India and the Indian Ocean Basin

Chapter 16
During the postclassical period there emerged in India no long-lasting imperial authority, as there were in China and the Islamic world. Regional kingdoms were the norm. Nevertheless, Indian society exerted a profound influence on the cultures of south and Southeast Asia. Through the extensive trade networks of the Indian Ocean basin, Indian forms of political organization, religion, and economic practices spread throughout the region. Several developments in India during this era gradually spread throughout the larger culture zone.
Dramatic agricultural growth fueled population growth and urbanization. These phenomena, combined with specialized industrial production and trade, resulted in unprecedented economic growth for the region.

India's central position in the Indian Ocean basin resulted in it becoming a major clearinghouse for products of the voluminous maritime trade network that encompassed east Africa, Arabia, Persia, Southeast Asia, and Malaysia as well as the entire Indian subcontinent.

Islam originally appeared in India through a variety of conduits, and it eventually became the primary religion of one quarter of the population. From India, Islam, along with Hinduism and Buddhism, spread to Southeast Asia and the nearby islands.
Production and Trade in the Indian Ocean Basin
Agriculture

* The monsoons (rains in spring and summer)
* Irrigation systems were needed for dry months
  * No big river in south India; waterworks included dams, reservoirs, canals, wells
  * Stored rainwater in large reservoirs connected to canals
  * One reservoir constructed during the eleventh century covered 250 square miles
* Population growth: 53 million in 600 C.E. to 105 million in 1500 C.E.
* Urbanization took place in Delhi and other large port cities
The Indian Ocean Monsoons
* Internal trade
  * Self-sufficient in staple foods such as rice, wheat, barley, and millet
  * Metals, spices, special crops found only in certain regions
  * Through trade, the Chola kingdom (south India and Ceylon) experienced rapid economic growth while northern India was disrupted by invasions and conflicts
Trade and Economic Development

* Temples and society in south India (Chola)
  * Rulers allowed considerable autonomy
  * Hindu temples served as economic and social centers
  * Possessed large tracts of land, hundreds of employees
  * Temple administrators were to maintain order, deliver taxes
  * Served as banks; engaged in business ventures
Hindu Temples (distinct characteristics)

Unlike other organized religions, in Hinduism, it is not mandatory for a person to visit a temple. Since all Hindu home usually have a small shrine or ‘puja room’ for daily prayers, Hindus generally go to temples only on auspicious occasions or during religious festivals. Hindu temples also do not play a crucial role in marriages and funerals, but it is often the meeting place for religious discourses as well as ‘bhajans’ and ‘kirtans’ (devotional songs and chants).
Hindu Temples
(distinct characteristics)

Large temples were usually built at picturesque places, especially on river banks, on top of hills, and on the sea shore.

The Nagara or northern style which developed for the fifth century is characterized by a beehive shaped tower (bottom-right).

The Dravida or southern style has a pyramid shaped tower consisting of progressively smaller storeys of small pavilions, a narrow throat, and a dome on the top called a shikhara (in southern terminology). (top-right)
Hindu Temples
(distinct characteristics)

1. **The Dome and Steeple:** The steeple of the dome is called ‘shikhara’ (summit) that represents the mythological ‘Meru’ or the highest mountain peak. The shape of the dome varies from region to region and the steeple is often in the form of the trident of Shiva.

2. **The Inner Chamber:** The inner chamber of the temple called ‘garbhagriha’ or ‘womb-chamber’ is where the image or idol of the deity (‘murti’) is placed. In most temples, the visitors cannot enter the garbhagriha, and only the temple priests are allowed inside.

3. **The Temple Hall:** Most large temples have a hall meant for the audience to sit. This is also called the ‘nata-mandira’ (hall for temple-dancing) where, in days of yore, women dancers or ‘devadasis’ used to perform dance rituals. Devotees use the hall to sit, meditate, pray, chant or watch the priests perform the rituals. The hall is usually decorated with paintings of gods and goddesses.

4. **The Front Porch:** This area of the temples usually has a big metallic bell that hangs from the ceiling. Devotees entering and leaving the porch ring this bell to declare their arrival and departure.

5. **The Reservoir:** If the temple is not in the vicinity of a natural water body, a reservoir of fresh water is built on the temple premises. The water is used for rituals as well as to keep the temple floor clean or even for a ritual bath before entering the holy abode.

6. **The Walkway:** Most temples have a walkway around the walls of the inner chamber for circumambulation by devotees around the deity as a mark of respect to the temple’s god or goddess.
Cross-Culture Trade in the Indian Ocean Basin

- Dhow and junks - large ships involved in maritime trade in Indian Ocean
- Emporia, Indian port cities, were clearinghouses of trade and cosmopolitan centers
* Based on the reading, describe life in the Indian port cities. How were they centers of trade and culture? (414)
Cross-Culture Trade in the Indian Ocean Basin

* Trade goods
  * Silk and porcelain from China
  * Spices from southeast Asia
  * Pepper, gems, pearls, and cotton from India
  * Incense and horses from Arabia and southwest Asia
  * Gold, ivory, and slaves from east Africa
Cross-Culture Trade in the Indian Ocean Basin

- Specialized production
  - Production of high-quality cotton textiles thrived
  - Some of the other specialized goods and manufactures to emerge from India into the world markets at this time... (415)
Cross-Culture Trade in the Indian Ocean Basin

* Some of the other specialized goods and manufactures to emerge from India into the world markets at this time...

* Sugar refining
* Leather tanning
* Stone carving
* Carpet weaving
* High-carbon steel used for knives and swords
The kingdom of Axum was a Christian empire centered in Ethiopia.

- Resisted pressures of Islam; stayed prosperous through trade
- Controlled Adulis, most prominent port on Red Sea
Questions

* How does the kingdom of Axum serve as an example of how trade can support political, cultural and economic development? (416)

* Read the “Sources from the Past” in the box on page 417. How did Ceylon compare as a commercial center with Constantinople and Baghdad, as described by Benjamin of Tudela? (417)
* Migrations, the growth of Islam, economic development, and urbanization placed pressure on the caste system to adapt

* Caste provided guidance in absence of centralized political authority
  * Caste helped to integrate immigrants (Turks, Muslim merchants) into Indian society – codes of conduct and regulation of behavior and interaction within their group
  * Caste and social change: guilds and sub castes (jatis)
Questions

* Why did the caste system expand extensively in southern India? (418)
The Meeting of Hindu and Islamic Traditions
* Jainism and Buddhism virtually disappear although there are still small communities today
* Hinduism and Islam dominate
  * Hinduism (south): numerous gods and spirits
  * Islam (north): monotheism and theology
* Vishnu and Shiva
  * Decline of Buddhism benefited Hinduism
  * The growth of the popular Vishnu and Shiva cults (and other gods associated with them)
  * Vishnu: preserver of the world (occasionally entered the world in human form to resist evil or communicate his teachings)
  * Shiva: god of fertility but also a destructive deity (brought life and took it away)
Devotional cults: veneration of images to achieve mystic union with gods as a way of salvation (growth of temples and shrines)

* In what ways did Indians venerate Vishnu and Shiva? (420)
* **Shankara**: Shiva philosopher (ninth century) who preferred disciplined logical reasoning

* **Ramanuja**: Vishnu philosopher (eleventh and twelfth centuries) believed that understanding of ultimate reality was less important than devotion

* What role do Shankara and Ramanuja play in Indian society then and now? (422)
Happened slowly through marriages between Muslim traders and Indian women

- Muslim conquerors gave little incentive to convert (political positions reserved for Arabs, Persians, or Turks)

- Conversion to Islam occurred in a slow and gradual way
  - Some converted for improving their lower social statuses
  - Often an entire caste or sub caste adopted Islam en masse
  - Rarely improved social standing

- By 1500, about 25 million Indian Muslims (1/4 of population)
* Sufis
  * The most effective missionaries, they had a devotional approach to Islam
  * Permitted followers to observe old rituals and venerate old spirits
  * Emphasized piety (reverance for god) and devotion
  * How were Hinduism and Islam similar? (422)
* The Bhakti movement
  * Sought to erase distinction between Hinduism and Islam
  * Guru Kabir (1440-1518), important bhakti teacher, taught that Shiva, Vishnu, and Allah were one deity
  * What was the result of the Bhakti movement? (423)
    * Movement did not succeed but helped to bridge social and cultural communities
The Influence of Indian Society in Southeast Asia

* The states of southeast Asia
  * Indian influence in southeast Asia
    * Indian merchants brought their faiths to southeast Asia
    * Ruling elite of southeast Asia adapted some Indian political traditions
    * The states sponsored Hinduism and Buddhism
    * Showed no interest in Indian caste system
    * Why did ruling elites in Southeast Asia adopt Hinduism and Buddhism? (425)
The Influence of Indian Society in Southeast Asia

- **Funan** (first to sixth century C.E.) in the lower reaches of Mekong River (Cambodia/Vietnam)
  - Drew enormous wealth by controlling trade
  - What did the Funan do with the profits they gained from controlling trade between India and China? (425)
  - Adopted Sanskrit as official language
  - What political, cultural and religious traditions did Funan’s ruling class adopt from India? (425)
  - Decline of Funan in sixth century
The Influence of Indian Society in Southeast Asia

* **Srivijaya** (670-1025 C.E.) was established on Sumatra after the fall of Funan
  * Maintained sea trade between China and India by navy
  * Chola kingdom of south India eclipsed Srivijaya in the eleventh century
  * Decline of Srivijaya brings about the rise of Angkor, Singosari, and Majapahit. What were the differences between them? (426)
Angkor (889-1431 C.E.)

- Kingdom built by Khmers at Angkor Thom, later Angkor Wat
- The city was a microcosmic reflection of Hindu world order
- Turned to Buddhism during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries
- Thais invaded the capital in 1431, and Khmers abandoned it
* THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
  * When and how did Islam reach Southeast Asia? Where did Islam take root? (428)
  * Conversion to Islam was slow and quiet
    * Ruling elite converted in cities while rural residents retained their traditions
    * Islam was not an exclusive faith in southeast Asia
    * Sufis appealed to a large public in these countries
  * Melaka was powerful Islamic state during fifteenth century
    * Similarities and differences between Melaka other southeast Asian states? (428)