

2.2 Historic Empires

empires and photos of artifacts and architecture



Maps and
Graphs



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Main Idea Three South Asian empires made significant cultural contributions in religion, science, and the arts.

The Mauryan, Gupta, and Mughal empires (an **empire** is the land or people ruled by one leader) dominated the history of South Asia between 321 B.C. and A.D. 1858. Like the Harappan and Aryan empires, these later empires had the advantage of protective mountains and arable land. The Mauryans, Guptas, and Mughals also helped spread three major religions in the region—Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

The Mauryan Empire

The Mauryan (MOWR yuhn) Empire was founded in the Ganges River valley in 321 B.C. The Mauryans built an efficient and organized government, which allowed them to run the empire. They also had a standing, or permanent, army.

The leader **Asoka** ruled for nearly 40 years and brought the empire to its height around 250 B.C. As the Mauryan empire grew and flourished, Asoka turned away from conquest in favor of more peaceful policies. He studied Buddhist nonviolent teachings and built many stupas, which are Buddhist religious structures.

Buddhism began in India, but gained more followers in east and southeast Asia as it spread. After Asoka's death, the Mauryan Empire declined.

The Gupta Empire

The Gupta (GUP tuh) Empire began around A.D. 321 in the fertile Ganges River valley. Gupta leaders practiced Hinduism, which became the major religion of South Asia.

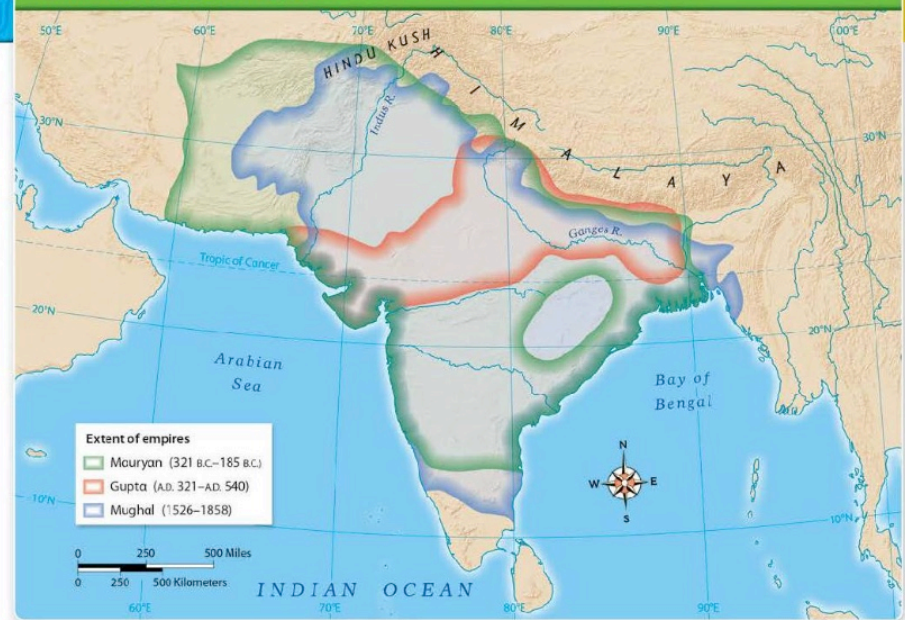
Gupta artists and scientists created lasting cultural contributions. Advances in metal working, literature, mathematics (including the development of the decimal), and astronomy were part of this legacy. Eventually, invasions weakened the Guptas and by A.D. 540, their reign was over.

The Mughal Empire

One thousand years later, the Mughal (MOO guhl) Empire was established in 1526 by Babur. Mughal rulers practiced Islam and came from Central Asia. Islam became a unifying force in South Asia and grew into a large religious minority.

Akbar the Great came to power in 1556 and ruled for 49 years. Akbar expanded the empire and practiced religious **tolerance**, or respect for others' beliefs.

EMPIRES OF SOUTH ASIA



Mughal leaders developed a large empire through military conquest. Cultural contributions of Mughal artists included the architecture of the **Taj Mahal** and detailed paintings called miniatures. The empire came to an end in 1858 when the British took control of the territory.

Before You Move On

Monitor Comprehension What cultural contributions did the three empires make?

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

MAP LAB



GeoJournal

- 1. Movement** What physical features influenced the empires' ability to control their territory?
- 2. Make Generalizations** Based on the map and what you know about arable lands, what geographic features were vital for the success of these empires?