The background image shows a massive, light-colored stone sculpture of a seated Buddha, part of the Yungang Grottoes in China. The statue is highly detailed, showing a serene expression and traditional robes. Behind it, another smaller seated figure is visible within a niche. The surrounding rock face is textured and shows signs of weathering and other carved figures.

# 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.

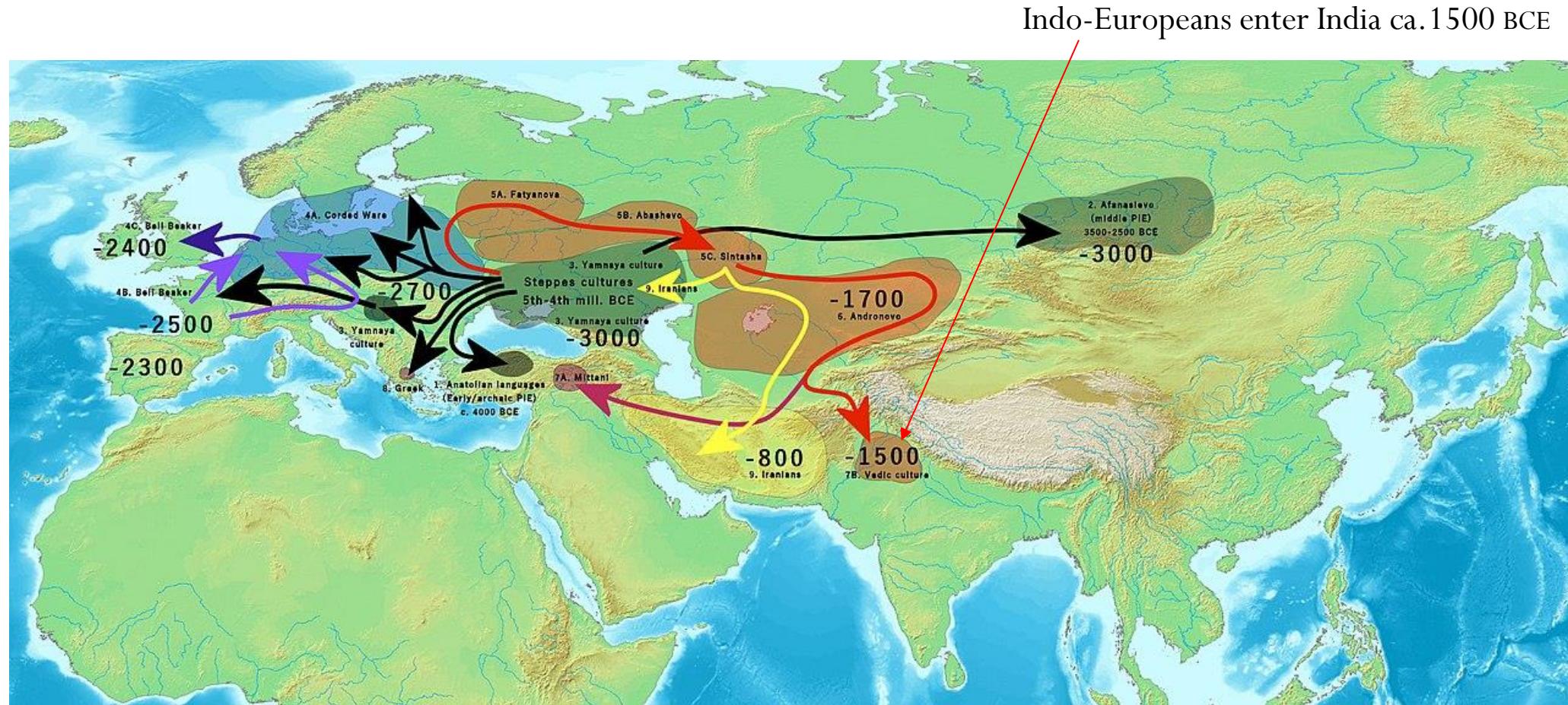
# Lecture One

## 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



*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*

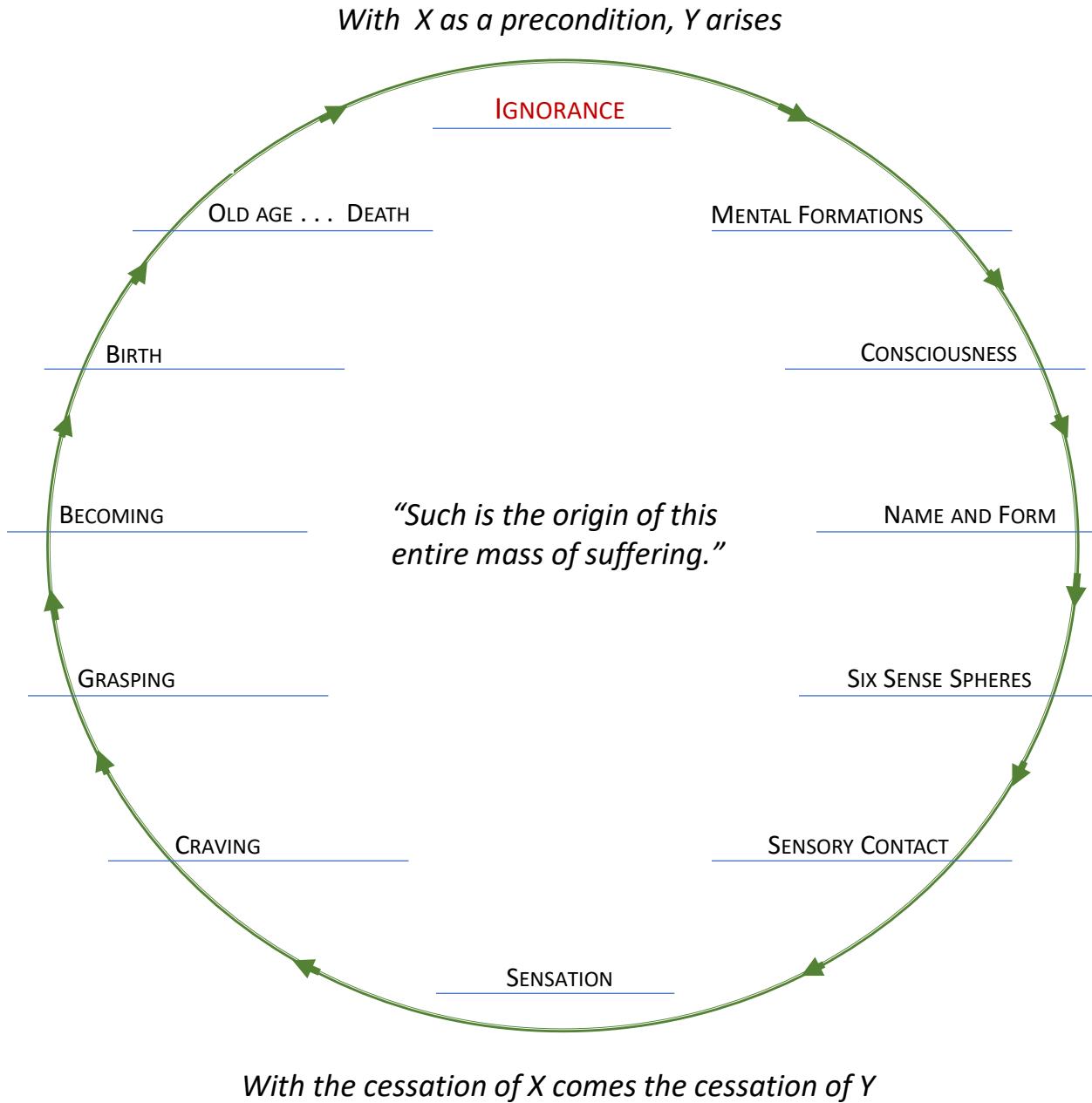
## *Pratīya-samutpāda* “Dependent Origination”

“When this is present, that comes to be.

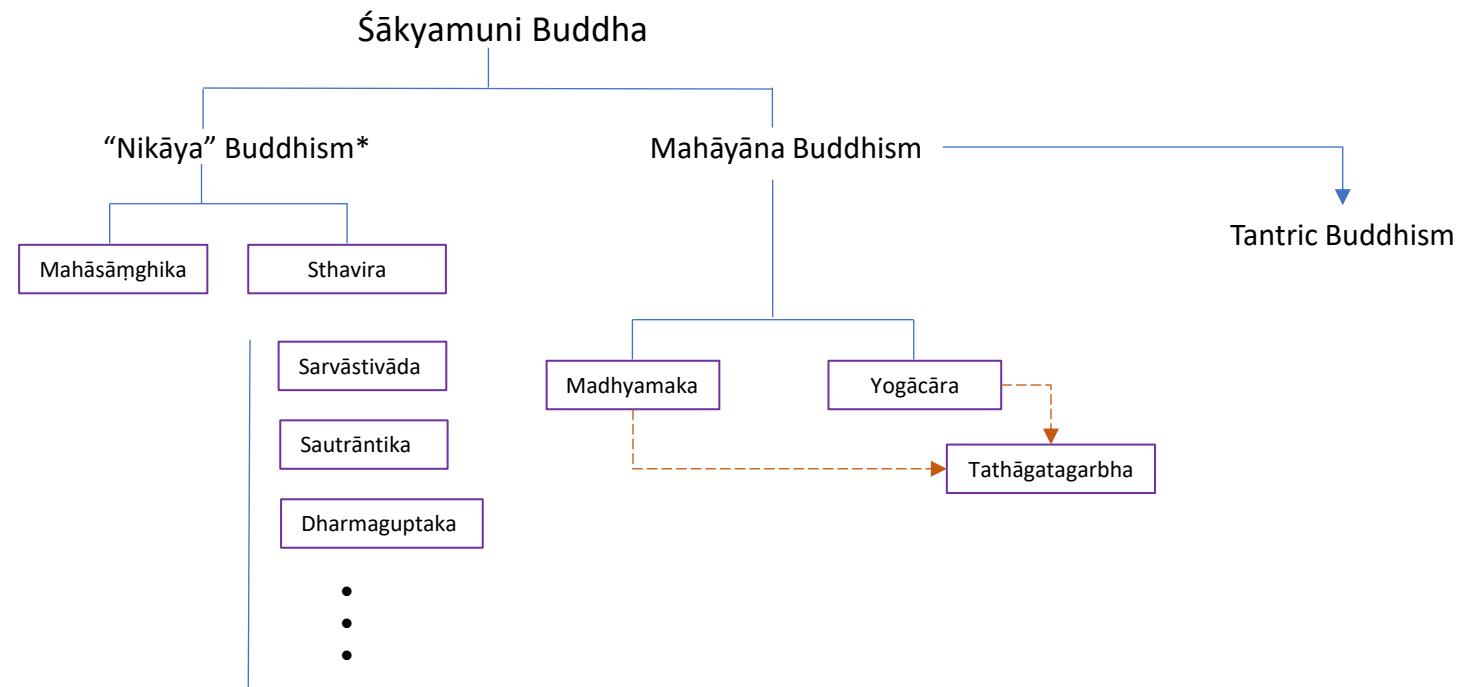
From the arising of this, that arises.

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*

*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.

← “Dependent Origination”

# 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 Kaliṅgas, 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.

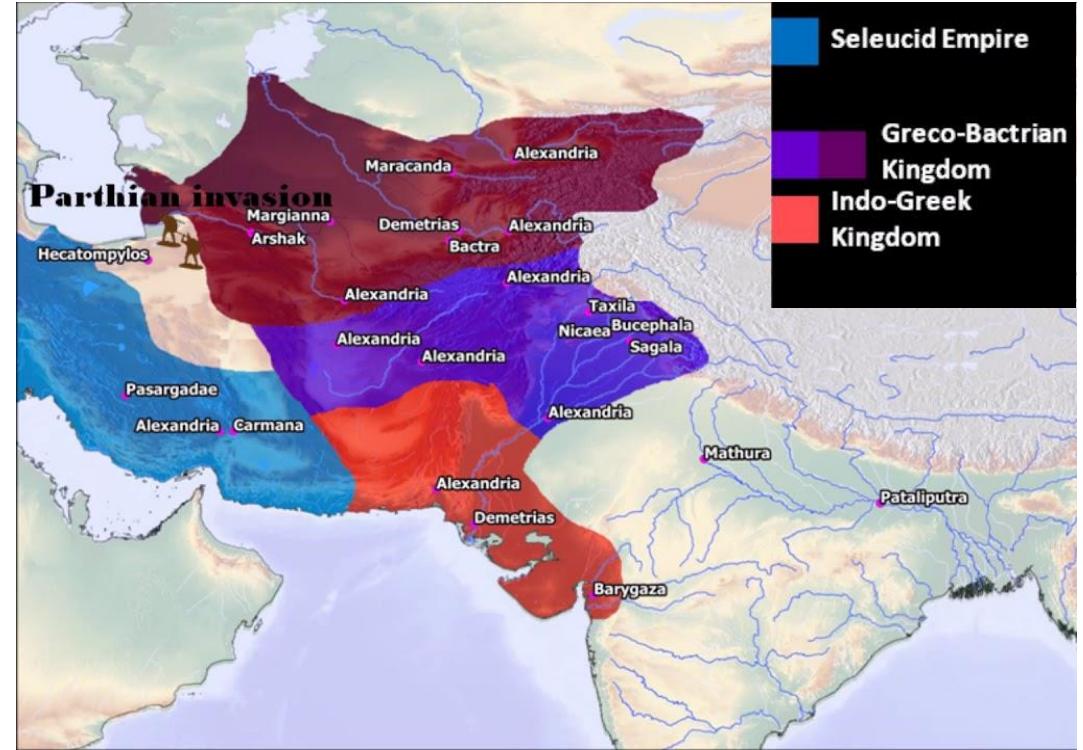
Following his conversion, Aśoka erected a series of pillars and rock inscriptions (*red dots on map*) throughout the empire proclaiming a generalized, nonsectarian Dharma loosely based on Buddhist morality.





## 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)

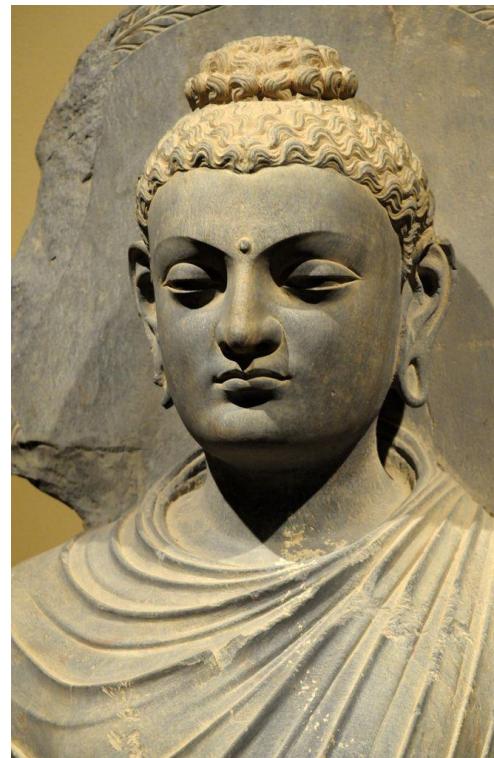
Around 120 BCE the Kushans (Kuṣāṇa), a Yuezhi people, migrated south to Bactria and Gandhara from what is now the Chinese province of Xinjiang and supplanted the Greco-Bactrians. The Kushan Empire adopted the Greek alphabet and was an agent of Hellenic culture.

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.

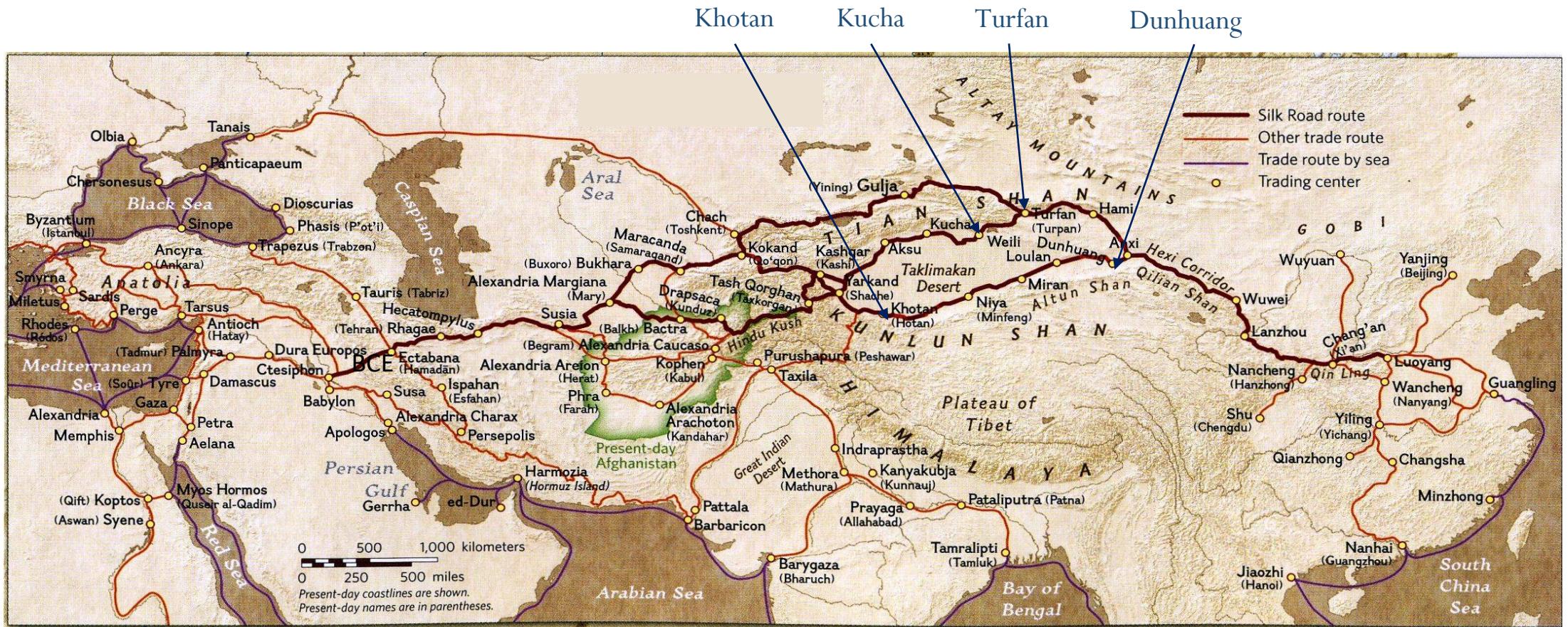


# Images of the Buddha in Gandhāran (Greco-Buddhist) Art, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>d</sup> c CE

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

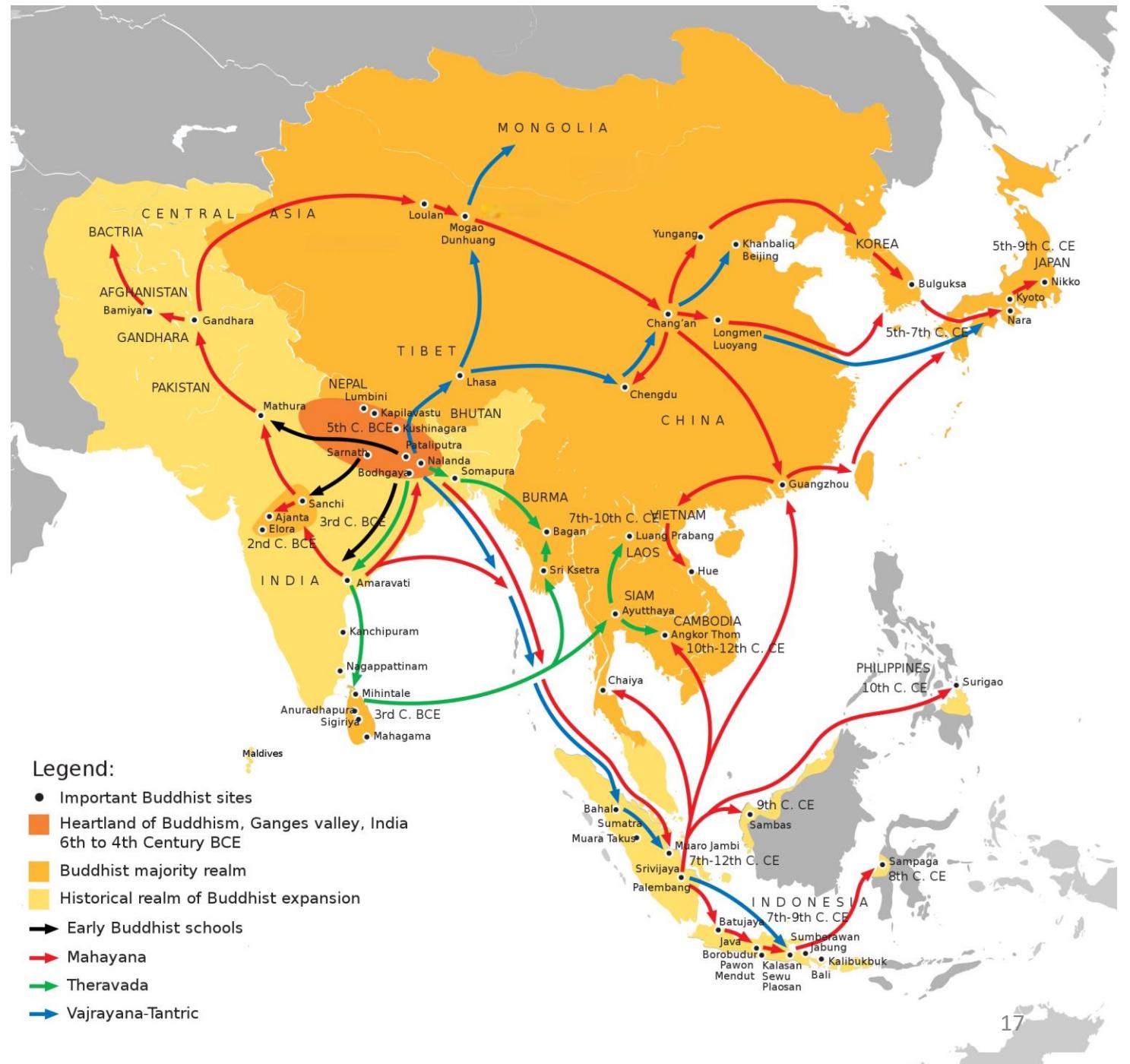


# The “Silk Road” ca. 300 BCE—100 CE



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



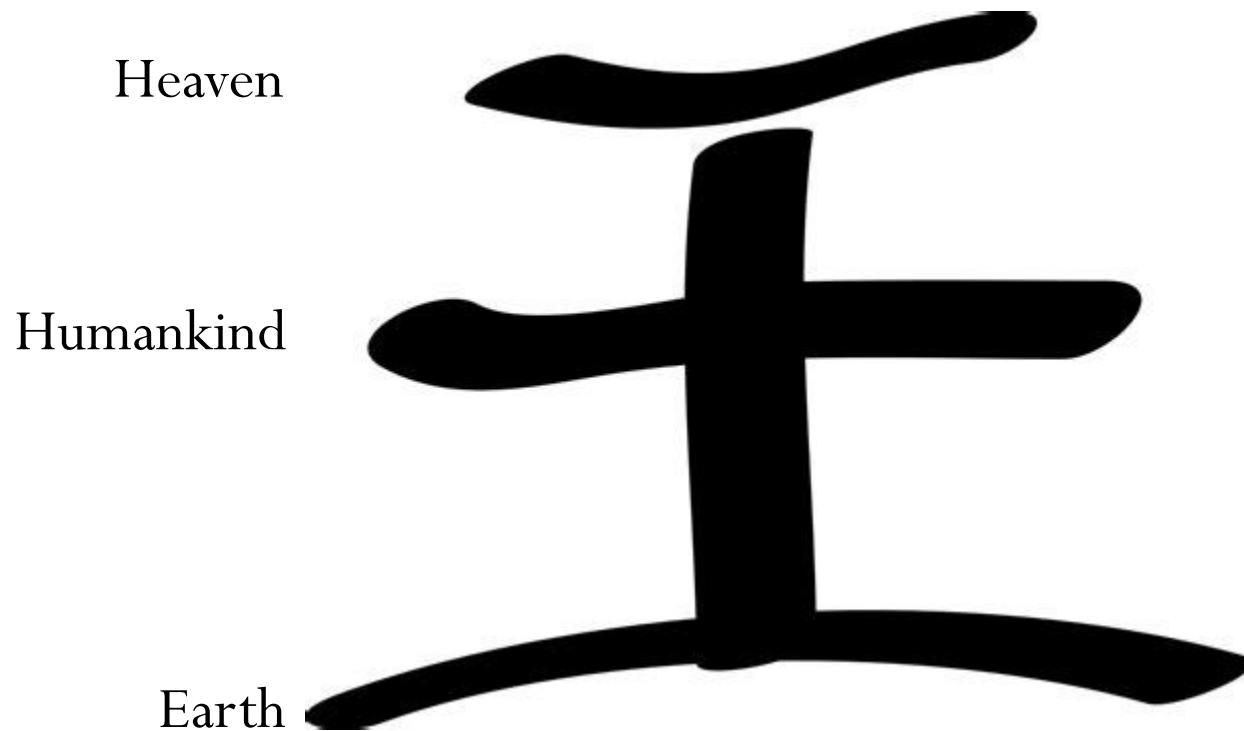
## Lecture Two

# Chinese Religion at the Beginning of the Common Era

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Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

*Wang* = “King,” “Emperor”



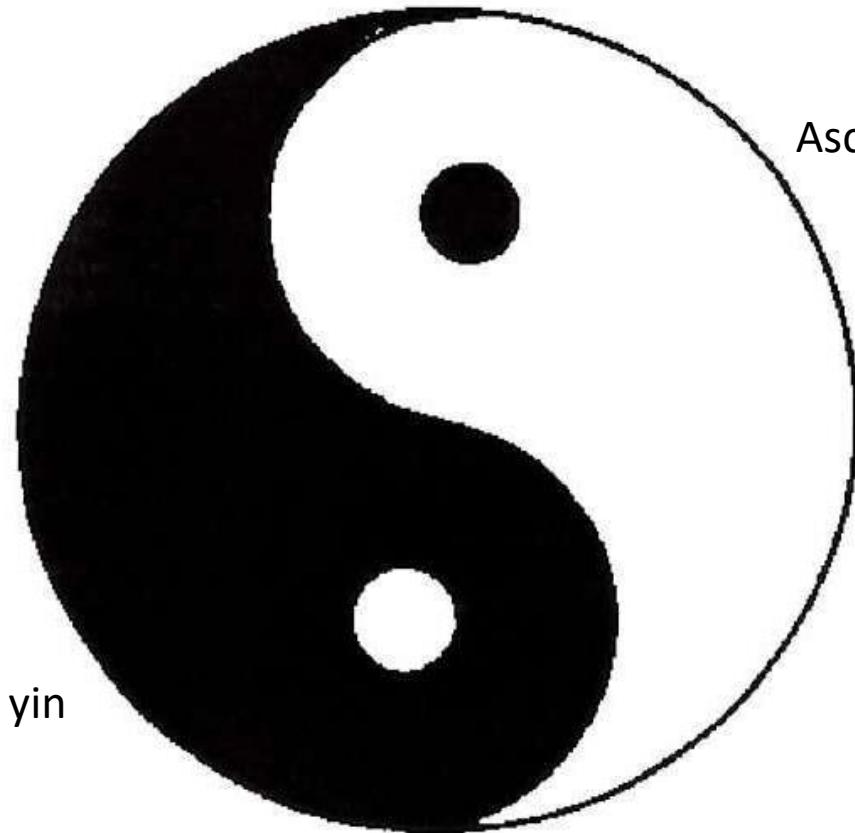
The Emperor (*vertical line*) is a “cosmic pivot” connecting Heaven, Earth, and Humankind

# 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



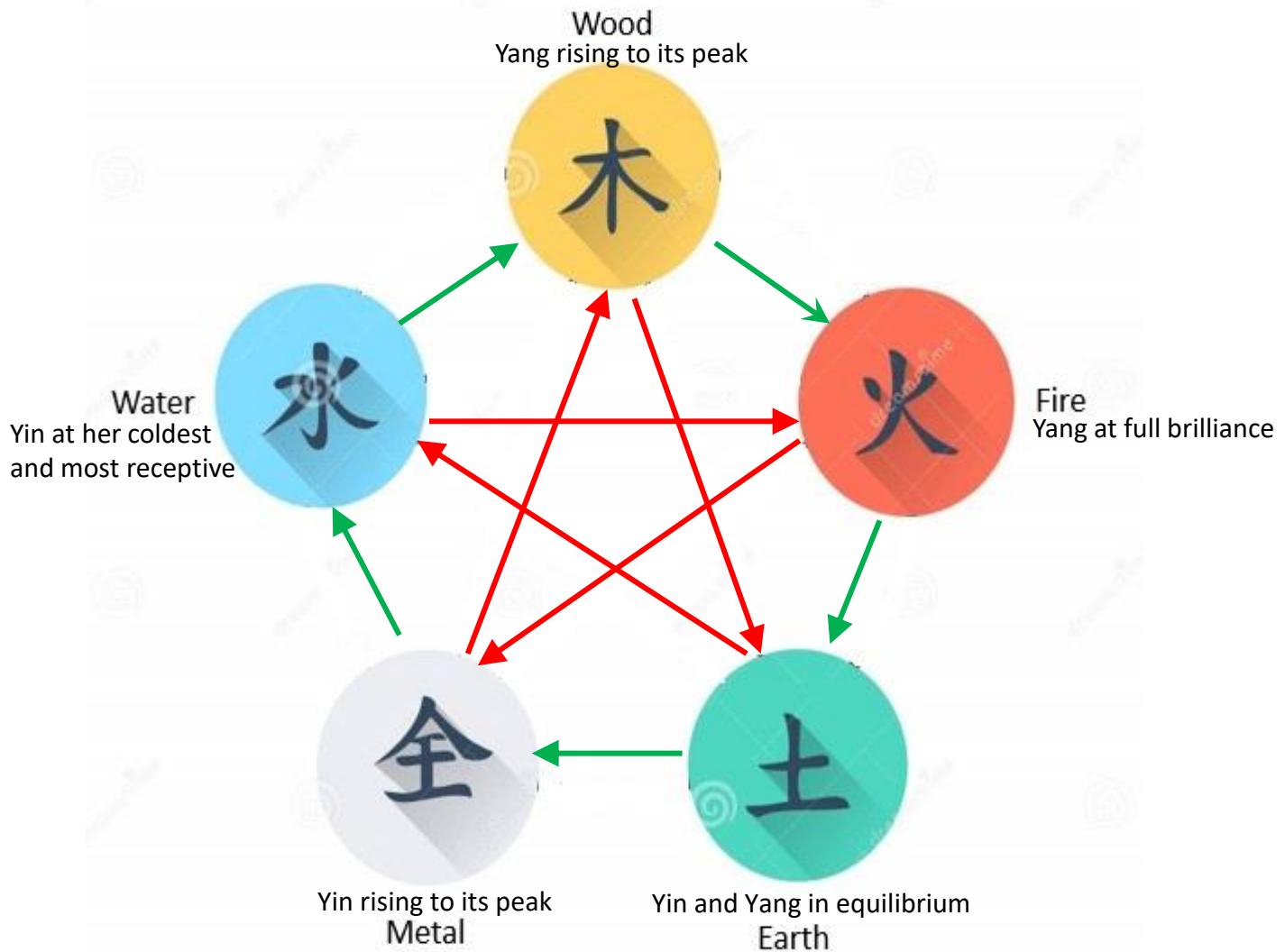
# *Wuxing*

## 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								
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

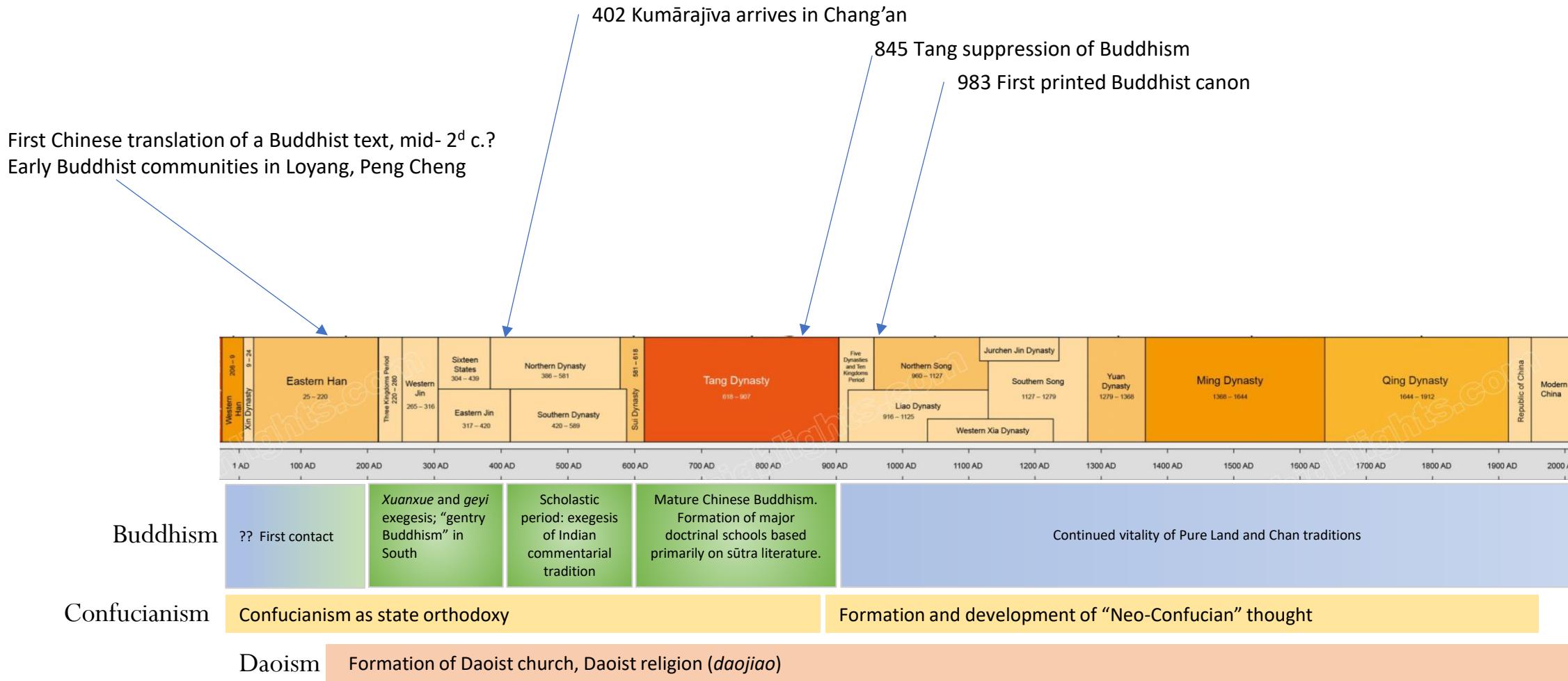
## Lecture Three

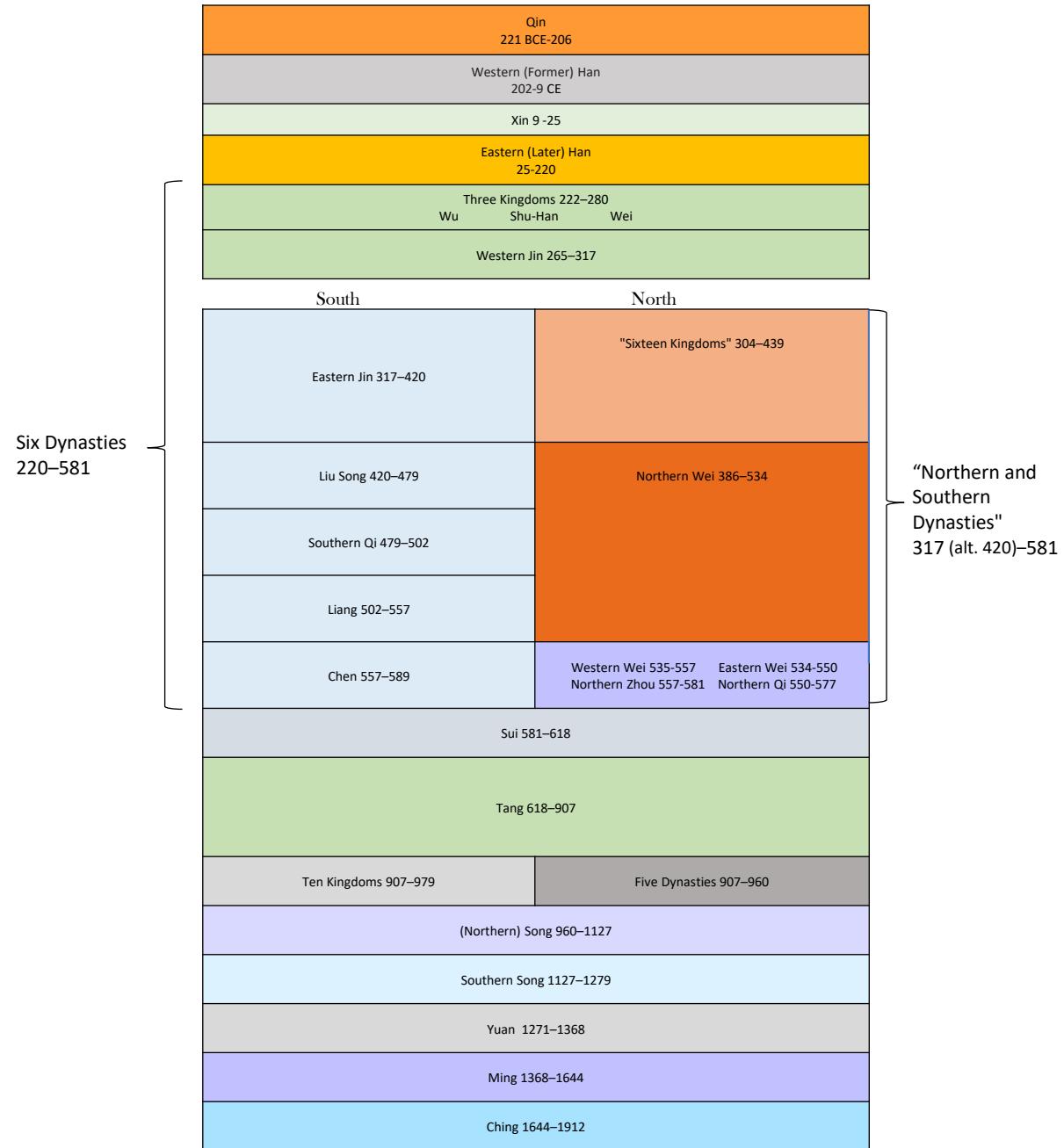
# How Buddhism Became Chinese I: Transmission and Appropriation

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Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

# A Periodization of Chinese Buddhism



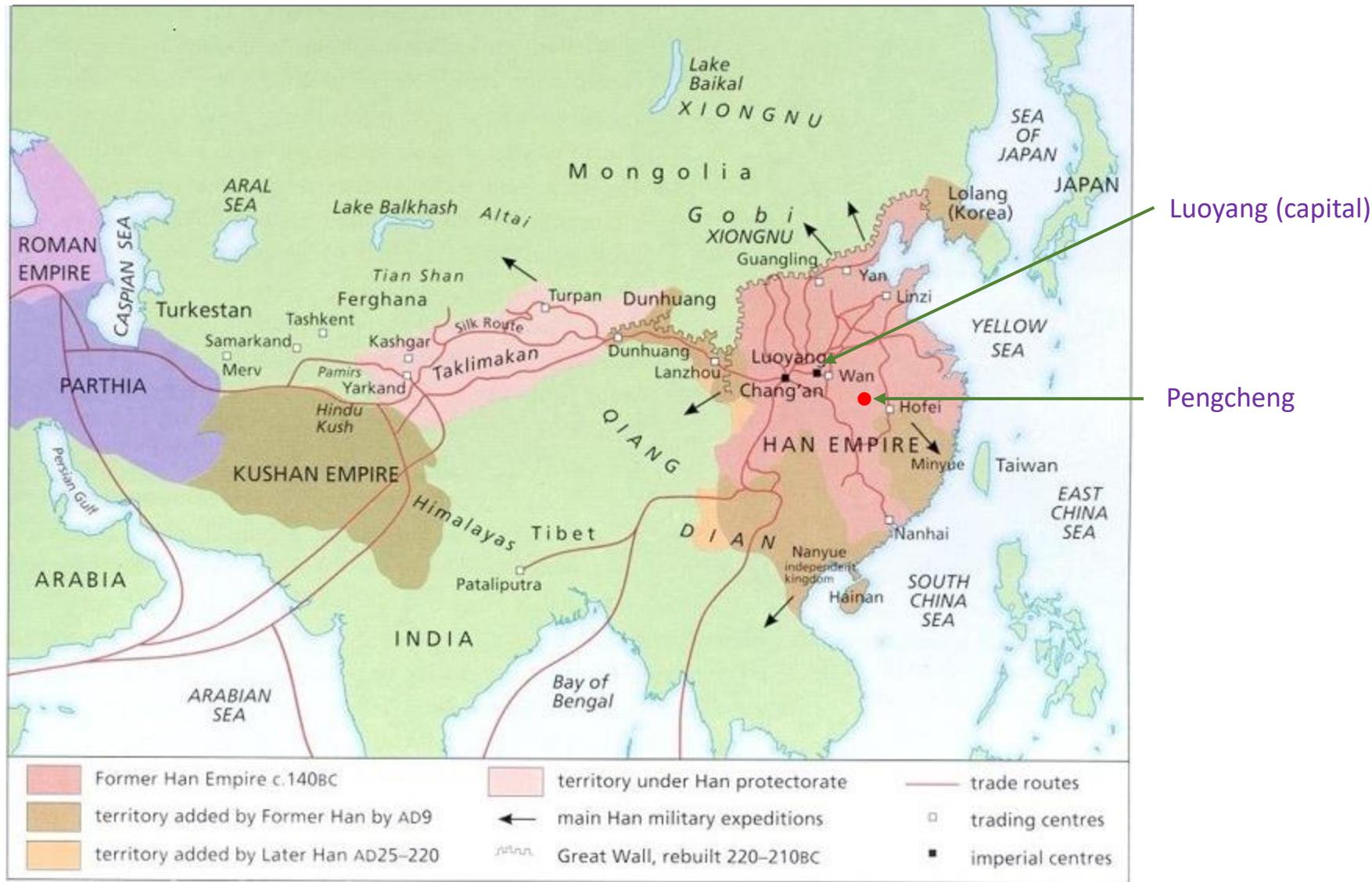


# Imperial China

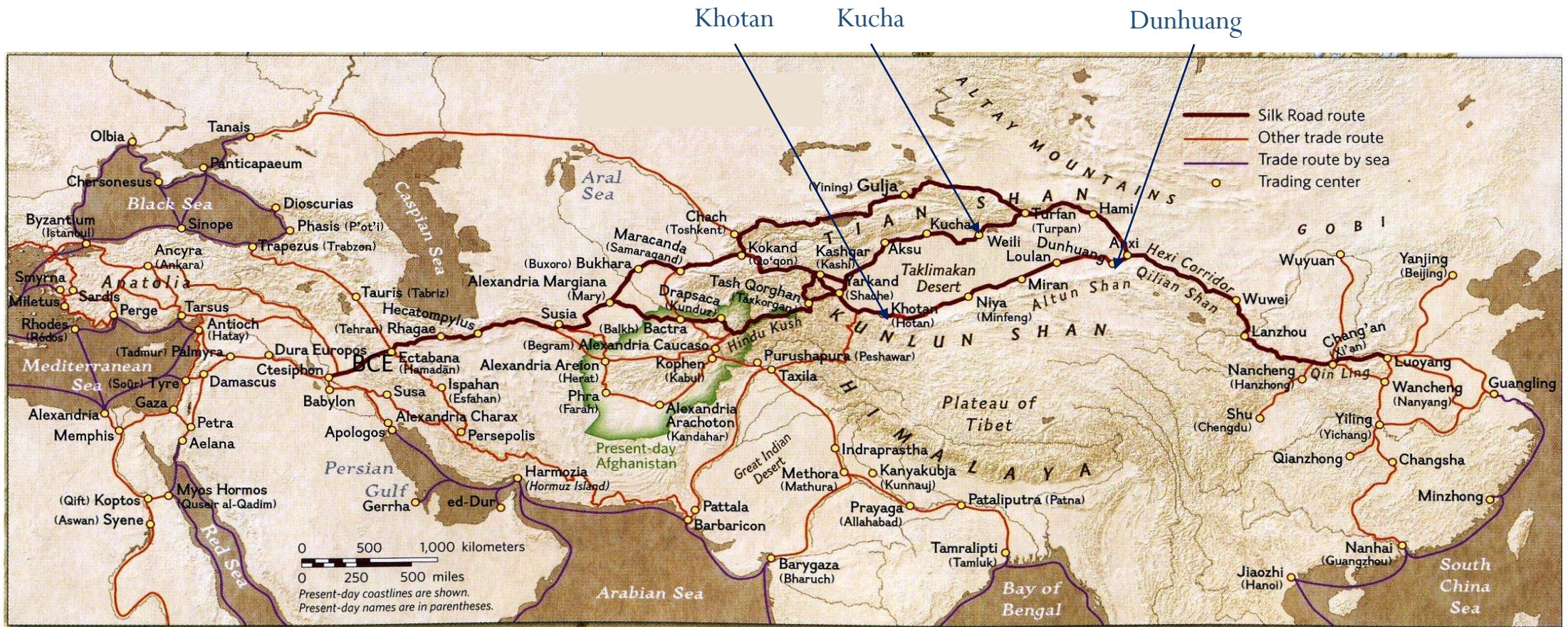
## Table of Dynasties

(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.

# 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	

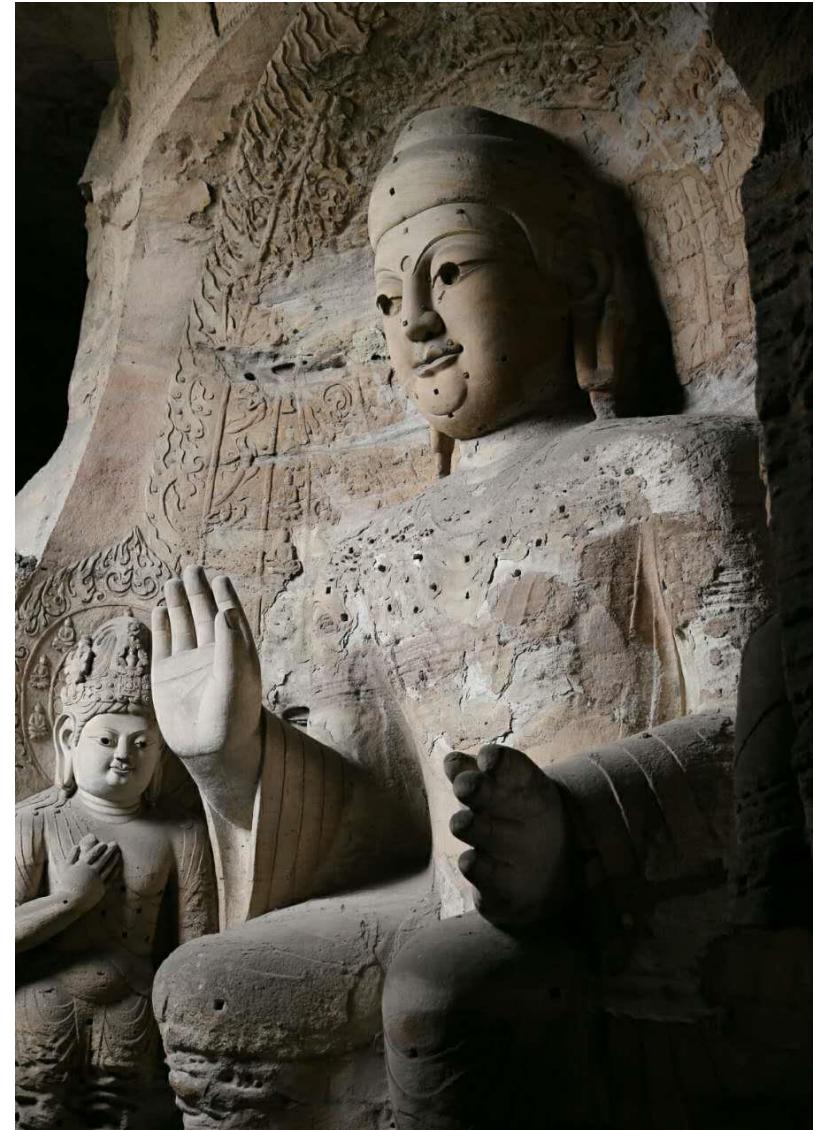
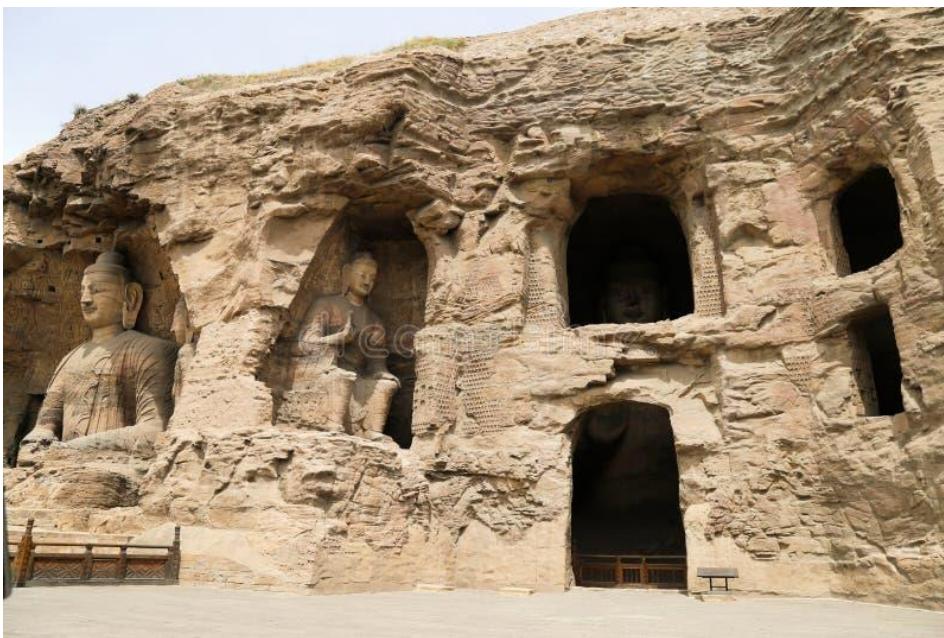
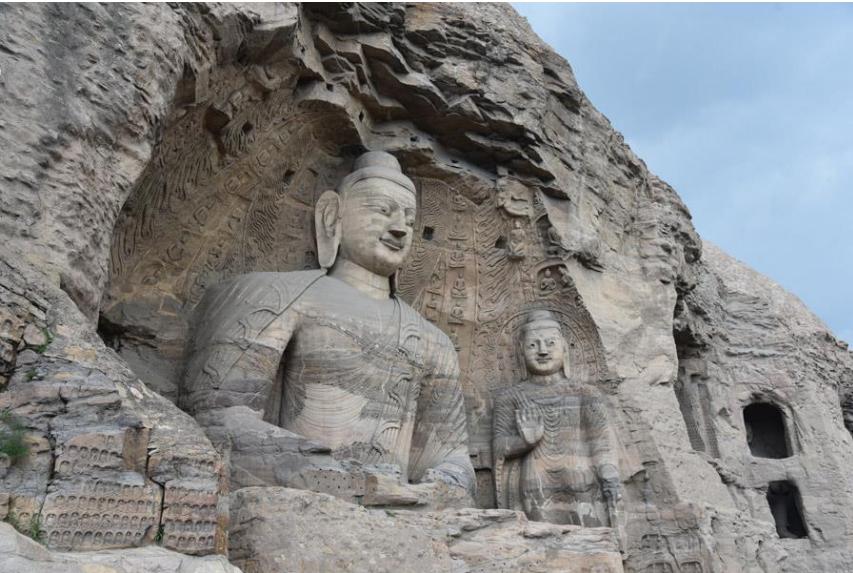
## “China” ca.471

# “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.

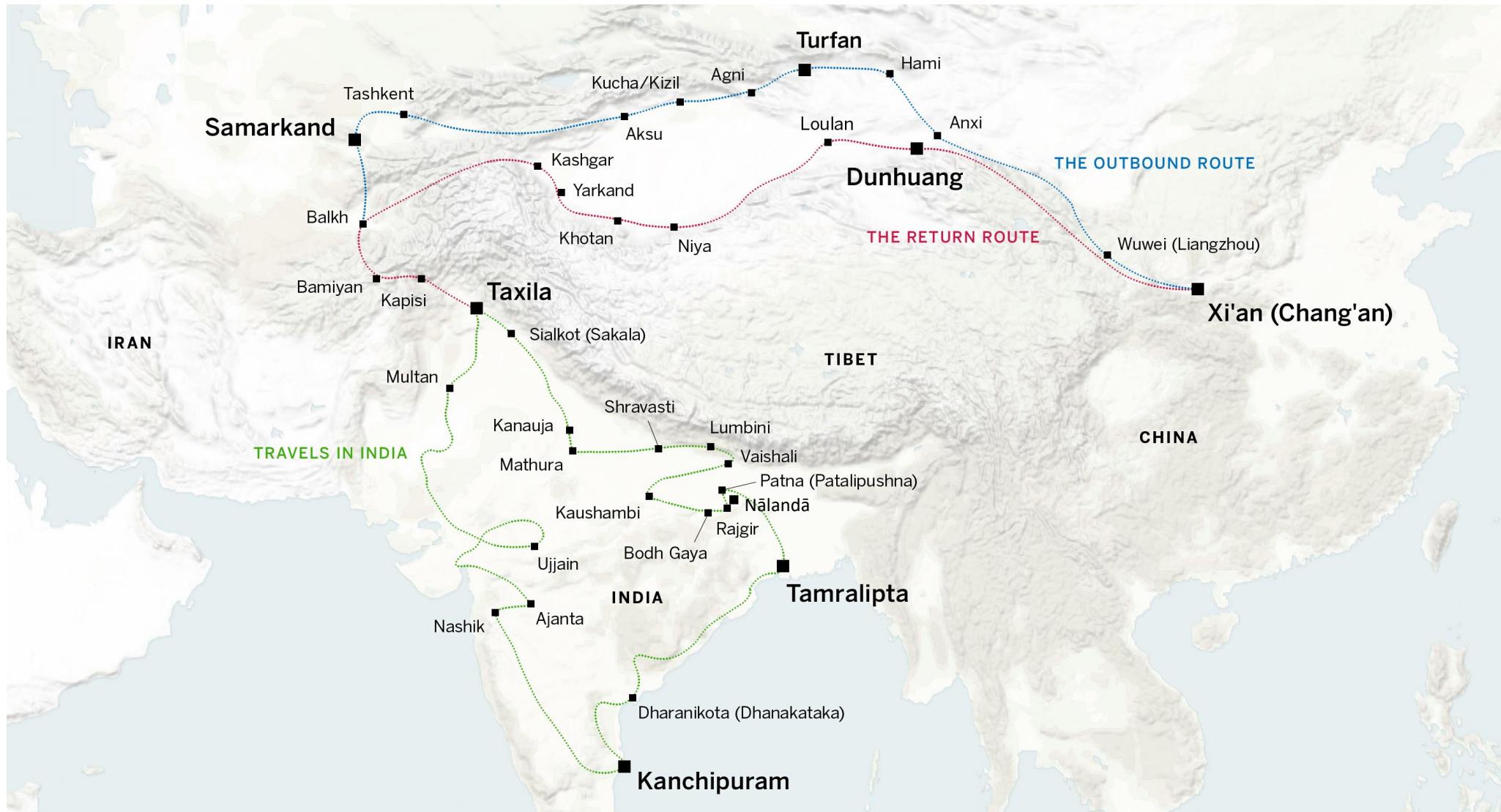
# Lecture Four

## How Buddhism Became Chinese II: The Tang Dynasty

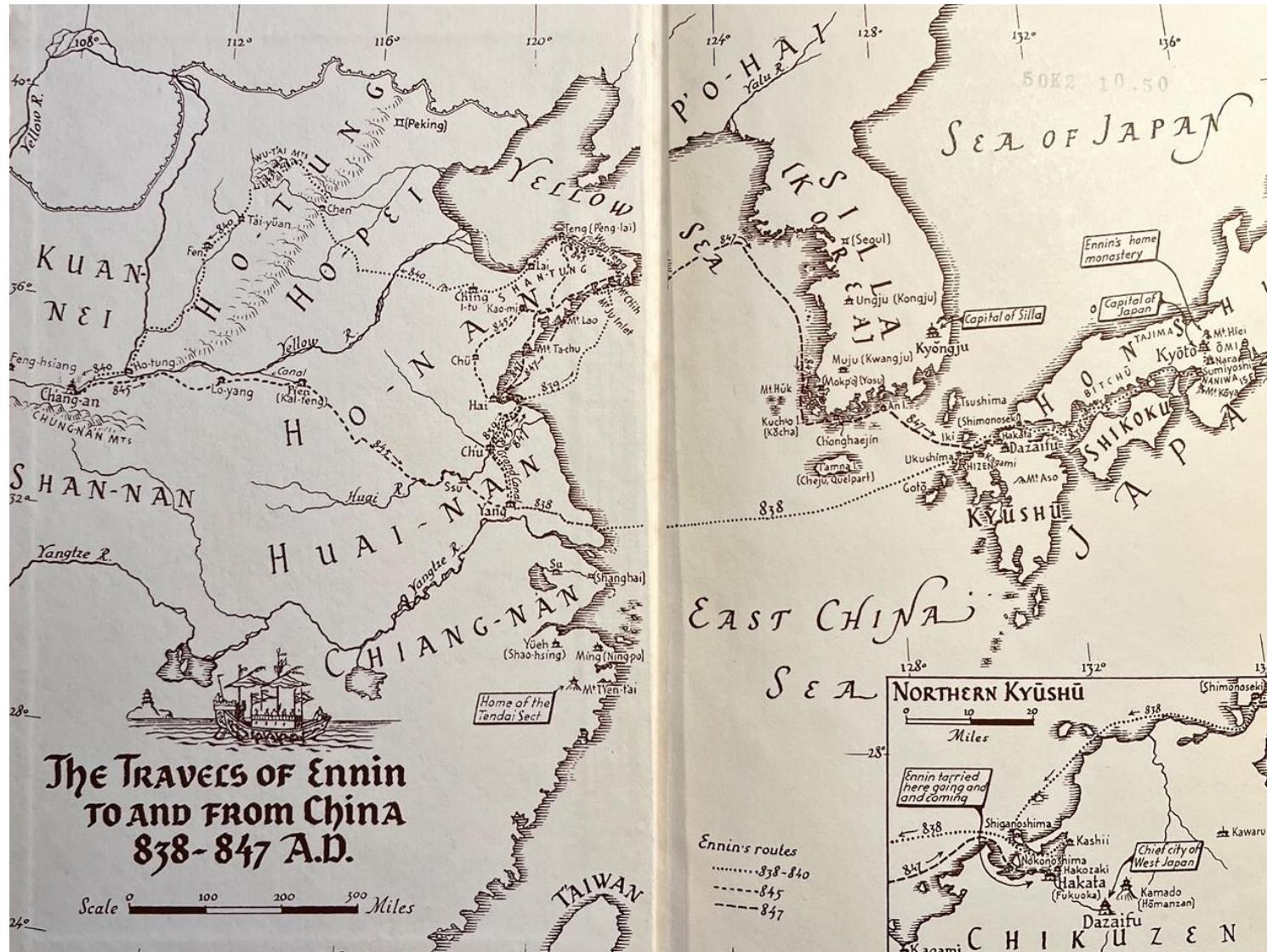
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Foundations of Chinese Intellectual History II: Chinese Buddhism

# Xuanzang's Pilgrimage to India, 627-645

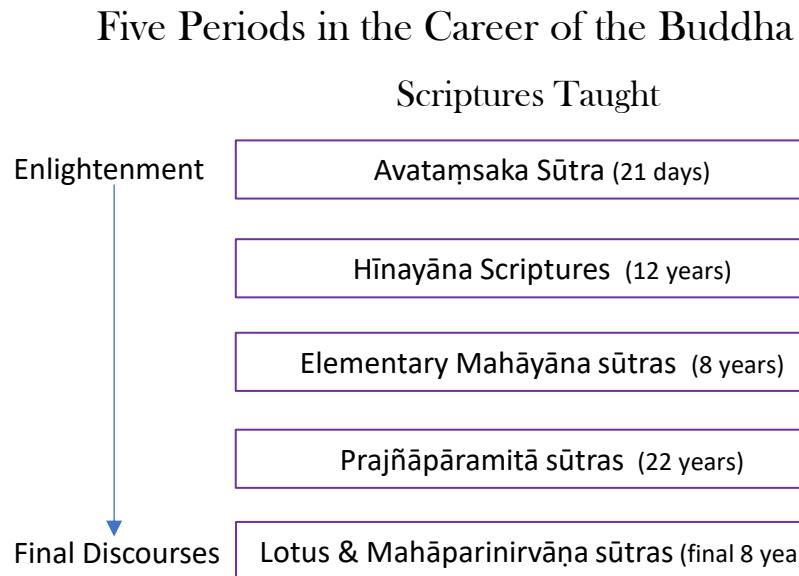


# Ennin's Pilgrimage to Tang China, 838-847



# “Five Periods and Eight Teachings”

## Zhiyi’s Synthesis of Buddhist Doctrine



## Eight Teachings

### Method of Instruction

#### Sudden

The complete exposition of the Dharma for those of the highest spiritual capacity, without resort to *upāya*. The Avatamsaka Sūtra.

#### Gradual

A gradual exposition of the Dharma, beginning with Hīnayāna teachings, then elementary Mahāyāna, and then the doctrine of *prajñāpāramitā*.

#### Secret

As the Buddha preaches, each audience member hears a different message, tailored to his or her own degree of spiritual sophistication. Audience members are unaware of each other and believe they are the sole recipient of the teaching.

#### Indeterminate

As in Secret, except that audience members are aware of each other.

### Nature of the Teachings

#### Hīnayāna Teaching

“Initiatory” doctrines such as *anātman* and *pratītyasamutpāda*.

#### Common Teaching

Teachings common to all three vehicles—*arhat*, *pratyekabuddha*, and *bodhisattva*.

#### Distinct Teaching

Teachings suitable only for *bodhisattvas*.

#### Round Teaching

The teachings of the Lotus Sūtra.

## Lecture Five

# Buddhist Devotionalism: Pure Land Buddhism and Popular Piety

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



Central stūpa (reliquary) of Vairocana

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

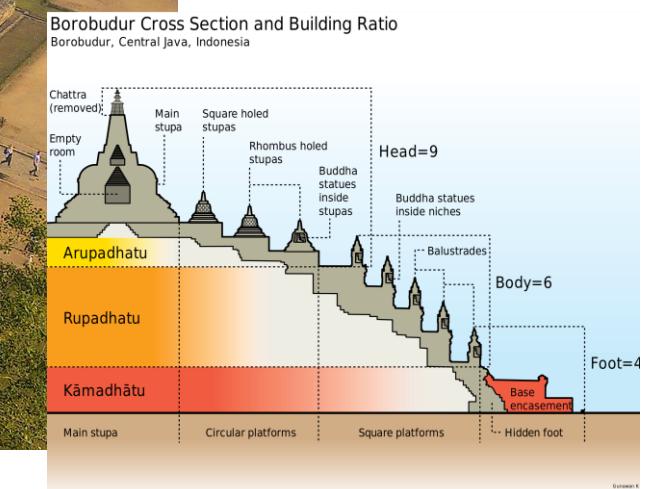
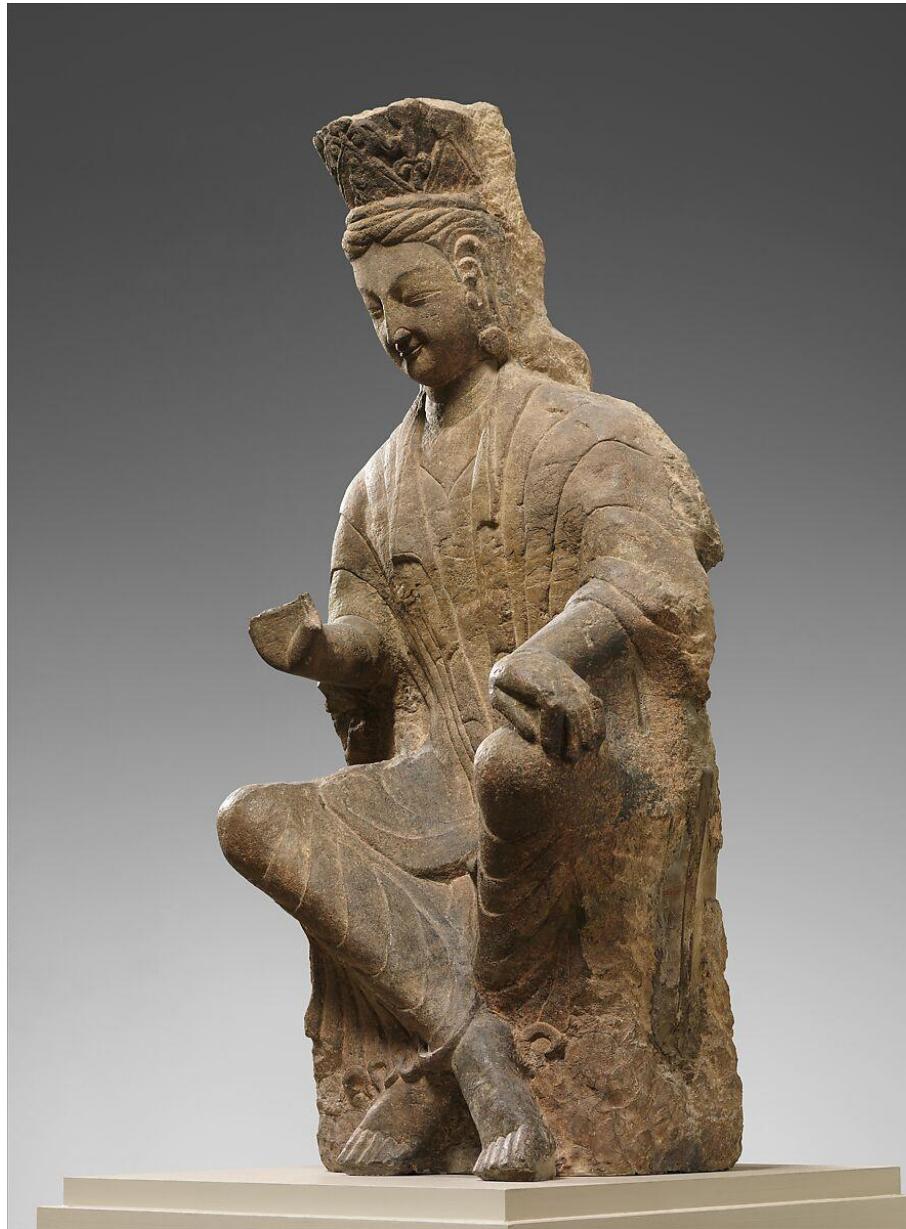


Image of Maitreya at Cave 25 (?),  
Yungang grottoes, ca. 470-80  
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)





Amitābha's Pure Land, Sukhāvatī, as depicted in the *Taima Mandala*, 14<sup>th</sup>-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 His or Her Death (Vow 19)

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

13<sup>th</sup>-century, unidentified Chinese artist