India and China Establish Empires

India’s First Empires

Terms and Names

Mauryan Empire  First empire in India, founded by Chandragupta Maurya
Asoka  Grandson of Chandragupta; leader who brought the Mauryan Empire to its greatest height
religious toleration  Acceptance of the right of people to have differing religious beliefs
Tamil  Language of southern India; also the people who speak that language
Gupta Empire  Second empire in India, founded by Chandra Gupta
patriarchal  Relating to a social system in which the father is the head of the family
matriarchal  Relating to a social system in which the mother is the head of the family

Before You Read
In the last section, you read about the influence of ancient Rome.
In this section, you will read about the Mauryan and Gupta empires in India.

As You Read
Use a chart to compare the Mauryan and Gupta empires.

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE IS ESTABLISHED (Pages 189–192)
How did the Mauryan Empire begin?
In 321 B.C., Chandragupta Maurya used his army to defeat a powerful king in eastern India. He became king, and this started the Mauryan Empire.

Chandragupta then moved northwest. In 305 B.C., he began to challenge Seleucus, one of Alexander the Great’s generals. The two armies fought for several years. Eventually Chandragupta won. For the first time, northeastern and northwestern India were joined under the rule of one person.

Chandragupta was a harsh ruler. He charged a heavy tax on farmers—one-half of the crop they grew each year. He used this wealth to build a huge army. He controlled his government by carefully choosing officials and watching them closely. He split his empire into four provinces, each ruled by a prince. These areas, in turn, were divided into smaller pieces that were run by members of the government. Life in Chandragupta’s court was rich. The palace and capital city were beautiful.

Chandragupta’s grandson, Asoka, took the throne in 269 B.C. He brought the Mauryan Empire to its greatest height. At first he was a warlike king and fought many fierce battles with an enemy to the south. Then he decided to accept the teachings of the Buddha.

Asoka promised to rule in a fair way. He issued laws that urged his subjects to avoid violence. He urged religious toleration. This is acceptance of people’s rights to differing religious beliefs.
He made great roads so that people could travel easily. Soon after Asoka died, however, his empire collapsed.

1. What changes did Asoka make in the Mauryan Empire?

A PERIOD OF TURMOIL (Page 191)

What troubles did India face?

For 500 years after Asoka, India was a land of troubles. In the center of India, a new dynasty—the Andhra Dynasty—dominated the region. In the northwest, many Greeks, Persians, and Central Asians entered the land. They were fleeing the invasions of others. These peoples added new ideas and languages to India’s rich mix of culture. In the south, three different kingdoms fought each other off and on. The people who lived in this region spoke the Tamil language. They are called the Tamil people.

2. Who are the Tamils?

THE GUPTA EMPIRE IS ESTABLISHED (Pages 191–192)

What was life like in the Gupta Empire?

Around A.D. 320, Chandra Gupta I came to power in the north. He was not related to the first emperor. He took the title of king and began to conquer other areas.

His son, Samudra Gupta, followed the same policy. For 40 years, he fought to win new lands for the Gupta Empire. Samudra’s son, Chandra Gupta II, brought the empire to its largest size. He added parts of western India, including some important ports on the Indian Ocean, to his empire. With these, the Guptas were able to take part in the rich trade that connected India, Southwest Asia, and the world of the Mediterranean Sea. The Gupta empire stretched all across northern India.

Most Indians lived in villages and were farmers. Part of each crop that they grew had to be paid to the king each year. Farmers also had to set aside part of each month to work on community resources, such as wells or dams. Craft workers and those who worked in trade lived in special sections of each village, town, or city.

Most families in northern India were patriarchal. They were headed by the oldest male. But in southern India, some Tamil families were matriarchal. This meant the mother was head of the family. Property, and sometimes the throne, were passed through the female side of the family.

The Gupta kings were patrons of the arts. Artists flourished during the Gupta rule. However, after the death of Chandra Gupta II, another wave of invaders moved into India. Over the next hundred years, the great Gupta Empire broke up into several smaller kingdoms. The empire ended about 535.

3. How did the Gupta Empire end?
Trade Spreads Indian Religions and Culture

Terms and Names

**Mahayana**  Sect of Buddhism that offers salvation to all and allows popular worship

**Theravada**  Sect of Buddhism focusing on strict spiritual discipline

**Brahma**  Creator of the world, in Hinduism

**Vishnu**  Preserver of the world, in Hinduism

**Shiva**  Destroyer of the world, in Hinduism

**Kalidasa**  One of India’s greatest poets and playwrights

**Silk Roads**  Caravan routes that crisscrossed central Asia

Before You Read

In the last section, you read about the Mauryan and Gupta empires of India.

In this section, you will learn how trade caused changes in Indian religion and culture.

As You Read

Use a chart to list one or more specific developments of Indian culture.

BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM

**CHANGE**  (Pages 193–194)

**What were the changes in religious thought?**

Over time, the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism became more and more distant from the common people. Priests dominated Hinduism. Followers of the Buddha found it difficult to find the promised goal of release from this world. As new peoples moved into India, they brought new ideas. These ideas had an impact on these religions.

The Buddha had taught that a tough spiritual life was the way to escape from the suffering of the world. But self-denial was difficult for most people. Many people came to worship the Buddha himself as a god, even though he had forbidden it. Some came to believe that other people could become Buddhas themselves. They could do this through good works and sacrifice.

These ideas created a new kind of Buddhism, the **Mahayana** sect. Those who held on to the stricter beliefs belonged to the **Theravada** sect. The new Mahayana approach helped Buddhism become a popular religion. All believers had the chance to be saved. This change caused an increase in art. Buddhists with money built temples and shrines and then paid artists to decorate them with sculptures and paintings.
Hinduism changed, too. By the time of the Mauryan Empire, only priests were involved in many rituals of the faith. For centuries, Hinduism had been a religion of many gods. Now other religions based on only one god were becoming more important. Many Hindus began to emphasize three gods in particular. One was **Brahma**, creator of the world. Another was **Vishnu**, preserver of the world. The third was **Shiva**, destroyer of the world. By devoting themselves to these gods, people began to feel the religion more directly in their lives.

1. What changes did the split in Buddhism bring?

2. What advances did scientists and mathematicians make?

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**THE SPREAD OF INDIAN TRADE** (Pages 195–197)

**How did India’s trade increase?**

Soon Indians learned about the **Silk Roads**. These were caravan routes that crisscrossed central Asia. Indian traders joined in the trade along these routes. Indians traded cotton cloth and animals to China for silk. Traders brought spices from Southeast Asia to India and then sold them to Rome and other western peoples.

This trade was so busy that large numbers of Roman coins have been found in India. The Indians also traded their own cotton cloth in Africa for ivory and gold. They sent rice and wheat to Arabia for dates and horses. They carried out this trade by land and sea.

India’s culture spread beyond India. The art and architecture of many lands in Southeast Asia show the influence of Indian art. Some people adopted Hinduism, and many began to follow Buddhism.

3. In addition to goods, what did India send to different parts of the world?
Han Emperors in China

Terms and Names

**Han Dynasty**  Chinese dynasty that ruled for most of the period from 202 B.C. to A.D. 220

**centralized government**  Government that concentrates power in a central authority

**civil service**  Administrative departments of a government; also, word describing government jobs and employees

**monopoly**  One group’s complete control over the production and distribution of certain goods

**assimilation**  Policy of encouraging conquered peoples to adopt the institutions and customs of the conquering nation

Before You Read

In the last section, you read about the spread of Indian religions and culture.
In this section, you will read about the Han Dynasty in China.

As You Read

Use an outline to organize main ideas and details on the Han Dynasty.

THE HAN RESTORE UNITY TO CHINA (Pages 200–202)

What changes did Han leaders make?

A strong empire also arose in China. The Chinese had been united briefly under the Qin empire. But it fell apart in a period of civil war. In 202 B.C., Liu Bang named himself the first emperor of the Han Dynasty. The Han would rule parts of China for the next 400 years. They set many patterns for Chinese culture for centuries to come.

Liu Bang created a centralized government. Local officials reported to the emperor. The rule of the previous emperor had been very harsh. Liu Bang took a different approach. He lowered taxes. He gave lighter penalties for crimes. Life became easier for the Chinese people.

From 141 to 87 B.C., the emperor Wudi ruled Han China. He made his empire almost the size of modern China. He defeated nomads in the north. He moved troops and settlers to the west. He sent soldiers to the north into modern Korea and to the south to modern Vietnam.

1. What changes did Liu Bang make?

A HIGHLY STRUCTURED SOCIETY; HAN TECHNOLOGY, COMMERCE, AND CULTURE (Pages 202–205)

What advances took place?

Chinese society under the Han Dynasty was very structured. The emperor was at the top. He had a large number of officials.
These officials reached down to the smallest village. They filled civil service jobs. Those who wanted these jobs had to pass an exam. The exam tested them on their knowledge of the writings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius.

To support a large government, the emperor collected taxes. Farmers paid part of the crops they gathered. Merchants paid taxes on the goods they traded. Peasants also had to work one month a year on government projects, such as dams and roads.

Under Han rule, the Chinese created many new inventions. One was paper. Paper made books more available and increased learning.

The Chinese also improved farming by inventing a new two-bladed plow. This change was important because the number of Chinese people had grown greatly. As Han emperors told their people, farming was the most important work. At the same time, several industries became important. The government had a monopoly on, or took complete control of, the mining of salt and making of iron, coins, and alcohol. It also made silk, which was in great demand in other lands.

2. Why were changes in farming so important?

assimilation—making sure that these people learned Chinese ways. They urged the Chinese to marry them.

One group that did not do well in Han China was women. According to Confucius, women were limited to meeting the needs of their husband and children. Some upper-class women, however, were able to become involved in other areas of life.

The Han empire began to have problems. Rich people got richer, while the poor were forced to pay heavy taxes. Members of the court were caught up in plots to gain power. Eventually, the peasants rebelled against their high taxes and poor lives.

A government official named Wang Mang took the throne. He tried to help the poor by taking land from the large landholders. But a terrible flood struck China and the peasants rebelled again. The Han Dynasty was restored when a member of the Han family was put on the throne. This was called the Later Han Dynasty.

For the next few decades, China enjoyed peace and wealth. But the same problems arose. The gap between rich and poor was too great. By A.D. 220, the Han Dynasty had fallen for good.

3. What caused the fall of the Han Dynasty?