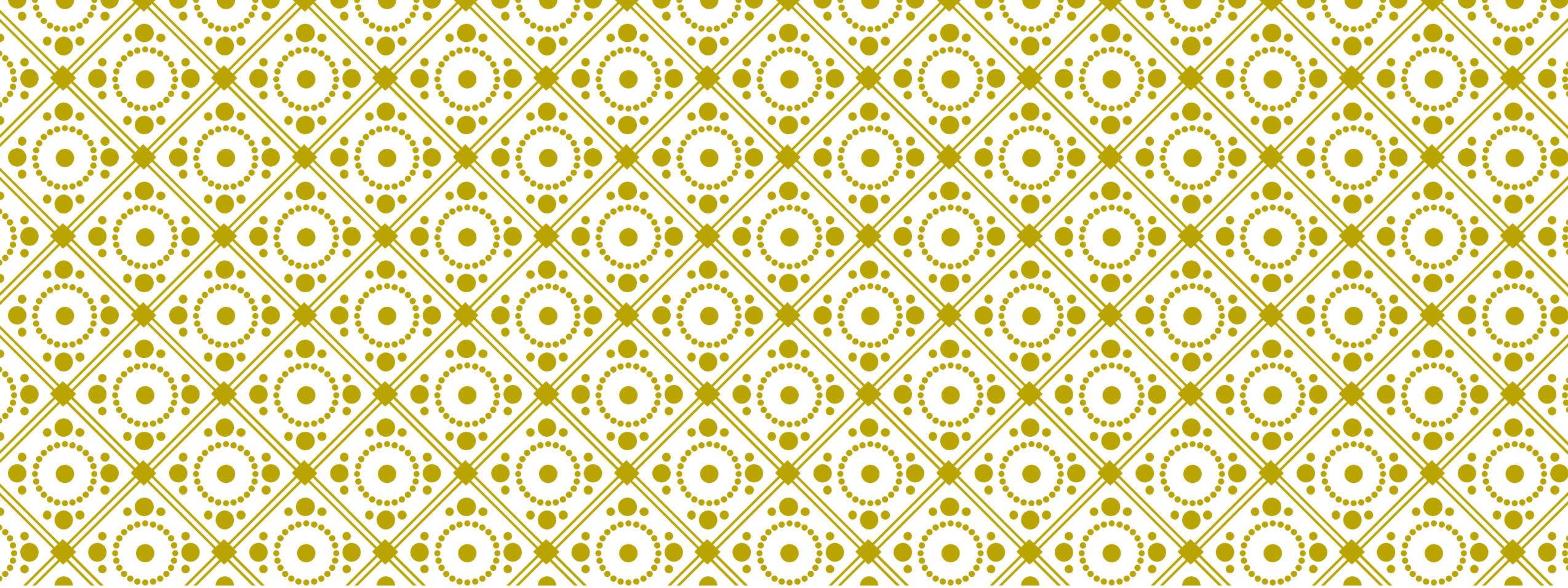


CLASSICAL INDIA

ca. 1500 BCE to 550 CE



POST-INDUS RIVER VALLEY

Beginning of the Vedic Age

POST-HARRAPAN CULTURE

Vedic Period (ca. 1500 BCE to 500 BCE)

- “Aryan Invasion” → migration of nomadic peoples from the Caucasus over the Hindu Kush mountains into the Indus River Valley by 1400 BCE
- Spread across the Indo-Gangetic plain by 1000 BCE

Formerly nomadic, with linguistic ties to Indo-European languages

- Sanskrit develops a written form around 600 BCE



INDO-ARYAN SOCIETY

Our understanding of early Indo-Aryan society comes from the Vedas (“books of knowledge”)

- Understood as revealed texts (*śruti*— that which is heard)
- Include the Rig Veda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda

Settled in small, independent villages or city-states

- Most led by a raja (prince) and a council of elders
- Significant warfare between various city-states

Agricultural society based on the production of

- Cattle, sheep, goats
- Barley, cucumbers, bananas



INDO-ARYAN SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Development of the caste system— a strict social hierarchy with endogamy

Four Varnas (roughly, “colors,” implying social class):

Brahmans— Priestly class

- Could study and teach the Vedas to others, performed religious ceremonies

Kshatriyas— Warriors and ruling elite

- Allowed to study but not teach the Vedas, led the government and army

Vaisyas— Commoners (merchants, artisans, farm owners)

- Not allowed to hear or recite the Vedas, tended crops and animals, made or sold goods

Sudras— Unskilled laborers, servants

- Not allowed to hear or recite the Vedas, worked to serve the other varnas, heavy labor

(Dalits or Untouchables)

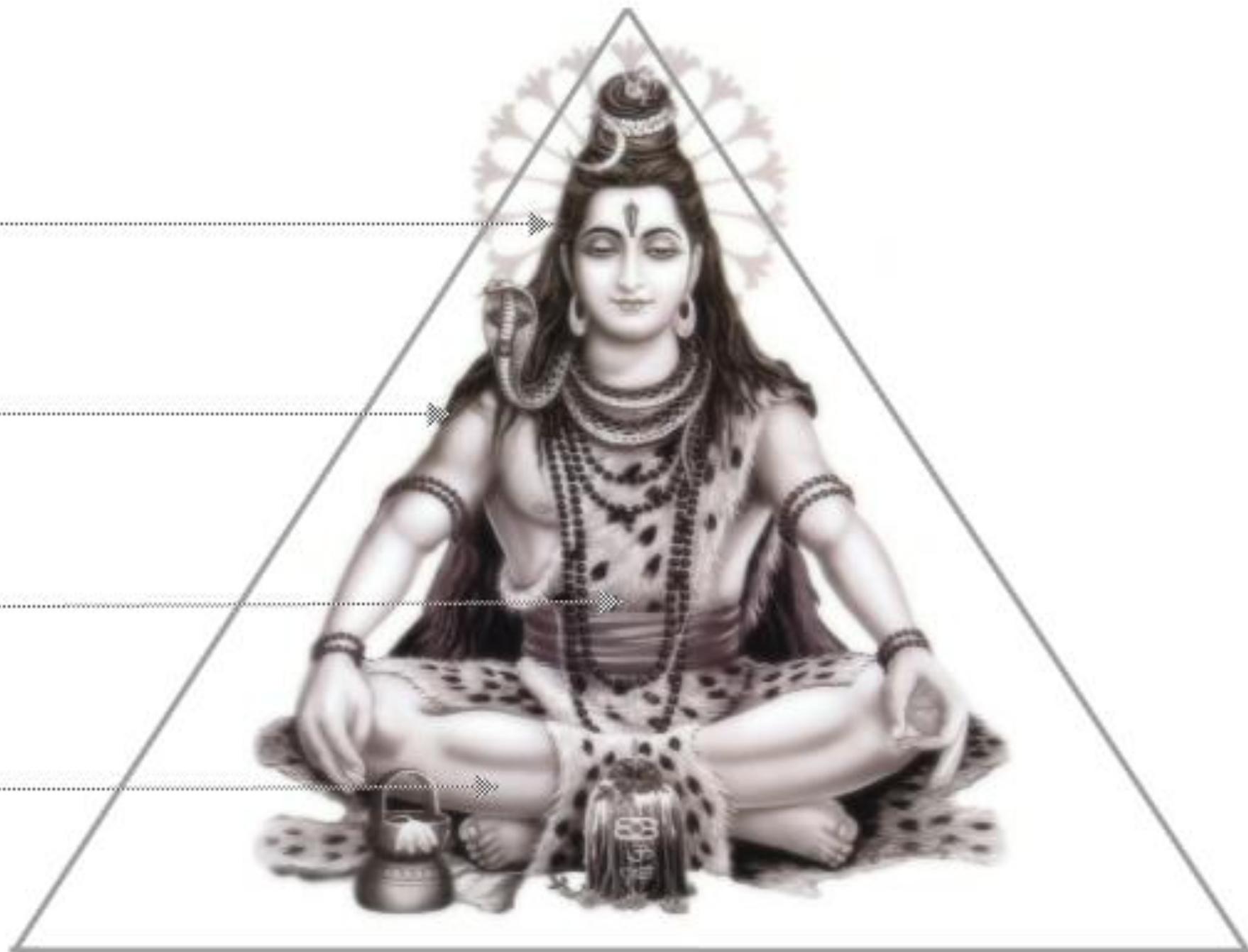
- Not technically a varna— these are people who are entirely outside of the system. Thus, “out-cast.”

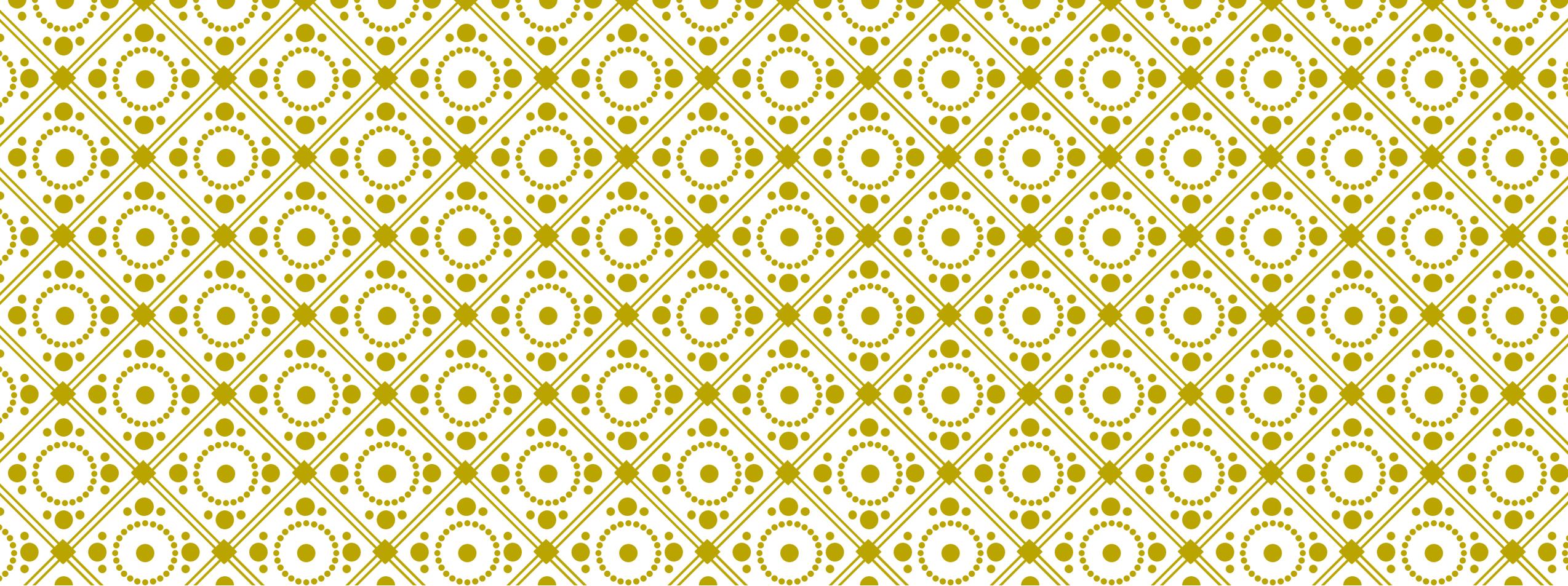
Brahman
Knowledge

Kshatriya
Defense

Vaishya
Sustenance

Shudra
Service





INDO-GRECO PERIOD

500 BCE to 324 BCE. Here comes Alexander the Great.

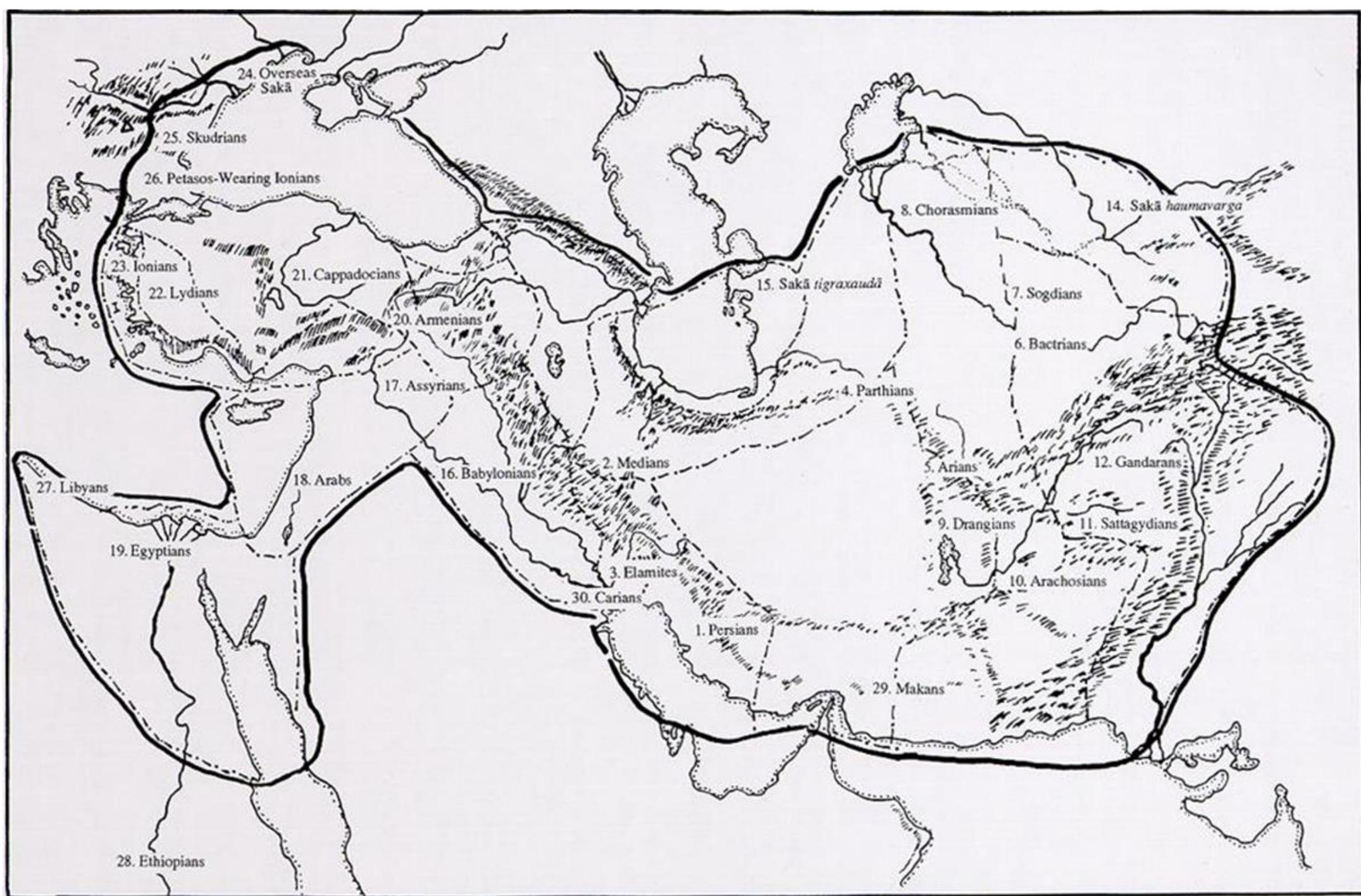
FOREIGN CONQUESTS

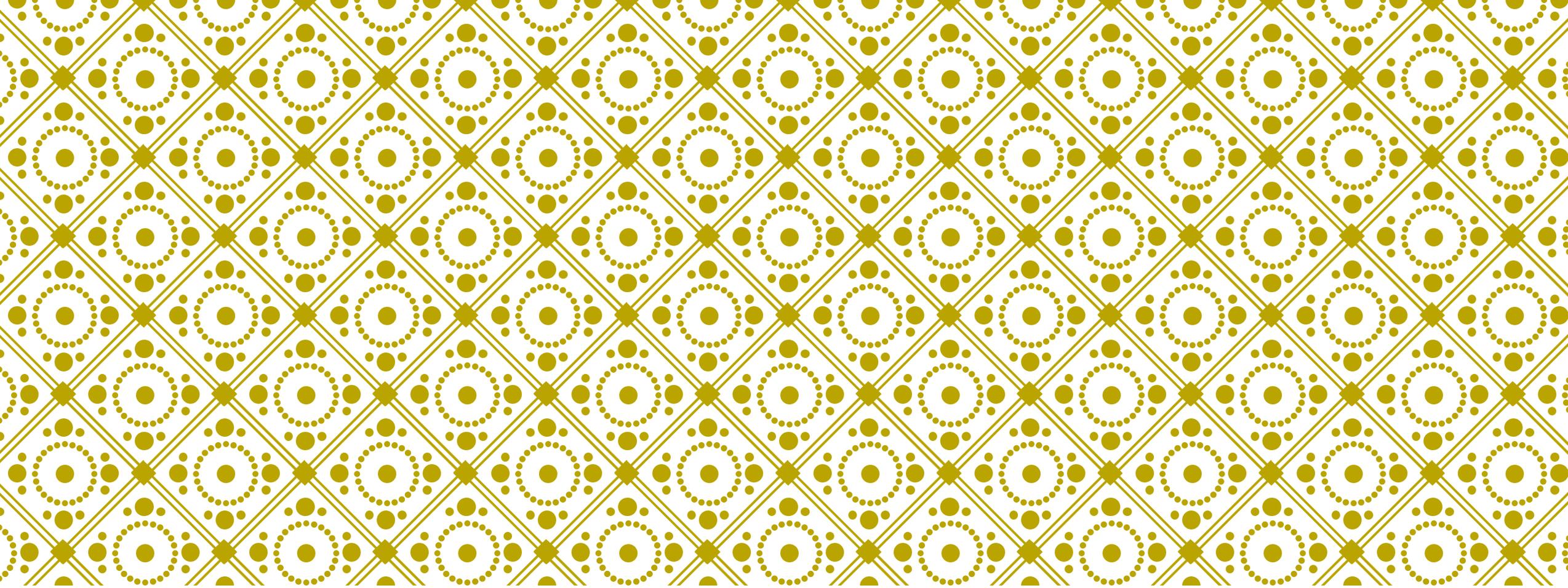
Small, regional kingdoms (mahajanapadas) develop by 500 BCE, begin trading with other civilizations via the growing Silk Roads

- Traded gold, cotton, gems, salt, and spices
- Developed a reputation for wealth

Two waves of foreign occupation controlled parts of the Indus River Valley:

- Persian Empire conquered and occupied the IRV from 516 BCE to ca. 380 BCE
- Alexander the Great (and subsequent Hellenistic Kingdoms) occupied from 340 BCE to 324 BCE.





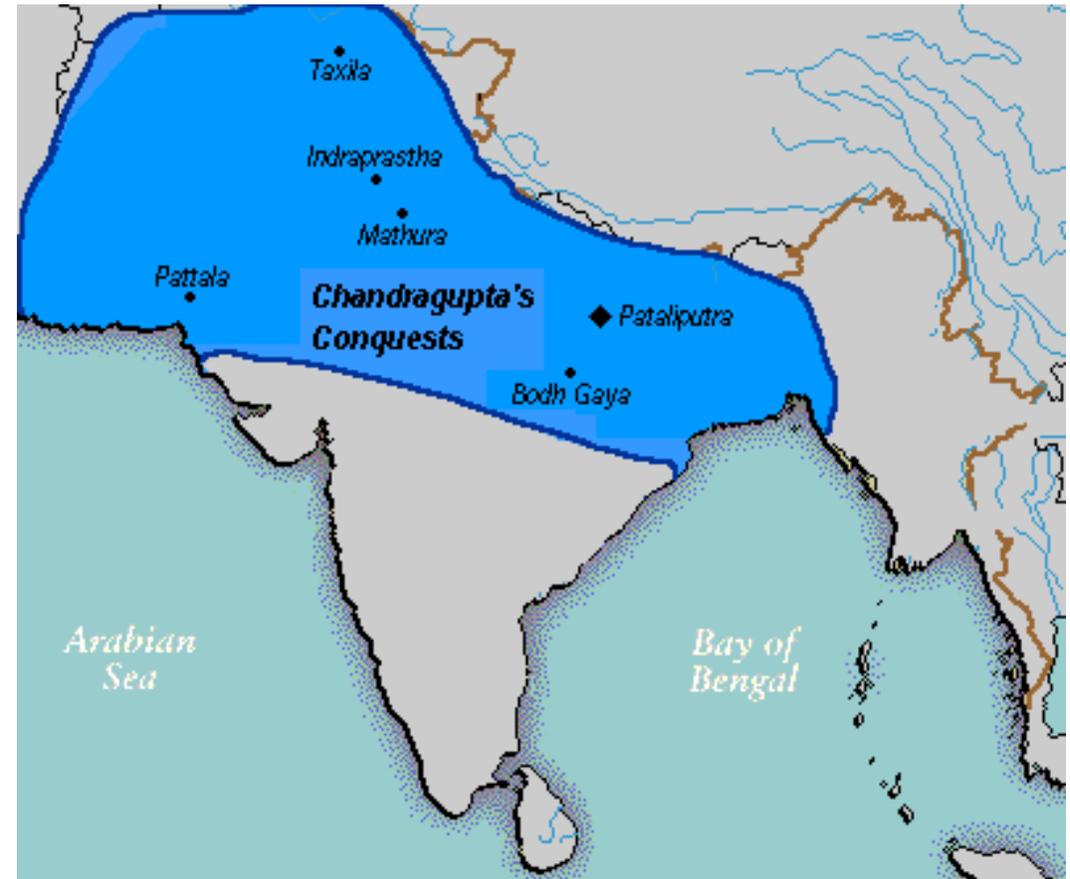
THE MAURYA EMPIRE

324 BCE to 185 BCE. The first great Indian Empire.

MAURYA EMPIRE (324 BCE TO 185 BCE)

Founded by Chandragupta Maurya (r. 324 – 301 BCE)

- Becomes leader of a mahajanapada via military coup d'etat
- Leads his kingdom and several others against the remaining Hellenistic forces and collaborating kingdoms
- By 321 BCE, Maurya controlled most of the Indogangetic plain
- Violent, military leader characterized by extreme paranoia
- Ruling principles were brutally practical— lots of torture, assassinations, intimidates



MAURYA EMPIRE (324 BCE – 185 BCE)

Establishes the Mauryan government systems:

- Empire divided into provinces, each ruled by a royal governor appointed by emperor
- Provinces further divided into districts, each ruled by an official appointed by the governor
- Each district contains individual villages, administered by local leaders (result of caste system)

Chandragupta Maurya abdicates the throne in 301 BCE in favor of his son

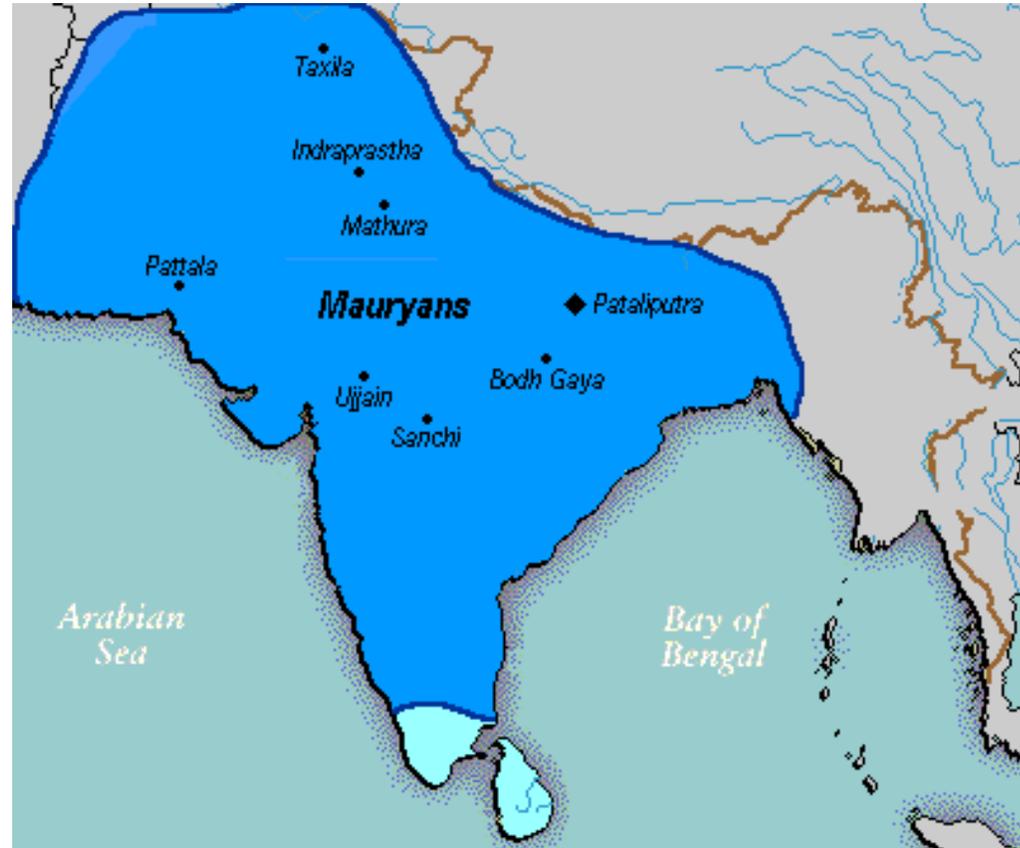
- Converts to Jainism, leaves the empire and goes to live as an ascetic



MAURYA EMPIRE: ASHOKA (R. 269 – 232 BCE)

The grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka initially continued the militaristic takeover of northern and central India

- Converted to Buddhism in 260 BCE after an extremely brutal conquest of the Kingdom of Kalinga
- Sent Buddhist missionaries throughout his empire and to other regions (Persia, Egypt)— leads to spread of Buddhism throughout Asia



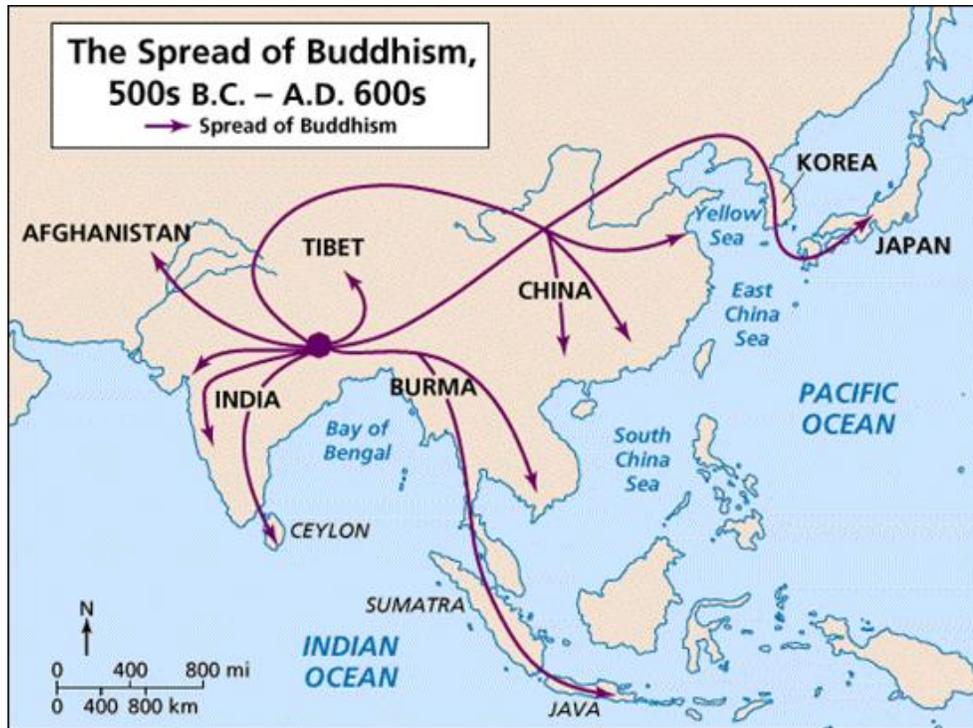
ASHOKA'S REPENTENCE

“What have I done? If this is a victory, what's a defeat then? Is this a victory or a defeat? Is this justice or injustice? Is it gallantry or a rout? Is it valor to kill innocent children and women? Did I do it to widen the empire and for prosperity or to destroy the other's kingdom and splendor?”

“One has lost her husband, someone else a father, someone a child, someone an unborn infant.... What's this debris of the corpses? Are these the marks of victory?”

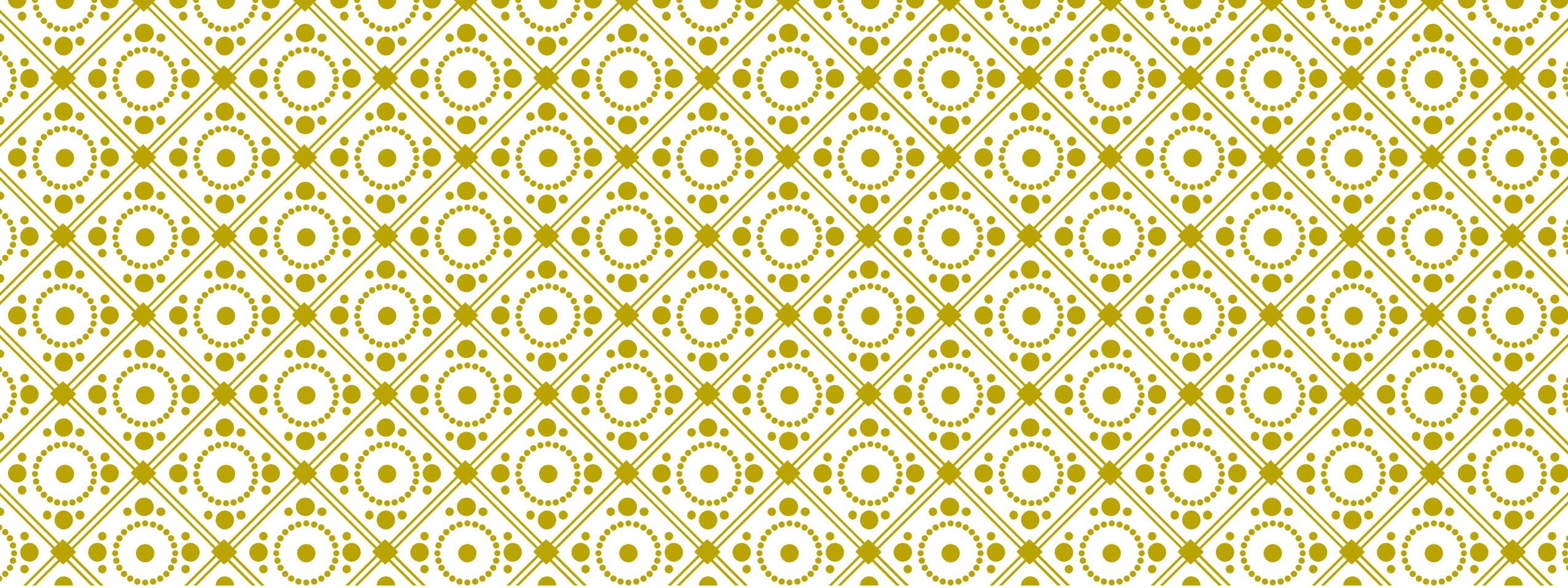


MAURYA EMPIRE: ASHOKA



Uses principles of Buddhism in his reign

- Issues “Rock Edicts”— stone pillars placed throughout the empire
- Each contains statements by Ashoka outlining his new ruling policies
- Appoints “officials of righteousness” who are to make sure all castes and areas are treated fairly
- Builds free hospitals for animals and people
- Creates “rest stops” at points along roads in his empire
- Allowed religious freedom within the empire



INTER-IMPERIAL FRAGMENTATION

185 BCE – 320 CE

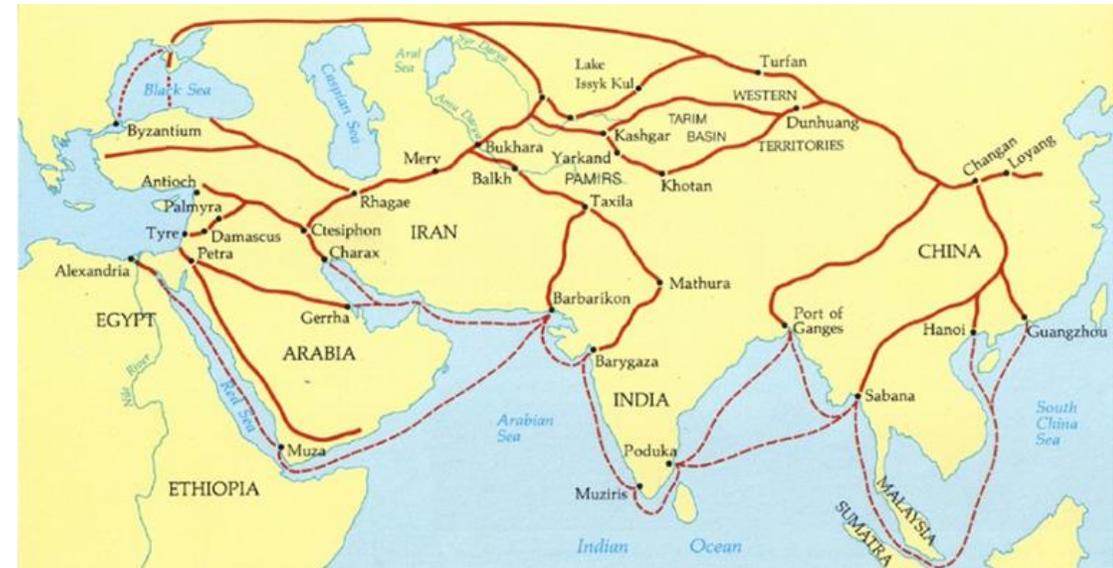
INTER-IMPERIAL FRAGMENTATION

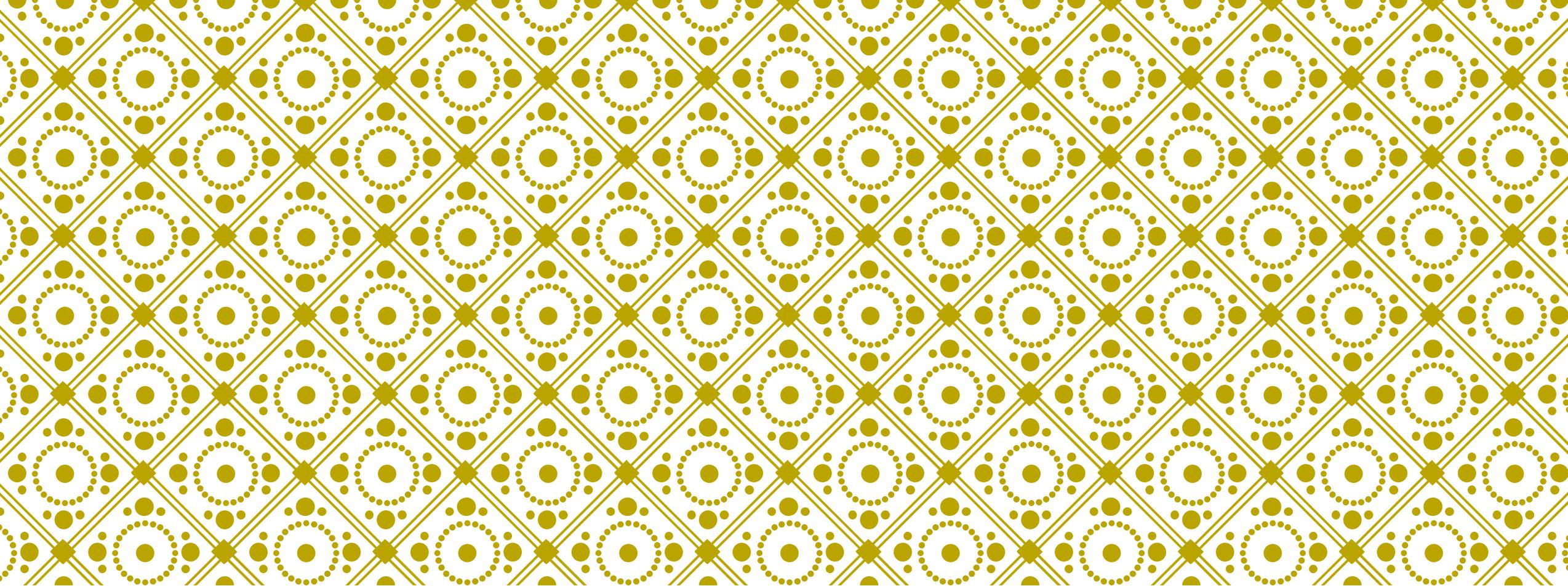
Ashoka dies in 232 BCE, and following Maurya emperors were unable to maintain control over the massive empire.

- Last Maurya emperor was assassinated in 185 BCE, and the empire dissolves back into regional kingdoms

Waves of nomadic groups (including the Hun!) settle into parts of South Asia

- Further development of the Silk Road(s)
- Connects into northern South Asia and incorporates many independent regional kingdoms





THE GUPTA EMPIRE

320 CE to 550 CE.
The Golden Age.

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 TO 550 CE)

Called India's "Golden Age" due to its wealth and cultural production

- Controlled a much smaller area than the Maurya (only north central India)

Founded by Chandra Gupta I (r. 320-335 CE), who united several kingdoms through conquest

- Also used marriage alliances to expand his growing empire

His son, Samudra Gupta, conquered more than 20 kingdoms to add to the empire

- Sometimes called "the Indian Napoleon"
- Patron of the arts, considerate of other faiths although the official faith was Hinduism





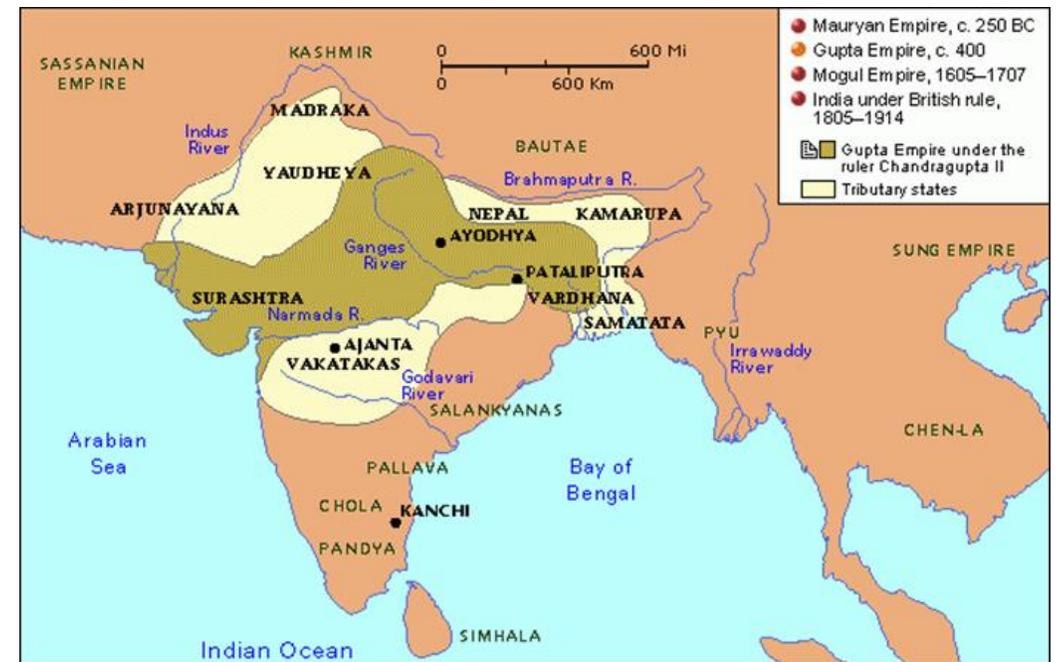
GUPTA EMPIRE (320 TO 550 CE)

Emperor held a direct monopoly on the production and sale of salt and minerals

- Heavy taxes generated through agriculture and long-distance trade

Generally, the Gupta empire governed loosely with little central control

- Relied on the caste system to provide stability
- Didn't particularly care about local issues, so long as provinces paid taxes on time.



GUPTA EMPIRE: CULTURE

Hinduism is the official religion, but other faiths are tolerated

- Arts with a religious focus flourish due to Gupta patronage
- Literature: plays, philosophical writings in Sanskrit
- Architecture and Sculpture (Hindu temples)

Universities (Nalanda)— attended by students all over Asia

- New technology developed: medicine (inoculation, surgery), higher level mathematics

Decline in the status of women

- Arranged marriages become common
- High respect, little power for women

GUPTA EMPIRE: COLLAPSE

Collapse of the Han Dynasty in 220 CE destabilizes trade

- By the 500s, the Rome-China axis of trade had fragmented, lessening the Gupta's ability to profit from trade.

Succession of weak rulers (467 to ca. 500 CE)

Waves of Hunnic invasion and other nomads

- Major invasion in 500, another in 510 CE

Internal fragmentation

- Reliance on local control limited the strength of the state