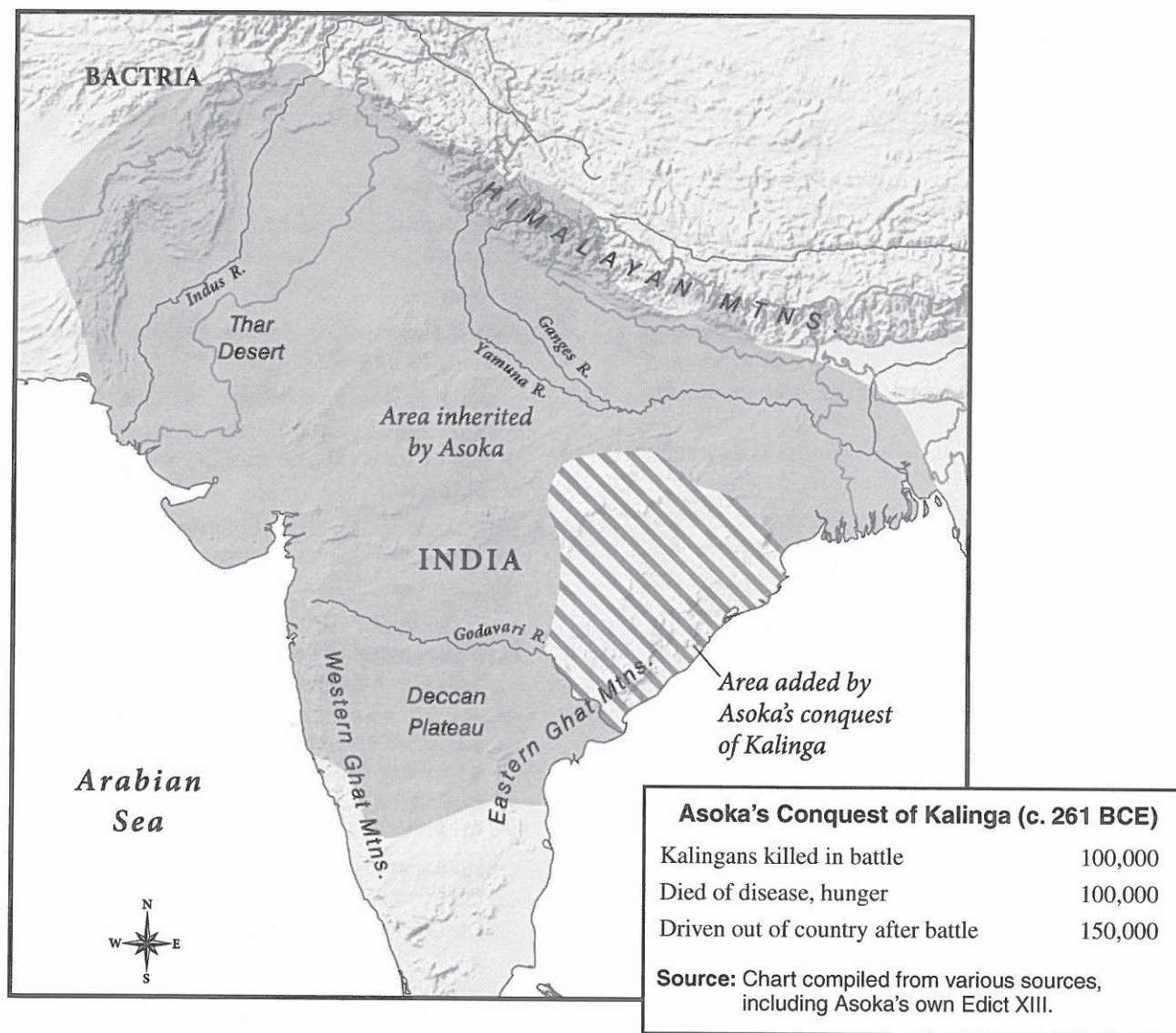


Document A

Source: Map created from various sources.

Asoka's Empire

EV



Document Analysis

1. When did Asoka invade Kalinga? How many Kalingans died as a result of his conquest?
2. What is a geographic advantage Asoka's forces had against the Kalingans?
3. Why might so many Kalingans have died of battle-related causes?
4. How does this document help you answer the question, "Asoka: ruthless conqueror or enlightened ruler?"

Document B

Source: Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford University Press, 1997.

The conquest of Kalinga was of importance both to the strategy and the economy of the Mauryan Empire.... [I]t stood in the way of the southern routes from the Ganges valley, and it was also a powerful maritime area, which if included within the empire would provide a convenient source of income.

Kalinga was conquered in the ninth year of Asoka's reign. After this conquest, Asoka ceased to indulge in wars of aggression. This... was not because he completely forsook the idea of war as a means to an end, though he claims to have done so, but because with the conquest of Kalinga the consolidation of the empire was complete. Furthermore there was now no opposing power within the empire. The people on the frontier were generally too weak to consider a war against him... and the kingdoms of southern India were on very friendly terms with the Mauryan Empire, judging from the edicts.

EV

Document Analysis

1. What was the name of the empire ruled by Asoka?
2. What river valley was an important part of Kalinga?
3. How did conquering Kalinga help the economy of Asoka's empire?
4. How does this document help you answer the question, "Asoka: ruthless conqueror or enlightened ruler?"

Document C

Source: Historian Michael Wood, as quoted in the 2009 PBS documentary *The Story of India*.

When the war in Kalinga was over...and the people [were] conquered, he [Asoka] felt inside him a great crisis, a stirring for meaning and a remorse. Asoka goes on a pilgrimage seeking a guru, a teacher. And by the riverbank he met a Buddhist monk and the monk told him to sit beneath the Bodhi tree where the Buddha had found enlightenment. And there the power of ideas and the power of the state came together in a uniquely Indian way. [It was] a rejection of the path of violence [and] of a whole way of understanding history. While he was here, Asoka gave rich gifts to the poor. He consulted with local communities about proper governance, about good conduct...forming in his mind now was a political order the sort of which had never been conceived of before in the history of the world.

EV

Document Analysis

1. Who did Asoka seek after conquering Kalinga?
2. In what way did Asoka imitate the Buddha?
3. According to the document, how did Asoka's ideas change after finding enlightenment?
4. How did Asoka feel after conquering Kalinga? Why did he feel that way?
5. What does Michael Wood mean when he says, "[It was] a rejection...of a whole way of understanding history"?
6. How does this document help you answer the question, "Asoka: ruthless conqueror or enlightened ruler?"

Document D

Source: Excerpts from the edicts of Asoka, circa 250 BCE.

Note: Asoka's 33 edicts are located throughout modern-day India, Nepal and Pakistan. Those engraved on pillars are known as "pillar edicts" and those on walls or boulders are "rock edicts."

Rock Edict II

Medicinal herbs whether useful to man or to beast, have been brought and planted wherever they did not grow; similarly, roots and fruit have been brought and planted wherever they did not grow. Along the roads wells have been dug and trees planted for the use of men and beasts.

Pillar Edict IV

I have decreed that prisoners who have been convicted and sentenced to death shall be granted a respite of three days when their relatives may appeal to the officials for the prisoners' lives.

Rock Edict VI

... I consider that I must promote the welfare of the whole world, and hard work and the dispatch of business are the means of doing so. Indeed there is no better work than promoting the welfare of the whole world. And whatever may be my great deeds, I have done them in order to discharge my debt to all beings.

Rock Edict XII

The faiths of others all deserve to be honored for one reason or another. By honoring them, one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others.



Source: Map created from various sources.

Document Analysis

1. How many major rock edicts did Asoka create?
2. Which edict is most concerned with health and the environment?
3. Which edict deals with convicted murderers?
4. Explain what Asoka means in Edict XII when he says that by honoring the faiths of others, a person exalts his own faith. Does this support the idea that Asoka was sincere about "promoting the welfare of the whole world"?
5. What does the map tell you about Asoka's level of commitment to his laws?
6. How can you use this document to answer the question, "Asoka: ruthless conqueror or enlightened ruler?"

Document E

Source: An excerpt from the edicts of Asoka, circa 250 BCE.

Rock Edict XIII

Today if a hundredth or a thousandth part of those people who were killed or died or were deported when Kalinga was annexed were to suffer..., it would weigh heavily on the mind of the Beloved of the Gods [Asoka].

The Beloved of the Gods believes that one who does wrong should be forgiven as far as it is possible to forgive him. And the Beloved of the Gods [wishes friendship] with the forest tribes of his empire, but he warns them that he has power even in his remorse and he asks them to repent, lest they be killed.

EV

Note: Rock Edict XIII makes these additional points:

1. Asoka's messengers have traveled as far as Syria, Greece, Egypt, and Sri Lanka, spreading Dharma*, the teachings of Buddha.
2. Asoka encourages his sons and great-grandsons to make any future conquests using Dharma, not military might.

* In Pillar Edict II, Asoka describes Dharma as "little evil, much good, kindness, generosity, truthfulness, and purity." Historians believe Asoka was the first important ruler to promote Buddhism.

Document Analysis

1. Who is "the Beloved of the Gods"?
2. According to Rock Edict XIII, how does Asoka now feel about the conquering of Kalinga?
3. Does Asoka believe he should be forgiven?
4. What does Asoka say should be done with "the forest people"?
5. How can you use this document to support the argument that Asoka was an enlightened ruler?
6. How can you use this document to support the argument that Asoka was a ruthless conqueror?

Document F

Source: The late Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, as quoted in *King Asoka and Buddhism: Historical and Literary Studies*, edited by Anuradha Seneviratna, Buddhist Publication Society, 1994.

Note: Nehru was a leading figure in India's independence movement and served as the country's first prime minister.

EV

Asoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man, who, though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperors. This astonishing ruler, beloved still in India and in many other parts of Asia, devoted himself to the spread of Buddha's teachings, to righteousness and goodwill, and to public works for the good of the people. He was no passive spectator of events, lost in contemplation and self-improvement. He labored hard at public business and declared he was ready for it.

Document Analysis

1. What is Nehru's opinion of Asoka?
2. How does Nehru describe Asoka's personality as a leader?
3. Why might Asoka be admired in parts of Asia outside India?
4. How does this document help you answer the question, "Asoka: ruthless conqueror or enlightened ruler?"