

Study of Classical Period (700 BC-200 BC)

ECONOMY and POLITICS
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Findings

- A thriving, prosperous, and peaceful society.
- Adoption of Vedic principles and values to the structure of economy and political administration.
- Centralized government coupled with innovative and growth-oriented taxation.
- Facilitation of trade as a state policy.

Outline

- State of Economy and Politics in 700 BCE
- Contributions made during Classical Period
- State of Economy and Political Affairs in 200 BCE

Economy and Politics 600BC

- By 600 BC, **Persian rule** had extended up to the western banks of Indus River.
- Sixteen organized **Mahājanapadas** (sovereign states) existed.
- Some of them were **Kingdoms**, some **Gaṇas** (Oligarchies) .
- Some **political entities** passed on from before e.g. chiefs in villages; conflict resolution through panchayats (a group of elders of the same tribe) at local level.
- Big **river trade** existed.
- Mining of **iron** ore had started.
- By 600 BC, **trade** had become an important economic activity after cattle and agriculture.

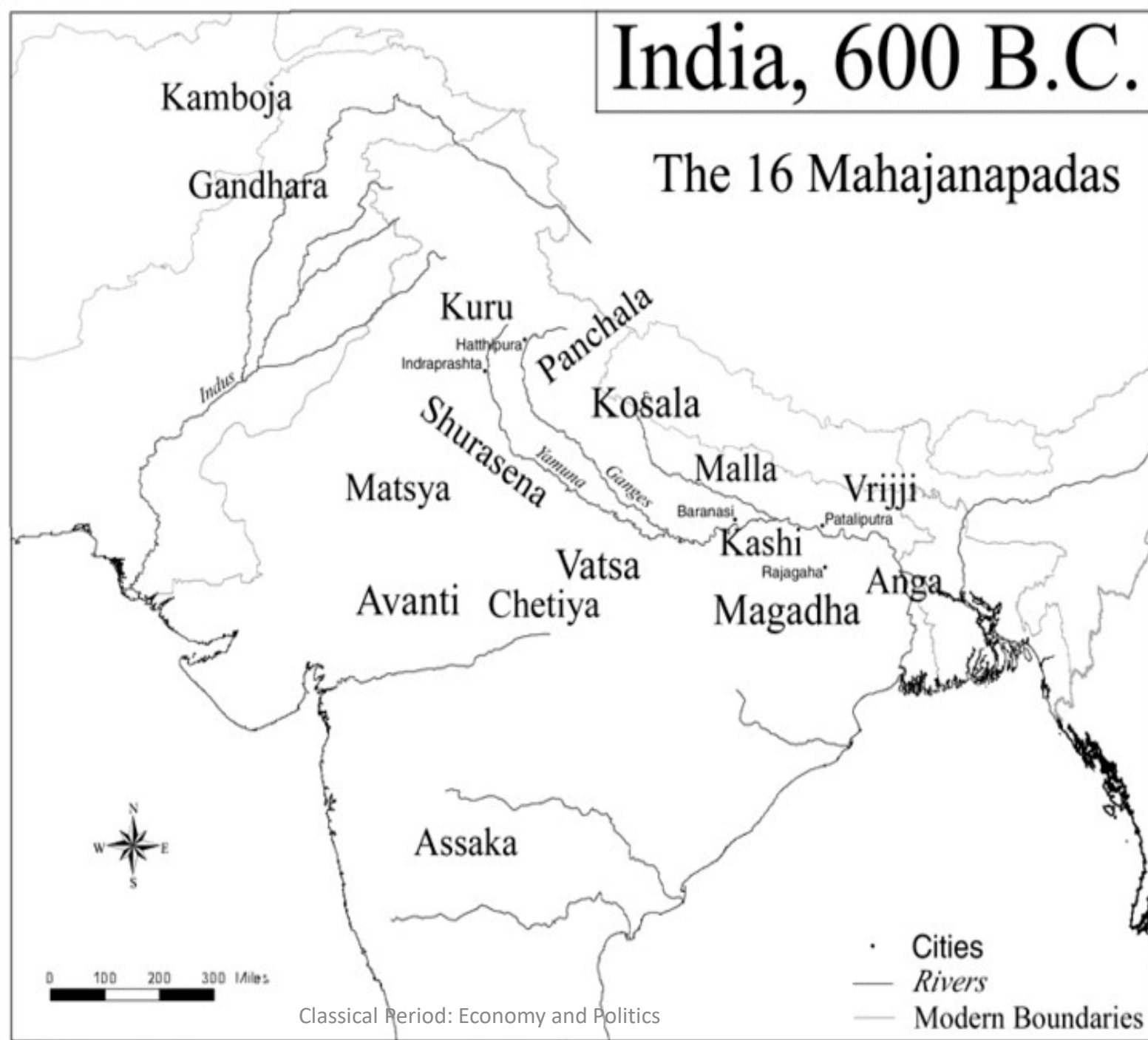
(Source: Robinson, A.)

Formation of Indian Union- Phase I: **Māhājanapadas**

- Janapadas known from **Vedic** times: Kāshi and Kambhoja.
- **Recent** janapadas: Avanti, Magadha, Anga, Vatsa, and Vriji.
- **Single** tribe Mahajanapadas: Mallas, Kāshi, Pāñchāl.
- **Confederacy** of tribes such as the Vriji.
- Ganas worked under a general assembly which, in turn, elected a leader (**rājā** or pati) who administered the Gana.
- **Capital punishment** was given through an annual general assembly, for example in Vriji.
- Common people worked under tribal / class rules **without interference** from the ruler.

India, 600 B.C.

The 16 Mahajanapadas



Māhājanapadas (continued)

- **Kingdoms:** Assaka, Chedi, Gāndhara, Kashi, Kambhoja, Malla, Kuru, Pāñchāla, Magadha, Vatsa.
- **Ganas (Sanghas):** Vriji, Koshala, Avanti
- (later) Malla, Kāshi, Pāñchāla
- **Post-Vedic confederacy:** of eight or nine janapadas: Vaishāli, Vriji, Lichchvis, Videhās, Nyāsa/Jñāthikas, Ugra, Bhoga, Kaurav, Aikshvāks)

Formation of Indian Union- Phase II:

(a) Magadhan Consolidation: Nanda Dynasty

- The political consolidation of Mahajanapadas started with **Nandas** ruling the Magadha.
- **Bimbisār** (544BC-493BC) acquired the status of Chakravartin enlarging his influence through matrimonial alliance and conquests.
- **Ajātashatru** (493BC-462BC) crushed the republic of Lichhavis after 16 years of battle; vanquished Koshala and annexed Kāshi.
- **Sisunāg** (430BC) annexed Kosala, Avanti and other important mājājanapadas to form an expanded Magadha.
- **Wealthy Shudras** existed; Nandas and some other ruling families were Shudras.

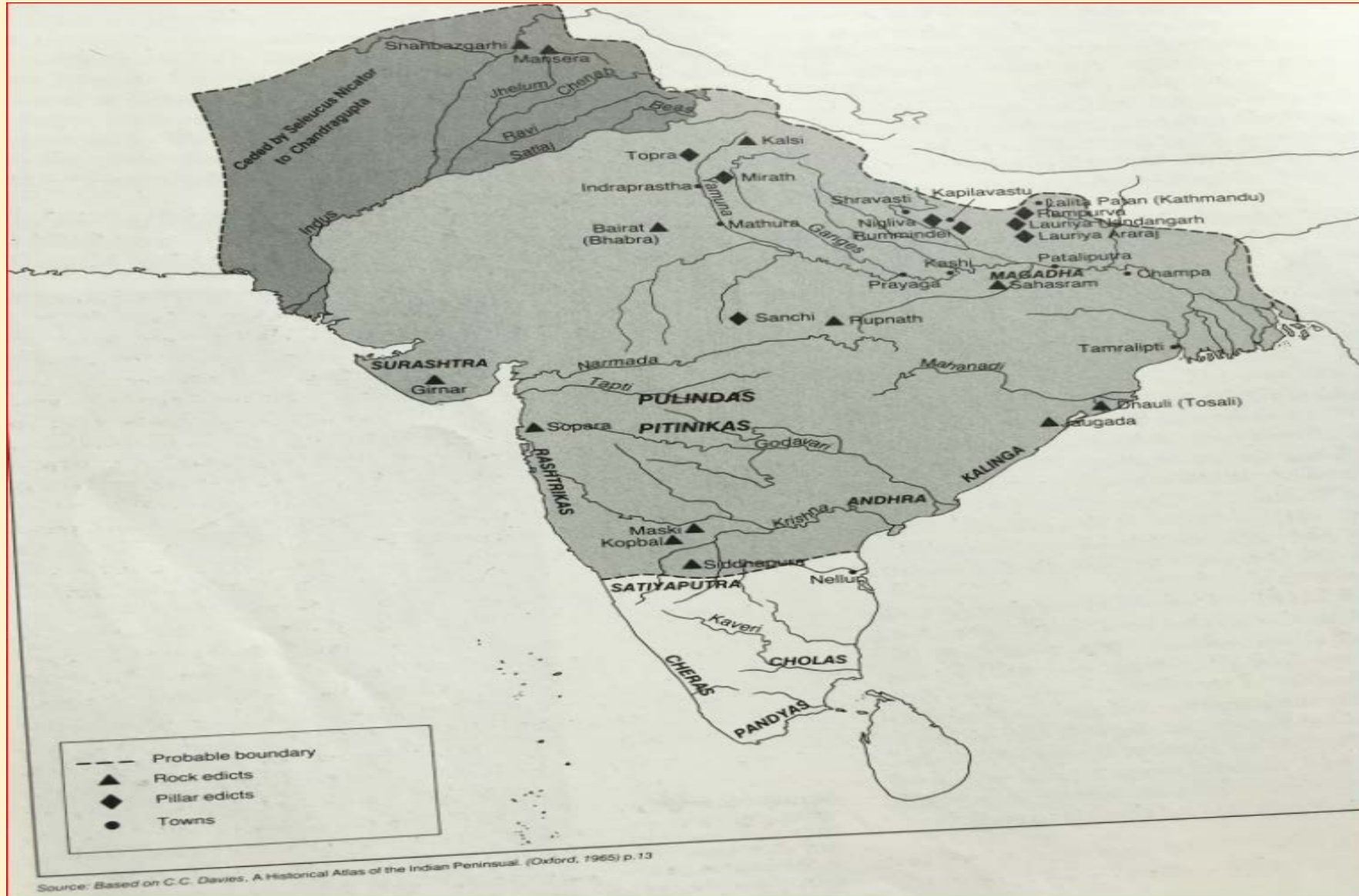
(Sources: Robinson, F., 1989)

(b) Political Consolidation: The Mauryas

- **Alexander's** invasion of India 327 BCE – 326 BCE.
- During 300 BCE, Persian and Greek influences were waning in the Northwest.
- **Dhanānanda** was ruling Magadha at the time of Alexander's invasion.
- Mauryan dynasty was established by Chandragupta **Maurya**, again in Magadh and at the cost of Nandas, by defeating the ruler Dhanānanda.
- **Chānakya** (also known as Kautilya) was a great force behind the new king Chandragupta Maurya.
- Jainism and Budhism had taken over **deeper roots** in the society.
- Kautilya, a great Brāhmin thinker, used **Vedas** to formulate Arthaniti, Dandaniti, and Videshniti.



(c) Ceded by Seleucus to Chandragupta



Chandragupta obtained the territories of **Arachosia** (Kandhār in Afghanistan), **Gedrosia** (in Baluchistan), and **Paropomisadai** in a 301 BCE conflict with Seleucus gifting 500 **elephants** in return.
(Source: Singh p. 330)

(d) Consolidation Continued: The Mauryan Dynasty (324BCE – 187 BCE)

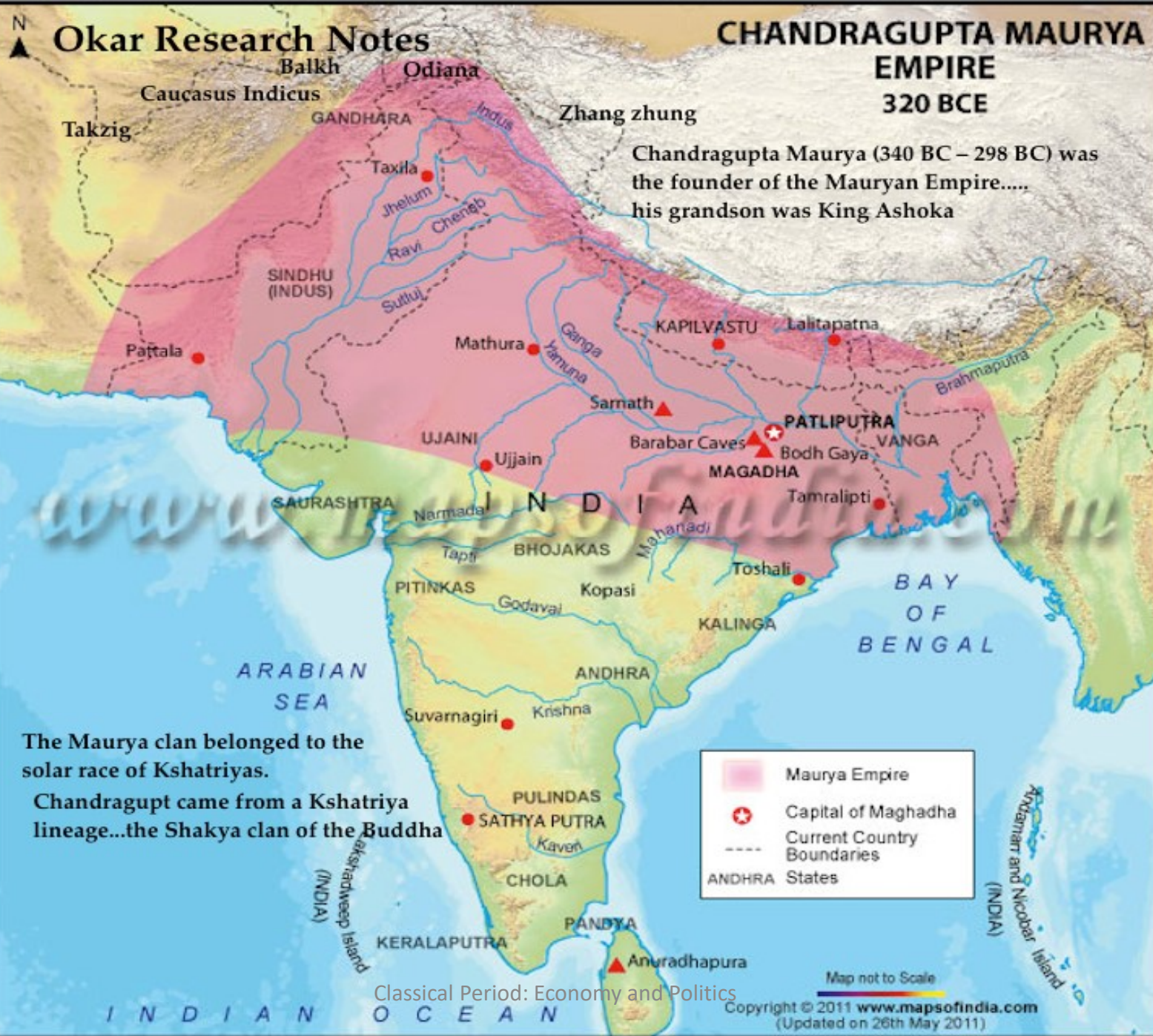
- **Chandragupta** (324 – 297 BCE); Bindusara (297 – 273 BCE); **Ashoka** (268 – 232 BCE).
- Chanakya's '**Arthashāstra**' treatise compiled 300 BCE.
- Chandragupta Maurya abdicated his throne to die of **Sallekhana** (ritual death by slow starvation) following the practice of Jain Thirthankars at **Sravana Belgola** (Mysore) temple.
- Four years of **succession** conflict between Bindusāra's chosen son Sushim and Ashoka.
- Ashoka survived fight between brothers; supposed to have killed 99 of them.
- Ashoka's **consecration** c. 269 BCE; abdicated in 222 BCE,
- Kalinga war 261 BCE; **eight** years after consecration; change of heart.
- Last king of Maurya, **Brihadratha** killed by his general, Pushyamitra **Shunga** in c. 187 BCE

(Source: Singh, 2009; Danielou, 1971; Wolpert, 1977)

Chandragupta Maurya's Standing Army

- Kautilya mentions creation of a standing army. Before that **common people doubled down** as warriors in times of need.
- Four divisions of army: **infantry**, cavalry, chariots, and elephants; under the control of **patyādhyakshas**, ashvādhyaksha, rathadhyaksha, and hastyādhyaksha respectively.
- Kautilya mentions recruiting army from **all varnas**.
- According to **Megasthenese**, Chandragupta Maurya's army consisted of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 7,000 chariots, and 9,000 war elephants.
- According to Mudrārākshasa book, Chandragupta's army consisted of **Sakas, Greeks (Yavanas), Kiratas, Kambojas, Pārasikas, and Bahlikas**.

(Sources: Singh, 2009, p. 347; Basham, 1954; McClish & Olivelle, 2012; Mookerji, 1988)



The Maurya clan belonged to the solar race of Kshatriyas.
Chandragupt came from a Kshatriya lineage...the Shakya clan of the Buddha

Portrait of Ashoka at Kanaganahalli (South India)

- The Kalinga war expanded the frontiers of Mauryan Empire further to the south.
- Other kingdoms such as Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas were not annexed; nor did any battle take place. Mauryas considered these kingdoms in south as “friendly” states.



The Empire of Ashoka the Great

- Ashoka has been described as the **Greatest of All Kings** by Historian H.G.Wells.
- He expanded the Maurya Empire by conquering the kingdom of Kalinga and thereby became ruler of almost the **whole of what is now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and parts of Afghanistan and Iran.**
- He underwent grief by observing violence and misery in war, became a Buddhist and replaced the doctrine of “**Expansion by War**” with “**Expansion by Dharma**”.
- Mauryan Empire patronized **Persian and Greek artisan** who specialized in making **monolithic sandstone columns** used for Ashoka’s pillar edicts; these artisans disappeared after the fall of the empire.



Mauryan Empire: Economic Activities

- **Agriculture** was the most important economic activity.
- Rains, fertility of soil, and energy and ability of cultivators impressed Greek travelers.
- **Mining** was important for making coins and weapons.
- Metals mined were gold, copper, lead, tin, and iron.
- Main **industries**: making weapons, weaving textiles, brewing liquor, making salt, and manufacturing jewelries.
- Gambling, betting, dharmashalas were known **service** industries.
- Merchants from foreign lands bought goods to cities to be sold through **bidding**.

(Sources: Sihag, 2014; Basham, 1954)

Factor Markets and Currencies

- Factors of payments: **Wages**, profit, **interest** and rent.
- Government and **private jobs** were available.
- **Cooperatives** of workmen existed: one person would fashion the stem of an arrow, other put wings on it while the third would attach a head to the arrow.
- The king issued silver and copper coins.
- The highest value of coins was one pana.
- A pana was minted in a **rectangular shape** and consisted of 11/16th part of silver, 1/4th part of copper, and 1/16th part tin, or lead, or antimony, or iron.
- Coins were made in one pana, 1/2 pana, 1/4 pana and 1/8 pana.
- **value** of coins were proportional to its **weight**.

(Sources: Sihag, 2014; Basham, 1954)

Mauryan Labor Policies

- Kautilya advised to acquire **settled** land so that labor can come with it suggesting **scarcity** of labor.
- Since **asceticism** was also an existing philosophy of the society, it was **punishable** if any one induced a woman of **child bearing** age to become an **ascetic**.
- An owner of a boat would receive a punishment if he did not **rescue a person** being carried away by floods.
- Unlike assembly-line, Kautilya incorporated **labor with Vedic values** added to it.
- Combination of **both Artha and Dharma** to make a vehicle of economic growth.

Mauryan Fiscal and Taxation Policies

- Banking facilities, per se, were not present but **loans** and credits were used and a reasonable **interest** charged.
- Big merchants used **letters of credit**.
- **Taxation** power was recognized to be **limited**.
- Taxation was designed **not to be heavy or excessive**.
- Royal decree: collect tax as a **bee** collects nectar from flowers.
- Tax increases was **graduated**.
- Taxation was a **constant revenue-yielding source** of the economy.
- Different and lower rates tax policy for **frontier** areas.
- Kautilya: create an **ideal economic** system fair, progressive, open, and efficient.

(Sources: McClish & Olivelle, 2012, Sihag, 2014)

Mauryan Agricultural and Land Grant Policies

- **Grant land** unsuitable for agriculture to ascetics for the **study** of the Vedas and soma sacrifices; tax-free and **hereditary** grants to ṛtvik, ācārya, and purohita.
- Grants of land to **adhyakshas**, accountants, gopas, sthanikas, elephant-trainers, and physicians as compensation and recognition. Such land could **not be sold** or mortgaged by the beneficiaries.
- **Mines** were especially important and placed under an authority **akarādhyaksha**.
- Forests, pastures and mines were the **state property**.
- Kautilya mentions different **kinds of share-croppers** working on state-owned land: **ardhasitika** and **svavīryopajīvī** who kept **half** and **1/4th** of produce respectively.

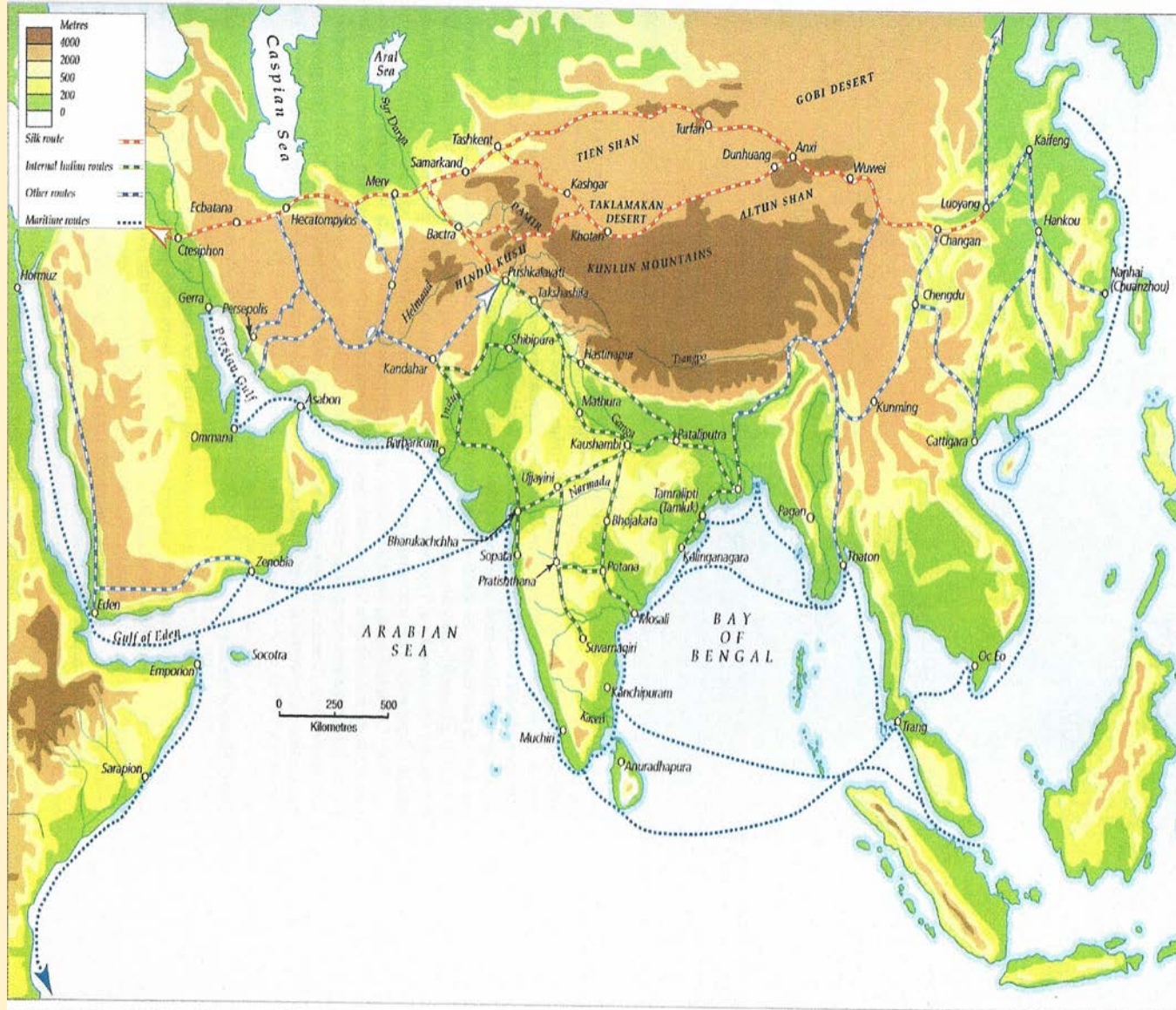
Kautilya's Arthashastra

- **Arthshastra** consists of 15 books (adhikaranas): first **five** dealing with internal administration (tantra), the next **eight** with inter-state relations (avapa), and the last **two** with miscellaneous topics.
- The Kautilyan state had seven limbs (Saptāṅga Rājya):
 - **Svāmī** (the king)
 - **Amātya** (ministers)
 - **Janapada** (territory and people)
 - **Durga** (the fortified capital)
 - **Koṣa** (the treasury)
 - **Daṇḍa** (“punishment is the science of governance”)
 - **Mitra** (ally)
- Arthshastra mentions **artha** (material well-being) as **superior** to **dharma** and **kāma** (the other two goals of human existence, the puruṣārtha).

State Economy Measures – from Megasthenes

- **Megasthenes** was an ambassador sent by **Seleucus** to **Chandragupta** and he wrote **Indica**.
- Megasthenes mentions existence of **six** committees of five members each for: (a) industrial **arts**, (b) **entertainment** and **surveillance** of **foreigners**, (c) **birth and death records**, (d) **trade** and **commerce** (including weights and measures), (e) public **sale of goods**, and (f) **collection** of taxes.
- There were regulations to **sell land** (kshetra).
- **Kshetrika** (owner of land) were distinguished from **upavāsa** (tenant).
- Institution of **private property in land** had emerged some centuries prior to Kautilya at least in north India.
- Taxes on the **income of actors**, singers, and prostitutes existed.
- International trade had acquired considerable importance.

Trade Routes in Classical Period



- One of chief trade routes ran from **Tamralipti**, near Calcutta on Ganga to **Kaushambi**; from where a branch went to the port of **Bhrgukaccha** .
- A route to the South went from **Ujjaini** to **Madurai**.
- Rivers were crossed using small or large **ferries**; no evidence of **bridges**.
- Mauryan Empire took great care of these roads and safeguarded it through **land-pilots**: sarathavāha and thala-niyyāmakas.
- Trade routes, enriching the state exchequer, provided more incentive than irrigation systems.
- Spices, silk, gold, muslin were traded to far-off lands like Persia and Arabia.

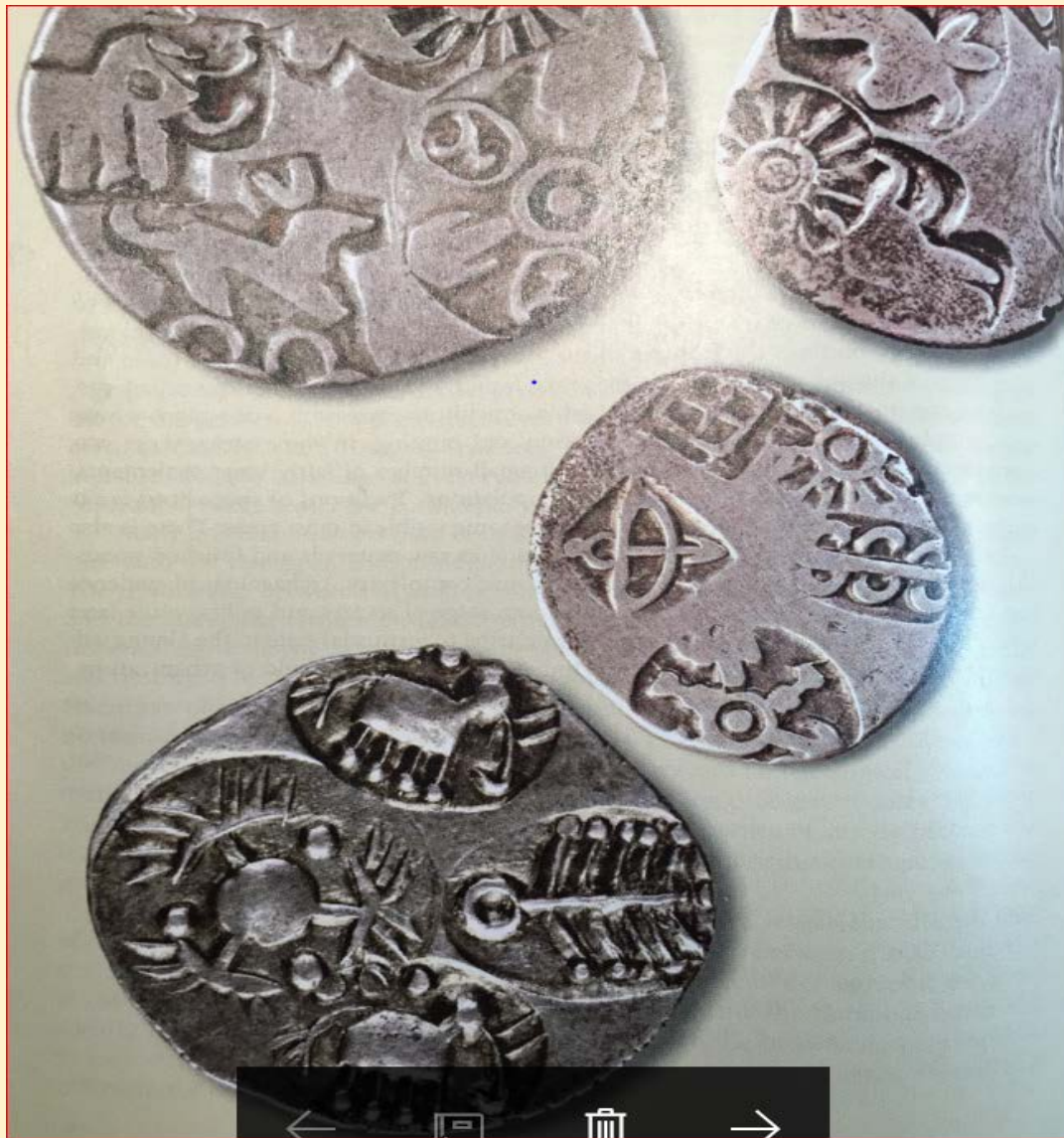
Trade

- Trade in spices, silk, muslin, grains, gold, NBPW
- Northern Black Polished Ware (**NBPW**) had hard polished surfaces that were unique technological innovations.
- Saddalputta owned 500 potters' workshops and a fleet of **boats** used to carry his wares to Ganges valley.



Mauryan Coins

- Each janapada minted and issued its **own** silver and copper punch-marked coins.
- Mauryan coins were uniformly used throughout the Empire some of them used a common pool of cultural symbols.



Ashoka's Principles of Governance:

- All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another. By thus acting a man exalts his own sect and at the same time does service to the sects of other people.
- Rock edit 1: ban on animal sacrifice.
- Pillar edit 5: more sweeping prohibitions (Delhi-Topra pillar).
- Rock edit 11: gift of dhamma being the best of all gifts.
- Rock edit 13: 8 years after abhiseka, Ashoka won Kalinga war. Ashoka, now a changed person, writes “the conquest of dhamma is the greatest of all”.

(Rotal Seal of Ashoka on the right)



Summary

The Classical Period laid the foundation for the **Golden Age** through:

- Creation of a **centralized administration** through judicious use of force to facilitate growth of a stable and strong economy that benefited the government and people extending it to animals and plants as well.
- Supported by the administration and through the use of technology, growth-oriented taxation, crop management, and travel facilities, **economy became stable and strong** that included trades with far-off places like Persia and Arabia.



THANK YOU !





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