Kushan Empire

30 C.E. – 375 C.E.
The Kushan Empire

The “Forgotten Empire”

3 CE – 375 CE
A Period of Turmoil

• The Breakup of the Mauryan Empire
  – Asoka dies in 232 B.C.; kingdoms in central India soon break away
  – The Andhra Dynasty dominates central India for centuries
  – Northern India receives immigrants from Greece and other parts of Asia
  – **Tamils**—a people living in southern India—remain separate and frequently war with rival peoples.
The Bactrian Greeks

- Composed of descendants of Alexander the Great’s invading army, the Bactrian Greeks pushed deep into the former Mauryan Empire.
- Their leader, King Demetrius, encouraged a blending of eastern and western cultures.
- The Bactrians brought Greek influence into sculpture, medicine, astronomy, astrology, and currency in India.
As the Mauryan Empire collapsed, India again divided into many regional kingdoms. These kingdoms differed in the north and south.

**North India**
- Invaders from Central Asia established new dynasties
- Many had been displaced by expansion of China

**The Greeks**
- Greek invaders from what is now Afghanistan formed Greco-Indian dynasties
- Introduced Greek art forms to India, influenced local styles

**The Kushans**
- Conquered much of north during first century AD
- Restored some of grandeur of Mauryan Empire to region
- Kushan dynasty fell, AD 250
South India

**Powerful kingdoms**
- Developed in India south of Deccan Plateau
- Andhra kingdom expanded across south, central India, 100s BC
- Controlled region until about AD 300

**Other kingdoms**
- In far south, small kingdoms had ruled for some time
- Chera, Chola, Pandya, collectively called Tamil kingdoms
- Carried on active sea trade with Southeast Asia, other regions

**Sea Trade**
- Brought kingdoms wealth, developed sophisticated culture
- Madurai, capital of Pandya kingdom, became center of Tamil poetry
- Poetry was filled with descriptions of vibrant society of southern India
Invasion from the Hindu Kush

• As the Mauryan Empire weakened, invaders from the northwest – the KUSH took control of India.

• KANISHKA – strong Kushan ruler converted to Buddhism – but his conversion led many in India to develop a negative attitude of Buddhism as it was connected with their conqueror.

• The Kushans fell by 220 C.E. and a period without a strong ruler continued until the rise of the GUPTAS.
Sacred Rocks of Hunza
along the Karakorum highway, northern Pakistan
Arrival to India

• Around the year 20 or 30 CE, the Kushans were driven westward by the Xiongnu, a fierce people who likely were the ancestors of the Huns.

• The Kushans fled to the borderlands of what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where they established an independent empire in the region known as Bactria.

• In Bactria, they conquered the Scythians and the local Indo-Greek kingdoms, the last remnants of Alexander the Great's invasion force that had failed to take India.

• From this central location, the Kushan Empire became a wealthy trading hub between the peoples of Han China, Sassanid Persia and the Roman Empire.

• Roman gold and Chinese silk changed hands in the Kushan Empire, at a very tidy profit for the middle-men.
Kushan Empire---Who Were They?

• The Kushan Empire started as a branch of the Yuezhi, a confederation of ethnically Indo-Europeans nomads who lived in eastern Central Asia.

• Some scholars connect the Kushans with the Tocharians of the Tarim Basin in China, Caucasian people whose blonde or red-haired mummies have long puzzled observers.
The Kushans

• The Bactrians were eventually assimilated into Indian culture, but another group soon took their place.

• The Kushans first conquered northern India before moving north to modern day Pakistan.

• The Kushans ruled India for 200 years, encouraging art, medical studies, and construction.
After Ashoka’s death, the Mauryan dynasty declined and finally fell to nomadic invaders called the Kushan (from Turkestan).

The Kushan continued trade links with other civilizations including the Roman Empire.

The collapse of the Kushans around 220 AD initiated a period of chaos that lasted until 320 AD and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Guptas.
The Kushan Empire

• The Kushans eventually conquered the Bactrians and ruled much of northern India and central Asia from about 1 C.E. to 300 C.E.

• Under Kanishka, the most prominent of the Kushan emperors, commerce resumed.

• The silk road network again flowed between Persia (Sassanid) and Han China, but imperial rule was not firmly established.
KUSHAN EMPIRE – 105 CE

• Established by nomadic warriors following the collapse of the Mauryan Empire
• Prospered from the trade between the Roman Empire and China

Kushan Buddhist devotee

Kushan worshipper with Zeus

Kushan Buddhist devotee
The Kushan Kingdom

- 1st century A.D., nomadic warriors seized power & established Kushan kingdom
  - Next 2 centuries, gained control over northern India to Ganges River
  - Prospered from trade
    - Most trade between China & Roman Empire
Kushana

- Hails from the Shaka Tribe
  - Shaka Tribes came from the same regions as the Aryans came from
    - The Caucasian regions (The area near Kazakhstan)
    - Some historians say that Shaka-s are also Aryans

- The Kushana empire covered most of North Western India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and China

- Felicitated the trade between far East (China) and Europe through the Silk Route
Main Kushan Rulers

- The main Kushan rulers were the following:

- Heraios, who was probably the first of the Kushan kings. He may have been an ally of the Greeks, and he shared the same style of coinage.

- Kujula Kadphises who set himself up as king of a kingdom called Guishuang. He invaded Anxi (Parthia) and took the Gaofu (modern day Kabul).

- Vima Kadphises was the son of Vima Taktu (Ruler of Kushan in 80-105) and the father of Kanishka I. He issued an extensive series of coins and inscriptions.

- The rule of Kanishka I, the second great Kushan emperor, fifth Kushan king, who flourished for at least 28 years from c. 127,

- The Kushan Empire saw rising success, especially when having contacts with Rome, during the 2nd century, and with China during the 1st and 2nd century.
Heraois
Kushan Empire

• The first self-proclaimed Kushan king, Heraios (ruled: 1–30 AD), was one short step away from being a Yuezhi tribesman.

• Thus it fell to his successor Kujula Kadphises (ruled: 30-80 AD) to assume the role of a true monarch and unite the disparate and quarrelsome Yuezhi tribes under the Kushan banner during the 1st century AD.

• After gradually wrestling control of Bactria from the Scythians and the Indo-Parthians, Kujula Kadphises moved the Kushan tribes into the region known as Gandhara (northeast Afghanistan and northern Pakistan) with the main capital located at Taxila (northwestern Pakistan) and the summer capital at Begram (known in ancient times as Kapisa, near the present-day Bagram Air Base), which also served as a major trading center.
Heraios
Kushan Empire

• From these two capitals, plus other settlements and trading posts farther north, the Kushans became master traders, adopted the Greek alphabet and struck their own gold coins featuring Kushan royal portraits, Greek mottos and symbols inspired by Roman coins that were widely used at that time to purchase goods from caravans along the Silk Road.

• By positioning themselves at the center of the Silk Road, midway between China and India in the east and the Mediterranean world in the west, the Kushans became a world power second only to China and Rome and the first unified force in Afghanistan to dispense rather than receive authority.

• In 48 AD Kujula Kadphises crossed the Hindu Kush and formed an alliance with the last Greek king in the region, Hermaeus, in the Kabul Valley, which allowed Kujula's son Vima Kadphises to attack and defeat the Scythians (known as Saka) in northern India and establish an empire that his successors continued to enlarge until it extended from the Ganges River in the east to the Gobi Desert in the north.
Kadphises and Vima Kadphsis

- Kadphises attacked the southern region of Hindu Kush, conquered Kabul and defeated Gandhara including the kingdom of Taxila.
- Later the leader Kadphises died in 78 AD.
- By then Kushans had supplemented the prince of Indo-Greeks Saka and Indo-Parthian communities along the frontiers of India.
- The successor of Kadphises was Vima Kadphsis who conquered large parts of North India
- The coins of Kadphises show that his authority extended up to Banaras and also till Indus basin.
- The valour of this king extended from Narmada to Saka Satraps in Malwa and Western India acknowledged his sovereignty.
Head of King Kanishka & Sanskrit inscription

Sacred Rocks of Hunza, northern Pakistan
Kanishka and Buddhism

Kanishka belonged to little Yuehi-Chi section of the horde. The capital during his period was Purusyapura where he built many Buddhist buildings.

In the Initial days he managed Kashmir and consolidated Indus and the Gangetic basin. His army defeated Chinese by crossing the Pamirs. Kanishka was the active patron of Buddhist Church during the later part of his reign.

The coins during his rule prove that he honoured a medley of Gods - Zoroastrian, Greek, Mitraic and Indian.

The prominent Indian deity was God Shiva.

This Kushan king also convened a council of Buddhist theologians to settle disputes relating to Buddhist faith and practices.
Kaniskha

• The conclusions of Kaniskha council were engraved on copper sheets and preserved in the stupa of the capital. Delegates to the council primarily belonged to the Hinayana sect.

• Soon the Kushan power declined. Within the Kingdom Nagas and Yaudheyas troubled Kushans. During the period of Kushan Dynasty, Naga ruler probably performed ten ashvamedha sacrifices and few other tribes also like Malavas and Kunindas probably regained their importance at the expense of Kushan kings.

• Brisk trade prevailed as the area covered by the Kushan Empire helped the flow of trade between the east and the west.
Kanishka

- The next ruler after Kadphises was his son Kanishka (100 – 126 AD), a prominent ruler of the Kushan Dynasty who achieved remarkable milestones in the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

- His descendants called him as Devaputra which means son of gods.

- The empire of Kanishka constituted Bactria (modern Afghanistan), Part of Central Asia (Tajikistan), northwestern India (modern Pakistan) and northern India till Pataliputra.

- Under the supervision of the ruler Kanishka the historical division between two versions of Buddhism, namely Mahayana and Hinayana, took place through the great Buddhist council that was organized.
Kanishka (127-151)

• King of Kings
• Son of God, Shah
• Uzbekistan to southern India- Capital city- Peshwar and Mathura
• Raw silk from China made into fine linens
• Pepper, Peacocks, Spice
• 700 feet high stupa- Buddha’s remains
Kanishka

• The rule of Kanishka, the third Kushan emperor, who flourished from the late first to the early/mid-2nd century AD, was administered from two capitals: Purushapura (present-day Peshawar) and the summer capital complex at Begram (Kapisa), which rivaled the pleasure palaces created by the emperors in Rome or Han dynasty China.

• Under Kanishka's rule, the Kushans controlled most of Central Asia and amassed great wealth through extensive mercantile activities, a flourishing of urban life and continued patronage of Buddhist sculpture and the building of monasteries.

• Settled life brought great changes to the lives of these former nomads.

• Having no traditions on which to build, they adapted what they found in ways best suited to their own personality.

• The result was a vibrant indigenous culture born of the fusion of western oriented Grecco-Bactrian ideals with those of eastern oriented India and interpreted by the forceful character of Central Asia — vital and dynamic
Kanishka

- Kanishka led the Kushans during their conquest of India and Pakistan
- Like Asoka, Kanishka converted to Buddhism, employing 500 monks to regulate Buddhist teachings in his empire
- Kanishka’s monks’ meetings resulted in the creation of *Mahayana* Buddhism
- His opening of trade to China led to the expansion of Mahayana Buddhism into East Asia
Kanishka – the Kushan Emperor

• Became Emperor in 89 AD
• Started the Shaka Era
• Converted to Buddhism
• Founder of the Mahayana Buddhism
  – Mahayana-s believe in gods
  – They also believe Buddha is God
  – It is the most commonly followed Buddhism now
Kushan “Boddo” coin
King Kanishka on obverse
2nd century AD
Kanishka

- By the rule of the fifth emperor, Kanishka the Great (c. 127-140), the Kushan Empire had pushed into all of northern India, and had expanded east again as far as the Tarim Basin, original homeland of the Kushans.
- Kanishka ruled from Peshawar, now in Pakistan, but his empire also included the major Silk Road cities of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan, in what is now Xinjiang or East Turkestan.
Fig. 18 Red sandstone portrait statue of King Kanishka I
Kushan period, Mathura
Ca. 100-146 AD
H. 185 cm
Inscribed: Great King, the King of Kings, the Son of God, Kanishka.
From Mat, Uttar Pradesh, India
(Archaeological Museum, Mathura)
Kanishka and Buddhism

• Kanishka was a devout Buddhist, and has been compared to the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka the Great in that regard.
• However, evidence suggests that he also worshipped the Persian deity Mithra, who was both a judge and a god of plenty.
• During his reign, Kanishka built a stupa that Chinese travelers reported as about 600 feet high and covered with jewels.
• Historians believed that these reports were fabricated, until the base of this amazing structure was discovered in Peshawar in 1908.
• The emperor built this fabulous stupa to house three of the Buddha's bones.
• References to the stupa have since been discovered among the Buddhist scrolls at Dunhuang, China, as well.
• In fact, some scholars believe that Kanishka's forays into the Tarim were China's first experiences with Buddhism.
Kanishka and Buddhism

- Kanishka's Casket. While the accounts of Kanishka's interest in Buddhism have been verified by numerous archaeological finds, he was also a devotee and patron of other local religions.
- Kushan coinage includes representations of the Buddha as well as a wide pantheon of gods and goddesses, deities of Greek, Persian and Hindu origin.
- Kanishka's reliquary casket, for example, features cast representations of Buddha as well as Hindu deities Brahma and Indra, Persian sun and moon gods on the sides of the container and a garland, supported by cherubs in typical Hellenistic style.
- Dated to the first year of Kanishka's reign in 127 CE, the casket was discovered in a deposit chamber under Kanishka's stupa, during the archeological excavations in 1908-1909 at Shah-ji-Dheri on the outskirts of Peshawar.
- The original is today at the Peshawar Museum; and old replica is in the British Museum. Rarities inside the casket are said to have included three bone fragments of the Buddha.
- The inscription on the casket is signed by the maker, a Greek artist named Agesilas, who oversaw work at Kanishka's stupas (caitya), confirming the direct involvement of Greeks with Buddhist artworks [the inscription reads in part, "The servant Agisalaos, the superintendent of works at the vihara of Kanishka ..."].
- The attribution of the casket to Kanishka has been recently disputed, on stylistic grounds [the casket may instead be attributable to Kanishka's successor Huvishka].
First Sermon
Buddhism

• Buddhists texts are full of praise for the Kushan Kanishka, "King of Kings" (circa 100 AD), whose benevolent patronage supported Buddhism like no one else during his lifetime.

• Buddhist Patronage. Kanishka's reputation in Buddhist tradition began with convening the 4th Buddhist Council in Kashmir, circa 100 AD, which became essential to the development of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition.

• Kanishka provided encouragement to both the Gandhara school of Greco-Buddhist Art and the Mathura school of Hindu art.

• His greatest contribution to Buddhist architecture was the Kanishka stupa at Peshawar. Archaeologists who rediscovered the base of thes stupa in 1908-1909 ascertained that this stupa had a diameter of 286 feet.

• Reports of Chinese pilgrims such as Xuan Zang indicate that its height was roughly 600 to 681 feet high and was covered with jewels.

• This immense multi-storied building must have ranked among the wonders of the ancient world.

• Buddhist monks from the region of Gandhara during Kanishika's lifetime played a key role in the development and the transmission of Buddhist ideas from India and Gandhara to China.

• For example, the Kushan monk, Lokaksema (c. 178 AD), became the first translator of Mahayana Buddhist scriptures into Chinese and established a translation bureau at the Chinese capital Loyang.
Buddhism

- The Buddhist Shrine Complex at Hadda.
- A Greco-Buddhist archeological site located in the ancient area of Gandhara, six miles south of the city of Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan, Hadda was one of the largest Buddhist temple and pilgrimage complexes in the world during the 1st through 3rd centuries AD.
- A key location on the 2,000-mile path that pilgrims followed in the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, Hadda was an active center for manuscript translation and duplication as well as sculpture.

More than 23,000 Greco-Buddhist sculptures made of clay or plaster, architectural decorations plus heads and figures depicting men, women, children, assorted demons, as well as the elderly, with every conceivable mode of expression and dress, every rank and status, every facial type from all corners of the known world — more faces than one would need to re-create an entire Buddhist city — were excavated from Hadda in a series of archaeological excavations during the 1930s and the 1970s.

Sculptures from Hadda combine elements of Buddhism and Hellenism, in an almost perfect uniquely identifiable Hellenistic style.

- Although the style itself is suggested by experts to date from the late Hellenistic 2nd or 1st century BC, the sculptures from Hadda are usually dated, tentatively, to the 1st century AD or later.

Given the early date, superb quality, technical refinement, variety and stupendous quantity of sculptures, Hadda must have been a "factory town" where Greek or Greek-trained artists familiar with all the aspects of Hellenistic sculpture, lived and worked in, what scholar John Boardman described as "the cradle of incipient Buddhist sculpture in Indo-Greek style."
Arts of the Kushan Empire:
The First Buddha Images
Characteristics of Culture

• Given all their contacts with the great empires of the day, it is hardly surprising that the Kushan people developed a culture with significant elements borrowed from many sources.

• Predominantly Zoroastrian, the Kushans also incorporated Buddhist and Hellenistic beliefs into their own syncratic religious practices.

• Kushan coins depict deities ranging form Helios and Heracles to the Buddha and Shakyamuni Buddha, to Ahura Mazda, Mithra and Atar, the Zoroastrian fire god.

• They also used the Greek alphabet, altered to suit spoken Kushan.
### Characteristics of Culture

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<thead>
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<th>Place</th>
<th>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</th>
</tr>
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<td>Period</td>
<td>200 BC- 300 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Pali Prakrit Bactrian Sanskrit Greek</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
<td>Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Greco-Buddhism Ancient Greek religion</td>
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<td>Rulers</td>
<td>Kujula Kadphises, Vima Taktu or Sadashkana, Vima Kadphises, Kanishka I, Huvishka, Vasudeva I</td>
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Zoroastrian

- Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. It was founded by the Prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) in ancient Iran approximately 3500 years ago.
- For 1000 years Zoroastrianism was one of the most powerful religions in the world. It was the official religion of Persia (Iran) from 600 BCE to 650 CE.
- It is now one of the world's smallest religions. In 2006 the New York Times reported that there were probably less than 190,000 followers worldwide at that time.
- Zoroastrians believe there is one God called Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) and He created the world.
- Zoroastrians are not fire-worshippers, as some Westerners wrongly believe. Zoroastrians believe that the elements are pure and that fire represents God's light or wisdom.
- Ahura Mazda revealed the truth through the Prophet, Zoroaster.
- Zoroastrians traditionally pray several times a day.
- Zoroastrians worship communally in a Fire Temple or Agiary.
- The Zoroastrian book of Holy Scriptures is called The Avesta.
- The Avesta can be roughly split into two main sections:
  - The Avesta is the oldest and core part of the scriptures, which contains the Gathas. The Gathas are seventeen hymns thought to be composed by Zoroaster himself.
  - The Younger Avesta - commentaries to the older Avestan written in later years. It also contains myths, stories and details of ritual observances.
- Zoroastrians are roughly split into two groups:
  - The Iranians
  - The Parsis
Characteristics of Culture

• Gold coins issued by the Kushans were of great complexity.

• The coins speak about the prosperity of people and show the figure of Kanishka standing and sacrificing at altar and deities belonging to various religions.

• The coins also signify that Kushans were in direct contact with the Romans.
Kushan coins
1st-2nd centuries AD
Tolerance

- The Gandhara region at the core of the Kushan empire was home to a multi-ethnic society tolerant of religious differences.
- Desirable for its strategic location, with direct access to the overland silk routes and links to the ports on the Arabian Sea, Gandhara had suffered many conquests during its long history — by the Achaemenid Persians, by Alexander the Great (327/26–325/24 BC), by the Mauryans from India, the Seleucid Empire, Graeco-Bactrian kings and their Indo-Greek successors (3rd-2nd centuries BC), as well as Scythians
Tolerance

• Parthians (2nd-1st centuries BC).

• The melding of races, beliefs and skills developed in the West and the East produced an eclectic culture, vividly expressed in the visual arts produced during the Kushan period.

• Themes derived from Greek and Roman mythologies were blended with Buddhist symbols and sensibilities, resulting in the first representations of the Buddha in human form during the Kushan era, as well as the earliest depictions of key Buddhist figures such as the bodhisattva.
Patron of the Arts

• The Kushans were patrons, not mere collectors of art. In works of art they commissioned, the Kushan kings ordered their faces and garments be placed side-by-side with the Buddha and his retinue.

• This new self-confidence invigorated a uniquely Ghandharan style of art in which Graeco-Roman art subject matter and motifs enriched by Indian ideals were employed by literally thousands of craftsmen in the service of the rapidly growing Buddhist faith.
Patrons of Art

• The greatest contribution of Kushan Dynasty was Gandhara art.

• Stone images of the Buddha and Bodhisattavas were carved out and the chief feature was blending of Buddhist subjects with Greek forms.
Red sandstone railing
Mathura, 2nd century AD
King making an offering
Grey schist frieze
Gandhara
2nd-3rd centuries AD
Red sandstone relief
Mathura, 2nd century AD
Kushan (30-320 CE and Later) Andhra (1st CE-320 CE)

- Kushana: were nomadic Caucasians from Central Asia; King Kanishka (early 2nd C) extended the empire; Buddhist art has combinations of Hellenistic, Persians and Mauraya styles.

- Buddhist art were produced in 2 major styles: Gandhara (influenced by Hellenistic style) and Mathura (indigenous Indian)
Birth of the Buddha

Grey schist frieze

Gandhara

2nd-3rd centuries AD
Buddha images

• Hands (*mudras*): meditation (*Dhyanamudra*), First Sermon (*dharmaacakramudra*), Earth-touching hand gesture (*bumisparsamudra*)
• Legs (*asana*): folded one on top of the other
• Positions: sitting, standing and reclining
• *Urna*: tuft of hair between the eyebrows
• *Usnisa*: sign of great man (32 major characteristics and 80 minor characteristics)
Dhyana Mudra
symbolizing meditation
for seated Buddha images
Vitarka Mudra
symbolizing teaching
for standing or seated Buddha images
Dharmacakra Mudra symbolizing debate for standing or seated Buddha images.
Abhaya & Varada Mudras

symbolizing reassurance and compassion

often together for standing Buddha images
Bhumisparsa Mudra
symbolizing enlightenment
for seated Buddha images
3.11 Seated Buddha, Gandhara, 2nd century CE. Schist
Standing Buddha
Grey schist
Gandhara
2nd-3rd centuries AD
Head of the Buddha
Grey schist
Gandhara
2nd-3rd centuries AD
Bodhisattvas

- Buddha-to-be who remain on earth to help all of the beings into paradise ("those who have bodhi, wisdom or enlightenment,’ also known as “buddhas-in the making”
- Wear jewelry and holds attributes
- Maitreya Bodhisattva (Future Buddha)
- Avalokistesvara Bodhisattva (Bodhisattva of Compassion); he resided in the Western paradise of Buddha Amitabha (Buddha of infinite light, space and time)
Standing Bodhisattvas

Grey schist

Gandhara, 2nd-3rd century AD
Standing Bodhisattva

Painted clay

Bactria, 3rd century AD
Buddha in meditation
Limestone
Bactria
2nd century AD

Fig. 265 Limestone relief depicting Buddha Sakyamuni seated beneath the Bodhi tree, flanked by two attendant monks
Bactria, Kushan period, 1st to 2nd century AD
H. 75 cm, W. 62.5 cm
From Fayaz-tepe, Southern Uzbekistan
(Museum of the History of the People of Uzbekistan, Tashkent)
This relief, in a style strongly reminiscent of Gandharan, depicts the Buddha shortly before the moment of his enlightenment as he meditates beneath the bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, Bihar State, India. The Corinthian columns at each side are a flourish from the Classical world.
Head of the Buddha
Stucco
Gandhara
4th-5th centuries AD
Head of Layman and Bodhisattva

Dark Grey/Black Schist

Gandhara

2nd-3rd centuries AD
Maitreya Buddha, Gandhara, 1st-2nd
3.13 Bodhisattva Padmapani, Cave 1, Ajanta c. late 5th CE
Buddha figures in niches
Gandhara
4th-5th centuries AD
Large Buddha images flanked by relief sculptures

Stucco

Hadda, modern Afghanistan

3rd-4th century AD
Big Buddha at Bamiyan

5th-6th century AD
Kushan Empire

• Trade, trade, trade...
• Buddhism flourished and brought to China
• Open-minded, multicultural empire
• Arts, literature, and science
• Knowledge of Plants, medicines, etc.
• Peace, trade, and tolerance
Expanding Networks: Routes

The silk road, Persian royal road, Roman roads, and shipping routes combined to form extensive interregional networks of exchange in Afroeurasia.

A wide variety of goods flowed along these networks…
Expanding Networks: Routes

The Silk Roads was a network of roads, tracks, and trails ran across Inner Eurasia. Most of this region is part of the Great Arid Zone, the belt of dry country that extends across Afroeurasia.
Expanding Networks: Routes

Inner Eurasia is a region of grassy steppes, rugged mountains, and forbidding deserts. This terrain is hard to cross. Despite these harsh conditions, humans have been carrying goods, ideas, and technologies along the Silk Roads of Inner Eurasia for millennia.
Between 300 BCE and 300 CE, long periods of stability and prosperity in states throughout Afroeurasia stimulated interest in long distance trade.

Intercontinental communication and the exchange of goods, became regular, organized, and protected by large empires.

The Silk Roads carried shipments of Chinese silk but also many other goods.
Expanding Networks: Routes

On the Silk Roads, goods changed hands many times. Parthians, Indians, Kushans, Uigurs, and others acted as middlemen, selling and bartering goods, and taking profits.

Caravans passing west carried silk, porcelain, jade, bronze, and spices.

Those traveling east shipped gold and silver coins, ivory, gemstones, glassware, and carpets.
Silk Road

- Named after China’s most valuable product
- Part of the route went through India
- Arose between 200 B.C. & A.D. 100
- Chang’an, China → Antioch, Syria
- Covered 4,000 miles
- Traded silk, spices, teas & porcelain from China for woolen & linen clothes, glass & precious stones from the west
- Romans considered silk worth its weight in gold
Silk Roads

► Classical empires such as the Han, Kushan, Parthian, and Roman brought order and stability to large territories
  – They undertook massive construction projects to improve transportation infrastructure
  – The expanding size of the empires brought them within close proximity to or even bordering on each other

► As classical empires reduced the costs of long-distance trade, merchants began establishing an extensive network of trade routes that linked much of Eurasia and northern Africa

► Collectively, these routes are known as the “Silk Roads” because high-quality silk from China was one of the principal commodities exchanged over the roads
Silk Road Trade to the West

Silk and spices traveled west from southeast Asia, China, and India

- China was the only country in classical times where cultivators and weavers had developed techniques for producing high-quality silk fabrics
- Spices served not just to season food but also as drugs, anesthetics, aphrodisiacs, perfumes, aromatics, and magical potions

Chinese silk making
Trade Goods

- Teak from India
- Mangrove swamps in East Africa
- Arabian horses to India
- Spices from Southeast Asia & Spice Islands
- Frankincense from Arabia and Africa
- ***Desired far beyond the Indian Ocean world
- Slave trades & labor migrations
  - Slaves from East Africa to Arabia/India
  - From Southeast Asia to Southern Africa
Kushana Empire and the Silk Route

Their Capital was Purushpura – Currently Peswar in Pakistan
Kushan Empire and Silk Road

• Silk first seen in Rome.
• Buddhism begins to spread from India into Central Asia.
• Kushan Empire of Central Asia.
• Sogdians trading on Silk Route.
• Death of Jesus Christ. Spread of Christianity begins.
Spread of Religion: Buddhism and Hinduism

► Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) first announced his doctrine publicly in India in 528 B.C.
  — By the 3rd Century B.C., Buddhism was well-established in northern India
► Buddhism was especially successful in attracting merchants as converts
  — Merchants carried Buddhism along the Silk Roads where it first established a presence in the oasis towns where merchants and their caravans stopped for food, rest, lodging, and markets
► Hinduism also spread along the Silk Roads, primarily along the sea lanes
Spread of Buddhism

• At Dunhuang, the Silk Road divides into two branches
  – By the 4th Century A.D., a sizeable Buddhist community had emerged there
Spread of Hinduism

- Hinduism also spread along the Silk Roads, primarily along the sea lanes
  - This for example is how Hinduism spread from India to Malaya
view of Bamiyan valley (modern Afghanistan)

For more, go to:
http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/loststolen/Afghan/bamiyan/bamiyan_overview/index/intro.htm
Kushan Decline

• The Kushan empire split into western and eastern halves. The Western Kushans (in Afghanistan) were soon subjugated by the Persian Sassanid Empire and lost Bactria and other territories.

• Mid-4th century, Kushans were subjugated by the Gupta Empire under Samudragupta.

• These remnants of the Kushan empire were ultimately wiped out in the 5th century by the invasions of the White Huns, and later the expansion of Islam.
Decline of Kushan Empire

• Decline and Fall of the Kushans:
• After 225 CE, the Kushan Empire crumbled into a western half, which was almost immediately conquered by the Sassanid Empire of Persia, and an eastern half with its capital in the Punjab.
• The eastern Kushan Empire fell at an unknown date, likely between 335 and 350 CE, to the Gupta king Samudragupta.
• Kushan Empire remained one of the most interesting Dynasties which ruled over the land of Jammu & Kashmir ever.
• Initiating its ruling journey in the period of first to second century AD, the Empire of Kushan extended its reach to each and every corner of the valley.
• The influence of Buddhism was at its peak during the reign of the Kushan Kingdom.