

## Early Medieval India

The focus here is on two major characteristics of the early medieval period, the structure and scale of the political forms which evolved and the gradual development of regional cultures and economies.

Some authors divide the subcontinent up into four major regions, or mega-regions: south, east, central and north India. Burton Stein has pointed to the existence of six major regions, the south, the west (containing Maharashtra and Gujarat), the east, the north, the central and the northwest (containing Punjab, Sind, and Baluchistan). These divisions are relevant to a discussion of the kinds of states which appeared in the early medieval centuries. Stein figures that between 500 AD and 1700, about 20 kingdoms succeeded in extending their sovereignty beyond a single mega-region, if we count the mega-regions as six in number.

Two thirds of these were ruled by Hindu dynasties, but the most durable of these imperial states was the Muslim Mughal empire, from about the middle of Akbar's reign, around 1580, to the reign of Muhammad Shah in 1730. Dominance in more than one region by almost all of these states was usually the accomplishment of a single ruler, a great conquering warrior like Pulakesin II of the seventh century Chalukyan kingdom or the mid-tenth century Krisna II of the Rashtrakutas, both of the Deccan.

Besides these 20 kingdoms which for a time at least spanned two or more large regions, there were numerous others the scale of whose authority was far more limited, but whose duration could nevertheless be considerable. From inscriptions and literary sources we get information on over 40 royal dynasties who endured for a period in the mega-regions. The chronicles of temples, royal genealogical texts, and oral traditions tell of both wealthy kings and local chiefs who attempted to achieve royal status.

The existence of so many rulers tells us that the early medieval period witnessed the emergence of new state forms, compared to the late Vedic and classical periods. There is, however, little agreement among historians about the character of these states and their form. However, the kingdom of Harsha is often taken as the typical state when scholars talk of Indian feudalism.

Harsha ruled a realm nearly as large as the Gupta kingdom during the first half of the seventh century. His capital was Kanauj, modern Kanpur, in the fertile plain between the Ganges and the Yamuna rivers, the doab. The capital had originally been at the old Mauryan capital of Pataliputra in the eastern Gangetic basin. Here there was rich agricultural potential and the revenues from trade which entered the Gangetic Plain at this point. However, with a shift to the west came improved defence of the entire plain from the Hun tribesmen who had preyed upon the Guptas.

A set of inscribed copper-plates of 632 AD provides insight into the structure of Harsha's state. This inscription recorded a gift of land to two Brahmins, by a military servant of Harsha. Among the protectors of the gift were a set of political personages in whose hands major elements of state power appeared to be vested. Some were 'great neighbors' of King Harsha, his *mahasamanta*. Others were 'great kings' (maharaja) who acknowledged Harsha's overlordship. Still others served the chakravartin, as he styled himself, in various capacities, including as soldiers. Lowest among the guarantors of permanence of the gift were the local community, the 'janapada', where the gifted lands were

located. Donations to Brahmins, Buddhists and Jainas before the time of Harsha had usually come from a royal prince or a provincial governor. In these copper-plates, however, the first of the dignitaries to be mentioned was the Mahasamanta who ruled a territory adjoining the core tract of the king around Kanauj. This, even though the donor of the land was a military servant of Harsha and the executor of the grant was an accountant in the king's service. Mahasamantas, or as they often also called themselves, *mahasamantaraja*, were independent rulers of realms near the core tracts of an overlord and might have paid tribute to the latter as well as providing military service. In most cases they were territorial magnates in their own rights, either by inheritance or conquest. Among them would also have been some who served kings like Harsha and were given lands to support their official duties in a manner similar to a feudal grant in Europe.

Titles and land grants were the means that higher lords expressed ties to lesser rulers as they attempted to organise a following. The great kingships of early medieval India were constituted by such followings. Rulers of this time spoke of their *samantachakra*, their circle of subordinates: the larger the circle, the greater the lord. A lord gained a high royal rank with a large following of minor rulers who served him in some fashion and honored him in political ritual. Both superior and inferior lords enhanced their security by such arrangements. Whether Harsha's kingdom was actually less centralized than the Guptas is uncertain, but the pattern of political agreements was different.

What is clearly different between the polity of Harsha and that of the Guptas is that the Guptas had few formidable opponents within northern India and, until quite late in the dynasty, not very formidable enemies without. The contrast with Harsha could not have been greater. He was humbled by the Chalukyan king Pulakeshin II when he sought to extend his authority southward into the Deccan. Harsha's successor was immediately crushed by the king of Bengal. This opened an era of incessant conflict covering several centuries and centering on Kanauj and Harsha's rich patrimony there. During that time warlords from every direction--from Bengal, from the Deccan, from Rajasthan in the west and from Kashmir in the north-- strove to hold Kanauj. Central Asian Muslims finally ended these conflicts by imposing their rule over the whole of the Gangetic region.

Elsewhere in India the relative centralization of the Mauryan and Gupta regimes is wholly absent. There is no question but that the states in Deccan and the south did not have administrations as describe in the *Arthashastra*. First notice of these states came in Ashoka's edict speaking of the kingdoms to which he sent Buddhist missionaries. Here the kings of the Cholas and the Pandyan in the far south are mentioned, along with kings of Syria, Macedonia, Epirus on the Ionian coast and Cyrene in north Africa. By the early centuries of the first millenium, next to the ancient Cholas and Pandyas were the Chera kings of the south-west coast of Kerala, the Satavahanas over the entire Deccan plateau, and the Chedi rulers of Kalinga on the north-east coast of modern Orissa. Some of the minor ruling houses of the fourth century were to attain very considerably greater sovereignty by 500 AD when Guptas still ruled their core Gangetic territory: Pallava and Kadamba kings ruled over eastern and western Deccan tracts, Vakatakas over the central and northern Deccan and a set of small kingdoms were found along the Orissan coast: eastern Gangas, Nalas, Mahakantaras. By the early seventh century, when Harsha's kingdom flourished in the central Ganges, the far south had come under Pallava kings of Kanchipuram and much of the central and eastern Deccan was under the Chalukyas of Badami, Pulakesin's

line.

Where did these peninsular kingdoms come from? We have mentioned the impact of the Mauryan Empire on state formation-  
-here we will elaborate on that.

The earliest peninsular kingdoms date from around the turn of the present era and appear to contain some Mauryan institutions which had emerged in two peripheral parts of Ashoka's realm. A king Kharavela established an extensive state centered on Kalinga. This you may remember as the area which Ashoka had brought into his empire with a military campaign that was so bloody that he announced that he would renounce violence. Kharavela was a Jain and though he should accordingly, it seems, have adopted the non-violence principle of that faith (*ahimsa*), he proved to be a masterful soldier. His conquests to the north and south brought him enormous wealth. Trade also added to the wealth of his state, whose coast was mentioned by Pliny the Elder, a Roman writer, in his work *Natural History*.

Evidence suggests, in fact, that Buddhist and Jaina monasteries constituted nodal points on a far-flung trade system linking coastal Kalinga to the interior. Kharavela had no successor, so that kingdom ceased with his death, but further south the Satavahana kingdom sprawled across the whole of the peninsula, connecting interior centres of trade and metal production with both trade coasts. The Satavahanas proved a longer-lived kingdom than Kharavela's owing partly to a series of able rulers. Also the structure of the kingdom offered more scope to local magnates than seemed available under the Mauryas, who had appointed governors in these distant places. Trade between both of the coasts of the realm remained important according to the first century writings of the Greco-Egyptian geographer Ptolemy. And, as in the case of Kalinga earlier, Buddhist and Jaina monastic establishments were supported by royal endowments even though its rulers were Hindu. These attracted crowds of pilgrim-consumers making these institutions nodes in an extensive trade network. Trade, then, was an important basis of peninsula kingdoms and that in close association with Jaina and Buddhist institutions.

These enjoyed high prestige and prominent positions in many parts of India during the early centuries of the first millennium, but no where so much as in the Pala kingdom of Bengal during the ninth century. Hinduism had experienced a comeback and further development in the emerging centers of regional culture in south India, in the Deccan and in many parts of northern India, but not in Bengal. Its Pala kings gave massive support to Buddhists of the Mahayana sect, giving it the flavor of the Tantric tradition of Bengali religious practice. From Bengal this variant was carried by missionaries to Tibet where it shaped the Buddhism there. The Bengali city Nalanda was the major centre of Buddhist learning in the eastern Gangetic region, and its educative functions were supported by income from hundreds of villages granted by Pala rulers. Buddhist scholars from South-east Asia were drawn there for instruction in Mahayana doctrines and practices. Nalanda and the contemporary center of high learning at Taxila, on the opposite side of the subcontinent, trained many of the monks that served Buddhist institutions in and beyond India. Thus, these monasteries along with Jain monasteries, were involved in state and community formation and major commercial developments that were taking place in the last half of the first millennium AD. The repression of Jains and Buddhists in the medieval period may have resulted partly from the deep involvement of both sects in secular activities. By 1000 AD both sects had been rendered marginal by the Hindu sects which were expanding in the new regional cultures of the

subcontinent.

As mentioned earlier, a major characteristic of the early medieval period was regional social and political development.

The regional kingdoms had fluid boundaries. They were polities defined less by administration and alliance than by language, sectarian affiliations and temples. Within these regions new political, linguistic and literary, and social histories took a shape that remain recognizable even in contemporary modern India. Religion was at the heart of this regionalizing process: gods, temples, inspired poets and philosophers. Expanding trade may have set off political processes, new patterns of competition, but religious developments affected patterns of state formation.

Buddhism and Jainism were displaced from their towering positions after Mauryan times with considerable difficulty in some places. Only with the Islamic conquests of the 12th century, when Muslims destroyed many of their sacred places, were Buddhists in Bengal overwhelmed, as Bengalis either converted to Islam or were recruited to the worship of the Hindu god, Vishnu.

More characteristic in some ways was the experience of the Tamil Country, which proved the model for the southern peninsula. It was the Tamil variant of Hindu culture which spread as well to South-east Asia.

Religious change inevitably merged in a variety of ways with both linguistic and political development: all shaped the regionalisation process. Driving the Tamil cultural process was a period of deadly struggle between a new sort of Hindu worship and the religious hegemony of Buddhists and Jains, their doctrines, and the political support they had from some rulers of Tamils around the sixth century. Little is known about the kings of this period of conflict. We have mostly hostile commentators who describe them as 'evil', but they may have been hill chiefs that extended political control over the plains of Tamil Country and patronized Buddhist and Jain institutions and teachers. Even when these so-called 'usurpers' were driven off by kings such as the Pallavas, the latter followed and supported Jainism until persuaded otherwise by teachers of a new devotional faith. The Pallava Mahendravarman (d. 630 AD) renounced his Jain affiliation and became a worshipper of Shiva, turning against and prosecuting Jains. Other Tamil rulers did the same then and later as the Shiva cult armed itself with a powerful theology to compete against that of Buddhist and Jains.

A major formulator of that Hindu theology was a Brahmin named Shankara (788-820 AD), who combined philosophical thinking with impressive administrative skill. To defeat the Jains and Buddhists and to brand them as heterodoxies, Shankara returned to the ancient Upanishads from which the Buddhist doctrines had evolved. Shankara offered new explanations of salvation and of knowledge equal to those of the powerful non-Hindu sects of his time. Besides incorporating and surpassing Buddhism's doctrines, Shankara copied their institutions by establishing monasteries in many places. Four which were famous as missionary centres became especially important and their leaders became known as Shankaracharyas.

Thus, Shankara's influence was not wholly intellectual. In addition to incorporating Buddhist and Jain models for faith and organization, he also incorporated popular worship of lord Shiva, particularly songs of praise. These hymns of devotion became the foundation for the new and popular of Hinduism that has endured until the present throughout India. Called bhakti, this

form of religious devotionism began in Tamil country during the sixth century. There had been earlier forms of devotionism, in particular that found in the *Bhagavadgita*, devotional poetry to the god Krishna. This had been composed about the first century AD and was incorporated into the *Mahabharatha* about a century prior to Shankara.

Further developments of bhakti religion among Tamils were the work of poet devotees and other theologians. Between the sixth and tenth century 63 Shiva and 12 Vishnu-worshipping poets created a large corpus of Tamil devotional songs and all are revered as saints by Tamils. Theological works of doctrines for worship of both Siva and Vishnu followed shortly as Brahmins took advantage of the intellectual base which Shankara had provided. This work protected Brahminical leadership role in religious affairs. This popular religious development spurred the development of first Tamil and then other languages between 1000 and 1300 AD. In the 12th century, bhakti hymns were composed in Bengal by the saint Jayadev, and in Mathura by Nimbarka. The latter was a south Indian Brahmin whose devotion of the god Krishna led to a missionary call that helped to make Mathura the center of the Krishna cult. Literary works along with such technical aids as grammars and dictionaries could be found in Marathi, Bengali, and several other languages. Two other literary projects were especially important besides the bhakti songs. One genre preserved or invented temple myths about the gods sheltered in temples, gods who were the objects of bhakti songs and devotional theology. Temples gave institutional focus to this reformed Hinduism. The other stimulus to the literature of the early medieval age were chronicles of ruling families of the period.

Temples and kings were decisive shapers of regional cultures; both institutions had the further effect of stimulating urbanization. Looking to Tamil Country for examples, we find that the Shiva temples of the sacred places of Chidambaram and Madurai became the chapel shrines of the Chola and Pandya kings respectively. Both ruling families lavished treasure for adorning the dieties and attracted a large permanent population of priests at each temple and throngs of pilgrims whose needs created the foundations for substantial urban centres. We know this from documents inscribed on the stone basements and walls of both temples and from the chronicles (*mahatmya*) praising the god in each. These inscriptions show how each diety was transformed from being a local protecting divinity by stories which assimilated them to Shiva legends found in Sanskrit puranas or earlier literature.

This process is sometimes called Sanskritization and illustrates one way the values and symbols of the Gangetic Plain spread throughout the subcontinent. Former territorial spirits were redefined to be great gods with cosmic powers. At the same time as Sanskritization was going on, however, royalization was also taking place. Chiefs who wanted the power and status of kings found that one way to legitimize their claims as *chakravartins* was to transform their guardian divinities into Shiva or Vishnu, deities worthy of the adoration and devotion of would-be emperors.

It is important to point out that Shiva and Vishnu were seen also as kings, as ruling gods. The human king in a region ruled on their behalf. The divine gods held court surrounded in their temples by subregional gods. These were the family gods of the human king's samantas. The sub-regional gods again rallied the village gods around them during festivals, just as headmen were occasionally invited to attend the court of a prince. The legitimacy of a human ruler was enhanced in this way. The more "royal" the cult of the territorial god, the more legitimate the claim of a king to rule that territory on behalf of the god. The bhakti cults contributed to this devotion to gods and kings in medieval India.

Temples played a major role in royal politics not only because the ruling aspect of the deity was emphasised, but because of the nature of temple ritual. Temple administrators, acting for the god, honored the men and women who endowed worship at the temples, giving gifts of land, produce or jewels. The greater the gift, the greater the honor which was given/shown as part of the ritual of worship.

The major texts outlining the ritual of temple worship are called the *Agamas*, the oldest of which were written in Sanskrit between the 3th and 7th centuries. Worship, called *puja*, was to be performed three to six times a day. It was done daily, but there were special pujas for special occasions and for the expiation of sins to alleviate a great problem. These rites were rites of adoration of the deity during which food was offered to him or her. *Arccanai* were rituals done just for the benefit of the worshipper. Puja was costly, involving washing the icon in special substances like milk and clarified butter, giving food, providing dancing to entertain the deity, dressing the icon in flowers, cloth and jewels, offering incense and making a sacrifice. The honors could be costly as well, ranging from giving a donor the food and water left over from the *puja* to the silk turban worn by the deity when he went in procession.

Not just kings, but all donors received honors in the court of the god. Thus they came to share the god's sovereignty in the same way as did those men who took part in rituals organized in the courts of human kings. Donors competed for these honors in temples, as they did for honors in the courts of princes. Thus we can see how the expansion of temple worship implied also the expansion of royal values, or royal ideologies.

In the early medieval times, the kings' temples were also palaces where royal business was conducted and royal ritual enacted. The word for temple in Tamil, for example, also means palace. Capitals thus became or were temple centers. Many of these capitals became the major temples of the time. Each was not only a sacred place for the royal deity, but also the place where the kings lived. Both god and king attracted subjects and devotees in large number. The care of both kinds of pilgrims and the objects of their adoration, human and divine, made each capital city an economic centre as well. To that spur to urbanization was added the imitations of the subordinates of kings, those magnates to whom the title *samanta* applied, who maintained smaller courts in the scores of kingdoms of the early medieval age. During this time, then another of India's historic urban phases took place, the third urbanization, after the first of the Indus Valley and the second of the Gangetic Plain in pre-Mauryan times.

Rich and powerful associations of urban-based corporate trade bodies in south India conducted their commerce over the whole of the peninsula and beyond to South-east Asia. The most famous of them took its name from a capital of one of the earliest of the medieval kingdoms, the Chalukyas. During the heyday of their rule over the Deccan in the seventh and eighth centuries Chalukyan kings had capitals at several places in Karnataka, including Ayyavole (modern Aihole). Taking as their name 'the 500 svamis (lords) of Ayyavole' in hundreds of stone inscriptions, partly in Sanskrit, partly in one of the southern languages, these prestigious traveling traders flourished from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. Their inscriptions dot the entire southern peninsula, tracing an inter-regional and international trade nexus of merchants. These trade groups provided one of the conduits for translating Dravidian culture from India to South-east Asia, a spill-over and extension beyond the subcontinent of early medieval urbanization.

That the formation of cultures and states in South-east Asia was deeply influenced by India has long been recognized. Different theories give founding roles to the conquests of Indian warriors or to missionary activities of Brahmin scholars or to the penetration of Indian merchants. Each of these explanations can be supported by some evidence, but the most likely major shaper of contact between southeastern India and south-eastern Asia were the efforts of South-east Asian rulers. They discovered in India the means for creating great kingships of their own, as a result of contacts with Indian soldiers, merchants and Brahmins. The major source of this Indian modelling was Tamil country, along with others from most famous of them took its name from a capital of one of the earliest of the medieval kingdoms, the Chalukyas. During the heyday of their rule over the Deccan in the seventh and eighth centuries Chalukyan kings had capitals at several places in Karnataka, including Ayyavole (modern Aihole). Taking as their name 'the 500 svamis (lords) of Ayyavole' in hundreds of stone inscriptions, partly in Sanskrit, partly in one of the southern languages, these prestigious traveling traders flourished from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. Their inscriptions dot the entire southern peninsula, tracing an inter-regional and international trade nexus of merchants. These trade groups provided one of the conduits for translating Dravidian culture from India to South-east Asia, a spill-over and extension beyond the subcontinent of early medieval urbanization.

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Not all of the culture contact between south and southeast Asia was peaceful. The Chola king Rajendra claims in some of his inscriptions to have made conquests in the Malayan peninsula. Some historians have suggested that he was attempting to establish commercial dominance. The later introduction of Islam into Malaya, Java and Sumatra came also from south-east India.

Muslims were present in India from the time of the founding of Islam. India's west coast knew Muslims and others from western Asia as part of the commercial expansion of the early medieval period. Arab and Jewish merchants not only journeyed along this coast on the Arabian Sea, but some were granted special protection for their religions and were even freed of tax obligations. This is known from inscriptions such as one of the eighth century on copper-plates granted to the Jewish merchant-elder Joseph Rabin, at the port of Cochin. A small Jewish community continues still to live there. At about the same time another sort of Muslim presence is recorded in the form of an Arab army which conquered Sind, the ancient

heartland of the Indus cities, and parts of Punjab to the east. India's Islamic period might have begun at this early time rather than in 1200 AD, except for the resistance to Arab invaders by the various kings of Kanauj such as Yasovaram around 736 and later Rajput chiefs and kings like the Gujara-Pratiharas who held Kanauj and most of northern India until around 950 AD. Not long after that however, in the year 1000 AD, incursions began from other Muslim fighters who were not Arabs but steppe-fighters from Central Asia.

Looking back over the period 500 to 1200 we are able to see only dimly the heritage of the Gupta golden age. The early medieval period was a distinct departure in many ways and it was the pattern for future development. The regionalization of culture, of religion and of politics was the critically significant process of the early medieval age. This involved two sorts of subordinate processes. One was the extension and transformation of Sanskritic forms dating from Gupta times. Many forms, however, were adapted to local values and were brought into localized culture through modification. Simultaneously as well local and even folk cultural elements were given Sanskritic meanings. An instance of this was the 'marriage' of the protecting goddess Minakshi at Madurai in Tamil Country to Shiva. She was in a sense turned into Shiva's Sanskritic wife Parvati in a temple ritual sponsored by the Pandyan kings. This sort of synthesizing of political, religious and cultural elements was a central feature of the regional process and assured that whatever unity is assumed about the classical Gupta age was forever dissolved in later times. As to which of the components of the regionalizing processes may have been the more important, or determining--political or religious or cultural--that is very difficult to decide. One can say that the ambition of local chiefs to become kings gave a boost to the royalisation of the gods and construction of temples. But if a powerful desire to worship the gods had not existed--in the bhakti movement--people would not have attended temple worship. We can say, too, that expanded trade and Jain and Buddhist religious activities during and after the Mauryan period gave impulses to state formation. Taxing trade gave chiefs and kings extra income.

Ambitious chiefs tried to legitimize their enlarged claims through their utilization of Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu ritual. This utilization became a process of regionalisation in that it was necessary to mix northern symbols of divinity with local ones, since the gods of the Hindu pantheon were distant from the experience of ordinary people.

At the same time, Buddhist values supported impulses among Hindus of devotion toward deities who were brought into the everyday life of ordinary people. The north Indian Shiva and Vishnu were joined by a relative recent addition to the Sanskritic pantheon, Krishna, and all three became the object of devotion of people who were part of the culture of the immanence of the divine. Influence from the indigenous culture of South Asia, the pre-Vedic culture, contributed to the religious change which saw the great gods inhabiting stone and metal idols in temples, making them more accessible. The worship of these idols through song and myth contributed to the popularity of literature in regional languages and to the growth of regional languages. The association of royal establishments with these temples enhanced the status of both gods and human rulers.

This period of political and cultural creativity coincided with the rapid development of commodity production, the manufacturing by hand of goods which made India's reputation in these early times as a land of fabulous wealth and elegance. This reputation attracted people to the subcontinent, feeding further the vitality of commerce within and beyond South Asia. It is often observed that Jain and Buddhist ideologies lingered so long in India because they provided a moral coloration to the practical values of merchants and moneyed men. They may

also have provided an institutional framework that linked Buddhist and Jain monasteries with the high commerce of the age. Hindu temples would eventually assume that role.

Another aspect of the political and cultural development of the age was the widespread acceptance of caste as a way to incorporate disparate groups into the new states and the new links between urbanization, commerce and manufacturing. Elites in areas of fertile agriculture patronized Brahmin families, granting them rich villages and lands, in return for priestly services which would legitimize the elite, landed status. Brahmins were not only necessary to would-be kings over expanded domains; they were also interesting to the lords of villages as a way of strengthening their authority over the low status laborers who worked their rice fields. In dry land areas, where hunters and pastoralist and dry land agriculturalists held sway, Brahminical influence was not so powerful and caste had a milder impact on social formations.

Though Buddhist and Jain institutions were ultimately made marginal by first, devotional Hinduism and then by iconoclastic Islam, much in their ideologies and many of their institutions enjoyed a long life in parts of the subcontinent--as Buddhism did in Bengal and Jainism in Karnataka. The heritage of their principles lived on the reformed Hinduism of Shankara's teachings. But more impressively, Buddhism experienced a full rebirth outside of India--in Tibet and China and in South-east Asia--as a result of the work of missionaries from India, as well as the interest of travelers at the Buddhist universities at Taxila and Nalanda. States and their formation in this era remains a problem because of differences among historians about whether the preIslamic era was, like that of Europe, feudal. How are these monarchies to be characterized? There is wide spread agreement now that none of these monarchies were centralized. There is also some agreement among historians that the *samanta* was an important identifying institution of politics. *Samantas* are first known in the fifth century AD Gupta kingdom of Samudragupta. Here they were military, possibly tribute-paying subordinates who, nevertheless, were also independent rulers of tracts adjoining the often modest core realm of a 'world-conquering' *chakravartin*. Later the same term was extended to include military servants of kings who attained a high degree of independence on lands granted for their services, hence a kind of feudalization.

If the exact characterization of the state is elusive, there are other aspects of early medieval politics about which there is more certainty. One has to do with the extent and importance of urbanization. This was another of the intensive urban phases in India's development. And it gives reason to be sceptical of speaking about an Indian feudalism. Nowhere is this clearer than in the way that the city of Kanauj in the western Gangetic plain was the focus of north Indian politics for several centuries during which competing conquerors from the north, south, east and west strove to seize and hold it, because the city had become the emblem of the *chakravartin*. But, all over the subcontinent other cities were created as the centres of other lordships. We have evidence in, among other sources, impressive and large ruins. The study of these remains has made historical archaeology a major intellectual enterprise in modern India. The pronounced urban character of the early medieval age--produced by a combination of religious and political causes--accounts in part for the attraction of India as a permanent homeland for the Turkic steppe fighters. Cities could be dominated so as to provide the means to sustain the new institutions of Islam and a new elite of Muslim fighters and rulers.

The late medieval age which began about 1200 AD and was characterized in part by Islamic conquests was made possible by the sheer multiplicity of states in the subcontinent. Each was

centered upon a city to be conquered and hinterlands to be ruled by Muslim horsemen of central Asia. Political forms in South Asia made such conquests possible.