A large-scale rock-carved Buddhist statue at Yungang Grottoes, China. The statue depicts a seated Buddha with a serene expression, wearing a traditional monastic robe. To the right, a smaller standing figure is visible within a niche. The rock face shows signs of weathering and other carved figures in the background.

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II

Chinese Buddhism

Yun gang

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II

Chinese Buddhism

Lecture Topics

- Lecture One: Indian Buddhism: The First Five Hundred Years
- Lecture Two: Chinese Religion at the Start of the Common Era
- Lecture Three: How Buddhism Became Chinese I: Transmission and Appropriation
- Lecture Four: How Buddhism Became Chinese II: The Tang Dynasty
- Lecture Five: Buddhist Devotionalism: Pure Land Buddhism and Popular Piety
- Lecture Six: Does a Dog Have the Buddha Nature? Chan Buddhism

Course Materials

Although there are no “assignments” for these lectures, your understanding will probably be enhanced by the readings included in the repository created for this course, especially the **Glossary of Technical Terms** and the **PowerPoint slide deck**. If you wish to do so, you can access them by clicking on the following link:

<https://github.com/mcummingsny/Chinese-Buddhism>

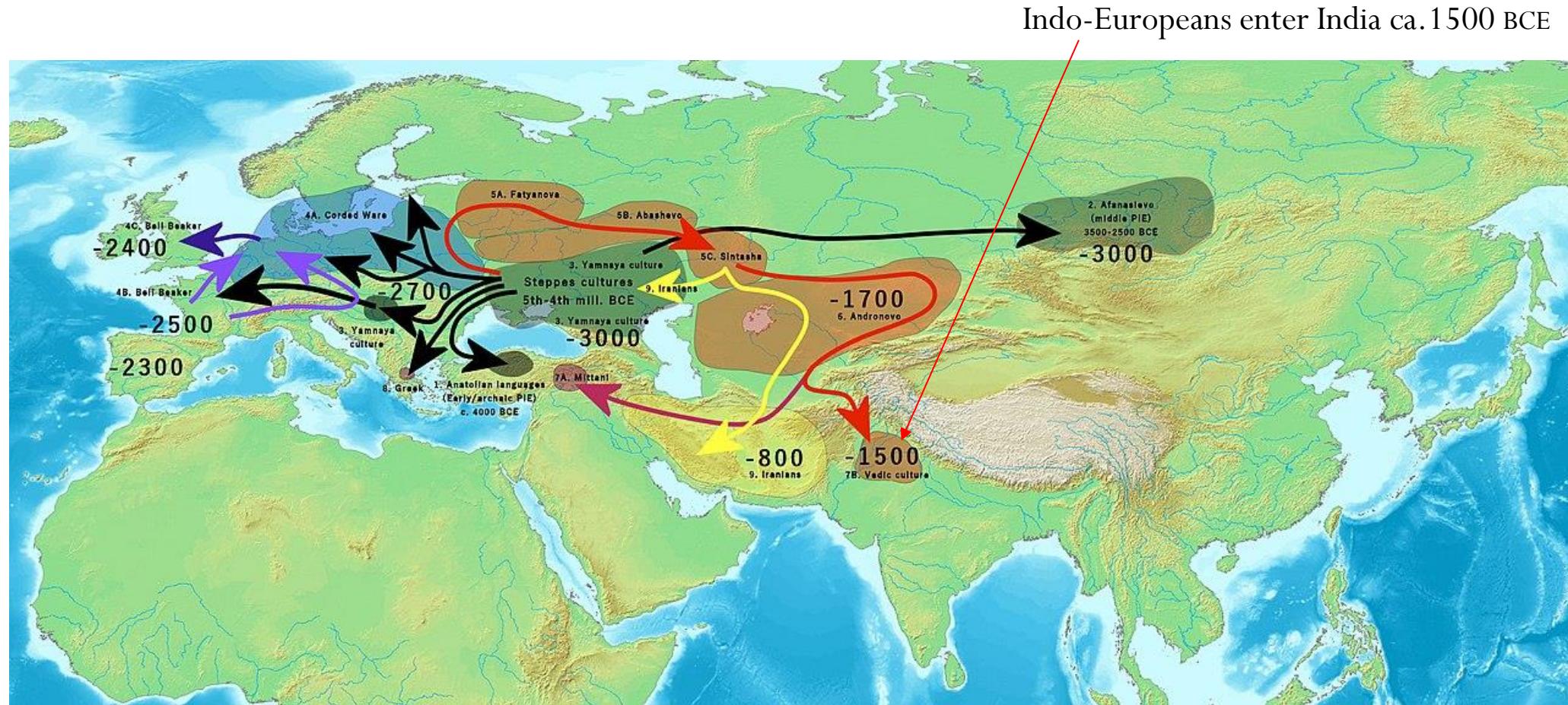
Also included in the repository is a brief bibliography of introductory-level books on the topics covered in these lectures.

Lecture One

Indian Buddhism: The First Five Hundred Years

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

Indo-European Migrations, 4000-800 BCE



*Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā
hetum teṣāṁ tathāgataḥ hyavadat
teṣāṁ ca yo nirodha
evam vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ*

Of those things that arise from a cause,
The Tathāgata has explained the cause,
And also its cessation.
This is the doctrine of the Great Renunciant.

Mahāvagga, I.23.5

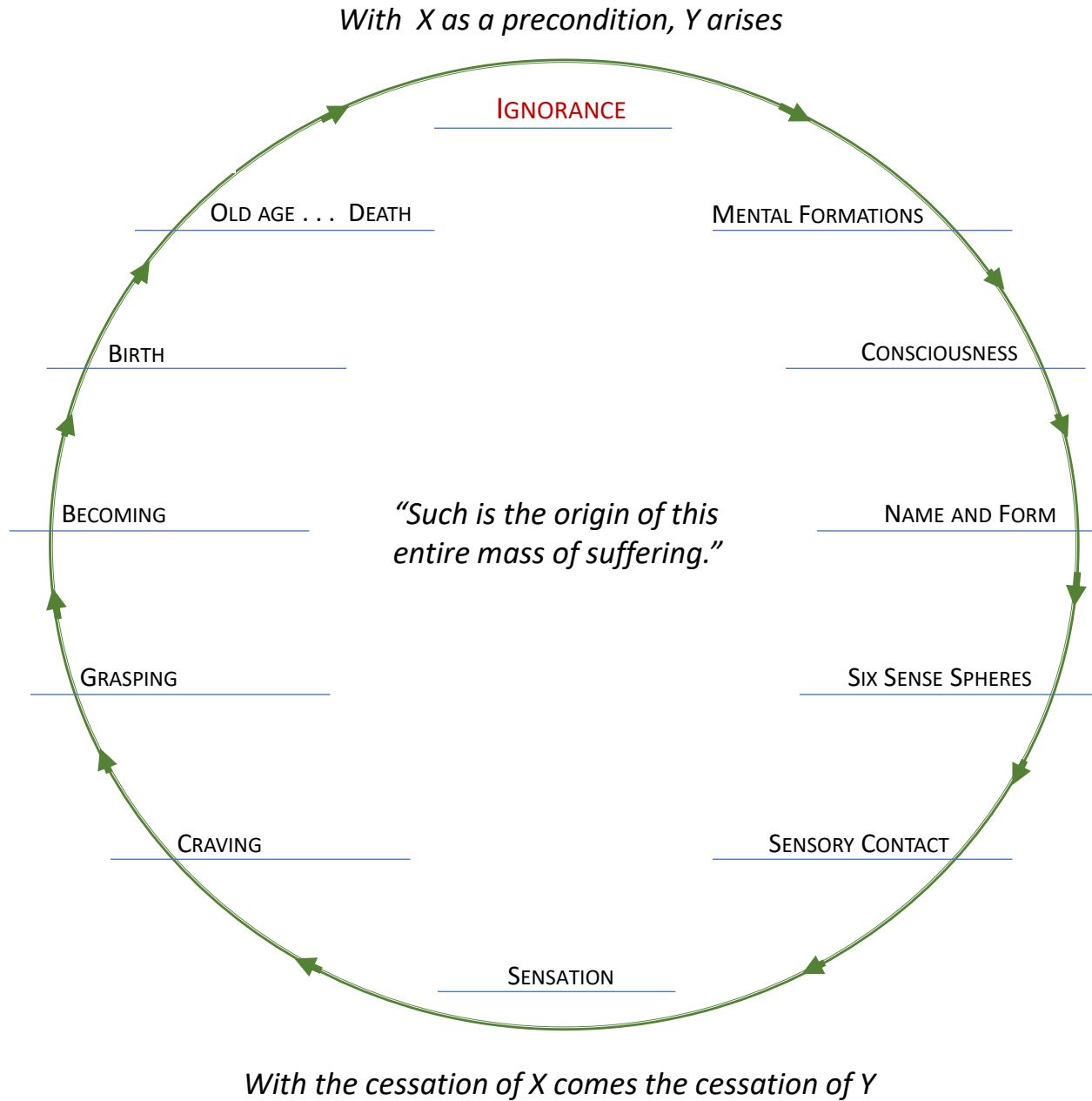
Pratīya-samutpāda “Dependent Origination”

“When this is present, that comes to be.

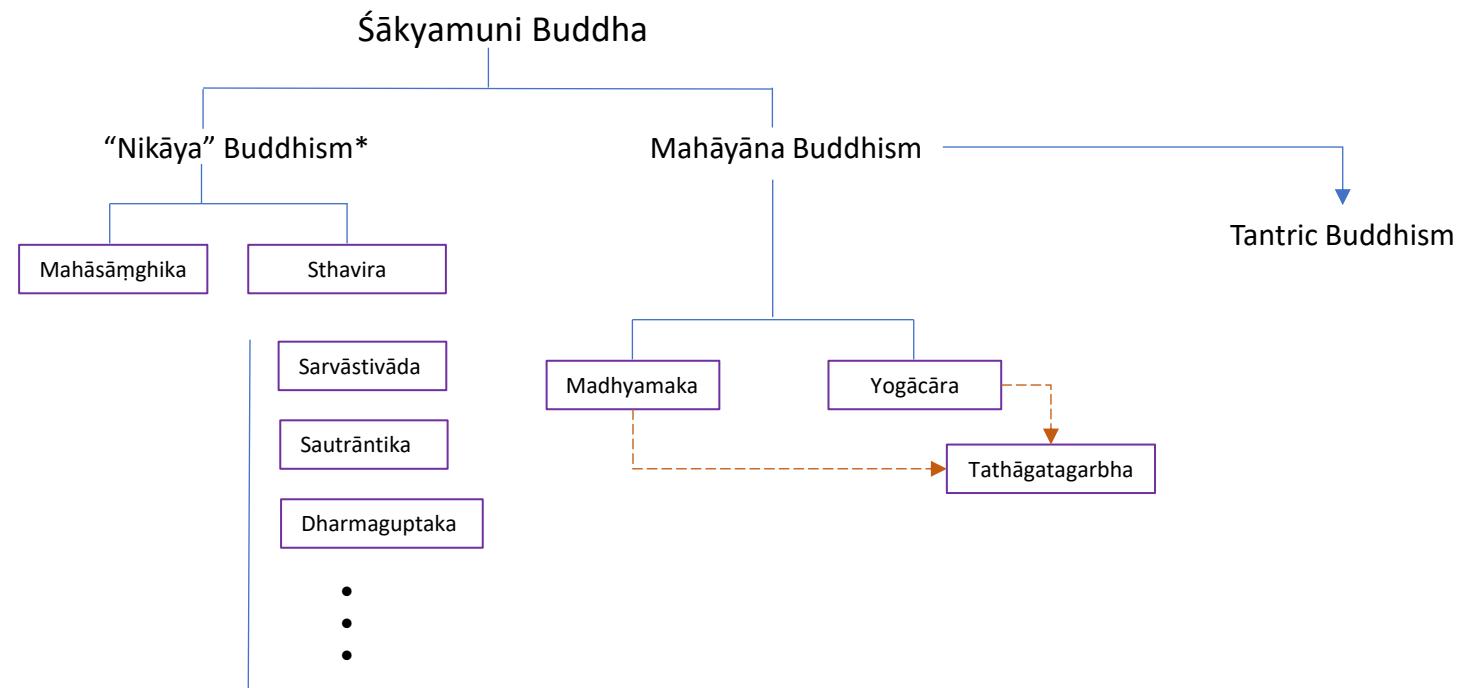
From the arising of this, that arises.

When this is absent, that does not come to be.

From the cessation of this, that ceases.”



Filiation of Major Buddhist Traditions



* The “Eighteen Schools”

The *Heart Sūtra* : A Précis of the Perfection of Wisdom Literature

Five skandhas

The *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara,
While deeply immersed in *prajñāpāramitā*,
Clearly perceived the empty nature of the five *skandhas*,
And transcended all suffering.

Form is not different from emptiness;
Emptiness is not different from form.
Form is emptiness; emptiness is form.
So it is with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness.

All *dharma*s are empty in character;
Neither arising nor ceasing,
Neither impure nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing.
Therefore, in emptiness there is no form;
There is no feeling, perception, volition, or consciousness;
No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind;
No form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or *dharma*s;
No realm of vision, and so forth . . . up to no realm of mind-consciousness;

For the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, the practice of “perfection of wisdom” reveals that any statements or concepts one might form about the nature of reality—even the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism itself (!)—simply become objects that are “grasped” and thus agents of our ensnarement in *samsāra*.

“Emptiness” (*śūnyatā*) is not a “quality” of things.

All phenomenal existence

No ignorance or ending of ignorance, and so forth . . . up to no aging and death or ending of aging and death. ← “Dependent Origination”

Four Noble Truths → There is no suffering, no cause, no extinction, no path. There is no wisdom and no attainment.
There is nothing to be attained.

By way of *PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ*, the *bodhisattva*’s mind is free from hindrances.
With no hindrances, there is no fear;
Freed from all distortion and delusion, ultimate nirvana is reached.

The Diffusion of Buddhism

The Conquests of Alexander ca. 326 BCE



The Beas River, the easternmost extent of Alexander's conquests

By 326 BCE Alexander had extended his empire of client states as far as the Punjab region of India, but at that point his army refused to go further. Reluctantly, Alexander withdrew from the region to begin the long march home, but he died *en route* in Babylon in 323. In the years following his death, one of his generals, Seleucus I Nicator, assumed control over the eastern portion of Alexander's conquests, consolidating his holdings into the Seleucid Empire in 312.

Maximum Extent of the Seleucid Empire ca. 312 BCE



The massive Seleucid Empire, the legacy of Alexander's conquests on the Anatolian plateau, Mesopotamia, Persia, and modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan, was a center of Hellenized culture and facilitated contact between India, western Asia, and the Mediterranean world.

The Mauryan Empire in the Time of Aśoka (r. 268–232 BCE)

In 303 BCE Candragupta Maurya waged war against the Seleucids and annexed lands west of the Indus River, expanding his Mauryan Empire into what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan.

His grandson Aśoka's war with the Kalingas, ca. 261 BCE, brought most of the rest of what is now India under Mauryan control. Afterward, appalled by the carnage of his campaign, Aśoka converted to Buddhism.

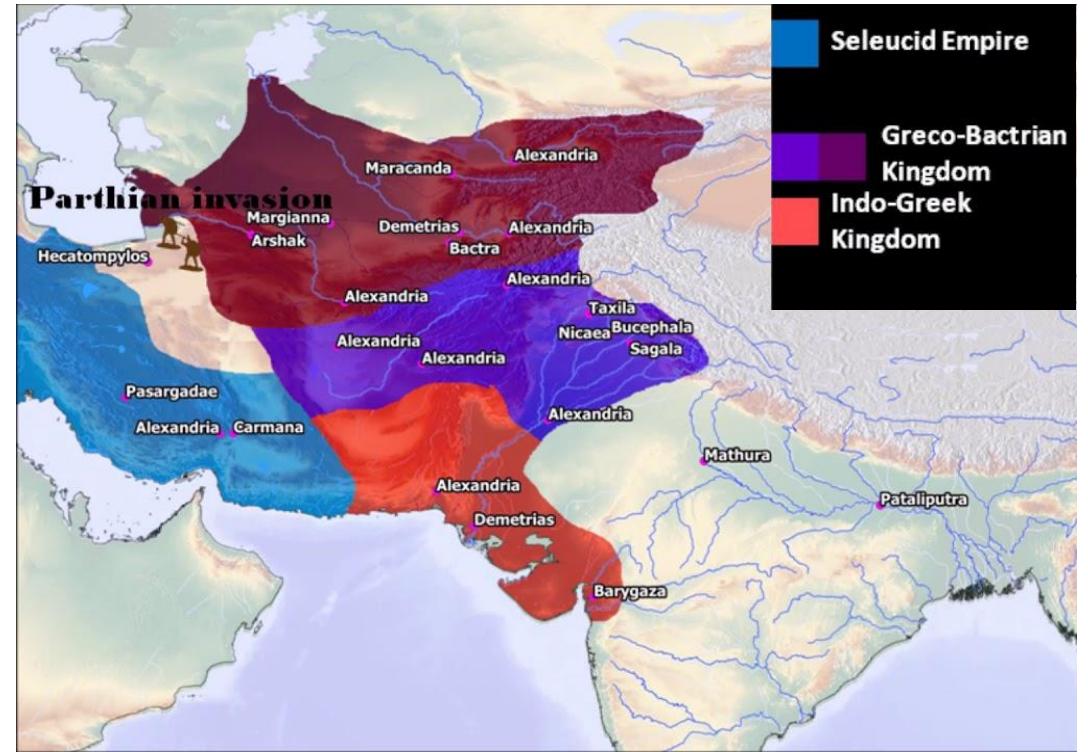
Following his conversion, Aśoka erected a series of pillars and rock inscriptions (*red dots on map*) throughout the empire proclaiming a generalized, nonsectarian Dharma loosely based on Buddhist morality.





The Greco-Bactrian Kingdom ca. 180 BCE

Established as a break-away kingdom from the Seleucids around 250 BCE



Indo-Greek Kingdom ca. 168 BCE

Following the Greco-Bactrian invasion of India around 200 BCE, the areas in northwest India were ruled by a succession of Hellenized kings as the Yavana Kingdom

The Kushan Empire in the time of Kaniśka I (r. 127–150 CE)

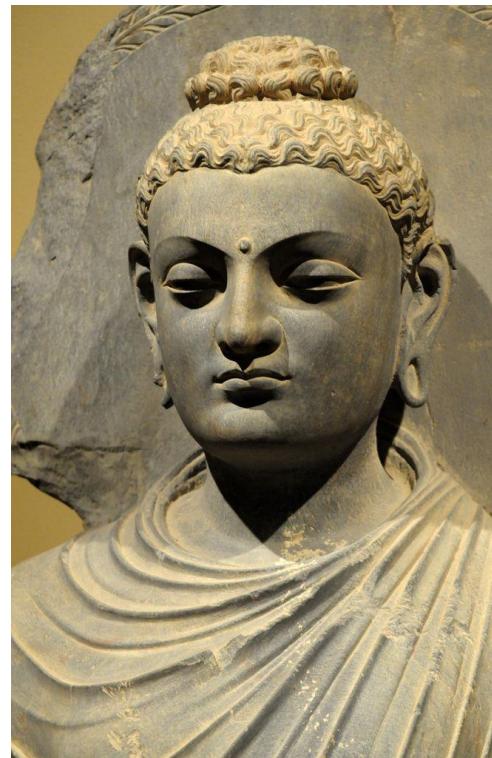
Around 120 BCE the Kushans (Kuṣāṇa), a Yuezhi people, migrated south to Bactria and Gandhara from what is now the Chinese province of Xinjiang and supplanted the Greco-Bactrians. The Kushan Empire adopted the Greek alphabet and was an agent of Hellenic culture.

Later, the Kushan emperor Kaniśka's patronage of Buddhism supported the spread of the religion along the Silk Road to the city-states of Central Asia, and from there to China.



Images of the Buddha in Gandhāran (Greco-Buddhist) Art, 1st-2^d c CE

Kushan contact with the Roman Empire introduced elements of “classical” Western art into Buddhist iconography in the Gandhāran region, as can be seen in these images of the Buddha from around the time of Kaniška.

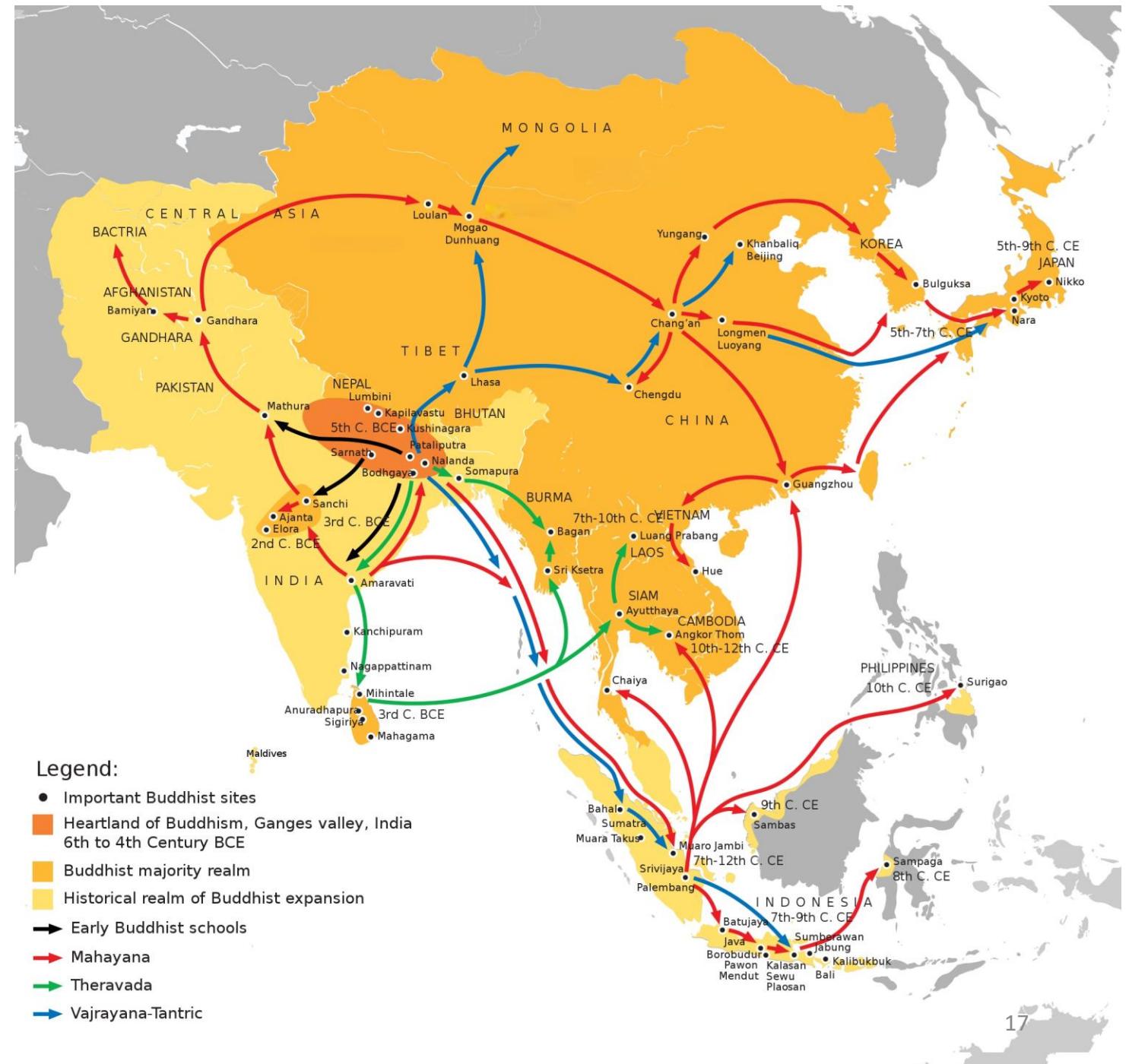


The “Silk Road” ca. 300 BCE—100 CE



City-states such as Kucha, Khotan, Turfan, and Dunhuang along the Silk Road were important centers of Buddhist monasticism. Monks from these areas were among the earliest transmitters of Buddhist scripture and teachings to China. Other early missionaries, from Parthia (Persia), Sogdia, Scythia, India, and further west, likewise arrived in China via the Silk Road.

The Diffusion of Buddhism in Asia

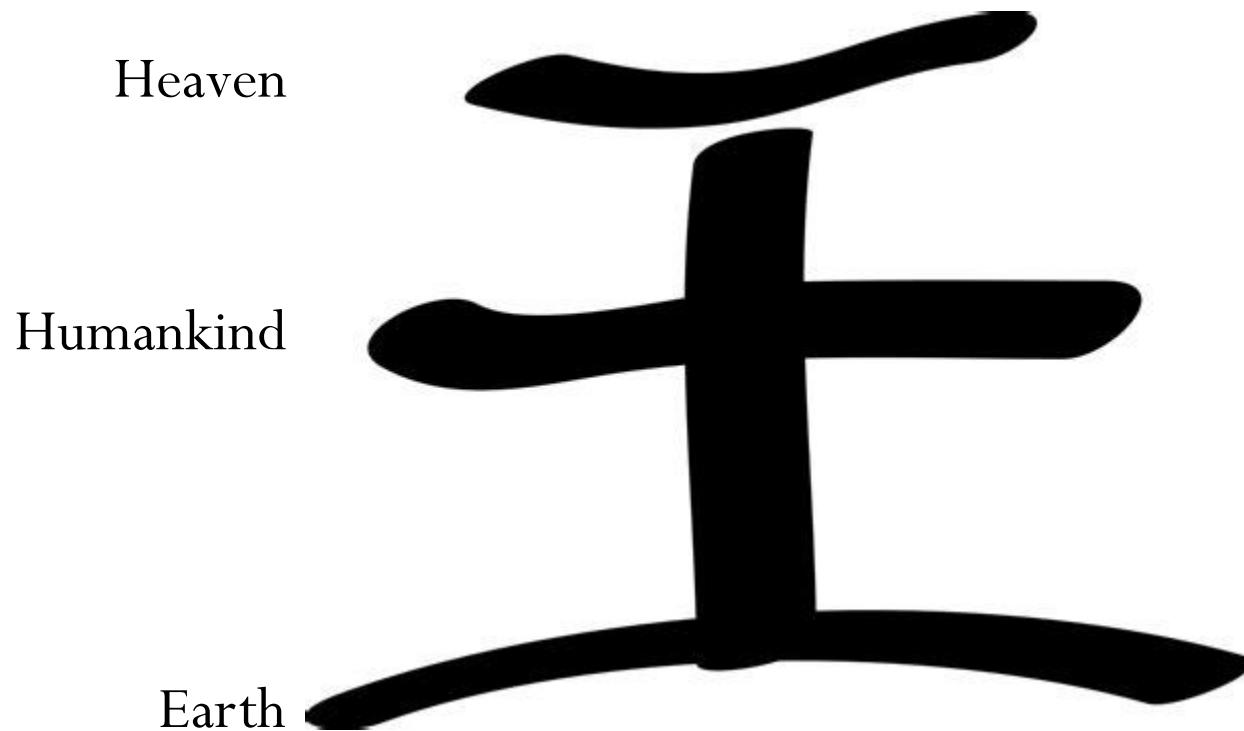


Lecture Two

Chinese Religion at the Beginning of the Common Era

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

Wang = “King,” “Emperor”



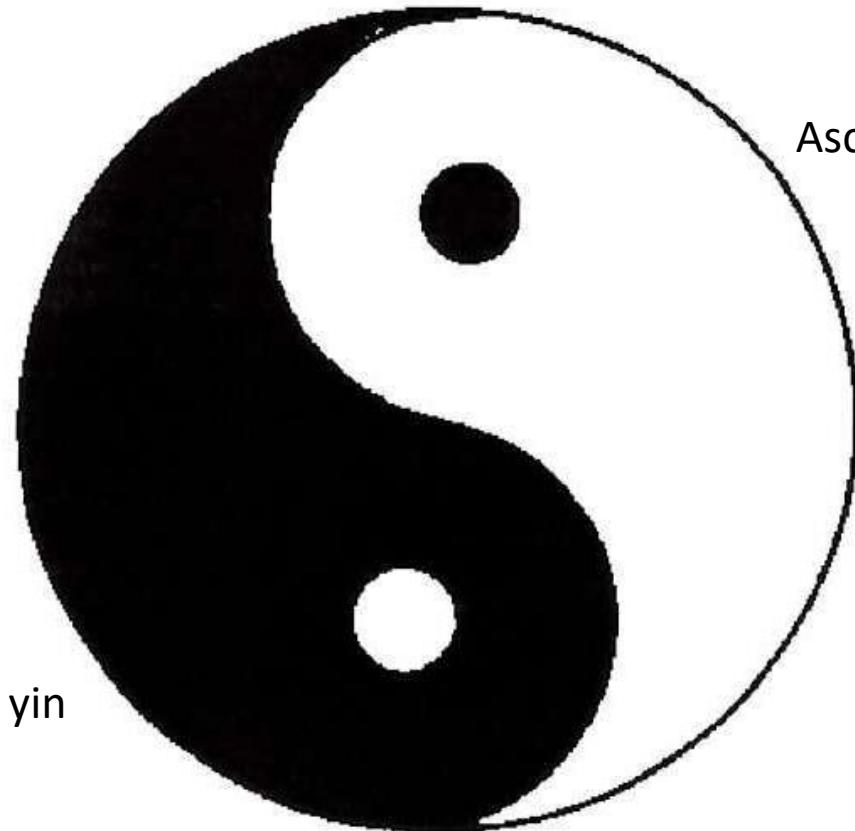
The Emperor (*vertical line*) is a “cosmic pivot” connecting Heaven, Earth, and Humankind

The Alternation of Yin and Yang

“The Dao begets one
One begets two
Two begets three
Three begets the ten-thousand things”

Daodejing verse 42

Ascendance of yin



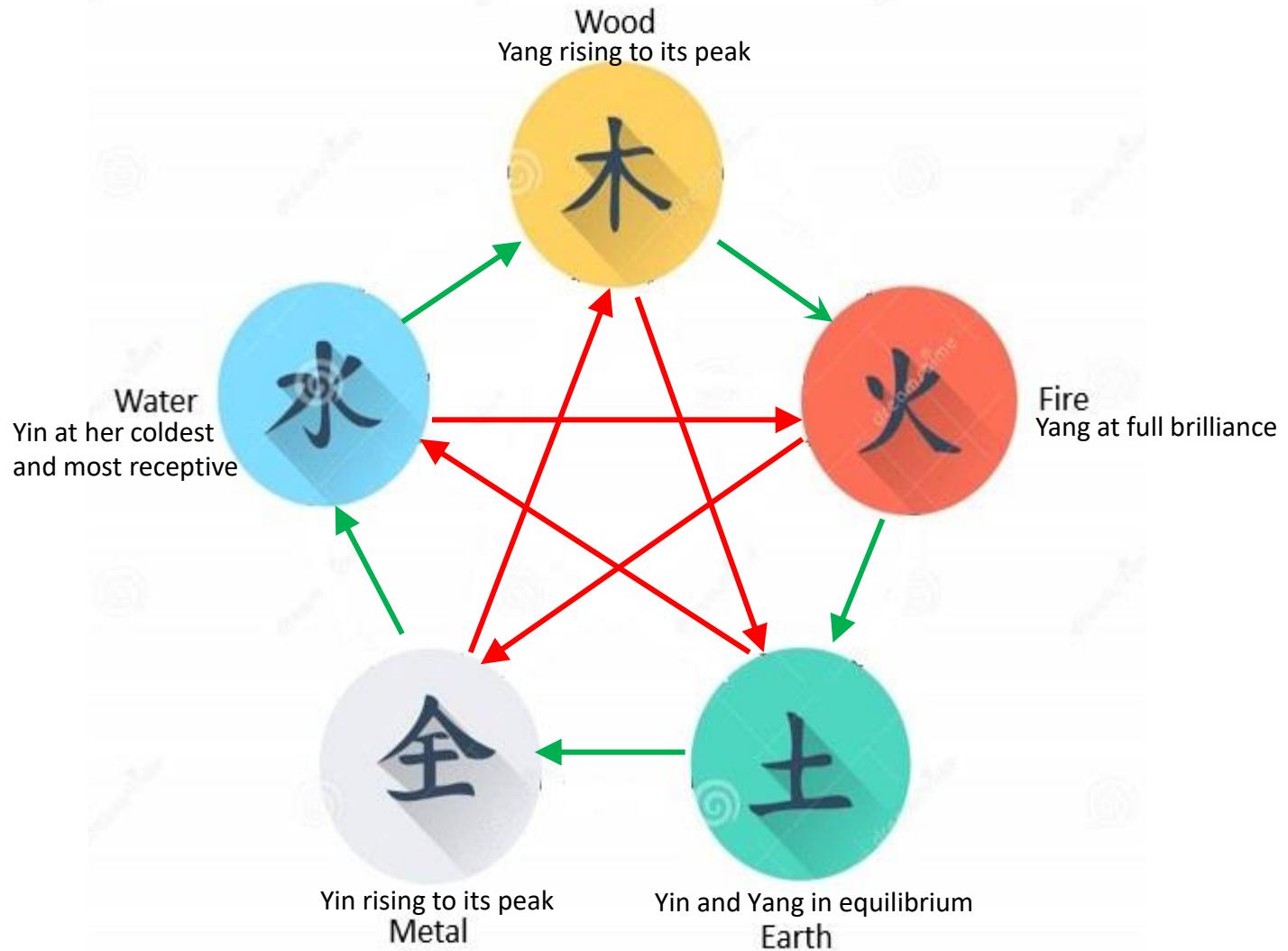
Wuxing

The Five Phases

Chunqiu Fanlu 58.1, 59.1

→ Generation, Mutual
Engendering

→ Mutual Conquest



The Five Phases: Table of Correspondences Han-era “Generation” Series

(Based on the *Huainanzi*)

	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Seasons	Spring	Summer	None	Fall	Winter
Directions	East	South	Center	West	North
Colors	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black / Dark Blue
Tastes	Sour	Bitter	Sweet	Pungent	Salty
Climates	Wind	Heat	Dampness	Dryness	Cold
Planets	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
Ying Yang	Lesser Yang	Utmost Yang	Centre	Lesser Yin	Utmost Yin
Animals	Fish	Birds	Human	Mammals	Shell-Covered
Ying Organs	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidneys
Yang Organs	Gall-Bladder	Small Intestine	Stomach	Large Intestine	Bladder
Sense Organs	Eyes	Tongue	Mouth	Nose	Ears
Tissues	Sinews	Vessels	Muscles	Skin	Bones
Emotions	Anger	Joy	Pensiveness	Sadness	Fear
Sounds	Shouting	Laughing	Singing	Crying	Groaning

The Sexagenary Cycle

甲 Jia
乙 Yi
丙 Bing
丁 Ding
戊 Wu
己 Ji
庚 Geng
辛 Xin
壬 Ren
癸 Gui

Ten Heavenly Stems

1. 甲子	11. 甲戌	21. 甲申	31. 甲午	41. 甲辰	51. 甲寅
Metal	Fire	Water	Metal	Fire	Water
2. 乙丑	12. 乙亥	22. 乙酉	32. 乙未	42. 乙巳	52. 乙卯
Metal	Fire	Water	Metal	Fire	Water
3. 丙寅	13. 丙子	23. 丙戌	33. 丙申	43. 丙午	53. 丙辰
Fire	Water	Earth	Fire	Water	Earth
4. 丁卯	14. 丁丑	24. 丁亥	34. 丁酉	44. 丁未	54. 丁巳
Fire	Water	Earth	Fire	Water	Earth
5. 戊辰	15. 戊寅	25. 戊子	35. 戊戌	45. 戊申	55. 戊午
Wood	Earth	Fire	Wood	Earth	Fire
6. 己巳	16. 己卯	26. 己丑	36. 己亥	46. 己酉	56. 己未
Wood	Earth	Fire	Wood	Earth	Fire
7. 庚午	17. 庚辰	27. 庚寅	37. 庚子	47. 庚戌	57. 庚申
Earth	Metal	Wood	Earth	Metal	Wood
8. 辛未	18. 辛巳	28. 辛卯	38. 辛丑	48. 辛亥	58. 辛酉
Earth	Metal	Wood	Earth	Metal	Wood
9. 壬申	19. 壬午	29. 壬辰	39. 壬寅	49. 壬子	59. 壬戌
Metal	Wood	Water	Metal	Wood	Water
10. 癸酉	20. 癸未	30. 癸巳	40. 癸卯	50. 癸丑	60. 癸亥
Metal	Wood	Water	Metal	Wood	Water

子 Zi
丑 Chou
寅 Yin
卯 Mao
辰 Chen
巳 Si
午 Wu
未 Wei
申 Shen
酉 You
戌 Xu
亥 Hai

Twelve Earthly Branches

The Sixty-four (8 x 8) Hexagrams of the *Yijing*

Eight Trigrams

Heaven
Thunder
Water
Mountain
Earth
Wind
Fire
Lake

Eight Trigrams

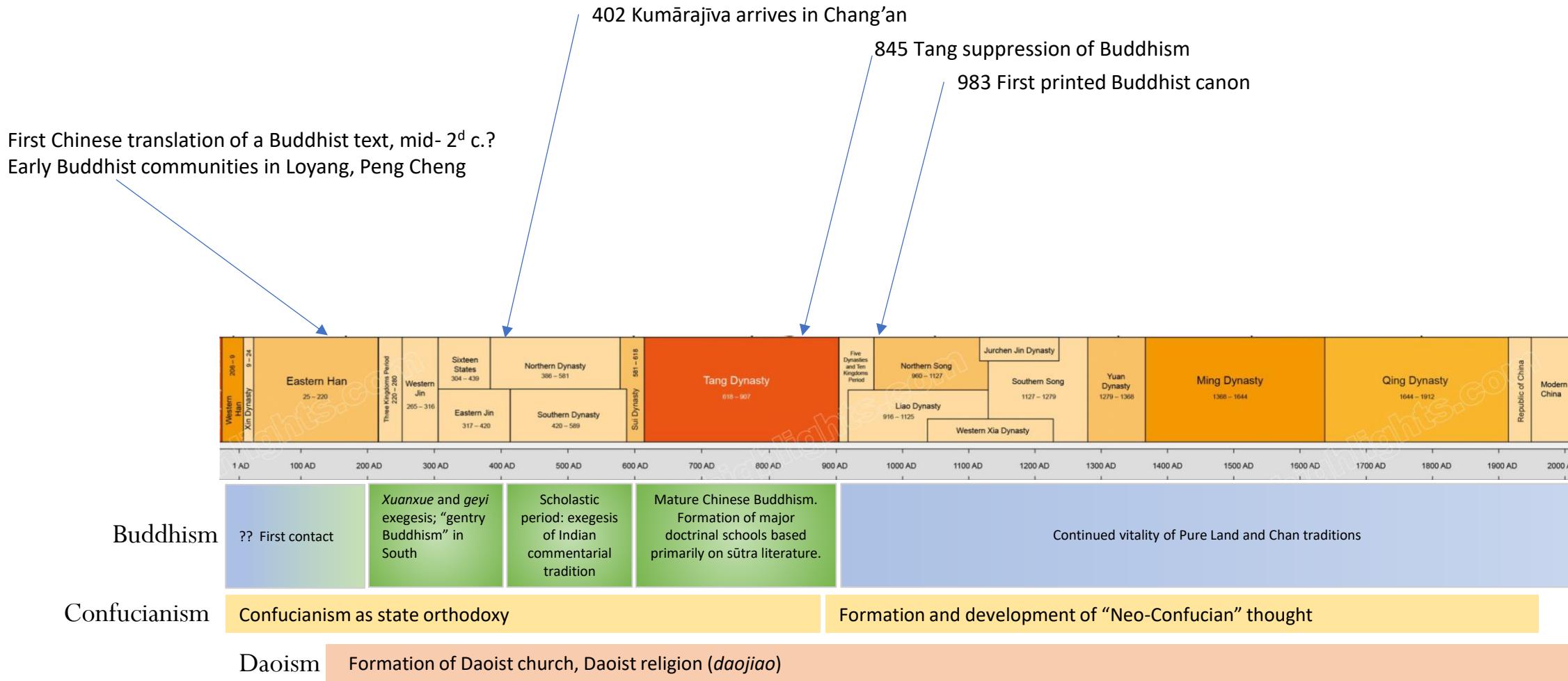
Upper trigram >> Lower trigram vv	Ch'ien	Chen	K'an	Kên	K'un	Sun	Li	Tui
Ch'ien								
Ch'ien	1	34	5	26	11	9	14	43
Chen								
Chen	25	51	3	27	24	42	21	17
K'an								
K'an	6	40	29	4	7	59	64	47
Kên								
Kên	33	62	39	52	15	53	56	31
K'un								
K'un	12	16	8	23	2	20	35	45
Sun								
Sun	44	32	48	18	46	57	50	28
Li								
Li	13	55	63	22	36	37	30	49
Tui								
Tui	10	54	60	41	19	61	38	58

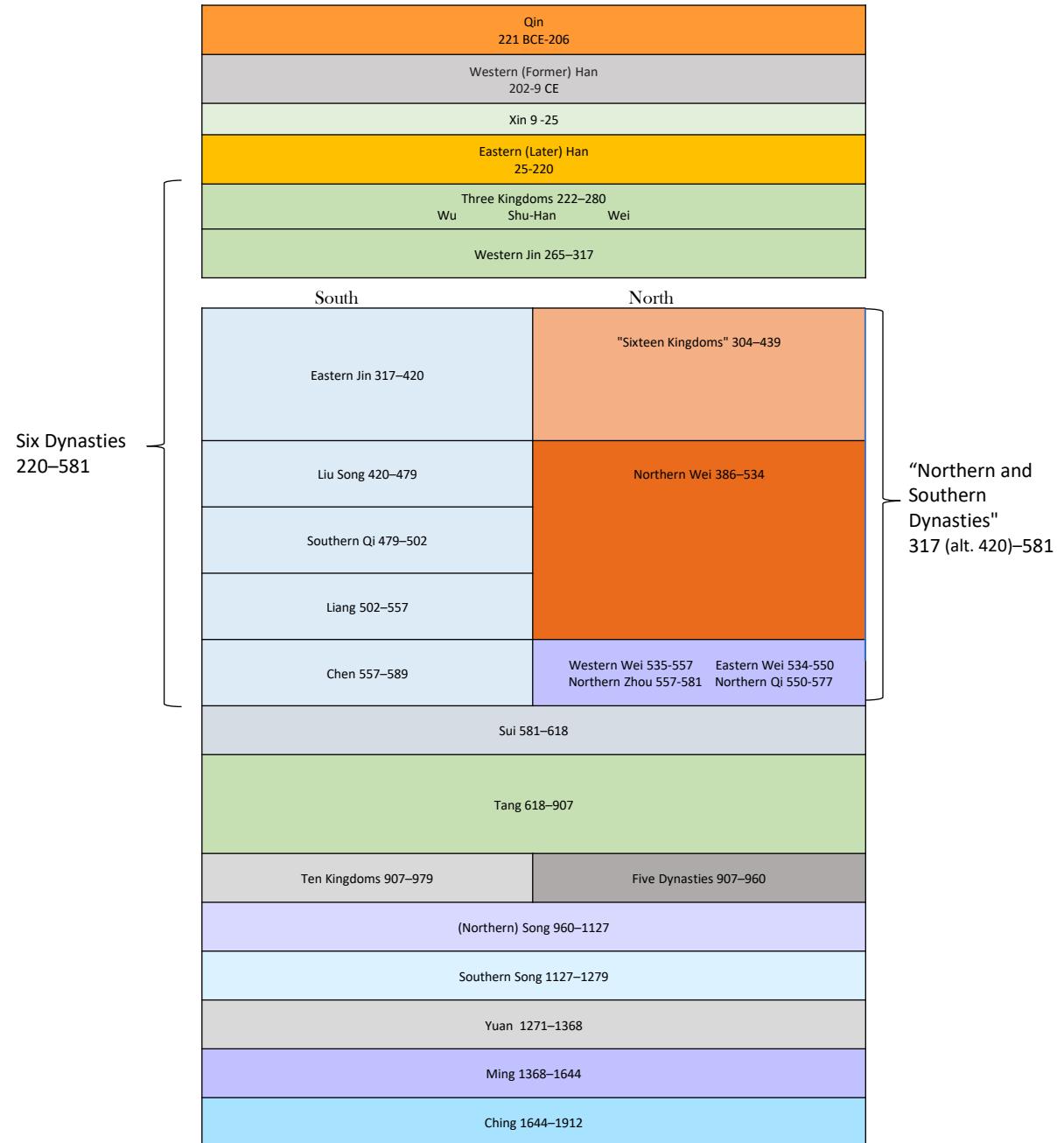
Lecture Three

How Buddhism Became Chinese I: Transmission and Appropriation

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

A Periodization of Chinese Buddhism



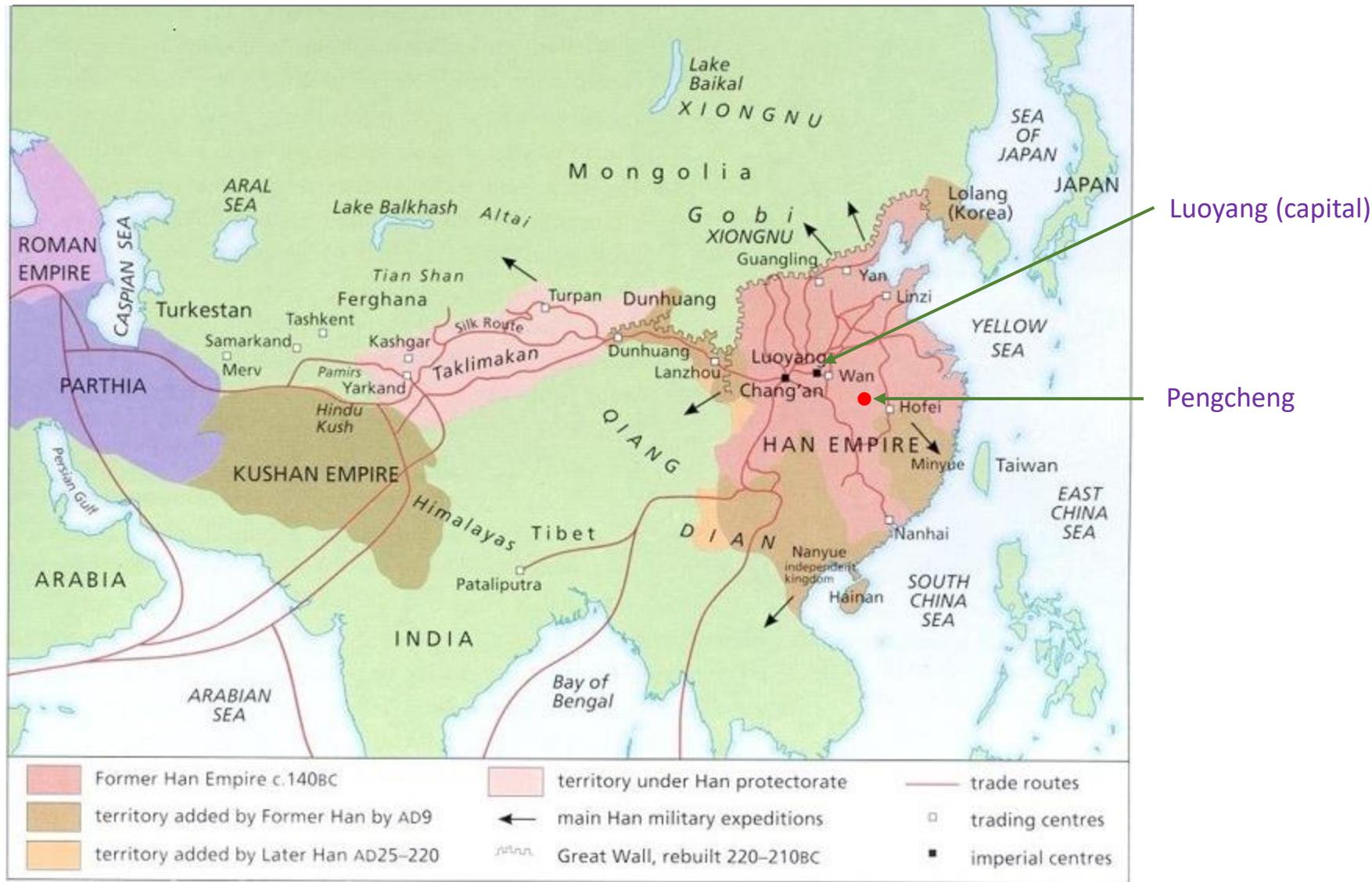


Imperial China

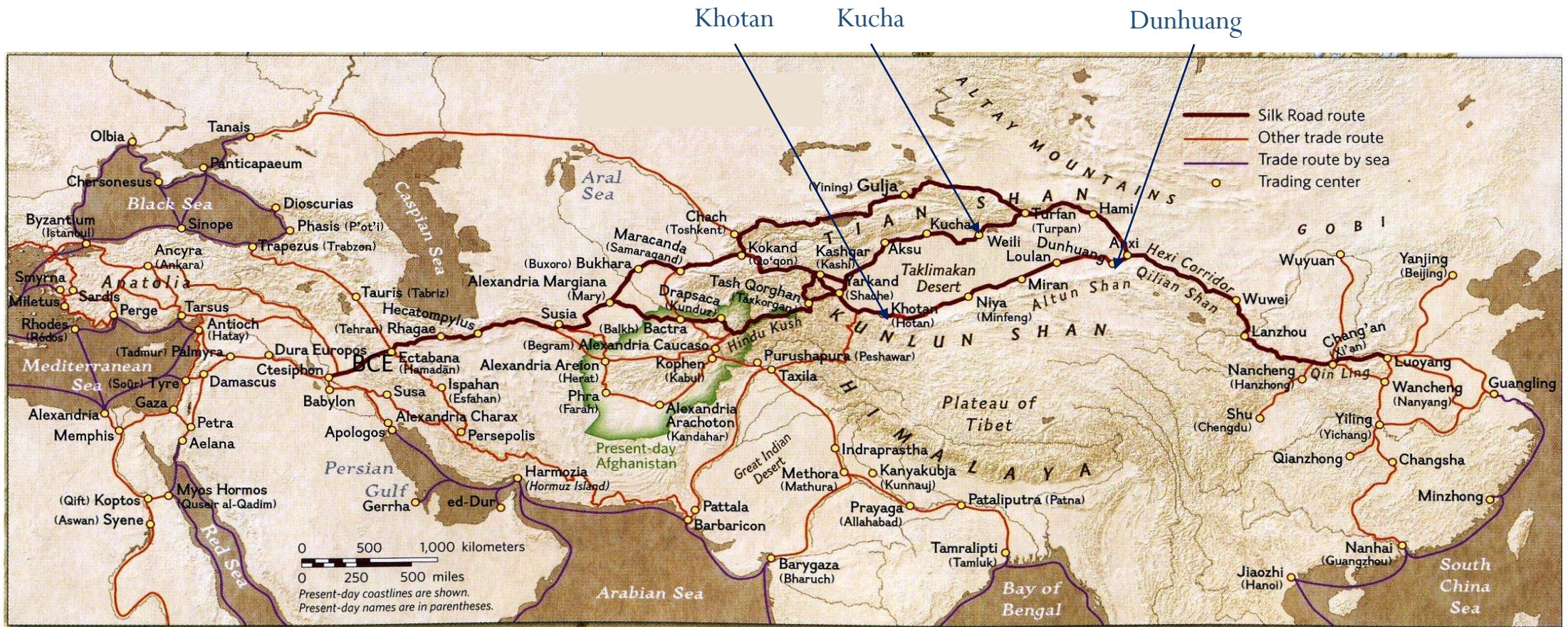
Table of Dynasties

(221 BCE-1912 CE)

Han Dynasty, 202 BCE-220 CE



The “Silk Road” ca. 300 BCE—100 CE



City-states such as Kucha, Khotan, and Dunhuang along the Silk Road were important centers of Buddhist monasticism. Monks from these areas were among the earliest transmitters of Buddhist scripture and teachings to China. Other early missionaries, from Parthia (Persia), Sogdia, Scythia, India, and further west, likewise arrived in China via the Silk Road.

Worlds Apart: Sanskrit and Chinese

An excerpt from the *Prajñāpāramitāhrdayasūtra*
般舟心經 “Heart Sūtra”

Sanskrit (50 syllables)

Arya-avalokiteśvara bodhisattvo gambhīrām̄ prajñāparamitā caryām̄ caramāṇo vyavalokayati sma: panca-skandhaś taṁś ca svābhava śūnyaḥ paśyati sma.

English

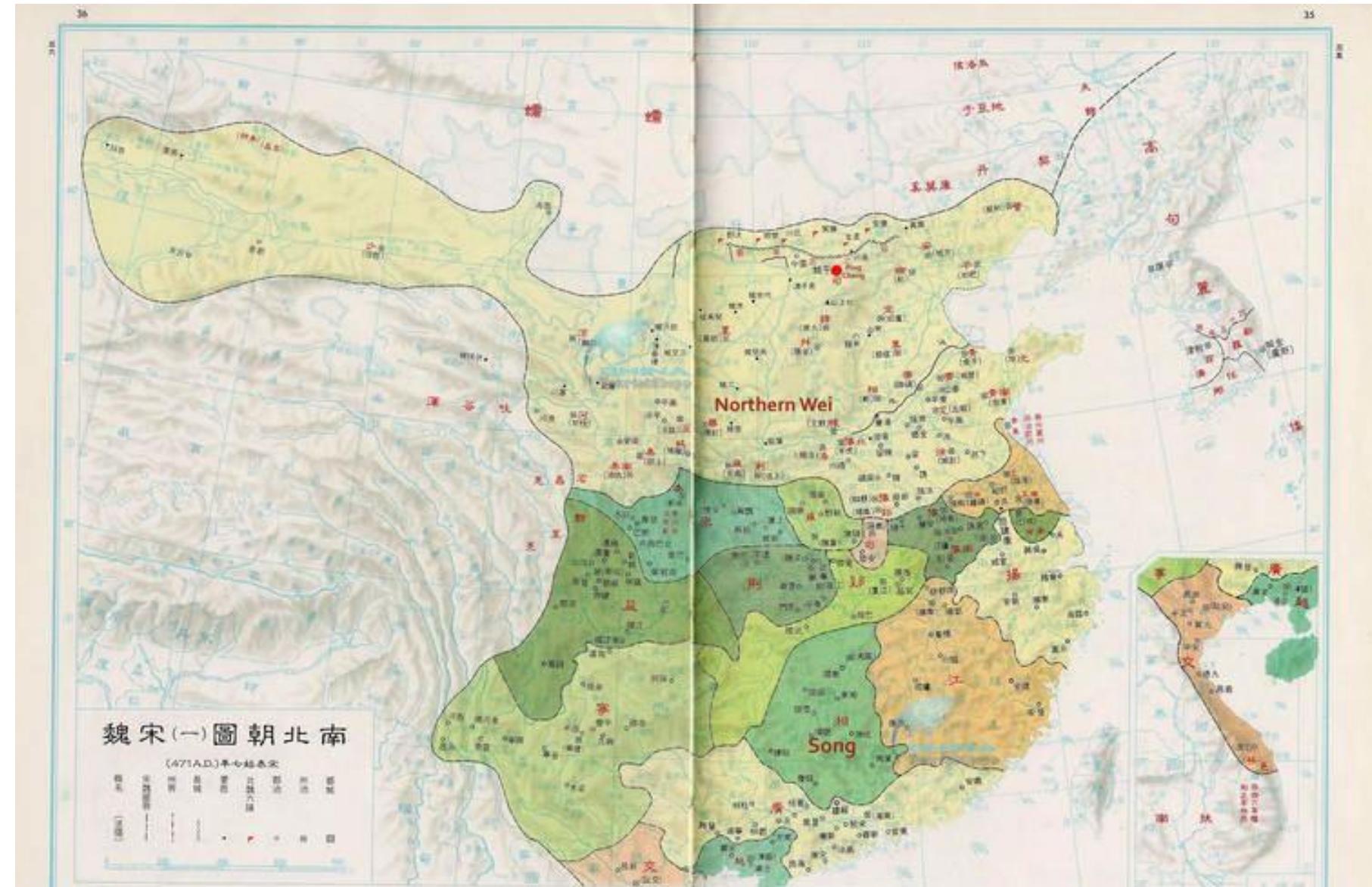
The holy bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was coursing deeply in the perfection of wisdom when he saw that the five aggregates (of personality) were all empty of own-being.

Chinese (17 syllables)

time	時	觀	Avalokiteśvara
perceive	照	自	“Penetrating Gaze”
five	見	在	<i>[translation]</i>
bundles	吾	菩	Bodhisattva
all	蘊	薩	“pu-sa”
empty	皆	行	<i>[phonetic transcription]</i>
	空	深	move
		般	
		若	prajñāpāramitā
		波	“bo-re-bo-loo-mi-duo”
		羅	<i>[phonetic transcription]</i>
		蜜	

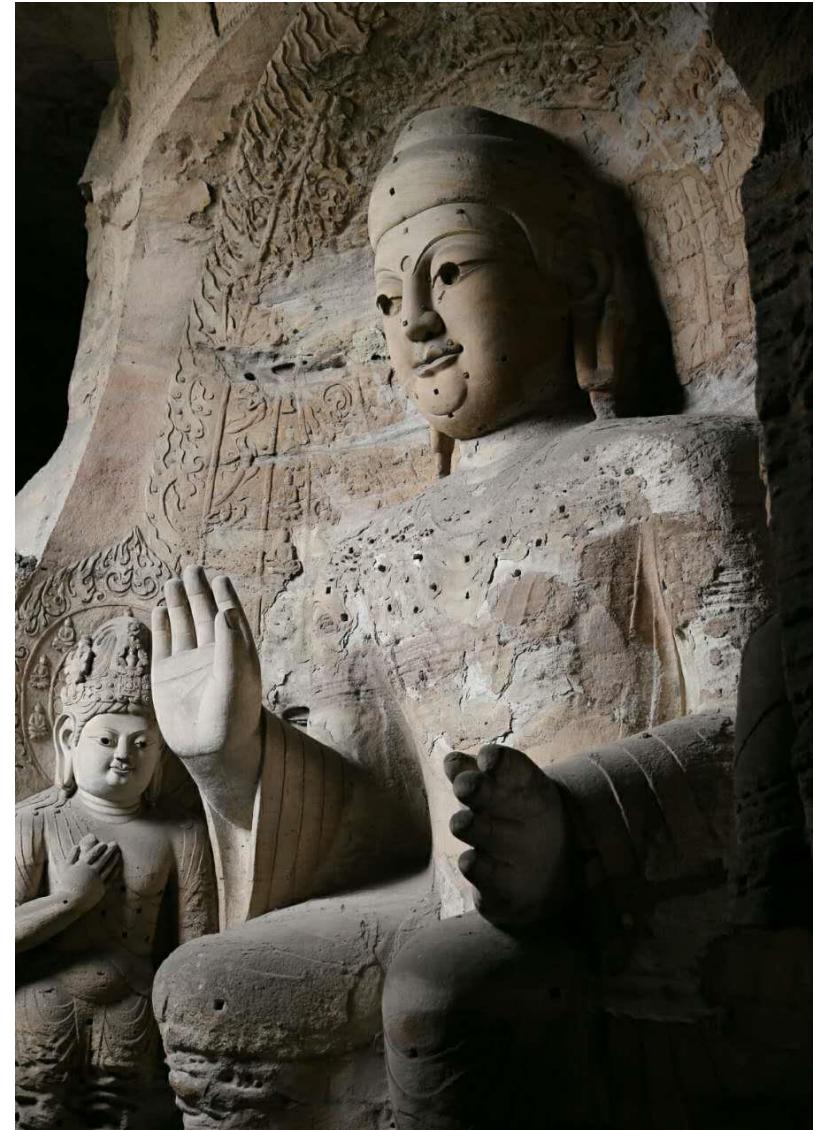
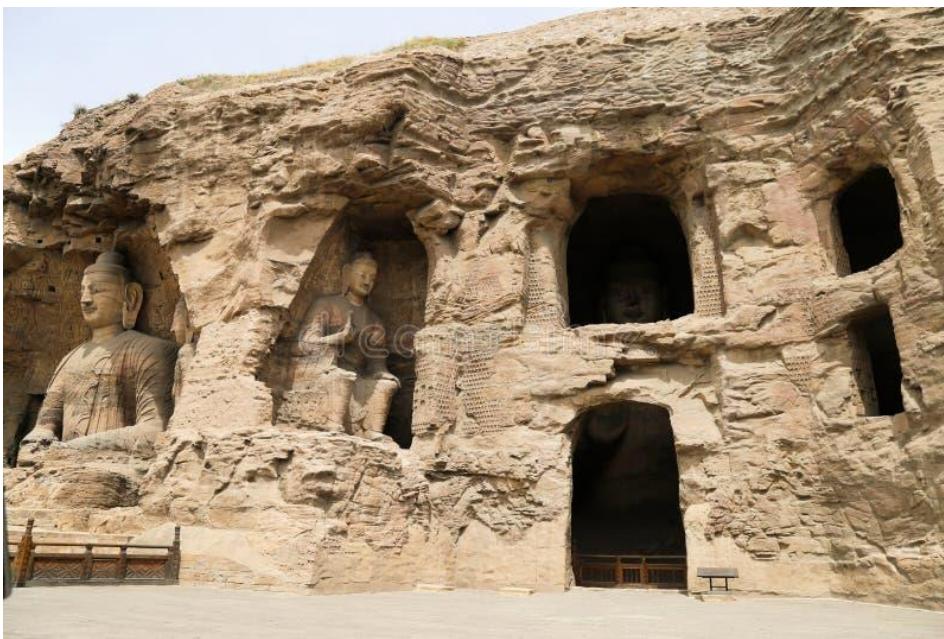
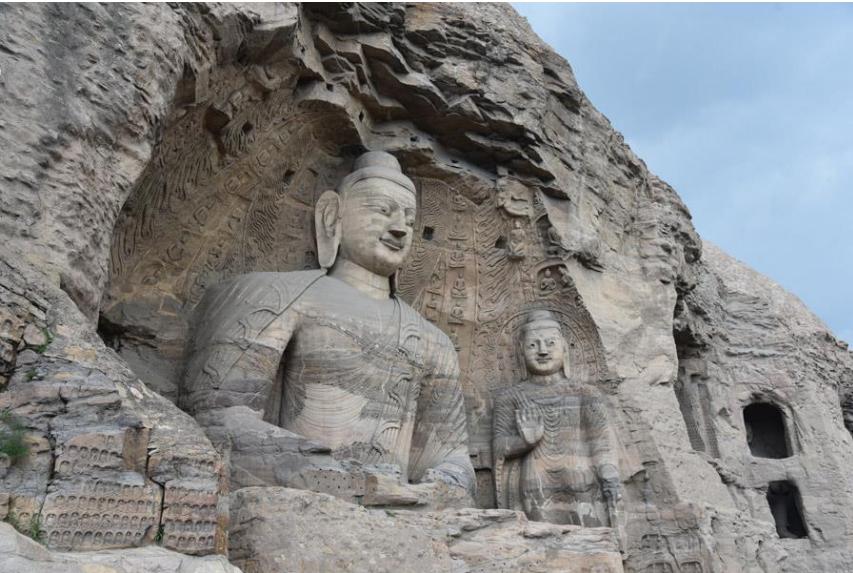
“China” ca.471

“Northern and
Southern Dynasties”
period



The Yungang Grottoes

Begun in the second half of the fifth century and completed in 525 during the Northern Wei dynasty, these grottoes, many of them constructed under state sponsorship, house over fifty-thousand sculptures of the Buddhas, *bodhisattvas*, and disciples.



The Longmen Grottoes



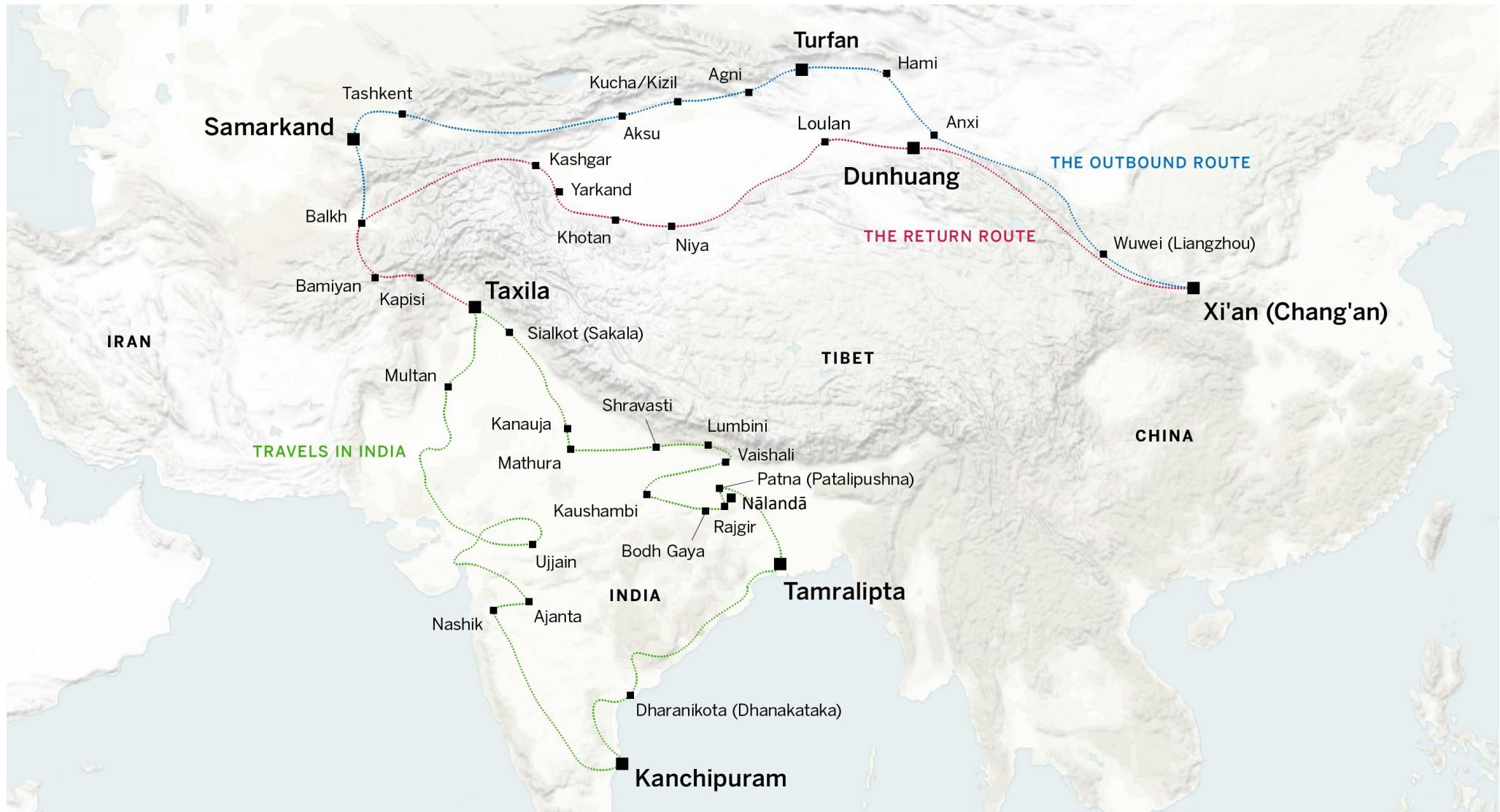
Carved into an escarpment in the Longmenshan range, near Luoyang, the 2,345 caves at Longmen contain tens of thousands of Buddha images of varying sizes. Thirty percent of the caves were constructed during the Northern Wei dynasty, beginning in 493. Another 60% date from as late as 755, during the Tang dynasty.

Lecture Four

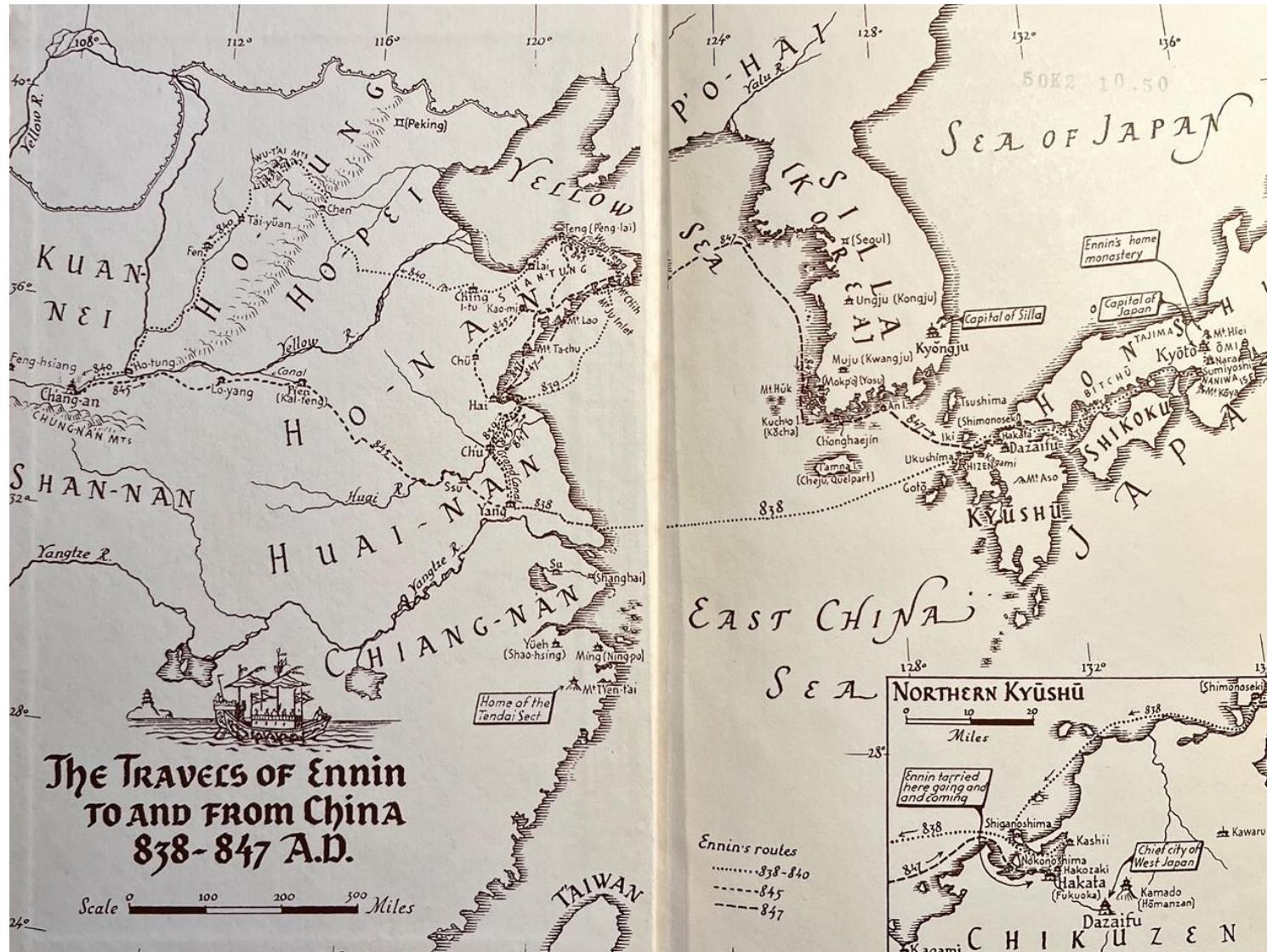
How Buddhism Became Chinese II: The Tang Dynasty

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

Xuanzang's Pilgrimage to India, 627-645

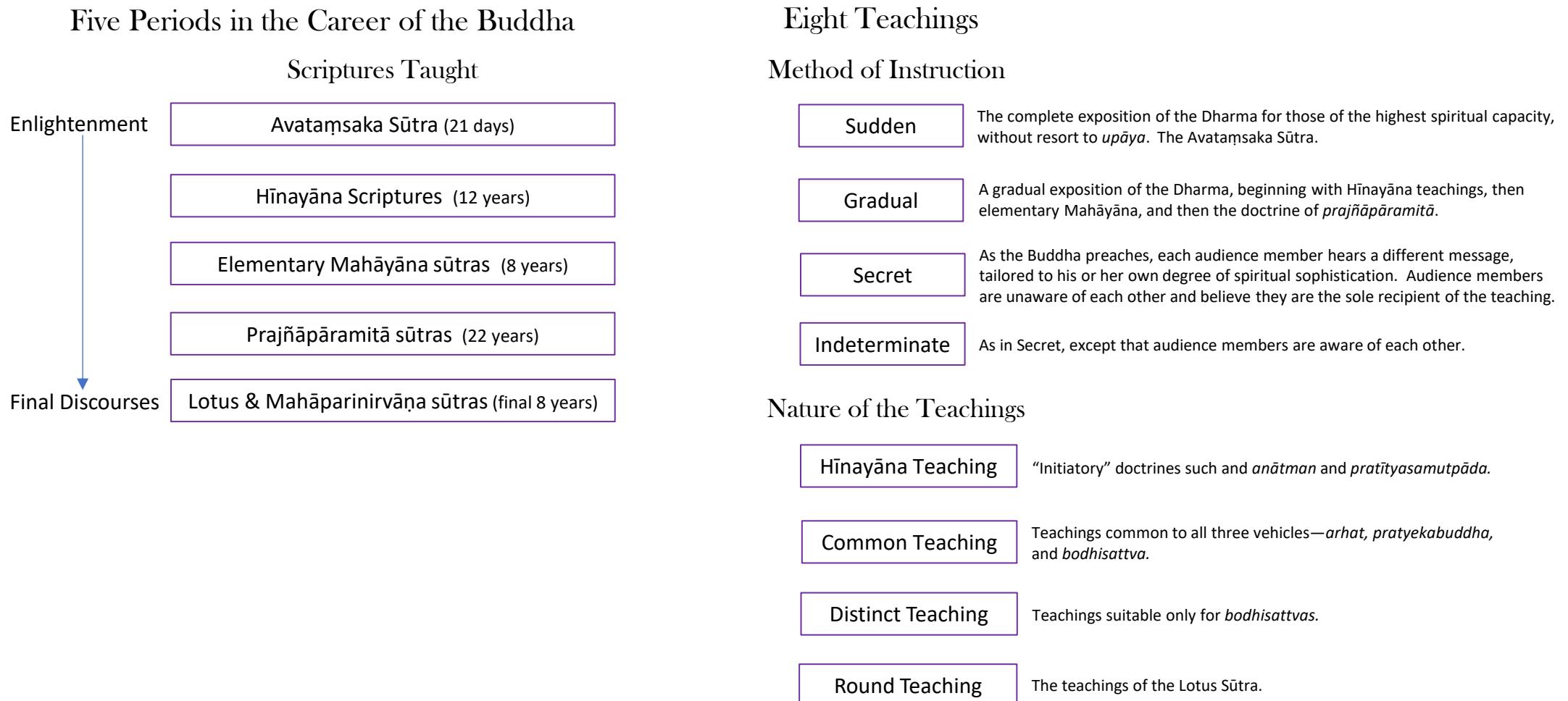


Ennin's Pilgrimage to Tang China, 838-847



“Five Periods and Eight Teachings”

Zhiyi’s Synthesis of Buddhist Doctrine



Lecture Five

Buddhist Devotionalism: Pure Land Buddhism and Popular Piety

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism



Great stūpa at Sāñcī, built in 3d c BCE under the direction of Aśoka Maurya



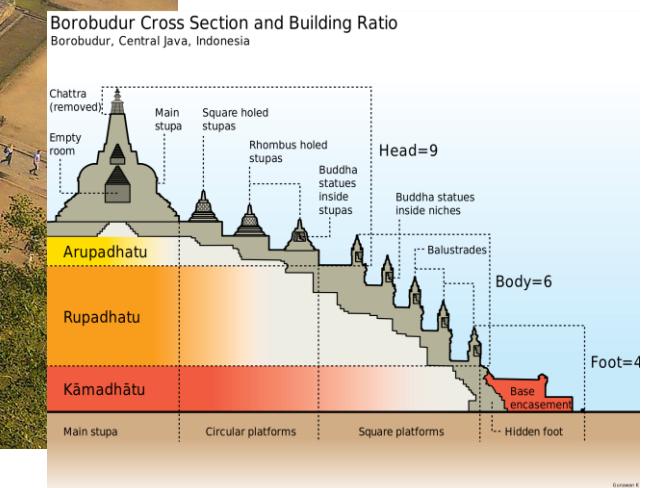
(Above) Xumi (Sumeru) Pagoda at the Kaiyuansi in Hebei.
Construction begun in 636 during the reign of Tang Taizong (626-649). (At left) Pagoda, provenance unknown.



The Great Stūpa at Borobudur
(9th c., Java, Indonesia)

Central stūpa (reliquary) of Vairocana

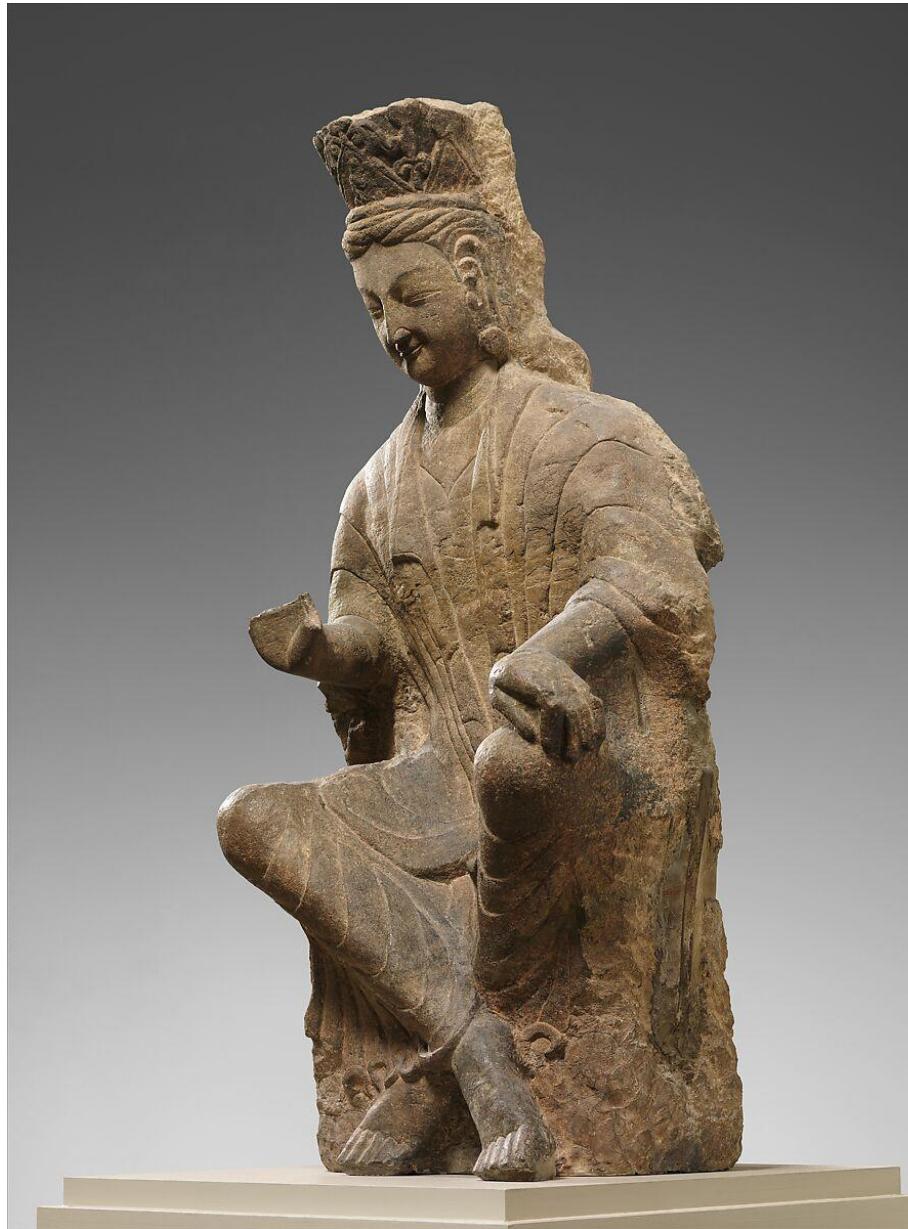
Levels 3 and 4:
460 friezes depicting the stages of
Sudhana's pilgrimage in the
Gandavyūha (*Avatamsaka sūtra*)





Ascent of the Borobudur temple via circumambulation of its terraces represents the spiritual progress of the devotee on her journey to enlightenment. At the third and highest level of the temple, representing the “formless” realm of the cosmos, are seventy-two stupas, said to contain relics of the Buddha. A stupa signifying the cosmic Buddha, Vairocana, sits at the summit of the ascent, as in the pilgrimage of Sudhana recounted in the *Gandavyūha* section of the *Avataṃsaka sūtra*.

Image of Maitreya at Cave 25 (?),
Yungang grottoes, ca. 470-80
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)





Amitābha's Pure Land, Sukhāvatī, as depicted in the *Taima Mandala*, 14th-century copy of the original, created in 763 at the Taima monastery in Kyushu, Japan (Kyushu National Museum)



Amitābha Descending from Sukhāvatī to Greet a Devotee at the Hour of Her Death (Vow 19)

Flanked on right by Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) and on the left by Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Dashizhi),
representing compassion and wisdom, respectively

13th-century, unidentified Chinese artist

Lecture Six

Does a Dog Have the Buddha Nature? Chan Buddhism

Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

禪

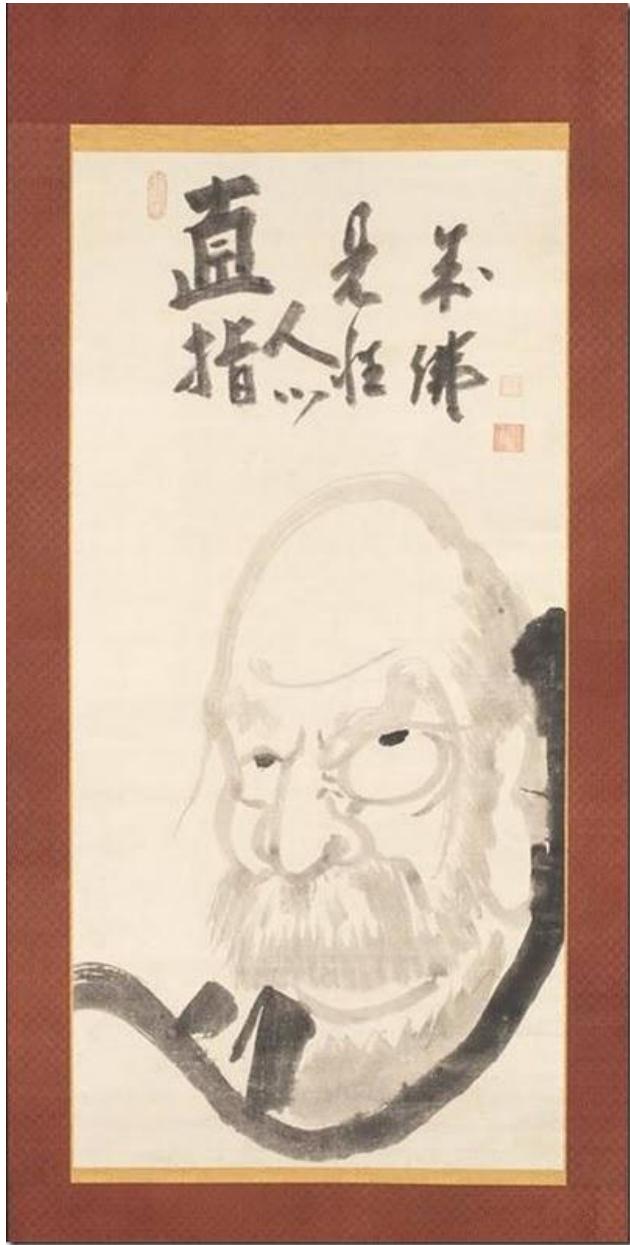


Image of Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chan Buddhism, drawn by the eminent Japanese monk Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1769).

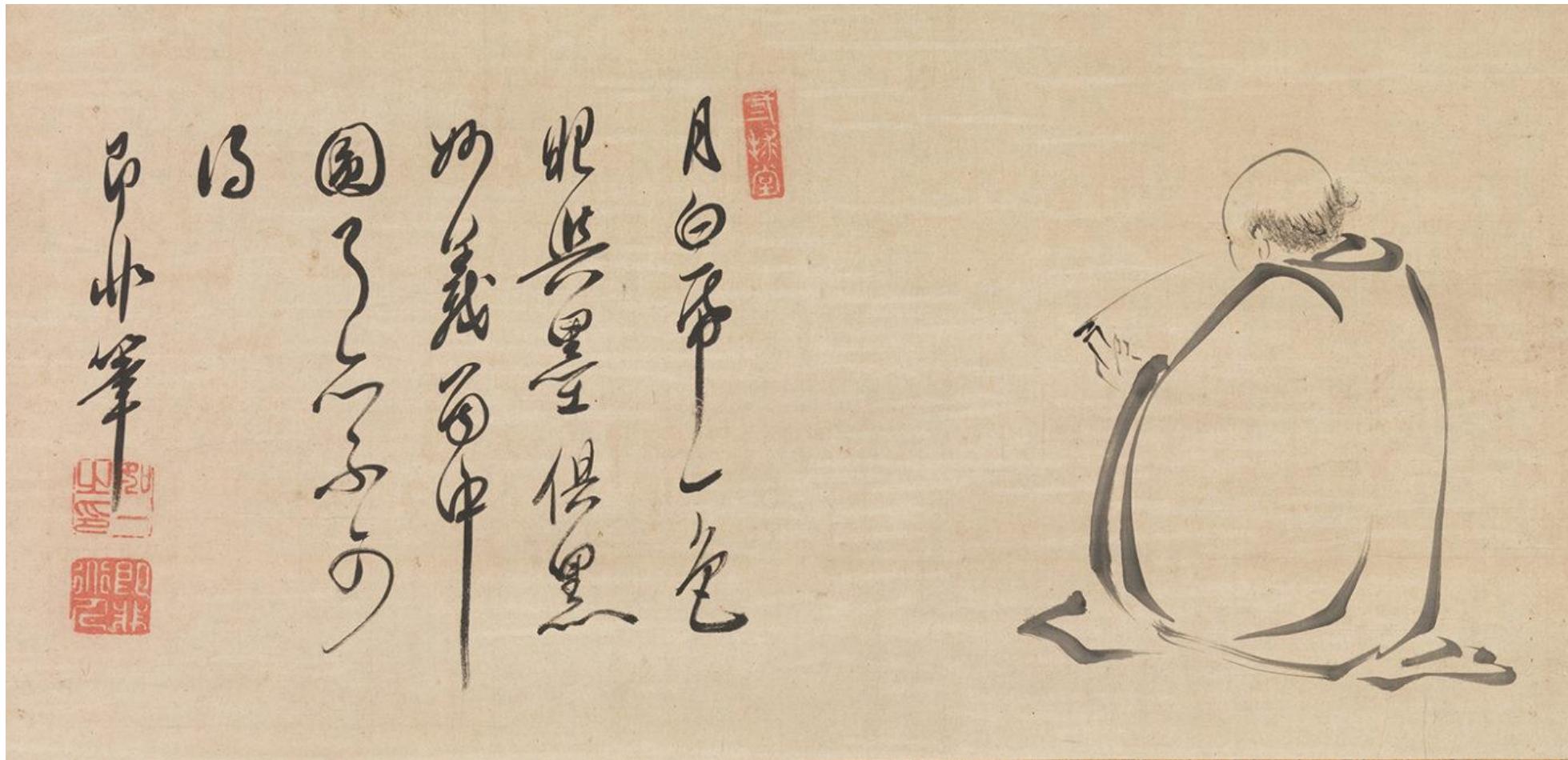
The inscription paraphrases a famous Chan apothegm:

“Pointing directly at the human heart
Seeing into one’s own nature
And attaining Buddhahood.”



According to legend, Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chan, meditated for nine years facing a cave wall outside the Shaolin monastery. This scene depicts the efforts of the monk Huike, who, wishing to become a disciple, severed his arm and presented it to Bodhidharma as a demonstration of his resolve to attain enlightenment.

Portion of a scroll by Dai Jin (1388–1462) depicting the first six Chan patriarchs. Ink on silk.



Reading a Sutra by Moonlight by Jifei Ruyi (Jpn: Sokuh Nyoichi; 1616–1671) depicts the Chinese monk Yinyuan Longqi (Jpn: Ingen Ryūki, 1592–1673), who emigrated to Japan in 1654 and founded the Ōbaku school of Zen.