of King Harshavardhan in northern and central India. He also mentions different Chinese names used for India such as *T’ien Chu, Shin-tu,*
Hien-tau In-tu (Beal 1884: 69). He further described about the geography of India, its climate, calendar, astronomy, cities, dresses of people, customs, etc. Xuanzang also visited Kamarupa (Assam) and met King Bhaskaravarman (Watters 1961: 185-186). From Kamarupa, he reached Tamralipti and further following the coastal line reached Kancheepuram which was under the rule of Pallava dynasty.

Thereafter, he travelled up to Maharashtra, visited Nasik and also Ajanta. He also visited Ujjain and then went back to Multan for his return journey to China.

He returned from his journey crossing through Kashgar and Khotan. He had been away from China for sixteen years and returned in 645 CE. He brought back with him statues of Buddha and 124 works of the great vehicle (sutras) (Beal 1884: 19-20).

Account of Yijing (7th century CE)

Yijing (I-Tsing), another famous Chinese monk started his journey to India in 671 CE. His sole aim was for visiting India was to record the monastic rules of Indian monasteries and to rectify errors which he found in the application of original principles in China (Takakusu 2006: 18).

Chinese monks especially during the 7th century CE travelled to India in search of original Buddhist texts and to visit Buddhist sites. Most of those monks came through the land route but a few also reached India using the maritime route. Yijing was one such Chinese monk who reached India through the maritime route. He started his journey from Chang’an on foot and reached at the port of Yangzhou in China to embark his further journey on ship. Then after crossing the region of Southeast Asia, Yijing reached Tamralipti. He further travelled up to Kannauj and halted at the Buddhist sites of Rajgir, Bodh Gaya, Vaisali, Kapilavastu and Sravasti.

During his stay in India, he completed two works, amongst which the first work was on the records of Buddhist practices in India and second was on the monks who visited India during the T’ang period in search of Buddhist doctrines and monastic rules.
The first work, he mentions that how Buddhist doctrines and monastic rules were practiced in India. He mentioned about the 40 practices followed at the monasteries in India and compared them with the practices followed in China. It includes cleansing after meals, mode of eating, regulations for ordinations, etc. He recommended some compromises in the practices due to socio-cultural differences between India and China. For example, he mentioned one practice of mode of eating, and for this he described that people in India use their right hand for taking food, but in case of illness one is permitted to use a spoon. He further mentioned that in China chop-sticks are used for taking food and therefore he suggested that since in the monastic rules “chop-sticks were never allowed nor were they prohibited” they could be used in China, “for if we obstinately reject their use, people may laugh or complain (Takakusu 2006: 90).

His second book contains biographical information of about fifty-six Chinese monks who travelled to India in the 7th century CE.

After completion of his work, Yijing returned back to China in 695 CE through the same maritime route which he used for arrival.

_Jiu Tangshu (10th century CE)_

The account was originally written by Zhang Zhaoyuan, Jia Wei and others under the title Tangshu (History of the T’ang Dynasty). Later it was compiled by Liu Xu of the later Jin dynasty between 940-945 CE and termed as _Jiu Tangshu_ (Old History of the T’ang Dynasty) (Ray 2011: 36). The account deals with the dynastic history of T’ang rulers and their foreign connections with the countries of South Asia and Central Asia.

The account mentioned about the geography of Tianzhu (India), products of export, customs and traditions of people, calendar, astronomy and trade connections with T’ang rulers. It states that precious products from India were occasionally traded with Funnan and Jiaozhi (present day Guangdong province and some part of northern Vietnam). The record gave an important account of an envoy sent by the Magadha King, Siladitya, from India to China in 641 CE and in return Chinese emperor Tai Zong
of T’ang dynasty sent an imperial envoy enquiring about Siladitya’s well-being (Ray 2011: 40-41). Thereafter many envoys were exchanged between India and China which includes an envoy from the kingdom of South India to China in the reign of emperor Jinglong (710 CE); envoy from the kingdom of west India to China under the rule of emperor Kaiyuan (714 CE); the king of Middle India named Yashovarman (Yishafumo) dispatched his chief priest Buddhasena with tributes to China in 741 CE, etc. (Ray 2011: 43).

**Yuanshi (?)**

*Yuanshi*, the History of the Yuan Dynasty is another important literary record but its date is unknown. According to this text, Yuan rulers had sent about sixteen envoys to India between 1272 and 1296 CE, majority of which reached Kollam on the Malabar Coast. During the same period about eighteen envoys came to India (Sen 2006b: 302).

The text mentioned that during the rule of Kubalai Khan, about four missions were sent to India lead by a Yuan official named Yang Tingbi. It also described about a ship of a Yuan envoy which encountered in unfavourable wind around the Gulf of Mannar and took an emergency halt at a port in the Ma’bar kingdom (Sen 2006a: 425). This is an example of the Indo-China trade links which indicates that ships from Quanzhou were making direct voyages to the South Indian coast.

**Chu-fan-chi (13th century CE)**

Chau Ju-kua was a custom inspector at Quanzhou, who compiled his work in a book *Chu-fan-chi* in around 1225 CE. In his text, Chau Ju-kua described about the countries located in the Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Near Eastern region and their traditions, customs, religions, trade contacts, etc. Along with the details of countries, he also described about the commodities exported especially between China and Arab countries between the 11th to 13th centuries CE.

He gave detailed description of a number of places in India such as Malabar Coast, Gujarat, Malwa and Coromandel Coast.
The details of these countries are as follows -

“The country of Nairs of the Nan-pi (Malabar) is in the extreme southwest. The people of this country are of dark brown complexion. They are skilled in archery, love fighting and ride elephants in battle. They are extremely devout Buddhists. The country of Malabar is very far away and foreign vessels rarely visit it. Its products are therefore taken to the Malay Peninsula (Ki-lo Ta-nung) and the following goods are exchanged in bartering for them: silks, porcelain-ware, camphor (chang-nau), rhubarb, cloves, lump-camphor (nau-tzi), sandal-wood, cardamoms and gharu-wood. For trade purposes, alloyed silver coins stamped with an official seal are used by the people” (Hirth and Rockhill 1911:87-89).

“The king of Hu-ch’a-la (Gujarat) rules over more than a hundred cities. The inhabitants of this country are white and clean looking. This country has 4000 Buddhist temple buildings residing 20,000 dancing-girls who sing twice daily while offering food to the Buddha (i.e., the idols) and while offering flowers. The native products of the country are indigo, red kino, myrobolans and foreign cotton stuffs of every colour. Every year these goods are transported to the Arab (Ta-shi) countries for sale” (Hirth and Rockhill 1911: 92).

“The kingdom of Ma-lo-hua (Malwa) borders on that of Hu-ch’a-la. This country rules over sixty odd cities, and it has land routes. The manner of dressing and the local customs are the same as Hu-ch’a-la. Of products white cotton cloth is very common. Every year two thousand oxen, or more, laden with cotton stuffs are sent over the roads to other countries to barter” (Hirth and Rockhill 1911: 93).

“The kingdom of Chola dominion is located on the Chi-lien (Coromandel Coast). The native products of the country are pearls, elephant tusks, coral, transparent glass, betel nuts, cardamoms, cotton stuff with silk threads, etc. This country had no links of trade activities with China in old times. Ma Huan noted that in former times, this country did not send any tribute to China. They sent their first mission to China with pearls and like articles as tribute in about 1015 CE. Thereafter in 1077 CE, they again sent tribute of native produce
to China. The emperor Shun-tsung sent an officer of the Inner department to bid them welcome” (Hirth and Rockhill 1911: 93-98).

*Daoyi zhi lue (14th century CE)*

*Daoyi zhi lue*, Brief Records of the Island Barbarians, is a significant literary text of 1349 CE written by Wang Dayuan. It mentioned the flourishing trade activities between India and China and the presence of Chinese merchants in the coastal regions of India.

This account also mentioned about a China pagoda at Nagapattinam that was constructed or financed by traders from China. It reads as -

"In the plains of Badan (i.e. Nagapattinam), surrounded by trees and rocks, is a pagoda constructed with mud bricks. [It is] several meters high. Chinese characters written [on it] say that its construction was completed in the eighth lunar month of Xianchun (1267). It is said, people from China visited the place that year and wrote [the characters] on the stone and engraved them. Up to the present time, they have not faded" (Sen 2006a: 426)

The record also mentioned about the ninety-nine places and kingdoms located on the Indian Ocean (Ptak 1996: 127-141) that included present day Bengal and Orissa in the east; Calicut in the south; and Mumbai and Gujarat in the west.

While describing the details of the important ports on Indian Coast, this record indicates that Bengal had become one of the important destinations for Chinese traders. It reads as -

"The Five Ranges (i.e., Rajmahal Hills) have rocky summits and are covered by a dense forest. The people [of the kingdom] reside around these [hills]. [They] engage in plowing and sowing throughout the year, so there are no wastelands. The rice fields and arable lands are spectacular. Three crops are harvested every year. Goods are all reasonably priced. During the ancient times, it was the capital of Sindu."
The climate is always hot. The customs [of the people are] extremely pure and honest. Men and women cover their head with a fine cotton cloth and wear long skirts. The official tax rate is twenty percent. The kingdom mints silver coins called Tangjia (i.e., tangka), two of which weigh eight hundredth of a tael (i.e., Chinese ounce), that is circulated and used [by the court]. They can be exchanged for more than 11,520 pieces of cowrie shells. The lightness of the coins is convenient and very beneficial to the people.

[The kingdom] produces [fabrics such as] bibu (bairami/bafta), gaonibu (kain cloth?), tuluojin (malmal), [and also] kingfishers’ feathers. [Chinese traders] use southern and northern [varieties of] silks, pentachrome taffetas and satins, cloves, nutmegs, blue and white porcelain ware, white tassels and such things [to trade with native merchants].” (Rockhill 1915: 435-436).

Besides the detailed description of Bengal and its interactions with China, this record has also mentioned the Orissa and China trade connections. It states -

“...The country is bare and swampy. The soil is fertile, crops are luxuriant and they have three harvests yearly. People are honest as Buddha and they are more prosperous than in any other foreign land. The export products of this region include kingfisher’s feathers, beeswax and fine cotton stuff. The goods exchanged by Chinese in trade are gold, silver, coloured satins, white silk, cloves, nutmegs, blue and white porcelain, drums, lutes, etc.” (Rockhill 1915: 444-445).

The record also included the names of the goods especially spices like pepper exported from the Malabar Coast to China in large quantities (Sen 2006a: 434). Chinese were also buying expensive luxury goods from the Coromandel Coast. Such important evidence proves brisk trade between India and China during the Yuan period of China.

*Hsin-Ch’a Sheng-Lan (15th century CE)*

Fei Xin (Fei Hsin) was a Chinese official who accompanied Cheng Ho in his voyages in the Indian Ocean. He was first chosen for the third voyage of Cheng Ho
(1409-1411 CE). He again accompanied Cheng Ho in his fourth, fifth and seventh voyages. After his return to China, Fei Xin wrote his account of travels titled *Hsin-Ch’a Sheng-Lan* in 1436 CE. Affirming the huge vessels used by Cheng Ho, Fei Xin mentioned that a number of commodities were traded from China including gold, silver, coloured satin, blue-and-white porcelain, beads, musk, quicksilver and camphor (*Wenwu* 1962.3). Fei Xin in his record mentioned about the forty-five places that were visited during the journey. He also described about the ports located on the Malabar Coast which includes Quilon (Kollam), Cochin (Kochi) and Calicut (Kozhikode).

Describing about Hsiao Chü-nan kuo (Kollam), he mentioned that it is a principle port for all the countries of the western ocean. This country uses gold coins named *t’ang-chia* (tangka) and another smaller gold coin called *pa-nam* (fanam) for trade purposes. The country produces pepper, dry arecanuts and jack-fruits. The commodities exchanged were cloves, nut megs, coloured satins, musk, gold, silver, brass articles, iron wire and black lead (Mills 1996: 65-66).

Next port mentioned by Fei Xin is *K’o-chih kuo* (Kochi). He described Kochi as a place facing the country of Sri Lanka. The climate is hot and the lands are barren. The country produces pepper in large quantities and all the wealthy families store it in their wooden warehouses in order to sell it to the traders. For trade a small gold coin called *pa-nam* (fanam) is used. The commodities exchanged here were coloured satin, white silk, blue-and-white porcelain, gold and silver (Mills 1996: 67).

Another important place described by Fei Xin is *Ku-li kuo* (Kozhikode). He mentioned it as an important place of the oceans which is located very near to Sri Lanka. The mountains are wide and the lands are barren. The chief is rich and lives in the depth of the hills. There are markets for trading of goods near the side of the sea. The items exported from Kozhikode were pepper, rose-water, jack-fruits and veils with printed designs. The commodities imported were gold, silver, pearls, coloured satins, blue-and-white porcelain, musk, quicksilver and camphor (Mills 1996: 68-69).

This account of Fei Xin gives useful information about items produced and exported from India as well as items imported from China.
Ma Huan, a Muhammadan Chinaman, was an official interpreter in the Cheng Ho’s (Zheng He) envoy for three voyages. He could speak fluent Arabic and that is why he was chosen to be a part of Cheng Ho’s fleet. Ma Huan recorded three voyages of Cheng Ho undertaken in 1413-1415, 1421-1422 and 1431-1433. The details of these voyages and the places visited are recorded in his book.

He also gives account of Cheng Ho’s fleet. It included Chinese junks with five to nine masts and were manned by a crew of 27,000. Cargoes carried on them included silk, embroideries, other luxury items for presenting to local rulers during the voyage (Mills 1970: 27-32).

Among places mentioned by Ma Huan, two important port towns located on the Malabar Coast are Cochin (Kochi) and Calicut (Kozhikode). His description gives detailed geography, customs, culture, tradition and trade activities of Kochi and Kozhikode.

He mentioned that for reaching Kochi, it took one day and one night from Kollam. The king of Kochi is a follower of Buddhism. The merchants of this country carry on their business like pedlars do in China. Here also is another class of men, called chokis (Yogi), who lead austere lives like the Taoists in China. The land is un-productive however pepper grows here on hills and is extensively cultivated. The people here trade goods such as pepper, precious stones, corals, etc. The coinage of the country is a gold piece called fanam and a small silver coin called ta-urh (tari) (Philips 1896: 341-344).

He mentioned about Kozhikode that this port is frequently visited by merchants from all quarters. The place is three days sail from Kochi. In Kozhikode, pepper is grown on the hills and coconut plantation is extensive. The king of this place is a firm believer of Buddhism. Many of the king’s subjects are Muhammadans and there are 20-30 mosques in the kingdom. The ships from China are
China are frequent here and whenever it arrives, the king along with a *Chitti* goes on board and values the commodities. Ma Huan further mentioned that when their ship arrived at this port, the silk goods from China were first inspected and then precious stones and pearls were seen for valuation. The money in circulation at Kozhikode is similar as Kochi. As a tribute, the king’s usually present a gold-plated girdle set with all kinds of precious stones and pearls to the emperor of China (Philips 1896: 345-348).

*Siyang Ch’ao Kung tien lu (16th century CE)*

This account compiled by Huang Sing-ts’eng in 1520 CE is another important source of information on India and China connections (Bagchi 1945: 97). The account includes details of some of the embassies sent from India to China. It also mentions about the trade connections between the region of West Bengal and China.

It states that the country of eastern India (Bengal) lies north of the Nicobar Islands. There is an important port here known as *Ch’i-ti-kiang* (Chittagong). From Chittagong, through a river journey one reaches at *Suo-na-eul-kong* (Sonargaon). It has city walls, tanks, streets and markets. Again starting from Sonargaon, one reaches the capital city of Pandua. This city is large and elegant. The king has a big flat-roofed palace and its pillars are ornamented with brass figures of flowers and animals (Bagchi 1945: 123-124).

For trade purpose, people used silver coins called tangka or sea shells called cowrie (Bagchi 1945: 125). Their main business was manufacturing of cloth and trade of local products like coral, pearls, crystals, carnelians, etc.

Huang Sing-ts’eng also records about early connections between India and China. The king *Ngai-ya-sse-ting* (Ghiyasuddin) had sent ambassador with tributes to China in 1408 CE when the emperor Yung-lo of Ming dynasty was the emperor. This ambassador from India reached in the Yung-lo court in 1411 CE. Another ambassador named *Pa-yi-tsi* (Bayazid) was sent to China in 1414 CE with a tribute of *K’i-lin* (African Giraffe) and other things followed by one more embassy in 1438 CE.
with same tributes as previously sent (Bagchi 1945: 127).

This record suggests prolific trade links between India and China during the 15th-16th century CE.

*Ming she* (18th century CE)

*Ming she* is an official compilation of the foreign journeys initiated by the orders of Ming emperor Yung-lo. This official record was completed in 1739 CE, but it also contains information on earlier embassies, voyages, trade, etc.

The record mentioned about close connections of Bengal and China during the reign of emperor Yung-lo. It stated that the king of Bengal named Ghiyasuddin had sent an embassy carrying tributes to China (Bagchi 1945: 133). Similarly in response, Chinese emperor Yung-lo also gave tributes. Since China had open policies towards foreign nations therefore every year an ambassador from Bengal was sent to China carrying precious and expensive gifts.

The text also contains the Biography of Cheng Ho (Zheng He) and details of his seven voyages (Bagchi 1945: 97). The biography of Cheng Ho mentions dates of his seven voyages i.e. 1405-1407, 1407-1409, 1409-1411, 1413-1415, 1417-1419, 1421-1422, 1431-1433 (Mote and Twitchett 1998: 232).

Cheng Ho’s biography also mentions thirty-seven countries including India which he visited during his seven voyages. In India, Cheng Ho visited Gujarat, Malabar Coast, Coromandel Coast and Bengal. The information supplied by the Biography of Cheng Ho is also confirmed through an inscription installed by Cheng Ho in 1431 CE at Galle in Sri Lanka.

**India and China in Other Literary Texts**

Other than Indian and Chinese records, references of connections between India and China have also been noticed in the records of merchants and travellers from different
regions of the world. Some of the important sources are discussed here.

*Periplus Maris Erythraei (1st century CE)*

This text on the travels and trade activities in the Indian Ocean was written in 1st century CE by an unknown merchant. Originally written in Greek, it is the first-hand Greeko-roman literary text which gives reference of India and China interactions through trade links. The text mentioned that there is a great city called Thinae (China), from where raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloth are brought on foot through Bactria (present day Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) to Barygaza (Broach), and are also exported to Damirica (southern India) by way of the River Ganga. But the land of this is not easy of access, few men come from there and seldom (Schoff 1912: 48).

*Kitab Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi’ktiraq al-’Afaq (12th century CE)*

Al-Idrasi, a Moroccan, compiled a geographical work titled *Kitab Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi’ktiraq al-’Afaq* in around 12th century CE. It includes description of India and its neighbouring countries which was based on the oral reports and old Arab sources (Maqbul 1960: 12). Besides the description of India’s political history, geography, religion, social customs, etc., the text also mentions about India and China connections.

Al-Idrasi mentions about Baruj (Bharuch), a large, magnificent and beautiful town in India. He further states that its inhabitants have high ambitions, copious resources, solid wealth, and recognised trades. He described it as a port for those who arrive from China, as well as for those who come from Sind (Maqbul 1960: 58).

*Oriente Poliano (13th century CE)*

Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller, reached India in the 13th century CE. He had mentioned in his account, *Oriente Poliano* (Description of the World), that there was a regular maritime trade connection between the China and India. His travel record has
provided the first eyewitness account of Chinese junks sailing to India. His account states that -

“These ships were built with fir timber. They have but one deck, though each of them contains some 50-60 cabins, wherein the merchants abide greatly at their ease, every man having one to himself. They are indeed of great size and one ship shall carry 5000 or 6000 baskets of peppers” (Yule and Cordier 1998: 249-250; Wake 1997: 56-57).

Besides the description of Chinese junks in Indian waters, Marco Polo has also described about the ports of Malabar and Kollam and their connection with the China. He has mentioned about Kollam as a place which grows ginger and pepper in good quantities. He further stated that the merchants reach there from Manzi or southern China and Arabia on their ships carrying large number of commodities to make profits both in export and import (Yule and Cordier 1998: 375-376).

Regarding the Malabar, Marco Polo mentioned that the kingdom has great produces in pepper, ginger, cinnamon and nuts. The ships that come from the east bring copper in ballast along with other products such as cloths of silk, gold, silver, etc. and exchange them for the products of this country. He further mentioned that ships come here from many quarters including the great province of Manzi or southern China. From Malabar, coarse spices are exported both to Manzi and the west (Yule and Cordier 1998: 389-390).

These references by Marco Polo shows that a variety of goods were exchanged between India and China since a long time and the trade was carried out using large Chinese junks (fig. 1.5).
The Travels of Ibn Battuta (14th century CE)

The Travels of Ibn Battuta is another important account which gives useful information on India and China connections. Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan traveller who visited India in 14th century CE. He reported of seeing thirteen Chinese junks anchored at the harbour in Calicut and remarked, "On the sea of China travelling is done in Chinese ships only" (Gibb 1994: 813). He also gave a detailed description of Chinese junks in his account. He stated that -

"The Chinese vessels are of three kinds; large ships called junks, middle sized ones called zaws, and small ones called kakams. The large ships have anything from three to twelve sails, which are made of bamboo rods plaited like mats. They are never lowered, but they turn them according to the direction of the wind; at anchor they are left floating in the wind. A ship carries a complement of a thousand men, six hundred of whom are sailors and four hundred men-at-arms, including archers, men with shields and arbalests that is men who throw naphtha. Each large vessel is accompanied by three smaller ones, the ‘half’, the ‘third’, and the ‘quarter’. These vessels are built only in the town of Zaitûn (Quanzhou) or at Šîn al-Šîn (Canton) in China" (Gibb 1994: 813-814).

Besides giving the description of Chinese junks in Indian waters, Ibn Battuta also confirmed about the regular visits of Chinese merchants to India. His account stated that he travelled to the town of Qaliqut (Calicut), which is one of the chief ports in Mulaibar (Malabar).

He further mentioned that it was visited by men from Thinae (China), Jawa (Java), Sri Lanka, the Maldives, al-Yaman (Yemen) and Fars (Persia), and in it gather merchants from all quarters. Its harbour is one of the largest in the world (Gibb 1994: 812-813).

Ibn Battuta also mentioned about the use of Chinese porcelain in India. He mentioned about an Indian meal that he took while travelling from Multan to Delhi. He stated that he was served meat in large porcelain bowls (Gibb 1999: 607-608). The instance of the use of Chinese porcelain mentioned by Ibn Battuta shows that it was an important item in the royal courts and was in great demand.
Porcelain in Literature

For a long period, a variety of Chinese porcelains were exported from China to the regions of Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and as far as Europe. Literary records of different travellers and merchants describe about Chinese porcelain in great detail. Some of the literary records mentioning Chinese porcelain are as follows:

Cha jing/ Ch’a Ching (9th century CE)

An important poem on Chinese porcelain is found in book Cha jing (Tea Classic) compiled in 804 CE by Lu Yu, from Hupei province of China. In this book, Lu Yu, described about the origin of tea, methods of preparing it and the utensils used. He also mentions about porcelain cups manufactured at different places, their colours and also the appearance of the colour of tea in those cups. He stated -

“The porcelain cups from Yueh-chou and You-chou are of a light bluish tinge and when they are filled with tea it appears reddish-white. The Hsing-chou porcelain is white and give the tea a red colour. That of shou-chou is yellow and makes the tea purple, that of hung-chou is brown and the tea looks blackish. None of them shows the tea to full advantage. But the best porcelain cups from Yueh-chou are those in which the tea took on a greenish colour and this was apparently what valued most highly” (Eichhorn 1969: 213-214).

All this shows that during the T’ang period, porcelain was by no means rare and the number of kilns shows that factories were already growing up in various places in order to meet with the general demand (Eichhorn 1969: 214).

Akhbar al-Sin wa’l Hind (9th century CE)

In 8th-9th centuries, the travels of Arab merchants to China increased when Muhammadan settled in Canton and other seaport towns of China (Bushell 1906: 19). During the same period, Sulayman al-Tajir, an Arab merchant visited China.

The first mention of Chinese porcelain outside China comes in the account of
Sulayman *Akhbar al-Sin wa’l Hind* (An Account of China and India). Mentioning about the qualities of Chinese porcelain, Sulayman describes about the fineness and refinement of Chinese porcelain in his account, he writes - “They have in China a very fine clay with which they make vases which are as transparent as glass; water is seen through them. These vases are made of clay” (Langles 1811: 35-46). Silcock translated it as - “there is in China a very fine clay from which are made vases having the transparency of glass bottles; water in these vases is visible through them, yet they are made of clay” (1939: 15).

**Record of Emperor Shih Tsung (10th century CE)**

Another important mention of porcelain is found in a record by an unknown Chinese author of 10th century CE, where he mentions about an imperial order of emperor Shih Tsung (954-959 CE) of Chou dynasty. The order on porcelain stated -

“As blue as the sky, as clear as a mirror, as thin as paper, and as resonant as a musical stone of jade.” (Bushell 1906: 20)

**Al-Jumahir fi Ma’rifat al-Jawahir (11th century CE)**

The account of Al-Beruni named *Al-Jumahir fi Ma’rifat al-Jawahir* (Book on Precious Stones) was compiled in the early 11th century CE (Krenkow 1933: 464). This is an important record in terms of porcelain manufacturing techniques and its trade. Al-Beruni gives a detailed account of the immense care taken by the Chinese potters in the preparation of clay. He also admired Chinese porcelain because of its qualities such as translucency, thinness and its tone when struck (Lane 1947: 31-32). He mentions about the Chinese porcelain in chapter 32 of his book. He states that -

“I have heard about the genuine Chinese porcelain which are described as transparent like crystal and looks like glass. For preparation of porcelain material, the workmen take to pounding the moist clay with their feet. Each man works at a fixed time and then transfers the clay in the container of his neighbour after his time of work is spent, and he takes to working in the same manner. The aim in this is that not one moment is
lost in pounding, because it hardens and spoils otherwise. They continue to pound the clay until it reached at the desired state. The prepared clay shall be sticky and able to be stretched like the dough of bread. Then the potters make vessels and let them dry in open.

After drying, the vessels are dipped in glaze. Then the potters put it into kilns” (Krenkow 1933: 464).

His account also stated that the best Chinese vessels were those of apricot colour, of fine texture and made of sharp clay which was stretched by pounding and their price was as high as ten dinars (Krenkow 1933: 465).

Al-Beruni also mentioned about a visit to his merchant friend from Isfahan, who resided at Rayy and owned Chinese porcelain of every kind and shape that includes vases, sugar-basins, wash-basins, plates, jugs, drinking-cups, lamp-stands, etc. (Lane 1947: 31-32).

Oriente Poliano (13th century CE)

Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller, commenced his journey from Venice in around 1271 CE. His account, Oriente Poliano (Description of the World) mentioned trade connections between India and China and export of goods from China to the Malabar Coast on huge Chinese junks (Yule and Cordier 1998: 375-376).

Marco Polo has also described about his itinerary and the places he stayed. He mentioned that after travelling through the Ormuz, Khorassan, Balakshan, Kashgar, Khotan, and crossing through the Gobi desert, he reached China where he stayed for one year. For return journey, he took a route through Cambodia, Malacca, Sumatra, Nicobar and Andaman Islands, Sri Lanka, Coromandel Coast and Malabar Coast.

Marco Polo has recorded some important details about China in his travellogue including the preparation of Chinese porcelain. His account mentions about the porcelain manufacturing at two cities of China i.e. Kin-sai and Tin-gui. He explained
the process of manufacturing bowls and dishes of porcelain and mentioned that Chinese potters collected a certain kind of earth and exposed it to the wind, rain and the sun for 30-40 years. After going through this process, the soil became refined and fit for making vessels. The wares afterwards baked in ovens or kilns (Ernest 1908: 318-319).

**T’ao-ch‘i Lueh (14th century CE)**

The text of *T’ao-ch‘i Lueh* (Appendix to the Ceramic Records) was compiled by Chiang Ch‘i during the Yuan period (Medley 1974: 7). It is the part of *Annals of Fou-liang-hsien* (A Short History of Fu-liang Hsien) which was earlier issued during the Song dynasty. This text was re-compiled in 1322 CE by the Yuan dynasty’s orders, with addition of the short work called *T’ao-ch‘i Lueh*.

The text contains important details on the ceramic industry in China, economic distribution of labour within the ceramic industry, and the extent of the trade.

The record gives details of different aspects of ceramic industry at Jingdezhen which had more than 300 pottery manufacturing kilns. The porcelain produced at these kilns was of pure white colour and without stain. The merchants who exported porcelain named this ware as *Jao-chou Jade* (Bushell 1899: 178).

Different varieties of porcelain were mentioned in the text such as the *wan* (bowls engraved with fish and wave pattern), *tieh* (dishes with the glaze shaded in different tones), *p’an* (the large dishes of horseshoe shape and of betel-nut coloured glaze), *yu* (the large bowls of lotus-blossom design), *wan* (the rice bowls), *tieh* (the platters), *lu* (censers made for burning incense in the form of fabulous lions), *ku* (trumpet-mouthed beakers), *hu* (bottle-shaped vases with handles and spouts), *hu lu* (double gourds), *shou huan* (vases with animal mask-handles), etc. (Bushell 1899: 180).

Regarding the kilns, the text mentions that the furnaces were carefully measured by the officials and heavy fines are levied if they are lighted without authority. The details
such as the length of the furnaces, the number of workmen employed in each, etc. were recorded in the registers so as to fix the tax to be levied on the potters. Details such as the size of the fire, the number of channels, chimneys, and vent-holes were never completely noted down by the officials (Bushell 1899: 178).

*The Travels of Ibn Battuta (14th century CE)*

Another important record of Chinese porcelain comes through the account of Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan traveller who visited India in 14th century CE. Ibn Battuta in his account mentioned about the Chinese ships sailing in Indian waters and regular visits of Chinese merchants on the Malabar Coast (Gibb 1994: 812-813).

This text also mentions about certain precautions taken by the Chinese potters for ceramic manufacturing. It states that during the winter the paste freezes, so porcelain cannot be fired. The text then states that the newly shaped pieces are very soft and therefore must be carried with care into the fire-chamber. Next it mentions that for firing the pottery, exact time cannot be fixed, so it is necessary to look through the aperture of the kiln and judge the well-fired porcelain by the white heat of the fire (Bushell 1899: 181-182).

Regarding the reference of Chinese porcelain, an important mention comes in Ibn Battuta’s record when he was travelling from Multan to Delhi. He described about the Indian meal served in special dishes and bowls of Chinese porcelain. His record states -

“The cook served bread (their bread consists of thin round cakes like those we call jardaqa); then they cut up the roasted meat into large pieces, and they put one piece before each man. They served also round dough cakes made with ghee, resembling the bread called mushrik in our country, which they stuff with the sweet [called] sabuniya (a concoction made in Egypt of starch, almonds, honey and sesame oil, the name of which was transferred to the Persian faludhaj, made of starch and honey), and on top of each dough cake they put a sweet cake which they call khishti (which means brick-shaped), made of flour,
sugar and ghee. Then they serve in large porcelain bowls meat cooked with ghee, onions, and green ginger. After that they serve something which they call samusak, made of meat hashed and cooked with almonds, walnuts, pistachios, onions, and spices, put inside a piece of thin bread fried in ghee” (Gibb 1999: 607-608).

Ibn Battuta reached China after visiting India and described about the Chinese pottery which he saw being manufactured in the city of Zaitun (Quanzhou) and Sin Kalan (Guangdong/ Canton). He mentions -

“Chinese pottery is made only in the city of Zaitun and in Sin Kalan. It is made from an earth from mountains there which burns like charcoal, as we shall explain. They add to it a stone which is found there and burn it for three days. Then they pour water on it and it becomes powdery again. Then they ferment it. The best is that which has fermented for a whole month, but no more. What has fermented for ten days is inferior. The price is that of pottery in our country, or less. It is exported to India and other parts of the world till it reaches our country in the Maghrib (Morocco). It is the most superb kind of pottery” (Gibb 1994: 889).

*Babur-nama (16th century CE)*

The *Babur-nama* (Memoirs of Babur) compiled in 1590 CE in the form of illustrations is one of the important Mughal records. These illustrations of *Babur-nama* show noteworthy references of the prolific use of Chinese porcelain in the Mughal courts (fig. 1.6-1.7). In these illustrations the use of porcelain dishes and bowls in green and blue-and-white colours are shown for serving royal dishes specifically Kebabs (Smart 1976: 199-231).

Besides this, porcelain in the form of colourful tiles was also used for decoration purposes in the Mughal monuments. The first reference of Chinese porcelain in this record is found when Babur mentioned about a small garden and a building in it built at Kohik in Farghana. He further mentioned that in the garden, there was a four-doored
fig. 1.6 Babur-nama: Food taken by Babur in the dishes of Chinese porcelain
(source: British Museum, London)

fig. 1.7 Babur-nama: Chinese porcelain used in the Mughal court (source: British Museum, London)
hall known as, Chini khana or porcelain house because it was decorated with porcelains which were brought from China (Beveridge 1979: 80).

During the Mughal period, porcelain was also known as poison dishes and it was believed that porcelain would break if poison is sprinkled over it. Babur in his record has also mentioned about these poison dishes. In another instance Babur mentioned about the use of porcelain in the royal kitchen. He mentioned about porcelain while describing an instance of poisoning him by a lady. Babur mentioned that when he was in India, he ordered his cook to brought Indian dishes. On hearing this, a lady made a plan to poison Babur's food. She gave a packet of poison to the Indian cook and promised him to give four parganas if he somehow managed to add the poison in the Babur's food. The cook did so and put poison directly on the dish instead of putting it in the cooking-pot as Babur had ordered the taster to compel any Indian cook to taste the food first. He further stated that thin slices of bread were kept on a porcelain dish and poison was sprinkled over it. Then over it buttered fritters were added. The food was served on Friday after the afternoon prayer and Babur ate dish of hare and mouthful of poisoned Indian food. After taking the food he felt sick and vomited. On this Babur became suspicious and ordered some of the vomit to give to the dog. After some days it was found that the dog's belly was swollen and it did not get up for a few days. On enquiring, Babur found about the conspiracy of killing him by an old lady and the cook (Beveridge 1979: 541-542).

*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* (17th century CE)

The *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* (The memoirs of Jahangir) was written by Jahangir himself in the first seventeen years of his reign. After that he gave the task of writing to Mu’tamad Khan who after the death of Jahangir made it a part of his own writings namely *Iqbal-nama*. The memoirs of Jahangir are valuable as far as description of India is concerned.

The mention of porcelain was found in a number of instance in Jahangir's memoirs. In the first instance, he mentioned that on a visit to Asaf Khan's house, a wazir gifted him
porcelain from northern and southern China. Jahangir stated in his memoir -

"On Thursday, the 22nd, on the invitation of Asaf Khan, I went with my ladies to his house and passed the night there. The next day he presented before me his own offerings, of the value of ten lacs of rupees, in jewels and jewelled things, robes, elephants, and horses. Some single rubies and jacinths and some pearls, also silk cloths with some pieces of porcelain from China and Tartary, were accepted" (Rogers and Beveridge 1909: 132).

In another instance, Jahangir mentioned that he received a number of gifts on the first day of the seventh year of his accession i.e. on 19th March, 1612 CE. While describing about the tributes, he specifically stated that one official namely Khan Dauran gifted him porcelain from China along with horses, camels, dressing gowns, etc. (Rogers and Beveridge 1909: 206).

An interesting instance shows the value of priceless porcelain for Jahangir (fig. 1.8). This story was mentioned by William Hawkins, a British merchant who visited Mughal court between 1608 and 1613 CE when Jahangir was ruling. Hawkins described the barbarous nature of Jahangir. He stated that once a chief official who was in-charge of Jahangir’s wardrobe was travelling carrying precious items of king. On the way, accidentally a faire China dish costing about ninety rupees fell down and broke. The official knew that the dish was very dear to the king and therefore he immediately sent one of his loyal servants to China to procure similar piece. After two years, king asked for the same dish. After knowing that the dish is broken, king ordered his men to beat the chief man with whips made of cords. After two months, the Chief official was sent to China to obtain a similar piece but he could not find it initially. After searching all over for fourteen months, he got the similar
piece from the king of Persia, which he finally presented to Jahangir (Foster 1921: 109-110).

All these significant instances show that Jahangir also appreciated Chinese porcelain like other Mughal rulers.

Illustration by T’ang Ying (18th century CE)

In around 1743 CE, the Ch’ing emperor Ch’ien Lung ordered T’ang Ying, director of the imperial porcelain industry at the Jingdezhen, to write in detail, steps of the porcelain manufacturing. The emperor handed over a set of 20 illustrations on porcelain manufacturing to T’ang Ying and ordered him to arrange the illustrations properly and specify each step.

T’ang Ying completed the work of describing illustration within 12 days and submitted it to emperor. The steps of porcelain manufacturing which were described by T’ang Ying were, mining for the stone and preparation of the paste; washing and purification of the paste; burning the ashes and preparing the glaze; manufacture of the cases; preparation of the moulds for the round ware; fashioning the round ware on the wheel; manufacturing of vases; collection of the material for the blue colour; selection of the blue material; moulding the porcelain and grinding the colour; painting the round ware in blue; fashioning and painting of vases; dipping into the glaze and blowing on the glaze; turning the unbaked ware and scooping out the foot; putting the finished ware into the kiln; opening the kiln when the porcelain has been fired; round ware and vases decorated in foreign style; open and closed muffle stoves; wrapping in straw and packing in cases; worshipping the god and offering sacrifice (Bushell 1910: 7-30).

Letters of Père Francois Xavier d’Entrecolles (18th century CE)

Père d’Entrecolles was French who travelled to China in around 1698 CE to study the secret techniques of porcelain manufacturing. He stayed at Jingdezhen, the main porcelain manufacturing centre of China. He minutely studied the procedure of the production of porcelain and written it in two letters. He wrote first letter in 1712 CE to
Père Orry, procurer of the Chinese and Indian missions and the second letter in 1722 CE. The original letters were published in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* and this is the detailed European account on manufacturing of Chinese porcelain (Bushell 1899: 332-358).

Père d’Entrecolles mentioned about the highly prized commodity of China i.e. Chinese porcelain which was exported world-wide on a large scale. He mentioned that porcelain manufactured at Jingdezhen was composed of two kinds of clay petuntse and kaolin. He also mentioned about the glazes which included one part of lime. He included all the technical descriptions on porcelain in his letters including the moulds used for making porcelain, the colours used for painting the porcelain, types of designs, firing of pots, types of kilns, etc.

**Previous Works**

Brahminabad in Sind is the earliest site in India subcontinent where Chinese porcelain was reported in 1854. The site of Brahminabad, now in Pakistan, is located 50 miles northeast of Hyderabad. The chosen site (near a big bazaar or square) of Brahminabad was excavated by two British personals, A.F. Bellasis and C.M. Richardson. While excavating, a large number of potteries of Near East and Chinese origin were discovered. These fragmented pieces of Chinese stoneware and porcelain gain attention when similar types were traced from the excavations of Samarra, Iraq in 1911 and 1914.

Pieces of refined white porcelain with wide flat-footed base found from Brahminabad (fig. 1.9) showed similarity with the Chinese porcelain potsherds discovered at Samarra. The potsherds traced from the site reflected the shapes of large bowls with foliated rims. Other than this, coarser porcellaneous ware covered with yellowish-white glaze was also found. The olive-green celadon pieces from the site resemble northern Chinese

---

*Fig. 1.9 Brahminabad, Sindh: White porcelain, 9th-10th century CE (source: Hobson 1928)*
celadon wares. This collection is housed in the British Museum, London (Hobson 1931: 21-23).

R.E.M. Wheeler in 1945 conducted an excavation at Arikamedu in Puducherry from where Chinese celadon ware (fig. 1.10) was discovered, which helped in establishing the chronology of medieval period in south India for the first time. Prior to this there was no exact chronological sequence for medieval era. Specimens of Chinese ceramics from Arikamedu i.e. celadon ware are datable to 10th-12th century CE (Wheeler et al. 1946: 91-93).

Basil Gray’s (Gray 1964: 21-37) article on ‘The Export of Chinese Porcelain to India’ published in Transactions of Oriental Ceramic Society in 1964 opened channel of discussions on Chinese ceramics in India. Gray also focused on the blue-and-white porcelain trade in India while referring only two texts, the Tao-i-chih, a Chinese text of 1349, and the writings of Ibn Battuta, who visited Delhi during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325-54). His work mentioned that once there were more than 600 pieces of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, celadon ware, Swatow ware, etc. in the kitchen of king of Awadh. But the pieces were taken over by a French-Canadian, M. Pelland and now many of these pieces are displayed at different museum of United Kingdom. While discussing the collection of porcelain which was once brought together in India, Gray concluded, ‘what has survived must represent a small fraction only of the great row of imported Chinese porcelain which reached India, especially in the 14th and early 15th centuries.’
B.K. Thapar of Archaeological Survey of India in his paper on excavation at Purana Qila mentioned about two broken pieces of blue-and-white porcelain. One of the bowls bears an inscription in Chinese “made in the great Ming dynasty of the Ch’eng Hua reign” datable to 15th century (fig. 1.11) and the other one carried a beautiful painting along with an inscription narrating a Chinese fairy tale in verse (Thapar 1972: 21-26).

In 1976, Ellen S. Smart, published her research ‘Fourteenth Century Chinese Porcelain from a Tughlaq Palace in Delhi’ (Smart 1976: 199-231) on Chinese ceramics found accidentally from the Rose Garden of Firozshah Kotla Complex.

These pieces of porcelain were found to be dumped in a pit. It was intentionally done by Firozshah Tughlaq as he turned orthodox and banned all such objects with figural representations. Supporting this point, a scholar, Simon Digby in his article ‘The Literary Evidence for Painting in the Delhi Sultanate’, has mentioned that Firozshah became more conservative in the course of his life, and ordered that pictures of living things which were previously allowed, will not be tolerated from now on any object (Digby 1967: 50). It was also done by Babur and he mentions the same in his memoirs, Babur-nama.

After rejoining the broken potsherds, in total around seventy-two pieces were counted, among which five belonged to celadon ware, forty-four to blue-and-white porcelain dishes and twenty-three to blue-and-white porcelain bowls. Most of the plates found in the collection have everted rims; some are either plain or foliated with slightly depressed centres, and wide foot-rims. As far as decorative motifs are concerned, some have peony or lotus scroll, fungus scrolls, lappets or cloud patterns extending from the edge toward a central medallion. Most common painting found in this variety is an
ordinary fish in waterweeds in the centre. Some even have complicated geometric designs. Among these fifty-three pieces are inscribed by a series of holes drilled into the glaze or body, forming words in nasta‘liq letters or forming symbols.

Ellen thoroughly described these porcelain wares and emphasised on the time frame of the pottery. It was made clear that these were prepared in Chinese kilns and it might be dated to 14th century. These porcelains resembled 14th century Chinese porcelain in the Topkapi Serai in Istanbul, Turkey and also those from the Ardebil Shrine in Iran in type of body, glaze, painting and decoration.

In 1976, John Carswell explored several coastal sites in India, mentioned in ancient literature, to find out the traces of Chinese ceramics. The sites surveyed by him include Champaner, Dhaboi, Gulf of Kambhat, Bharuch and Surat in Gujarat; Chaul and Koralai in Maharashtra; Old Goa; Sadashirghah, Karwar, Anjediva Island, Honavar, Bhatkal and Mangalore in Karnataka; Cannanore, Tellicherry, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon in Kerala; Virapandiyam-pattanam, Kayalpattanam, Punnaikayal, Tuticorin, Sadras and Madras in Tamil Nadu (Carswell 1978: 25-68). All these sites yielded blue and white porcelain and celadon ware, datable to 13th-16th century CE.

Noboru Karashima, a Japanese scholar, has carried out extensive work on Chinese porcelain specifically in southern India such as Periyapattinam, Darasuram, Velor, Golconda, Gangaikondacholapuram, Arikamedu, Pandalayini-Kollam, Kondungallur and Kollam (Karashima 2009: 225-244). He has reported a variety of Chinese ceramics - celadon ware, white porcelain, blue-and-white porcelain. Most of the Chinese ceramics found from these sites are belonged to the kilns of Longquan, Fujian, Dehua, Jingdezhen and Guangdong. Surveys by Karashima have proved that China and India had strong trade contacts.

These researches clearly indicate that the Chinese porcelain has already been found on several sites in India but the previous studies have been carried out by a few scholars. Besides the study of Chinese porcelain, the contacts between India and China have also been found by studying other archaeological finds. The other finds include the evidence of Chinese origin discovered in India and vice versa.
Other Archaeological Finds

Prolific trade contacts between India and China have been confirmed through the literary sources along with archaeological finds of Chinese porcelain in India. Besides the findings of Chinese porcelain, other finds such as coins and inscriptions have also been discovered in India. Similarly, archaeological finds of Indian context are discovered in China also that includes structural remains, coins, inscriptions, etc.

Chinese Finds in India

The finds of Chinese origin in India includes coins and inscriptions. The Chinese coins have been found in India from Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka. Amongst these, the maximum number of Chinese coins belonging to different periods have been discovered from Tamil Nadu. The Chinese inscriptions are noticed in the region of Assam, Bihar and Maharashtra. Besides these, a significant evidence of a Chinese pagoda at Nagapattinam is reported in a number of literary texts. Details of these finds are as follows:

Chinese Coins

A number of Chinese coins have been reported from the regions of central and south India. Most of the Chinese coins are made of copper, have a square hole in the centre and bears Chinese characters.

Tamil Nadu - In 1942-43, a hoard of 20 Chinese coins along with two small bronze images was discovered at Vikram village of district Thanjavur. It contained 20 coins of K’ai-Yuan (713-742 CE) of T’ang period (Sridhar and Sundararajan 2011: 8). Other Chinese coins found in this hoard belongs to Song period (fig. 1.12).

![fig. 1.12 Vikram, Thanjavur: Chinese coins, Song period (source: Sridhar and Sundararajan 2011: 12)](image-url)
The coins datable to Song period represents its entire period from 10th century to 13th century CE. The coins were found in bad condition but 18 out of 20 coins clearly shows nien-hao i.e. regnal years occurring in the legends (Bagchi 1944: 60-63).

In 1944, another hoard of Chinese coins was recovered at Thallikkottai village, district Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. The hoard consisted 1822 copper coins (Sridhar and Sundararajan 2011: 8). The coins belong to two varieties, the first variety of hsiao-chien or small coins has 1601 coins and the second variety of ta-chien or large coins has 184 coins. Besides these, 2 coins are found double in size of second variety while rest of the 31 coins are in fragile condition. The legends on coins suggested that these are datable from the Sui period (585 CE) to late Song period (1279 CE) (Bagchi 1951-53: 194-196).

Madhya Pradesh - In the year 1955-56, an excavation at Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh was conducted by the Saugar University and the Department of Archaeology, Madhya Pradesh under the direction of M.G. Dikshit. The excavation revealed a small Chinese copper coin, circular in shape and has a square hole in the centre. The coin belongs to emperor Kai Yuan (713-741 CE). The other associated antiquities include locks and lamps, votive seals and tablets bearing sacred texts, two small images of Kubera, a fine chlorite image of Manjusri and a terracotta plaque depicting a twelve-armed Avalokitesvara. The finds shows that it was an important Buddhist centre (IAR 1955-56: 27).

Andhra Pradesh - Excavation at Motupalli, Andhra Pradesh was conducted in 1973-74 by the Department of Archaeology, Andhra Pradesh. The site revealed Chinese copper coins of early Ming period along with Chola coins of Rajaraja, iron objects and celadon ware (IAR 1973-74: 7).

Orissa - Another site of Khalkataptnam, Orissa was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India under the direction of J.S. Nigam in 1984-85. The site revealed one complete and two fragmentary Chinese copper coins, circular in shape and having square hole in the centre. The coins bear legend in Chinese characters on both the sides. The other corresponding finds include celadon ware and egg-white glazed and
glazed chocolate wares from the Arabian countries. The finds state that Khalkatapatna was an important port town having maritime trade contacts both from the eastern as well as from the western countries (IAR 1984-85: 59). The site was again excavated in 1994-95 by the Archaeological Survey of India under the direction of K. Veerabhadra Rao. During this excavation, two Chinese coins with a square perforation at the centre were discovered. Amongst these, one coin was picked up from the surface and the other was found while excavating in the southern side of the site (IAR 1994-95: 62).

A Chinese coin (fig. 1.13) has also been evidenced from Manikapatna (Behera 2007: 13). It is circular with a square perforation in the centre. The coin is also bearing Chinese characters. The celadon wares with moulded designs have also been found along with this copper coins from Manikapatna excavation which was carried out from 1989 to 1993.

Karnataka - An excavation at Hampi, Karnataka was conducted in 1992-93 by the Archaeological Survey of India under the direction of K.P. Poonacha. This excavation revealed a Chinese coin (2.5 X 0.01 cm) having a square hole (0.5 X 0.5 cm) in the centre. The obverse side of the coin bears a legend in four Chinese characters and the reverse side is blank (IAR 1992-93: 41).

Chinese Inscriptions

Chinese inscriptions in India are found in two forms, on gold plaque and stones. The inscription found on gold plaque is a declaration of emperor Yung-lo which was brought by the Chinese admiral, Zheng He. Other Chinese Inscriptions are found in Bodhgaya and Kanheri. The details of these inscriptions are as follows:

State Museum, Guwahati - An important Chinese inscription found on a gold plaque
is housed in the State Museum, Guwahati (fig. 1.14). The inscription on the plaque states that this plaque was issued in 1407 CE by the Chinese emperor Yung-lo of the Ming dynasty. The plaque is a sort of certificate or the letter of credence and states that anybody carrying this plaque should be treated with all respect and rendered all kinds of facilities, such as manpower, food, conveyance, etc., by local authorities wherever he went. On one side of the plaque, there are twelve Chinese characters mentioning royal declaration of the emperor that states “anybody who disobeys the royal declaration should be ordered to death” and on the other side of the plaque, two Chinese characters reads as Hsin Fu which means letter of credence. This plaque was left behind in India by Zheng He or Cheng Ho when he was carrying out his expedition to the west. Zheng He was a Chinese admiral of the Ming dynasty (IAR 1955-56: 62).

Bodhgaya - In 1880, two Chinese inscriptions were found by Alexander Cunningham in the surroundings of the temple at Bodhgaya. The first inscription bears sculpted figures of mortal buddhas and the Bodhisatva Maitreya. The inscription on it states that these were written by Chi-I, a priest of the Great Han Country. It further states that Chi-I being a Buddhist monk vowed to encouraged about 30,000 people to do good works for a birth in heaven and to encourage people to donate 30,000 books relating to heavenly birth. About himself, he stated that he recited many books and in the company of others set out to travel to Magadha through India. The inscription worship the further stated that he vowed to continue his travels through India in the company of priests. Names of three priests are mentioned which are Kwei Tseih, Chi-I and Kwang Fung (Beal 1881: 553-554).
The second inscription belonged to the reign of Chen Tsung (1022 CE) of the Song dynasty (fig. 1.15). This inscription states that Ho-Yun, a priest went to Bodhgaya to worship the sacred relics. When he was there, he carved a stone Pagoda with a surmounted pinnacle and square base to the north of the Bodhi tree in the honour of 1000 Buddhas. He wrote a hymne in praise of the three Buddhas who are mentioned in the inscription as the Fa-shin, the Po-shin and the Fah-shin. The inscription ends with the statement that in the year 1022 CE, two men, I-tsing and I-lin, were sent from the east with a kashaya garment in a golden case which they hung above the Bodhi tree (Beal 1881: 555-556).

Kanheri - The site is famous for its Buddhist cave architecture and sculptures. A Chinese inscription datable to post-Gupta period (4th-6th century CE) is noteworthy. It is inscribed horizontally on a wall of cave no. 90 (fig. 1.16). The wall also bears rock-cut sculptures of Buddha in different postures (huntington.wmc.ohio-state.edu/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=showThisDetail&ObjectID=8454&detail=large).

Chinese Pagoda

There was a Chinese pagoda at Nagapattinam which does not exist now but its drawing is available (fig. 1.17). The pagoda or tuta was called by several names i.e. Pduveli-gopuram, old pagoda, Chinese pagoda, black pagoda. The tower was square in plan, made of bricks and had timber lintels. The earliest mention of constructing this
fig. 1.16  Kanheri: Cave no. 90, Inscription in Chinese  
(source: The Huntington Archive)

fig. 1.17  Nagapattinam:  
Chinese pagoda, a sketch made in 1846  
(source: Elliot 1878)
Chinese pagoda was found in the records of Kieou T’ang Chou (year 720) where it was stated that “in the 9th month, the King of South India Sri Narasimha Potavarman (Che-li-Na-lo-seng-k’ia-to-pa) constructed a temple on account of the empire of China; he addressed to the emperor a request asking from him an inscription giving a name to this temple; by decree, it was decided that the name should be ‘which causes return to virtue’ (Koeihoa) and it was presented to him (i.e. the emperor sent Narasimha a tablet with the inscription Koei-hoa se, so that it might be placed on the front of the temple erected in India by Narasimha for the benefit of China)” (Sastri 1939: 117).

The first European description of this structure was given by a Portuguese Jesuit Manuel Barradas in 1615 CE who reported about the tower saying ‘it is believed by these people of Nagapattinam to have been made by the Chinese when they were lords of the commerce of India: it is of brick, and despite been neither inhabited nor repaired for many centuries still is in its majesty, and in perfect condition’ (Guy 1993-94: 291).

In 1846, Walter Elliot, a British officer requested a draughtsman to document the Chinese structure through drawing. Elliot also gave a detailed description of the tower and mentioned that the three-storied tower is about 30 m high and constructed of bricks. He mentioned that the first and second storeys were parted by corniced mouldings (Elliot 1878: 224-225). In 1856, five Buddhist images were found in a brick chamber which was located adjacent to the Chinese pagoda. It was discovered that four of these images were made of bronze while the fifth one as made of porcelain and clay (Guy 1993-94: 292). This find is no longer traceable and only the drawing of the images is available. In 1867, the pagoda was demolished by French Jesuit missionaries in Nagapattinam with the permission from the British authorities. At present, only the drawing of the structure is available.

Indian finds in China

As the evidence of India and China contacts has been evidenced in India in the form of Chinese inscriptions, structures, coins, etc., in the similar manner Indian finds are discovered in China.
Tamil and Chinese Bilingual Inscription

In Quanzhou, a late 13th century bilingual Tamil and Chinese language inscription was found (fig. 1.18). This inscription is associated with the remains of dilapidated Siva temple of Quanzhou. The inscription has six lines out of which the first five lines and two characters in the sixth line are inscribed in Tamil; rest of the sixth line is written in Chinese. Only the Tamil portion of the inscription is deciphered yet. The exact date of this inscription is 1281 CE and it was written after the dispatch of the Yuan envoy to India when the trade between southern Indian and China was at peak (Guy 1998: 266).

The translation of the Tamil lines is as follows -

"Obeisance to Hara (Siva)! Let there be prosperity! On the day Citra in the month of Chittira in the Saka year 1203 (1281 CE), the Tavachchakkarvarattigal Sambandhap-perumal, a Saiva religious leader, caused, in accordance with the firman (written permission) of Chekachai Khan, the Mongol ruler, to be graciously installed the God Udaiyar Tirukkalisvaram Udaiya-nayinar (Siva), for the welfare of the illustrious body of the illustrious Chekachai Khan" (Subramaniam 1978: 8).

It bears the date in Saka era which is equivalent to 1281 CE. The inscription records the erection of a Siva temple which was exclusively built to install a sculpture of God Siva by the written permission of a Mongol King named Chekachai Khan.
Hindu Temples and Sculptures

There were two Hindu temples near the port of Quanzhou which were built for the Tamil merchants travelling to China. Although the structures are entirely missing now and only evidence of temples are its broken sculptures. There were about three-hundred architectural fragments of temples along with sculptures noticed near the old city wall of Tonghuai city (Guy 1993-94: 296). The architectural fragments include stone pillars; door jambs; broken capitals and reliefs, etc. The significant findings include a relief of seated Durga (?)/Lakshmi with two female attendants which is now displayed in the Museum of Overseas Communications History, Quanzhou. The reliefs also include scenes where devotees and animals like elephant and cow are worshipping sivalinga.

It is also believed that some of the architectural members of these long lost temples were used in the Ming period’s K’ai-yuan Buddhist temple of Quanzhou. This temple has a basement frieze with vyala-vari design and four-faceted square pillars with reliefs of deities like Vishnu, Narsimha, Gajendramoksha, Bhairava, etc. The reliefs also have scenes from Krishna lila such as Kaliya-damana (subjugation of serpent Kaliya); gopikavasthapaharan (stealing of the cloths of milkmaids), etc. Besides the depiction of Hindu mythology, a number of medallions shows decorations of Chinese origin i.e. pair of phoenix, mythical birds; lion of Buddha chasing a ball; deer in the landscape, floral designs, etc. Therefore, this temple is an amalgamation of Hindu and Chinese styles.

Overall, a large number of literary accounts by Chinese, Arab and European travellers and merchants highlights the extent of trade activities between India and China which began proliferating as early as 1st century CE. During this time, the activities through the Silk Road started advancing. As the contacts between India and China developed, the Chinese monks started visiting India through the Silk Road. Though several Chinese monks arrive India to learn Buddhist doctrines but to name amongst these, Fa Xian (3rd century CE), Xuanzang (7th century CE) and Yijing (7th century CE) are important as they left noteworthy accounts on India. The flow of Chinese monks in
India grew during the Gupta period. As Chinese monk arrived in India similarly many Indian monks also visited China to translate the Buddhist literary texts into Chinese.

The word *Cina* mentioned in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* shows that China was a warriors clan which developed as a civilisation during the Shang period (2000 BCE). The information obtain from historical records suggest that there were regular visits of Indian envoys to China and vice versa which began to develop in 7th century CE. The king Harsavardhana of Vardhana dynasty had healthy interactions with the contemporary Chinese dynasty of T'ang. During the Chola period, the activities between India and China grew. The Chola sent embassies to China carrying tributes and goods for export. The literary texts have suggested that the trade and cultural contacts between India and China remained prosperous for a long period and continued till the 18th-19th century CE. The findings of Chinese porcelain in India along with other remains like Chinese coins, structures, inscriptions, etc. have confirmed it. Similarly the archaeological remains of Indian context in China in the form of bilingual inscriptions, sculptures and temples have suggested mutual interactions.

The mention of Chinese porcelain in the literary accounts emphasise on its qualities, and high demand among the royals in India. There are innumerable references in literature about porcelain, amongst which some significant ones are *Cha jing* (Tea Classic) (9th century CE), *Akhbar al-Sin wa'l Hind* (An Account of China and India) (9th century CE), *Al-Jumahir fi Ma’rifat al-Jawahir* (Book on Precious Stones) (11th century CE), *Oriente Poliano* (Description of the World) (13th century CE), *T’ao-ch’i Lueh* (Appendix to the Ceramic Records) (14th century CE), Travels of Ibn Battuta (14th century CE), *Babur-nama* (Memoirs of Babur) (16th century CE), etc.

There are a few previous works on the findings of Chinese porcelain in India. Some of these initial works have been done by A.F. Bellasis and C.M. Richardson at Brahminabad, Sindh (1854), R.E.M. Wheeler at Arikamedu, Puducherry (1945), B.K. Thapar at Purana Qila, Delhi (1972) and Ellen Smart at Firozshah Kotla complex, Delhi (1976). Besides these, John Carswell (1978) carried out a survey on the coast of India in search of Chinese porcelain. Noboru Karashima (1980) carried out a survey
particularly on the east coast of India. Such a large number of porcelain finds in India corroborating with literary texts proves its demand and popularity.

Notes

1 Celadon ware is a variety of porcelain having glaze of green colour in different tones. The word ‘celadon’ is of French origin which is named after a character in a work by Honore d’Urfe, L’Astree, who wore a costume of grayish-green colour.

2 So far Chinese porcelain has been identified from 117 sites in India. At many places either it has not been identified or properly reported. It is very likely that many more sites would have yielded porcelain, which are yet to be identified.