

Chapter 12

Iran, India, and “Global” Trade

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Chapter Chronology

c. 238 B.C.E.–224 C.E.

Parthian Empire in Persia

c. 50–300 C.E.

Kushan Empire in Central Asia and India

c. 100–125 C.E.

Kanishka the Great

c. 200–500 C.E.

Ajanta caves constructed and painted

c. 224–637 C.E.

Sassanian Empire in Persia and Central Asia

320–480 C.E.

Gupta Dynasty in India

c. 406 C.E.

Arrival of Fa Xian in India

c. 500–c. 800 C.E.

Formative period of caste system

711 C.E.

Muslims begin to invade northwestern India

c. 700–1000 C.E.

Hindu revival and decline of Buddhism in India

Late 1100s–1400s C.E.

Delhi sultanate in North India

New Persian Empires (Slide 1 of 2)

Parthian Empire (238 BCE-224 CE)

- Iranian tribe seized Persia and Mesopotamia from Seleucids
- Stopped Roman expansion with superior cavalry
- Profited from location on the Silk Road, trade relations with China
- Religion
 - Zoroastrianism preferred
 - Buddhism, Judaism, Nestorian Christianity also tolerated
- State loosely organized, may have encouraged revolt

New Persian Empires (Slide 2 of 2)

Sassanian Empire (224-661 CE)

- Policy of territorial expansion
 - Empire once included northern Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Persian Gulf
 - Led to constant conflicts with Roman/Byzantine Empire
- State more highly centralized
- Zoroastrianism made official state religion
- Continued to profit from the Silk Road
- Developed their own silk weaving

Kushan Empire

- Dominated much of Northern India, Afghanistan, Central Asia in 2nd and 3rd c.
- Xiongnu forced them out of homeland in Turkistan
- Kushans promoted trade and commerce and helped spread Buddhism to central Asia and China
- **Kanishka the Great** (78-125) – patron of Buddhism
 - Held Fourth Buddhist Council to settle doctrinal issues
 - Secured crucial areas on Silk Route
 - Minted gold coins, essential to merchants and pilgrims



Long-distance Trade and the Buddhist Community

- Mahayana Buddhism benefited long-distance trade
 - Facilitated capital lending and investment
 - Located **sanghas** (monasteries) at strategic points to provide safety and shelter for merchants and pilgrims
- Trade facilitated spread of Buddhism
 - Kushan Buddhists accompanied caravan trade to Loyang and Nanjing where they translated sacred texts into Chinese and won converts
 - Later Chinese pilgrims (Fa Xian, Xuan Zang) traveled to visit shrines, discuss scriptures
 - Images of **bodhisattva Avalokitesvara**, savior to travelers, proliferated along trade routes and on coins

The Gupta Dynasty (320-480)

- Rebirth of Hindu culture
- Merchants and emigrants spread Hindu theology and Sanskrit literature to southeast Asia
- Prosperous, orderly society with strong king, according to Fa Xian, Chinese Buddhist diarist
- Limited first-hand knowledge of Gupta period
 - Indians did not keep historical records until later
 - Oral, not literary tradition – they memorized texts and poetry



Economic and Cultural Progress

- Villagers farmed small plots devoted to rice cultivation
- Control, distribution of water -- source of conflict
- Arts flourished
 - Impressive architecture and sculpture
 - Kalidasa -- great Sanskrit playwright
- Notable achievements in math and science
 - Concept of zero
 - “Arabic” numbers
- Medical sciences developed significantly



Political Fragmentation South: Hinduism and Buddhism

- South India never part of the Gupta Empire
 - Not affected by steppe invasions
 - Contact with foreigners by peaceful trade
 - Languages unrelated to Sanskrit
- Political history of south largely unknown
- Culture strongly influenced by Hinduism and Theravada Buddhism
 - Spread to Southeast Asia
- Buddhist and Hindu architecture, sculpture flourished
 - Stupas
 - Stone sculptures
 - **Ajanta caves** – interior paintings inspired by legends, religious stories



Political Fragmentation North: Islam Comes to India

- Arabs conquered Indus Valley, 711
- Peaceable trade in coastal areas
- Mahmud al-Ghazni led Turks on raids north to seize booty, 1001-1030
- Delhi sultanate set up by Turks and Afghans, 1192
- Muslims merchants took back Indian knowledge of algebra and astronomy
- Buddhism disappeared from India (its birthplace) due to revitalized Hinduism and Muslim antagonism

Hindu Doctrines in the Classical Age

- Vedas – epic poems, Aryan origin, **Rigveda** most significant
- **Upanishads** - long and short philosophical speculations, poems
- Chief Hindu deities
 - Brahman -- impersonal life force
 - Vishnu -- preserver, incarnated from age to age
 - Shiva -- destroyer
- **Mahabharata** (Great Story)
 - World's longest poem
 - Most popular part was **Bhagavad-Gita**

Development of Caste System

- Sub-castes (jati) multiplied
- Sub-caste members linked by occupation, territory, doctrines
- Could raise or lower status through marriage
- Stratification of society grew stronger by the end of the Gupta period

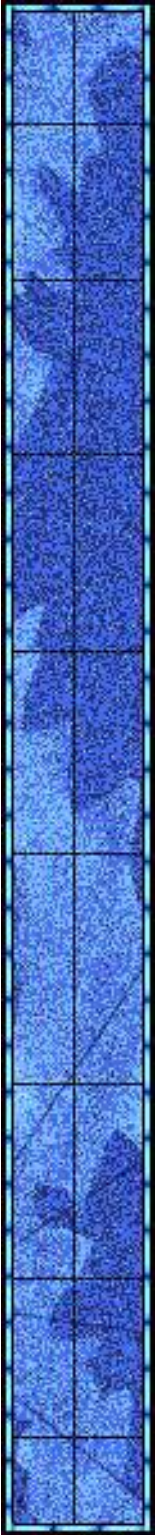
Social Customs

- Extended family
 - Two or three generations lived under same roof
 - Oldest male exercised ultimate authority
 - Polygamy and concubinage
- Marriages arranged early in life
 - Primarily economic and social affair
 - Always married within caste
 - Wife was to bear children, preferably sons
 - Widows not allowed to remarry
 - Expected to remain in perpetual mourning
 - Remained with in-laws who might blame husband's death on her bad karma
 - **Sati** (widow's suicide) sometimes preferable to widowhood



India and East Asia

- Indian colonies established in southeast Asia (6th-13th c.)
 - By invitation rather than conquest
 - Indians remained small minority
- Southeast Asians selectively adopted elements of Indian culture
 - Accepted primarily linguistic, commercial, artistic features
 - Added some Hindu religious, philosophical beliefs – example of **syncretism** (blending of two or more faiths)
 - Buddhism succeeded Hinduism: Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam
 - Islam introduced via merchant trade, after 7th c.



Kingdoms in South-East Asia

Khmer: Kingdom of Cambodia

- **Angkor Wat** largest religious building in the world
 - Originally Hindu, became Buddhist
 - Abandoned for several centuries

Empire of **Sri Vijaya**

- Based on island of Sumatra
- Built large maritime empire by 7th c.
- Expanded Hinduism throughout Indonesia
- Conquered by south Indian kingdom of **Chola**, 1000