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.

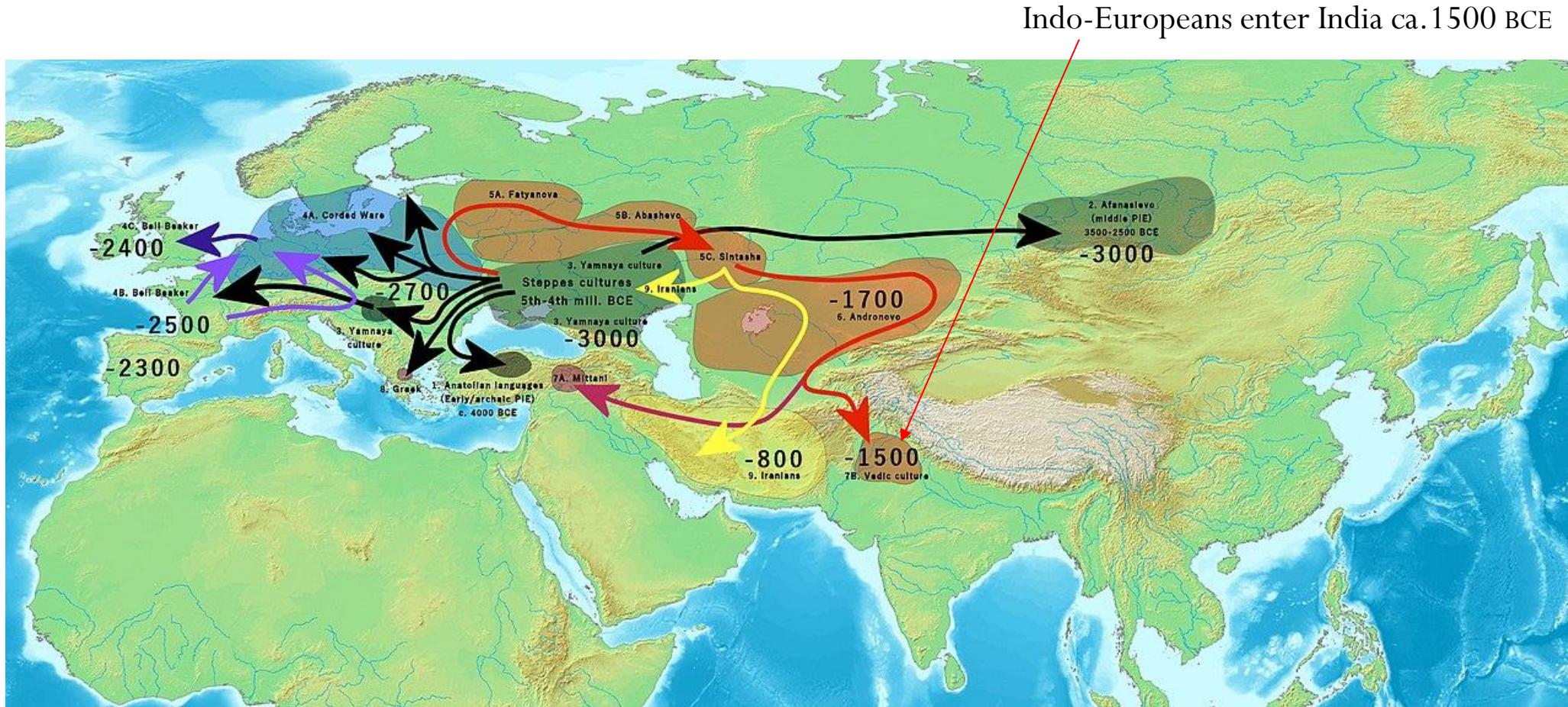
# Lecture One

## Indian Buddhism: The First Five Hundred Years

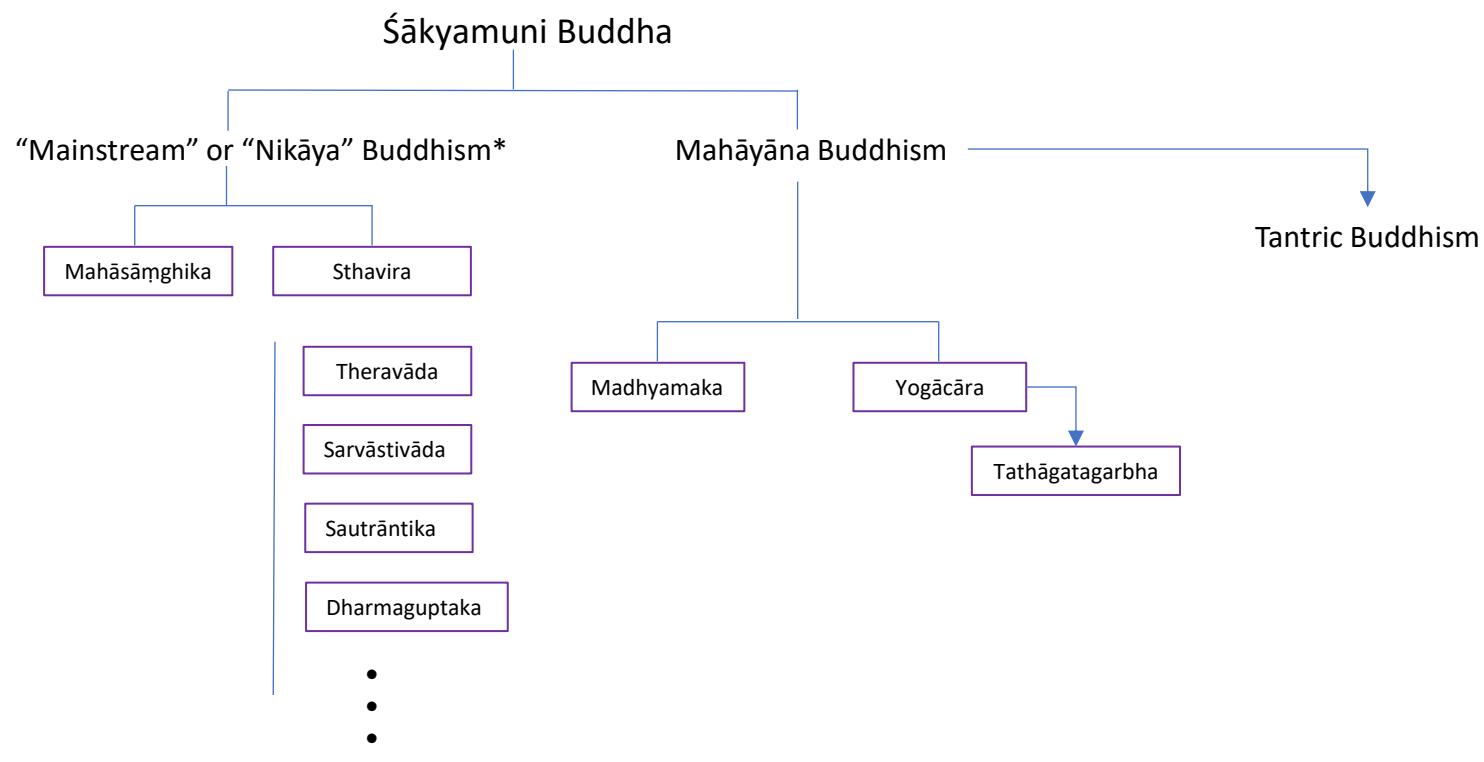
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Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

# Indo-European Migrations, 4000-800 BCE



# Filiation of Major Buddhist Traditions



# The Diffusion of Buddhism

# The Conquests of Alexander ca. 326 BCE



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.

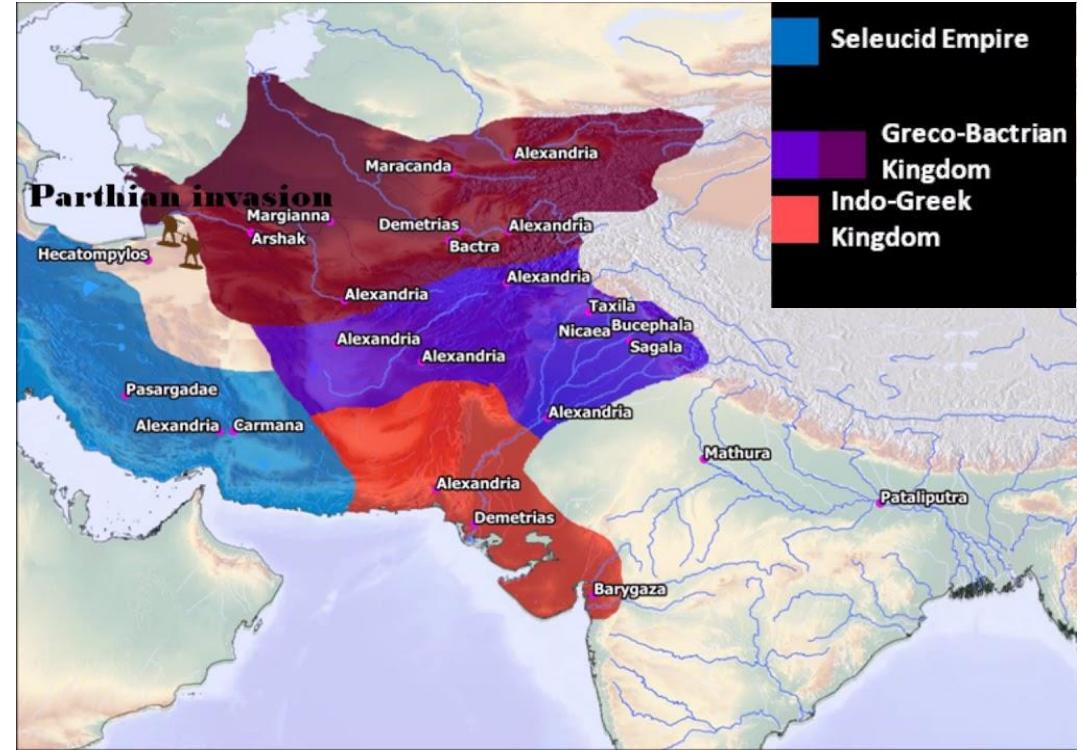
Following his conversion, Aśoka erected a series of pillars and rock inscriptions (*red dots on map*) throughout the empire proclaiming a generalized, nonsectarian Dharma loosely based on Buddhist morality.





## 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)

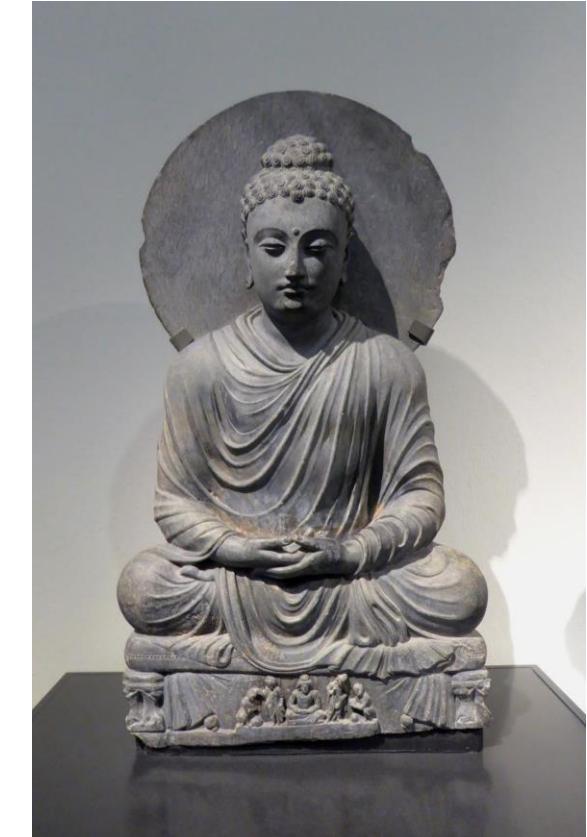
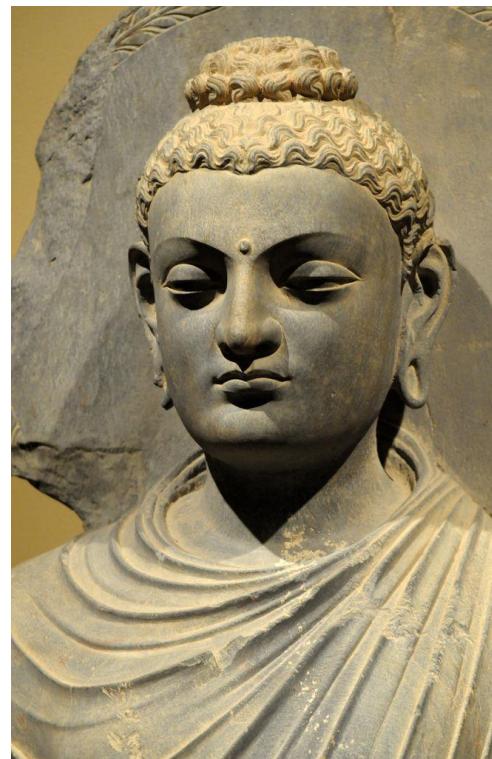
Around 120 BCE the Kushans, a Yuezhi people, migrated south to Bactria and Gandhara from what is now the Chinese province of Xinjiang and supplanted the Greco-Bactrians. The Kushan Empire adopted the Greek alphabet and was an agent of Hellenic culture.

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.

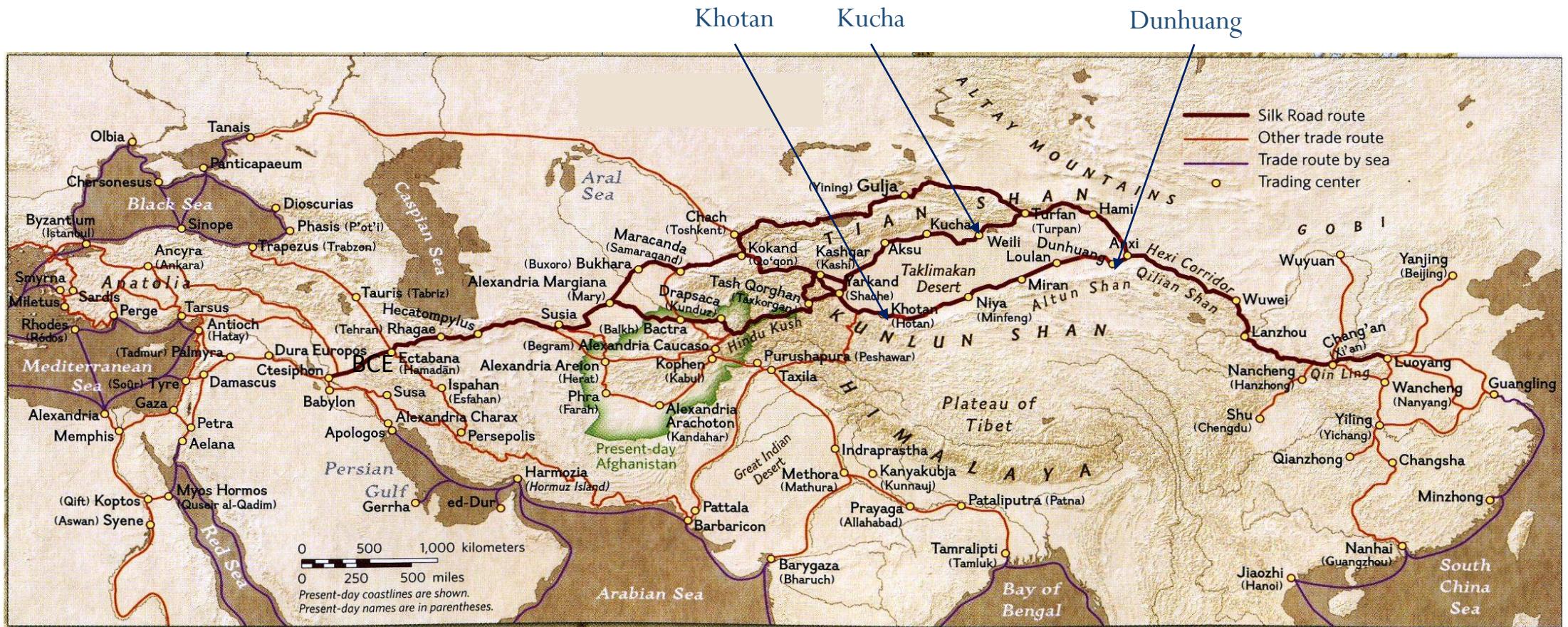


# Images of the Buddha in Gandharan (Greco-Buddhist) Art, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>d</sup> c CE

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

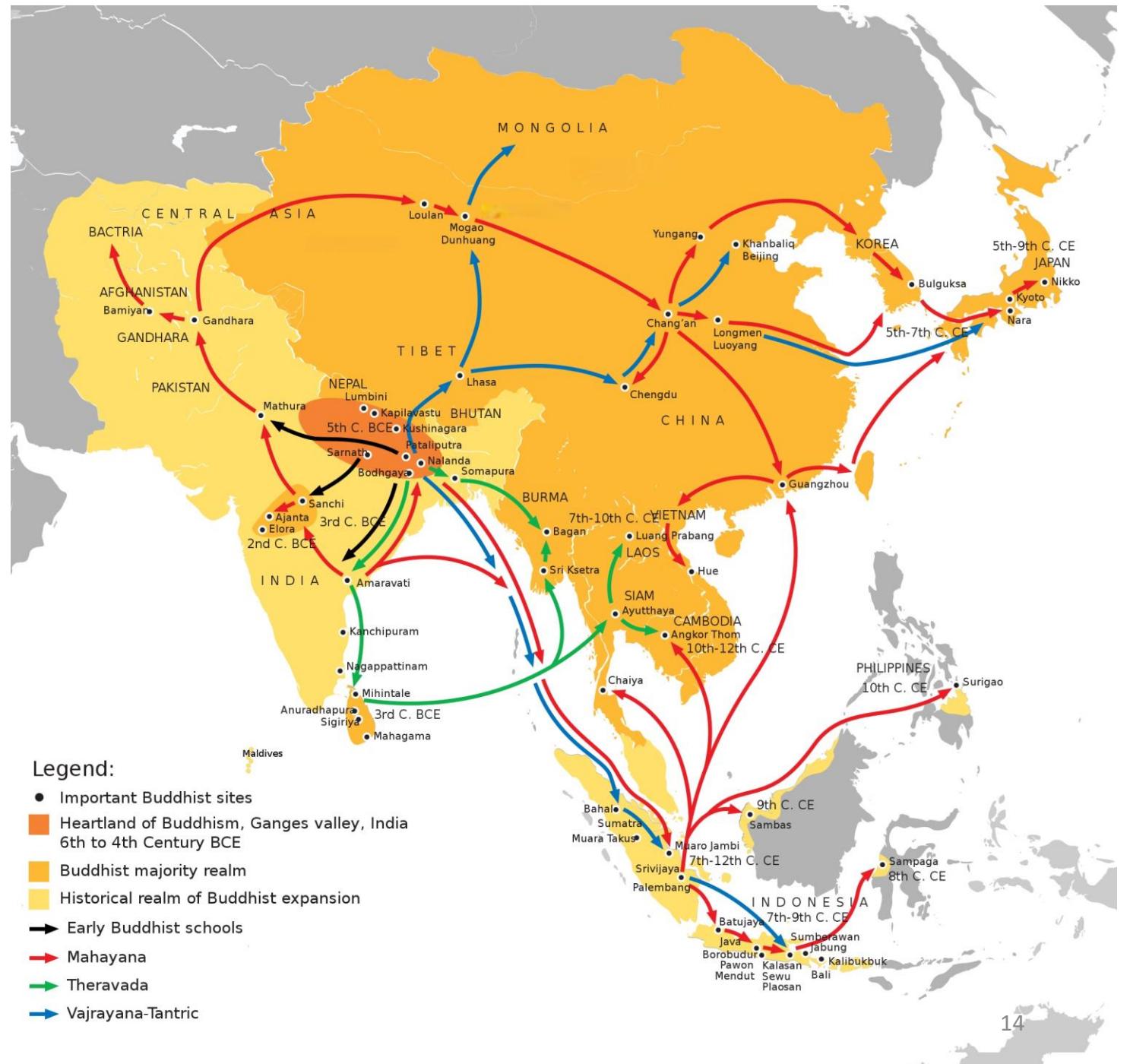


# The “Silk Road” ca. 300 BCE—100 CE



City-states such as Kucha, Khotan, 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



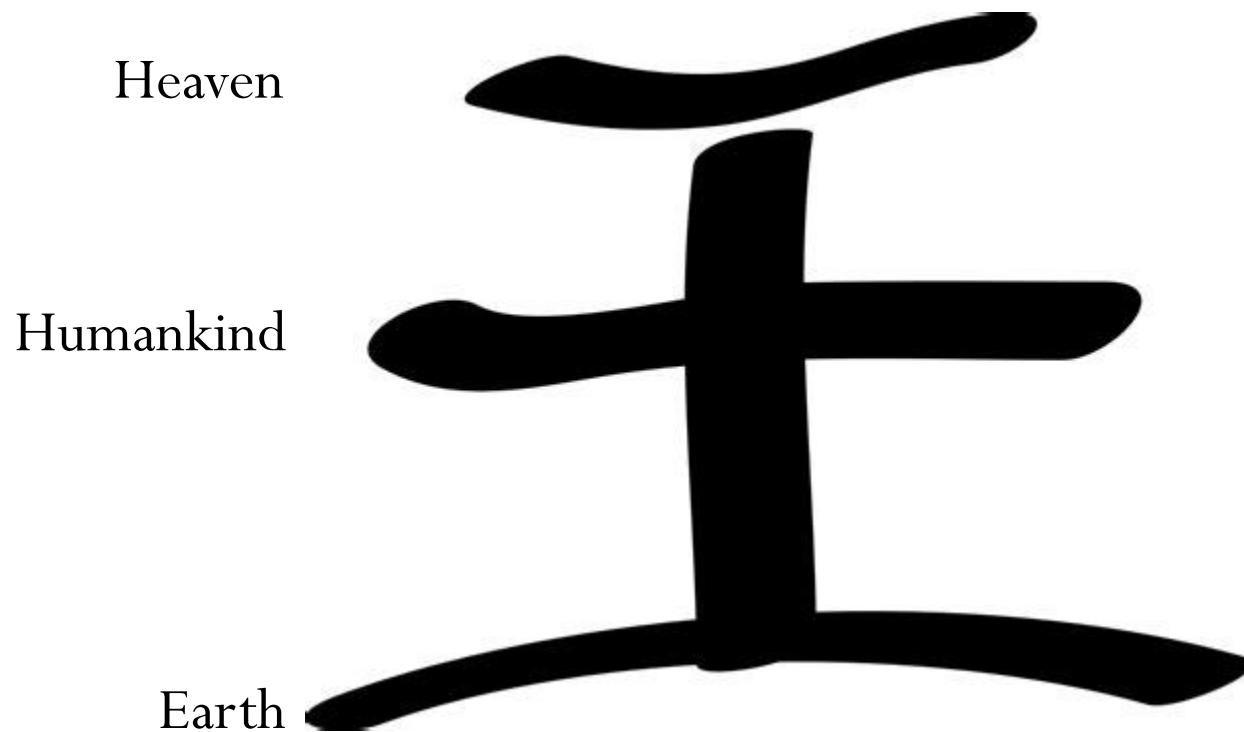
## Lecture Two

# Chinese Religion at the Beginning of the Common Era

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Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

*Wang* = “King,” “Emperor”



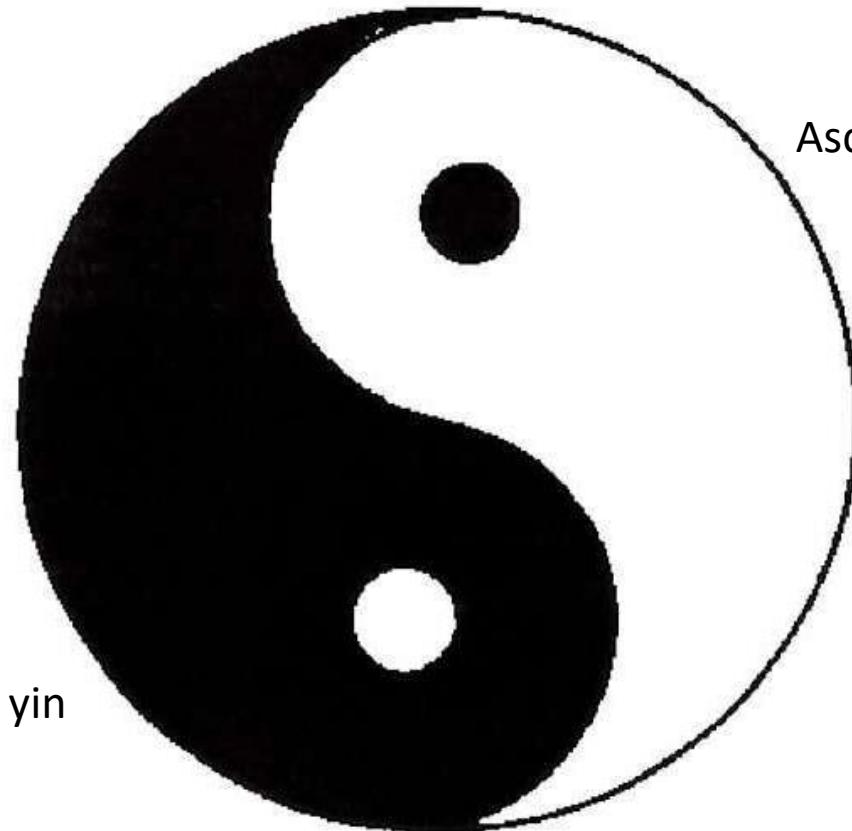
The Emperor (*vertical line*) is a “cosmic pivot” connecting Heaven, Earth, and Humankind

# 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								
Chen								
K'an								
Kên								
K'un								
Sun								
Li								
Tui								

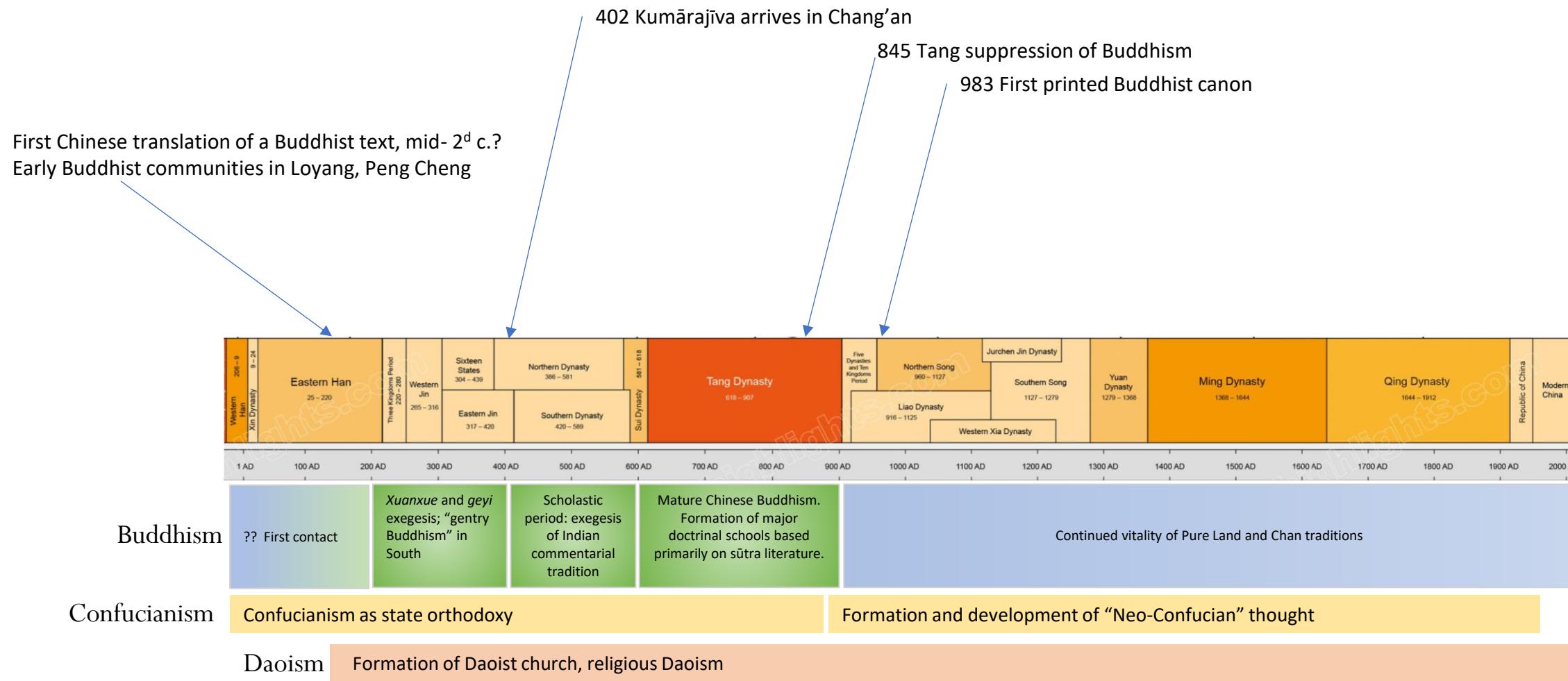
## Lecture Three

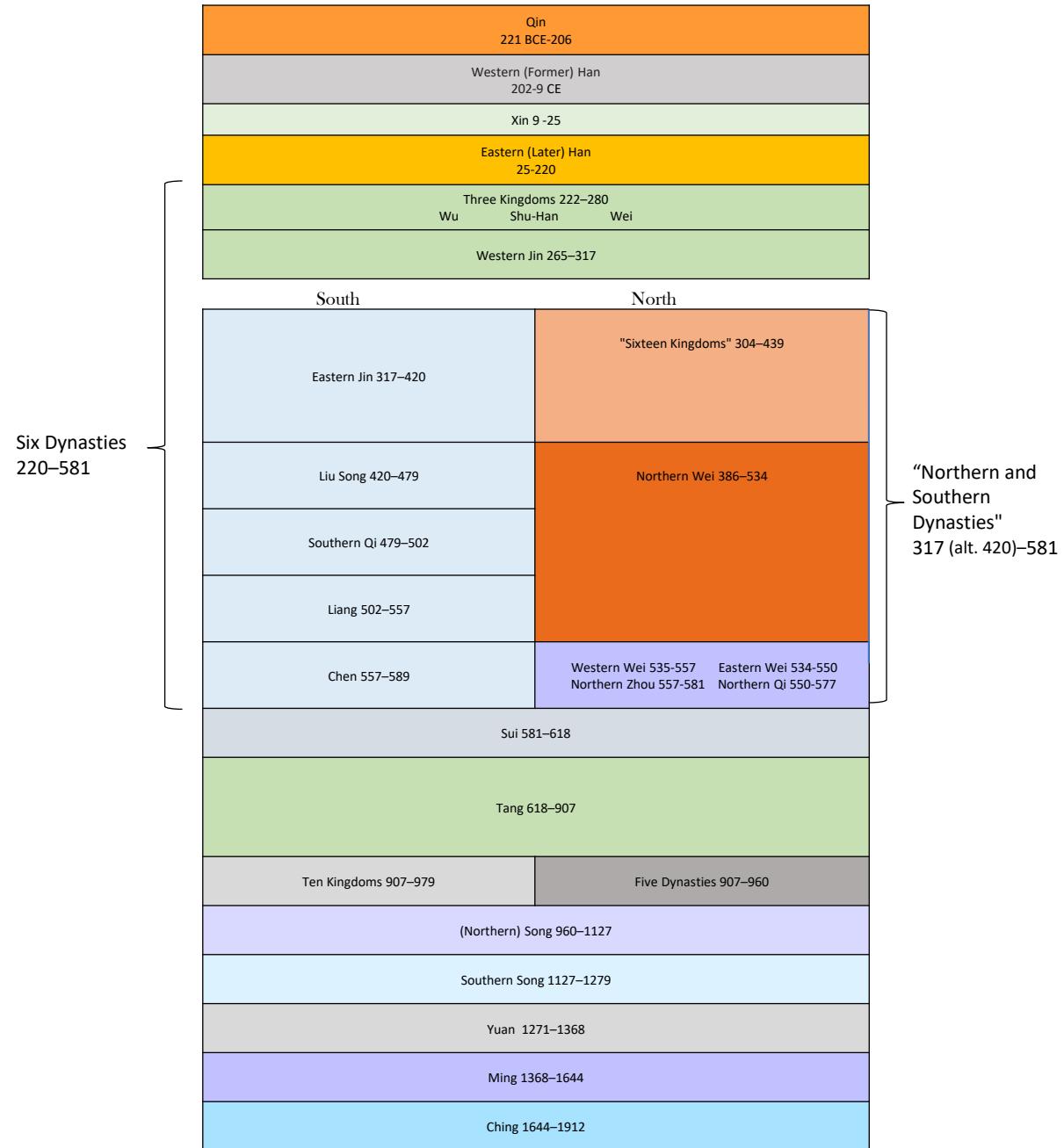
# How Buddhism Became Chinese I: Transmission and Appropriation

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Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

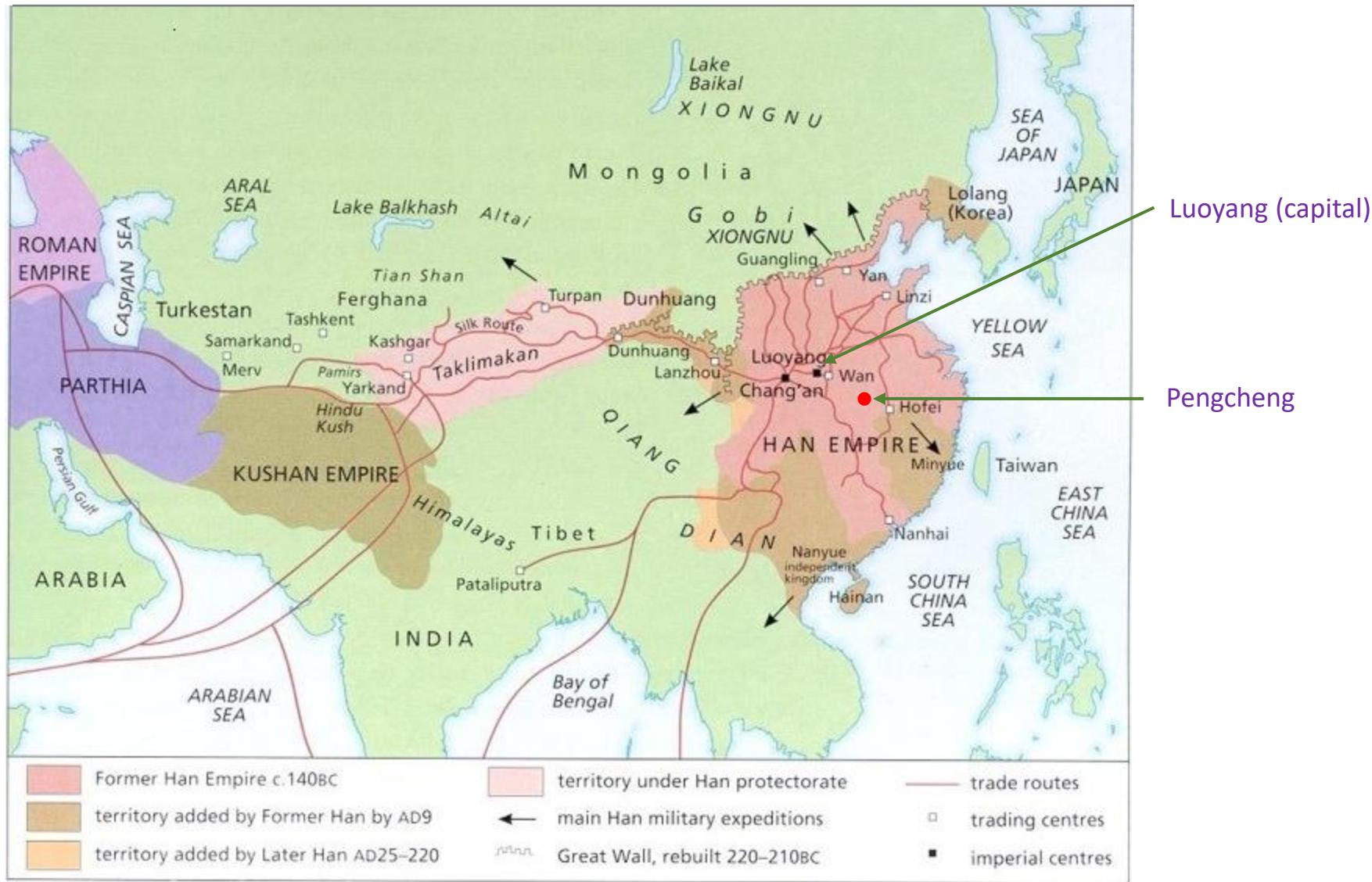
# A Periodization of Chinese Buddhism



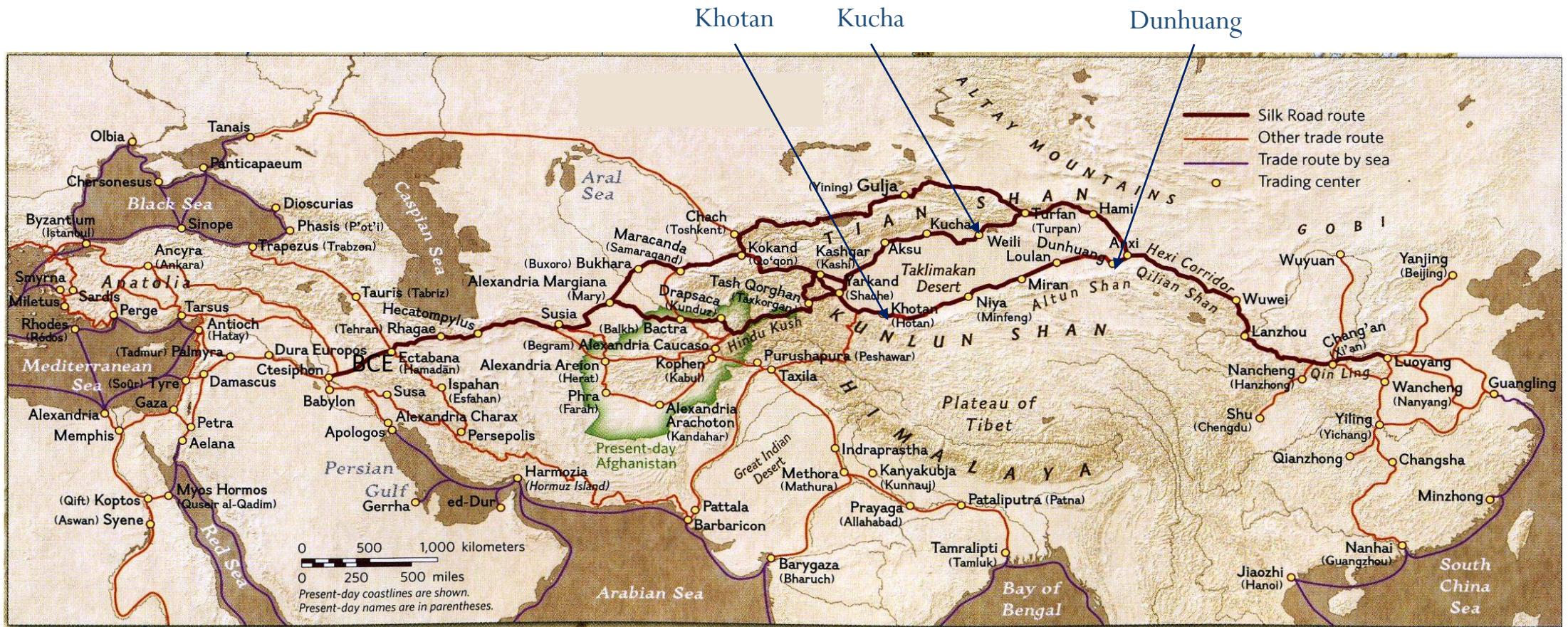


# Imperial China Table of Dynasties (221 BCE–1912 CE)

# 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.

## Chinese (17 syllables)

time	時	Avalokiteśvara “Penetrating Gaze” [translation]
perceive	照	
five	見	
bundles	吾	Bodhisattva “pu-sa” [phonetic transcription]
all	蘊	
empty	皆	
	空	move
	行	
	深	
	般	
	若	
	波	
	羅	
	蜜	

# Worlds Apart: Sanskrit and Chinese

An excerpt from the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra*

般舟心經 “Heart Sūtra”

## Sanskrit (50 syllables)

Arya-avalokiteśvaro bodhisattvo gambhīraṁ prajñāpāramitaṁ caryaṁ caramāṇo vyavalokayati sma: panca-skandhaḥ tāṁś ca svābhava śūnyaṁ 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.

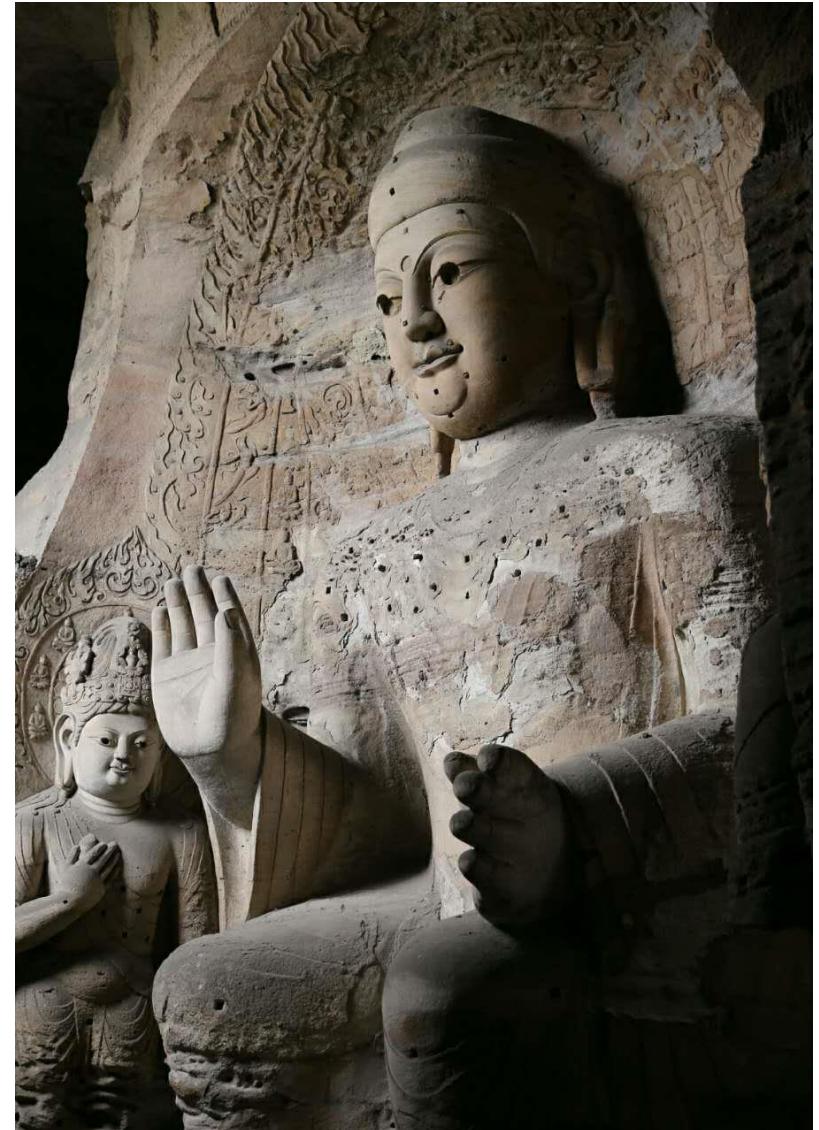
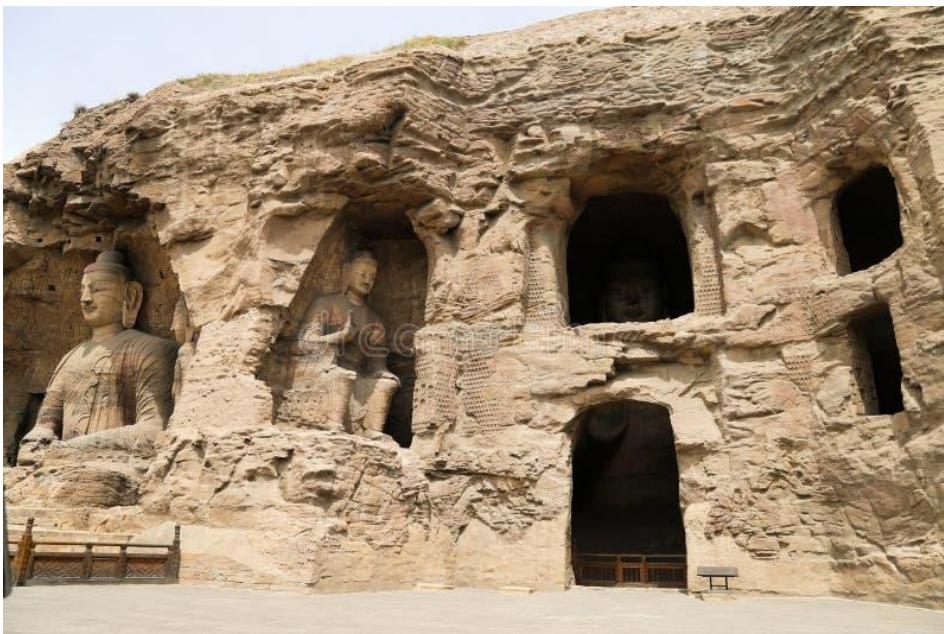
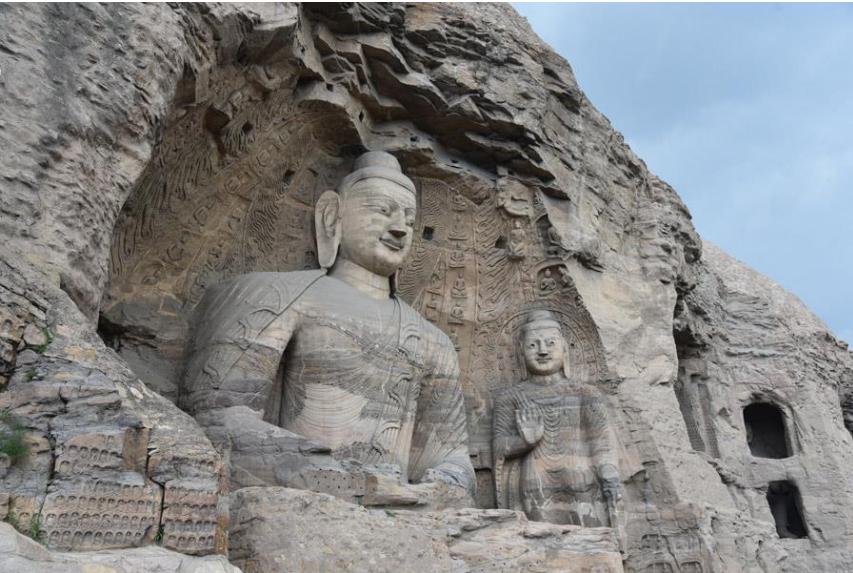
“China” ca.471

“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.