

## Chapter 12

### Iran, India, and “Global” Trade

<b>c. 238 B.C.E.–224 C.E.</b>	Parthian Empire in Persia
<b>c. 50–300</b>	Kushan Empire in Central Asia and India
<b>c. 100–125</b>	Kanishka the Great
<b>c. 200–500</b>	Ajanta caves constructed and painted
<b>c. 224–637</b>	Sassanian Empire in Persia and Central Asia
<b>320–480</b>	Gupta Dynasty in India
<b>c. 406</b>	Arrival of Fa Xian in India
<b>c. 500–c. 800</b>	Formative period of caste system
<b>711</b>	Muslims begin to invade northwestern India
<b>c. 700–1000</b>	Hindu revival and decline of Buddhism in India
<b>Late 1100s–1400s</b>	Delhi sultanate in North India



# New Persian Empires

- Parthians 238 BCE-224 CE
  - Iranian tribe seize 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





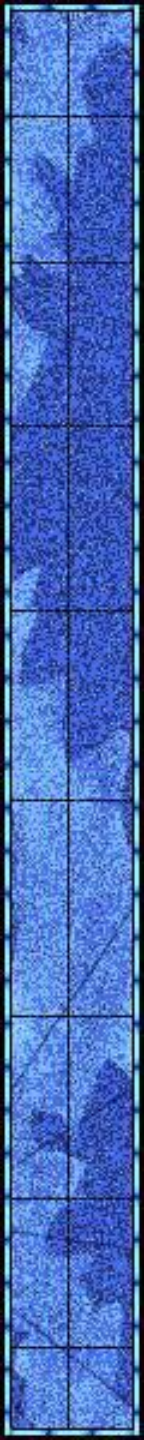
# New Persian Empires

- Sassanians 224-661 CE
  - Territorial expansion leads to constant conflicts with Roman/Byzantine Empire
  - State more highly centralized
  - Zoroastrianism made official state religion
  - Continued to profit from the Silk Road
  - Develop their own silk weaving









# The Kushan Empire and Long-Distance Trade

- Kushan Empire and its greatest emperor, Kanishka the Great (c. 78-125 CE)
  - Nomadic peoples pushed into Bactria by Xiongnu
  - Archaeological research & coin inscription evidence ties Kushan to expansion of Buddhism, long-distance trade
- Fourth Buddhist Council under Kanishka
  - Settled key doctrinal issues
- Extended control over Tarim Basin, monasteries and oases along Silk Road
- Kanishka's reign coincided with spread of Buddhism along Silk Road to China
  - Buddhist tradition regards Kanishka as greatest patrons after Ashoka





# The Buddhist Community

- Expansion of Buddhism created Asia's earliest "community of discourse"
- Bodhisattva on coins illustrate interplay of Buddhism & commerce
- Buddhism more adaptable for merchants than Brahmanism
  - Facilitated usury, capital investment, trade
  - Monasteries at key points along trade routes provided shelter and safety to travelers
- Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara
  - Savior figure
  - Image everywhere, marking chronology of these developments





# The Gupta Dynasty

- Gupta Dynasty, after 320 CE, ushered in Hindu rebirth
- Empire smaller, more decentralized than Mauryans
- First period of Indian history for which we have first hand accounts
  - Fa Xian's traveler's narrative
  - Other sources limited to plays, poetry and folklore
  - Historical records not yet kept
- Empire falls to nomadic invasions from the north 6<sup>th</sup> century







# Economic and Cultural Progress

- Villagers farmed small plots devoted to rice cultivation
- Control, distribution of water source of conflict
- Upsurge of Sanskrit literature – Kalidasa was great playwright
- Notable achievements in sciences: mathematics and astronomy
  - Concept of zero
  - “Arabic” numbers
- Medical sciences developed significantly





Paolo Koch/Photo Researchers, Inc.





# 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
- Great flourishing of Buddhist and Hindu architecture, sculpture
  - Stupas
  - Stone sculptures
  - Ajanta caves – interior paintings inspired by legends, religious stories







*Kushan  
Avalokitesvara  
c. second  
century C.E.*

© The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY



*Chinese  
Avalokitesvara  
c. 500 C.E.*

Vanni/Art Resource, NY



*Java*  
*Avalokitesvara*  
*c. 900 C.E.*



Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, from central Java, c. 9th–10th century (bronze), Indonesian/Musee Guimet, Paris, France/Lauros/Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library



# Political Fragmentation

## North: Islam Comes to India

- Arabs conquer Indus Valley 711 AD
- Peaceable trade in coastal areas
- Mahmud al-Ghazni leads Turks on raids north between 1001-1030 to seize booty
- 1192, Delhi sultanate set up by Turks and Afghans
- Muslims merchants took back Indian knowledge of Algebra and Astronomy
- Muslim conquest ended long decline of Buddhism in India



# Hindu Doctrines in the Classical Age

- Vedas
- Upanishads - long and short philosophical speculations, poems
- Emergence of Bhakti Hinduism
- Chief Hindu deities
  - Braham, 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

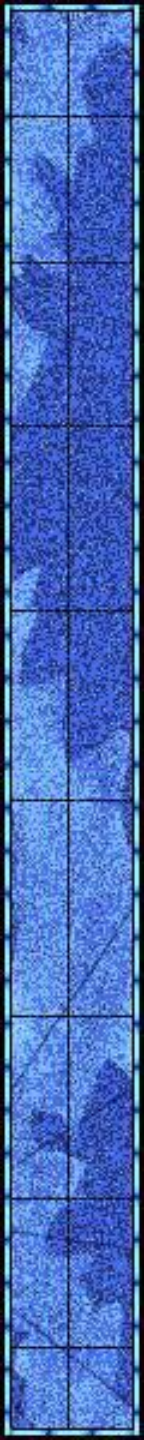
- Extended family
  - Two or three generations lived under same roof
  - Oldest male exercised ultimate authority
  - Polygamy and concubinage
- Marriages arranged early in life
  - Primarily economic and social affair
  - Always married within caste
  - Wife was to bear children, preferably sons
  - 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 sometimes preferable to widowhood



# India and East Asia

- Colonies established in southeast Asia
  - By invitation rather than conquest
  - Spice trade
  - Chinese silk
  - Importance of SE Asia in Indian Ocean trade
  - Indian element functioned as teachers, administrators
  - Indians remained small minority
- Southeast Asians were selective in adopting Indian culture
  - Primarily accepted linguistic, commercial, artistic aspects
  - Elements of Hindu religious, philosophical beliefs were adopted
  - Buddhism succeeded Hinduism: Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam
  - After 7<sup>th</sup> C, Islam introduced via merchant trade





# Kingdoms in South-East Asia

- Khmer: Kingdom of Cambodia
  - Angkor Wat largest religious building in the world
  - Originally Hindu, became Buddhist
- Empire of Sri Vijaya
  - Based on island of Sumatra
  - Large state by 7<sup>th</sup> century
  - Expanded Hinduism throughout Indonesia
  - Conquered by south Indian kingdom of Chola 1000 A.D

