The Victims
of
Latin N. and L.
The Making of Early Medieval India

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decision to do this will not reflect adversely on their judgement. My interest in early medieval India and the urge to re-examine the dominant formulations regarding the period began when I was, for about a year, a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla. I acknowledge with thanks the many facilities made available to me by the Institute. I am grateful to my colleagues Professor Muzaffar Alam and Dr Neeladri Bhattacharya for the interest they have taken in the publication of this collection; to my students Ms Nandini Sinha and Sri Shyam Narayan Lal for the help received from them in the preparation of the manuscript; and to Oxford University Press for having patiently awaited the final script.

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Abbreviations

ARIE  Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy
ARRM  Annual Report on the working of the Rajputana Museum, Ajmer
BSOAS  Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
EI    Epigraphia Indica
IA    The Indian Antiquary
IAR   Indian Archaeology—A Review
IESHR The Indian Economic and Social History Review
JBBRAS Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
JESHO Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JPASB Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society, Bengal
JRAS (JRASGBI) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland
PIHC Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
PRASWC Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey, Western Circle
ZDMG Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
some meaningful attempts in this direction. Discussions around the appropriateness or otherwise of chronological labels are now expected to relate to the theme of periodization, i.e. around the problem of historical change, and to whatever the scales and processes of historical change may have been. The problem therefore now involves—given the obvious elements of continuity in Indian history—the selection of variables which would purport to separate one historical phase from another. This task obviously implies abstraction and not simply the putting together of empirical evidence; in other words, the constructs of both what is early medieval and what leads to early medieval are problems related to the kind of vantage point a historian wishes to take, keeping long-term Indian history in mind. This introduction represents one more attempt to understand, along with the other essays as empirical support, the abstraction which the term ‘early medieval’ may represent, both as a chronological phase and as a signifier of processes of change which correspond to the phase. Of necessity, this involves a review of the current historiographic position on ‘early medieval’, as also how the passage to ‘early medieval’ has so far been viewed.

By accepting the idea of the medieval—or more specifically early medieval—as a phase in the transition to medieval, we subscribe to one way of looking at the course of Indian history. This is the perspective from which, despite an awareness of the elements of continuity, the course of history is seen in terms of stages of change. In other words this use of chronological labels like early medieval and medieval, despite the overtones of European historiography which these labels evoke, implicitly rejects the notion of the changelessness of Indian society.

It is necessary to underscore this point because the notion of India’s social changelessness, which derives essentially from particular perceptions of India’s cultural characteristics and is inextricably associated with the major premises of Orientalism, has not been given up. The notion persists under different camouflage; sometimes it stretches to

4 For a recent discussion of this in the context of Indian history and a critique, see Ronald Inden, Imagining India (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1990), passim.
Indian history started with 'Aryan invasions' and suffered a major break with the coming of the Muslims, we had a simple view of the ancient. Despite the ups and downs of its ruling dynasties and the alternation of golden ages and dark ages, 'ancient' was seen to continue till the close of the twelfth century or thereabouts. Of course this was not the only view. The use of the term 'early medieval' in relation to a period which far preceded the Turkish invasions of northern India has been in vogue for some time, although the association of 'Muslim invasions' with the advent of the medieval period has remained, willy-nilly, the dominant textbook point of view. Altogether, clarifying what we seek to understand by the term 'ancient' is no longer so simple. For one thing, concerns with definitions have become much more acute than before, and second, in the Indian context a tremendous spate of archaeological excavations and explorations has added significant dimensions to how we view the ancient period of our history. Added to this is the growing awareness among many archaeologists and historians that we have to contend with the simultaneous existence of a wide range of cultures. 'Living prehistory' is very much a live concept, and the view is quite strong that many meanings of the past can be successfully decoded only if live systems are simultaneously studied and analysed.

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6 The equation between the establishment of Muslim rule and the beginning of a new era in Indian history which, as a sequel to 'ancient', has to be considered 'medieval', is quite strongly entrenched in Indian historiography. For example, even though R.C. Majumdar appears to deviate from the normal convention of historians of India by considering the time span 1000–1300 as part of a Hindu (and by implication ancient) period, in his reckoning the establishment of the first all-India Muslim empire on the ruins of the Hindu kingdoms did 'usher in a new era in Indian history in which the Muslims played the dominant role for more than four hundred years'. R.C. Majumdar, ed., The Struggle for Empire, vol. 5 of The History and Culture of the Indian People (Bombay, 1957), Preface, xlvii.

7 The expression 'living prehistory' was used by D.D. Kosambi in his article 'Living Prehistory in India'. For reference, see R.S. Sharma and V. Jha, ed., Indian Society: Historical Probing (In Memory of D.D. Kosambi), second edition (New Delhi, 1977), p. 15, entry no. 125.

8 Kosambi repeatedly stressed that what is visible in records from the past needs to be analysed in the light of contemporary realities. His insistence on the combined method is well-known. I cannot resist the temptation of giving an excerpt from a personal letter (dated 8 February 1964) in which, too, Kosambi underlines the need to be aware of the realities which surround us: 'I have an article in the Times of India
practice among historians in India is to term this phase ‘early historical’. This term gives us a better idea of what chronological span and what kind of society we envisage when using it. ‘Early historical’ has for example, come to denote a phase which started taking recognizable shape from the middle of the first millennium BC. When historian talk about a transition from ‘ancient’ to ‘early medieval’ in Indian history, it is essentially the ‘early historical’ culture phase, which originated roughly in the middle of the first millennium BC which is the intended reference point. Even if we arrive at some kind of agreement on viewing the beginnings of ancient or early historical in this manner (and we are making a deliberate switch from ancient to early historical now), it does not necessarily mean that we are clear to go by current historical writings, on either of these two counts: (i) what the major historical traits constituting the early historical are; and (ii) how far, chronologically, early historical would stretch.

The arbitrariness in the use of labels appears evident when it is noticed that both early medieval and medieval are used in relation to the Sultanate period of north Indian history, as well as in relation to the Cola period in south India, and equally to the Cālukya period in the Deccan. It seems, then, that chronological labels need to be discussed afresh by taking up current views on periodization. It is these

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10 For the significance of this period in Indian history and for a discussion of such new trends as the emergence of territorial states, urbanization, the rise of heterodox ideas, etc., see R.S. Sharma, Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India, chs 6 and 7, R. Thapar, From Lineage to State Social Formations in the Mid-First Millennium BC in the Ganga Valley (Bombay, 1984). The middle of the first millennium BC is taken as a chronological reference point, in comparison with other civilizations, as the ‘axial age’ of Indian history; H. Kulke, ‘The Historical Background of India’s Axial Age’, in S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., The Origins and Diversities of Axial Age Civilizations (State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 374–92.

11 Cf. the chronological focus of, for instance, Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India (Delhi, 1980); G S. Dikshit, Local Self-Government in Medieval Karnataka (Dharwar, 1964); Om Prakash Prasad, Decay and Revival of Urban Centres in Medieval South India, c AD 600–1200 (Patna, 1989). David Ludden seems to speak of the ‘last century of the medieval period’ in the context of Cōla-Pāṇḍya rule in south India, but it is not clear which century he refers to. See Ludden’s, Peasant History in South India, first Indian reprint (Delhi, 1989), p. 205. By contrast, the time span 500–1200 is taken to represent ‘early medieval’ in R.S. Sharma, Social Changes in Early Medieval India (circa AD 500–1200), The First Devraj Chanana Memorial Lecture (Delhi, 1969).
through the transformation/inversion of these attributes that we arrive at a set of almost opposed attributes which mark the beginnings of 'medievalism'. To put it in terms persistently used, the 'route to medievalism, in what is currently the dominant school of ancient Indian historiography, was through 'Indian feudalism'. The belief in 'Indian feudalism' as an explanatory model for the transition has become so assertive as to inspire, in a recent important empirical contribution to the theme, this statement: 'the problem today is not whether India experienced a feudal development but rather what was the precise mechanism of such a development'. What constituted medievalism and what constituted Indian feudalism are understandably perceived differently by different historians: the historiographical ground has been so well covered that it is pointless to repeat the discussion. However, it is necessary to analyse sample views of the transition to the early phase of medievalism in order to understand shifts in the connotations of chronological labels, as well as shifts in the formulations of explanatory positions.

One type of statement on the transition, by Niharranjan Ray, attempts a multi-dimensional characterization of medievalism. He locates the beginning of the process in the seventh century and says it became more pronounced from the eighth century; he envisages three subperiods within the medieval: (i) seventh to twelfth century; (ii) twelfth to the first quarter of the sixteenth century; and (iii) first quarter of the sixteenth to the close of the eighteenth century. Un-

13 R.N. Nandi, 'Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India', Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress, 45 session (Annamalai, 1984).


15 N.R. Ray, 'The Medieval Factor in Indian History.'
although, it needs to be stressed, the essential variables of the Indian feudalism construct are also present in his formulation.\textsuperscript{17}

From what we have said above, two points emerge: (i) in the dominant view within Indian historiography, medievalism is present in the centuries preceding the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, and the early phase of medievalism has to be understood in terms of the features of Indian feudalism; and (ii) Indian feudalism is a recent construct, and this construct (which has to be distinguished from earlier haphazard uses of the term feudalism) imbibes elements from different strands of historical writing.

However, despite the inevitable shifts which occur when explaining the formation of the structure which the construct represents, as well as when identifying the major political, social and economic variables of the structure, certain common variables figure as points of consensus. These variables exist in opposition to what are seen to constitute the ancient or early historical order. The essential points may be highlighted thus, particularly because they appear almost as the polar opposites of the attributes of early historical society:\textsuperscript{18}

1. \textit{Political decentralization:} The conventional duality of centrifugalism and centripetalism in Indian polity has been replaced by the image of a structure which provides a counterpoint to the centralized, bureaucratic state, the crystallization of which is located only in the post-Gupta period. The new state structure is characterized by decentralization and hierarchy, features suggested by the presence of a wide range of semi-autonomous rulers, \textit{śamantas}, \textit{mahāśamantas} and similar categories, and the hierarchized positioning of numerous rāja-

2. \textit{The emergence of landed intermediaries.} This is considered the hallmark of Indian feudal social formation and is seen to be linked both to the disintegration and decentralization of state authority and

\textsuperscript{17} For example, Kosambi considered the decline of a money economy, the rise of village self-sufficiency, and the growth in the rank of \textit{tīhī} holding \textit{śamantas} as hallmarks of Indian feudalism, these features seem to be common to most constructs of Indian feudalism thus far.

\textsuperscript{18} Detailed bibliographical references from which these features are abstracted will be found in B D. Chattopadhyaya, ‘State and Economy in North India. 4th century to 12th century’. 
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to major changes in the structure of agrarian relations. The emergence of landed intermediaries—a dominant landholding social group presumed absent in the early historical period—is causally linked to the practice of land grants. The identifiable recipients of which in the early centuries of the Christian era (as also in later periods) were almost invariably brahmanas or religious establishments. However, in the context of the post-Gupta period, feef holders and free holders are terms used in relation to secular recipients of such grants and to autonomous holders of land.

3. A change over from the market or money economy to self-sufficient villages as units of production rationalizes this being an important dimension of the transition process. This change over is seen as deriving from the decline of early historical urban centres and commercial networks. This led to the practice of remuneration in land as a substitute for cash to the migration of different social groups to rural areas to an agrarian expansion, and to the crystallization in rural society of jajmani relationships (relationships of interdependence between patrons and clients). According to one formulation, feef holders and free holders in rural society emerged as agents of social change in the latter phase of early medieval society generating once again such features of early historical economy as trade, urbanism, and a money economy/market economy.¹⁹

4. Subjection of the peasantry. Likened sometimes to servitude characteristics of the subjection of the peasantry such as immobility, forced labour and the payment of revenue at exorbitantly high rates all point to the nature of stratification in post-Gupta society. The condition of the peasantry in this pattern of rural stratification was in sharp contrast to what the agrarian structure in early historical India represented since that structure was dominated by free Vaisya peasants and labour services provided by the Sudras.

5. The proliferation of castes. One dimension of social stratification is suggested by the proliferation of castes in post-Gupta society. Despite the presence of the idea of varnasamkara which explains the

¹⁹ See R.N. Nandy, Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India, Presidential Address Ancient India Sect on Indian History Congress 45th sess on (Annamala 1984)
tendency of castes to proliferate in terms of uneven marital relations in the pre-Gupta period.\textsuperscript{20} the intensity of the caste formation process is located only in the post-Gupta period.\textsuperscript{21} As representing a comprehensive process of transition, the proliferation of castes was not marked by the appearance of major groups like the Kayasthas alone, but by varieties of other groups as well. Further, many of the social groups associated with what was considered to be polluting manual labour came to constitute the degraded rank of untouchables.\textsuperscript{22}

6. The feudal dimension of the ideology and culture of the period: The core of the ideology of the period is seen to be characterized by bhakti, which was feudal in content, since it accentuated the relationship of loyalty and devotion, which are believed to be hallmarks of feudal ties.\textsuperscript{23} At the level of culture, the decline of what was urbane and cosmopolitan had its natural sequel in the degeneration of feudal courtly culture. The association of degenerate religious practices (such as Tantric rituals) in princely courts, and the fact that the new agrarian structure created a leisurely class of landed magnates, provided congenial conditions for the rise of a feudal social ethos and feudal cultural traits.\textsuperscript{24}

One cannot be sure of any consensus, even among those who study the transformation of early historical society in feudal terms, on reducing the 'vast ramifying reality' of post-early historical society to the features outlined above. However, what we are dealing with at the moment is current historiography. The rationale for projecting the image of the period, conceived as the early medieval period of Indian

\textsuperscript{20} For the concept of varnasamkara as going back to when the Sutras were compiled, see V. Jha, 'Varnasamkara in the Dharmasutras: Theory and Practice',\textit{Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient}, vol. 13, pt. 3 (1970), pp. 273–88.

\textsuperscript{21} R.S. Sharma, \textit{Social Changes in Early Medieval India (circa AD 500–1200)}.

\textsuperscript{22} For the Kayasthas, see Chitrarekha Gupta, The Wittles Class of Ancient India—A Case Study in Social Mobility', \textit{The Indian Economic and Social History Review}, vol. 20, no. 2 (1983), pp. 191–204.

\textsuperscript{23} See the section titled 'Feudal Ideology' in D.N. Jha, ed., \textit{Feudal Social Formation in Early India} (Delhi, 1987), pp. 311–401.

\textsuperscript{24} See in particular, Devangana Dosai, 'Art: Under Feudalism in India (c. AD 500–1300)', reprinted in D.N. Jha, \textit{Feudal Social Formation in Early India}, pp. 391–401; also Idem, 'Social Dimensions of Art in Early India', Presidential Address, Section I, Ancient India, Indian History Congress, 50th session (Gorakhpur, 1989).
history, in terms of these features is that they are posited as points of sharp contrast with features of early historical society. Indeed, in the available writings on the theme of transition from antiquity to the middle ages or more specifically from the early historical to the early medieval, the transition seems the crystallization of an opposition early medieval is seen as a breakdown of the civilizational matrix of early historical India.

Breakdown implies social crisis and it is precisely in terms of a social crisis that the breakdown of the early historical civilizational order has been envisaged. The historical events which signify crisis are identified differently by different historians or at times by the same historian sometimes it is the Huna invasions, sometimes it is the expansion of the scale of land grants, at other times it is the decline of the early historical urban civilization which tears the fabric of early historical social order. Recent writings attempt to show that the crisis can be analysed, in concrete historical terms, from the way the epics, the Puranas and other brahmanical texts delineate Kaliyuga, namely as marking the fall from a normative social order which is assumed to have been the existing social order. Kaliyuga, the contemporary

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15 The terminology is that of B N S Yadava, “The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages” The Indian Historical Review vol 5 nos. 1-2 (1979) pp 31-64.


17 The genesis of Indian feudalism through which the transition to early medieval Indian crystallized was persistently traced by R S Sharma to the practice of land grants with administrative rights. R S Sharma Origins of Feudalism in India (AD 400-650) Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, vol 1 no. 3 (1958), 298-328. Idem, Indian Feudalism, c. 300-1200 (Calcutta 1965).

18 The point is particularly stressed in R N Nandi, Growth of Rural Economy in pre-modern India. The emphasis on the practice of land grants to urban decay, which according to him was the social crisis equivalent to feudal decline, is urban decay in Shaili (1901, Calcutta 1947) and Urban Decay in Shaili (1901, Calcutta 1947) in particular.

19 For details of how Kaliyuga which essentially signifies a period of devolution from ideal Brahmanical society is perceived as corresponding to actual historical trends after a particular period see R S Sharma, “The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis,” in S N Mukherjee ed. India, History and Thought (Essays in Honour of A L Basham) (Calcutta 1982) pp 186-203; B N S Yadava, “The Accounts of the Kali Age”.
segment in the early Indian schema of cosmic periodization, is believed to be congruous with a segment of actual historical time span. This is because the brahmanical texts use concrete social categories such as the state, human settlements, varna, and so on, to highlight an upheaval which heralded a rupture with the past. The transition to the early medieval period is located in this social upheaval. This is perhaps why what is perceived as the phase of transition to medieval society is seen to be composed of elements which were the opposites of elements constituting early historical society.

II

A detailed critique of the position summed up above would be redundant here; while one can insist on the empirical validity of what sustained research over the years has established, it is equally possible to detect explanatory incongruities in the way the transition has been constructed. Detailed empirical and competent research presents us with the image of a society which was going through change, and no serious student of Indian history today would now view Indian society of the second and third centuries as having remained unchanged by the eighth and ninth centuries; we cannot now believe that the societies represented by these two time-segments were identical.

The question then really is: what made the eighth and ninth centuries (and of course subsequent centuries) so very different from the second and third centuries? The answer will emerge from the particular perspectives one chooses to adopt for viewing change in Indian history. It seems to me that an understanding of the making of early medieval India—as indeed the very rationale of the label ‘early medieval’ for a particular historical time span—has to begin by identifying the major historical processes in early India and examining the crystallization of these processes in their specific temporal and spatial contexts. Empirical evidence can be understood only if we are able to view it through these major historical/societal processes of change; else there is the danger of isolating a set of evidence from the total context, a sort of ‘arbitrary abstraction’.

30 See B.D. Chattopadhyaya, ‘State and Economy in North India: 4th to 12th...
In the context of early Indian history in particular this meth
odological emphasis on societal processes in their specific temporal
spatial manifestations is important. This is because historians often
depend on one set of evidence by virtually ignoring other categories
with which comparsons ought to have been undertaken. A common
example of this ease is the historiography of the Mauryan empire.
The image of this empire as a highly centralized and bureaucratic state
apparatus operative over a largely homogeneous culture zone is con
structed on the basis of certain categories of evidence. This image
with its roots in nationalist historiography (which justifiably hailed
the discovery of the Arthasastra) tends to ignore the distinctions in
terms of their specific cultural patterns between Madhyadesa of
fourth third centuries BC and large parts of the empire such as the
Deccan where the dominant culture was still megalithic and in a
pre-state stage. 1 Thus, when we talk of political fragmentation fol
lowing the breakup of the Mauryan empire, we miss the major sig
ificance of the empire in its societal processes. The sequels to the
formation of the Mauryan empire were (i) the reaching out in dif
ferent directions of the cultural elements which the Mauryan state
with its core in the Madhyadesa represented (ii) their interaction with
local cultural matrices and (iii) in subsequent stages, the formation
of local states and empires in the Deccan. Looked at from this perspec
tive, the breakup of the Mauryan empire did not bring a societal
process to a close, rather it needs to be underlined that keeping

\footnote{The cultural variances within the Mauryan empire and their implications for
the overall structure of the Mauryan state: the reconstruction of which lean
heavily on the Arthasastra evidence have not been adequately undertaken so far. For
a continuing characterization of the Mauryan state as central red—implying the
existence of a uniform pattern of administration throughout the empire—see R.S.
Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideals and Institutions in Ancient India, ch 15 revised edition
(Delhi: 1991), ch 23 Appendix; to ch 23 and
ch 24. For some recent relevant discussions, see G.M. Berg and T.M. Raina,
Mauryan India (New Delhi: 1985), ch 14; Romila Thapar, The State and Empires in
Ancient India, and Peter Skalnik, eds., The Study of the State (The Hague: 1981), pp
409-26. Idem, The Mauryas Revisited (5 G. Devaki Lectures on Indian History
1984) (Calcutta: 1987), pp. 31; G. Fussman, Central and Provincial Administration in
Ancient India: The Problem of the Mauryan Empire. The Indian Historical Review
vol. 14 nos 1-2 (1987-88), pp. 43-72.}
specific regional/chronological dimensions in view, it accelerated societal processes of change.\textsuperscript{32}

The major historical-societal processes in early Indian history will then have to be identified not by taking an epicentral view, but by keeping in mind the fact that historical-cultural stages have always been uneven over the subcontinent.\textsuperscript{33} It seems to me that, viewed from this perspective, it should be possible to identify at least three major processes which were operative through all the phases of Indian history, and through early Indian history in particular. These processes were: (i) the expansion of state society through the process of local state formation; (ii) the peasantization of tribes and caste formation; and (iii) cult appropriation and integration. Obviously, these processes were not unrelated to one another, and together they constitute a cultural matrix which came to acquire over the centuries a recognizable shape at the subcontinental level, including in areas which had initially remained peripheral.\textsuperscript{34}

Identifying these societal processes and underlining them as the

\textsuperscript{32} For discussions relating to Kalinga and the Deccan, see S. Seneviratne, \textit{Kalinga and Andhra: The Process of Secondary State Formation in Early India}, \textit{The Indian Historical Review}, vol. 7, nos. 1–2 (1980–1), pp. 54–69, also B.D. Chattopadhyaya, \textit{Transition to the Early Historical Phase in the Deccan: A Note}, in B.M. Pande and B.D. Chattopadhyaya, eds, \textit{Archaeology and History (Essays in Memory of Sri A. Ghosh)}, vol. 2 (Delhi, 1987), pp. 727–32.

\textsuperscript{33} For a statement of how geographers view the hierarchy of regions, and how such perceptions can relate fruitfully to the study of early Indian cultural patterns—not in isolation but in their interrelatedness—see B Subbarao, \textit{The Personality of India}, second edition (Baroda, 1958), chs 1 and II. Cf. also the relevant remarks by the Allchins: ‘One of the distinctive features of South Asian culture in historic and recent times is the way in which it has encapsulated communities at many different cultural and technological levels, allowing them, to a large extent, to retain their identity and establish intercommunity relationships’. And further: ‘We must recall that in the Indian subcontinent distinct, self-contained social groups, at different levels of cultural and technological development, survived right into this century. They include hunting and collecting tribes, pastoral nomads, shifting cultivators, traditional settled agriculturists, modern “developed” agriculturists, and several levels of urban industrial society, all co-existing and economically interdependent. This provides us with a basic model for past developments’. Bridget and Raymond Allehin, \textit{The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan} (reprinted New Delhi, 1989), pp. 11, 62.

\textsuperscript{34} This point was made earlier in B D Chattopadhyaya, \textit{Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective}, pp. 10–11.
mechanism of integration do not mean taking an epicentrical position. On the contrary, they point to the need to understand how historical regions emerge with distinct personalities—not by being submerged by a single predetermined cultural pattern but by responding to and in turn reshaping within a broad range of variations an ever dynamic pattern whose dominant political, social, economic and cultural dimensions could be recognized at a pan-Indian level. The making of early medieval India, if we adopt this perspective, may thus have to be seen in terms of the scale of certain fundamental movements within the regional and local levels and not in terms of the crisis of a pre-existent pan-Indian social order.

III

It is necessary to elucidate this position by referring to some of the important evidence which has a bearing upon the processes mentioned above. This evidence relates to specific contexts within the formation of regional societies. Chronologically, the period between the third and sixth centuries but more particularly the period after the sixth century was marked by an increasing scale of local state formation. This process is suggested by the emergence of different categories of ruling lineages distributed over regions which geographers like to put under different labels.35

To illustrate this process, I would like to cite examples from two time brackets: the third-sixth centuries and the sixth-ninth centuries. In the Vidarbha region of north-east Maharashtra, archaeology reveals a sequence of cultures which, as in many other regions, stretches from the marginally Chalcolithic through the Megalithic to the early historical urban phase.36 As a region, early historical Vidarbha was a part

35 See note 33. The notion of regions starting from what are considered perennially nuclear to others down the scale, is present in O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmouth, India and Pakistan (Land, People and Economy) (Delhi, 1972) part 2. A familiar view of the notion of regions has proved of great use in understanding the differential chronology and scale of local level state formation. This represents a distinct advance from the position which assumed the existence of states in all regions of India simultaneously or which viewed the study of dynamic history as equivalent to the study of the state.

36 For a brief statement on the sequence of archaeological cultures in Vidarbha
of the major territorial kingdom of the Sātavāhanas, but the local state of Vidarbha, with an extensive agrarian base, came into existence only in the form of the Vākāṭaka lineage from the middle of the third century AD.37 Going by the nature of the hypothesis being formulated regarding the breakdown of the early historical social order, one may encounter the suggestion that the agrarian kingdom of the Vākāṭakas was a consequence of the decline of the early historical urban centres of Vidarbha.38 But the connection appears, even on the face of it, to be rather tenuous, and in any case impossible to validate empirically. Such a connection would also leave unexplained how the lineages of the Ikṣyākus, the early Pallavas and the early Kadambas (to name only a few) arose in other parts of the Deccan more or less in the same period.39

In the post-sixth century the scale of the formation of local states and the transformation of some of them into major, regional state structures became much more historically significant. These state structures, the rise of which can be located between the seventh and tenth centuries and which can be placed in all the major regions,40 are

37 For a recent study of the agrarian base of the Vākāṭaka kingdom, based on a study of its land grants, see K.M. Shrimati, Agrarian Structure in Central India and the Northern Deccan (A Study in Vākāṭaka Inscriptions) (Delhi, 1987).

38 For a brief resumé of the urban settlements of Vidarbha such as Pauni, Paunar, Kaundinyapura, etc. and the extent of their chronological span, see R.S. Sharma, Urban Decay in India, pp. 74–8.

39 For these post-Sātavāhana local ruling families which emerged in different parts of the Deccan and adjoining regions, see R.C. Majumdar, ed., The Age of Imperial Unity (vol. 2 of The History and Culture of the Indian People) (Bombay, 3rd impression, 1960), ch. 14.

40 Since the primary concerns of early India’s historians have been centred on reconstructing the genealogies and chronologies of ruling families, and on statements about dynastic achievements, the crucial dimensions which have generally been overlooked are: (i) how the emergence of ruling lineages in different areas bears upon the problem of local-level state formation and regional political structure; (ii) how-
familiar to every student of Indian history. The point of significance is not their genealogical or military history but the fact that examined closely they all display trends which worked towards the formation of the regional political, economic and socio-religious order. These trends separate them from those of state formation in the early historical period. I shall return to this issue later.

I have picked on the process of local state formation despite the presence of large territorial states in the early historical period as exemplifying the process of transition. This is because when studied in the context of its local manifestation, state formation makes intelligible a wide range of relationships whereas discussions regarding the state from the stratosphere of a unified concept rarely succeed in grasping such relations. At one level the process of state formation between the third fourth and the sixth tenth centuries resolved one outstanding issue: monarchy became the norm of polity. This vindicated Brahmanical monarchical ideology. The view that anarchy pervaded the vacuum which signified an absence of monarchy is. The significance of this resolution was not limited to the political sphere for even before the fourth century there was no opposition between heterodoxy and kingship. What it signified more importantly was the ultimate affirmation of the Brahmanical view of the varna order in the political context. This was the most comprehensive framework of social stratification available and its expansion in the form of varnasamiksha was capable of both a horizontal and vertical spread. Since the framework was pliable it left the working out of actual social details to their temporal and spatial contexts. Channels were available for the processes of social mobility either in the form of movements

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For a theoretical correla.to between the absence of the monarch and anarchy particularly with a Brahmanical ideology see Kamla Thakur. *From Jarge to State (Social Form a Era in the Mad Prat Millennium, at in the Ganges Valley)*. p. 116.

within the hierarchy envisaged in the social order, or through the organization of protests against the ordering of the hierarchy.\footnote{This mobility took the form of segmentation and stratification within a community, with one segment emerging as an elite group, mostly by acquiring political power and an economic base. See B.D. Chatterjee, 'Origin of the Rajputs: The Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan', \textit{The Indian Historical Review}, vol. 3, no. 1 (1976), pp. 64–5; and S. Jaiswal, 'Studies in Early Indian Social History: Trends and Possibilities', \textit{The Indian Historical Review}, vol. 6, nos. 1–2 (1979–80), pp. 1–63. There is also enough evidence to show that protests against the ordering of hierarchy as envisaged in the \textit{varṇa} ideology (which gave predominance to Brāhmaṇas) were quite common. Dissenting groups such as the Siddhas rejected \textit{varṇa} altogether (see notes 67 and 68), and protests could also take the form of individual families, which wielded considerable political power, associating themselves with the Śūdra \textit{varṇa} in order to claim a purity greater than the other \textit{varṇas}. See S. Jaiswal, 'Varna Ideology and Social Change', \textit{Social Scientia}, vol. 19, nos. 3–4 (1991), p. 47. The genesis of such early medieval ideas and movements as Vīraśaivism (which acquired a massive social following in the Deccan) lay in protests against \textit{varṇa} hierarchy as well as against the ideological and economic dominance of Brāhmaṇas in society. See R.N. Nandi, 'Origin of the Vīraśaiva Movement', \textit{The Indian Historical Review}, vol. 2, no 1 (1975), pp. 32–46.}

In addition to the dimension of ideology, to which was related the legitimation of royalty, the use of the term 'state' immediately implies (i) the existence of a resource base capable of generating a surplus; and (ii) the existence of a structure of relationships of domination and subordination. My contention is that if one were to examine the nature of the interrelatedness between the major societal processes identified above, we would reach an understanding of what precisely was activated by state formation. For example, if a recurrent motif of change in Indian society (and for the moment let us take this as an ahistorical abstraction) was the transformation of tribes into peasantry, then state formation, as a catalyst in the historical process, can be seen to accommodate several levels in the relationship of domination and subordination. Further, it points to the dominant strand in the total structure of such relations. In other words the extension of the state in pre-state societies, in those cases where state societies continued over centuries (either through conquest or through the emergence of local ruling lineages), inevitably brought about a range of changes in a region or in a community hitherto without the state sort of political formation. A state would integrate as well as disintegrate; it would
create a distinct stratum of ruling elites and in doing so cause ruptures within communities which had remained largely undifferentiated. The formation of relationships of domination and subordination thus cannot be viewed entirely as the superimposition of extraneous elements upon a community nor is stratification simply a dichotomous relationship between such elements and a pristine community. In other words it is sharp fissions within communities and regions and the emergence of a complex of relations of domination and subordination which characterize a regional state society; this is irrespective of whether the polities representing such societies remained autonomous or semi-autonomous from or became parts of large state structures.

In Rajasthan—the region from which I have analysed some of the empirical material—the period approximately after the seventh century witnessed significant changes. The proliferation of ruling lineages,

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43 The volume of literature on early state formation is enormous. But the relevance of much of this literature for analysis of evidence from societies in which states had long been in existence is somewhat limited. However, the following works offer varied viewpoints on the implications of the emergence of the state in early societies: H J M Claessen and Peter Skalnik [eds], The Early State (Mouton Publishers, 1978); Idem, The Study of the State (Mouton Publishers, 1981); Morton Fried, The Evolution of Political Society (New York, 1967); R. Cohen and E.R. Service, Orims of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution (Philadelphia, 1978); and H J M. Claessen and P. Van de Velde [eds], Early State Dynamics (Leiden, 1987).

44 The use of terms such as “village community” when applied to residents of a settled village which constituted a basic unit in a state thus stands in the way of a proper understanding of rural social structure in the context of state society. If the residents of a village were different acted in various ways then constructing them into a community would serve little purpose; intra-village and trans-village networks would depend on how sections of rural residents were aligned across village boundaries. For relevant discussion see B D Chattopadhyaya, Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India, particularly pp 125–31.

45 Thus why the concept segmentary state when applied to such larger territorial kingdoms as the Cola, makes no sense. This concept is concerned merely with a superficial appraisal of how political powers represented different scales may have related to one another not with the more vital dimension of their vertical structures. For bibliography and discussion see B D Chattopadhyaya, Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective
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46 See the relevant essays included in this collection and in Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India, ch 3.
which over time came to constitute the social category called ‘Rajput’, was initially spread over the period from the seventh to the tenth centuries. The process which crystallized in the formation of this social category drew in non-indigenous communities like the Hūṇās, as well as indigenous lineages like the Guhilas and the Caulukyas. In some cases, the integration of lineages bearing the same clan name laid the foundation of a stable state structure. This happened in the case of the Guhilas, several lineages of which were initially distributed over Gujarat and Rajasthan. By the twelfth-thirteenth centuries the Nagda-Ahar lineage of the Guhilas, which controlled the nuclear area of Mewar, had emerged as the most important lineage, preparing a stable base for the medieval state of Mewar.\footnote{\textit{The Making of Early Medieval India}} In other parts of Rajasthan land grants as well as other varieties of grants after the seventh-eighth centuries point to the emergence of agrarian bases, supported in some areas by well irrigation. This was also the period when tribal and pastoral groups started getting either marginalized or began figuring, at least in epigraphic records, as cultivators. One specific case was the Gurjaras, who are mentioned as cultivators. But it should be noted that several ruling families of western India were likely to have emerged out of Gurjara stock.

The simultaneous operation of several processes of change in situations of regional state formation can be seen by making cross-regional references. The pattern was obviously not identical everywhere. For example, if one refers to the Orissa of the period between the fourth century and the mid-twelfth century in terms of three sub-phases (fourth-seventh centuries, seventh-tenth centuries and tenth-mid-twelfth centuries), one notices constant shifts in centres of power and the formation of new lineages side by side with the existence of some stable lineages. This goes on till the establishment of the major power of the Coḍa-Gangas in the eleventh century.\footnote{The history of the Guhila lineages of this phase and of the ascendency of the Nagda-Ahar lineage has been worked out by Nandini Sinha, ‘The Guhila Lineages and the Emergence of State in Early Medieval Mewar’, unpublished M. Phil dissertation, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi, 1988).} The implication
of this political geography of Orissa between the fourth century and the mid twelfth century is that the various loci of the ruling families which emerged were also as the land grants tell us the agrarian resource bases of such families. One can go further south and note how the formation of agrarian regions in the context of the regional political structure was taking place. It has been contended quite correctly that although the origins of the various sub-regions of Tamil Nadu go back to the early centuries their development as agrarian regions resource bases and cultural subregions took place over several centuries (seventh to thirteenth centuries). The earlier period was that of the Pallavas and Pandyas (seventh to ninth centuries) followed by the Colas (ninth to thirteenth centuries) particularly the last of them. In a sense the macro-region evolved with the distinctive socio-political culture which developed under the Colas.

As in the case of some areas of Rajasthan, the expansion of agrarian base and rural settlement region in Tamil Nadu too was linked with the expansion of irrigation networks. There is a general correspondence between the steady increase in irrigation works and the increase in the radius under the Pallavas and early Colas. In fact one would suspect that the generalization made about Tamil Nadu would be applicable to other parts of peninsular India though the pace and chronology of the formation of agrarian regions in such parts may have been somewhat different.

If we are willing to accept—and this will depend on how intent we are on departing from the overwhelmingly dominant notion—that

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in Orissa. An Epigraphic Study ad 300-1147 (Delhi 1994)
50 Ibid p 97 This seems to correspond to Burton Stein's model on regarding the expansion of settled agriculture and the acceleration in the pace of radius formation in the Pallava- Cola periods. See Prasun Banerjee and Society in Medieval South India, ch. 2. For the importance of the Pallavan Pandyas phase as marking a major beginning in irrigaion works see V. Venkata. Irrigation in Southern India in Pallava Times. Archaeological Survey of India. Annual Report 1903-04 pp 207 11 and Rajan Gunalkal Aspects of the Reservoir System of Irrigation in the Early Pandyas State Studies in History new series vol 2 no 2 (1986) pp 155-64.
local/sub-regional or regional state formation did not necessarily derive from the fragmentation of a given state structure, and that the stabilization of a state structure at local and regional levels implied changes of various dimensions, then it will be possible to turn to the other major societal process mentioned earlier, namely the peasantization of tribes and their absorption into the dominant social order as caste categories. Our readiness to accept an alternative perspective may also help us resolve certain anomalies which exist in our understanding of the conditions of the peasantry.

The anomaly can be stated in the following terms. It is often believed that the position of the Vaiśya varṇa, traditionally associated with cattle-keeping, agriculture and commerce, declined gradually as a result of the decline of long-distance commerce, and that the position of the Śūdras, whose ranks swelled through the assimilation of numerous aboriginal tribes and foreign elements improved. In one formulation ‘the new Śūdras do not seem to have been recruited as slaves and hired labourers like their older counterparts. They pursued their old occupations and were possibly taught new methods of agriculture, which gradually turned them into tax-paying peasants’. At the same time it has been repeatedly stressed that the early medieval peasantry was a ‘subject peasantry’, their condition having undergone radical and adverse changes through the practice of land grants which introduced a layer of intermediaries between the state and the peasants. The formulations in fact envisage two contradictory positions: (i) the ‘subjection of the peasantry’, their subjection having been generated by the practice of land grants. This formulation thus does not seem

51. R.S. Sharma, Śūdras in Ancient India (A Social History of the lower order down to c AD 600), revised second edition (Delhi, 1980), pp. 240–41.


53 In addition to the references cited in note 52, see bibliography in B.D. Chattopadhyaya, ‘State and Economy in Northern India: 4th century to 12th century’
to relate to the Vaisya peasants of the early historical period, whose economic and social status is believed to have declined because of the decline of commerce; and (ii) the majority of the cultivators were by now tribes turned into tax paying Sudra peasants; these were no longer recruited as slaves and hired labourers as were their older counterparts.

This anomaly may be resolved if we get away from the Dharma-sutra category of the Sudra varna. This latter, when it related to the context of assimilated tribes and other ethnic elements was in any case a product of the fiction of varna simkara (intermixture of varnas). Instead we should examine the actual cultivating categories in different regional contexts. In fact when I refer to cultivating groups in the post-Gupta period I do not refer to them simply as Sudras; I either use the status in terms of which they were known or I use the specific names given to them in the sources. In Bengal, for example, the evidence from the Gupta period onwards refers to kutumbas, mahattaras, mahamahattaras and to other categories who must have corresponded to different land-owning groups including Brahmanas. Parallel references would be to the Kaiyattas who in the context of the Pala period must have constituted a formidable community of cultivators. In addition to other types of evidence, the sustained (and for a period successful) peasant resistance put up by the Kaiyattas against Pala rule bears adequate witness to this. There

54 R.S. Sharma, *Sudras in Ancient India*, ch. 8
55 ibd. pp 240-1
56 Ibid. As R.S. Sharma correctly points out: "The non-Sanskritic names of many of these mixed castes and their description as tribes or occupations at different places suggest that these were older tribes or occupations improved into castes" (*Sudras in Ancient India*, p. 336). And yet, by undertaking conscious territorial expansions and the practice of planting Brahmanas in the tribal areas through land grants (ibid. pp 337, 339) as the only mechanism through which transformation of tribes took place, he misses out on the process of change from below in the period identified as early medieval. It was as it has been shown in this essay the changes from within locales and regions which alone can point to the ways in which not only were regional communities transformed but were hitherto as well.
57 For the implications of these references, see B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *Aspects of Rural Settlement and Rural Society in Early Medieval India*, pp 47-53 and 128-29
58 See R.S. Sharma, *Problems of Peasant Protest in Early Medieval India*, Social
is the occasional mention of groups of like vardbakis (carpenters)\textsuperscript{59} or cirmakaras (leather workers) either owning plots of land or having received land from the king to provide services to a newly established temple.\textsuperscript{60} Attempts at systematization are evident from the Purānic literature. This not only relates diverse groups to the varpa category but also makes distinctions between different tiers of a single varpa such as Śūdra.\textsuperscript{61}

The correlation between peasant economy based on wet-rice cultivation, and rural caste structure which derived essentially from a gradual transformation of a tribal region, is more evident from the inscriptions of Assam, which can be dated between the fifth and the thirteenth centuries. Several points which emerge from these inscriptions are worth noting. First, the language of the inscriptions, which is Sanskrit, is interspersed with a number of Khasi, Bodo and other non-Sanskritic tribal word formations which are indicative of the substratum of the region.\textsuperscript{62} For example, the occurrence of Bodo words used by the Kacharis living in the plains in the inscriptions is significant, since canal irrigation and other irrigational methods—through which the extension of cultivation took place—are also associated with the Kacharis. Second, it has been correctly stressed that 'the peasantry of pre-Ahom Assam is multi-ethnic in character'\textsuperscript{63} and

\textit{Scientist}, vol. 16, no. 9 (184) (1988), pp. 3–16. However, the nature of Kaivartta rebellion which brought Pāla rule to a close (for some time) would hardly suggest that they were 'subject peasants'; from all accounts they would appear to have been a formidable peasant community of eastern India

\textsuperscript{59} For references to individual carpenters owning plots of cultivated land in the late Gupta period, see D.C. Bhattacharyya, ‘A Newly Discovered Copper Plate from Tippura’, \textit{The Indian Historical Quarterly}, vol. 6 (1930), pp. 54–60, and D.C Sircar, \textit{Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization}, vol. I (University of Calcutta, second revised edition, 1965), pp. 340–5.

\textsuperscript{60} See the evidence of the Paschimbhag copper plates of the Candra King Śrīcandra, D.C. Sircar, \textit{Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan} (Calcutta, 1973), pp. 31–6; 63–9.

\textsuperscript{61} Niharangan Ray, \textit{Bāṅglār Itiḥās (Ādi Parva)}, (in Bengali) (Calcutta, third edition, 1980), ch. 7; also B N.S. Yadava, \textit{Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century}, ch. I.


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
that 'the dominant impression is of a number of tribal groups such as the Mekurs, Khasis, Kukis and Kacharis having taken to cultivation on a permanent basis at some point in the past before the creation of a dominant class of Brahmind landholders. Assam inscriptions too refer to the Kavarttas, and in fact one comes across at least two groups of Kavarttas, the Abanchi Kavarttas and the Svalpadyuny Kavarttas.

The point then is that in the context of the post-Gupta period the use of the category Sudra is entirely insufficient when explaining the composition and status of the peasantry and the agricultural labour which constituted the base of an internally and highly hierarchized society—i.e. the problem of regional social stratification. To continue with the point which was being made above, if we turn to a region like Tamil Nadu there would be an extensive continuum from such groups as the Parayyars to the upper echelons of the dominant Vellala. In Karnataka too, epigraphs make clear distinctions with specific references to praghugamundas, prajagamundas, bhoomipurakas and many other categories. A detailed examination of the condition of the peasantry in the post-Gupta period is not intended here; we only need to note, by making a few cross-regional references that the majority of regionally recognizable cultivating groups, such as the Gujjuras

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid. For the situation in Assam. also see N. Lahiri, Pre Abom Assam (Studies in the Inscriptions of Assam Between the Fifth and the Thirteenth Centuries A.D.) (Delhi 1991) ch. 4.
66 Historiographical studies on stratification at the level of cultivating groups in individual villages have hardly been undertaken. A major reason for this may be that historians of pre-modern India have generally accepted the notion of a village community without considering the range of differentiation existing within it. For south India of the Pallava or the Cola periods, no systematic study of such stratification is therefore available. The major concern of historians has so far been to underline distinctions between peasant dominated and Brahmind-dominated brahmadesas. However, the following publications may be consulted for a general impression of the agrarian situation in early medieval south India: K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Colas (University of Madras reprint of second edition 1975) ch. 21 N. Karashima, South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions, ad 850–1000 (Delhi 1984) chs 1 and 2.
67 For a brief discussion of the evidence from Karnataka see B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India, pp. 93–114.
Kaivarttas, Gāvundas, Rēdhis, Kalitas—a bewildering multiplicity of which constitute the Indian peasantry—started figuring in historical records only from the Gupta, and more perceptibly from the post-Gupta period. The time span, which is the sixth-seventh centuries to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, thus represents a crucial phase in the evolution of regional agrarian structures. This was, as pointed out already, the time span significant in the history of the regional political structures as well. Second, the use of Dharmaśāstra categories to posit the decline of the Vaiśya varṇa and the ascendency of the Śūdra (which in any case creates a curious epistemological anomaly) has little relevance for explaining post-Gupta historical developments. The new Śūdras, if they represented tribal communities turned into castes, could hardly be taken to illustrate the process of upward social mobility of the early historical Śūdra varṇa.

IV

The ideological and religious dimensions of the society which was going through these processes of transition were, to say the least, complex. Indeed, if one were to consider that even such mutually incompatible situations as—(i) ritual power generated by the monopoly over the Vedas; (ii) the anti-Vedic Siddha or Somasiddhāntika protestations; and (iii) other levels in between these—were all ideological manifestations related to the period, then it is difficult to envisage


69 The ideological dimensions of the society identified as early medieval were indeed complex. Despite the fact that Brāhmaṇism—both in the spread and perpetuation of Vedicism as well as in the crystallization of Purānicism—figures prominently in records as projecting the widest range of recognized and revered symbols, it was not in itself homogeneous, and certainly not the only point of reference. The geographical spread of brahmākya, agrahāras and other types of Brāhmaṇic settlements was extensive. Repeated references to branches of Vedic and affiliated learning and to impressive Purānic compilations point to the general dominance of Brāhmaṇism. Yet movements against the norms and the order which Brāhmaṇism stood for, as well as tensions within Brāhmaṇism itself, are evident. There is no systematic study of this as yet, but for some samples, see A.V. Subramania Aiyar, The Poetry and the Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhars—An Essay in Criticism (Chidambaram, 1969); Kamil V. Zvelebil, The Poets of the Powers (London, 1973); David Shulman,
a homogeneous strand in the ideological evolution of the period. Yet meaningful attempts to understand the making of the early medieval phase of Indian history must relate to all these dimensions. It is generally believed that Bhakti and the worship through Bhakti of God as a Lord located in a temple was the key ideological strand of the period. Evidence of the extensive spread of Bhakti is certainly available in South India. One form of this is the devotional hymns of the Vaisnava Alvars and Saiva Nayanars. A second is the records of their extensive itineraries at proliferating temple centres. In South India the term for the temple (kasi) was the same as that for the king's residence. God was the Lord and the relationship between God and his devotee was seen as parallel to an all-pervasive feudal ideology. Similarly, the pervasiveness of Tantra and its penetration into all religious systems and practices were seen as proceeding from and contributing to the degeneration into which Indian feudal society had sunk.

The literature on Bhakti is extensive and need not be cited in detail. For a treatment of Bhakti as an ideology from an historical perspective (in the context of early medieval South India) see M.G.S. Narayanan and Veluthat Kesavan Bhakti Movement in South India. Reprinted in D.N. Jha, ed. Feudal Social Formation in Early India, pp 348-75 also R. Chamsasalakshmi, Religion and Social Change in Tamil Nadu (c. AD 600-1300) in N.N. Bhattacharyya, ed. Modern Bhakti Movement in India Sri Caitanya Quincentenary Commemoration Volume (New Delhi 1989), pp 162-73. For extensive treatment of krama bhakti oriented towards the institution of temples see F. Hardy, Venitha Bhakti, The Early History of Krama Devotion in South India (New Delhi 1983), passim. Two points which Hardy makes and which bear vitally upon the concerns of this essay are (i) karma bhakti, expressed in the hymns of the Alvars, represents increasing brahmanization and (ii) krama bhakti may be seen apart from other things, in the light of its contribution towards a reconsolidated Tam braf awareness.

The degeneration of Indian society in the post-Gupta or post-Harsha period seems firmly rooted in the historians' perspective of the period. A sample of this perspective is K.M. Panikkar's remarks during his Presidential Address to the Indian History Congress. Another problem that faces the student is the decadence which seems to have overtaken Hindu society in the period between the 8th and the 12th centuries, Presidential Address Indian History Congress 18th session (Calcutta 1955) p 17. In recent years, strong statements on early medieval degeneration have...
It is not possible here to examine the voluminous writings on these aspects nor even to attempt a synthesis of views. We can at the most turn now to the last major historical/societal process, i.e. the appropriation and integration of cults. It is necessary to briefly consider the operation of this process in order to understand how it relates to the problem of transition. Cult assimilation does not necessarily imply a harmonious syncretism, but it does imply the formation of a structure which combines heterogeneous beliefs and rituals into a whole, even while making (or transforming) specific elements dominant. In many significant ways the crystallization of a major cult illustrates the ideological dimensions of that phase of Indian history. First, the fact that the Brahmins came to control the major cults and cult centres was the mechanism which transformed the character of earlier ‘local and tribal cults’. It has been aptly remarked:

This new Hindu cult comprised, on the one hand, a regular sequence of daily rites, and was directed, on the other hand, to a permanently ‘present’ god who was worshipped either in the form of an anthropomorphic divine idol or as a Saivite lingam. This god, who was always present and visible, required also regular offerings. In contrast, the local tribal deities manifested themselves just now and then in their non-iconic symbols or in a priestly medium and received offerings only on these definite occasions. This comparison between the Hindu temple cults and the cults of the autochthonous local deities... might certainly have induced the people to draw comparisons between the status of their earlier tribal chiefs and that of a new Hindu raja. In the basically egalitarian tribal societies of India the chiefs...


The implication of this crucial historical process in the structural formation of important cults has not been satisfactorily worked out. This is primarily because material on the historical stages through which different elements coalesced; as also on the general brähmanization of these cults, is inadequate. The dimensions of appropriation, brähmanization and politicization of a cult—and in some cases the growth of a cult to regional as well as trans-regional importance—are sufficiently evident in the history of the cult of Jagannatha; A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and G.C. Tripathi, eds, *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (Delhi, 1978; *passim*). That the process of appropriation is a continuing one emerges from the detailed study on the cult of Pattini; see G. Obeysekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*.
could assume a more elevated position only temporarily and in certain functions (as for example while waging war). Only in its functional position could they expect some regular presentations and services from people outside their own clan (villages). The Hindu raja claimed an altogether different position. In the Brahmanical theory of society he occupied an elevated rank which towered contumely above that of his former tribal brethren. In this new representation he demanded regular tributes—as the ever present new Hindu god in the temple nearby demanded worship continuously.

The symbiosis which developed between royal power and the perception of divinity as well as the nexus involving different social groups which operated around a major cult centre are very well illustrated by the detailed empirical work which has been done on the cult of Purusottama Jagannatha at Puri in Orissa. Another dimension of the historical process perhaps territorially more pervasive during the period was the spread of Sakti, signifying a coming to the fore of an hitherto dormant religious force. To demonstrate further how an understanding of the regional context as an arena for the interplay of societal processes is important, I shall refer briefly to the emergence of Sakti principally by considering how this phenomenon has been viewed.

Dwelling on the impact of Tantrism (including Tantric Saktism) B N S. Yadava who has done extensive work which advocates the feudal character of early medieval India writes, 'The Brhadadharma Purana clearly reveals that Tantric Buddhism, Tantric Saktism and Tantric Saktism had made the position of varnaadharma critical in Bengal and the adjoining regions. Even without going into the question of which specific period is being talked about, significant in the statement is the assumption that the position of varnaadharma was likely to have been critical in Bengal and the adjoining areas. This assumption proceeds from what I would call an epicentric Dharmaśastra view of Indian society. It would see deviations from the Dharmaśastra schema as social aberrations, not as a concrete

71 H. Kulke, Introduction. The Study of the State in Pre-modern India. (OUP, Delhi 1975)
72 A. Fischer, ed. The Cult of Jagannath. (OUP 1979)
73 B N S. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century, p 380
regional reality. In other words, instead of assuming that Täntric Śāktism made the position of vāraṇāśramadharma critical in eastern India, a more contingent query would have been to understand the reason for the reappearance and pervasiveness of Śakti in eastern India. To understand the reappearance of Śakti or the Goddess on the Indian religious scene, Daniel Ingalls notes:

What is strange about [the] Indian record is not so much the replacement of female by male hierophanies, a phenomenon which has occurred over most of the civilized world, as the fact that in India the Goddess reappears . . . why should the Indian record have differed? To such large questions there are no certain answers . . . I suspect that within India's diversified culture the worship of the Goddess never ceased. The two thousand year silence of the record may be explained by the fact that all our texts from that period are either in Sanskrit or closely related languages. Our earliest hymns to the Goddess, according to this view, are the continuation of an old religion, not an innovation. These first appear at the conjunction of two historical processes. On the one hand Sanskrit, by the third century, had become the nearly universal language of letters in India. On the other hand, the pre-Aryan worship of the Indians had spread by that time very widely among the Aryans. From the third or fourth century, at any rate, the religion of the Goddess becomes as much part of the Hindu written record as the religion of God.76

Once this conjunction takes place—and it does not necessarily have to be expressed in terms of Aryan and non-Aryan categories—regional elements begin to take shape through local assimilation as well as through the adoption of trans-regional idioms. On the eastern Indian regional Mother Goddess cult, the central theme of the Kālikā Purāṇa, B.K. Kakati makes the following generalization:

Once her existence was recognized and her worship formulated, all local and independent deities began to be identified with her as her local manifestations . . . The process of assimilation went on until in the Devi-Bhāgavata it came to be declared that all village goddesses should be regarded as partial manifestations of the goddess . . . Thus the concept of the Mother Goddess

assumed a cosmic proportion and all unconnected local numina were allotted to her.

This seems to be substantially the opinion of K. R. Van Kooij too when he refers to the division or rather multiple manifestations of one goddess as five separate goddesses Kamakhya Mahotsaha Tripura Kamdevi and Sarada also to the mode of worship adapted to each particular goddess has her own magic formula (mantra) a geometrical figure (yantra) and her own iconography and to secondary deities such as Sakas yoginis doorkeepers etc. The common ritual covers by far the greater part of the fragment on deities worship in the text of the Kālīka-Purāṇa and this fact is a clear indication of the author's concern to have the deities of his country propitiated by a cult form closely corresponding to the ones usual in other parts of India of his time and to draw in this way the borderland of Kamarupa in the fold of Hinduism.

The merger of diverse elements in the formation of a cult in Puranic Hinduism was nothing new. The composition of major deities like Siva, Visnu and Uma derived from the same process. What becomes significant in the context of the shaping of regional society and culture is when we come across recorded references—for the first time and more or less within the same time frame—to local and peripheral deities such as Aranyakasim, Bahugunadewi and Vatayaktinidewi in Rajasthan to Viraja in Orissa and Kamakhya in Assam to cite a few cases. Juxtaposed with evidence of other kinds they too become indicators of an overall process of change in these.

77 Barakanta Katra The Mother Goddess Kamakhya (or Studies on the Funerary of Aryan and Primi of Basis of Assam) (Calcutta third impression 1987) p. 65
78 K. R. Van Kooij Worship of the Goddess According to the Kālīka Purāṇa (A Translation with an introduction and notes of chs 54-69) (Leiden 1972) pp. 7-8
79 See Epigraphica Indica vol 20 pp 97-9 b.d. vol 22 pp 26-79
80 For Viraja of Jijpur who was considered a form of Uma and became a member of the group of Dakshinadiva or five deities, see A. Eschmann et al. ed. The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Traditions of Orissa, pass no 20 H. Hulke Fragmentary on and Segmentary on versus Integration: Reflections on the Concept of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in India in History Stud 8 in H. story vol 4 no 2 (1982) pp 237-64
81 Ban kanta Katra The Mother Goddess
regions. They do not all develop into major cults, but some do. They function towards the integration of other local cults and become one of the recognizable symbols of the region.\(^{82}\) The religious and ideological expressions of a region in their varied forms thus become enmeshed in the web of its polity, economy and society. The interrelated vehicle of their expression is naturally language.\(^{83}\)

V

The argument that I have been trying to develop, starting with a statement on historiography, can now be rounded off. Two points, in particular, need to be underlined. First, although an overview of Indian society of, say, the period between the sixth-seventh and the twelfth-thirteenth centuries would show it to be vastly different from Indian society of the early historical period, the change does not necessarily have to be envisaged in terms of a collapse of the early historical social order. In trying to decipher the dominant pattern from among apparently irreconcilable sets of evidence (alleged 'urban decay'\(^{84}\) and the large-scale formation of states, for example), the most dominant pattern seems to be the shaping of regional societies. The period indicated above was most crucial in so far as the majority of the territorial segments of the Indian subcontinent were concerned.

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\(^{82}\) In some regions, for instance Orissa, the integration of different cults came about by combining the worship of deities at different centres through concepts such as *pañcadevatā* or five deities. The five gods were Visnu/Jagannātha of Puri, Śiva/Lingarāja of Bhuvaneswar, Durgā/Virāja of Jaipur, Sūrya of Konarak, and Ganeṣa or Mahāvīrāya; cf. H. Kulke, 'Introduction'.

\(^{83}\) In addition to other evidence bearing on the increasing visibility of regional languages an important indicator would be the chronology of, and the manner in which, regional languages started figuring in the inscriptions. See D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy* (Delhi, 1965), ch. 2.

\(^{84}\) R.S. Sharma, in his *Urban Decay in India* (pp. 177–81), envisages the decline of early Indian urban civilization in two stages. Curiously, he derives the ruralization of early Indian economy from this decline, thus making the implicit assumption that early Indian economy was not predominantly rural before this. In any case, his statement that 'the period c. 400–650 seems to have been particularly important for the rise of new states or kingdoms' (p. 168) obviously does not intend to suggest that there was any direct correlation between the decline of early historical urban civilization and the 'rise of new states or kingdoms'. 
What I have called the shaping of regional societies was essentially a movement from within following from the operation of several major historical/societal processes in regional contexts. This explains the relative long-range stability of regional social structures and identities.

Second, in the operation of the major historical/societal processes in regional contexts, the crucial agent of change was the phenomenon of state formation at diverse territorial levels from local through supra-local to regional at times expanding into supra-regional. It needs to be reiterated that the process of state formation was not a unique characteristic only of the time span discussed. However, the relationship between the process and region formation considered from a pan-Indian perspective was perhaps the closest in this period. Admittedly in Indian history the crystallization of regions was like the formation of states a continuing process. Our period marked in a perceivable way the coming together of ingredients which go into the making of regions. State formation was a crucial agent of change in this respect in the sense that it brought a measure of cohesion among local elements of culture by providing them a focus. At the same time it mediated in the assimilation of ideas, symbols and rituals which had a much wider territorial spread and acceptability. Common modes of royal legitimation and interrelated phenomena such as the practice of land grants, the creation of agal aras, the emergence of major cult centres and temple complexes, social stratification subsuming to the varna order (even when the order in the strict sense of the term was absent)—all these were manifestations of the manner in which local level states mediated in the absorption of ideas and practices which had been taking shape as a wider temporal and ideological process. The taking root of these ideas and practices was not a simple fact of diffusion from some elusive centre. It was an indication essentially of where and in what forms state society was taking shape.

This perspective leaves us pondering a few last points. If the transformation of early historical society took the form of the gradual shaping of regional societies and if this transformation is seen as having essentially derived from the major ingredients of early historical society, then how do we respond to the schema of periodization which envisages an early medieval phase in the Indian context also what is our response to the notion of an Indian feudal society as characterizing
that phase? Since the main concerns of the present exercise have been with historiography, and with delineating the directions taken by the transformation of early historical society, these problems seem marginal to this exercise. However, a brief response is in order, keeping in view the issues raised. Even in stereotypes which assert the changelessness of pre-modern Indian society, such markers of periodization as Hindu, Muslim and British, or Ancient, Medieval and Modern have been in use for very long. Despite the possible existence of sharply different notions of social change, markers differentiating broad historical phases need to continue in Indian history. Our perception of how the nature of early historical society changed may differ from the perceptions which are currently dominant, but continuing with the term 'early medieval', rather than using terms such as 'late Hindu' or 'late classical', has an advantage. This term goes beyond the narrowly political and cultural dimensions of history, and, further, it clearly projects continuities in the operation of major societal processes well into later phases of Indian history. As argued earlier, the major thrust in the process of region formation may be located five or six centuries preceding the establishment of Turkish rule. It should be reiterated, simultaneously, that the process had neither its beginning nor its end during these centuries.

Whether this early medieval society was feudal is an altogether different issue. Even those who believe in feudalism as a typical and exclusively European social formation make exceptions by relating this concept to other societies. So the issue of whether Indian history is entitled to a feudal phase or not can hardly ever be considered closed. The point I have tried to make is that the historiography on the transition to what is considered the feudal phase has been ever-shifting and essentially dependent on the directions of European historiography; it therefore suffers from internal inconsistencies. Unless this

85 The term is used in the title of a general survey of the period M.K. Bose, Late Classical India (Calcutta, 1988).
86 For example, Perry Anderson who is apparently critical of the particular 'version of materialist historiography' which views feudalism as 'an absorbing ocean in which virtually any society may receive its baptism', is nevertheless prepared to discuss in detail 'Japanese feudalism'. Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State (London, Verso edition, 1974), pp. 402, 435–61.
87 B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'State and Economy in North India: 4th century to
historiography reconciles itself to certain empirically validated major societal processes in Indian history, the current construct of Indian feudalism will continue with its Eurocentric orientation from a persistent refusal to consider alternative modes of social change. This paper outlines what I perceive tentatively as an alternative mode

12th century

23 Despite the fact that the term 'Indian feudalism' has been coined to stress the indissolubility of what is perceived as the Indian feudal format on the range of variables which have been chosen to construct 'Indian feudalism' as it largely conforms to its in European historiography. It seems clear from a recent restatement of the Marxist position in support of 'Indian Feudalism' (see Preface in D N Jha ed. *Feudal Social Formation in Early India*) that both among antiquarians and among other categories of historians, no satisfactory model of social change which works as an alternative to the Feudal node has been available so far.
Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan

Although the two broad regions of Rajasthan, demarcated into east and west by the regular stretch of the Aravalli in a northeast-southeast direction, have distinct geographical characteristics, yet perhaps neither of them can be justifiably called, to use two archaic expressions, *nadināṭrka* (i.e. river-fed) or *devamāṭrka* (i.e. rain-fed). As such, any attempt to reconstruct the agrarian history of these areas will have to take into account the patterns of their irrigation system. The present paper seeks to examine available data on irrigation relating to the early medieval period, its emphasis being on methods of artificial irrigation. Apart from the nature of the relevant contents of inscriptions—the major source-material for this period—the impression that settlement areas proliferated in early medieval Rajasthan, while climatic conditions or natural drainage conditions either remained unaltered or deteriorated, provides the only other rationale.


1 For the geography of Rajasthan I have largely depended upon V.C. Misra, *Geography of Rajasthan* (New Delhi, 1967).


3 It is not possible to fully substantiate this supposition within the compass of this paper except by underlining that its main focus is on western Rajasthan where archaeological material on early historical settlements is almost totally absent.

Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan

for such an emphasis. The material examined here is confined to inscriptions of the early medieval period but it is done in the hope that an initial brief survey may eventually lead to a more detailed and meaningful research. The first part of the paper deals with the territorial distribution of different devices of artificial irrigation the second attempts to study albeit sketchily the relationship between irrigation and whatever imperfect knowledge we have about crop production in early medieval Rajasthan and the final part seeks to view irrigation organization as part of the agrarian structure.

Although the paper refers roughly to c 700-c 1300 it also considers the pattern of crop production and irrigation in the earlier period to see whether any change in this pattern is perceptible. Quite naturally the data for ancient times have so far been very meagre. Early excavation reports refer only perfunctorily to evidence relating to cultivation. Rain in the former Jaipur state—a state believed to have been under occupation between the third century BC and second century AD with traces of partial occupation till the Gupta period—has yielded from its springwell or soak坑 deposits nondescript corn and the finding of millet has been reported once. The first century AD remains from Batur also in the former Jaipur state include a fragment of cloth that may indicate local production of cotton. Excavations at Nagan in Chitorgarh district do not seem to have yielded any corresponding specimen and Bhandarkar's find of six alleged oilmills has no significance in this respect as there is no indication whatsoever regarding the dates of these finds.

5 K. N. Puri, Excavations at Rainh during 1938-39 and 1939-40 (Department of Archaeology and His oral Research Jaipur no date) pp. 59-61 nos. 81 82 103
6 D. B. Sahni, Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Batur (Department of Archaeology and Historical Research Jaipur no date) pp. 22

It is believed that Huien Tsang's seventh-century account of Po-li ye-ta lo or Paisara gives an idea of the agricultural products of the Batur area. According to him Pas ratas (Batur?) yielded crops of spring wheat and other grains including a peculiar kind of rice. D. Sharma (General ed.) Rajasthan Through the Ages, vol. 1 (published by Rajasthan Sra e Archives) (U. Laker 1965) p. 67 also T. Watters, On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India (Delhi reprint 1961) p. 300. The chronology of this evidence falls more within the scope of the early medieval era than of the early historical period.

7 D. R. Bhandarkar The Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Nagan (Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India no. 4) (Calcutta 1920) p. 127
Comparatively recent excavations at two sites, widely distant from each other, have produced more detailed results. Evidence of rice cultivation over a lengthy stretch of time comes from Rang Mahal in Bikaner in north Rajasthan. The late phases at Ahar in Udaipur district also correspond to some extent to the early historical period. Here the cultivation of rice of long-seeded strain is believed to go back to phase I, period I, to which is assigned a date earlier than the middle of the second millennium BC. The site attests to the cultivation also of millet or jawar, the period probably being 'c. 100 BC-AD'. It is also hopefully postulated on the strength of contemporary remains from other areas of India that 'it is more than probable that the Aharians ate wheat'.

This appears to be the sum total of the picture so far as the early historical period is concerned. All these crops continue down to early medieval times, but no other meaningful comparison either in terms of regional distribution of crops or any substantial addition, in the later period, to the number of crops cultivated, appears plausible. As we shall see later, early medieval cultivation was not limited to millet, rice, jawar; wheat and cotton (though, it may be guessed, they must have been the major items even in those times); the list for the early historical as also for the early medieval period may at best be considered to be only partial. Secondly, any possible addition in later times may not have been related to artificial irrigation.

However, whatever relevant data we have on the probable sources

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8 Hanna Rydh, *Rang Mahal*, pp. 79, 183. From an examination of textile impressions on Rang Mahal pottery, it has been suggested that the fabric used was from a 'vegetable fibre': jute, cotton or even hemp (p. 202). The area of origin of such fibres is, however, not specified. At the time of the publication of the Report, the plant remains from Rang Mahal were being examined at Dehra Dun. I am not aware of whether or not the results have been published.


of irrigation in early historical areas make a comparison with the later period to some extent relevant particularly in view of the already underlined impression that settlement areas expanded in early medieval times. The Raith area as KN Puri mentions is intersected by the river Dhil. The Bahr valley is drained by two rivulets the Baurat nala running northward to join the Banganga river and the Bandrol nala in the south. Ahar too is located on the bank of the Ahar river, a tributary of the Banas. While the location of these three sites indicates their possible sources of water supply, the evidence seems to be more specific at Rang Mahal where in early times a high rainfall rate and annual flooding of the Ghaggar probably facilitated rice cultivation. If these instances are taken to form any generalization regarding the early historical period then the organization of artificial irrigation in early medieval Rajasthan certainly constitutes a departure from the earlier pattern. However, as will emerge from our discussion on the change is perceptible mostly in southern and western Rajasthan from where the bulk of our material comes.

I

We may start with the rather obvious statement that artificial irrigation in early medieval Rajasthan was provided by (i) tanks and (ii) wells. These must have been common modes elsewhere as well and yet in view of a variety of other existing methods, the prevalence of only these two in Rajasthan may have had some significance. We have perhaps no reference here to such big projects as canal excavation which was sponsored by rulers in other areas. In terms of financial

1 KN Puri, Excavations at Raith p 1 and map facing p 1
2 D R Sahni, Archaeological Remains p 12.
3 Sankal, Excavations at Ahar p 1
4 Hanna Rydill, Rang Mahal, pp 33-44. 183 The desert on of the area in the late sixteenth century has been attributed to changes in climatic conditions and the drying up of the Ghaggar (p 33).
5 A study of the published material relating to early medieval Rajasthan gives one the impression that western Rajasthan has been more intensively explored than any other area.
6 Cf Hatun rock inscription of the time of Pratap Shah deva which records the construction by the chief of the army at Gilgara (Gilgir) of a tank and the
investment, labour mobilization, impact on cultivation and the nature of land revenue assessment; the absence of such large-scale projects may have made the Rajasthan pattern considerably different.

References to tanks and reservoirs excavated by and perhaps named after individuals are not uncommon in early medieval records. In the period immediately preceding AD 700 they must have constituted an important source of water supply, as did wells. The Guhila inscription issued from Kishkindhā near Kalyāṇpur in the Dungarpur-Udaipur area of Udaipur district give us some idea about the possible methods of irrigation. An inscription of AD 689, while specifying the boundaries of two plots of land in the village of Mitrapalliṅka, mentions a paha-kataḍāgikā (a small tank) as one of the boundaries. Similarly a second plot lay around a well (kūpa-kaccha is the expression used to denote the nature of the land). A contemporary record, of AD 644, refers to karkka-taḍaḍa in the context of irrigated fields in the Bhilwara district. There are repeated references to tanks and reservoirs in later inscriptions. Reference to three reservoirs (rāhidātriya) is found in the Sevadi (Bali, Pali district, former Jodhpur state) copper plates of AD 1119, and the context would associate them with the irrigation of that area. This relationship is also clear in an inscription of AD 1155, from Thakarda in the former Dungarpur state, which records the excavation of a canal of 32,000 hasas (?) called Makaranavāhinī which was taken out to a forest to the east of the village Hātuna (EI, XXX, pp. 226–31). Also, the Dewal prafasti of AD 992–3 of Lalla of the Chhinda line (EI, I pp. 75–85), who claims to have conducted the river Khāth and to have shown it the 'way to the town'. For evidence of a somewhat different nature, see the Rajatranāgini, vol. V, pp. 73, 80–91, 110–12. The reasons for the absence of such large scale irrigation works in Rajasthan have been summed up by R.C. Sharma: 'The seasonal and feeble flow in rivers, the great depth of the underground water, and the arid and sandy character of landscape allow little chance for large-scale irrigation', Settlement Geography of the Indian Desert (New Delhi, 1972), p. 23: Cf. also his other remark (Settlement Geography . . . , p. 22): 'It (water) is important in the location of the settlements of the region, e.g. in the western areas, the wells are significant in deciding the location of most of the villages; in the southern part, the tanks or ponds control the site of the villages.'

18 Ibid.
19 EI, XX, pp. 122–25. See ibid., XXXV, pp. 100–02 for the revised date of the record.
21 IA, LV, pp. 225ff.
gift of one *baisa* of land and other plots near a *savakim*. Yet another record (Kadmal plate of Guhila Vijayasimha) referring to the village of Pali in the Jodhpur region mentions among other things a share given to a brahman of the income from a *sadiga* or a *reservoir*.

Besides tank irrigation, well irrigation was also in vogue. A somewhat visual idea of how water was drawn in a leather bucket is provided by one of the Pattabgarh inscriptions of the Gujara Pratihara period (AD 946). In modern times the average depth of wells in areas such as Jodhpur is about 150 feet and except when wells are unusually full it takes a long time to bring up the often saline water by 30–40 gallon sacks hauled by a pair of bullocks or a camel. Despite these drawbacks wells were in common use and the epigraphs give a rough idea of the areas covered by them.

Before however I try to map the distribution of irrigational wells in early medieval Rajasthan it is perhaps necessary to discuss another problem. Do the relevant epigraphic expressions refer to a single type of well irrigation or do they indicate variations in the operation of irrigational wells? In the absence of adequate technical data I would not like to enter here except marginally into a controversy regarding whether or not Persian wheels were in use in early medieval Rajasthan, but would rather seek to highlight whatever indirect evidence I have from inscriptions.

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2. *El xcu* pp 217 38

22. *El xiv* pp. 176ff. The inscription refers to a piece of cultivated land in the following manner: *kasa MBA Chaudhakshiram manimapa 10* (i.e. the chhandaka field which was irrigated with *kasa MBA* and in which 10 *mans* of seed could be sown).


24. In the majority of the translations of early medieval Rajasthan inscriptions the term *amrthana* has been translated as either *tank* or well or Persian wheel (PRASWG, 1916–17 p 65). Literary data on early medieval Rajasthan have been taken to refer to the use of the Persian wheel in that and also in an earlier period. Such views and data as may be found in the history of the Persian wheel in India and the effects of its introduction in agriculture have been admirably presented by I Habib. In *Technology, Changes and Society 13th and 14th Centuries* (Presidential Address Medieval India section, 31st session of the Indian History Congress Varanasi, December 1969) pp 12–19 Professor Habib argues that the alleged references to Persian wheels in early India relate more appropriately to the *nutka* which could be used for drawing water from near the surface or from a river and
in which there is no hint either of a chain carrying the pots, or of any gearing. He would place the introduction of the Persian wheel proper in India in the 13th–14th centuries as part of its largescale diffusion from the Arab world.

Perhaps the history of the use of the Persian wheel outside India is controversial too (compare the date given by Professor Habib on the strength of A.P. Usher's findings in *A History of Mechanical Inventions* (Boston, 1959), pp. 168, 177–8, with C. Singer *et al.*, eds, *A History of Technology*, vol. II (Oxford, 1957), p. 676. In India, while no satisfactory technical details relating to the *araghatta* or *ghatiyantra* are available as yet, it is not true that these devices were not set up on wells (Habib, *Technological Changes*, pp. 12–13). Recently M.C. Joshi has *reinterpreted* a passage in a Mandasor inscription of 532 which, referring to a newly constructed well, eulogises its ‘rotary motion (moving ring) resembling a garland of skulls’ which would continue to discharge ‘nectarlike pure water’. This date accords with that of *Amarakosa* which also defines *ghatiyantra* as a device for drawing water from a well (M.C. Joshi, ‘An Early Inscriptional Reference to Persian wheel’, reprinted from *Professor K.A. Nilakanta Sastri 80th Birthday Felicitation Vol.*, pp. 214–17). However, Joshi’s contentions that there was an operational difference between an *araghatta* (which he takes to represent a ‘noria’) and a *ghatiyantra*, and that the Mandasor inscription of 532 refers to a Persian wheel proper may still be disputed. In connection with the first point reference may be made to two citations in the *Sahas-kalpadruma* (Motilal Banarsidass 1961, vol. I, s. v. *araghatta*) where *araghatta* is defined as a *mahakupapah* (*mahakupahityamarajasadharanah*). More explicit evidence that an *araghatta*, with its pots, was set up on a well (like the *ghatiyantra* of *Amarakosa*) comes from a passage in the *Pañcatantra* (Sā kadacid—dāyadān—udvājino raghataṭagatikā—māruhya kūpāt kramaṇa nishkrāntah, *ibid.*). See also R. Nath, ‘Rehant versus the Persian wheel’, *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, XII (1–4) (1970), pp. 81–4. Archaeological evidence in support of this is available in the form of two sculptures from the Jodhpur region showing a wheel with pots set on a well, R.C. Agrawala, ‘Persian Wheel in Rajasthani Sculpture’, *Man in India*, vol. 46 (1966), pp. 87–8. They are from Mandor near Jodhpur and Saladhi near Ranakpur in Pali district and are thus from areas where epigraphic references to *araghattas* are profuse. One of the sculptures is assigned to the 10th–11th century and here we have a complete view of the Persian wheel, i.e., the string of pots is touching the water inside the well as well. The pots are tied to a rope in a row hanging below. While the above references definitely show that *araghattas* were, contrary to Professor Habib’s suggestion, set up on wells, they still do not indicate the use of both chain and gearing. To be set on a *mahakupapah* (big well), the wheel carrying the pots required the mechanism of a chain but, as has been pointed out (Habib, *Technological Changes*, p. 14), the gearing mechanism, which facilitated the use of animal power, may have come at a later stage. For the probable use of human labour in *araghatta*-operation in early medieval Rajasthan, see the Nanana plates of the first half of the 12th century (*EI*, XXXIII, pp. 238–46); also R. Nath, ‘Rehant versus . . .’, p. 83. Among other recent discussions on the problem, see Lallanjii Gopal, ‘Araghata—the Persian Wheel’ in his *Aspects of History of Agriculture in Ancient India* (Varanasi, 1980), pp. 114–68 and I. Habib, ‘Pursuing the History of Indian Technology—Premodern Modes of Transmission of Power’, *The Rajiv Bambawale Memorial Lecture*, *Indian Institute of Technology* (New Delhi, 1990), manuscript.
Inscriptions use three different terms in connection with wells dhimada or dhivada 6 api (step-well) and araghatta, araghata or arachata. This fact in itself may perhaps indicate operational variations in well irrigation, although what the exact differences were is not clear from these names alone. Leaving aside api, the distinction between a dhimada and an araghatta may perhaps be made clear from an epigraph which refers in more than one context to both dhikku (a variant of dhimada) and araghatta. Secondly, while the assertion by some epigraphists that a dhimada or ordinary well (or small araghatta) irrigated half as much land as did an araghatta 23 has never before been substantiated, the evidence of an inscription of 1287 from Pattanarayana in Sirohi 29 may have some bearing on this question. While specifying a levy on the produce of some irrigated fields it enjoins that 2 seers should be paid from the field irrigated by a dhimada and 8 seers from the field irrigated by an araghatta. The distinction made between these areas would perhaps also suggest a distinction between the two in terms of the methods of operation and their relative capacity to irrigate. Thirdly, the relative importance of araghantas may also perhaps be deduced from the fact that almost invariably they bear separate names and from the social status of the people who seem to have transferred land irrigated by an araghanta. I shall come back later to this point. 34

While the above discussion does not elucidate the mechanism of an araghanta, nevertheless the impression emerges that its operation was distinct from that of an ordinary well. There are a few indications

26 Its variants are dhimada, dhikku, dhik, dhikku, dhimbadu, dhimaka etc.

See EI XIII pp 208-220 IA, XL pp 77f.

27 EI, XII, pp 208f.

28 PRASWC, 1916-17, p 65.

29 IA, XLIV pp 77f.

34 A somewhat indirect and largely undependable method for ascertaining the mechanism of an araghanta would be to compare its distribution with the present day distribution of Persian wheels in Rajasthan. Apart from the enormous time gap the implied assumption would also run the risk of viewing an araghanta as definitely identical with the Persian wheel. Even so it may be mentioned that in the Harach basin where bajra is the staple crop, many other crops such as wheat, rice, millet, sugarcane and cotton are cultivated. Irrigation is almost entirely from wells by Persian wheel method" (V.N. Misra, Pre and Proto History of the Bherach Basin, South Rajasthan, Poona 1967, p 6).
regarding the probable location of *araghattas* which would suit I. Habib's hypothesis that they represent pre-Persian wheel technology and operated on the water surface. An inscription of 644 from Dabok, near Udaipur,\(^{31}\) while specifying certain pieces of land, mentions in one case a boundary formed by an *arabhatta* field in front of the tank Karkka (Karkkaratākasaya cāgrata arabhattakṣetram). In another inscription the boundary is described as *Rajakiya arabhattakulīya*. Considering that a *kulyā* represents 'a small river, canal, channel for irrigation, ditch, dyke or trench',\(^{32}\) *Rajakiya arabhattakulīya* would probably suggest an irrigation channel on which the royal *arabhatta* was set (perhaps an alternative and equally acceptable meaning would be drainage for water drawn from the royal *arabhatta*, in which case the *arabhatta* would not necessarily be operating on a stream or channel). Another inscription, of 1165 from Barmna, lists at least 4 *dhikus* and 1 *arabhatta* in the village of Koramṭaka, and in specifying the boundaries of a piece of land mentions a river as its eastern and northern boundaries.\(^{33}\) An examination of a Survey of India map (NG 43) shows Koramṭaka (modern Korta) to be situated on one of the tributaries of the Jawai and may indirectly suggest the possibility that the *arabhatta* in the village of Koramṭaka was used to draw water from the river surface.

The two pieces of evidence cited are, however, indirect, and even if references to *arabhatta* in these two specific cases do correspond to 'noria' we would not, in view of the definition of *araghatta* as 'well' in early literary sources,\(^{34}\) like to restrict the meaning of *araghatta* to 'noria' in all the known contexts. In the other Rajasthani records there is probably no indication that it is 'noria' that is meant. It is hardly possible that in all the areas where *araghattas* were in use, water from a stream or a reservoir would be readily available, and the existing knowledge of setting a wheel of pots in a deep well with the mechanism of a chain would certainly be utilized in areas where such wells were excavated.

The areas covered, for purposes of irrigation, by *dhimada, vapi*

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\(^{31}\) *EI*, XX, pp. 122–25; also ibid., XXXV, pp. 100–02.


\(^{33}\) *EI*, XIII, pp. 208ff.

\(^{34}\) See above.
and araghatta can be shown in the form of a table which indicates the chronology of the references to such expressions and their geographical contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>644</td>
<td>Dhor Bhilwara district</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>EI XX pp 122-25 ibid XXXV pp 100-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>689</td>
<td>Kalyanpur (Dungarpur Udaipur area Udaipur district)</td>
<td>kupa</td>
<td>EI XXXIV pp 173-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>827</td>
<td>Dhulpur vapi</td>
<td>ZDMG XL pp 38 ff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>835</td>
<td>Kaman talu small well</td>
<td>EI XXIV pp 329 ff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>946</td>
<td>Bharatpur district karaaka</td>
<td>EI XIV pp 176 ff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>946</td>
<td>Chitorgarh district arahatta</td>
<td>EI XIV pp 176 ff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>994</td>
<td>Partabgarh arahatta</td>
<td>EI X pp 76-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1045</td>
<td>Bhaland Pali district vapi</td>
<td>JBRRAS, 1914 p 75 ff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1059</td>
<td>Panahera Banswara district arahatta</td>
<td>EI XLI pp 42-50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1083</td>
<td>Pali district arahatta</td>
<td>EI XXXI pp 237-48</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1086</td>
<td>Jhalrapatan vapi</td>
<td>JPASB X (1914) p 241-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1110</td>
<td>Sevadi Pali district arahatta</td>
<td>EI XI pp 28-30</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1110</td>
<td>Nanana Pali district arahatta</td>
<td>EI XXXIII pp 238-46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1143</td>
<td>Badi Pali district arahatta</td>
<td>EI XI pp 32-3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1143</td>
<td>Kekind</td>
<td>PRASWC 1910-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1163</td>
<td>Jodhpur district dhiku</td>
<td>PRASWC 1908-9 p 53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1165</td>
<td>Banniya aral atta</td>
<td>EI XXIII pp 208 ff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1165</td>
<td>Banniya dhiku</td>
<td>ibid pp 209-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1165</td>
<td>Jodhpur district dhiku</td>
<td>PRASWC 1910-11 pp 33-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bannera
Lalrai, Jodhpur district
Ajahari
Virapura, Chhappana (Udaipur district)
Ahada, Udaipur district
Arthuna, Banswara district
Manglana, Jodhpur district
Ghagsa, Chitorgarh district
Burta, Jodhpur district
Patanarayana, Sirohi district
Patanarayana, Sirohi district
Mala, Dungarpur district
Bamnera, Jodhpur district
Vagin, Sirohi district

Bhikū
arahatta
arahatta
well (arahatta)
araghāṭta
arahatta
vāpi
vāpi
vāpi
dhimada
arahatta
arahatta

PRASWC, 1908–9, p. 53.
EI, XI, pp. 49–51.
ARRM, 1930, pp. 2–3.
ARRM, 1931, p. 4.
EI, XXIV, 295–310.
IA, XLI, pp. 85–8.
ARRM, 1927, p. 3.
EI, IV, pp. 312–14.
IA, XLV, pp. 77ff.
ibid.
EI, XXI, pp. 192–6.
PRASWC, 1908–9, pp. 52–3.

Briefly, the above list indicates two things: first, the majority of the references occur in inscriptions of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, and second, the geographical context of many of them is west Rajasthan, a land of relatively higher water scarcity.

II

Having established artificial irrigation as a part of the system of cultivation, at least in some areas of early medieval Rajasthan, it is natural to now seek to examine what relationship, if any, it had with a supposed change in crop production and the development of agriculture in general. However, any idea of progress can be empirically
Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan

substratuated only if sufficient comparable material is available for the early period which as we have seen is not the case. Evidence of crop production in early medieval period has also to be strenuously culled from the mostly indirect information that the inscriptions offer. Hence only a sketchy and descriptive presentation can be made here.

To start with I would like to go back to the Dabok inscription of 644 the evidence contained in it may be broadly applied to the Udaipur area. It specifies the boundaries of three plots of land and mentions therein arabattas puskara and taraka. The impression one thus gets is that the cultivated areas referred to were thoroughly irrigated. While no crop is mentioned some of the areas are specified as saradhy-grasamakram suggesting in all likelihood that artificial irrigation facilitated double-cropping and the production of kharif and rabi crops in these areas. Unfortunately no such information is available from records of the few following centuries and it is only from the eleventh century onward that an idea of the crops cultivated emerges. An inscription of 1059 from Panahera (Banswara) may refer to rice-fields irrigated by araghattas. Cultivation of godhuma (wheat) appears to have been on a larger scale and is attested by a number of inscriptions. Many of the Nanana (Marwar) inscriptions of the first half of the twelfth century mention cesses and rents in the form of a certain measure of godhuma from araghatta fields. Identical evidence is obtainable from the Keland (Jodhpur) inscription of 1143. The Vagin (Sirohi district) inscription of 1302 also records the gift of a certain quantity of godhuma to a temple from land irrigated by a dhivada. Yava (barley) was another cereal which was cultivated on a large scale by artificial irrigation. The Laturi inscriptions of 1176 specify the amount of barley to be levied from different fields irrigated by araghatta. The Arthuna (Banswara) record of 1214 also mentions arabate yai a-harakka (one haraka of barley per arabatta) as one of the

35 El xx pp 122–125
36 Ibid., xx1 pp 42–50
37 lb d xxxii pp 238ff
38 PRASVG, 1910–11 p 35
39 ib d. 1916–17 p 65
40 E/ XI pp 49–51
41 lb d xxxv pp 295–310
levies. Among others cereals yugandhari (jawar or millet) is mentioned as the produce of a royal holding (rājakiyabhoga) in the Sanderay inscription of 1164, but the record does not indicate the extent of production of artificial irrigation. Pulses were another item of produce mentioned in the records. The Manglana (Jodhpur) inscription of 1215, which refers to the construction of a vapi in an area of water scarcity, fixes dhāanyakorada-se as the levy per plough. Korada, according to the editor of the epigraph, represents, in local usage, such varieties as munga, cānā, jawar, etc., and dhānya is here certainly used in the sense of 'grain'. Among the items listed in the Bhinmal inscription of 1249 as godhuma (wheat), cokha (rice) and munga (pulses); the list, however, relates to the stock of food grains in a bhāndāgar, and there is no way of ascertaining whether they were locally produced on irrigated fields. There is also little evidence of the cultivation of commercial crops and the benefits of artificial irrigation are not too explicit in epigraphic sources. Reference may, however, be made in this connection to the Sevadi (Bali district) inscription of 1115 which mentions tila (sesame) produced in an area which seems to have been under irrigation from reservoirs. Cultivation of oilseeds, perhaps making possible the operation of local ghānakas (oilmills), is attested to by the Manglana inscription of 1215, cited above. The list of items brought to the market at Arthuna in Banswara includes ājyatala (sesame oil), taila (oil) and tavanī (sugar cane). As has been shown before, in both these areas barley and other varieties of grains were produced in fields irrigated by a vapi and araghāṭa.

The above survey is not an exhaustive one and it certainly is not intended to cover the total area under cultivation, the extent of which is, in any case, beyond any method of computation at present. From a number of inscriptions only those that bear, directly or indirectly, upon the relationship between artificial irrigation and the production of 42 Ibid., XI, pp. 46–7.
43 IA, XII, pp. 85–8.
44 EI, xi, pp. 53–7; also D. Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties (Delhi-Jullundur-Lucknow, 1959), pp. 300–01.
46 See above; Cf. Naddli (Desuri) inscription of 1143 which refers to oil from āmitiyaṅghañaka (EI, XI, pp. 41–2).
47 See above.
of certain crops have been selected here. Even so it is perhaps significant that evidence relating to crop production and the emergence of settlements in water scarcity areas like Marwar does not date back to a period much earlier than the early medieval. This leaves some room for postulating a connection between territorial expansion of agriculture and artificial irrigation. Secondly the reference to double-cropping 48 although it is the only one of its kind would establish that a certain growth in production could be achieved through the organization of artificial irrigation.

III

How was artificial irrigation socially organized? This question is particularly pertinent to western Rajasthan where water was scarce so much so that in 994 when a land grant was made at Bolera 49 in the kingdom of the Caulukya ruler Mularaja I, to brahman Śrī Dūrghacarya it consisted of a piece of land with a share of only one third of the water from a well (Ghaghalkupa-trībhagadskena sahe). It is significant that the land lay in the mandala of Saryapura (Sanchore) enjoyed by Mūlaraja I himself (rābhyajamana) and its gift was executed by his mahattama Śivaraja. That water was an important administrative concern in this area is revealed by royal initiative in the necessary work of construction and the nature of gift specifications. The Manglapa inscription of 1215 50 indicates Cahamana initiative in the construction of a rupi in an area defined as a daumarashthi (land of water scarcity). The Kudmal plate of Guhila Vijayasimha (1083) 5 while giving away to the donee full right over the fifth part of every item of produce of the donated village to the extent of its boundaries mentions as an exception the income of taxes and drainage in which he received only half (i.e. one tenth part) the other half going to the donor himself. Along with these may be grouped the evidence of a Bannera plate which records that in 1165 52 when a well (dhiknada)

48 See above.
49 Et X, pp 76-9
50 See above.
51 Et XXXI, pp 237-48
52 Ibid XIII, pp 708-10
at the village of Korañtaka was given to a brahman by the Nadol Câhamâna prince, Ajayarâja, the donee was enjoined not to disturb or destroy the channel (nâlabâu na lopya).

Such meaningful information is rather sparsely available. We may, however, raise two questions. First, what are the major categories of people from whom grants of the facilities of artificial irrigation emanate? The answer to this may indicate the incidence of ownership and the financing of artificial irrigation facilities such as tanks, reservoirs and arâghattas. Secondly, who are the major beneficiaries of such grants? The answers to the second question are usually found in the same records which yield answers to the first one.

There are obvious indications in the records that grants of irrigational facilities emanated largely from the rulers and their officials. This, however, is an observation based on the proportion of such grants to the total number of grants examined and is not intended to suggest a rigid generalization. Still, it is significant that while an early inscription—of the middle of the seventh century—records the grant of two plots of arâhabhâta-land to a temple by an individual called Vâidyâ Gâyaka of a Kâyastha family,\(^{53}\) such an example is seldom repeated in later times, although epigraphic references to arâhabhâtas are far more numerous in that period.

The majority of early medieval grants may, for our purpose, thus be arranged dynasty-wise, and some of the representative ones may be cited here. In 946 two plots of land were given out of the bhôga of Śrîvijñâna (his signature appears on the plate along with that of mahâsâmanta dânândâyaka Śrî Mâdhava, an official of the Gurjara-Pratihâras) for performance of different rites of the god Śrîmadindrâdityadeva at the village of Dhârâpadraka ('Dhârâyavat in Mewar near the boundary of Partabgarh').\(^{54}\) One of these plots was given along with an arâghatta (sâdharam Kacchâkannama arâhatena in sam-jutam dattam). No other comparable record of the Gurjara-Pratihâra period has been found\(^{55}\) and it appears that the number of such grants increased in the period of the later Rajput dynasties. The evidence of

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\(^{53}\) See above.

\(^{54}\) EI, XIV, pp. 176ff.

\(^{55}\) Cf., however, the Dholpur inscription of 827 recording the construction of a vâpi by the Câhamâna Cândamahâsena (ZDMG, XI, pp. 38ff).
Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan

the Kadmal plate of the Guhila Vijayasimha has already been referred to. The Vīrapura inscription of 1185 mentions Amrāpila Guhila of Vagada as having donated a well (an araghastā) and two balas of land to a brahman at the village of Gatauda in Sarpancaṭata (Chappana in Udaipur district). The inscriptions of the Paramaras of Vagada also record grants of different plots of land including some irrigated by araghastas, to the god Mandaḷesvara at Panahera.

It is however in the areas that belonged to the Nadol Cahamana family that certain aspects of agrarian economy based on araghattā-irrigation come into clearer focus. Here too we have a number of inscriptions recording straightforward grants of land. Thus several inscriptions of Banneta of 1163 and 1166 refer to the gift of doli (i.e. land given to brahmanas nammu, religious establishments and so on) irrigated by a dinku and araghastā by the Nadol Cahamana rulers Ajayasimha and Kelhana. The Ajani record of 1183 mentions the grant of an araghattā by kumar Palhanadeva and putaram Sagaradevi. A few other records specify gifts not of araghattas but of a share of the produce from araghattas fields such gifts being in fact more common in the records of western Rajasthan. In 1110 in the reign of maharājadhiraja Asvaraja and the yauvaraja of Śrīkalakara raja mahasahīnaya Uppalaraja along with his family members and relatives, made a gift of one hiraka of yavati (barley) on each arabhata at three villages for the daily worship of Śrīharmanatha at Sāmpatiya Cāitya (Sevadi, Bālhi district, Godwar). The Lātra inscription of 1176 mentions a local levy apparently on the produce of an araghattā field for the festival of Sāntanatirtha fixed by prince Lasanapala who enjoyed the jagir of Sinanava along with prince Abhayapala and queen Mahubaladevi. In 1291 at Korrā a selahastā fixed 3 darammas (?) as

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56 See above
57 ARRMS 1930 pp 2–3
58 See above p 307 note 1
59 PRASWG 1908–9 p 53
60 Ind 1910–11 pp 38–9
61 EI xi pp 28–30
62 lb d. pp 49–51
63 For selahastā see A.K. Majumdar Chaulukyas of Gujarat (Bombay 1956) p 235
payment to be collected from each araghatta for the fair festival of the sun-god Mahāsvāmi.\textsuperscript{64}

It is not clear what such levies imply. The donors were obviously not transferring their entire revenue to the donees (as is usual in the case of land-grants) but only a part of it, and that too in connection with certain religious occasions. In the case of the royal and official holdings this may indicate that, apart from a fixed amount of revenue from tenants who were likely to have cultivated such holdings,\textsuperscript{65} further and occasional redistribution of produce was in vogue—a process perhaps not unconnected with the provision of irrigational facilities in such lands.

This redistributational aspect is also clear from the Āhada grant of 1207\textsuperscript{66} and the Nanana plates of the first half of the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{67} The Āhada grant records the gift of the araghatta Māoda at Āhada in Medāpatā (Mewar) to a brahman by the Cāulkula, Bhimadeva II, but ‘the ninth part of the crops produced by irrigation from this well’ was assigned to the local Bhāilasvāmī temple. According to the Nanana plates, the land and the araghatta apparently belonged to the temple of Śrīpurusā and several matha establishments at Nanana, but the king, Aśvarāja, probably intervened to make fresh allotments and reallocations. An araghatta called Naravāṭṭaka, located at the village of Devanandita, which was in the possession of the mathapati, was granted for the maintenance of the god Candaleśvara. Besides the retinue of songstresses and musicians allotted to the god were two individuals, Śilapati and Śripāla, who were presumably engaged in the operation of the araghatta. Apart from the light this piece of evidence may throw

\textsuperscript{64} PRASWC, 1908–9, pp. 52–3. There is one interesting record of 1143 from Bali (EI, xi, pp. 32–3) in which mention is made of contributions, not from araghattas, but for araghattas. In this period the village of Valahi (Bali) was being frequented by queen Śrī Tīhunaka and on the occasion of the festival of goddess Bahuṅṭhā of this village, one dramma each was granted by Bopaṅava-stambhā to the araghattas Sitka, Bhariya, Bohada, Hahiya, etc. It is not clear what such contributions imply.

\textsuperscript{65} The tenant-stratum in the composition of agrarian classes is suggested by both the Dabok inscription of 644 (EI, XX, pp. 122–5) and the Nanana inscriptions of the first half of the twelfth century (ibid., XXXIII, pp. 238ff).

\textsuperscript{66} ARR, 1931, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{67} EI, XXXIII, pp. 238ff.
on the possible existence of some form of temple slavery in early medieval Rajasthan it also shows that on the strength of the ownership of araghatta fields a temple establishment could engage certain types of labour and assign to them fixed portions of produce from such fields. The second point is also clear from another Nanamana plate which mentions an arag latta at the village of Bhinalavada which was probably leased out to one Kumara whose annual rent to the temple—5 dhanas of wheat—was allotted to a devata (songstress) named Sobhika. 68

Araghantas where they existed thus seem to have played an important role in rural economy and with the existing institutional framework of patronage. Apart from the kings, the Pancaakula—apparently executive bodhis mostly appointed by the king—also transferred land and arag lattas to brahman dones and religious establishments and were in some cases entrusted with the supervision of cestes from araghatta fields. 70 In several cases a corporate body such as a gopu was instructed to look after the levy on agricultural produce imposed in an irrigated area. 4 A statutory record from Lakai shows a group of satra (cultivators) as transferring a share of their produce from an araghatta field to a temple, but here too the jagir of Sammanaka was held (sammanarakabhukta) by rajputra Abhayapala and the cultivators were in all likelihood his tenants either individually or collectively. 72 Apart from the Dabok record of 644 to our knowledge the only other record which indicates the prevalence of individual ownership of araghatta fields is an inscription of 1143 from Kekund. 73

Here it is an individual Copadeva who makes a gift of 1 hankur of wheat per arag latta to the god Gunesvara.

While the few records cited above may justifiably be taken to

68 There are other records dealing with proprietary rights over lands and wells held by temple establishments. The Bannera inscription of 1165 mentions a dhara (well or field irrigated by a well) as the property of god Maha. 61 (PRASWC 1908-9 p 53)

69 For the composition and functions of the Pancaakula, see A.K. Majumdar Chakratabyog of Guha ed. pp 236-42

70 PRASWC 1910-11 pp 3-9 EI VII pp 192-6

71 EL XI pp 85-9

72 EI XI pp 50-1

73 PRASWC 1910-11 p 35
imply that the organization of artificial irrigation was not an exclusive royal concern, the incidence of inscrptional references to official initiative in the construction of wells and reservoirs and of the ownership of araghattas, in twelfth-century Rajasthan in particular, still remains significant. In western Rajasthan this is understandable because of the naturally large size of the holdings and the likelihood that the cost of tank excavation and well construction was very high. If, on the basis of the discussion above, it is possible to suppose that there existed, in early medieval Rajasthan, a certain positive correlation between what may be called (to change the phraseology a little) 'induced' irrigation organization and a general growth in agricultural production, then irrigational efforts could and did to a certain extent generate economic and social power, albeit at microscopic political-spatial levels. This essay does not represent any attempt to revive the sensitive polemics on 'hydraulic society' per se, but seeks merely to conclude, on the basis of some empirical data, that under certain geographical conditions and the initiatives taken by an emergent socio-political system the organizational aspects of irrigation could assume a significance which would perhaps be absent in a different historical context.

74 See V.C. Mista, Geography of Rajasthan, p 66.
75 I have not been able so far to trace any contemporary Rajasthani evidence which would show what expenses were involved. There is, however, a sixteenth century inscription (Toda-Raising inscription of 1547, El, XXX, pp. 192–3) from the Jaipur area which records that the construction of a vapi cost 101 (i.e., tanka identified with silver coins of Sher Shâh and Islam Shâh). Its equivalent in Mewar currency (Mevadya nana) is also given; but the rate of exchange cannot be ascertained owing to the faulty nature of the evidence (I owe this reference to Professor D.C. Sircar). Another record, from Manda, Jhalawar, is dated 1485 AD and refers to the excavation of a tank at a cost of 723714 tankas (ARRM, 1914, p. 6, no. 11). Contemporary evidence comes from Madhya Pradesh and also relates to the excavation of a tank. A Rewa inscription of samvat 944 (1192?) refers to the excavation of a tank by Malayasimha, a feudatory of the Cedis, at the cost of 1500 tankakas with the figure of the Buddha on them (PRASWC, 1920–21, p. 52).
76 Assaults on the application of this concept in an unqualified form to the Indian context will be found in: Irfan Habib, 'An examination of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism', Enquiry, no. 6 (1961), 54–73; Romila Thapar, The Past and Prejudice (New Delhi, 1975), Lecture 3, and B. O'Leary, The Asiatic Mode of Production Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History (Oxford, 1989), passim. See also P. Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State (London, 1979), note B.
Origin of the Rajputs: The Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan

The origin of the Rajputs is a red herring much dragged about in historical writings on early medieval India. These writings reveal an extreme polarity of opinions extending in range from attempts to trace the Rajputs to foreign immigrant stocks of the post Gupta period—explaining in the process a later origin myth, namely the Agnikula myth—as a putative on myth—to contrived justifications for viewing the Rajputs as of pure kshatriya origin. The question of the indigenous origin of the Rajputs assumed symbolic overtones in the heyday of nationalist historiography and in the historical and purely literary writings of various genres the military and chivalrous qualities of the Rajputs were repeatedly projected. At the level of historical writing, C.V. Vaidya may be cited as epitomizing an extreme stand in this viewpoint. He states:

The Rajputs who now came to the fore and who by their heroism diffuse such glory on the period of Mediaeval India have not but have been the descendants of Vedics Aryans. None but Vedics Aryans could have fought so valiantly in defence of the ancestral faith (emphasis added).

Another facet of this viewpoint is revealed by the suggestion—repeated in recent writings—that the Rajputs rose to prominence in

1 Theories about the origin of the Rajputs continue, a voluminous literature. The relevant bibliographic references are however available in some recent works on Rajasthan. D. Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties: A Study of Chauhan Political History, Chauhan Political Institutions and Life in the Chauhan State and from c. 800 to 1316 AD (Delhi, 1959), passing Idem ed., Rajasthan Through the Ages, (Bikaner, 1960). passing Idem and J. N. Asopa, Origin of the Rajputs (Delhi, 1976). passing
2 C.V. Vaidya, History of Medieval India, Ind. Hist. Early History of Rajputs (750 to 1000 AD) (Powner, 1924) p. 7
the process of resisting foreign invasions and that they 'shouldered willingly the Kṣatriyas' duty of fighting for the land as well as its people and culture'.

At the level of narrative political history, the reconstruction of the early history of the Rajputs follows a pattern which has recently been characterized as a tendency to 'dynasticize'. This tendency is evident in most attempts to deal with genealogies found in epigraphs, and what such attempts manifest is the practice of rationalizing the inscriptions of a number of rulers of uncertain date and lineage into dynastic superstructures, thereby conferring both temporal and genetic relationships on them where the data provide neither, and further, the 'even more wide practice of juxtaposing and concatenating short genealogies and grafting them into an impressive whole which is truly greater than the sum of its parts'.

The most recent writings on the early history of the Rajputs have not substantially deviated from these assumptions and methods. As a result, even in detailed studies on Rajasthan, the origin of the Rajputs in the early medieval period has hardly been examined as a process which may have had parallels or otherwise in early medieval developments outside the region. The study of the Rajputs in isolation, therefore, seldom refers to the factors, except in the form of facile generalizations, which are now known to have been in operation in early medieval India. Admittedly, the pattern of the emergence of the Rajputs may show substantial deviations from developments outside western India, but the plea that the phenomenon should be examined as a total process still holds good. What is attempted in this paper, which is only an outline of an intended fuller study, is to view this process and to trace the early stages of the history of such clans as came to be recognized as Rajput.

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5 What we have in mind here are such factors as the formation of numerous new castes, emergence of dynasties seeking Kṣatriya status, accent on locality in social relations and so on. For a brief statement of some of the factors, see R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India (c. AD 500–1200)* (Delhi, 1969).
6 The existence of the Rajputs in the tenth-twelfth centuries has often been
The general framework for the paper is provided by the recent analyses of claims to traditional 'kshatriya' status, which became widespread in the early medieval period. Such claims were attempts to get away from, rather than reveal, the original ancestry and they underline the nature of a polity in which new social groups continued to seek various symbols for the legitimization of their newly acquired power. Furthermore, Rajput, like the traditional varna categories, is known to have been assimilative in space and time and has, until recent times, been a recognizable channel of transition from tribal to state polity. The processes of Rajputization thus at work in different periods and different areas may have been dissimilar and the concept of Rajputization, which also has some bearing on the present problem, is taken here to be relevant only to the extent that it points to the necessity of viewing the Rajput phenomenon in the early medieval period in terms of a process rather than in terms of the ancestry, genuine or concocted, of individual dynasties.

A preliminary idea of the processes involved may be formed by trying to define the term 'Rajput.' As in other periods, so in the early medieval period too, it may not be at all easy to distinguish the Rajputs from the non Rajputs despite the clear evidence regarding certain recognizable clans and frequent references to the rajputas in inscriptions and literature. One way of recognizing the early Rajputs may be by extrapolating evidence from later literature. Statements regarding the lists of Rajput clans, traditionally numbering thirty-six, are avail

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Footnotes:


able in relatively early works such as the *Kumārapālacakāra* and the *Varnavatākara*.

The *Rājatarangini* too refers to the number thirty-six. An analysis of the composition of various lists—-for the lists never tally with one another—suggests that the composition was not such as could be considered immutable by the contemporary compilers. If the early medieval and medieval references to the *rājaputras* in general are taken into account, they represented a 'mixed caste' and 'constituted a fairly large section of petty chiefs holding estates'. The criterion for inclusion in the list of Rajput clans was provided by the contemporary status of a clan at least in the early stages of the crystallization of Rajput power. However, the names of certain clans—such as the Cāhamānās or the Pratiharas—occur regularly in the lists, possibly due to their political dominance. Sources relating to them are also voluminous, and as such references to these clans will be more frequent throughout this paper than to others.

There are two important pointers to the process of the emergence of the Rajputs in the early medieval records. As these records suggest, at one level the process may have to be juxtaposed with the spate of colonization of new areas. The evidence of such colonization has to be traced not only in the significant expansion of the number of settlements but also in some epigraphic references, suggesting an expansion of agrarian economy. Any assertion about an increase in the number of settlements is, in the absence of any detailed historical-geographical study, only impressionistic. But in view of the widespread distribution of archaeological remains and epigraphs of the period as well as the appearance of numerous new place names, there cannot be any doubt about the validity of the assumption. A brief

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10 Ibid.
11 VII. 1617–8.
12 Compare the lists given in Yadava, pp. 36–7.
13 Cited in ibid., p. 34.
14 *Aparajitaaparāḥ*, a text of the twelfth century, cited in ibid., p. 34.
15 Compare the lists of early historical sites with those of the early medieval period in K.C. Jain, *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan* (Delhi, 1972), passim. Archaeological reports covering sites, monuments and epigraphs of Rajasthan convey the same impression.
reference to the names of several places and territorial divisions may be meaningful in this context. The term *vapadalakha* which was used to denote the territory of the Cakamanaas may indicate like the territorial divisions of the Deccan suffixed with numbers an expansion of village settlements. In fact some of the territorial divisions with suffixed numbers mentioned in the Skanda Purana such as Vagun 80,000 or Varana 36,000 have been located in Rajasthan. The Nadel Cakamana kingdom was known as *sapasana* and an inscription from Nanana relating to this family claims that it was made into *sapasahanaka* by a Cakamana king who killed *smadhipas* (chiefs of the boundaries of his kingdom) and annexed their villages. In the records of about the twelfth century the Abu area was known as *asaadala sata*. If all this cumulatively suggests a proliferation of settlements, then the relationship of this process through an expansion of agrarian economy, may be postulated with the emergence of the early Rajputs from about the seventh century. Apart from the inscriptions of the Guhilas of Kiskundh and of Dhavagarta which refer to irrigation based agriculture a more specific connection is suggested by a few records of the Mandor Pratiharas. A Ghatiyala inscription of Kakukka of AD 861 credits him with cattle raids and the destruction by fire of villages in the inaccessible Varanashaka. Kakukka made the land fragrant with the leaves of blue lories and pleasant with groves of mango and madhuka trees and covered it with leaves of excellent sugarcane. Another Ghatiyala record also of his time and dated AD 10

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15 D Sharma ed. *Rajasthan Through the Ages* ii p 18
16 See G S Diksit *Local Self-government in Medieval Karnataka*; (Dharwar 1964) pp 24-8 also T Venkateswara Rao *Numerical Figures Affixed to the Names of Territorial Divisions in Medieval Andhra*; *It has*, Journal of the Andhra Pradesh Archives, ii no. 1 (January-June 1974) pp 53-8
17 D Sharma ed. *Rajasthan Through the Ages* i p 19
18 *hastva s mado pa sanakhya saarn gramin pradyuga sa, delah sapalata yna sampasad anna kriYah, Nadel fragmentary grant (V 14)* ed ed by in D Sharma *Early Chauhan Dynasties* p 189
19 D Sharma ed. *Rajasthan Through the Ages* i pp 18-19
20 *Surat The Guhilas* pp 74-5
21 El xx pp. 122-5
22 For an idea of the methods and spread of irrigation in early medieval Rajasth see *Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan* in this volume
23 *JRAS* (1895) pp 519-20
861, mentions the resettlement of a place characterized as Abhiraj, nadarunah, terrible because of being inhabited by the Abiras. The place was not only conquered, but a village, Rohinsakupa, as well as Maddodara (identified with Mandor), were provided with markets. Kakkuka is repeatedly mentioned in the Ghatiyala inscriptions as having installed ātta and mahājana in the area which, apparently, became a crowded with brāhmaṇas, soldiers and merchants. When seen in the light of some other inscriptions of western and central India, which also speak of the suppression of the Śabaras, Bhillas and Pulindas, this evidence from Rajasthan may reveal two important aspects of a process. First, the territorial expansion of what came to be known as Rajput power was achieved, at least in certain areas, at the expense of the erstwhile tribal settlements. Similar movements for expansion are found in the cases of the Guhilas and the Cāhamānas as well. Though the Guhila settlements in various parts of Rajasthan are found as early as in the seventh century AD, slightly later traditions recorded in the inscriptions of the Nagda-Ahar Guhilas trace their movement from Gujarat. There is also a voluminous bardic tradition which suggests that the Guhila kingdoms in south-Rajasthan succeeded the earlier tribal chiefdoms of the Bhils. The Guhila connection with the Bhils, implied in the part that the latter played in the coronation ceremony of the Guhila kings, is also suggested in an Ekalingājī temple inscription of AD 1282:

The enemies of king Allata being impotent to show their contempt (towards him) in battlefield treat the Bhilla women disrespectfully who describe his actions with pleasure in each of the mountains.

25 El, ix, p. 280.
26 Ibid., i, p. 337, v. 22.
27 JA, xxxix, pp. 186ff; El, xxxi, pp. 237ff.
30 A Collection of Prakrit and Sanskrit Inscriptions (Bhavnagar Archaelogical Department, Bhavnagar, n. d.), pp. 74ff. For further discussion, see also Nandini Sinha, ‘Guhila Lineages and the Emergence of State in Early Medieval Mewar’ M. Phil Dissertation (Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1988).
The movement of the Cahanamas, according to the tradition mentioned in their inscriptions, was from Ahicchatrapura to Sakambhrani or Jangaladea which one would assume from the name and topography of Jangaladea. This led to the colonization of a generally uncharted area. The Nandol branch of the Cahanama family was founded in the Godwar region of southeast Marwar (Pali district) by Lakshmana whose military adventurism, according to tradition recorded in the Puranamratabandhasamagraha and Namas Khyan, led to the formation of a kingdom at the expense of the Medas of that area. Another example of the same process is available in the bardic legends of Palliwal Chand, which narrate how Rathoda Sita was brought in to keep away the Medas and Minas. Secondly, as already mentioned in connection with the reference to Pratihara Kakkuka’s inscriptions, the colonization of new areas appears to have been accompanied by what may be loosely termed a more advanced economy. In other words, Rajasthan in the period when Rajput polity was beginning to emerge was, in its various areas, undergoing a process of change from tribalism. Some facets of change that such a transition presented elsewhere in India may thus seem to have been present in early medieval Rajasthan as well.

As the second point suggests, to conceive of the emergence of the Rajputs only in terms of colonization would be to take a wrong view of the total process involved, and here we come to the second pointer provided by the records. The fact that the mobility to Kshatriya status was in operation elsewhere in the same period prompts one to look for its incidence also in Rajasthan. The cases of two groups who are included in the list of Rajput clans are significant in this context. One is that of the Medas who are considered to have reached the Rajput status from a tribal background. The other is that of the Hunas.

31 D Sharma, ed., Rajasthan Through the Ages, I, p 12 cites Sahadharmama-man to show the following characteristics of the region: the sky is generally clear, trees and water are scarce, and the land abounds in ārams (propis sp; c genus) karus (Sapphiraphylla) pul (catuca rhoeas) and karandakas (Ziziphus jujuba) trees.

32 Cited by D Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties, pp 121–2

33 ibid, p 188

34 Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p 34

35 ibid
sufficient to belie any assumption that the structure could be composed only of such groups as were initially closely linked by descent, 'foreign' or 'indigenous'.

II

Apart from the fact that the rājaputras are mentioned in certain sources as being of mixed caste, the evidence relating to the Medas and the Huṇas cited above thus leads one to search not for the original ancestry of the clans but for the historical stages in which the Rajput clan structure came to be developed. This can initially be done with reference to some major clans which played a politically dominant role in early medieval Rajasthan. For the purpose of this paper, these clans are the Pratiharas, the Guhils and the Cāhamanas.

To start with the Pratiharas, despite some laboured attempts to dissociate them from the Gurjaras on the plea that Gurjara, in the 'Gurjara-Pratihara' combine, represented the country and not the people, it would appear that the Pratiharas who rose to prominence sometime in the eighth century were really from the Gurjara stock. In early India, janapada names were commonly interchangeable with tribal names. Secondly, the argument that the Pratiharas could not have emerged from the pastoral Gurjara stock is misplaced, because as early as in the seventh century, the Gurjaras of Nandipuri represented a ruling family. Thirdly, a branch of the Pratiharas in the Alwar area is taken to represent the Bad Gujars. Documents dating from the seventh century suggest a wide distribution of the Gurjaras as a political power in western India, and references to Gurjara commoners may indicate that the political dominance of certain families reflected a process of stratification that had developed within the stock. The Pāncharatna evidence which mentions the Gurjara country as providing camels for sale may suggest, though inadequately, pas-

38. A, xiii, pp. 70ff; E, xxiii, pp. 147ff.
40. maya gurjaradee gantavyam karabhagrahamaya . . . iatasca gurjaradee gatv
toralism. The Gujars are mentioned as cultivators also in an inscription of a Gujara Pratihara king Mathana from Rajorgarh in Alwar.

It would seem that the Pratiharas, like several other Gujara lineages, branched off the Gujara stock through the channel of political power and the case probably offers a parallel to that of the Kusandas who originally a sept of the Yueh-chih rose to political eminence and integrated five different jolas.

Further, the fact that some Pratiharas also became brahmanas will find parallel in developments among the Abhiras out of whom emerged Abhira brahmanas, Abhira ksatriyas, Abhira Sudras and so on.

Admittedly, all this reconstruction is tenuous and in the absence of evidence, even such reconstruction is not possible in the case of the Cahananas and the Guhitas. But a definite correlation does exist between the achievement of political eminence and a movement towards a corresponding social status. The pattern of this correlation may be indicated by the following few tables, prepared mostly on the basis of the epigraphs of the various families of the Pratiharas, the Guhitas and the Cahananas.

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41 tr gujara va saimsanaskatra, El u. pp 263-7
43 B. Surugavari The Abls, Their History and Culture (Baroda 1962) pp 39-40
44 The inforaminal references from which these tables are drawn up are selective and not arbitrary. The column indicating political status has often been left blank as this status, not always defined in the records, has to be reconstructed. The status is mentioned in the column only when definite indications are available about it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Political Status</th>
<th>Nature of Claims about the Origin of the Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gurjāras of Nandipuri</td>
<td>Seventh century&lt;sup&gt;45&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Gurjāra-Nipativamśa</td>
<td>Feudatory, suggested by such titles as mahāsāmanta, etc., but special position suggested by the claim that they gave protection to the overlord</td>
<td>In some records claim made about descent from Mahārāja Karna, which substitutes the family name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratiharas of Mandor</td>
<td>837&lt;sup&gt;46&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Pratihāra-vamśa</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Descent traced from the kṣatriya wife of a brāhmaṇa, implying brahma-kṣatra status. Links established with Laksmana who acted as the pratihāra (doorkeeper) of Rāma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>861&lt;sup&gt;47&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Pratihāra</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Similar, but name of the brāhmaṇa wife, mentioned in earlier record, dropped.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>45</sup> IA, xiii, pp. 70ff; EI, xxiii, pp. 147ff.
<sup>46</sup> EI, xviii, pp. 97–8.
<sup>47</sup> JRAS (1895), pp. 519–20.
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Praunara of Rajasthan and Kanauj</td>
<td>Ninth century $^{48}$</td>
<td>Praunara</td>
<td>Sovereign power</td>
<td>Descent traced from the Sun suggesting claims to solar origin through Laksmana who served as prashara (doorkeeper) of Rama Mentioned as the family of Raghu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tenth century $^{49}$</td>
<td>Indirectly referred to in the inscription of their Cakamana feudatories</td>
<td>Mentioned as the overlords of the Cakamana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarata-Praunara of Rajor in Alwar</td>
<td>960 $^{50}$</td>
<td>Gujarata</td>
<td>Feudatories of the Praunaras of Rajasthan and Kanauj</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Praunaranvaya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{48}$ *Ef* xviii, p. 110

$^{49}$ *La*, vi, p. 58 A contemporary text Rajalekshara’s Karpuranamajara also refers to Mahendrapala and Mahapala as Rghulataka, cited by D.R. Bhandarkar “Foreign Elements in the Hindu Population”, *Ef* (1911) p. 85 fn 80

$^{50}$ *Ef* iii, pp. 263-7
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guhils of Kiskindhā</td>
<td>Second quarter of the seventh century&lt;sup&gt;51&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Guhilaputriānvaya</td>
<td>Feudatory, suggested by such titles as sāmantā, samādhigatapañca- mahātabda, mahārāja, etc.</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guhils of Chatsu</td>
<td>Middle of the tenth century&lt;sup&gt;52&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Guhilavamśa</td>
<td>Originally feudatories of the Mauryas and Prāṭihāras</td>
<td>Brahma-ksatrānvita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guhils of Mewar</td>
<td>661&lt;sup&gt;53&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Guhilānvaya</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Late tenth to late eleventh century tradition&lt;sup&gt;54&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Guhilavamśa</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Originator of the family described as ānandapura vinirgata- viprakulānandah mahidevaḥ, implying descent from a brāhmaṇa family of Ānandapura. Record implies claim to brahmaksatra status.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>52</sup> *El*, xii, pp. 10ff.
<sup>54</sup> *IA*, xxix, p. 191; *El*, xxxi, pp. 237ff.
<sup>55</sup> *A Collection of Prakrit and Sanskrit Inscriptions* (Bhavnagar Archaeological Department, Bhavnagar), p. 89.
<table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>Srid rajaswa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suryavamsa implying claim to solar origin</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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**Cahamana**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
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<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Political Status</th>
<th>Nature of Claims about the Origin of the Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Middle of</td>
<td>Cahamana</td>
<td>Feudatory as suggested by such titles as maharajavamsa dh puru samadg napanavamasa lebha, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>8th century</td>
<td>Cahamana</td>
<td>Possible feudatories of the Pratiharas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Dholpur</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>Cahamana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Nadox</td>
<td>1119</td>
<td>Cahamana</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ancenity traced to Indra through a person who came out of Indra's eyes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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56 lb d, p 141
57 CB xi, pp 197ff
58 ZDMG xl, pp 38ff
59 EL xl, p 304
<table>
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<th>Family Name</th>
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<th>Nature of Claims about the Origin of the Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cāhamānas of Śākambhāri</td>
<td>946$^{60}$</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>Feudatories of the Pratihāras</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1169$^{61}$</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>Independent power</td>
<td>Vipraśī Vatsagotra, implying claim to brāhmanical descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelfth century</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kṣitirājaevamka</td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>Ancestry traced to Sun-god, described as the right eye of Viṣṇu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1191–3$^{62}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>Origin traced to the Sun and the family related with the Ikṣvākus of the Kṛta age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cāhamānas of Mt. Abu</td>
<td>1320$^{63}$</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>Origin traced to the holy sage Vaccha who created the Cāhamāna as a new race of warriors when the solar and lunar races became extinct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{60}$ IA, xli, pp. 57ff.
$^{61}$ EI, xxvi, pp. 84ff.
$^{62}$ Ibid., xxix, p. 179.
$^{63}$ Pṛthivirājaevam of Jayanaka; the evidence of this text as also of other sources bearing on the changing claims regarding their ancestry made by the Cāhamānas has been extensively analysed by V.S. Pachak, Ancient Historians of India: A Study in Historical Biographies (Bombay, 1966), pp. 98–136.
$^{64}$ EI, ix, pp. 75ff.
The tables given in the previous pages seem to demonstrate a close correspondence between the different stages in the assumption of political power and the stages in which various claims to ancestral respectability were made. Although the genealogies having been drafted by different hands did not always follow a uniform pattern it would appear that feudatory status was incompatible with the stage when detailed and fabricated reference to a respectable ancestry could be made. Apart from the evidence already cited, one further point should make this clear. In a period when detailed genealogies with a respectable ancestry were being put forward on behalf of sovereign families of a clan another section of the same clan placed in a feudatory position did not advance any such claim at all. Thus a Guhila record of AD 1145 from Mangrol in south Gujarat speaks of three generations of Guhila rulers of Mangalapura who were feudatories of the Caulukyas simply as Sin Guhila although in the same period claims to respectable ancestry were being made by the Guhilas elsewhere.

When one looks at the different stages in which the genealogies were being formulated it further appears that for the majority of the newly emerging royal lines Brahma ksatra was a transitional status, which once acquired was not however entirely given up and explanations continued to be given for the supposedly authentic transition from the brahmana to the ksatriya status. If it be accepted on the strength of these relatively later records that both the Guhilas and the Gahamanas were originally of brahmanical descent—although no claims to such descent have been made in their early records—then the status was being projected in order to legitimate their new ksatriya role. It may also well be that the Brahma ksatra was a relatively open status as can be gathered from its wide currency in India in this period which was seized upon by the new royal families before they

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55 The term 'feudatory' is being used here in the absence of a better alternative imply to imply a subordinate category. For a recent critique of the and scrupulous use of these and such other terms see B. Stein, 'The State and Agrarian Order in South India' in B. Stein ed. Essays on South India (Hawaii: 1975) pp. 83-4
56 A Collection of Pahari and Sanskrit Inscriptions, pp. 157ff
could formulate a claim to a pure ksatriya origin. This gradual change is perhaps illustrated by a comparison between two Pratihāra inscriptions of the ninth century from the Jodhpur area. While one, dated AD 837, explains the origin of the Pratihāra brāhmaṇas and Pratihāra ksatriyas in terms of the two wives, one ksatriya and the other brāhmaṇa, of brāhmaṇa Haricandra, in the second, dated AD 861, the brāhmaṇa wife is dropped from the genealogical list. The continuation of references to brāhmaṇical origin was as much related to a concern for pure descent as the need for finding a respectable source from which the ksatriya status was derived. The genealogy of the Jodhpur Pratihāras starts with Haricandra who is described in one record as Pratihāravamsaguru, but an elaborate statement of the connection with such a source is provided by a Guhila inscription of AD 1285 from Acaleswar (Mt. Abu):

Assuredly from Brahmalike Hārīta (Hāritarṣi-sage) Bappaka obtained, in the shape of an anklet, the lustre of a Ksatriya and gave the sage his own devotion, his own brāhmaṇical lustre. Thus even till now, the descendants of that line shine on this earth, like Ksatriyahood in human form.

Though not exactly identically, but in a largely similar way, the Če ros of Bihar, some of whom claimed Rajput status, claimed their descent from Čyavansāri.

All this suggests that detailed genealogies of ruling clans, which came to be formulated only in the period of change from the feudatory to an independent status, can hardly be extrapolated for an assessment of actual origin, although some parts of such genealogies may have been based on a genuine tradition. The different stages in the formulation of genealogical claims also thus reveal a political process, it being that of upward mobility from an initial feudatory position. The Gujarat Gurjaras are stated, both in their titles and in the declaration of their allegiance to the Valabhi king, as feudatories. The early Guhilas of Kiskindhā and those of Dhavagartā were feudatories too, and Bappa...
Rawal, the traditional founder of the Guhila line of Mewar, appears to have started with a feudatory status as the title san iva (identical with rajakula which was sometimes associated with a subordinate position) suggests. The Chahamanas both of Gujarat and Rajasthan were clearly feudatories of the Gujarana Pratiharas and it may be significant that the second name in the Chahama genealogy is samanta (which indirectly suggests a feudatory status) which is in contrast with the next name nipa or nara des i (both meaning king). The transition from feudatory to independent status was clearly through the growth of military strength. The Nandputi Gujaratas boast of the protection they gave to the lord of Vallabhi who had been overpowered by Bansa. The Hansot plates of the Chahamanas begin with the invocation: Victorious be the Chahama family exalted with a large army. Similarly inscriptions of the Chahama and Pratihara feudatory families from Rajasthan highlight the part played by them in the military expeditions of their Gujara Pratihara overlords.

The point just made should be interesting inasmuch as it shows that the emergence of the early Rajput clans took place within the existing hierarchical political structure. This point is often missed in efforts to build an image of the Rajputs as making a sudden and brilliant debut on the north Indian political scene. An understanding of this initial political stage is important on one more count. It provides us with a vantage point from which to examine further processes namely how from their initial feudatory position the Rajput clans in their bid for political ascendancy moved towards creating economic and social bases for their interlocking interests.

III

The process of the emergence of the early Rajputs is associated at the level of economy with certain new features of land distribution and territorial system which were perhaps present both in the large empires of the Pratiharas and the Chahamanas as also in the localized kingdoms.

73 The evidence of the Bhabol inscription of AD 1169 El xxvi pp 84ff
74 ib d., xxvi pp 147ff
75 ibid, xi pp 197ff
76 l.c.xi p 58
such as those of the Guhils. Such features have often been discussed before, but in view of their continued association, in some form or other, with the Rajputs till later times, we shall only examine them in relation to the consolidation of clan networks among the early Rajputs. One feature, the incidence of which in this period appears to have been higher in Rajasthan than elsewhere, was the distribution of land among the royal kinsmen. It must, however, be underlined—because it is not usually so done—that this feature appears to have represented a process which gradually developed and which was associated in particular with the spread of one clan, the Cāhamānas. The Pratihāra empire being of a rather vast dimension, the composition of the assignees in the empire was varied, although such expressions as vamsapotakabhoga (this occurs in the Rajorgarh inscription of Gurjara-Pratihāra Mathana of Alwar) have been understood in the sense of clan patrimony. A certain measure of clan exclusiveness, which could not have been very rigid in the system of land distribution, appeared in a nebulous form in Rajasthan in a slightly later context, and was, as mentioned earlier, associated in particular with the Cāhamānas. The Harśa inscription of AD 973 from Jaipur area perhaps gives the earliest evidence of such distribution. Here are mentioned the svabhogas (personal estates) of king Simharāja, his two brothers, Vatsaraṇa and Vigrarāja, and his two sons, Candarāja and Govindaṇāja. The inscription also mentions another assignee, perhaps of the Guhila clan, holding a bhoga. A duhsādhya, an official, had his own estate too within this kingdom, but his rights were obviously limited inasmuch as his authority to grant land depended on the approval of the king, whereas others needed no such sanction and made grants on their own. The process seems to have gone through further develop-


78 For a general review of the evidence, see K. Gopal, ‘Assignment to Officers.


80 El, iii, p. 266f; cf. K. Gopal, p. 91.

ment till the twelfth century when in the areas held by the Nadol Cahamanas the assignments termed variously as grasa, grastabhumi or bhukti, came to be held by the king, the kunama or the crown prince rajapurava or sons of the king, the queens and, in one case, the maternal uncle of the king (who obviously was not a member of the same clan).  

To some extent tied up with this feature but in actual operation distanced from it was a new land unit which appears to have consisted of six villages and the multiples thereof. The use of this land unit was by no means limited to Rajasthan even so the incidence of its use in this period appears to have been higher in western India than elsewhere. The units were in many cases parts of such administrative divisions as mandala, bhukti or usaya, but the statements in inscriptions that villages were attached (pratibaddha) to such units may suggest that the units became the nuclei of some kind of local control. The earliest references to the units of eighty four villages seem to be available in Sautashtra held towards the close of the ninth century by the Gaurara Pratiharas and its spread to Rajasthan was perhaps intended to facilitate the distribution of land and political control among the ruling elites. The Harsa inscription of AD 973, which we have cited earlier mentions the Tukakigala group of twelve as having been held by Cahamana Simharaja. In the eleventh century pratibhad sahala, which was located within Cacchunnamandala was held by the Paramaras of Kota and in AD 1160 twelve villages attached to Naddulai (Naddula-pratibhadhadradalagramani) were assigned by Cahamana Alihana and his eldest son to Kuruppala and a younger son. By the later part of the fourteenth century the caurana or holders of eighty four villages had become as the evidence of the Visaladeva Kuta suggests a well known class of chiefs and if the pieces of evidence cited above are any indication such big holdings emanated

82 Ibid, pp 32-3 of K. Gopal pp 92-4
83 U.N. Ghoshal: Contributions to the History of the Hindu Revenue System (University of Calcutta 1929), p. 268
84 Et, IX, pp 2-6 ibid, XI, pp 116-30
85 Ibid, IX, pp 2-6
86 Ibid, XX, p. 155
87 Ibid, XX, pp 62-6
88 Cited by K. Gopal, p 96.
from the process of the distribution of land among the members of the ruling clans. The *caurusia* arrangement was not always strictly adhered to in the territorial system of the Rajputs, but it did provide a 'theoretical frame' to that system in which the hierarchy of units and the linkages between clan members and units could be worked out fairly well.\(^9^9\) Obviously, the details for identifying such linkages are absent in our records, but it is significant that, despite inadequate inscriptive evidence, the rudiments of the *caurusia* arrangement and its connection with the distribution of land can be traced to the early phases of the crystallization of Rajput polity.

The early phase of Rajput ascendancy also coincided with the construction of fortresses, numerically on a large scale—a feature which appears to have been absent in the earlier kingdoms of Rajasthan,\(^9^9\) but which came to be very much a part of the Rajput territorial system later on. Early medieval inscriptions suggest their location in different parts of Rajasthan: Kamyakiyakotta in Bharatpur area,\(^9^9\) Rājayapura at Rajor in Alwar,\(^9^2\) Māndavapura in Durgā at Māndor near Jodhpur,\(^9^3\) Citrakūtamahaḍaudra at Chitor,\(^9^4\) Kosavardhanadurga at Shergarh in Kota,\(^9^5\) Suvarnagiridurga at Jalūr,\(^9^6\) Śrīmāliyakotta at Bhīmāl,\(^9^7\) Taksakagadha\(^9^8\) and other places. The fortresses served not only defence purposes but had, as the composition of population in some of them will show, wider functions.\(^9^9\) They represented the numerous foci of power of the ascendant ruling families and appear to have had close links with landholdings in the neighbouring areas. The Ropilplate of Paramāra Dēvarāja, dated AD 1052, mention the grant of a


\(^9^0\) See, for example, the early historical material in K.C. Jain, pp. 80–154.

\(^9^1\) *El*, xxiv, pp. 329ff.

\(^9^2\) Ibid., iii, p. 263.

\(^9^3\) Ibid., xvii, p. 98.


\(^9^5\) *El*, xxiii, p. 132.

\(^9^6\) Also mentioned as Kaṁcanagirigadha, ibid., i, pp. 54–5.

\(^9^7\) Ibid., xxii, pp. 196–8.


piece of land in the \textit{saabhujanamaanaaasa} of Deyara, the land having been located to the south of \textit{Sralayakota}. Among its boundaries are mentioned lands belonging to two Lakhmanas and a \textit{mahamanadhpath}. Another inscription of the time of Paramara Udava dariya from Shergarh in Kota district mentions the village Vilapadrika as belonging to a temple in the Kotavardhanadurga.

References to \textit{durgas} in the context of lands donated obviously suggest that these forts were a fact of control for their rural surroundings—a point which may be further substantiated by a reference to the Gopagiri inscriptions of the time of the Gaurkara Pratiharas which also suggest the same kind of control wielded by an early medieval fortress. Thus along with the assignment of land, occasionally in terms of units which could be made into administrative units as well the construction of fortified settlements in large numbers could be seen as a part of a process of the consolidation of their position by the ruling clans.

At the level of social relations the obvious pointer to this process would be the marriage network among the clans. The information available from inscriptions is unfortunately rather limited and so when in the genealogical lists a few cases of marriage are mentioned it may be assumed with certainty that they have been recorded because of their significant political implications for the family. Proceeding onward chronologically from the Pratihara family one can see a change in the marriage network pattern in which not only does the supposed origin of a family play an unimportant part but there is also a development towards an understandable pattern of interclan relationship. As mentioned earlier in an inscription of AD 837 of the Pratihara family from the Jodhpur area the originator of the family is mentioned as having married a brahmana and a kshatriya wife. In another inscription of AD 861 the brahmana wife is dropped from the account of the ancestry. Towards the end of the genealogy Rakka who is very close to the last and the current ruler in the genealogical list is mentioned as having married a Pandita of the Bhairav clan considered

\textsuperscript{10} E 1 xx 1 pp 106-8
\textsuperscript{10} ibid xx 1 pp 131 ff
\textsuperscript{10} ibid pp 154 ff
by some to be identical with the Bhaṭṭis of Jaisalmer area.\textsuperscript{103} Records of other families suggest a similar development towards a network which involved mostly the ruling Rajput clans. In the inscriptions of the Cāhamānas there seems to have been a distinct preference for the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, Rāṭrāudhas or Rathors. A rāṇaka Tribhuvanēvara of this family was married to Rāṣṭrakūṭa Lakṣmīdevī.\textsuperscript{104} Ālhaṇa of the Cāhamāna family of Nadol also married Annalladevi of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa family.\textsuperscript{105} Among the Paramāras of Rajasthan, the marriages known to have been contracted were with the Cāhamānas. Paramāra Dhārāvarśa of Mt. Abu married the daughter of Cāhamāna Kelhaṇadeva.\textsuperscript{106} Paramāra Satyaṛāja of the Vāgadā family married Rājaśī, apparently of another Cāhamāna family.\textsuperscript{107} The network was, however, more varied and widespread with the Guhilas. Two records, respectively of AD 1000\textsuperscript{108} and 1008,\textsuperscript{109} mention two wives of Guhila mahāsāṃantaḍhipati of Nāgahrada: one was mahārājī Sarvadevi who was the daughter of a mahāsāṃantaḍhipati of the solar family; the other was mahārājī Jajukā who was similarly the daughter of a mahāsāṃantaḍhipati of the solar family of Bharukaccha. Ālhaṇadevi, from a Guhila royal family, was married to Gayakarṇa of the Cedi family.\textsuperscript{110}

Marriage relations, contracted by the Guhilas with specifically Rajput clans, extended to the Caulukyas,\textsuperscript{111} the Paramāras,\textsuperscript{112} the Rāṣṭrakūṭas,\textsuperscript{113} the Cāhamānas\textsuperscript{114} and the Hūṇas.\textsuperscript{115} Interclan relationships in terms of marriages contracted could, at a certain point of time, be limited to two clans and any consistency in the pattern may have been due to the nature of political relations between such clans,

\textsuperscript{103} EI, xviii, pp. 87–99; also D. Sharma, ed., Rajasthan Through the Ages, i, p. 124, fn. 2.

\textsuperscript{104} EI, xxxvii, pp. 155–8.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., ix, pp. 66ff.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., xxxii, pp. 135–8.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., xxi, pp. 42–50.

\textsuperscript{108} ARRM (1936), p. 2.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{110} JA, xvi, pp. 345–55.

\textsuperscript{111} PRASWC (1905–6), p. 61.

\textsuperscript{112} EI, xxxi, pp. 237–48.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} JA, xxxix, pp. 188–9.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
or as in the case of the Guhilas it could be quite expansive. But the network operated mostly among such clans as came to constitute the Rajput category. The choice was essentially political because the families cited here constituted the ruling elites of early medieval Rajasthan. Interclan relationships however revealed through cases of marriage seem to have had wider social implications as well. It could provide social legitimacy to such groups as the Hunas who had acquired sufficient political power in western India by this period leading finally to their inclusion in the Rajput clan list. Secondly interclan marriage relationships may have also led to collaboration in wider areas of social and political activity. This Guhla Allara, who was married to a Huna princess had a Huna member in a goush in the kingdom of his son Narasimhana. Similarly, Ana belonging to the family of the Hastikund Rastrakutas was involved in activities concerning a religious institution in the kingdom of Parmara Dharavarna who had entered into matrimonial relations with the Hastikund family. In an inscription of AD 1168 from Hansi Hisar district there is a reference to one Guh laura Kihbana who was the maternal uncle of Prthviraja Cahamana and in charge of the Asika fort of the Cahamanas. These examples are obviously inadequate but interclan relationships offer a key to an understanding of the processes through which Rajput polity evolved in the early medieval period.

IV

In our discussion of the processes leading to the emergence of the Rajputs in the early medieval period we have focused so far on a few major ruling families. Although the term rajputra continued to denote along with maha raja kumara the son of a king as in the inscriptions of the Nadol Cahamanas there was certainly a gradual change in the connotation of the term which came to denote descent

16 For the process of Huna power in the period see D.C. S ca. S me Prob Lee of Ayuna and Rajput History (University of Calcutta, 1969) pp 83-7
17 ibid iv pp 161ff
18 ibid iv pp 50-1
19 ibid al pp 17-9
20 cf. Pa. pp 49-51
groups and not necessarily a particularly exalted political status. A Chitor inscription of AD 1301 mentions three generations of rājaputras,\(^{121}\) perhaps suggesting that by the close of the thirteenth century the term rājaputra conveyed not merely a political status, but an element of heredity as well. The proliferation of the Rajputs in the early medieval period is suggested by a variety of sources. Hemacandra’s Trisastisālaḳapurusācārīta refers to rājaputrakaḥ or numerous persons of rājaputra descent;\(^{122}\) a Mr. Abu inscription of the late eleventh century speaks of ‘all the rājaputras of the illustrious Rājaputra clan.’\(^{123}\) Merutunga in his Prabandhacintāmani mentions hundred rājaputras of the Paramāra clan.\(^{124}\) It is understandable then that among the ruling élites, rājaputra covered a wide range, from the ‘actual son of a king to the lowest ranking landholder.’\(^{125}\) In terms of the actual clans recognized as Rajputs, it is clear from the evidence in the Kumārapālacārīta and the Rajatarangini that the number had become substantial, as mentioned earlier. However, the number given in these texts suggests not so much a rigid set of thirty-six clans as the idea of descent setting apart the rājaputras from the others. To quote a relevant passage from the Rajatarangini, ‘Even those Rajaputras Anantapāla and the rest, who claim descent from the thirty-six families and who in their pride would not concede a higher position to the sun himself . . . .’\(^{126}\)

From about the twelfth century onward, one comes across a variety of expressions which are applied to the ruling élites and which are different from such ranks as sāmanta and mahāsāmanta, the use of which appears to have become less frequent now. The most common terms are rājaputra, rāutta or rāutta, rājakula or rāvala, mahārājakula or mahārāvala, rānaka, and so on, and to these are sometimes tagged

\(^{121}\) Cited in Asopa, pp. 9–10.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.

\(^{123}\) Ibid.

\(^{124}\) Ibid.


\(^{126}\) M.A. Stein, Kalhana’s Rajatarangini: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir, Reprint (Delhi, 1961), p. 593.
official titles like samanta, mālamandaleśvara\textsuperscript{122} or mahamandalika\textsuperscript{123} indicating the ranks that the rajputras and such others may have attained in an administrative arrangement. What is common to all such terms as rajakula, rajputra or ranaka is suggested affiliation to royalty and although it is not always possible to trace a direct lineal connection between a rajputra or ranaka and a royal family an explanation for the use of such terms may be sought in the high incidence of their connection with the clan families from which constituted the royalty in early medieval Rajasthan. Indeed references to rajakula (AD 1208)\textsuperscript{124} malarajakula (AD 1186 1292 1302)\textsuperscript{125} maharavata (AD 1302)\textsuperscript{126} rana in rajakula (AD 1167)\textsuperscript{127} shakkura rauta (AD 1138)\textsuperscript{128} etc. of the Guhila families ranaka (son of a mandalika)\textsuperscript{129} rajputra (AD 1287) etc. of the Cālamana families\textsuperscript{130} and so on become frequent from the twelfth century onward. This evidence should certainly not be construed to mean that rajputras and such other distinguished epithets were confined to a few select clans. In the inscriptions one comes across Śrī Vamśāgottiyā rauta (AD 1156)\textsuperscript{131} Gujarajātiya thokkra (AD 1283)\textsuperscript{132} or a ranaka from the Kālmara country (AD 1143)\textsuperscript{133} and these are a measure of the flexibility of the system in which new groups could be accommodated by virtue of their political initiative and power.

The proliferation of the Rajputas in the early medieval period both among the established clans as well as those outside them is a key indicator for an analysis of the structure of Rajput political dominance. There is no direct evidence regarding the changing status of the traditional ksatriya groups or ruling elites of Rajasthan and one can

\textsuperscript{122} PRASWC(1910-1) pp 38-9
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid. p 35
\textsuperscript{124} ABBJ (1927) p 3
\textsuperscript{125} PRASWC(1914-15) p 35
\textsuperscript{126} Jb d
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid. (1911-12) p 52
\textsuperscript{128} El. 11, pp 36-7
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. xxxvii, pp 157-8
\textsuperscript{130} L. xiv pp 771f
\textsuperscript{131} P C Nahar, Jāna Lekhal Sanghaba pt 1 (Calcutta, 1918) p 218
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid. pt ii (Calcutta 1927) p 25
\textsuperscript{133} PRASWC(1908-9) p 45
even assume their incorporation into the Rajput structure if they survived in power; but the evidence of two inscriptions of the tenth century may suggest the possibility that some among the traditional ‘ksatriyas’ were going through a process of change. A record of AD 956 from Mandkila Tal, near Jodhpur, \(^{139}\) mentions the son of a learned ksatriya, who engraved a praśasti and was a sistradhrāṇa by profession. Another inscription, of the tenth century, of the Gurjara-Pratiharas from the Doab area in UP, \(^{140}\) refers to a ksatriya vanik. Though obviously inadequate, the examples may nevertheless be taken to indicate that the proliferation of the Rajputs contributed towards an undermining of the political status of the early ksatriya groups which were taking to less potent occupations and also that the preferred term for the ruling stratum was now not so much ‘ksatriya’ as ‘Rajput’.

As a hypothesis, the substitution of the traditional ‘ksatriya’ groups by the Rajputs and the consolidation of the Rajput structure may be viewed as a result of collaboration between the emerging clans, not only in terms of interclan marriage relationships but also in terms of participation at various levels of the polity and the circulation of clan members in different kingdoms and courts. Although the beginning of this process may be traced to the feudatory-overlord relationship between the Pratiharas, Cāhamānas and others, a wider network of relationships appears to have spread to other levels of the polity—only gradually. One may start here by pointing to the changing typology of the inscriptions of Rajasthan. Whereas the royal commands conveyed through epigraphs from about the seventh to tenth century—and in some cases to the twelfth century as well—were addressed to various categories of officials (in the Dungarpur inscription of AD 689, \(^{141}\) for example, the list runs as: nirpa, nrpsuta, sandhivigrāhādhi-kṛta, senādhyaśa, purodha, pramātrā, mantri, pratihara, rajasthanya, upārika, kumāramatya, visayabhogapati, cauroddharanika, saulkika, vyaprtaka, dandapāsika, cāta, bhata, pratisarakα, grāmadhipati, drangika, and so on), in later inscriptions lists of such officials are generally

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\(^{139}\) EI, xxxiv, pp. 77ff.

\(^{140}\) Ibid., xix, pp. 52–4.

\(^{141}\) Ibid., xxxiv, pp. 173–6. See also Rajor inscription of AD 960, ibid., iii, pp. 263–7; Bāmbara plate of Paramāra Bhoja of AD 1019, IA, xii, pp. 201–2; a Nadol inscription of AD 1119; EI, xi, pp. 304ff.
absent. The change is perhaps best shown by the form of address in a Nadol Cahanama inscription of AD 1161 *dcmto rajapurtrun jana* padagam kothiyayena. Here the rajaputras who are distinguished from the jana padagamara alone seem to stand for all the categories of officials mentioned in the earlier inscriptions. This is not to say that the earlier ranks had completely disappeared. In fact, according to traditions relating to the twelfth century, there were one hundred samantas in the Cahanama court. But from a study of the inscriptions, one is strongly tempted to assume that such ranks mostly circulate among those groups who were claiming to be rajapatas as well. Although there is an early reference to a Prathihara member of a goshta in the seventh century Vasantgadh inscription on one of Varmalak, it is only in a much later period that the rajapatas or more generally the members of various clans are found placed at various positions in the Rajput socio-political structure. It is in this period that the insessional evidence relating to the composition of élites suggests a distinct trend towards what we have earlier called collaboration between the clans.

Thus in the Ahada inscription of Guhila Allara (AD 942) a Huna and a Prathihara are mentioned as members of a goshtika again in the Paldi inscription of Guhla Anamsha (AD 1059) a Saulamkri vamshiyu rajaputra figures as a member of a goshtika. In the Mala plates of Virasunha (AD 1287) a matsu is among various witnesses mentioned. The Hansi stone inscription of Prithvira a Cahanama contains some relevant information in this connection: (i) Asitkundu a fort was given to a Guhilatunmayaka or a person belonging to the Guhila clan and (ii) a Dadaunayaka or a person belonging to the Doda subclan was a subordinate of Prithvira's maternal uncle. Both these references showing the inclusion of Guhila and Doda elements in the Cahanama polity are by no means exceptional because in the same kingdom

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142 Ibid. IX pp 62–6
143 D. Sharma ed., Prathamkara Tmavagh, Sh. Act 4, p. 359
145 L, iv i pp 161ff
146 E3, xx pp. 8–12.
147 Ibid. II, pp. 192–6
one comes across references to mahāmāndalikas of Bodānā origin\(^{149}\) and other categories of feudatories of Dadhica origin.\(^{150}\) The presence of Guhila landowning élites in the Cāhamāna kingdom is revealed by the Biholi inscription of AD 1169\(^{151}\) which refers to grants of land made to a Jain temple by Guhilaputra Rāvala Dhādhara and Guhilaputra Rāvala Vyāharu. A rājaiputra, Śrī Sallakṣaṇa-pāla, is mentioned as the mahāmantri of Vigraharāja in the Delhi-Siwalik pillar inscription of AD 1163.\(^{152}\) In the Nadol Cāhamāna kingdom a Raśtrakūṭa or member of the Rathor clan probably figures as a talāra in AD 1164.\(^{153}\) This kind of information is available from other kingdoms as well. An inscription of AD 1287\(^{154}\) mentions a Guhilaputra and also a member of the Devarā subclan as important landholders in the kingdom of the Sirohi Paramāras. Between the middle of the twelfth and the early part of the thirteenth century the Caulukya feudatories in southern Rajasthan comprised the Paramāras\(^{155}\) and the Cāhamānas.\(^{156}\) These few examples are likely to represent a wide range of similar information and may show that apart from kinship ties within a clan which have earlier been shown to have at least partly influenced the distribution of land, the interclan relationship governing the distribution of power helped consolidate the structure of Rajput polity in the early medieval period.

An extension of this argument would be to examine the nature and incidence of the participation, among the ascendant clans, in the military exploits of the period. There is practically no direct and detailed evidence about the composition of the warriors at various levels, but one can make use here of the evidence of a particular type of sculptured stone which, though originating elsewhere much earlier, became widespread in Rajasthan from the early medieval period onward.\(^{157}\) These stones are memorial relics, usually known as gouvārdhana

\(^{149}\) Ibid., pp. 202–3.

\(^{150}\) EI, xii, pp. 56–61.

\(^{151}\) Ibid., xxvi, pp. 84ff.

\(^{152}\) IA, xix, pp. 215–9.

\(^{153}\) EI, xi, pp. 46–7.

\(^{154}\) IA, xlv, pp. 77ff.

\(^{155}\) Ibid., lx, pp. 135–6.

\(^{156}\) PRASWC (1907–9), p. 49, IA, lxii, p. 42.

\(^{157}\) For useful details of the memorial stones of early medieval Rajasthan, see H
dhyanal 18 and patiyas or devaki delei or devikulika 19 as they are called in inscriptions. They were installed to commemorate death, including death on the battlefield. The range of social groups which the memorial stones generally cover is quite extensive, but the memorials to violent deaths relate mostly to such groups as came to be recognized as Rajputs and the incidence of memorial stones in general among them at least in the early medieval period seems to be higher than among others. 60 The names of various clans as can be collected from the memorial stones alone are Pratihara 16 Cahamana 16 Guhila 165 Paramara 164 Solanki 165 Rathoda 66 Chandela 167 Mahavara 168 Mangaliya 67 Bodana 170 Mohila 171 Devari 170 Doda 172 Dahiya 174 Pavara 175 Dohara 176 Bhice 177 Ghambala 178 Dharka 179 and so on. Further, in a number of cases, titles indicative of the political and social status of the commemorated occur in the same records, such titles being raja. 152


154 ARR(1964-5) p 102
155 PRASWC(1911-12) p 53
156 I have discussed this elsewhere. See the article, "Early Memorial Stones of Rajasthan: A Preliminary Analysis of their Inscriptions in the collection.

LAR(1959-60) p 60
161 Ibid(1962-3) p 54
162 PRASWC(1909-10) p 61 Ibid (1911-2) p 52
163 Ibid (1915-7) p 70
164 L. xl p 183
165 Ibid pp 181-3
166 ARR(1933) pp 3-5
167 PRASWC(1911-2) p 53
168 Ibid
169 Ibid
170 Ibid
171 Ibid
172 ARR(1909) p 10. Appendix D. For the Devadas see also L. xlv pp 77ff

El 11 p 79
173 ARR(1922-3) p 2
174 Ibid pp 267-9
175 ARIE(1964-5) p 102
176 Ibid (1959-60) p 113
177 PRASB(1916) pp 104-06
178 Ibid
179 Ibid
180 PRASWC(1909-10) p 51
mahāsāmanta,\textsuperscript{161} rānā,\textsuperscript{162} rāuta or rajaputra,\textsuperscript{183} etc. The memorial stones may have been a borrowed concept, but the way they were fashioned and the contexts many of them represented in early medieval Rajasthan relate largely to the new ‘kṣatriya’ groups which together made up the political order of Rajasthan.

V

It should be clear from some references made in the preceding section that an important aspect of the proliferation of the Rajputs in the early medieval period was the emergence of various minor clans and subdivisions of the major clans. Mention has been made earlier of the Prabandhacintāmani evidence which refers to hundred rajaputras of the Paramāra clan. Speaking of the Guhila family, the Acaleswar (Mt. Abu) inscription of AD 1285\textsuperscript{184} describes it as full of branches and sub-branches which consist of good members (suparśah patravibhūti-
tāṃśāh). This development seems to apply to all the major clans. Further, the continuing process of the formation of Rajput clans, presumably through the acquisition of political power, is attested by a few inscriptions. A record of AD 1156\textsuperscript{185} mentions a maharāja who was a Bodānā. Mahāvarāha, another clan, appears in a record of AD 1011.\textsuperscript{186} The subdivisions of the major clans had become fairly numerous by this time, as will be clear from the following list: Dōdā, subdivision of Paramāra; Pipādia\textsuperscript{187} and Māngalya, subdivisions of Guhilā; Devalā, Mohila and Sonī or Sonigārā,\textsuperscript{188} subdivisions of Cāhamāna; and Dadhica, subdivision of Rāthor. That the new clans and what came to be recognized as subdivisions of earlier clans were being drawn into the Rajput network is suggested by a few cases of marriage of which records are available. In a record of AD 1180\textsuperscript{189} 2

\textsuperscript{161} ARIE (1961–2), p. 115.
\textsuperscript{162} PRASWC (1911–12), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{184} A Collection of Prakrit and Sanskrit Inscriptions, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{185} IA, xli, pp. 202–3.
\textsuperscript{186} PRASWC (1911–12), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., p. 52.
\textsuperscript{188} EJ, xi, pp. 60–2.
\textsuperscript{189} PRASWC (1911–12), p. 53.
rana of the Guhila family is mentioned as having married a Bodani that is a girl of the Bodani family. Another record of AD 1191 refers to a Guhila who married a girl from the Mohula subdivision of the Chahanas.

How did these subclans emerge? The process expected to explain this phenomenon would be the segmentation of clans which sometimes resulted from their movements to new areas. But there is no actual evidence in our period of such segmentation leading to the formation of subclans. For example, the Chahanas of the Sakhambhan line segmented to form the Chahana family at Nadol a splinter group from which again established itself at Jalore. No subclan seems to have emerged from this process. Similar events also took place in the royal family of the Paramaras resulting in the starting of new lines at Vágada and Mt Abu which nevertheless continued as the Paramaras. What may be useful to invoke in this context is the phenomenon of caste formation in the early medieval period in which the element of localism was substantially involved. In Rajasthan the working of localism may be seen in the rise of Śramana or Bhilamala brahmanas and the process may be further extended to analyse such groups as Dahiya brahmanas as well as Dahiya Rajputs who having originated in the same locality had strong affinities with each other. Secondly as has already been indicated, Rajputisation was a process of social mobility which in the wake of its formation into a structure, drew in such disparate groups as the Medas and the Hunas. From these perspectives the formation of various subclans was not necessarily a result of the direct segmentation of clans but perhaps a product of the mechanism of the absorption of local elements when such elements came into contact with some already established clans. Thus element of localism in the formation of Rajput
subclans is suggested in the early medieval period by the Pipādīa Guhilas and the Sonigārā Cāhamānas, Pipādīa having been derived from the place name Pippalapāda and Sonigāra from Suvarṇagiri (Jalor). That one of the channels for rising to the status of a recognized clan was through marriage relationships is suggested by instances of such relationships between the Guhilas on the one hand and the Bodānās and Mohilas (subdivision of the Cāhamānas) on the other.

In conclusion, two chronological stages of the emergence of the Rajputs in the early medieval period may be envisaged. In the first stage it was essentially a political process in which disparate groups seeking political power conformed to such norms as permeated the contemporary political ideology. As the entry into the Rajput fold basically continued to be through political power, the traditional norms or the need for legitimization remained. In this respect, the emergence of the Rajputs was similar to a pan-Indian phenomenon, namely the formation of dynasties, many of which sought legitimization through zealously claimed linkages with kṣatriya lines of the mythical past. But in the second stage, which we would roughly date from the eleventh-twelfth centuries, the rise of the Rajputs became a comprehensive social phenomenon as well. As such the multiplication of the rājaputra should not be viewed as merely reflecting the consolidation of a political power structure; its implication should be extended also to explain the growing phenomenon of minor clans and subclans. And if one were to venture a final hypothesis, it was in the expansion of mere 'dynastic' relations towards a wider arena of social relations that lay the future growth of the Rajput network.
Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan

All enduring social relations, as Cyril Belshaw puts it, involve transactions which have an exchange aspect but since the exchange aspect of trade has specificities which cannot be identical at all times and places, the objective of a study on trade ought finally to locate it in the context of the society in which it takes place as an economic activity. The preliminary areas of investigation in such a study would be (i) an assessment of the nature of goods that appear as regular items of exchange (ii) an analysis of the process of mobilization of goods, and (iii) the nature of exchange centres and the nature of authority at such centres. The range of goods that figure as exchangeable items may be large but it is the regularity or the irregulartion with which the items appear at various centres in a region that ought to be taken as a crucial pointer to the nature of commerce in that region. An analysis of the process of the mobilization of goods will involve not only differentiation between the various categories of sources of goods and of the agents of exchange but also an understanding of the destinations to which the goods are required to be mobilized. One of the important points that ought to be considered here depending on the availability of the data for the purpose is the physical distance which the goods cover to arrive at the place of exchange. In so far as an examination of the nature of exchange centres

The term market is used here in the literal sense of a space where buying and selling of goods take place as a somewhat regular act etc. This sense would be conveyed by the expression krupa samay (buying and selling) which occurs in an inscription of the tenth century found at P. jaypur on the route from Udaipur to Sisupal, but traced to the Pali district of the former Godawadi region in so the east.

Marwar EJ vol 10 p 24 1 27 The essay is repeated from Social Science Probs vol 2 no 4 (1983)

Cyril S Belshaw Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets (Prentice Hall of India Priv ate Limited New Delhi 1969) p 4
and of the nature of authority at such centres is concerned, detailed studies of individual centres, to the maximum extent possible, are necessary because the pattern of regional economy can become understandable in a large measure by analyzing how the centres integrate various economic activities through the processes of exchange.

The theme of this essay is the pattern of local commerce in early medieval Rajasthan. I may as well begin with the confession that the statement of objectives outlined above is rather ambitious, considering that the material available for the theme is both sporadic and sketchy. The material, derived mostly from the epigraphs of Rajasthan, is of a nature which is not commercial but religious. The inscriptions are concerned with specifying levies imposed by authorities on various heads, including items manufactured or exchanged at a locality. The levies which ought to be called 'prestations' were often of an ad hoc nature and were acts of patronage. The attempt to analyze the nature of commerce on the basis of such one-dimensional evidence may lead to very questionable generalizations. Secondly, epigraphic evidence, while it may not always exactly contradict the evidence of literary texts, often used for reconstructing the activities of traders in early medieval Rajasthan, does not happily blend with the evidence of such texts either. This point may be illustrated by presenting the major features of trade as they appear in two much-used texts, the Samarātiça-Kahā of Haribhadra Sūri and the Kuvalayamālā of Udyotana Sūri.

The kind of trade they seem to portray had two major features: (i) long-distance trade, involving the organization of caravans as also of maritime voyages. Initiatives for this kind of trade possibly came from individual merchants of high standing and immense wealth. The distance covered not only extended to different traditional trading regions and centres such as Konkan, Ujjayini, Tāmrālipta and Tagara but also to such trans-oceanic centres as Katāha, Ratnadvipa, and so on; (ii) the trade was essentially in high-value goods. In one case, for

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2 The text has been dated to the middle of the eighth century or later by H. Jacob, Samarātiça Kahā: A Jaina Prākrit Work, vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1926).
3 This text was written in the last quarter of the eighth century. See A.N. Upadhyā, Kuvalayamālā, pt. 2 (Bombay, 1970) and particularly the section titled 'A Culinary Note on the Kuvalayamālā' by V.S. Agrawala, pp. 113-29.
example, reference is made to goods worth five lakhs of *dinaras* (a term which incidentally does not occur in contemporary inscriptions of Rajasthan but is found in Gupta period inscriptions from other parts of India).

High value goods converged at princely courts which as centres of exchange were limited in number as was the circulation of goods traded. Big merchants and long distance trade are phenomena not absent from western India since the tenth century more particularly since the eleventh twelfth centuries but considering the period of the texts that we have cited they seem to carry over a stereotype from the past or to project an ideal for the leaders of merchant communities in the initial phase of the early medieval period. In the choice of sources the verdict will thus be in favour of epigraphy which because of the chronological and spatial specificities of its evidence makes it possible to work out the stages of change.

In the context of early medieval Rajasthan the first stage may be taken to correspond to the pre Pratihara as well as the major part of the Pratihara period. The period witnessed what may be imperfectly labelled as the emergence of a new thrust which intermingled with the existing pattern gradually led to the crystallization of the early medieval pattern of commerce in Rajasthan. Merchant groups with *pradassus* written for them are found at several centres and their association with such centres may be derived from the brief genealogies which the records provide. For example several records from the Sekhawati area dating back to the early ninth century refer to goshti *kas* constituted by the *samskars* and *sresthis* of the Dhusara and Dharkata.

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1. Jacob, *Sama aleva Raha*
2. See El vol 15 pp 130ff. Also Harshadra Sun uses the term *krupana* in the sense of a town which is frequent in early historical records but not in early medieval India. See D Sharma, ed *Rajasthan through the Ages*, I (Bikaner 1966) p 297.
3. This impression is further conveyed by repeated references to such old place names as Hatnapura, Kunumapura and Kausambi and the importance attached to them in the texts cited above.
families; the distribution of the early records of these families at Khandela, Sakrai, Mandikila Tal— all in the former Jaipur state—points to an area of concentration which may have been an operational base of local but important merchant groups. (Such merchant groups and the proliferation of their bases will be discussed in detail later.) Vaniks also figure in the list of addressees which include officials and brähmanas in the records of the Guhils of Kiṣkindhā (Kalyanpur in the Udaipur district). At the same time, one significant set of evidence relates to the movement of merchants, sometimes of well-established families, not only to old settled areas, but also to areas which were perhaps being effectively colonized for the first time. A Chitorgarh inscription of the early sixth century, assignable to the period of the Aulikaras of Mandasor, refers to the family of Viṣṇudatta who is described in the record as Vaniṣṭhā, ‘best among the merchants’. Genealogically he appears to have been connected with the naigama or merchant family of Mandasor, referred to in a Mandasor record of 532. A comparison of the two records may thus suggest the movement of a family of merchants, earlier settled in Mandasor, to a not too distant old settled area of Madhyamikā-Chitor in the early part of the sixth century. The Samoli record of 646, on the other hand, suggests movement away from a settled area, Vaṭanagara, identified with Vasantgarh in Sirohi district, by a community of mahājanas, headed (two terms in the record, pramukha and mahattaka, imply this) by a person called Jentaka. The community started an āgara, possibly the operation of a mine, at a place called Aranya-kīpāgiri. That the terrain implied by the expression is significant is suggested also by the construction of a devakula for the deity Aranyavasini by the community. The place name mentioned in the record which belongs to an early stage in the history of one of the Rajput

7 See Sakrai stone inscription of AD 822, El, vol. 27, pp. 27ff; Khandela stone inscription of AD 807, ibid., vol. 34, pp. 159–63; Mandikila Tal inscription of AD 986, ibid., vol. 34, pp. 77ff.
9 Ibid., pp. 53–8.
10 Ibid., pp. 54–5.
11 Ibid., vol. 20, pp. 97–9. The record, incidentally, also refers to pānīḍā deśamāgatā aṣṭadāsavaṇi, i.e., ‘eighteen’ bards coming from various countries.
lineages the Guhulas consists of three parts avanya, kupa and giri. While avanya (forest) and giri (hills) are self explanatory kupa is not so but it is significant that many early medieval records of western India contain place names with the suffix kupa or kupaka and sometimes end with upya. The significance of the Samoh record lies in the fact that it points to a movement leading to the exploration of a new area and its colonization most probably providing a supply base for local manufacture.

The evidence of some early Pratihara records from the Jodhpur area will have to be seen in the light of this process. These records too imply extension into areas which were previously under the control of such communities as the Abhirs, of the creation of bases of agriculture and settlements and of the establishment of exchange centres (hata) and of communities of merchants. The village mentioned in one case is incidentally called Rohinsakupaka. The emergence of exchange centres in different pockets appears to have been a continuous process. This is suggested by an earlier record from Dabok (located eight miles to the east of Udaipur) of AD 646 of the time of the Guhulas of Dhavagata (Dhod in Bhilwara district) which apart from containing a curious expression ranakamaryadewadajati a refers to hata and hattaniwarga within the spatial limits of Dhavagarta close to which lay the fields donated to a religious establishment mentioned in the record.

Several points seem to emerge from the meagre evidence presented so far. There indeed existed old settlement areas and centres of merchant activities in which the merchants as a significant social group are seen as undertaking works of religious benefactions and having pralams composed in honour of their family and caste. But if one takes an overview of a long chronological span it may be possible to note a new trend with which are associated at least initially, move-

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12 Examples of such place names are Rohinsakupaka, Khattakupa, Tindakupa, Minakupa, Kotkupaka, etc. See El vol 9 p 280 and vol 2 pp 129-30. It has been suggested to me by several scholars of Rajasthan b. c. that place names with the suffix kupa or kupaka would indicate the presence of a well (literally kupa) in the area. It is still not satisfied with this explanation.

13 ib. d vol 9 pp 277-80

14 ib. d vol 20 pp 122-5 also ibid vol 35 pp 100-02
ments of individual merchants and merchant groups and establishments of new exchange centres. This process will have to be seen in the broader context of the history of Rajasthan in this period which was marked by a gradual agrarian expansion and the proliferation of ruling lineages with their various centres of power. The linkage between the proliferation of such centres and of centres of exchange is a possibility which may be kept in mind at this point. Finally, the records from roughly the tenth century present, in one very important respect, a contrast with those preceding it: the pre-tenth records generally lack in information regarding items of exchange. This contrast too may be taken to suggest certain possibilities which will have to be explored by taking into consideration, along with other factors, the spatial contexts of the exchange centres.

II

Although it may be facilely assumed that the power centres of the various ruling lineages of early medieval Rajasthan were all in some way nodes in the local network of exchange, it seems safer to start with references which are specific. The use of two terms—hatta and mandapika—was widespread in early medieval times as signifying centres of exchange; mandapika is especially understood to have denoted a centre where commercial cess was imposed and collected. Both terms occur in the records of Rajasthan, and a compilation of references to them in chronological order may help us understand the distribution pattern of the exchange centres in the region. There were, however, centres which are not clearly designated in the records as hattas or mandapikas but the fact that cesses were collected at these points may perhaps suggest that they too represented some types of exchange centres. Two separate lists of exchange centres, compiled from a variety of early medieval epigraphs from different parts of Rajasthan but by no means comprehensive, follow:

15 See 'Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan', in this volume.
16 See my paper, 'The Origin of the Rajputs: Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan', in this volume.
17 For the significance of these terms, see my paper, 'Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview', in this volume.
# TABLE 1

## List of Exchange Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location of the Centre of Exchange</th>
<th>Ruling Lineage</th>
<th>Term Used in the Record and Reference to the Centre of Exchange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>644</td>
<td>Ghod Bh Bwara dist. (near)</td>
<td>Guh la</td>
<td>katta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>861</td>
<td>Ghat jala near Jodhpur</td>
<td>Pratihara</td>
<td>Itana at Roh nekupaka gram a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>905</td>
<td>Kaman Baya (in)</td>
<td>Pratil ata</td>
<td>Kambal bhatat, Kamyak ya Karna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>916</td>
<td>Haritkundika</td>
<td>Rastrakupa</td>
<td>raj. al an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>939</td>
<td>admissions area in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>953</td>
<td>Adada part of Ledpur</td>
<td>Guh la</td>
<td>katta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1278</td>
<td>Adada</td>
<td>mandap ka at Aghrapura</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>955</td>
<td>Bayana Bhatapur</td>
<td>Pratihara the feudatory local</td>
<td>i) mandap ka at Vasavara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>961</td>
<td>Rajor Alwar</td>
<td>Pratihara</td>
<td>h. na at Rajyapura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1017-</td>
<td>Shergarh Kota</td>
<td>Paramara</td>
<td>mandap ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1080</td>
<td>Arliuna Banswara</td>
<td>Paramara</td>
<td>hatta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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18 El vol 30 pp 122-5
19 lb d vol 9 pp 277-80
20 ibid. vol 24 pp 329-36
21 lb d vol 10 pp 17-24
22 The Indian Antiquary vol 58 pp 161ff
23 G.H. Osha Udaiipur Rajput Ki Itihaas (n. d.) pr 1 (Amer 1928) p 176
24 El vol. 22, pp. 120-77
25 ibid. vol 3 pp 263-7
26 The Indian Antiquary vol. 40 pp 175-6 El vol 23 pp 137-41
27 El vol. 16 pp 293-316 also H.V. Tr ed. Inscriptions of the Pratas at Chandellas, Rakhelipaghast and Two Minor Dynasties (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum vol 7 pt. 1) (New Delhi n. d.) pp 286-96.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location of the Centre of Exchange</th>
<th>Ruling Lineage</th>
<th>Term Used in the Record with Reference to the Centre of Exchange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1109</td>
<td>Talabād, 12 miles south of Banswara</td>
<td>Paramāra</td>
<td>pattanavara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1115</td>
<td>Sévadi²⁹, Pali district</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>i) Śamipāti-pattana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1278</td>
<td>Badari, near Nadol³⁰, Pali district</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>ii) Mandapikā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1161</td>
<td>Nadol³¹</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>Mandapikā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1178</td>
<td>Kirātakūpa (Kiradu)³²</td>
<td>Caulukya, local</td>
<td>Naddūla-talapada-sulka-Mandapikā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lineage being</td>
<td>sulka-(mandapikā)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1184</td>
<td>Mandor, near Jodhpur³³, Jodhpur</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>māndavya-puriya-mandapikā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>district</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1250</td>
<td>Khamnor, near Udaipur³⁴</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>māndavi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1276</td>
<td>Ratanpur, near Jodhpur³⁵, Jodhpur</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>hatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1291</td>
<td>Jodhpur³⁵, Jodhpur district</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1278</td>
<td>Chitor³⁶, Chitor-garh district</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>hatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1288</td>
<td>Chandrañavati, Sirohi³⁷ district</td>
<td>Paramāra</td>
<td>Candrāvati-mandapikā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1296</td>
<td>Jalor³⁸, Jalor district</td>
<td>Cāhamāna</td>
<td>nisrānikṣepa-hattā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²⁸ El, vol. 21, p. 52.
²⁹ ibid., vol. 11, pp. 30–32; PRASWG, 1907–8, p. 52.
³⁰ The Indian Antiquary, vol. 41, pp. 202–03.
³² The Indian Antiquary, vol. 62, p. 42.
³⁴ ARRMM, 1932, p. 3:
³⁵ P.C. Nahar, Jaina Inscriptions, vol. 1, pp. 248–9. The ruler mentioned in the records is Sāmantasimhā who can be identified with Cāhamāna Sāmantasimha of Jalor. See D. Shatma, Early Chauhan Dynasties (Delhi, 1959), pp. 159ff.
³⁶ G.H. Ojha, Udaipur Rayā.
³⁷ H.V. Trivedi, Inscriptions of the Paramaras, p. 277.
³⁸ El, vol. 11, pp. 60–61: Nisrānikṣepa-hattā is taken to signify a part of a hattā.
### TABLE 2

**CENTRES NOT SPECIFICALLY SO DESIGNATED BUT PERHAPS SERVING AS CENTRES OF EXCHANGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location of the Centre of Exchange</th>
<th>Ruling Lineage</th>
<th>Nature of the Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1138</td>
<td>Naduladgika (Narali) (^{39})</td>
<td>Cahamana</td>
<td>Presence of the deity of Vanaparaksas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pal district</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reference to levies on loaded bulls on trans-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1141</td>
<td>Dhalapasthana near Naulol (^{40})</td>
<td>Cahamana</td>
<td>The document relates to the interception of goods from various categories of people inclu- ng traders samas, mahajas, inclu- ng those from Anahalvada, among witnesses mentioned in the document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1295</td>
<td>Vahadameru Juna Vadner near Barmer (^{4})</td>
<td>Cahamana</td>
<td>Presence of a caravan (ṣartha) of camels and bulls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution pattern of the exchange centres may now be related to their individual spatial contexts. Without making a detailed survey of the areas in which they were located, reference to a few selected centres will serve the purpose of providing a general idea. To repeat the evidence already cited Rohinsakupaka where Pratihara Kakaku installed around 861 a bāstu with its various shops and established mahajanās was a grama (village). His inscription also pos-

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\(^{39}\) *El* vol 11 pp 35-7 42 3

\(^{40}\) Ibid pp 37-41

\(^{4}\) Ibid. pp 59-60
sibly suggests the introduction of a few agricultural innovations in the area.\textsuperscript{42} In 961, Pratihāra Mathanadeva of Rajyapura (Rajor, Alwar) made several provisions for a temple, and the categories of people he addressed were headed by, among others, the \textit{vanīk} and \textit{pravani}, suggesting their substantial presence at the exchange centre at Rajyapura. Among the varieties of donations mentioned, the following may be underlined: (i) cultivated fields located in the \textit{bhōga} of the donor and neighbouring fields cultivated by the Gūrjaras (\textit{samastaśīṛgurjara-vāhitasamastaksetra}). The imposts on all crops are mentioned, including those termed in the record as \textit{skandhaka} and \textit{mārganaka} (\textit{samastaśāyānāmbhōga-khulabhikśa-prasthaka-skandhaka-mārganaka}).\textsuperscript{43} For the spatial context of the Rajyapura exchange centre the expressions are significant for they suggest a range of activities extending to movement of agricultural produce; \textit{skandhaka} and \textit{mārganaka} being imposts on such movement; (ii) imposts, in cash, on loads of agricultural produce brought at the exchange centre for sale. The exchange centres were, thus, located in the context of the bases of agrarian production, and a close look at the records will yield the same spatial pattern for most exchange centres in other areas where clusters of rural settlements occur. An excellent example of this is further provided by two records of the second half of the twelfth century from Nadol, the seat of a Cāhamāna ruling lineage. One record of 1160 speaks of twelve villages with Naddūlagrāma apparently as their centre, which were assessed in cash for the purpose of making a donation to the local shrine of Mahāvīra Jina.\textsuperscript{44} The second record, of 1161, also mentions religious donations but out of the income accruing from \textit{Naddūlagadapa-sulkā-mandapika}.\textsuperscript{45}

Naddūla, even though mentioned as a \textit{grāma} in the earlier record (it is of course elsewhere designated as a \textit{pura}),\textsuperscript{46} was a node in a cluster of rural settlements and its emergence as a node and an exchange

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., vol. 9, p. 280; for reference to mango-groves and sugarcane plantations in this area, see \textit{Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland}, 1895, pp. 513–21.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Et}, vol. 3, pp. 263–7.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 66–70.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., pp. 62–6.

\textsuperscript{46} Nadrai inscription of 1171, ibid., vol. 11, pp. 47ff.
centre at which commercial levies were collected was obviously related to its being a centre of Cakamana power. The integration of rural units of production and of commercial traffic through centres which in the early medieval period were in many cases also seats of ruling lineages is the primary point from which we can start exploring two further aspects of the exchange centres. First in a number of cases the exchange centres which could not all have been identical in structure combined inflow of goods from outside with local manufacture. The second aspect concerns the reconstruction of a hierarchy of exchange centres. At Kamyakiya or Kaman in Bharatpur a record of 905 refers to Kambali hatta which has been taken to mean a cattle market. It was however not a periodical market although it may have been so originally atarikas or enclosures with utthas or shops are mentioned in the overall complex of the hatta. Other records from the centre speak of tarkhikas or cochin shell workers' guild of artisans' guild of gardeners' guild of potters (mentioned separately)—all indicating the range of economic activities of the centre. Similarly the Arthana (Banswara) record of 1080 lists apart from the items sold at the hatta in which shops were located at least two categories of manufacturers kamyakaras or brokers and kalyapalas or distillers of liquor. It can of course be assumed that each exchange centre may have been a manufacturing centre of some kind as well but the actual dimensions of the centres are likely to have varied depending on the range of economic and other activities taking place in the spatial context of such centres. No satisfactory finding in this regard is possible without detailed work in the historical geography of the period which also deals with such problems but the question of hierarchy may for the present be approached from several angles. One approach would be to examine as far as possible the overall structure of a settlement to ascertain if it accommodates one or more points at which exchange transactions take place. Evidence of this kind is available from various regions of early medieval India and it may be worth

48 HV Trivedi Inscriptions of the Parasamnati
49 S Yadav Inscriptions, ranging a date from 904 to 958 I.e. a number of such points of exchange. EJ vol 1 pp 162-79 for other examples from early medieval India are ib d vol 19 pp 52-4 ib d vol 13 pp 15-36 No A.
while looking for such evidence in early medieval Rajasthan. The second approach would be to try and locate clusters of exchange centres; a series or succession of such centres in a given area is likely to yield, if not a hierarchical ordering of such centres, at least an idea of the areas of concentration. Thirdly, a dependable index for the purpose would be provided by an analysis of the range of goods which were regular items of exchange at a centre and the variety and number of social groups and institutions which were drawn into the network of exchange. This exercise may be considered relevant for a study of local commerce since no region as a whole represents equal potential for identical economic activities at any period of history, and a reconstruction of hierarchy may indicates the directions along which the flow of commercial traffic was important.

Although it would be impossible to work out the details of this pattern in this essay, particularly in view of the uneven exploration of the historical sites of Rajasthan, attempts may nevertheless be made in relation to a few areas. Clusters of exchange centres seem to have been located along a line from the Jodhpur area down to Banswara in the south. Around Jodhpur, exchange centres at Ghatiyala, Mandor and Ratanpur suggest some kind of cluster. References in twelfth century records suggest more than one exchange point at Ratnapura or Ratanpur. Another cluster can be located about half way between Jodhpur and Udaipur in an area under the control of Cāhamāna lineages; here, the exchange centres at Nadol, Nāduladāgika or Narlai, Dhalopa, Sevadi and Badari are located close to one another. Arthuna, Talabad and Panahera, all in Banswara, together seem to constitute another cluster in south Rajasthan. Towards the east, the exchange centre of Kāmyakiya-kōṭṭa, taken along with the mandapikās at Śrīpatha and Vusavāta, may be taken to form another cluster. It is perhaps superfluous to add that considering the vastness of Rajasthan as a region, other such clusters may well have existed in this period, but even the kind of limited exercise done above may suggest a pattern of unequal intensity of commercial exchange (see map on page 101).

Insofar as the hierarchical order of exchange centres is concerned, two centres appear to stand out as exceedingly important, at least from
the manner in which they have been presented in the records. One is Āghāṭapura or Ahar, a part of Udaipur; the other is Arthuna near Banswara. Ahar seems to stand out alone but if the Arthuna evidence is any indication, it would seem that in both the cases there were minor exchange centres located around them. The importance of both lay in the fact that they were points at which varieties of resources converged; this impression is derived from the items which were listed for the purpose of religious levies and from the groups which were drawn into such transactions. At Āghāṭapura or Ahar, the merchant groups represented different origins and organizations. Apart from the resident Vaniks, there was an organization of the desis, members of which are mentioned separately. The third category was constituted of merchants from Karṇāṭa, Madhya-vaṣaya, Lāṭa and Tālka. The range of the merchandize probably started with agricultural produce but extended, in keeping with the convergence of different categories of traders at the centre, to such high-value items as horses and elephants. The record suggests the existence of more than one exchange point within the settlement complex of Āghāṭapura.51 Arthuna, to reiterate a point made earlier, certainly combined trade with manufacture; here too agricultural produce, including several commercial crops and products from them, formed an important component of exchange. Apart from items produced by local manufacturers, there were those used as raw materials for manufacture, such as cotton and Maṇḍiṣṭhā, both used for textile production. The manner in which the merchants are mentioned suggests the presence of different groups. Of course, we could have formed a clearer idea of the composition of merchant groups at Arthuna, had the record not been so unintelligible in most parts.52

III

The significant trend which can be seen in the increase in specific references to exchange centres coincides with references to items which were available at the centres. It is of course impossible to reconstruct

51 The Indian Antiquary, vol. 58, pp. 161ff.
52 H.V. Trivedi.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Agricultural Items Including Items of Commercial Agriculture, Processed Items and Dairy Products</th>
<th>Manufactured Items or Items used for Manufacturing</th>
<th>Other Items</th>
<th>High Value Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>916</td>
<td>Hastikundika,</td>
<td>1 wheat</td>
<td>1 cotton</td>
<td>1 salt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>939</td>
<td>Godwar,</td>
<td>2. barley</td>
<td>2. mansusha</td>
<td>2 collika of leaves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>997</td>
<td>Pali district</td>
<td>3 pulses</td>
<td>3 products of brazier</td>
<td>3 kumkuma</td>
<td>(saffron)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. product of oil press</td>
<td>4. ralaka (stuff made from animal hair)³⁴</td>
<td>4 gum resin</td>
<td>(suggala)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 dhanya (rice?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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³³ Ibid vol. 10 pp 17-24
³⁴ Angali Bagu, on the strength of the seventh century account of Huen Tsang and other sources, suggests that ralaka probably denoted some variety of stuff made from animal hair. Merchandedae and Mercantile community in post-Gupta times in northern India, Ph. D. Dissertation submitted at the University of Delhi 1985 p 111 fn 1 Dasarat Sharma, on the strength of the Jaina Prakrit text Kuralayamala, takes ralaka to mean winter cover prepared from goats hair. Presidential Address Ancient India Section Indian History Congress 29 session (Patiala, 1967)
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Other Items</th>
<th>High Value Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>953</td>
<td>Ahar, Udaipur</td>
<td>i) unspecified agricultural produce for which two measures, tulā and ādhaka, are mentioned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. elephants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ii) produce of ghāṇaka or oil mill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. horses</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iii) produce of confectioners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. horned animals</td>
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<tr>
<td>960</td>
<td>Rajor, Alwar</td>
<td>i) reference to sacks of agricultural produce? (gōnī)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ṣrīgī)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ii) butter and oil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1080</td>
<td>Arthuna, Banswara</td>
<td>i) barley (yava)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ii) reference to bhānda-dhānya, possibly meaning 'loads of grain'</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iii) lksī (sugar-cane); separate reference to khanda-guda, i.e. candy-sugar and jaggery</td>
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55 *The Indian Antiquary*, vol. 58, pp. 161ff.


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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Agricultural Items Including Items of Commercial Agriculture Processed</th>
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<th>Other Items</th>
<th>High Value Items Manufacturing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iv) cotton (karpassa)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>v) thread (nira)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vi) clothing fabric (karppana-konka)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vii) sesame oil (ajyatsala)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>viii) oil (sula)</td>
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<td>ix) rice nut</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x) coconut</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xi) citron</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1143</td>
<td>Nadir 59</td>
<td>i) dhava&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>i) iron implements&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>i) salt</td>
<td>i) jewels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Pali district</td>
<td>ii) kiradswa, covering such items as gum black pepper dry ginger and so on</td>
<td>ii) m tejul&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>i) oil</td>
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<td>v) ghee</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vi) cotton</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vii) pusa haruksi (myrobalan)</td>
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<sup>2</sup> PC Nehal, pp 213ff LF vol 11, pp 42-3
the total range of goods since the levies or prestations imposed upon them were often specified in terms of total dues and not as dues from separate items; this would be suggested by such expressions as margā-dāya\textsuperscript{59} (collection from marga) or mandapikādāya\textsuperscript{60} (collection from mandapika) out of which a part would be set aside for the purpose of donation. It is only in cases where the levies are specified as collected from separate items that it is possible to form an idea of the range of goods which were exchanged. Comparisons between exchange centres in this respect would thus be imperfect, but for an understanding of the general trend it needs to be reiterated that clusters of exchange centres seem to occur in areas which were essentially agrarian settlements and that agricultural items entered the centres perhaps with as much regularity as did other items. Few records offer any details but those that do may be used to prepare a table which will provide, for generally fixed points of time represented by the available records, lists of items constituting the nexus of exchange at the exchange centres (see Table 3).

Even though the material collated in Table 3 is decidedly inadequate for generalizations, it is nevertheless an indicator, at least in two respects, of the nature of commerce in all major exchange centres: (i) the first point concerns the structure of contemporary demand which generated exchange as a major economic activity. In understanding this structure the crucial fact is the juxtaposition of agricultural goods with high-value items and manufactured items at several points where exchange took place; (ii) secondly, exchange took place at points where various social groups interacted—not periodically but on a regular basis, and in this sense the major exchange centres were different from periodical markets or fairs, references to which are available in early medieval records from different parts of India.\textsuperscript{61} Movements of specific

\textsuperscript{59} EI, vol. 23, pp. 137–41. Some inscriptions also have such expressions as Suyadāna-madhyāt marga (i.e. from our collections from the road); see Nalhati record of Rāyapaladeva of 1138, EI, vol. 11, pp. 36–7.

\textsuperscript{60} See for example, Shergath inscription of 1018, EI, vol. 23, pp. 137–41. In fact both the terms—margādāya and mandapikādāya—occur in this record.

\textsuperscript{61} One piece of rather well-known evidence regarding the horse fair in north India is provided by the Pehōa (Karnal district, Haryana) record of the time of the Pratihāras, EI, vol. I, pp. 184–90; the Bali record of 1143 from Rajasthan, referring.
goods into the exchange centres could be periodical, but major exchange centres had resident populations including resident banks and manufacturers and one could thus suppose that exchange relations between these two groups and other sections of the population were not determined by periodical cycles in the movement of goods even if such movements are taken as an essential component of the mobilisation process. Both points however require further empirical substantiation. Two records of early medieval Rajasthan may be cited to reveal at least partially the pattern of contemporary requirements which would correlate with activities at the exchange centres. The Harsha record of AD 973 from the Shigar area speaks of Vigharatasa of the Cahanana lineage in the following terms:

He has been served with many presents—wth strings of pearls gay steeds, fine garments and weapons with camphor quantities of betel first rate sandal wood and endless quantities of gold and with spirited rutting elephants huge like mountains together with the mates.

The description of presents is in one sense a conventional one similar descriptions being found in other records of the period in another sense however it represents the range of requirements among the ruling elites which can be used for the purpose of correlation with contemporary commerce. Although the record chooses to list the items as presents one is entitled to read beyond this label and on the basis of other records of the period broadly consider them as items which entered into the exchange activities of various merchant groups. Indeed the same Harsha record mentions that a levy of one dramma on every horse was imposed by the rulers on the Hedavaka group of horse dealers who visited the Shigar area from Uttarapatha.

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For references to fa ns held in different parts of the Karna sa and Andhra see G.S. Dikshit Local Self-Government in Medieval Karna sa (Dharwar 1964) ch 8 T. Venkateswara Rao. Local Bodies in Pre Vjayanagara Andhra (AD 1000 to AD 1536) Ph D thesis (Dharwar University 1975) ch 5

"27 vol 2 p 127 The term pagara in the record (verse 24) seems to refer to betel nut and n butcher

"48 ib d. The Hedavaka horse-merchants are mentioned not only in the Harsha record of 973 The Hedavaka the 

The Hedavaka is mentioned in the Harsha record of 973. The Hedavaka, the horse-merchants, are known from other epigraphic and literary sources as well.
The second record, of 1249, from Bhanimal, mentions an amount of several drāmmas deposited at the bhāndāgāra of the Jagatsvāmi temple at Bhanimal, the deposit being intended to procure certain resources for the performance of a ritual at the temple. The items required for the ritual were: wheat, rice, pulses, ghee, betel-leaves and nuts, aguru and kunkuma.

Despite their distance in space and chronology, the juxtaposition of the two records cited above would surely reveal the complex pattern of early medieval trade involving a wide range of goods and of exchange relations, necessitating the use of coined money combined with other means of exchange. This will, in turn, reflect on the structure of the centres of exchange as points of convergence of movements of goods and acts of exchange. It may be worthwhile to attempt to examine, from a study, over a wide span of time, of movements of goods and of operations of trading groups, whether any particular form of operation can be seen to emerge as more significant than others. The movements of goods suggest differential distances covered. While the term skandhaka (literally, imposts on items carried on shoulders) may refer to movement over a very short distance, intercentre movements, by the vanajāraka community of traders, for example, were undertaken by loading pack animals and carts. Long-distance move-


The other point to note is that the horse, as an item of trade, was in demand throughout the country, and was a prized item among the royalty, which would explain its extensive itinerary. Apart from the Harsha record, see the evidence of the Kinaru inscription (1161) of Caulukya Kumārapāla and his feudatory Paramārā Somesvara. Somesvara claims to have exacted 1700 horses, including one 'five-nailed' and eight 'peacock-breasted' from one prince Jajjaka. The Indian Antiquary, vol. 61, pp. 135–6.

64 Ibid., vol. 11, pp. 55–7.
66 For example, the expression mārgge gacchaitanāmāgatānām vraḥhanām sekeṣu (Nadlaí-record of 1138, EI, vol. 11, pp. 36–7) refers to incoming and outgoing
ments of exchangeable items were organized in the form of ārthas. It can be assumed that traders from outside Rajasthan to whom the Ahir record of 953 refers, moved from one centre to another in periodic cycles in well-organized caravans.

The nature of the organization which cut across trading groups coming in over long distances as well as certain though not necessarily all groups which may be considered to have operated locally is mostly reflected in the use of the term desī. Desī can only loosely be taken in the sense of a guild of traders and in the records of Rajasthan the term has been used in such expressions as Bhikkāṣa desī and also in relation to the Vanajarakas. The reference to the Hedavikas the horse dealers in the plural perhaps suggests an organization similar to that of the desī. In the Ahir record of 953 seven members of a desī are mentioned by name. It may be significant that the list of desī names is juxtaposed with the name of an individual who is designated as a samikṣa, perhaps indicating conscious differentiation between them by the community which was the immediate context of exchange.

The groups participating in commerce in early medieval Rajasthan may thus be considered to have ranged from non-resident merchants from other—sometimes distant—regions, locally mobile groups originating in different centres and coming together for the mobilization

loads on bullocks which passed through the road at Nadiā. The load of merchandise transported by the trading organization (desī) of the Vanajarakas on bullocks (up-gabhā-bhārata) are mentioned in another Nadiā record of 1145 ibid. pp 42-3. A fascinatingly visual idea of how goods were transported comes from the Mangarol inscription of 1144 from the Kathwār area under the Cauhāk. Referring to the varieties of merchandises arriving at Sriman Mangalpurā-Julkarnandapīka, the record includes items transported by bulvārdas (oxen) vaisali kha (donkey) and sāl (camel). For the text of the record, see G V Acharya, Historical Inscriptions of Gujaratas (in Gujarati) Sri Forbes Gujarati Sabha Series No 15 pt 2 (Bombay 1935) No 145.

For occurrence of the term śārtha, carriying of oxen and camels, see the Junā record of 1253 from Mallān district. Fl vol 11 pp 59-60.

68 The Indian Antiquary vol 58 pp 161ff
69 Sth vol 2 p 124 June 1865.
70 Reference to the desī of the Vanajarakas is available in the Nadiā inscription of 1145 of Rayapalā, ibid. vol 11 pp 42-3.
71 Ibid vol 1, p 124 line 38.
72 The Indian Antiquary vol 58 pp 161ff.
of goods, to resident merchant-families. In trying to understand the overall pattern of commerce which the activities of these disparate groups reflected, it is necessary to reiterate two points already made: (i) such activities converged at sedentary points where exchange took place; and (ii) such points were centres of ruling lineages of varying importance. Although the epigraphs do not directly relate to the mechanisms of commerce, the nature of transactions with which they are concerned throws up two impressions from which the commercial trend of the period may be sought to be reconstructed.

IV

The first impression is that of the ascendancy of several local merchant lineages and of the expansion of their network. Mention has previously been made of the Dhūsara and Dharkaṭa families of the ninth century from the Sekhavati area of the old Jaipur state. Although reference to the Dhūsara vanśa of merchants does not seem to continue, the continuity of the Dharkaṭa lineage is attested by later records. A Rajorgarh record of 922 and another record of the tenth century, preserved in the Mandor museum, contain references to the Dharkaṭas. A vanīgarā of the Dharkaṭa family is mentioned in 986 in the Mandkila Tal record from Nagar. The Dharkaṭa jāti further appears in the records of the eleventh century and early thirteenth century. It is believed that the Dharkaṭas or the Dhakadas repre-

73 The use of the term ‘sedentary’ should however relate more to the organization of trade than to nodes of exchange; the point which emerges from this essay is that by the close of the period under review ‘sedentary’ merchants perhaps tended to become more important than itinerant and other categories of merchants in the region concerned. For conceptual clarification, see J. Bernard, ‘Trade and Finance in the Middle Ages: 900–1500’, in C.M. Cipolla, ed., *The Fontana Economic History of Europe: The Middle Ages* (London-Glasgow, 1973), pp. 308–09.

74 See note 7.


76 *El*, vol. 34, pp. 77ff.

77 A stone inscription, reported to have been discovered in Jodhpur district and dated V. S. 1165 (AD 1198), records the death of a merchant of Dharkaṭa lineage and of Khandasa gōṭa. This information is derived from the descriptive label of the record preserved in the Mandor Museum.

78 P.C. Nahar, p. 220. See also *JPASB*, vol. 12 (1916), pp. 104–06.
sented a section of the later day Oswals. The Sons taken to be another subdivision of the Oswals and deriving their name from Suvarnagiri or Jalore are mentioned in a record of 1296 from Jalore. In fact the emergence of the Oswals as a major merchant group before the middle of the thirteenth century can be considered a certainty. A Mr. Abu record of 1230 while providing details of the composition of various gowthikas refers at one place to the merchants of Uesavala jnatiya from Kasahradagrama and at another to merchants of Ousavala jnatiya, probably a more correct form of the name of Sahila vada.

Another merchant lineage that of the Simulas was also on the ascent from around this period. A Mr. Abu (Sirohi) record of 1144 mentions it as Simula kula and a Jalore record of 1183 has a eulogistic reference to an individual merchant of the lineage, who is described as Sri Sri Malasamudrabhusana Srestha Yasodeva. The ascendancy of the merchant families of the period some of whom like the Sons or the Simulas derived their caste or lineage names (the epigraphs use such terms as kula rambha jat jana etc.) from the centres of their origin and of the consolidation of their intraregional as well as interregional network is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the Pragavas. The Pragavas are known from inscriptions at Sirohi (1031) Kirdau (1132) Nadol (1161) and other places such as

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79 According to D.R. Bhandarkar the name Dharakas survive as Dhukada which he takes to represent a sub-section of the Oswals. EI vol 27 p. 29 The Dharakas figure very promenly in the inscriptions of Ouan, the temple site located 66 kms to the north northwest of Jodhpur the site considered a cradle of the Oswals.

80 EI vol. 11 pp. 60-2
81 ib id
82 G V Acharya Inscription No. 168
83 ib id
84 EI vol. 9 p. 151 Curiously the person mentioned in the record is spoken of as belonging to Simulakula and as being an ornament of the Pragava kula.
85 EI vol. 11 pp. 52-4
86 ib id vol. 9 p. 149 The association of the Pragavas with Arbudig in Sirohi continued for centuries. ib id. Also G V Acharya
87 ib id vol. 11 pp. 43-6.
88 EI vol. 9 pp. 62-3 For reference to Sri Nadalara (Nadol): pura uae-Pragava-vandha, see also G V Acharya Inscri ps on No. 148.
Candrāvati\textsuperscript{89} but their network extended to Gujarat, and in fact the merchants of the Prāgvaṭa family developed a close association with the Caulukya court of Gujarat.\textsuperscript{90} According to early medieval Jaina texts, Ninnaya of the Prāgvaṭa family, originally belonging to Śrīmāla or Bhinmal was invited to settle in Anahilavāda.\textsuperscript{91} Individual members of the family were endowed with such official designations as maha-mātyavara and dandapati or dandadhipati, mantri and saciva,\textsuperscript{92} and if the evidence of literary texts is to be believed, Vimala of Prāgvaṭa descent was elevated to the rank of nṛpati\textsuperscript{93} with proper insignias. The movement towards the ranks of the contemporary political elites is reflected further in the saying attributed to Vastupāla who won a military victory over a Muslim merchant, supported by the ruler of Lāṭa, from Cambay: 'It is delusion to think that ksatriyas alone can fight and not a vanik... I am a vanik in the shop of battlefield.'\textsuperscript{94}

Major merchant lineages such as those of the Prāgvaṭas had understandable links with important centres like Anahilapura or Candrāvati and with royalty, but what is more significant for understanding the growth of their intraregional and interregional network is that they are found associated with various other, possibly rural, bases as well. The details of this phenomenon for different parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan are not available, but an idea of the network of the merchant lineages is nevertheless provided by the Mt. Abu record of 1230 which enumerates some of their bases. The Prāgvaṭas are thus found, apart from Anahilapura and Candrāvati, at Umbaranikisaraulagrama, Brahmanā, Ghauligrāma and Dāhadagrāma.\textsuperscript{95} The merchants of the Śrīmāla lineage can be located, on the strength of the same record, at Phlinigrāma, Hāmadṛagrāma and Dāvanigrāma.\textsuperscript{96} The Oswals are found to be associated with Kāsahradagrama and Sāhilavāda.  

\textsuperscript{89}EI, vol. 9, pp. 149–50; also G.V. Acharyya, Inscription No. 168.
\textsuperscript{90}G.V. Acharyya, Inscriptions 167, 168.
\textsuperscript{91}V.K. Jain, Trade and Traders in Western India (AD 1000–1300) (Delhi, 1990), chs 9, 10. The epigraphic records of the Anahilapura family, however, trace the genealogy of the family from the time of Chāṇḍapa, EI, vol. 8, pp. 200ff.
\textsuperscript{92}See ibid., pp. 208–13; ibid., vol. 9, pp. 62–6; V.K. Jain.
\textsuperscript{93}V.K. Jain.
\textsuperscript{94}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95}G.V. Acharyya, Inscription No. 168. See also EI, vol. 8, pp. 219–22.
\textsuperscript{96}Acharyya.
\textsuperscript{97}Acharyya.
The expansion of the network of lineages of local merchants, the history of some of which may be traced back at least to the ninth century, appears to have been the mechanism through which resource bases, arteries for the flow of resources and the centers of exchange came to be gradually integrated. The stages of this integration are still far from having been worked out; one may perhaps envisage a change from a situation in which suzerain merchants and the vamāñakas were an important component in commercial operations to a situation which was dominated by groups that were being crystallized into trading castes. Certainly by the close of the early medieval period the ascendency of such merchant lineages as Dharkat, Oisavala, Sumala and Pragyata was a phenomenon which patterned commercial as well as non-commercial activities at various centers in Rajasthan. To this may perhaps be added another dimension. The major merchant lineages had by now been considerably stratified. The segment of the Pragyatas resident at Anahilapura (Anahilpuravastuṣṭya or Śrīpat tanavastuṣṭya) and high up even in political hierarchy would be a case in point. It is likely that such merchant families were involved in trans-regional trades during the period through their agents and mediated between them and local resource bases because of their expansive network.

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99 Stratification was not necessarily confined within individual merchant lineages, although one could suppose that the difference between the Anahilapura Pragyatas and those located in rural bases extended to other merchant lineages as well. Stratification related to different categories of merchants of which there must have been a wide range. V. K. Jain cites contemporary literary references to Śudra pedlars, to needy traders and farmers receiving equid capital from merchants on interest and to the appointment of different types of traders by big individual merchants. The complementarity between big merchants and petty traders in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in which the terms ṣal and bopani bōpān were used is brought out by Irfan Habib in this respect. Up to the great zamān is spoken of as God served by his mill ones of bāraya; and one whose confidence it is not easy for new bāraya to gain. Unity in Medieval India. "Comparative Studies in Society and History" vol. 6 No. 1 (1964) p 200

100 Irfan Habib, "Social History of Gujarat: A Survey of the Economy and Culture of Gujarat from the Middle Ages to the End of the Nineteenth Century" (Bombay 1956) pp 260ff and V. K. Jain, eb. 9. It should however be made clear that no clear relation is between the major merchant lineages or individual merchant concentrations, as mentioned in this essay and the agents occasionally referred to in other types of
The second impression to which only a perfunctory reference will be made in this essay (since a fuller statement would require far more sustained and detailed work) relates to the manner in which money has been mentioned in the records. References to varieties of coins start appearing in the epigraphs of Rajasthan from about the tenth century. This phenomenon corresponds closely to the proliferation of epigraphic references to centres and items of exchange. Two points regarding the use of coins in contemporary economic relations may be noted at this stage. First, religious levies at centres of exchange were expressed both in terms of cash and kind; thus monetization, even in the spatial context of exchange centres, was partial. In fact the contributions by ruling elites to the religious institutions were often made in the form of shares which they drew in kind from agricultural and related products—a practice suggested by such expressions as ātipālāmadhyā, ātmāghanakamadhyā, etc. By contrast, religious levies are found to have been imposed in cash on communities in areas not necessarily commercial.

Secondly, the situation of partial monetization may be assumed to have emerged because of certain needs for the circulation of money—needs which may be explained in terms of the range of relations from the primary producers to the itinerant merchants and of the varieties of demands, including preparations for the endemic wars of the period, of the ruling elites. At other levels, in situations sources can be established as yet. All that can be suggested is that it is not beyond the range of possibility.

On this numerous examples can be cited from different parts of India for early medieval Rajasthan, reference may be made to a select number of records already discussed above in some detail: Ahar record of 953 (Indian Antiquary, vol. 38, pp. 161ff); Arthuna record of 1080 (H.V. Trivedi); The Rajorgarh record of 961 (El, vol. 3, pp. 263–7).


Ibid.

For example, 2 dirhams were imposed as annual levy on each village attached to Nadulai, to be paid on a specified date to Śrī Mahāvira Jina, El, vol. 9, pp. 66–70.

The support expected by the royalty from the merchants in this regard is a common feature of royalty–big merchant collaboration. V.K. Jain refers to the Caulukya king Siddharāja calculating the amount of cash he could expect a merchant to pay for raising an army against Mālwa.
of direct appropriation of agrarian surplus; for example, the need for cash may not have been great and with a few and rather unspectacular exceptions, the evidence of local production of coins in this period is decidedly inadequate. And yet, varieties of coins such as dramma-rupaka and umistopaka along with such extensively used media of exchange as cowries are found to have been in simultaneous circulation at single exchange centres. As underlined earlier this coexisted with the system of imposition of religious levies in kind as well, but its general implications for the mechanism of commerce at the exchange centres and more generally in the network of commerce cannot be overlooked.

As a hypothesis, the situation of partial monetization in which the local supply of money was uncertain—an uncertainty perhaps confirmed by the emergence of concerns concerning the mining of money—would suggest that the supply of money itself was an important component of contemporary commercial enterprise. For the moment, attention may be drawn to certain contemporary practices which located in the context of what has been outlined regarding the monetary situation may be examined to generate further discussion.

106 Although no inventory of coin hoards relating to the early medieval period is available, references to finds of coins from that region would add up to a substantial quantity. However, in the era which can be defined as indigenous to local ruling lineages are not many. Those that can be attributed with any certainty were based on the Indo-Sasanian and Bactrian types. See D. Sharma, Rajasthān through the Ages, pp. 499-507. For a recent detailed investigation, see John S. Deyell, Law in early India. The Monetary History of Early Medieval North India (New Delhi, 1990) part 2.

107 See, for example, the Shergah inscription of 1018 CE vol. 23, pp. 157-41 and the Arthasastra inscription of 1080 CE, vol. 23. For examples of coin names in early medieval epigraphic and literary sources from Rajasthan and western India in general, see D. Sharma, Rajasthān through the Ages, pp. 497-505.

108 Much of Aymard suggests that the role of money could be of a role greater than the actual circulation of coins might suggest even when physically absent money dominated the core of economic activity and social relations. See Money and Past Economy: Studies in History, vol. 2, No. 2 (1980) p. 15.

109 This impression is derived from the way mining of coins by the Cālluminate king Ajayārāja (eleventh century) and his sūtra Sammatadeva's elucidated by Jayansāka in Pithārtha-prabha and by his commentator Jayanāra. See D. Handa, Coins of Sammatadeva: A numismatic D. gest, vol. 2, pt. 2 (1978) pp. 47-57; also D. Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties, p. 41 (164).
sion on the relationship between money and commerce in general. The hypothesis presented here cannot be developed further without bringing in comparable and contemporary material from other regions. One can, however, underline the possibility of interconnections in areas of basically commercial import, which may be assumed to be related to the mechanism of money accumulation and circulation, and to provide an explanation of stratification within the community of merchants and perhaps also among manufacturers.

It would appear from the social composition of those who regulated mārgādāya and maṇḍapikādāya that some form of commercial revenue farming was gradually coming into existence. This was true not only of early medieval Rajasthan but of other regions as well. The autonomous character of such bodies is suggested by the phenomenon that local merchant associations or other corporate bodies could impose levies on local communities and on the items of exchange. To an extent this may have been so, but the phenomenon surely needs a more satisfactory explanation, and in a political situation where ‘bureaucracy’ lacked a distinctly identifiable character, one way of looking at it would be to consider it a mechanism of control over the acquisition of cash and kind and over their redistribution, assuring at the same time the concerned political powers of a regular return in the form of a share. Of course, this would not apply to ad hoc levies intended as contributions to religious institutions, but then terms such as mārgādāya or maṇḍapikādāya cannot be conceived in terms of ad hoc levies alone.

In early medieval Rajasthan, as in some other regions, a trend was

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110 This, we understand, is a statement likely to be vehemently challenged, but if followed up, it may lead to a new line of inquiry and explain why the ruling elites themselves are not directly involved in the collection of commercial revenue. For Rajasthan, one relevant record to analyse would be the Shergarh inscription of 1018 which refers to contributions made to Bhaṭṭaraka Śrī Nagnaka from maṇḍapikādāya by a body consisting mostly of Śresthis, EI, vol. 23, pp. 137–41.

111 For evidence of this kind, see G.S. Dikshit, ch. 7; T. Venkateswara Rao, pp 134ff. For Tamilnadu, the functions in this regard of the merchant groups constituting the nagaram have been discussed in detail by K.R. Hall, Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Colas (Delhi, 1980), chs 3 and 5. The details given by Hall in ch. 3 seem strongly to suggest that the nagaram could well have served as an agency for the collection and redistribution of royal revenues at one level.
developing towards the acquisition among other things of immovable assets such as avinikas or residential buildings apar or and vishu or shops. The acquired assets are consistently found to have yielded a rent return in cash. This practice is of course found in our records of religious grants but perhaps a comparison may be made between the functions of cash deposits made with religious establishments in the early historical period with at least one facet of the pattern emerging in the early medieval period. As the Bhinnal record of 1249 cited above shows, cash deposits could bring in resources for keeping the ritual cycle of a temple in operation but in trying to understand the relationship between cash and the mechanism of trade outside the ritual sphere of temples, the particular dimension of cash rent accruing from investments in immovable assets even for temple establishments cannot be lost sight of. Unlike immovable assets, money was more a part of a system of circulation but its uncertain flow in a situation of demand created for it by the existence of stages in the exchange process may have assured it a high return in the form of non-cash resources which could then be put in the exchange-circuit or could further be used to augment capital for the purpose of ensuring high

112 For Rajasthan, the practice of assigning or accruing such assets for religious purposes sometimes made by the merchants or manufacturers themselves is to be found in the Kaman inscriptions (EI vol 24 pp 329-36) and the Sherpari inscription (ibid vol 23 pp 137-41). Outside Rajasthan, the details from the Ahar record of the Cujara Panhara period are quite revealing, ibid vol 19 pp 52-4. For relevant analysis of the record, see R.S. Sharmaji, Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India (Delhi 1983) pp 212-15. Also the essay “Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India” in this volume.

113 For early historic evidence see EI vol 8 pp 82-3.

114 EI vol 11 pp 55-7.

115 This point can be substantiated by cursive again in the evidence of the Bhinnal record of 1249 (EI vol 11 pp 56-3) which lists the items which two separate cash deposits were expected to yield. These items were a part of the total range of goods which entered the centres of exchange.

1 Annual interest on 40 drachmas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>2 ses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghee</td>
<td>81/2 kalasa or jar</td>
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rent in cash. The premium put on the acquisition of cash by the merchants of western India may be illustrated by citing two cases. D. Sharma cites the Kharataragacchapatavali to show that Sadharana, 'perhaps the richest of the merchants of Chitor fixed 1,00,000 drammas as the limit of the property that he would amass.' A document in the Lekhapaddhati records that in 1230 a resident of a village issued a receipt to his father, in the presence of witnesses, for a sum of 500 drammas of his share which he had borrowed for the purpose of operating business transactions on his own. The document has interesting implications pointing to the existence and use of common capital which could be drawn upon before partition, but what is relevant in the Kharataragacchapatavali evidence as well as in the Lekhapaddhati is the control which could be exercised through access to such substantial amounts of cash over the exchange network.

This brings us finally to the question of the rate of return. The return in the form of resources in kind could, as suggested before, be considered high, but data for calculating actual rates of interest are rather meagre. Even so, barring a few curious exceptions, the rate of interest per annum may be put between 25 per cent and 30 per cent. Despite the absence of evidence on how interest rates related to the general processes of commerce, it is certain that outside their known religious contexts they were also interwoven in the different tiers of secular exchange transactions. The three final sections of this essay relating to the accumulation and circulation of money can therefore be taken as pointers to go beyond the constraints implicit in the evidence and examine more thoroughly a process which evidence emanating from religious establishments partly reflects.

2. Interest on a deposit of 15 drammas:
   Wheat 25 pāillis
   Munga 4 pāillis
   Chokhā 2 pāillis
   Other articles of worship 2 drammas in value

See also D. Sharma, Rajasthan Through the Ages, p. 506.
116 D. Sharma, ibid., p. 498.
118 This estimate is based on D. Sharma, Rajasthan Through the Ages, pp. 505–07.
To sum up, the broad survey of the commerce of early medieval Rajasthan offered in this essay seems to establish distinct stages in its history, with overlapping between them in certain respects. The first phase is essentially characterized by the proliferation of local centres of exchange which were situated within the domains of emergent Rajput lineages and the spatial contexts of which were agrarian. Despite being local centres of exchange, they were nevertheless points of intersection for traffic of varying origins, and it is perhaps the nature of the interaction with traffic from the outside that gave rise to a certain measure of hierarchy among exchange centres. The second phase, dating roughly from the eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed the resurgence of local merchant lineages already in operation and the emergence of hitherto unfamiliar lineages which established wide intraregional and interregional networks. What this essay cannot claim to offer at this stage is a satisfactory exposition of the structure of commerce which these merchant lineages represented or what changes the structure underwent beyond the thirteenth century.
Early Memorial Stones of Rajasthan: A Preliminary Analysis of their Inscriptions

The memorial stones of Rajasthan cover a span of more than a thousand years. It was in this region that mémorial stones developed in the medieval period into a form of architecture, the catris or memorial pavilions, which were put up to commemorate Rājput royal and associated families.¹ Seen in the light of the immense potentiality for a detailed study of the Rājasthānī memorial relics, the scope of the present note is rather limited; it covers the period roughly down to the close of the thirteenth century; furthermore, it is neither intended as a comprehensive survey, nor is it based on any extensive field work. Its main focus is on the social origins of the stones as they were fashioned in the early medieval period, and on how such origins were linked with the pattern of the Rajput polity, which was gradually consolidating itself in that period. Needless to say, the suggestions made here are purely tentative.

This essay is based on information from publications such as the Epigraphia Indica; Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, Western Circle; Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy; Indian Archaeology—A Review; Annual Report on the Working of the Rajputana Museum, Ajmer, and so on. The point that emerges from a study of these publications and which crucially relates to any meaningful future investigations of the memorial stones of Rajasthan is that, so far, a systematic presentation of the data has been largely neglected; this neglect, which probably stems from the fact that the stones were not considered a serious theme of study, has affected two aspects most

¹ Reprinted from S. Settar and G.D. Sontheimer, eds, Memorial Stones: A Study of their Origin, Significance and Variety (Dharwad, 1982).
vitally: (i) references in the publications are mostly to non-descript memorial stones which as the more satisfactorily published ones show have significant typological variations (ii) in the majority of cases the complete texts of inscriptions on the stones are not available. Thus the circumstances leading to a death which was commemorated remain largely unknown as also the details of the person or persons commemorated. Such details are necessary for analysing the pattern of the incidence of memorial stones in relation to particular social groups in a region and the diversity and intensity of their involvement in situations which caused the memorials to be erected. This kind of information is vital also in the case of san stones as the practice of san is unlikely to have been current in all strata of society. After all memorial stones are valuable documents of social history and it is difficult to subject them to a social analysis if there are large gaps in our information.

The preliminary work however is to make a typological study of the stones and to study their distribution in time and space. From the available records there appear to have been two types of stones in the early medieval period: (i) memorial pillars with sculptured tops the main variations within the type deriving from variations in the sculpture. The pillars are locally known as gauradhana and possibly also as surthambas. The term gauradhanda or gauradhanaadavinjey is as early as the memorials themselves: (ii) the vertical slabs, with sculptures in relief are known as puliyas or devalis. The term devali is also old and occurs in the epigraphs on the stones along with its variants devaḍa, devakulika etc. The sculptural variations in this type are many and seem to correspond at least in some cases to the type of occasion for which they were erected. Thus in ordinary san stones there would be a couple facing the front if the occasion was the death of an individual.

2 PRASWC 1911 12 p 51
3 IP 151 1916 pp 101 60
4 ARIE 1964-5 p 101
5 tiht
6 Raja ban Bhand V ps. III IV p 12
PRASWC 1911 12 p 53
7 Agrawal R.C. Pachm in Rajasthan Ke Kuchh Paramshik Smrit samhita
Varna (Hind) (April 1963) p 70
in battle, the battle scene would be depicted, as also the horseman; cattle raids would occasion the depiction of a man driving cattle. Such close correspondence between the theme and the form of the memorial stone may not, however, have been universal, and, for a further analysis of the stones from a chronological perspective, it would be interesting to see if there was a trend towards a gradual standardization of their forms.

As a continuation of what has been said above, a few other points regarding the typology of the stones need further investigation: (i) the first concerns the relative chronology of the two types mentioned above. Goetz has made the point that by about the twelfth century govardhanas were generally replaced by pāliyas.11 This statement needs further substantiation and, if found to be valid, some explanation should be thought of as to why pillars henceforth assumed a different commemorative function;12 (ii) how did the memorials originate in this known form? Goetz’s derivation of govardhanas from tribal memorial pillars of central India, Rajasthan and Gujarat13 appears to be valid, and in fact, as a recent article has shown, the association of pillars with the cult of the dead is of extremely early origin.14 But, if the social context of the transformation of pillars into impressive monoliths in the early historical period is provided by early Buddhism,15 then the social process which transformed the humble wooden pillars of the tribals into stone memorials with sculptured tops is something which remains to be investigated. This would apply to the study of the pāliyas as well. They are believed to be of Central Asian origin, but the prototypes from western India to which they are related by Goetz16 are far too early for the Rajasthani specimens. If,

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9 See Agrawal, p. 70 for description of a hero on horseback with two satis.
10 PRASWC, 1908–9, p. 49.
11 Goetz, p. 88.
12 According to Goetz (Ibid.), the function of a govardhana was gradually reduced to that of a kirrisambha.
13 Goetz, p. 87.
15 Ibid.
16 Goetz, p. 88. For other stone memorials of an early date, see H. Sarkar, ‘Chhayastambhas from Nagarjunakonda’, Seminar on Hero-stones, R. Nagaswamy,
however the connection between the Central Asian memorials and the pahys of Rajasthan is found to be irrefutable. It should still be examined as to why or from which particular period this type of memorial tended to proliferate.

Apart from the typology of the stones the typology of the contents of inscriptions that occur on the memorials needs detailed study and analysis. A primary classification may be made of what the memorials commemorate. Many of the memorials merely speak of the death of an individual. In some cases an individual’s wife or wives performed sat. Under this category may be included some inscriptions issued in AD 686, AD 688, AD 692 and AD 770 from Chhouti Khattu in the Nagaur Dt. where the death of four wives of four persons are commemorated separately. Similarly, a Pushkar memorial stone inscription of 1130 records the death of one Tha (kurta) Hiravadevi wife of Tha (kurta) Kolhava. Others commemorate both the male member of the family and his wife or wives. Thus the Lohari inscription of 1179 mentions Jalasala and his nine wives in whose names the memorial was erected. An identical specimen would be the one which was set up in honour of the Cahanana king Ajayapala and his three wives Somaladevi Osthalada and Sr deva at Bassi Nagaur Dt. in 1132.

The region wise spread as well as the spread in terms of social groups which such memorials covered appear to have been extensive. Two further instances both from the Jaisalmer area, may be cited. An inscription of the Bhatika samva 534 (1158 AD) (it is not clear whether the inscription is engraved on the usual type of memorial stone or not) from the temple of Camunda four miles from Jaisalmer records the demise of Adi Varaha of the Adhi family. Supposedly a great poet. Another inscription engraved on a gowardhana, about ten miles from Jaisalmer records that during the reign of Vijayaraja queen Rajaladevi built a tank and erected a gowardhana in memory of her

ed (Madras, 1974) pp. 93-7
17 Agrawal R.C. pp 68-9
18 ARRM 1919-20, p. 3
19 Ibid 1922-3 pp 2-3
20 EI XXXII pp 163-4
21 ARRM 1919-20 p 3
daughter's son, Sohāgapāla. References may be cited in plenty to show that persons belonging to different castes, Brahmans, Jains and others, were commemorated through memorial stones, and, although such references may not necessarily be taken to suggest any universality of practice, they may nevertheless show that in all such cases it was not a hero whose death was being commemorated, but that commemoration of the dead had become a social practice, irrespective of the cause of death. We shall return to an elaboration of this point later on.

There are, at the same time, memorials to violent death, and an analysis of the circumstances which led to such deaths may bring out the significance society attached to them. One series among such memorials relates to the victims of cattle raids. A very well-known example of this type of memorial is a stone from about the eighth century from Bayana in Bharatpur. The rectangular slab sculptured along the top with a row of four animals being driven by a man bears an inscription which mentions that in the reign of Śrī-Nanna, in a place called Pimpala-Gauda, a certain Durgādītya was killed by some robbers in a cattle raid. The term go-graha is mentioned also in a stone of possibly 1013 from a different region of Pokan in the Jodhpur area, where a govardhana was erected in the memory of a member of the Guhila family who had been killed in a cattle raid. The Jaisalmer area also provides interesting information on memorial inscriptions, found in the form of a group, occasioned by such raids. One record (of Bhāṭika year 685 = 1309) from Gogaki-talai, five miles from Jaisalmer, mentions Dhulā, the son of Isara and belonging to the Cāhamāna family and Vatsa gotra, as having been killed while rescuing cows. The victim of another such raid was Palāni, the son of Velāka and of the same descent. The last record of this group commemorates Mūñjalādeva, the son of Hema, descended from the same Cāhamāna family and Vatsa gotra, who was killed by robbers.

22 Ibid.
23 PRASWC, 1908–9, p. 49.
24 Agrawal, p. 70.
25 ARRM, 1936, p. 3.
26 Ibid.
while serving his master in the act of rescuing women, cows, horses and camels belonging to the Brahmanas.\textsuperscript{27}

The other series of such memorials refers to those who fell in battle. An interesting representative of this series would be the twelfth century group of Chatur inscription from the Bikaner area which supply the names of several Mohalla chiefs and record the death of Ahara and Ambhara in the battle of Nagapura i.e. Nagra\textsuperscript{28}. The memorials (mentioned in the records as \textit{devati}) from Anakhara in Bikaner—all dated 1283—possibly refer to such an event.\textsuperscript{29} A similar group known from three memorial records is known to have been found in the Sekhawan area of the former Jaipur state. All the three records referring to the reign of Prthviraja Cahamana are from the village of Revasa in the Sikar Dt and are of the same date i.e. 1186\textsuperscript{30}. The victims Chandela Nannava Chandela Dulabhadeva and Chandela Singhara were killed apparently in the same encounter at the village of Khaluwana. There is another \textit{devati} of 1104 from Berasar Bikaner wherein occurs the inscription \textit{subahu ra.asan} or protection of Subahu\textsuperscript{27}.

These memorials then appear to have been erected to those who were victims of raids and elsewhere in the country also such memorials were erected.

While no detailed study can be made of the contents of the inscriptions in this preliminary essay what may be underlined is that a classification of the contents is useful for analysing the social composition of the people who were commemorated. Secondly, an attempt may be made to correlate particular situations resulting in commemorations to particular social groups. Any deviations from the pattern of correlation that may emerge will have to be explained not in terms of the caste or clan of the person commemorated but in terms of how much he may be supposed to have deviated from the position warranted by his caste or clan. Thus while ordinary memorials could be erected for a Brahmin, a Jaina or a Rajput, a memorial for violent

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{JFAASB}, 1920 pp 256ff
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{ARRM}, 1935 pp 3-5
\textsuperscript{27} Agrawal p 71
death in the case of a Brahmin will be explained by how he was involved in such a situation. Again, an analysis of the cases of violent death would show which social groups were generally involved in situations leading to such death. In short, future investigations, relying on the evidence of number, will be able to establish a more effective correlation between inscriptive types and social types.32

But first, in continuation of what has been said at the beginning, it may be pertinent to ask: How universal was the practice of commemoration? Broadly speaking, the practice seems to have been fairly widespread in space and time. For example, apart from the Brahmins33 and Jainas,34 mentioned earlier, there was a broad spectrum of other groups which were also represented. Memorials to śreṣṭhas, or merchants, of the early twelfth century have been found.35 A member of a Naigama Kāyastha family, Talhā, the son of Bilhana and grandson of Thā (kura) Candra, was commemorated by Thākura Somadeva in

32 The memorial stones, in cases where they are available in clusters, also provide some clue for a study of the single clan or multi-clan composition of a region, and where the memorials were the result of raids, an analysis of such composition may give some idea of the pattern of inter-clan conflict as also of inter-clan alignment in a particular period. For example, a memorial cluster in the Sekhawati area of the former Jaipur state relates to a Cândela prataganaka (an area held by the Cândelas) and to Cândelas who apparently fought for the Cāhamānas in the period of Pāthvaśrī III (ARRM, 1935, pp 3–5). Similarly, it has been remarked in the light of the evidence of memorial stones, that the ‘whole of the Meda province was only held by Guhilots’ (PRASWC, 1909–10, p 61). On the other hand, a cluster of 12 govardhanas, found at Pāla near Jodhpur and ranging in date between AD 1161 and 1187, refer to at least four castes, Bhīci, Gaṅghala, Dharkaṭa and Pratiḥāra, JPSB, 1916, pp. 104–06.

33 The memorial records occasionally refer to different sections among the Brahmins. For example, a record speaks of a memorial to Pālīval Brahmins, IA, XL, p. 183.

34 There are a few interesting specimens of Jaina memorials, termed nisēdhikā in the records, from the Kishengarh area. One such nisēdhikā, from a record from Rūpnagar, was erected in AD 961, in memory of Meghasenācārya by his pupil Vimalasenaapandaṇḍita (PRASWC, 1910–11, p. 43). Another, from the same place, was erected in AD 1019, in memory of Padmasenācārya, by Citranandin (ibid.). A third, from a site three miles to the south of Rūpnagar, refers to the memorial of Vāla Śaddika erected by Chāhchideva and does not seem to be Jaina in origin (ibid.).

35 Inscriptions of Jhalrapatan of AD 1109 and AD 1113, AARM, 1912–13, Appendix B.
AD 1158, as is evident from a stone at Pilani: there is also perhaps quite an early memorial (AD 764) erected to the daughter of a rehpur (courtesan) at Osian in the Jodhpur area. Another a sat slab from Kalyanpur in the Udaipur area records the death of a member of the Kambhar, i.e. potters caste.

While these cases do relate to a wide cross section of society what may be highlighted again from a rough calculation of the number of records available is that the memorials—to both normal and violent deaths—were predominantly to the following castes and clans: Pratihara, Varaha and Mahavahra; Rathoda; Gumbhila and Mangalaya; a subdivision of the Gumbhila; Camburgana; and Bodana; and Mohali subdivisions of the Camburgana; Debra; Doda; Solanki; Dahiya; Parmara; Pavara; Dohara; Bhuchi; Ghamgala; Dharkara; and so on. Further, in a number of cases...

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9 Ibid, 1933, p. 2
37 ARJE, 1961-62, p. 114
38 Agrawal, p. 78
39 One of the two memorials dated AD 936 from Chetar, Jodhpur, mentions Arjuna, the son of Durabharaja of Pratihara jain (Indian Archaeology—1959-60, A Review, p. 60)
40 A record of AD 1015 from Chetar, Jodhpur speaks of a memorial to one of Pratihara gona (Indian Archaeology—1959-60, A Review).
41 PRASWC, 1911, 12, p. 53
42 Ibid.
43 LAL XL, pp. 181-83
44 PRASWC, 1909, 10, p. 61; PRASWC, 1911-12, p. 52
45 Ibid, 1911-12, p. 53
46 Indian Archaeology—1962-63, A Review, p. 59
47 PRASWC, 1911-12, p. 53
48 Ibid.
49 ARJE, 1935, pp. 3-5
50 Ibid. 1909-10, Appendix D
51 Ibid. 1922-23, p. 2
52 LAL XL, p. 183
53 Ibid., XLIII, pp. 267-69
54 PRASWC, 1916-17, p. 70
55 Ibid., 1911-12, p. 53 also ARJE, 1964-65, p. 102.
56 ARJE, 1959-60, p. 115
official titles or titles indicative of social status, occur on the same records, such titles being rā(uta),\(^60\) raja,\(^61\) mahasāmania,\(^62\) rajaputra,\(^63\) rāna,\(^64\) etc. In short, where it is possible to relate the memorial stones to any clans or castes, it is mostly the Rajputs that we come across. Chronologically, too, the early memorials of Rajasthan correspond to the formative period of the Rajput polity. It is true that the memorials were not erected to the Rajputs alone; but such diffusion as penetrated different sections of society may suggest that the formalization of death through stones by the members of the deceased's family had come to be accepted as a symbol of status in society. The stones also gave sanction to the practice of satī, which was becoming increasingly common and the incidence of which was quite frequent among the ruling elite of this period. One should further take into consideration the expenses involved in getting the stone sculpted and incised with the inscription by, as one record mentions, a professional craftsman (rupakāra).\(^65\)

The process of the transformation of tribal wooden pillars into memorial stones may also be viewed in this light. The Rajput polity evolved, at least to an extent, as a result of confrontation with original settlers, and inscriptive references, though veiled, bear testimony to Rajput expansion at the expense of the Bhils, Āhirs\(^66\) and others. This interaction may have resulted in the Rajputs (and it may be underlined here that all Rajputs were not colonizers, as might be suggested from

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\(^{60}\) ARIE, 1954–55, p. 69.


\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) A record of 1191 from Unstra, four miles west of Barlu in Jodhpur area, speaks of rāna Moriśvara, a Guhila utra, as having been followed in satī by his chief queen, Rāji, a Mohili (PRASWC 1911–12, p. 53).

\(^{65}\) ARIE 1952–53, p. 67.

\(^{66}\) Such ideas about colonization emerge from several records of early medieval Rajasthan. Thus, the Ghatiyala inscription of Kakkuka, of AD 861, from the Jodhpur area, credits Kakkuka with taking away herds of cattle (implying that go-graha was not always a defensive measure) and with the destruction by fire of a village on the hill in the inaccessible Vātānānaka, JRASGBI, 1895, pp. 513–21. See also EL IX, p. 80 for another record of AD 996 of the same family for the settlement of an area called Abhirajānadarunah, 'terrible because of being inhabited by the Abhiras'.

the gradual proliferation of Rajput castes)\textsuperscript{67} taking over a simple form of memorial and transforming it into something vastly more elaborate in keeping with the art tradition of the time which also found its source of patronage among the emergent Rajput political elites as well as among other categories of elites in the early medieval society of Rajasthan.

\textsuperscript{67} For the process of the Rajputization of local tribes see B.N.S. Yadava. Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century (Allahabad, 1973) p 34
Recent studies have attempted to show that a major socio-economic change took place in early India from roughly the close of the Gupta period. This change is elucidated in terms of the gradual crystallization of 'Indian feudalism', the origins of which can be traced to the land grants of the pre-Gupta period; and the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest marked both the climax and the decline of feudal economy of India. As a new system,

* Reprinted from *The Indian Historical Review*, vol. 1, No. 2 (1974).

[An earlier draft of this paper was read at a seminar on 'Cities and Towns in Ancient India' organized in March 1974 by the Centre of Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta. My attention was later drawn by Dr. Sanjay Chandra of the Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, to E.M. Medvedev's 'The Towns of Northern India during the 6th–7th Centuries (according to Huen Tsang)' in *India—Land and People*, Book 3 (vol. 14 of Countries and Peoples of the East), compiled and edited by I.V. Sakhatov (Moscow, 1972), pp. 168–83. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Chandra for this reference and also for translating the entire paper from the original Russian into English. Medvedev makes a thorough study of Huen Tsang, but my use of his account is limited to the passages cited in the original draft of the present paper.]

1 For a statement of different facets of this change, see R.S. Sharma, 'Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History', *The Indian Historical Review*, i, No. 1 (1974), pp. 1–9; also his *Social Changes in Early Medieval India (c. AD 500–1200)* (Delhi, 1969).


3 R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, p. 262. However, the chronology of 'Indian feudalism' is not as yet precisely ascertained. While early indications of feudal
it is naturally assumed to have marked a departure from the early historical pattern. The economic implications of the suggested change are believed to be represented by a situation of increasing ruralization in which the self-sufficient villages became the foci of production.

This hypothesis has gained considerable strength from the substantive arguments put forward from time to time in the process of its elaboration. Two deductions following from the idea of self-sufficient village economy have been made: (i) decline of trade, including long-distance trade, and (ii) decline of urban centres. The paucity of indigenous dynastic coinage which suggests rarity of exchange at commercial levels has been taken to substantiate the first point. It has derived support from an analysis of some literary material as well. For the second point considerable support comes from a recent survey of the early north Indian urban centres, many of which reached a state of decay in Gupta and post-Gupta times.

Even if as suggested by the hypothesis thus outlined trade and urban centres suffered a setback in early India, resulting in the growth of a closed village economy over a considerable stretch of time one cannot still view this validly in terms of production for use as opposed to production for exchange. While therefore it is necessary to

development are traced to inscriptions of the late 5th and early 6th centuries AD (Kosambi, p. 276). The historians of medieval India apply the same term albeit with reservations to the Mughal economy. S. Nurul Haq, "Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India" (New Delhi, 1973) pp. 1-2.


5. For a list of even types in circulation in the early medieval period, see L. Gopal, "Early Medieval Coin Types of Northern India," Numismatic News, No. 12 (Varanasi, 1966). A recent detailed study is by John S. Deyell, "Luxury or Silver: The Monetary History of Early Medieval North India" (Delhi, 1990).

6. L. Gopal, "The Economic Life of Northern India," c. AD 700-1200 (Delhi, 1965), pp. 107-44.


8. It may have been so, but if the history of Indian feudalism extends from the second to the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, then it has to be reconsidered whether a relative decline of trade or urban centres really constitutes an essential variable in the study of this system.

9. For the difficulty involved in thinking in terms of such a distinction.
examine closely as to what extent and in what precise form trade and urbanism survived in the post-Gupta period, the scope of the present paper is rather limited. Here only a few known documents have been chosen for a detailed analysis — documents which bear upon the close link between trade and urbanization. These pertain to several distinct geographical regions, and it can at least partly be tested whether what emerges from them will have uniform applicability for different parts of north India. In the final part of the paper an attempt has been made to review the entire problem of the decline of trade and urban centres in the light of the documents selected as well as some other material.

I

The geographical areas to which the documents relate are: (i) the Indo-Gangetic divide; (ii) the upper Ganga basin, and (iii) the Malwa plateau. This location pattern is crucial since it is known that in at least two of them, the upper Ganga basin and the Malwa plateau, important urban centres had developed in the early historical period.

We may start with a site in the Indo-Gangetic divide which, if at

H.K. Takahashi, in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (London, 1954), pp. 35ff; also the important remarks of Marx, 'The extent to which products enter trade and go through the merchants’ hands depends on the mode of production...on the basis of every mode of production, trade facilitates the production of surplus products destined for exchange, in order to increase the enjoyments, or the wealth, of the producers (here the owners of products are meant), who are specified as the ‘slave-owner, the feudal lord, the tribute-collecting state’, etc., Capital (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1962), iii, pp. 320–1.

This need is also suggested in the important writings on Indian feudalism. Although Kosambi speaks of the ‘ominous spread of closed village economy’ in the context of feudalism (p. 288), he underlines the process of the ‘development of new trade centres’ in his criticism of Marx’s concept of the Asiatic mode (p. 11). R.S. Sharma has made a study of trade and urban centres in the context of early medieval feudalism, Indian Feudalism, pp. 238ff.


12 For a distribution of the important early historical urban sites of north India, see A. Ghosh, The City in Early Historical India (Simla, 1973), map facing p. 90; also, G. Erdosy, 'Early Historic Cities of Northern India', South Asian Studies, vol. 3 (1987), pp. 1–23.
all it has to be given the label 'urban' may at best be called an incipient urban centre. This site is Pithudaka, modern Pehoa in the Barnal district of Haryana. Pithudaka is called an adhivahan in an inscription (AD 882–3) of the Gurmara Pratihara period which also provides some details of a fair at this place in which different animals—the most important of which was the horse—were sold and bought. Several points emerging from this record are of relevance here. First, the horse dealers headed by a foreman (which suggests that the horse dealers were organized into a guild) were not local; they hailed from nine different localities Cutavanka, Utpala, Cikkarvelavanapura, Bala, devapura, Sarankadaka, Sihrurudukkaka, Traighataka, Champhaka and Aivalauhavaka. One of these is tentatively identified with a locality near Lahore. Secondly, the dealers do not seem to have been non Indian traders of the period although horse trade is not usually associated with Indians in the contemporary sources. According to the editor of the record, the names appear to be Hindu and it is likely that some of them were brahmanas (for example Vamuka or Bharga Viraka's sons Vanda and Rajyabala). The evidence of the Pehoa record may thus suggest that in the ninth century Indians of the north west at least acted as intermediaries dealers in horse trade and if the guess regarding the participation by brahmanas is correct, the restrictions in the brahmanical texts weighed lightly on them. Thirdly, the donations which the horse dealers agreed to make went not only to a religious shrine at Pithudaka but also to Kanyakubja, Gourtha and Bhojapura—all widely distant from Pithudaka. Fourthly, among the buyers of horses figure the king, shakkuras and provincials who were however not necessarily physically present at Pithudaka. It would appear from all this that Pithudaka was a focal point in the network

13 C. Bühler, "The Pehoa Inscri ption from the Temple of Garibnath; Epigrapha India, vol 1, pp. 184–90.
14 For countries from which the horse was imported see L. Gopal, The Economic Life of North India, p. 113. The information on that horse trade extended up to Bengal in the early thirteenth century and that Turkic traders of Bengal posed as horse traders is given by Tabaqat-i-Nawim, etc., H.H. Ravey (repr. n ed. n New Delhi 1970), p. 557.
15 C. Bühler
16 See Maranam, x, pp. 86–89 and also Kullabdhprata's commentary which p okhbas brahmanas from part of the ng in aninal trade.
of north-western horse dealers and although the record does not positively show it to be an urban centre, it may be labelled at least as a *nigama*—a market centre occupying a somewhat intermediary position between a village and a developed township. ¹⁷ This supposition seems to be confirmed by its characterization in the record as an *adhisthāna* which, in Gupta and post-Gupta terminology, would signify an urban centre as well. ¹⁸

Tattānandapura, identified with Ahar near Bulandshahar and situated on the western bank of the Ganga, was on the other hand a fully developed township of the upper Ganga basin. It has yielded a set of ten inscriptions dated between AD 867 and 904, ¹⁹ which show it to have been included in the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire. The urban character of the settlement emerges from a number of indications in the record. First, the suffix *pura* in its name and the fact that it was called *pattana*²⁰ distinguish it from *grāma*, *palli* or *agrahāra* by which village settlements of the period were known. ²¹ Secondly, whatever meagre information is available regarding its lay-out confirms this. It was intersected by a number of roads, *kurathyā* (small or narrow roads, lanes?), *bhadrathyā* (big roads) and *hāṭṭamārga* (roads leading to the market area). ²² Since such expressions have been used in relation to

¹⁸ Vaiśāli (modern Basath in Vaisali district of north Bihar) which was an urban centre in the Gupta period was called an *adhisthāna* in that period, cf. the expression *nīkhyādhisthānādhiśkaranasa*, scăl No. 25 in T. Böhm, *Excavations at Basath, Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1903-4*, p. 109. Gopāgiri (Gwalior), an urban centre of the tenth century, is mentioned in its records as an *adhisthāna*. It may be noted that by the time of Rājasekharā, Prthudaka was considered to be so important as to be mentioned as the point beyond which the northern region began, *pradhakāt parata uttarāpathah, Kavyamimāṃsā*, G.S. Rai, ed. (Varanasi, 1964), ch. XII, p. 264.
²⁰ Ahar Inscription, Nos. 1, 2, etc. (The numbers cited here refer to D.R. Sahnī’s edition).
²² Ahar Inscription, Nos. 4, 5, 6, etc.
townships in early medieval literature some functional differences between them in the context of urban settlements may be inferred. The impression one gets from the records is that the eastern market area (parvathaprabheda) was one of the nerve centres of the town dotted as it was with shops and residential buildings. The reference to the eastern market implies that there were several other such centres which as is clear from the eastern market cluster were not necessarily located in one part of the town but were dispersed among different residential areas. The inscriptions mention six temples (those of Kani


canadidevi or hanakadevi, Nandabhagavati devi Vamanaswami, Gan
dhadevi, Daśvatara and Sarvamangala) which formed a distinct part of the urban set up. At least two of them, enshrining Nandabhagavatidevi and Kānianadidevi, seem to have been located a little away from the town ( ś a t i a p a r a n a d i v a l i d a s i m a s m a d i i but both owned property in the eastern market area

Thirdly, the constructional details and dimensions of some of the buildings are given in the records in clear terms. Two types of buildings are generally mentioned aṣṭāṇ (shops and enclosures) and gṛha (residential buildings). The aṣṭāṇ seem in some cases to have combined the functions of a shop and a residential building. In one case an aṣṭāṇ with its elevations is said to have consisted of three rooms of burnt bricks in another it had a few inner apartments. The gṛhas were also constructed with burnt bricks. The inscriptions abound in references to houses sizes (gṛhahum) contiguously situated and belonging to persons of different castes.

That Tarunandaputra was an important urban settlement of the early medieval period is confirmed by archaeologists as well although no attempt at correlation between epigraphic and archaeological material is possible at present. The mounds at Ahar cover a total area of 3800 acres and five trial trenches laid at the site are scattered over a

1) L. Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India, p. 96
2) ibid., p. 97, Nos. 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14.
3) ibid., No. 2.
4) ibid., Nos. 21, 10.
5) ibid., Nos. 4, 5, 9, 13.

Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports 1925–6, pp. 56–8 plates XVII (I owe this reference to Mr B. M. Pande).
stretch of nearly one and a half miles. At site B, which dates back to about ninth century AD were discovered, apart from burnt brick structures of residential character, excellent specimens of pottery, hand-grinding mills, a mortar, household articles of copper, an iron scythe and early-medieval coins of at least three varieties.

All the urban characteristics of Tattānandapura or Ahar revealed by epigraphy were present at Siyadoni near Lalitpur in Jhansi district. The dates of its records ranging from between AD 907 and 968 relate, as in the case of the other inscriptions cited, to the Gurjara-Pratihara period. It was also a pattana intersected by a variety of roads, rathyā, hattarathyā, etc. The functional differences between different varieties of roads may be assumed here again; besides, there is clear mention in one case of a road belonging to the merchants (vanijoni-jarathyā). The residential sites included aparasaraka (houses with a porch or vestibule), āvasanika (dwellings) and gribabhiti (a house site) owned by different communities. The spatial dimensions of the town may be assumed to have been larger than those of Ahar, considering the number of market centres it had. Five of them figure in the records: Dosīhaṭṭa, Prasannahaṭṭa, Caturhaṭṭa (possibly identical with Catus-kahaṭṭa of no. 25), Kallapāḷānāmsatkahaṭṭa (hatta belonging to the Kallapālas) and Vasantamahattakahaṭṭa (possibly named after the chief of a guild). Vithis or shops owned by merchants and manufacturers of different categories constituted the nucleus of a hattā, though not the entire hattā complex. Although, as in the case of the Kallapāḷanāmsatkahaṭṭa, the entire hattā appears to have been owned by and to have specialized in the merchandise of the Kallapālas, this was not the general pattern. At Caturhaṭṭa, for example, the vithi owned by garhapatika tumbulika Keśava is mentioned along with that of the kamsaraka. Nor was there any clear distinction between commercial and residential areas and in this regard too the lay-out was similar to

30 Ibid., Nos. 6; 7; 9; 10, etc.
31 Ibid., No. 27.
32 Ibid., Nos. 3; 6; 7; 14, etc.
33 Ibid., Nos. 6; 7; 8; 27.
34 Ibid., No. 11.
35 Ibid., No. 8.
that at Ahar. The residence of a brahmana or a religious shrine could be a part of the total hatta complex. As at Ahar, temples formed a part of the urban set-up, there were several of them at Siyadoni dedicated to Narayanabhataraka Svabhataraka Bhavasvami Siga kiyadeva etc. Siyadoni was however primarily a commercial centre as is suggested not only by the number of its hattas, but also by a customs house attached to it (Siyadoni satkanandasapika). A mint also seems to have been located there. Siyadoni served as a political centre as well but this point will be elaborated later on.

Though not very close to Siyadoni yet in the same geographical region was Gopaguri (Gwalior) which as the analysis of its two inscriptions dated AD 875 and 876 shows appears to have been a fort town. The settlement was administered by a chief of the boun daries (maradvadhirya) appointed by a Gurnara Prathara king. The second record refers to the presence at the fort town of a kastapala, also appointed by the Gurjar Prathara ruler and a hekadhikra (commander of the army). The settlement seems to have covered both the hills and the plains as suggested by an incidental reference to the dwellers of the plateau of Gopaguri (gopagrimalapar). Gopaguri was a commercial centre as well as stresus and sarthavetas were counted among its residents and as members of a local council. Two samkhas, Cacchika and Nimbaditya are mentioned as those parts of Gopaguri where oil millers (samkha) lived and on the strength of this indication it may be inferred that Srisarvavarpura and Sivatsasvamipura residential areas of several other oil millers mentioned in the records were also parts of the Gopaguri urban complex.

On the basis of the discussion so far some typological differences that seem to have existed between the four urban centres may be briefly

36 Ib d. No 7
37 Ib d. Nos. 1, 10, 14, 15, 20, 25 etc.
38 Ib d., Nos. 2, 11, 27 etc.
39 Kish. No 8
40 E. Hubert, ‘The Two Inscriptions of Varavahassavara Temple at Gwal or’ Epigraphia Indiae, i pp 154-62.
41 It is significant that while in connection with other Tanmarshallapura or Siya doni no nyamanga (royal road) is mentioned (for narapatipatha at Ujjain, see Meghadutam, Puruvamogha, 37) Gopaguri inscription, No 2 refers to hithhoyadakaprajaparam, the descent of the road of Bhoyadeva the Gurjar Prathara ruler
reiterated. While Prthūdaka was perhaps not a fully developed urban centre (although the holding of a fair would imply a commercial status already achieved), Tattānandapura and Siyadoni were certainly so. Some typological distinction seems, however, to have existed between the two. Despite some incidental references to a uttarasabha, the meaning of which is not clear, and a dandapāśika and a dūtaka at Tattānandapura, the records do not mention any ruler or other important officials in connection with the town or its activities. At Siyadoni, on the other hand, four rulers—all feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratiharas—are mentioned within a span of about sixty years. The pañcakulas, appointed by the rulers in each case, represented the administrative body of the township; there are, besides, references to such officials as karanikas and kauptikas. Siyadoni was thus on all counts an important political centre of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire. The point of contrast between Siyadoni and Gopagiri would be that the latter’s political importance was more military than administrative. The character of the rule, suggested by the presence of a kottaḍāla and a bālādhikīra, would be a sufficient indication of this. Another significant piece of information is also available in the Gopagiri records, if the suggested interpretation of the relevant passages is correct. They record that a piece of land belonging to the village of Cūḍapallikā and the entire village of Jayapurakā were the properties of the city (svabhūjjayāna). This may suggest the measure of the fort town’s control over the countryside, evidence regarding which is absent in other records.

II

To what extent the suggested typological differences had a bearing on the nature and organization of the commerce and certain other related aspects at these urban centres cannot be satisfactorily ascertained from

42 Ahar Inscription, Nos. 1, 3.
43 Siyadoni Inscription, Nos. 1, 2, 11, 20.
44 Ibid.
46 Gopagiri may thus well compare with the fortified settlements under the Pālas and the Candellas listed by R.S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, Appendix II.
the records which are not primarily concerned with such matters. Only a few guesses can be made. What strikes as a possibility in the cases of Tattanandapura, Syadoni and Gopagut is that they were not planned townships—a point suggested by the disparate location pattern of the hattas which as mentioned earlier included shops, temples and residential buildings. There is no evidence that caste distinctions were made in the selection of residential sites. At Tattanandapura the house site of a brahmana is mentioned as lying next to that of a varṇa in the eastern market area. Similar evidence is available from Syadoni. At Gopagut, the headmen of the oil millers are mentioned in connection with two hattas and Srinivasa Varapura and Svarasa svāmpura and this may again endorse the supposition that the latter two were hatta-cum-residential areas integrated within the townships.

At Syadoni two types of shops are mentioned: (i) purpuamahopyata, and (ii) svaratara. While the latter category suggests an expansion of activities by the town's merchants, the former testifies to the quantity of commerce at the hattas carried down family lines. This type of evidence may be taken to suggest that before emerging as fully developed urban centres all these sites were central points in local commerce. An assumption which may explain the concentration of a number of hattas in one area. It was the process of the conglomeration of such hattas and residential areas which led to the initial urbanization of these settlements. Such a developmental process of

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**Footnotes:**

47. All the four inscriptions discussed here offer an intriguing insight into the working of the caste system at the urban centres: brahmans as part enipated in the horse trade at Pehda at Tattanandapura a kaśtriya varṇa was engaged in commerce (Ahar Inser 6. Syadoni and Gopagut records mention respectively a brahmana and a kaśtriya cult-vato).

48. Ahar Inscription No. 4.

49. Syadoni Inscription Nos. 13, 15, etc.

50. This seems to be more forcefully suggested by the evidences relating to Anah la población, an early medieval urban centre in Gujarat which consisted of 84 maras of Kumarnaharasa cited by P N'yo, Contributions to the Economic History of Northern India (from the tenth to the twelfth century AD) (Calcutta, 1962) p 120. One wonders how V.K. Thakur, who chose to reuse the same records as have been analyzed in this paper came to the rather astounding conclusion that ed by medieval urban centres of different regions clearly bring out the fact that non-commercial nature and that they betray d is not non-commercial ethos. "Towns In Early Medieval India" in K. R. Rama et al (eds), Spaces, Art and Architecture in India: The Role of Eastern Art (Calcutta, 1982)
urban centres would not, however, preclude the possibility of long-distance contacts; that such contacts did exist is borne out by all the records discussed here. At Tattânandapura lived (and got involved in local property transactions) the Varkkaṭaṇavāṇik community from Bhillamāla (Bhinmal in south-west Rajasthan), the Gandhikavāṇik community from Mathura and also merchants from Apāpura, a place not yet identified. At Śiṣyadoni the presence of a maṇḍapikā would imply outside trade contacts. The merchant community of Gopagiri included sārthavāhas who may be assumed to have headed long-distance commercial ventures. Considered along with other evidence relating to early medieval India, which includes the Pehoa record, such examples would testify to the existence of a network of trade routes cutting across boundaries of local commerce.

The three urban centres, Tattânandapura, Śiṣyadoni and Gopagiri, seem to have been different in certain respects from townships founded by rulers, to which reference will be made later. Apart from their process of growth, the Śiṣyadoni evidence may bring out the difference further. Although it was a political centre, its importance in that respect lay essentially in the fact that it was assigned to the feudatories (the town is referred to as paribhuyjyamāna a number of times) of the Gurjara-Pratihāras. The assignment was perhaps not permanent, an


Unlike temples elsewhere receiving donations in the form of extensive landgrants, the major sources of income of temples located in urban centres were in the form of contributions by merchant groups or cesses on their incomes. The urban process was therefore exactly the opposite of what V.K. Thakur considers it to have been; the resource bases of the urban centres—and of temples located in them—were created by the activities and convergence of merchant groups and artisans; it was not the temples which created such resource bases.

51 C.D. Chatterjee (p. 102) suggests that Varkkaṭa and Lambakāṇcika, mentioned in the Ahar records, 'refer to the different sections of the Gurjara stock'.

52 A relatively early evidence would be the account of I-sing who refers in the second half of the seventh century to many hundreds of merchants coming to central India from Tamilalipi, A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago, tr., J. Takasuku (Oxford, 1896), p. xxxi; for other examples, see L. Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India, pp. 90-1; it is significant that the vāśyas who are believed to have become hardly distinguishable from the śādras in the early medieval period were, as traders, urged by Medhātithi to get themselves familiarized with the products, customs and languages of different countries (ibid.).

53 Śiṣyadoni Inscription, Nos. 11, 20, etc.
assumption suggested by the mention of four feudatories within a span of sixty years and the absence in all cases of any reference to their predecessors. There is nothing surprising in an urban centre being assigned to feudatories. Document number 27 of the S Yadoni group of inscriptions clearly refers to a township Rayakka made over to some brahmans by a prince of Mahodaya. Similarly, in the eleventh century one-half of a town along with a number of villages was assigned by Paramara Bhoja to a feudatory in the Nasik area (Sri Bhagavataprasadavarta nagara sarkaradhi-saradhasahasragrama-nam bhokta Sri Yadavarma) 34.

The fact that S Yadoni was an assigned area (and as a political centre it has to be viewed from this perspective) would not by itself have made much difference in the nature of its commerce. As commercial centres the real points of difference among the townships—which would perhaps also explain the necessity and forms of communication among them—would emerge from the composition of their artisan and merchant groups. It may be assumed that the records leave out a number of social groups from their purview, but the most dominant groups do nevertheless seem to have been different at different urban centres. At Tatandapura apart from the Caturvadya brahmans various varaskus are mentioned. Vanik Varkkata jati Lambalakshnikant Jari Sauvannikavanikhajana Mathura jatiya Gandhikavanik and Ksatodyavanik. If any conjecture can be made from their recorded activities the Sauvannikamahajanas appear to have been the most dominant group. At Gopagiri apart from the brenhit and sarthavaca, the nature of whose trade is not specified are mentioned heads of oil millers (saliya maharsaka) who alone numbered more than twenty and heads of gardeners (malika-maharas) who numbered more than fourteen. Social groups other than merchants and artisans were represented at S Yadoni by different types of rajapurusas (karanikas kaupnikas, etc.) brahmans and marragjs (ie Candilas) but the records are concerned more with merchants and artisans (saliya mahrans) kathamaks (salt makers) kallakala (d stilifiers of liquor) kanduka (?) tambulika (betel leaf traders).

34 See R.D. Banerji, The Kalvan Plate of Yadavaranma Epigraphy India xix pp 69-75 il pp 7-8
tailika (oil-millers), sitakuta (stone-cutters) and lobavana (blacksmiths?). Here again, if any guess is hazarded, the nemakavaniks would stand out as the most important group.

A guild was the organization which integrated the activities, secular as well as religious, of the merchants and artisans. As in the early period, the term is śrenī, which occurs in the Gopagiri inscriptions. The chief of each guild was a mahattama, as in the case of the tailikas of Gopagiri or mahara, as in the case of the gardeners of the same place or the tambilikas of Siyadoni. Perhaps the term grahapataika referring to a tambilika at Siyadoni carried the same sense. The use of the term jāti in respect of some merchant communities at Tattanadapura raises certain problems regarding the organization of guilds in the early medieval period. It may be taken to suggest that guilds invariably corresponded to specific castes. However, if this was so, one would expect that not more than one guild, representing a group of merchants or that of manufacturers, would exist at an urban centre. The tailikas and gardeners at Gopagiri had, however, a number of chiefs, and this fact, along with references to a series of mostly religious activities undertaken by individuals and their family members, may imply that guilds were organized more on family lines than in terms of all the members of the same caste or even of practitioners of the same trade. That they were united at certain levels is evident from such expressions as samastakallapālanām, samastamahājanena, samatā, sīlākūnānām, etc. In any case one may perhaps think of variations in guild organizations from a number of contemporary sources. That guilds cut across the frontiers of caste and narrow regions is suggested not only by the Pehoa record, but also and more forcefully by contemporary south Indian evidence.

55 Siyadoni Inscription, No. 18.
56 Ibid., No. 8.
57 See L. Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India, p. 82.
58 Siyadoni Inscription, Nos. 4, 11, 20, 21.
59 For example, a record of c. AD 800 from Mulgund speaks of four heads of a guild belonging to 360 towns, see A.S. Altekar, The Rashtrakutas and Their Times (Poona, 1934), pp. 368ff for this and other cases. Vijnānaśiṣa in the Māñcāsā (ii. p. 30) defined a śrenī as a guild of persons earning its livelihood by the same kind of labour, though belonging to different castes or the same caste, cited by R. Narasimha Rao, Corporate Life in Medieval Andhradeśa (Secunderabad, 1967), p. 5.
What is most difficult to reconstruct is the relationship between the merchants, artisans and officials, because what brings them together in the records are religious donations and levies and not any economic transactions. Two separate pieces of information may however have some bearing on this point. At Sidi Adoni the authority for levying contributions from the mandapsika was the local ruler or the parakala appointed by him. While the composition of the parakala is not known (only the names of individuals are known) both at Sidi Adoni and Gopagiri the actual sthanadhistha or sthanadhistha was the lara which as the Gopagiri evidence shows was constituted by the kishtri and sarbavarna. Secondly, the temples which received donations in different forms either through official intervention or by arrangements initiated by their patrons were mostly built by merchants. Of the six deities at Tattaranaspura two were clearly caste deities—Kanakadevi or Kanakadevi of the Sauravamukhamahyanas and Gandharaidevi of the Gandhukaavanikati. At Sidi Adoni too the shrines for Visnubhattaraka Bhairavada etc., were all constructed by merchants.

Paradoxical though it may sound, it is the pattern of donations and more generally, the activities centring around these temples that suggest the commercial ethos of these urban centres. While certain fields and villages belonging to the township were made over to the temples at Gopagiri (and here one temple was built by the local rulers) the contributions from the itinerant merchants at Parbadaka were in the form of dharma, certainly a corruption of dramma. The most common coin name in early medieval records. At Sidi Adoni such contributions were in the form of a daily levy of one quarter of pana-drasrama at the mandapsika made over, under the aksaguna tenure, to Visnubhattaraka enshrined by a salt merchant.

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60 Sidi Adoni Inscription, Nos. 1 20
61 G. Bühler seems wrong in taking it in the sense of a tax set apart for religious purposes, for a general survey of dramma in early medieval literature and epigraphy, see R.C. Agrawala, Dramma in Ancient Indan Epigraphy and Literature. The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, xvi. pp. 64-82; also L. Gopal Coon in the Epigraphical and Literary Records of Northern India in the Early Medieval Period, ibid., xxv pp. 1-16
62 Sidi Adoni Inscription No. 2
another type of arrangement, of which the temple would be a beneficiary, was the investment of a substantial amount of cash with a group of manufacturers (for example, record no. 11 at Siyadoni shows that 1350 ādivarāḥadrammas were deposited with the distillers of liquor who were to pay every month tuṅgīyadramma on every cask of liquor). This type of investment, perhaps implied by the expression aparimṣtamūlyena kṛtvā (i.e. having bought with excessive price), involved other groups of artisans and manufacturing communities at Siyadoni, and in all cases except a few (where it was not necessary to convert kind into cash) the purpose of such investments was a return in the form of a regular interest in cash.

It was the prospect of this form of regular return on investments which governed the most typical transactions, made on behalf of the deities, both at Tattānandapura and Siyadoni. Most of the Tattānandapura documents deal with the purchase, with cash belonging to Kāṇcanasrīdevi, of houses and house sites owned sometimes for generations by different communities (Cāturvaidya brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya-ṇvaya vānik, etc.). The deed of ninety-nine years (navanavatipatrī) through which such transactions were formalized assured the investor

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63 Ibid., Nos 4, 5, 11, etc.

64 The transactions were all in cash except where contributions in kind could be used by temples (for example, oil levied on the tailikas and garlands on the gardens at Gopagiri); see also Siyadoni record No. 22. Elsewhere contributions or interests on deposits realized even from the local manufacturers were in the form of cash, as is clear from the arrangements made with the distillers of liquor at Siyadoni (Nos. 4, 5, 11, etc.). The Pehoa record mentions one type of coin, dramma, and the Ahar inscriptions two: dramma and vinRATEÇOKA. Siyadoni records on the other hand give a much more comprehensive idea of the types of coins that circulated in the Gurtjara-Pratihāra kingdom, not all of them necessarily representing indigenous or dynastic coinage, or even metallic currency: pāṇcīyakadramma, yuga, vigrāhapāṇḍramma, vārahakayavinīpaka, ādivarāḥadramma, kapandaka, vigrāhapāṇḍramma and dramma. What these names represented is at least partly known from the Ahar finds of three types of silver coins: (i) Indo-Sasanid; (ii) with legend śrī vi or vigrā (definitely identical with vigrāhapāṇḍramma); and (iii) uncertain, possibly with a Bull device (Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1925–6, pp. 56–8). A hoard of ādivarāḥa and vigrāha type of coins was found at Ahicchatra (Ancient India, i, pp. 39–40), whereas at Kashipur (Nainital district) early medieval currency is represented by the 'Bull/Horseman' type (Indian Archaeology, 1970–71, A Review, pp. 41ff).
of varying types of surnames. In some cases, where initially the surnames were of a limited kind, fresh arrangements were later made to transfer the entire property and thus the entire rent to the deity. At Siyadoni although no clear references to such purchase are available (unless the expression apramantamahena kruva refers to buying up of some kind of property) houses and shops were assigned in large numbers to various dethes of the town. The purpose of such assignments was obviously to secure a regular rent and the patterns at Tattanandapura and Siyadoni were identical because in substance the rent accruing from the assigned houses and shops was the same as the return on the money with which the houses were purchased. As mentioned earlier all these transactions revolved round the temple establishments at these two places but one may not be entirely wrong in supposing that the trend was not substantially different in secular commerce.

III

Prrudaka, Tattanandapura, Siyadoni and Gopagin are useful examples—and more so because of their chronology—of the continuity of inland trade and of urbanisation associated with it in the early medieval period but by themselves they cannot hardly answer whether or not the early medieval pattern was completely different from the early historical. For such an answer one may think of two sets of comparisons between the two periods in the following terms (i) a comparison region wise of the number of different categories of urban centres and of the social composition of population in them (ii) a comparison of the pattern of trade and of petty commodity production. No such detailed comparisons particularly in quantitative

65 For a relevant analysis of the Ahar documents see R. S. Sharma, Usury in Early Medieval India (c. AD 400–1200) in Light on Early Indian Society and Economy (Bombay 1966) pp 138–9

66 Ahar inscription compare 4 and 8 and 2 and 9

67 See however Siyadoni document No. 17 which refers to the purchase of a market which was assigned to the deity Sri Uma Maheswara

68 Siyadoni Inscription Nos. 6 7 8 9 10 13 15 16 17 etc

69 The term used in the two records is bhadaka. For the significance of the term see C.D. Chatterjee, p. 92. See also Siyadoni Inscription No. 21
terms, are available,\textsuperscript{70} and, given the nature of the data, are hardly likely to be undertaken. But then one can legitimately raise a question: if early historical economy had reached a certain level of urbanization and petty commodity production, what were the reasons for the apparent swing back to the state of ‘natural economy’ in the post-Gupta period?

One possible explanation suggests itself in the form of the decline of trade relations with the West,\textsuperscript{71} indicated archaeologically by the gradual disappearance of the flow of Roman coins into India after the first three centuries of the Christian era. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the hoards of Roman coins relate to the first century AD and not later.\textsuperscript{72} Secondly, although the relative prosperity of the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa-Sātavāhana urban phases\textsuperscript{73} may to some extent be linked with Roman trade, it has to be remembered that ‘India had . . . lost its principal source of the precious metal (i.e. gold) just before the beginning of the Christian era—a phenomenon which has been taken to explain convincingly the genesis of Indian contacts with South-East Asia.\textsuperscript{74} This may further show that the spate of gold currency throughout the Gupta period, despite its debasement in the later period of the empire,\textsuperscript{75} cannot be entirely attributed to trade with the West, because, if the chronology of the hoards of Roman coins is any indication, relations with that area had already declined by that period. In the post-Gupta period India was no doubt not a serious contender in the contemporary international trade,\textsuperscript{76} but so was the

\textsuperscript{70} For a rather incomplete list of the urban centres of north India, see P. Niyogi, pp. 117–22; for several other references where such lists are available, see R.S. Sharma, \textit{Indian Feudalism}, p. 245ff; also Appendix II.


\textsuperscript{73} R.S. Sharma, ‘Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and post-Gupta Times’.

\textsuperscript{74} G. Coedes, \textit{The Indianized States of South East Asia} (East-West Center Press, Hawaii, 1968), p. 20.

\textsuperscript{75} S.K. Maiti, \textit{Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period} (c. AD 300–550), 2nd edn. (Delhi, 1970), Appendix III.

\textsuperscript{76} This is the impression one gets from L. Gopal, \textit{The Economic Life of Northern India}, chs VI and VII.
case even during the period of Roman trade. However, the continued participation by Indians in this trade and the presence of non Indian merchants, particularly the Tankaas and the Turuskas in different parts of India, are attested by a variety of sources. The Arab conquest of Sind and the occasional raids in the western and central parts of India are initial indications of commercial motivations turned political.

Foreign trade, however, is not central to the argument here as even a decline in foreign trade may not necessarily imply a decline in internal trade or petty commodity production. The same applies to urban centres as well. It emerges from a number of recent discussions that the economic basis of the early urban centres of the Ganga basin was an agricultural surplus generated by new methods as well as expansion of cultivation and by the gradual crystallization of a power structure which ensured the production of surplus. A certain amount of commercialization of this surplus was necessitated by the presence of specialized labour and of surplus appropriated by social groups which were not necessarily confined to the monarch, his kin and his

77 In northern India on which the focus of the present paper is the pattern of trade seems to have been different from that in the south and local Indians were among the many middlemen in the Indo-Roman trade. See G. L. Adhia, Early Indian Economics (Studies in the Economic Life of Northern and Western India c. 200 BCE-300 CE) (Asian Publishing House, Bombay 1966) pp. 46-91.

78 L. Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India, pp. 113-15 Tinukhadasa, occurring commonly in the Gahaavali records of the Ganga basin, has been taken by a number of writers as a tax on Turkish settlers. See R. S. Ananth and A. Ghosh, References to Muhammadans in Sanskrit Inscriptuations in Northern India—AD 730 to 1320, Journal of Indian History, xvi, p. 171; also L Gopal, Economic Life, pp. 116-18. It is well known from the Arab geographers' accounts that the Tankaas or the Arabs were patronized by Rashtrakuta rulers for which cooperation is available in the epigraphic records of the western Deccan. The Chinchani Charter of AD 926 mentions that the entire mandala of Samyana (Sanjan) was made over by Kirana II to Madhumati (Muhammad) of the Tanka community who conquered the ch s of all the harbours of the neighbourhood on behalf of his master and placed his own officials in them. D.C. S. rear, Rashtrakuta Charters from Chinchani, Epigraphs, Index, vi, pp. 457.

79 This point has been made by M. Mujeeb, Ideam e Influence on Indian Society (Meenur, Delhi-Kanpur 1972) pp. v-vi.

80 R.S. Sharma, Life on Early Indian Society and Economy, pp. 57-58.

81 A Ghosh p. 20.
officials. Viewed from such a perspective, it stands to reason that trade (and not necessarily foreign trade) and a power structure which needs it and hence may promote it, are essential factors in urban growth. If foreign trade did not play a crucial role in the birth of early urban centres, a reduced volume of such trade may hardly be held responsible for their decay in the post-Kusāṇa or post-Gupta period.

Secondly, and this is more important, the alleged decay of urban settlements coincides with, and in a number of cases even precedes, the period when land grants actually start proliferating. This may preclude any possible connection between them, as the full impact of land grant economy, if any such impact is highlighted to explain the decay of urban centres, ought to have taken some more time to assert itself. This point needs to be stressed, as decline of trade and of urban centres may not have logically followed from the types of assignments that were made in early and medieval India. For the present this has to remain at the level of a theoretical discussion, but it may be pointed out that some trends to the contrary have already been discovered. Of south-east Bengal, which initially as a peripheral area offers a good example of the working of land grant economy, Morrison writes:

Such an extensive series of occupation sites ... indicates a concentration of population whose food needs would have been met by the surplus production of the local agriculturists. There may well have been a commodity market with a currency to facilitate exchange as well as the transfer of extensive lands to temples and monasteries to secure to them productive land from which their own food needs might be supplied.

An increase in the number of assignees with their bases at already existing urban centres perhaps served as an impetus to further urban

82 So far as the urban centres along the Himalayan foothills are concerned, Medvedev points out that the account of Fa-hien tallies with that of Hiuen Tsang.

83 R.S. Sharma, Social Changes in Early Medieval India, pp. 3–6.


85 For currency in early medieval south-east Bengal see my paper, 'Currency in Early Bengal', Journal of Indian History, vol. 55, pt. 3 (1977), pp. 41ff; for relevant bibliographical references to the extensive writings of B.N. Mukherjee on the coinage of southeast Bengal, see B.N. Mukherjee, Post-Gupta Coinage of Bengal (Coin Study Circle, Calcutta, 1989).
growth and trade as it seems to have done in Mughal India while their presence in rural areas could have created conditions for what Medvedev calls "commodity money relations." Thus rural market centres named after kings like the Devapaladevahatta mentioned in a Nalanda inscription or created by feudatories like the market centre founded by Kakku in the Jodhpur area of Rajasthan could and did emerge in the context of a land grant economy. A conglomeration of such bhattas could evolve as shown by Tattanandapura and Shyadon evidence into an urban centre where urban property along with marketed goods would become objects of commercial transactions. It may be mentioned that a good amount of Silpamarga material on town and town planning despite its being highly stereotyped relates to the early medieval period and the ranking of houses prescribed by early medieval texts for princes and different categories of samsaras may be accommodated within the framework of what they say about towns and town-planning.

One has at the same time to contend with the unassailable archaeological evidence which shows that many of the important—and not so important—urban centres decayed in north India in the Gupta and post-Gupta times. An alternative way of looking at this process of decay would be to start with a study of the geographical distribution of the centres for which, apart from archaeology, the travel account

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* Shrink, H. "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India," *Economic Development in the 16th-18th Centuries* (Moscow 1971) ch III.

It may be argued, of course that conditions in Mughal India were completely different from those of early medieval times as Mughal India was characterized by the separation of the crafts from agriculture and the town from the countryside (Chicherov, p. 95) but then we are only thinking in terms of a theoretic possibility here.

Ed. Medvedev

*Epigraphia Indica, xxv p. 335

(ibid. ix pp. 277-80 The inscription refers not only to the establishment of a bhatta but also to the settling of merchants in it, i.e. in Maharajashtra shapati.)

* For example, *Satamangalastha* of Bhaya T. Ganapan Sastri and V S Agrawala ed. (Bombay 1966) chs 10 15 18 30 etc. for a list of Silpamarga texts see D N. Sukla, *Vasudhara: Hindu Science of Archecture* (Chand ghat, no date) p. 83. See also D B Dutta, *Town Planning in Ancient India* (Calcutta 1925) passim.

* R S Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India* p. 6-7.
of Hiuen Tsang, which is regarded as a standard source for the first half of the seventh century, may be useful. Hiuen Tsang too refers to a number of decayed urban centres in the Indus valley, one such typical site was Sākala. Such sites were, however, much more numerous in the Ganges basin proper and the adjoining areas where a selected list would include Kauśāmbī, Śravasti, Kapilavastu, Rāmagrāma, Kuśinagara, and Vaiśāli, the capital of the Vaijīs. The point to be noted in this account is that in many of the regions where these centres lay it was not only the townships which had gone into decay, but the ‘peopled villages’ too were ‘few and waste’. Hiuen Tsang seems also to have made a conscious distinction between a city and a town. With reference to the capital of the Vaijīs, he remarked that ‘... the capital is ruined’ and that ‘it may be called a village or town’. His statement about Magadha has similar implications: ‘The walled cities have but few inhabitants, but the towns are thickly populated’. It would appear from his descriptions that this distinction would also apply to the urban centres which he found surviving and some of them would come under his category of cities. Thus Kānya-kubja and Varanasi may be definitely labelled as cities of his period. Both of them were ‘thickly populated’ and ‘valuable merchandise was collected’ at them ‘in great quantities’. Urban characteristics were present also at a number of sites listed by Hiuen Tsang in the Indo-Gangetic divide, the Ganges valley and its extension, covering a recog-

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92 Medvedev gives convincing reasons for treating it as a standard source.
93 From the tenth century onward the accounts of Arab geographers and others contain much useful material, but they have not been used in this paper.
95 Ibid., pp. 235–9.
96 Ibid., ii, p. 1.
99 Ibid., pp. 31–2.
100 Ibid., p. 66.
101 Ibid., p. 78.
102 Ibid., p. 32.
103 Ibid., p. 78.
104 Ibid., p. 82.
105 Ibid., i, p. 206; ii, p. 44.
nizable stretch along the Himalayan foothills. At Thaneswar ‘rare and valuable’ merchandise was brought from elsewhere, the chief town of P'o lo-hi h mo-pu lo was densely populated and most of its people were ‘engaged in commerce’, at Kiu pi shwang na moo the population was numerous.

The survival of old urban centres or the emergence of new ones in these areas is attested by archaeology as well although owing to the insignificant progress made in historical archaeology so far, our information is scanty here. The most important representative of the old urban centres is Ahicchatra in Bareilly district, which reveals an unbroken sequence in the early medieval context. At Purana Qila in Delhi, the Gupta, post-Gupta and Rajput phases show that here also the sequence was uninterrupted between the Kusana and the Turkish periods, though the quality of the structures at these phases appears to have been poor. Attanjikhera in Etah district has remains of Gupta and post-Gupta times. At Rajghat near Varanasi, period IV lasted from AD 300 to 700 and period V from AD 700 to 1200. At Chirand in Saran district, representing the middle Ganga basin, a new occupational stratum was discovered in 1968-9 and the coins of Gangeyadeva and other metal objects marked it out to be the early medieval phase of the site. Among the sites that appear to have emerged in the post-Gupta period apart from Ahar, Sankara in Aligarh district may be mentioned. Structures at this site have been dated from between the ninth and twelfth centuries.

To return to Huien Tsang the deserted and deurbanized areas of
his account, so far as the Ganga basin and the adjoining areas along the Himalayan foothills are concerned, correspond to a stretch which was in early times intersected by a number of important trade routes. They connected Gaya, Pāṭaliputra, Vaiśāli, Kuśinagara, Nepalese tāraṇī, Śrāvasti and Kausāṃbi,\textsuperscript{115} covering precisely an area in which were located the most important urban centres which had decayed by Hiuen Tsang’s time. No detailed history of these trade routes is as yet available, but the impression that they had decayed fairly early may still be rested by analysing the chronology of the sources in which some of them are mentioned. Mithila in north Bihar is believed to have been touched by eight trade routes: (i) Mithila-Rājagṛha; (ii) Mithila-Śrāvasti; (iii) Mithila-Kapilavāstu; (iv) Videha-Puṣkalāvati; (v) Mithila-Pratiṣṭhāna; (vi) Mithila-Sindhu; (vii) Mithila-Gampā; and (viii) Mithila-Tāmrālīpti.\textsuperscript{116} From the direction of these routes their actual number may be reduced to three or four, but even so it is significant that not a single reference to them is of the early medieval period, perhaps suggesting that they had become defunct by that time. This apparently provides us with an explanation as to why the urban centres in this area decayed, but it does not answer why the trade routes themselves had dried up.

There is another dimension to the problem already briefly touched upon, and it bears upon the relationship between trade, urban centres and a stable political structure. The role of the political organism in the formation of early historical urban centres has often been stressed to the extent that according to one writer ‘... if any priority is to be established, the ruler should get the credit because he happens to symbolize a power structure very necessary for the maintenance of any economic system represented by the merchants’.\textsuperscript{117} The problem of the decay of urban centres has also to be viewed in this light. It is common knowledge that the mahājanapadas, within the framework of which emerged the urban centres of the Buddha’s time, were not

\textsuperscript{115} D.D. Kosambi, op. cit.; p. 132.

\textsuperscript{116} Md. Aquique, Economic History of Mithila (c. 600 BC–1097 AD) (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 141–4.

merely territorial structures but political structures as well. With regard to the urban sites along the Himalayan foothills, Medvedev’s formulation that with the dissolution of Ksatrya oligarchical state clan formations (ganas) the Himalayan area lost its past political significance and came to occupy the position of an unimportant outlying province of economically advanced north Indian states may be only partly true. But it is significant that even in the Ganga basin and the Indo-Gangetic divide there is in the post-Gupta period no substantial evidence of any well-knit kingdoms apart from the ephemeral empire of the Vardhanas. Even in this short-lived empire, two urban centres, Thaneswar and Kanauj, stand out in the account of Huen Tsang and in Harsha’s time they were important political centres as well. Instances of early médieval rulers establishing new townships abound in literature and in epigraphs and they cover such widely distant regions as Kashmir, Rajasthan, and Bengal. Tarimandapura, Siyadomi, and Gopaguri, although not founded by any ruler, are all examples of townships which emerged along with the rise of the Gujara Pratihara empire.

This, however, does not guarantee that the rise of a kingdom or an empire would necessarily bring in trade and urbanism. We have as yet no substantial evidence of either for example in the long-lasting kingdom of the Eastern Calukyas of Andhra. And despite political vicissitudes a number of traditional urban centres survived: such survivals were the measure not of the stability of a kingdom but of (i) some important trade routes and (ii) the location of a traditional seat of manufacture at the centre. A single but representative example would be Varanasi which was not only located on a traditional artery

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118 See H.C. Raychaudhuri, Political History of Ancient India, 6th edn (University of Calcutta 1953) part 1 ch III also A. Ghosh, p 13.

119 Medvedev

120 The oligarchical states disappeared as a result of Magadhan expansion, but archaologically the region included the Nepalese areas is well-documented down to the Kusana period, if not later. Debala Mitra, Excavations at T’ lung lai and Explorations in the Nepalese Tarai (The Department of Archaeology, Nepal, 1972) p 15 also R.S. Sharma, Decay of Gangaridai Towns in Gupta and post-Gupta Times p 97.

121 See Rajatarama, iv 10: v 156, etc.

122 Epigraphia India, xvi pp 87-99.

123 See Ramachandra of Sandhyakarananda, v 32.
of trade, the Ganga, but was also an important centre of textile and ivory products in the early historical period.\textsuperscript{124} As a centre of textile manufacture, its importance continued till early medieval times.\textsuperscript{125} When new centres emerged in different regional contexts—and studies on early medieval India have to think in terms of such possibilities—the pattern of petty production was not substantially different from that of earlier times. Of the most important guilds of early historical times\textsuperscript{126} at least seven existed at Tattānandapura, Siyajōni and Gopagiri, those of the goldsmiths, stone-masons, braziers, oil-pressers, garland-makers, potters and caravan traders.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{124} See B. Srivastava, \textit{Trade and Commerce in Ancient India (from the earliest times to c. AD 300)}, Appendix A, pp. 278–9.


\textsuperscript{127} For a list of 18 guilds mentioned in \textit{Jambudvīpaprajñāpī}, see A.K. Majumdar, \textit{Chaulukyas of Gujarat} (Bombay, 1956), pp. 263–4; also L. Gopal, \textit{The Economic Life of Northern India}, ch. IV.
Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview

Urbanization in early medieval India is a little understood phenomenon. Compared to the quantum of writing on urbanization in other phases of early India, the research available on this phase is decidedly inadequate. This inadequacy is apparent at two levels. First, in the absence of any substantial empirical work, the intensity or otherwise of urbanization and the distribution of urban centres in the period can only be assessed on stylistically gauged. Second, general works on the period which touch on the problem of urbanization lack an appropriate analytical framework. The existence of urban centres is taken for granted in such works and no reference is usually made to the historical context in which they may have emerged. Such studies are therefore in the nature of compilations of urban place names from epigraphs and literature, or they state what according

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1 General works on early medieval India hardly touch upon the problem of urbanization. Even a work which purports to trace the history of urban development in India in a broad sweep rests content with Al Beruni's evidence as far as the early medieval period is concerned. See B. Bhattacharya *Urban Development in India Since Prehistoric Times* (Delhi 1979) ch. 3. The position is no better in standard works on economic history in which a synthesis of voluminous empirical material has been attempted. See Tapan Ray Chaudhuri and Irfan Habib (eds.) *The Cambridge Economic History of India 1200-1750* (Cambridge University Press 1982). The section on *Economic Conditions before 1200* (pp. 45-7) presents a rather dismal picture of the decline the economy suffered in the post-Gupta period. In the context of south India, however, Burton Stein recognizes the development of urban places, but generally from the thirteenth century onwards. pp. 36-42.

2 See examples included in S. N. Dikshit *The Economic History of Northern India from the tenth to the twelfth century* (Calcutta 1962). A chapter (ch. V) on *Towns and Town planning* contains a chapter on indigenous and non-indigenous sources a list of place names which are regarded as urban centres of the period with which the work deals. The information on town
to prescriptive Śilpaśāstra texts, the various forms of urban settlements were in terms of their plan or layout. Whereas such compilations do not lay down specific criteria by which a settlement area may be defined as urban, the prescriptive texts, in the absence of any attempted correlation with other types of evidence and in view of their uncertain chronology, are, in the final analysis, hardly of any use in understanding the nature and process of urbanization in the early medieval period.

Although some beginnings have now been made in understanding urban processes in various regional contexts, in the absence of an

planning is based on some literary evidence which cannot be further tested; material which is datable to a much earlier period is also used. K.C. Jain's Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan (A Study of Culture and Civilization) (Delhi-Varanasi-Patna, 1972) has a rather confused chapter on 'Principles of Selection' (ch V) and takes the 'criteria on the basis of which the selection of cities and towns has been made' as self-evident. This work is really in the nature of a compilation of brief sketches of settlements in Rajasthan and does not distinguish between the early historical and the early medieval period. P.K. Bhattacharya's compilation of a list of rural and urban centres in Madhya Pradesh in Historical Geography of Madhya Pradesh from Early Records (Delhi-Varanasi-Patna, 1977), pp. 198–225, is similarly of little use for distinguishing between rural and urban and between early historical and early medieval. In fact all the works cited above take the existence of urban centres so much for granted that they do not regard the problem of urbanization as a theme requiring serious analysis.

3 See B.B. Dutt, Town Planning in Ancient India (Calcutta, 1925; reprinted, New Asian Publishers, Delhi, 1977). Dutt's work is based largely on such texts as Vaiśnavīya, Mānasāra, Mayāmatam, Mamanālaya-Candikā, Visvakarmapракāśa and so on. Apart from the fact that the dates of most texts cannot be ascertained with certainty, the material contained in such works is of doubtful relevance for the study of urbanization. This is not to imply that literary texts have no historical value; much of our understanding of early historical urban centres is in fact derived from literary evidence. I merely suggest that the use of literary material requires a different kind of critical apparatus, which is generally absent in works which depend on it. That literary evidence can have exciting and suggestive details is revealed by the text Kumārapālacarita, which describes the urban centre of Anahilapura in Gujarāt; the text has been cited by P. Niyogi, p. 125, and B.N.S. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century (Allahabad, 1973), p. 241.

4 Regional studies in the form of monographs on urbanization in early medieval India are rather rare. O.P. Prasad's Ph.D. dissertation, 'Towns in Karnataka', submitted at Patna University, has only recently been published under the title Decay and Revival of Urban Centres in Medieval South India (c. AD 600–1200) (Patna-Delhi, 1989). A few articles by him on this theme are also available: (i) 'A Study of Towns
overall perspective there is a tendency to isolate factors and elements relevant to a local situation rather than view local developments as expressions of a broader general process. Notwithstanding the possibility that urban centres represented varied typologies or that they were generated by different immediate factors there is a need to transcend locality-centered perspectives and view urbanization as corresponding to a process which alone can satisfactorily explain its emergence and structure. Even the range of issues involved in the study of early medieval urbanization remains to be properly defined and empirically worked out and I shall only underline some of the issues and present a viewpoint. In so doing it may be found necessary to introduce some empirical material in various regional contexts but the main purpose of this would be not to highlight regional trends but to identify factors which cut across what may have been taking place at a purely regional level. If urbanization was a phenomenon which was geographically widely distributed in the early medieval period then one is entitled to speculate as to what the commonality of elements was between the urban centres of the period. This will be a valid exercise.


The picture of early medieval urbanism is thus only slowly emerging and is still mostly to be got from articles. For urban centres in the areas under Gupta Prata phala see B D Chattopadhyaya’s Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India in this collection. For the growth of urban centres in the coastal area of Tamil Nadu see R. Champakalingam’s Growth of Urban Centres in South India, Kodinvakkul Palam Varai, the Town City of the Coast Studies in History, vol. I No. 1 (1979) pp. 1-29 also Idem Urban Process in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu Occasional Papers Series, No. 3 Urban History Association of India (1982) See also C.R. Hall, Peasant State and Society in Chola Times: A View from the Travancore Nadur Urban Complex, The Indian Economic and Social History Review, vol. 18, Nos. 3-4 (1981) pp. 373-410. Also see R. Champakalingam, Urbanisation in Medieval Tamil Nadu, in S. Bharacharya and Romula Thapar eds., Swaraj: An Indian History (1981) pp. 34-105, see also Idem Urbanisation in South India. The Role of Ideology and Polity. Presidential Address, Ancient India A Sect on Indian History Congress, 47th session (1986) (Srinagar).
In defining the issues, the first point to be made is that urbanization in the early medieval period is here taken as the beginning of the third phase of the phenomenon in India. Two distinct phases of urbanization in early India have already been demarcated. The first and perhaps the more readily recognized phase is represented by the planned cities of the Harappan culture, and in several ways this phase stands apart from the historical context which gave rise to India's second urbanization. Covering a long time span between about the middle of the third and the middle of the second millennium BC, the Harappan cities were mainly distributed over the Indus drainage system, extending to what Spate calls 'one of the major structure-lines of Indian history', namely 'the Delhi-Aravalli axis and the Cambay node'. The Indus civilization sites did spill over into other geographical regions and did interact with other cultures, but beyond the 'structure line' there was no gradual territorial extension of the Indus urban sites. In other words, the major part of the Indian subcontinent remained unaffected by Indus urbanism. Secondly, the Indus cities, with their accent on rigid and unfailingly uniform layouts, reflect a kind of spatial and social organization which would be unfamiliar on such a scale in any other phase of Indian history. The Indus valley urbanism thus did not continue as a legacy beyond the middle of the second millennium BC.

The second phase of urbanization, the beginnings of which have been dated around the sixth century BC, coincided with a gradual maturation of the iron age. As a causative factor of the second phase

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6 The literature on Harappan urbanism is extensive and to form satisfactory impressions of Harappan urban centres the best guides are the excavation reports. For a useful though by now dated bibliography, see B.M. Pande and K.S. Ramachandran, *Bibliography of the Harappan Culture* (Florida, 1971). For recent perspectives and bibliographical references, see G.L. Possehl, ed., *Harappan Civilisation: A Contemporary Perspective* (New Delhi, 1982).
7 Despite oft-repeated suggestions to the effect that Harappan cultural traditions continue into later Indian history, this point has been made with considerable emphasis in A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India* (Simla, 1973) and S. Ratnagar, *Encounters: The Westerly Trade of the Harappa Civilization* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981), p. xiii.
of urbanization iron has been a subject of some debate. The second phase of urbanization reveals stages of internal growth and horizontal expansion. The distribution of two new and crucial cultural elements, namely a multifunctional syllabic script and coinage which are associated with this phase serves as an effective indicator of the geographical spread of urbanism. The factor adding substantially to the internal growth process was an enormous expansion of trade networks in the period when India's early contact with Central Asia and the Roman world reached its peak and despite physical variations between the urban centres between Ujjayini and Nagarjunakonda for example this network is evident in the unprecedented mobility of men and goods in the period. It is probably not coincidental that a shrinkage in this network coincides with the decline of urban centres from the post Kusana period through the Gupta period. The decline was geographically widely distributed and since this observation is based on a study of archaeological sequences at a number of


10 For a general survey of the trade networks of this period the following works may be consulted. G.L. Adhikar Early Indian Economics (Bombay 1966); E.H. Warmington The Commerce Between the Roman Empire and India (Cambridge 1928); J.M. Wheeler Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers (London 1954); H.L. Eggertson The Murundas and the ancient trade route from Taxila to Ujjain Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient vol 9 (1966) pp. 257-96


13 R.S. Sharma in an attempt to add to the empirical base of his hypothesis that decline of trade and urbanism is associated with Indian feudalism (see his paper Fundament, University of Calcutta 1965 pp 65ff) provided the first archaeological documentation of this decline. Decay of Gangetic towns in Gupta and post-Gupta times Proceeding of the Indian History Congress, 33rd session (Muzaffarpur 1972) pp 92-104 Idem Urban Decay in India (c 300-c 1000) (New Delhi 1987)
early historical sites, both of northern and southern India, the chronology of the decline of this urban phase is not a matter of speculation. Thus if the phenomenon of urbanism is noticeable again from the early medieval period, one may not be off the mark in calling it the third phase of urbanization in India. At the same time to characterize this as a distinct phase in early Indian urban history leaves one with two vital questions: (i) what contributed to the fresh emergence of urbanization after a recognizable, although perhaps not total, lapse? and (ii) in what way did early medieval urbanism differ from early historical urbanism? Once it is categorically asserted that early medieval urbanism represented a distinct phase, there is no way in which one can avoid confronting these two questions. These questions are particularly relevant because the comparison intended in this essay is between the early historical and the early medieval; the proto-historic Indus valley does not come within its purview.

14 That the decline of the early historical urban phase was a widespread geographical phenomenon is becoming increasingly evident with the progress of empirical research. See V.K. Thakur, *Urbanisation in Ancient India* (New Delhi, 1981), ch 7: 'Decline of Urban Centres'; R. Champakalakshmi, 'Urban Processes in Early Medieval Tamilnadu'; R.N. Nandi, 'Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brahmanical Order', *The Indian Historical Review*, vol. 6, Nos. 1–2 (1979), pp 74ff.

15 The use of the term 'third urbanization' seems to have become necessary in view of the current historiography which points to a break in the early historical urbanization sequence but does not at the same time properly recognize early medieval urbanism as a phenomenon to be placed outside the context of the early historical urban phase. For example, V.K. Thakur, who has a lengthy chapter on the decline of early urban centres, starts with a categorical statement: 'Urbanisation in ancient India had two distinct phases' (p. 1). Where does one then place urban centres of the tenth or eleventh centuries? 'Third urbanization' may imply a partial rejection of my earlier views (in 'Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India'), but the point made in that essay was not so much to underline the continuity of early historical urbanism into the early medieval period as to structurally examine 'urban centres', so often projected as a crucial variable in the idea of 'Indian feudalism'. Cf. R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*. By talking about distinct phases of urbanization in early India, one may be drawn somewhat towards the two models of urbanization developed by R.M. Adams: the 'Rump' process and the 'Step' process. See *The Evolution of Urban Society (Early Mesopotamia and pre-Hispanic Mexico)* (Chicago, 1966), p. 170. The formulation of 'third urbanization' seems to establish a close parallel between the 'Step' process and the early Indian experience Adams' model, however, does not provide for an examination of the historical contexts, which alone explain the emergence and collapse of distinct urban stages the parallel therefore can at best be external.
The hazards of defining an urban centre are more acute in the early medieval context than in the context of the early historical phase. The problem derives largely from the nature of the source material. While there is a happy convergence of archaeological and literary material (and to these was added epigraphical material at a later stage) for the study of early historical urbanism, the only kind of material on which the historian has to depend for information on early medieval urban centres is epigraphic. Indeed the almost total absence of archaeological material on early medieval urban centres is perhaps the chief reason why our understanding of the chronology and character of early medieval urbanism remains imperfect and will continue to remain so unless at some time or the other early medieval archaeology draws the attention of the practising archaeologists of the country. If Taxila or Kausambi to name only two among many offer a visual idea of early historical urban centres or Hampi and Champaner of that of the medieval period, there is not a single urban centre of the tenth or the eleventh century of which we can form a similar idea. Further early historical urban centres are known both from literature and archaeology; what was known for long from literary references came to be confirmed, though in a necessarily modified form, when literary references were geographically located and excavations exposed various stages of the history of the sites. Literary references alone cannot provide the definition of an urban centre. Archaeologists and historians can more meaningfully start talking about differentiation between an urban and a non urban centre when the actual dimensions of a settlement are revealed by archaeology.

17 R.N. Mishra, Medieval Archaeology (Delhi, 1973) ch. 18, “Townplanning at Champaner.” pp. 140ff. fig. 5.
18 The early medieval phase is represented at a number of archaeological sites which have sequences dating to earlier periods, but owing to the absence of a horizontal clearing of this phase, it is impossible to form any idea of settlement structure. The archaeological potential of early medeval urban centres is revealed by such sites as Ahar, Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report 1925-1926, pp 36-8.
19 An attempt was made by R.S. Sharma to lay down certain criteria in the context of the early historical sites in Decaying of Gangetic Towns also Urban Decay.
medieval archaeology is still an elusive proposition, historians of early medieval settlements depend entirely on epigraphic data to stipulate the recognizable characteristics of urban centres. The uncertainty of historians in regard to this problem can be illustrated. Writing in general terms on urbanization in Karnataka between AD 973 and 1336, G.R. Kuppuswamy states:

It is futile to attempt a clear cut classification of medieval economy of Karnataka into different sectors, namely urban and rural. For in actual practice there were many things common to village and town life—industries, banking, fairs, corporations or guilds and religious beliefs. The distinction was only one of degree and not of kind. The villages exhibited more the features of a rural or agricultural economy while the towns or cities betrayed more of an urban or industrial and commercial economy.20

Viewed from this angle it is futile to attempt any distinction at all, since the 'distinction of degree' is impossible to measure; nevertheless the quotation does underscore the basic difficulty of isolating and defining a settlement as urban without being arbitrary.

The two major preliminary problems in the study of early medieval urban centres are thus of locating them among rather voluminous epigraphic references to place names of the period, and of explaining their growth. Both call for sifting the epigraphic material with caution.

II

If archaeology is more or less silent on the dimensions of early medieval settlements, how should one determine their nature? The initial method is to depend on contemporary perceptions regarding the differential characters and typologies of the settlements. These perceptions are conveyed by the use of terminologies which (as in the early historical period) relate to what must have been distinguishable categories, although the distinctions could not have been immutable. In fact we have evidence of attempts to transfer, under certain situations, settlements of one category into another.21 The range of both

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20 Economic Conditions in Karnataka, AD 973–AD 1336 (Dharwar, 1975), p. 95.
21 For examples of this in early medieval Karnataka, see G.S. Dikshit, Local Self-government in Medieval Karnataka (Dharwar, 1964), pp. 140–2.
early historical and early medieval settlement terminology if we are to use literary references as well is extensive. The major categories for the early historical period are those of _grama nigama pura nagara_ and _mahaganaga_ 2 and although _nigama_ seems to have been in infrequent use in the later period there was really no break in the use of the terms _grama_ and _pura_ or _nagara_. This indicates that the idea of two essentially different categories of settlements representing two opposite points on a continuum pole continued to survive whatever the stages in the history of urbanism.

Yet this polarity at the conceptual level is not enough since _pura_ or _nagara_ seem at the same level to have represented some form of ranking as well and the use of the _pura_ or _nagara_ suffix could easily have been a way of underlining the assumed or induced status of a particular settlement space. Admittedly then among the multitude of settlement names mentioned and very infrequently described in any detail in epigraphs it is hazardous without applying further tests to try and locate urban centres and comprehend their structure.

Clues to further tests are fortunately provided by the epigraphs themselves. In the majority of cases villages appear in the epigraphs in the context of grants of land 4. The reference may be to an individual village or to villages distributed around the village in which the grant was made. The object of the grant and the details associated with it almost invariably occur in the context of space which the records themselves specify as rural. So when one comes across cases where the object of grant and its associated details are sharply different one can legitimately assume that the nature of the spatial context in which the grant was made was necessarily different. The objects of grant in this

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2. For discussions on units and terminology of settlements see N. Wagle, _Society at the Time of the Buddha_ (Bombay 1966) ch 2 A Gloss ch 3

3. For a brief discussion of urban terminology see B.D. Chattopadhyaya also R.N. Nandi, _Nardi_ cit, O.P. Trasad s d see 12. It is to show that such terms as _pura_, _nagara_, and _mahaganaga_ which occur in the epigraphs of the sixth-tenth centuries, are replaced by _patana_ and _nagara_ in the eleventh-twelfth centuries.

4. For the general features of such documents see D.C. Sastri, _India Epigraphy_ (Delhi 1965) ch 5 Ep graf s also refer to the creation of rural habitation areas previously not settled and the distribution of land by specifying shares in such areas would indicate the stress put on bringing the land under cultivation.
different spatial context consist of levies on industrial items locally manufactured or brought from outside, on items brought for purposes of sale or exchange, on shops and residential quarters, and so on. Land is not entirely absent as an object of grant in such spatial contexts, but only rarely does one find it even as a subsidiary item.

The two types of grants thus relate to how spaces are differently occupied and used, and with this primary distinction in epigraphic references to early medieval settlements one can tentatively perceive the difference between rural and non-rural spaces. Thus, irrespective of whether rural space incorporated such activities as industry or commerce, land as the major item of grant would be the determinant of its nature as a human settlement; if the major object of grant, by contrast, relates to industrial and/or commercial items, then the spatial context within which such grants are made can justifiably be characterized as non-rural. It is perhaps necessary to add that a study of the different natures of the grants is essential since, despite its volume, the epigraphic material almost invariably records various types of grants.

There is one more general feature of the epigraphic evidence bearing on this distinction. Land, cultivated or uncultivated—and occasionally residential—being the major object of grant in rural space, there is hardly any need in epigraphs to furnish details of the rural settlement structure. The reference is specifically to land donated in relation to surrounding plots and villages. Although a typical village settlement is known to have consisted of three components, the vāstu (residential land), kṣetra (cultivable) and gocāra (pasture), the relationship between the three is generally absent in epigraphic material, except perhaps in south Indian records. It can therefore be assumed that one is moving away from a purely rural landscape when one comes across references (although provided in fragments in the

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25 For discussions on various components of rural settlements, see A.K. Chaudhary, *Early Medieval Village in North-Eastern India (AD 600–1200)* (Calcutta, 1971); also, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India* (Calcutta, 1990).

26 For an introduction to the material bearing on rural settlements in early medieval Tamilnadu, see the interesting paper by N. Karashima, 'The Village Communities in Chola times: Myth or Reality', *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India*, vol. 8 (1971), pp. 85–96, now included in his *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850–1800* (Delhi, 1984), pp. 40–5.
same category of material) to centres of exchange, residential structures, and their occupants-manufacturing quarters functionally different streets, and so on.  

This should not suggest however that a rural settlement was essentially devoid of such features. It appears that urban centres can be identified from among a multitude of references in epigraphic records only by isolating what is stereotypical of the rural. This has nothing to do with the mention of a place as a grama or a nagara; it is the relevance of how much is described in the context of what is being recorded that will finally count in assessing the character of each settlement. The method proposed here is admittedly inadequate and will appear more so whenever an attempt is made at detailed empirical study, and while preparing a distribution map of the urban centres of the period. For the present however the epigraphs do not appear to offer many more options.

III

Having suggested that urban centres of the early medieval period may be so considered because they are presented in epigraphic sources of the period as spatial units distinguishable from more readily recognizable rural ones, one is led to ask if this difference can be stretched on the strength of the ideally exclusive categories of grama and nagara, to the point of polarity. This question is to a large measure related to the problem of the genesis of urban spaces because acceptance of the idea of polarity—in spatial as well as social terms—would correspond to viewing urban settlements as growths from above. This while not placing urban settlements totally outside the context of rural settlements would nevertheless tend to suggest that the sphere of interaction between the two was largely induced.

As growths from above urban centres could be expected to exhibit characteristics of planned settlements marked to a considerable degree by an absence of the components of rural settlements. There are numerous references in early medieval records to the creation of

27 See B D Chattopadhyaya "Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India" in this collection
townships by rulers and officials, but not a single record seems to reveal how such settlements were planned. In fact, an analysis of such references merely suggests an extension, through official initiative, of an already emergent process; the creation of townships in such cases consisted of laying the foundation of a core exchange centre or a ceremonial centre or a combination of both in areas where there was need for them; such initiatives would hardly be equivalent to the urban process as a whole. Secondly, the very fact that urban centres of various dimensions become readily recognizable in records from a particular point of time immediately relates to the problem of social change, of which urbanization is only an aspect. Considering the nature of the social formation of the early medieval period, urban centres were likely to represent ‘an extension of that of the countryside’. However, if this perspective is adopted, it cannot then be added in the same breath that they have to be viewed ‘as works of artifice... erected above the economic construction proper’. Indeed they could not be, since it

28 Ibid. Also, T. Venkateswara Rao, pp. 124ff.
29 This is conveyed by an interesting passage in a Ghatiyala inscription of AD 861 from the Jodhpur area, which records the establishment of *hattas* and *makkas* by a Pratihāra king. *Epigrapha Indica*, vol. 9, p. 280. References to fairs or periodical markets are quite common in early medieval records, and while fairs cannot be considered necessarily equivalent to urban nuclei, they do nevertheless suggest movement and concentrations, which are associated with the urban process. One may here recall the interesting observation of Fernand Braudel: ‘town or market or fair, the result was the same—movements towards concentration, then dispersion, without which no economic life of any energy could have been created...’ *The Structures of Everyday Life* (London, 1981), p. 503.
31 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Penguin edition, Harmondsworth, 1973), p 479. Marx applies this statement to ‘really large cities’, which he would consider ‘merely as royal camps’. Apart from the fact that the two constituents of the sentence sound somewhat contradictory—mere royal camps being in the nature of really large cities—Marx’s characterization of ‘Asiatic’ cities leaves, by merely suggesting the indifferent unity of town and countryside’, the issue of the emergence of towns as non-rural settlements unaccounted for. After all, ‘ruralization of the city as in antiquity’, to use his expression, is a general proposition and does not decrease the burden of finding out what is distinct between town and country. In fact, Marx’s formulation regarding the Asiatic city, if one goes by the statement in the *Grundrisse*, is a component of his Asiatic Mode of Production formulation. Parallel to its
was the nature of the economy which largely determined the spatial and social shape that the urban centres took.

To the issue of genesis must be added another dimension on which I have already focused namely that the spurt of a new phase of urbanism became noticeable several centuries after the earlier phase had become moribund. There is no reason to suppose that the spurt in early medieval urbanism became possible only with a noticeable revival in India’s external trade network or with the arrival of new cultural elements with the establishment of the Sultanate. To stress this is to miss an important element in the significant changes taking place in the earlier period to which the establishment of the Sultanate added substantially. The existence of fully developed urban centres in some parts of the country can be traced to the close of the ninth century if not earlier. References to them increase numerically suggesting the crystallization of a process and unlike the early historical urban phase there is no suggestion as yet that this phase too reached a stage of decay. The early medieval thus seems to have advanced into the medieval although this is a surmise which can only be validated by substantial empirical work.

A work which deals with corporate activities in the Andhra region from between AD 1000 and 1336 and dwells at some length on urban
dichotomy between the Absolute Despot and society is the dichotomy between the large city and the country side.

13 See L Gopal, *The Economy of North India* (Delhi, 1969); A. Appadorai, *Economy and Conditions in Southern India (AD 1000-1500)* vol I (Madras, 1936) ch. 5

15 It is evident that there was considerable expansion of the urban economy during the Sultanate and fully convincing (see his *Economy of the Delhi Sultanate*, an essay in interpretation, *The Indian Historical Review* vol. 4 No 2 1978 pp. 287–303) but the degree and nature of this expansion will have to be assessed in relation to the kind of change that surely was taking place in the pre-Sultanate period. The graph of data on the tenth to thirteenth centuries relating to the number and distribution of urban centres with the inadequacies of the estimates available at present make one hesitant about accepting Habib’s tentative reinterpretation. It is possible that there was a modest revival of commerce and towns before the Ghuran conquests. *The Peasantry in the Indian History*; Presidential Address, The Indian History Congress, 13rd session (Karukahetta, 1982) p 34 fn. 4

16 B D Chattopadhyaya, *Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India*
organizations lists several factors which resulted in urban growth in the region: (i) the holding of fairs; (ii) the emergence of religious centres; (iii) commercial activities centred around ports; (iv) the bestowal of urban status on rural settlements; (v) initiatives taken by kings and ministers in the creation of urban centres, and so on. A basically similar approach to causality is present in a substantive recent study on the urbanization process in south India in which the growth of Kudamikkul-Palayārai, twin cities of the Colas in the Kaveri valley, is analysed. The factors which seem to be highlighted in the context of the growth of this complex are: (i) the geographical location, making it 'a point of convergence of all major routes which passed through the core region of the Cola kingdom'; (ii) trade, which, however, to begin with, was 'incidental in the process of urbanization'; (iii) importance as a centre of political and administrative activities; and (iv) religious importance, indicated by the presence of a large number of temple shrines. In fact the study speaks of 'four major criteria which emerge as determinant factors in urban development, leading to the evolution of four main categories of urban centres', although it is underlined 'that in most cases, while trade was a secondary factor, religious activity was a dominant and persistent, though not necessarily the sole, factor'.

36 R. Champakalakshmi, 'Growth of Urban Centres in South India'.
37 Ibid., p. 26: The facts that temple shrines were the most dominant monuments of the urban landscape and that the available records mostly relate to them have considerably coloured the perspective regarding the growth of urban centres. This is evident, for example, from the juxtaposition of the statements which K.R. Hall makes regarding the urban complex of Tiruvaidamarudur. In trying to controvert Burton Stein's argument that the religious importance of such a centre comes first, Hall states, 'Tiruvaidamarudur, strategically located at an important intersection of the Kaveri communication network, had natural advantages which encouraged its development as a centre of exchange'; and further, 'Tiruvaidamarudur's nagaram fulfilled the area's commercial needs, specialising as the centre of a community of exchange. [It] was the locus for local economic interaction with higher order networks of exchange. And yet the temple remains the final contributory factor: Tiruvaidamarudur provides an example of an urban centre which as a major religious hub was a participant in the pilgrimage networks of that era, but also, and possibly as a consequence of this influx of religious pilgrims, developed as a supra-local centre of consumption as well, requiring goods supplied not only by area residents but also goods acquired from distant places: e.g. condiments used in temple rituals as well
One could add a few more to the list of the multiplicity of factors behind each historical phenomenon but while the factor complex approach may be of some use in understanding the separate personalities of contemporary settlement centres, the simultaneity with which factors became operative ultimately calls for a look at the process of which the factors were many facets. It is necessary to see what separates one phase from another and explain how one phase gradually changes over to another.

In a study of early medieval urban centres no detailed reconstruction is possible of the stages of their growth since archaeology alone can unravel these stages. Epigraphy when it happens to refer to an urban centre presents us with a fait accompli and it is rare to find epigraphic material on an urban centre covering a long chronological span. How then is the process to be reconstructed?

The epigraphic references to urban centres—keeping in mind the criteria laid down above—present among a variety of other details two crucial items of information. The first relates to their linkage with the space outside. The second bears on the nucleus or nucleus within an urban area through which interaction as a regular urban activity takes place. These two features are present more or less uniformly in relevant epigraphs from different regions and a digress on will be in order to introduce some empirical material on the significance of these two interrelated features for a study of early medieval urban growth.

Two inscriptions both dated to the tenth century and belonging to the region of the Kalacuris refer to the existence of about seven urban centres in the Jabalpur area of Madhya Pradesh. Of these some details regarding two centres are available. The Kantalai record coming from the watershed area between the upper Son and the Narmada of the time of Laksmanaryya II mentions four major categories of grants to a newly constructed temple and the brahmans

as prov’s ons for the consumption of v ists to the temple compound. K.R. Hall Peasant State and Society in Chola times: A View From the Thanjavaradur Urban Complex. Indian Economic and Social History Review vol 18 Nos 3-4 (1981) pp 397-8

33 YV Murashi Inscriptions of the Kalachuris Chedi Era Corpus inscriptionum Indicae, vol 4 part 1 (Ottomanum 1955) pp 204 24

39 ibid pp. 186-95
associated with it: (i) villages and fields, all located within a distance of about twenty miles (see map on facing page); (ii) khalabhikā or levies from threshing floors of the mandala, probably a term denoting the geographical unit within which the urban centre was located; (iii) levies on agricultural produce—covering, it would seem, both food-grains and commercial items—as well as industrial items brought to the purapattana or the township for sale; and (iv) income from fairs held at the place. The second record, from Bilhari in the same geographical region and datable to the close of the tenth century in the period of Yuvarāja II, provides a more detailed list of articles brought to the pattanamanḍapikā and of the levies imposed on them in the form of cash: salt (the quantity of which is specified and expressed in a term not understandable); products from oilmills; betelnuts; black pepper; dried ginger; varieties of vegetables, and so on. Items of considerable value on the sale of which levies were also imposed were horses and elephants.

To start with, let us assume that these two represent the typical urban centres of the early medieval period. The epigraphs provide only partial glimpses of them; nevertheless several things are clear. First, there is the imposition of levies as a source of urban income, indicating the nature of activities predominant at the urban centres; second, the nucleus of urban space in which urban economic activities take place; third, the nature of the interaction with settlements outside; and, finally, the nature of urban hierarchy, which may be derived from an analysis of their respective networks.

Both Karitalai and Bilhari, as the epigraphs would have us view them, were centres of exchange of goods. The centre of this activity was the manḍapikā, a term which literally means ‘a pavilion’ but the

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40 Ibid., pp. 204–24.
41 Both Karitalai and Bilhari appear to have been urban centres of modest dimensions with a limited range of functions, but they are nevertheless useful as samples of the kind of urban settlements which were coming up in the early medieval period. It is profitable to refer to Braudel again in this context: ‘it would be a mistake only to count the sun-cities ... Towns form hierarchies everywhere, but the tip of the pyramid does not tell us everything, important though it may be’, pp 482–3.
contextual meaning of which is suggested by its survival in the form of *mandi* in Hindi and *mandai* in Marathi. For Kariralai the range of spatial interaction seems to have remained limited to its immediate rural context, not only because the epigraph does not mention any item of exchange which could be of distant origin but also because the centre derived its resources, *inter alia*, from its immediate rural hinterland. These were villages and land assigned to its inhabitants, imposts on varied articles brought to its market centres, and levies from the threshing floors of the *mandala* in which it was located. By comparison Bilhari suggests a more extensive network: through such items as pepper, horses and elephants, its *mandapika* maintained contact with a much wider area. Considering that the two inscriptions speak of at least seven urban centres in the core area of the Kalacuri region in the upper Narmada basin, perhaps the possibility of a hierarchical order of settlements, covering the broad spectrum from rural to urban, is indicated.

There are two more pieces of relevant evidence from two disparate regions, one from the extreme south of Rajasthan and the other from north Karnataka. The Rajasthan record, dated AD 1080, is from Arthuna, twenty-eight miles west of Banswara, which provides a detailed list of levies imposed, in both cash and kind, in favour of a temple, Mandalesvara Mahadeva, the name of the temple itself suggesting the nature of its origin. The levies relate to various categories of items which include agricultural produce of the immediate vicinity. The levies were to the tune of one *haraka* measure of barley on an *araghatta* (i.e. field irrigated by an *araghatta*), one *dramma* on a pile of sugarcane and a *bharaka* measure on twenty packs of loaded grain (*bhândadhanam*). The imposts on merchants and merchant organizations are mentioned separately from those on items sold at the market centre (*hatta*). On each *bharaka* measure of candied sugar and jaggery (*khandagurayorbharakam*) belonging to the traders (*vanijja*) was imposed an amount which is not intelligible from the record; on each *bharaka* measure of *manjisha*, which obviously was to be used

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as a dye and on thread and cotton the amount was one rupaka. In another part of the record is mentioned the vanikmanda or association of traders which was required to pay one dramma each month.

The items which were sold at the market or were associated with it appear to have been subjected to meticulous assessment although it is impossible to determine the basis on which the amount of impost was worked out. On every bhiraka of coconuts was assigned one coconut on each bullock load of salt one manaka measure of salt one nut on every thousand arecanuts on every ghataka of butter and sesame oil one palika measure and on each konka of clothing fabric one and a half rupakas. Owing to the obsolete terms used in the record the nature of other items listed cannot be ascertained with any certainty; nevertheless it seems that the decision to impose contributions in cash or in kind was determined on the basis of whether the items were divisible into required shares or not. On each shop of the traders in the market area was fixed a contribution of one dramma during the castra festival and the sacred thread festival. The braziers located in the same area paid a dramma a month and each distillery run by the kañapalas paid four rupakas. Besides each household was required to pay one dramma, whereas the contribution from a gambling house was fixed at two rupakas. The record refers to other items which too were assessed and contributions from which were received either in kind or in some other variety of cash such as vritauimopaka but owing to the uncertainty of the meanings of the terms used in the record they are left out of the present discussion. In any case they would do no more than supplement the details already given.

The north Kannanaka record of 1204 from Belgaum 43 called Venugrama in the record is another detailed statement of several varieties of grants. They were made over to Subhadra Bhattiraka acarya of the Jaina shrine Ratta Jinalaya of Belgaum. The record is of the period of Ratta Kārttavirya IV of Saundatti, the building of the temple too as is evident from its name, was an act of patronage by this local ruler. Unlike the records analysed above, the Belgaum record provides a partial glimpse into the layout of urban space by mentioning land
including arable land, as an item of grant within the territorial limits of Venugrama. Thus an area, included in the twenty-fourth hatti or division of Venugrama, was given on a tenure of sthalavriti. The context and other details are even more telling:

In the aforesaid Venugrama, in the western course of the great eastern street, on the north of the house of Duggiyara Tikana, one house; in the western course of the western street, one house; in the western town gate, one house; in front of the white-plastered building of the god Kapileśvara, on the east of the Sāla-basadi, three houses; on the north of the road going to Aneyakere (elephant’s tank), a flower garden of two mattras and 276 karnas according to the rod of Venugrama; on the west of the great tank of Ālur of Kaṇamburige, twelve mattr of arable land; in the street on the south of the western market, one house, five cubits in width and twenty-one in length.44

To this may be added another significant detail, given toward the close of the record, that Ratta Kaṛttavīrya donated to the Jaina sanctuary four bazaars ‘on the east of the high road at the western end of the northern course of the north street.45

The reference to the twenty-fourth hatti or division is a sufficient indication not only of the vast dimension of the settlement space marked off as Venugrama but of considerable intermingling of residential-cum-institutional and non-residential space as well. However, the focus of the record shifts immediately to the area of crucial economic activities of Venugrama, which centred around the professionals of two major categories, the merchants and manufacturers. The decision to make a comprehensive coverage of items on which levies were imposed for the purpose of contribution to the sanctuary of Sāntinātha emanates from an assembly composed of the professionals of these two categories, headed by their leaders.

The category of merchants includes not only the mummi-dandas of Venugrama itself; it also comprises several groups of itinerant traders: the pattamigas of the total hereditary area of the Rattas, namely Kundi, 3,000; the traders of Lāla or south Gujrat and those of Maleyala or Kerala. Their representation in the assembly is understandable since they were all involved in the movement of a great bulk

44 Ibid., lines 42–5.
of goods that converged at Venugrama. Since the terms used in the record for indicating quantity elude explanation, only a bare list of items which are specifically mentioned as coming from outside is all that can be provided.\(^{45}\) They include various loads of paddy as well as husked rice suggesting the importance of the cereal as an item of import (this supposition is further strengthened by references to separate levies on bazaars of paddy shops and shops of husked rice)\(^7\) loads of black pepper asafoenda green ginger and turmeric betel leaves and arecanuts coconuts palm leaves and grass sugarcane and coarse sugar plantains and myrobalans. The list further extends to include raw and consumer items such as cotton and finished cloth parcels of perfumery and horses.\(^8\) What is curious and defies explanation however is why the assembly decided to grant immunity on all imports in the case of sixty-five oxen and buffaloes however they be laden.\(^9\) Since the loads are not specified this clearly deprives us of further details of the goods that came to Venugrama from outside.

Despite its monotony it was necessary to consolidate the list given above on the basis of the record its range covering a wide variety from paddy to horses can alone make the composition of merchants who participated in the economic and other activities at Venugrama—as also the nature of transactions which obviously formed the core of its activities—understandable. There was a range of goods starting from those which can be related to Venugrama's immediate rural context to those which could be brought only through the organizations of professional itinerant merchants. The local participants in the assembly, besides the mummurandases were headed by goldsmiths clothiers oil merchants and others. The imports on local manufactures were on clothiers shops a goldsmith's booth, a jeweller's shop and a perfumer's shop.\(^{10}\) It is impossible to ascertain the point of time at which Venugrama started developing as a centre of manufacture. All that the Belgaum record suggests is that a space usually of a rural character and still retaining a measure of that character, came over

\(^{45}\) Ibid lines 53-8.
\(^{47}\) Ibid lines 54-5
\(^{48}\) Ibid lines 51-3
\(^{49}\) Ibid lines 51-2
\(^{50}\) Ibid lines 52-3
time, to be a point of convergence of goods, obviously from varied distances, and of specialized items of manufacture for sale. If there were other crafts which did not come under the purview of imposts, the record has very naturally chosen to ignore them.

Starting from the significant fact that the urban settlement mentioned in the Belgaum record of 1204, which included cultivable land within a defined urban space, was known as Venugrama, several inferences can be drawn from the early medieval evidence discussed so far. Although not invariably in a uniform manner, urban space represented a slow transformation of rural space, perhaps reflecting in most cases a non-nuclear organization of such space. Epigraphy provides inadequate evidence on how a total urban space was defined, but considering what was relevant to this evidence hattā or mandapikā emerge as key terms for understanding the core of the urban space structure. They appear to have combined manufacture and exchange—two dominant activities of any settlement worth being considered a township. That their potential as sources of revenue is recognized by the ruling elite is the criterion by which such activities are assumed to be dominant. The details of items of exchange vary from one centre to another, but there is one common denominator: the mobilization of agricultural products, both in the form of foodgrains and commercial items, at certain points in space where the act of exchange is intermingled with other economic and non-economic activities. It is essential to remember that the process of mobilization has a history which precedes the imposition of levies—an event with which alone the epigraphs are concerned—as a form of religious patronage. In other words, the 'ceremonial' or 'ritual' centres which represented the important foci of many urban settlements were themselves part of a system of resource mobilization and redistribution.

51 This has been suggested elsewhere as well with regard both to the urban centres of early historical and early medieval periods: B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Mathurā from the Śunga to the Kuśāṇa Period: An Historical Outline' in Doris M. Srinivasan, ed., Mathurā: The Cultural Heritage (Delhi, 1989), pp. 19–30; Idem, 'Urban Centres in Early Bengal: Archaeological Perspectives' (forthcoming). This, however, should not be taken to mean that there was no nucleation of professional or caste groups within the urban space. Early medieval records, in fact, abound in references to such agglomerations.
The total complex of these will have to be underscored if one were to understand the specificity of the urbanization process in early medieval India.

The "gross surplus" which constituted the subsistence base of this urbanization covered a noticeably wide range of commercial and industrial items, including commercial crops. The production and variety of these appear from the surveys available for this period to have been on the increase.\(^3\) The exchange nodes presuppose a productive rural hinterland and that this essential link has not gone entirely unnoticed is evident from the relationship which has sometimes been suggested between some urban centres and their local rural contexts. Of Kudamukku Palayaram in the Cola region following comments bring out the relevance of this relationship.

Numerous peasant settlements arose in this region from the Sangam period down to the thirteenth century forming the main resource base of the Colas. The crucial stage in its development into an urban centre would be the period of the proliferation of brahmadesamadavinas: the seventh to ninth centuries AD henceforth a continuous phenomenon showing the availability of sufficient resources for supporting a large population.\(^4\)

Similarly Mamallapuram which in the reign of Rajaraja I was administered by a managaram—signifying its status as an urban centre—was said to have received the products of the fifty villages of Anur Kotram (the regional unit of government) that were under the juris

\(^3\) For an elaboration of the concept of gross-surplus, see R.M. Adams, *The Evolution of Urban Society*, p. 46.

\(^4\) While any estimate, in comparative terms, would be impossible to cite this is an impression which general works on early medieval India seem to convey (1) references to frequency and variety of such crops (2) regular movements of such crops for purposes of exchange. See A.K. Chaudhary ch 6 P. N. Bag pp. 23-37 B.P. Mazumdar *Socio-economic History of Northern India (1030-1194 AD)* (Calcutta, 1960) pp. 177-80 S. Gururajachar *Some Aspects of Economic and Social Life in Karnataka (AD 1000-1300)* (Mysore, 1974) ch 3 G.R. Kuppuswamy has attempted a detailed map of crops in Karnataka from between the close of the tenth and the middle of the fourteenth century see Kuppuswamy pp. 60-6, map facing p. 48.

\(^5\) R. Champakalakshmi *Growth of Urban Centres in South India* p. 22.
diction of a Cola-official. Venugrama is similarly believed to have been the chief town of a small district of seventy villages.

Despite their disparate geographical locations the point to be considered regarding urban centres is the kind of centripetality of surplus flow which alone could make urbanization a viable socio-economic process. The mobilization of surplus is invariably associated with an 'elaboration of complex institutional mechanisms'. The mechanisms of production and mobilization of agricultural items—which have been underlined as the major economic activities that generated and sustained urban centres of the early medieval period—are ultimately tied up with the hierarchized structure of the polity in the period. An elaboration of this linkage is not possible within the brief span of this essay. It suffices to say that this complex power structure not only skimmed the surface of what was brought to the market in the form of levies but that, in the final analysis, this structure was responsible for drawing the rural productive units—and groups with exchangeable commercial items—into the network of urban centres. It could do this because the various groups of elites were not only the ideal customers for circulating high value goods but because they were also, in a complex situation of land distribution (partly characterized by the system of assignments), the ultimate destination towards which the surplus was to move.

IV

If the urbanization process of the early medieval period with its continuity into the medieval period is taken as a case of the third phase of urbanization, in what ways did it differ from early historical urbanization? Only a tentative response to this question is attempted here. It has been remarked that early historical urban centres were all characterized by, first, being centres of political power, second, by

56 *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 13, p. 18.
57 R.M. Adams, p. 46.
58 For details, see R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, chs 2 and 5; B.N.S. Yadava, ch. 3.
large-agricultural hinterlands and third by their location along well-developed trade routes. The conjunctive of these features may go well with the earliest phase of early historical urbanization but it is doubtful if this conjunctive continued with the horizontal expansion of the urbanization process. In the context of early historical urbanism it is legitimate to think in terms of an epicentrum—really the region spread over the stretch of the upper Ganges and middle Ganges basin—and a subsequent expans on reach ny out in stages to different parts of the subcontinent. There thus developed a wide network accentuated by new factors which accounts for a certain uniformity in cultural items unearthed by archaeology at the early urban centres. They did each have an agrarian base with the exception perhaps of those which with their littoral locations were more tied up with maritime trade than with an agricultural hinterland. But it is not adequate to try to understand early urban centres particularly those of the early centuries of the Christian era only in terms of their interaction and integration with an immediate hinterland. If Taxila was one point in the network which linked up early urban centres, the other points could well have been as distant as Paralipam in the east, Barygaza in the west and Per or Pauhan in the south.

Early medieval urban centres did not have an epicentre even though it may be empirically established that urban centres in different regional contexts represent different chronological stages. There is again no lack of interregional linkage for we do often come across references to the presence of distant merchants in various urban centres. But there is nothing in the records which could indicate the

60 See as illustration of h v, the ev dence of The Periphery of the Egyptian Sea, translated and edited by W. H. Schoff (reprinted in Delhi 1974) pp 41-3.
61 Evidence for the itinerary of naastanashos diversifies as it traverses regional origins is more readily available for the south than the north. B. S. Ein, 'Commandel Trade in Medieval India', in John Parker ed, Merchants and Scholars (University of Minnesota Press 1965) pp 47-62. R. H. Hall, Trade and Statescraft in the Age of the Celts, ch 6 S. Cunmrajachar, Some Aspects of Economic and Social Life in Kamaasha (AD 1000-1300) ch 5. However, in different parts of north and west Ind a too distant me chants can be seen to converge at points which serve as foci of commercial transact ons. See for exam ple Epigraphic Inscr, vol I, pp 184-90.
regularity of such exchanges on a subcontinental level, notwithstanding the possibility that certain prized items of trade may have had a fairly extensive itinerary. Epigraphic evidence bearing on the range of interaction of early medieval urban centres seems to suggest that they were far more rooted in their regional contexts than their early historical predecessors. No early medieval centre seems to be comparable—and the absence of archaeological information alone may not be a sufficient explanation—with such early fortified settlements as Kausambi or Ahicchatra, but it may be significant that the estimates available regarding the numerical strength of early medieval urban centres suggest a high incidence. The estimates are imperfect, irregular and only incidentally done, and are cited only for their dubious worth.

According to one estimate the Malwa area in the Paramara period had twenty towns. The number is eight, obviously an extremely low figure, for the Caulukya period in Gujarat. T. Venkateswara Rao estimates the number to have been more than seventy in Andhra between 1000 and 1336, and Dasaratha Sharma has compiled a list of 131 places in the Cathamana dominions, ‘most of which seem to have been towns’. In a century-wise estimate for Karnataka, made on the basis of epigraphic sources, it has been shown that compared to seventeen in the seventh century and ‘more than twenty-one’ in the eighth century there was a ‘sudden increase’ from the tenth century onward, and ‘more than seventy-eight towns are noticed in the inscriptions of the eleventh century’. The numbers are clearly uneven, and this is largely due to the absence of any criteria for identifying urban centres.

But the estimates do make one positive point: the emergence of centres which could be considered distinct from rural settlement units was phenomenal in the early medieval period. This is not surprising

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The Indian Antiquary, vol. 58, pp. 161ff.
62 R.S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 245.
63 P. Niyogi, pp. 120-1.
64 T. Venkateswara Rao, pp. 124-9; map 3.
65 D. Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties (A Study of Chauhan Political History, Chauhan Political Institutions and Life in the Chauhan Dominions from c. 800 to 1316 AD) (Delhi, 1959), pp. 311-16.
Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview

If considered in the light of the profusion of place names in early medieval records, since the majority of the urban centres of this period were primarily nodal points in local exchange networks, the numerical strength of settlements and the growth in the number of locality elites would tend to result in the proliferation of urban centres of relatively modest dimensions. They would thus reflect the character of the economy and policy of the period, unlike the early historical centres which were directly linked with centres of authority with supra-regional loyalties. The majority of the early medieval centres would correspond to different tiers of regional power. Like land urban settlements too came to be objects of administration—a phenomenon which further reinforced the intimate linkage between them and their immediate localities.

In the final analysis, however, was the base nature of early medieval urban centres so very different from that of their predecessors of the early historical period? With our limited understanding it may be too early to say but even so, M.I. Finley’s broad typologies of consumer cities and commercial cities, which correspond to cities of the classical and the medieval west respectively, do not seem to relate to the Indian urban phases.

If his major variable—the rentiers and revenue collectors was what characterized the ancient city, this variable was characteristic of both the early historical and early medieval phases of Indian urbanization. At the same time, the organizational and occupational specificities of Indian urban centres accommodated the commercial elite organized into guilds as a substantial component in their structure. It was this juxtaposition which may have prevented both the emergence of two distinct typologies as well as the Indian urban groups from approximating to the category of the burgher in the medieval west.

Even the aspired mobility of the Indian social

For examples of this from the early medieval period, see Epigraphia Indica, vol 1 pp 162–79. Document No 77 bid. Vol 19 pp 69–75 the Gurgi record of the Kalacuri urban centres in whose dorm noms have been discussed above also mentions that the king donated a whole city crowded with citizens as a grant. Mirzai, p. 230 verse 41.


Of the perceptive comments of Carlo M. C. Pella, ‘The Origins’ in Carlo M...
groups did not extend beyond validation within the norms of a traditional social order, the broad contours of which remained identical in both early historical and early medieval phases.\(^7\)


The separation of the town from the country, which set a pace of change in the medieval west, did not take place in India. It would thus be futile to try to see in the emergence of early medieval towns a possible dissolvent of ‘Indian Feudalism’. For a critique of such attempts, see D.N. Jha, ‘Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique’, Presidential Address, Section I, Ancient India, Indian History Congress, 40th session (Waltair, 1979).

\(^7\) *Vātiyapurāṇamu*, a medieval Telugu *Purāṇa* based apparently on earlier historical events, is an excellent example of this conformity to societal norms. The *Purāṇa* relates to the Komati, also known in early medieval records as Nakaramu-102 or merchants of 102 gotras. The ascendancy of the merchants is evident from the way they styled themselves lords of the city of Penugonda and the way they were organized into a highly, closed group. Their social organization sought validation not only through claiming the *vātiya* status but also through rigid observance of the social customs of the community, called *menarikam* or *kulācāra-dharmam*. For details, see T. Venkateswara Rao, pp. 240–5.
Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India

Colleagues

I am grateful to the Executive Committee of the Indian History Congress for the honour they have done me by inviting me to preside over the Ancient India section at the session this year. I confess that I am as surprised as I am overwhelmed at this honour not only because my association with the Congress has so far been only minimal but also because my own assessment of my meagre research output, mainly of an exploratory nature, falls far short of the value the Committee have so kindly chosen to attach to it. I suppose being in the profession commends one to the responsibility of presenting one's credentials publicly to fellow practitioners at some stage or the other. In me, the responsibility has evoked a sense of awe and all that I can do to get over this is to try and turn it to my advantage by bringing to you a problem which for me is beginning to take the shape of a major academic concern. Unable to present the results of a sustained empirical research, I am here instead with my uncertainties but as I see it there can be no better forum for bringing one's problems to than this annual meet of historians which accommodates various shades of thinking and encourages exchange of ideas beyond narrow barriers.

The problem I refer to concerns the study of polity in early medieval India. There is hardly any need to underline that this erstwhile dark period of Indian history (a characterization deriving incidentally from the absence of vast territorial empires in the period) is fast emerging as one in which significant changes were taking

Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, Indian History Congress 44th Session (Burdwan 1983)

[Due to constraints of space, I have had to limit the references to recent writings and to use earlier publications mostly for the purpose of comparison. My thanks are due to Sri Alok V. Serrar and especially to Sri P. K. Banerjea, research students at]
place—a useful reminder that historical assessments never remain static and need to go through a process of constant revaluation. As one interested in the study of early medieval India, my feeling has been that the problem of the political formation of this period is in an urgent need of revaluation, and while it is presumptuous to think in terms of a single empirical work which will cover the problem at the level of the entire subcontinent, one can at least pose the problem, constant reminders regarding regional variations notwithstanding, at the subcontinental level, from the perspective of the possible processes in operation. My own interest in the study of the early medieval polity derives not so much from the recent spate of publications on the early state and the possibility of analysing early Indian political systems in the light of new ideas but from more pragmatic considerations. The foremost among these is the resurrection, through the study of polity, of an interest in the study of the political history of the period. I apprehend that this sentiment is likely to raise a murmur of protest and I am also likely to be reminded that we have had enough of political history which may be sanctioned well-earned rest for some time to come. I wonder if this is really so, since I feel that historical


2 Evidence of recent interest in the study of the early state will be found in the range of contributions and bibliographies in two recent publications: H.J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik, eds, *The Early State* (Mouton Publishers, 1978); and *The Study of the State* (Mouton Publishers, 1981). The focus of most of the contributions in such publications is on the emergence of the early state which is often distinguished only from the modern industrial state and is therefore of little value in understanding processes of change. Relevant ideas on the emergence of the state have been used for the study of the pre-state and origin of the state society in India by Romila Thapar, 'State Formation in Early India', *International Social Science Journal*, 32.4 (1980), pp. 655–669 and *From Lineage to State: Social Formation in the Mid-first Millennium BC in the Ganga Valley* (Bombay, 1984), and by R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1983); 'Taxation and State Formation in Northern India in Pre-Maurya Times (c. 600–300 BC)', reprinted in R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, third revised edition (Delhi, 1991), ch. 15; Idem, 'From Gopati to Bhupati: a review of the changing position of the king', *Studies in History*, 2.2 (1980), pp. 1–10.
revaluation of the nature of change in a period implies revaluation of its sources in their entirety. As a teaching of ancient Indian history, I noticed a growing trend among students to be interested only in social and economic history since political history with its endless dates, genealogical charts, and catalogues of battles involves senseless cramming and serves no intellectual purpose at all. Given the nature of ancient Indian political historiography, the distaste is understandable but if in sheer frustration we turn away from a serious study of political history we shall perhaps unwittingly be leaving out a substantial chunk of Indan history. After all, the study of policy essentially involves an analysis of the nature, organization, and distribution of power and in a state society in which the contours of inequality are sharp, relations of power encompass relations at other levels in some form or the other. Even the seemingly bewildering variety of details of the political history of early medieval India—the absurdly long genealogies the inflated records of each event of microscopically small

3. I is necessary to keep in mind that a study of social and economic history by itself is not a sufficient guarantee of the quality of history. Most available monographs on social and economic history of the period, including my own, are no more interesting readings than dynastic accounts.

4. The dominant trend in the writing of the political history of early medieval India is towards the reconstruction of dynastic accounts and the trend carried to an extreme has yielded more than one monograph for a single dynasty. We have thus at least three monographs on the Yudhavas and the same number of works on the Chandellas. For a very useful critique of dynamic reconstruction, through consideration of distinct segments of the same ruling lineage, see David P. Hengge，“Some Phases in the Dynastic History of Early and Medieval India: A Graphic Outline and the Abhorrence of Vacuums,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 38.3 (1975).

5. I have only to refer here to the statement made by Perry Anderson in the Foreword to his Lineages of the Absolutist State (Verso Ed., London, 1979, p. 11). “Today when ‘history from above’ is become a watchword in both Marxist and non-Marxist circles, and has produced major gains in our understanding of the past, it is nevertheless necessary to recall one of the basic axioms of historical materialism: that secular struggle between classes is ultimately resolved at the political-cultural level of society. In other words, is the construction and destruction of state power itself the basis for the relations of production. A pressure from above” is thus no less necessary than a “history from below.” Elsewhere (p. 406) he writes that “pre-capitalist modes of production cannot be defined except via their political, legal, and ideological structures since these are what determine the extra-economic coercion that specifies them.”
doms, the rapidity of the rise and fall of centres of power—are ultimately manifestations of the way in which the polity evolved in the period and hence is worthy, not so much of cataloguing, but of serious analysis. I make an additional point in justification of my plea for the study of political history by saying that an occasional comparison of notes with the historiography of medieval India would help, because medieval historians have continued to enrich our knowledge of political history and its study is essential for our understanding of that period.

I

The relevant approaches to the study of the early medieval polity will be discussed later. I will begin with a brief reference to the basic opposition between the two broad strands of assumptions that bear upon a study of the Indian polity. In one assumption, polity in pre-modern India is variously characterized as ‘traditional’ or ‘Oriental Despotic’; in fact, it has been considered possible by different


7 ‘Traditional polity’ is implied in the statements and titles of writings on disparate periods of Indian history, in which a long-term perspective is absent and in most of which the accent is on Kingship and rituals associated with Kingship; see, for example, the following collections: Richard G. Fox, ed., Realm and Region in Traditional India (Delhi, 1977); R.J. Moore, ed., Tradition and Politics in South Asia (Delhi, 1979); J.F. Richards, ed., Kingship and Authority in South Asia (South-Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison Publication Series, Publication No. 3, 1978). S.N. Eisenstadt’s typologies of ‘centralized historical bureaucratic empires or States’ in which he curiously clubs together Gupta, Maurya and the Mughal empires as ‘several ancient Hindu States’ also essentially correspond to the notion of ‘traditional polity’, The Political System of Empires (New York, 1969).

8 That ‘Oriental Despotism’ characterizes changeless polity and society will be clear from the following statement of K.A. Wittfogel: ‘... varying forms of semi-complex hydraulic property and society prevailed in India almost from the dawn of written history to the 19th Century’, Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power, 7th Printing (Yale University Press, 1970), p. 260. For the genesis of
individual authors—all apparently subscribing to the assumption of traditional policy—to view political ideas and structures of disparate periods of Indian history in terms of a model of pre-State policy. It would of course be too simplistic to lump a wide variety of writings on traditional pre-modern policy together because both in their empirical and theoretical contents such contributions vary substantially but basically the broad assumption underlying most of them remains that traditional policy was essentially changeless. A continual kaleidoscopic reorientation of a given political and social context. Opposed


10 Frank Perlin, "The Pre-colonial Indian State in History and Epistemology".
to this view of 'traditional' polity within which 'early medieval' is not clearly demarcated, is the other assumption which envisages possibilities of change and, curiously, it is within this purview that most empirical studies on early medieval India can be located. Here too views on change or on mechanisms of change are not identical; the majority of works on early medieval political history and institutions in fact contain generalizations which are mutually contradictory. The king in all the monarchical states is the source of absolute power and wields control through bureaucracy; there is thus nothing much to distinguish him from the 'absolute despot' despite his benevolent disposition; and yet, the malaise of polity is generated by feudal tendencies.\(^{11}\) Change, expressed mostly in terms of dynastic shifts, becomes, in the early medieval context, a concern over the size of the emperor's territory; imperial rulers down to the time of Hāra endeavoured to stem the tide of disintegration and fragmentation, which is seen as a disastrous change from the ideal imperial pattern and which is invariably assessed against the ultimate failure to retain what used to be called—and I fear many of our much used text books continue to call—the Hindu political order.\(^{12}\) Concern with the failure of the early medieval political order—a concern not only noticeable in works

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11 See, for example, A.S. Altekar, *State and Government in Ancient India*, reprint of 3rd edition (Delhi, 1972), chs 16–17. In the context of south India, while T.V. Mahalingam (*South Indian Polity*, University of Madras, 2nd edition, 1967, ch. 1, sec. 2) talks of checks on royal absolutism and the presence of *sāmartas* or *manda-letuvaras*, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (*The Cola*, reprint of 2nd edition, University of Madras, 1975, pp. 447–48) characterizes Cola polity as indicating change from 'somewhat tribal chiefty of the earlier time' to 'the almost Byzantine royalty of Rājāraja and his successors'. For a relevant discussion, see Lorenzen.

12 R.C. Majumdar, for example, writes in his preface to *The Struggle for Empire* (vol. 5 of the History and Culture of the Indian people; Bombay, 1957, xliii): 'This volume deals with the transition period that marks the end of independent Hindu rule'. See also K.M. Panikkar's Foreword to Dasarath Sharma's *Early Cauhan Dynasties* (Delhi, 1959); R.C.P. Singh (*Kingship in Northern India, Cir. 600 AD–1200 AD*, Delhi, 1968, ch. 8) analyzes this failure in terms of the nature of Hindu kingship. Most works on the political history of the period, dealing with changes in the loci of power are charged with communal overtones, completely ignoring the fact that such shifts were constantly taking place in Indian history.
on political history but a starting point in serious monographs on social and economic history as well—has logically led to value-judgments on the structure of politics. A single quote from a widely read text book on polity out of many such available will serve to illustrate the sentiment common to most historians of early medieval India (the) ideal of federal feudal empire with full liberty to each constituent state to strive for the imperial status but without permission to forge a unitary empire after the conquest thus produced a state of continuous instability in ancient India. I have chosen this quote to underline the kind of ambivalence which permeates the writings even of those who tend to think in terms of change; there is dichotomy between constituent state and unitary empire the dichotomy deriving in the present case from adherence to the model provided by ancient political thinkers the dichotomy is not timeless because its emergence is located in the fourth century AD and yet it produced a state of continuous instability in ancient India instability being change from the norm i.e. the centralized unitary state.

Irrespective of the merits of the terminologies used in these writings historiographically the interesting correlation is between change in polity and feudalism. Feudalism is thus not a new historiographical convention its use limited to the political plane has been as a synonym for political fragmentation and the term has in fact been shuttled back and forth in Indian history to suit any period in which no unitary empire could be located on the political horizon.

We know that a major breakthrough in the application of this term to the Indian context came in the form of a new genre of empirical works from the fifties here for the first time feudal polity

13 D Sharma, ch 27
14 B P. Majumdar Socio-econ em c History of Northern India (1030-1194 AD) (Calcutta 1960) preface
15 Adikar p 383
16 H C. Raychaudhuri (Political History of Ancient India, 6th ed 1964 University of Calcutta 1953 p 206) speaks of mandabhisaya in the period of Prabhakar as corresponding perhaps to the Earls and Counts of medieval European polity. A L Basham speaks of quasi-feudal order in the pre Mauryan age and when that empire broke up Mauryan bureaucracy gave way to quasi-feudalism once more. Studies in Indian History and Culture (Calcutta 1964) p 5
17 Serious analytical work of this genre are with D D Kosambi. An Introduction
is not an entity-in-itself; through a reasoned argument—irrespective
of whether we accept the argument or not—'feudal polity' is shown
to be a stage which represents a structural change in the Indian social
and economic order; it envisages the emergence of a hierarchical
structure of society in place of the binarily opposed entities of the state
and the peasantry, and it is basically this hierarchical structure with
its different tiers of intermediaries which explains the mechanism of
exploitation and coercion of the early medieval state. The distinctive
contribution of the study of 'Indian feudalism', from the perspective
of the problem I have in view, consists in the attempt to bridge the
gap between polity and society.

In concluding this brief review of various strands of opinions on
ey early Indian polity, which tend to be organized into two opposite sets,
I feel that the opposition cannot be pushed to any extreme limits. If
the feeling represents a curious contradiction, the contradiction is
embedded in available historiography. For, even those who work
within the framework of traditional polity do not all necessarily work
with such ahistorical models as 'Oriental Despotism'; similarly, the

to the Study of Indian History (Bombay, 1956), and R.S. Sharma's Indian Feudalism,
C. 300–1200 (University of Calcutta, 1965), is the first thoroughly researched
monograph on the subject. In terms of documentation another important work is
by B.N.S. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century
(Allahabad, 1973). The literature on 'Indian feudalism' is of course growing and
useful bibliographical references will be found in R.S. Sharma and D.N. Jha, 'The
Economic History of India up to AD 1200: Trends and Prospects', Journal of the
Economic and Social History of the Orient, 17.1, pp. 48–80, D.N. Jha, 'Early Indian
Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique', Presidential Address, Indian History
Congress, Ancient India Section, 40th session (Waltair, 1979); H. Mukhia, 'Was there
Feudalism in Indian History?', Presidential Address, Medieval India Section, Indian
History Congress, 40th session (Waltair, 1979); B.N.S. Yadava, 'The Problem of
the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India', Presidential Address, Ancient
India Section, 41st session (Bombay, 1980).

18 Compare, for example, two articles by Nicholas B. Dirks written on two
different periods of south Indian history: (i) 'Political Authority and Structural
Change in Early South Indian History', The Indian Economic and Social History
Relations in a South Indian Little Kingdom', Contributions to Indian Sociology, 13.2
(1979), pp. 169–206. B. Stein too (Peasant State and Society . . . ) attempts to see
change from the Cola to the Vijayanagar period. Their perception of change is, of
course, not in terms of feudal polity.
The current construct of feudal polity carries over elements from past historiography, which in a way hinder the formulation of a long-term perspective of change. The opposite is perhaps ultimately lies in the realm of ideologies and perspectives than in the realization of the necessity of study of change. We turn now to the specificity of the problem which this historiographical situation has created for a study of early medieval polity.

II

The structure of the construct of Indian feudalism which is spoken of as a variant form rests so far as the study of polity is concerned on two interrelated arguments. Since detailed studies of early medieval polities within the framework of the feudalism hypothesis are still a desideratum, they therefore need to be stated. (i) Feudal polity emerged from the gradual breakdown of a centralized bureaucratic state system empirically represented by the Mauryan state the implication of the argument being that the emergence of diverse centres of power of the later periods would correspond to a process of displacement of bureaucratic units. Feudal polity however crystallized eight centuries after the disintegration of the Mauryan state although elements of feudal polity—suggested by a two-tier or three-tier structure of the administrative system—are evident in the Kura polity of north India and the Satavahana polity of the Deccan. (ii) The system of assignment of land apparently absent in the Mauryan state because of the practice of remuneration in cash became wide-


20 R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideals and Institutions in Ancient India*, 2nd
spread and intermixed with the transfer of the rights of administration, corroding the authority of the state and leading to the 'parcellization' of its sovereignty.\textsuperscript{21} It may be interesting to dilate on this characterization of the Mauryan state and its choice as a starting point for the study of feudal polity because at one level it carries over from past historiography the equation: feudal polity = political fragmentation = dismemberment of a centralized state; at another, it represents an unstated search for a proto-type of the state system of the Classical West, the breakdown of which provides a starting point for the study of western feudalism. However, for our purpose, the validity of the arguments stated above can be subjected to a single test: do they sufficiently explain the total political configuration of what is called the feudal formation? The explanation has to relate not to the structures of individual monarchies alone but also to the political geography of the subcontinent at any given point of time—a requirement suggested by frequent shifts in the centres of power and the ongoing process of the formation of new polities as a result of transition from pre-state to state societies. It is considerations such as these which have led to considerable rethinking regarding the Mauryan state itself,\textsuperscript{22} which—the focal point in the concentration area of the earlier

\textsuperscript{21} This supposition is based on two sets of evidence: (i) reference in the Arthaśāstra (5.3) to payment of state officials in coined money, and (ii) actual circulation of coined money in the Mauryan period. However, there seems to be a contradiction in the Arthaśāstra itself; cf. 5.3 with 2.1.7. Even 5.3, which deals with the payment of state officials, states: '... He should fix (wages for) the work of servants at one quarter of the revenue, or by payment to servants ...' (R.P. Kangle's translation, 2nd edition, Bombay, 1972, p. 302). More importantly, there is no necessary correlation between the circulation of coined money and payment in cash. This will hold true not only for the post-Mauryan period to the fifth century at least but for the medieval period as well, although in the medieval period the remuneration was computed in cash.

\textsuperscript{22} Interestingly, Beni Prasad, as early as in 1928, held the 'unitary' character of the Mauryan State as suspect, \textit{The State in Ancient India} (Allahabad, 1928), p. 192. Romila Thapar has considerably changed her views on the character of the Mauryan State; compare Atoka And the Decline of the Mauryas, 2nd edition (Oxford-University Press, 1973), ch. 4 with her 'The State as Empire' in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik, \textit{The Study of the State}, pp. 409–26 and \textit{From Lineage to State}, ch. 3. For other
mahajanapadas of the upper and middle Ganges basin—represents basically a relationship between the nucleus which is the metropolitan state and a range of differentiated polities. The disappearance of the metropolitan Mauryan state did not create a political or economic crisis either in areas where state polity had been in existence or in areas of pre-state polity incorporated within the Mauryan empire. In fact Mauryan territorial expansion and similar expansions at later times seem to have created a fresh spurt in the emergence of local states in areas of pre-state polity—a phenomenon certainly not to be confused with the process of the decentralization of a centralized administration.

Two further points regarding the current historiography on the genesis of feudal polity need to be made. First, not all criticisms levelled against the use of landgrant evidence for explaining the genesis of feudal polity can be brushed aside lightly. The fact remains that the major bulk of epigraphic evidence relates to brahmadesas and devadanas, grants to brahmans and religious establishments, and the element of contract is largely absent in the system of early and early medieval landgrants. The presence of a contractual element cannot be altogether denied; it would also be difficult to disagree with the view...
that the system of assignments brought in important changes in agrarian relations in areas where such assignments were made—but how does it all help us to understand the genesis of feudal polity? Let me clarify. The samanta-feudatory system has been considered to be the hallmark of the structure of polity in early medieval India—and there is no reason to dispute the empirical validity of this point—but it has not been seriously examined as to how even the system of secular or service assignments to officials led to the emergence of a samanta-feudatory network. It has been conceded that the general chronology of the epigraphic evidence for service-assignments postdates the genesis of feudal polity. The conclusion which ought to follow from it is that service grants present a facet and not the precondition for the emergence of the overall pattern of political dominance. Secondly, irrespective of whether administrative measures can bring in changes in societal formations or not, there is the larger question: what generates administrative measures? Land assignments as administrative measures are, we have seen, presented as deliberate acts which corrode the authority of the state; the state not only parts with its sources of revenue but also with its coercive and administrative prerogatives.

... element remains important as otherwise the logic of service assignments does not appear intelligible. See also fn. 26.

25 See fn. 17 for references. A restatement of this will be available in R.S. Sharma, 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 12, nos. 2-3, pp. 19-43.

26 Yadava, *Society and Culture* . . . , ch. 3.

27 R.S. Sharma, 'Landgrants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India c. AD 1000–1200', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 4 (1961), pp. 70–71; Idem, 'Rajasasana: Meaning, Scope and Application', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 37th session (Calicut, 1976), pp. 76–87. For other details of such grants known variously as prasāda-likhita, prasāda-pattala, jivita, rakta-kodag and so on, see N.C. Bandyopadyaya; Yadava, 'Secular Landgrants . . .', *Society and Culture* . . . , ch. 3; K.K. Gopal, 'Assignment to Officials and Royal Kinsmen in Early Medieval India (c. 700–1200 AD)', *University of Allahabad Studies (Ancient History Section)* (1963–64), pp. 75–103. Three points may, however, be noted: (i) the generally late chronology of such grants in some of which only the 'contract' element is explicitly stated; (ii) they are, including grāstras and anjghogas, more an evidence of the sharing of lineage patrimonial holdings than of service grants; (iii) in terms of total area controlled by dominant sections in a polity such grants may be found to constitute a relatively insignificant proportion.

28 This point has been raised by H. Mukhia.
Thus feudal policy arises because pre-feudal policy declines to use an all too familiar expression to preside over the liquidation of its own power. This is a curious position to take which could be understandable only in terms of a crisis of structural significance in pre-feudal political and economic order. We have argued earlier that the breakdown of the Mauryan State does not appear to have generated such a crisis in fact in a situation in which the state policy was expanding horizontally and the final annihilation of the gana-sangha system of policy was taking place; it would be a difficult exercise indeed to construct a reasoned theory of crisis in state power.

One must then look for an alternative explanation. In presenting the above critique of the historiography of the genesis of early medieval policy, the differential distribution of power represented by the samana-feudatory structure is not disputed what is questioned is the rather one track argument wholly centred around a particular value attached to the evidence of the landgrants for the emergence of the structure in pre-Gupta and Gupta times. In fact in no state system, however centralized can there be a single focus or level of power and the specificity of the differential distribution of power in early medieval policy may be an issue more complex than has hitherto been assumed. And perhaps a revaluation of the evidence of the majority of landgrants may be called for within this complexity.

III

At one level this complexity derives from the presence of trans-political ideology in all state systems even though in the context of early

29 Recent attempts to construct a crisis lean heavily on the Brahmanical perception of the evils of Kaliyuga and on the correlation of the evils with actual changes in terms of shifts in the positions of various and proclining classes decline of urban semi-decentralization of policy and so on. See B.N.S. Yadava, The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Trans in from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, The Indian Historical Review 5 pp 1-2 (1979) pp 31-64. R.S. Sharma, The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis in S.V. M. Kherjee ed., pp 186-293. The crisis of course is chronologically located several centuries after the Maurya period but in any case the historical roots of the crisis are not clear.

30 See note 22 also the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta n D.C. Suta: Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization, vol 1 2nd ed. (Calcutta University 1965) pp 262-8.
medieval India one may not perceive such an ideology from the perspective of anthropologists or anthropology-oriented historians. One dimension of this was the need for constant validation of power not only in areas where a community was passing from the pre-state to the state-society stage but even in established state societies. The root of this need which, in the early medieval context, may be understood by broadly labelling it as the ‘legitimation’ process, lay in the separation between the temporal and the sacred domain.31 The do-

Political Processes and Structure

If one goes beyond theory and tries to grasp their relationship in concrete existential terms, they must be seen as interdependent. The temporal power, needed legitimization from spiritual authority, so did the human agents of spiritual authority require sustenance from temporal power. Viewed from this perspective, it should not be surprising that priestly validation of temporal power continued beyond the period of Hindu dynasties. The brahmans in a situation of reciprocal relationship could continue to prepare the praistha of the rule of a Sultan and Sanskritize his title to Suratana. Emphasis on legitimization alone obfuscates crucial aspects of the exercise of force and of the secular compulsions of state power, but as a part of the overall political process it nevertheless offers us a convenient vantage point from which to view the ideological dimension of the state. Temporal power in early as well as in later theoretical writings was required to guarantee protection. It would be too narrow a view of protection to take it simply to mean the physical protection of subjects. Protection related to the ideal social order as defined by the guardians of the sacred domain Danda or force which may have had both secular and on secular connotations was intended by the guardians of the sacred domain primarily not as a political expedient but for the preservation of the social order. Curiously the ideal social

such as leg, nation and the Church-State. I believe have obscured the complexity and true significance of Kingship in India and Heereman in his comment on 'The Conundrum of kings Authority' (p. pp 1-2) in fully agrees with this claim but finally concludes that the king and chal in n were definably separated and made into two mutually exclusive categories. The greater the king’s power, the more he needs the bhain n. C. F. also C.R. L. suggest The Classical Law of India (Berkeley University of California Press 1973) p. 216

See the Cambay Stambhna Parshvanath temple, erected in about 1308 AD referring to Ahladd in as Suratana. Appendix to Epigraphia Indica, 1923 Nos. 766. Another interesting record from hot war on khau in dated 1369 AD refers to Shabuddin as Shahabuddana and traces his descent from the Pandavas through a man named Devasthada. B. K. Paul, Devasthada Corpus of Sanskrit Inscriptions Of Kashmir (Dhel 1982) pp. 113 18 the Veraval record 1264 from coastal Gujarat refers to prophet Mohammad named as Jauudin Muhammad and to God in Islam as Vamantha—vinnanapta Siva dvaraka-pratidevdharman janamam-bhikshu-rana-Muhammadu sarvasu. D. C. Sircar Select Inscriptions Vol 2 (Dhel 1983) p. 303

See Ben Prasad Theory of Government in Ancient India 2nd ed (Allahabad 1968) pp 333-335, Mahabharata ch 8
order was defined, but dharma, nevertheless, was not uniform, and although the king was required to preserve social order, he was at the same time enjoined to allow the disparate dharmas of regions, guilds and associations and of social groups to continue. If there is an anomaly here, the anomaly may help us to understand the massive support which the ruling elites extended to the representatives of the sacred domain in the early medieval period. The territorial spread of the state-society required cutting through the tangle of disparate dharmas through the territorial spread of the brahmanas and of institutions representing a uniform norm in some form or the other; they did not necessarily eliminate the disparate norms but they could provide a central focus to such disparate norms by their physical presence, their style of functioning and their control over what could be projected as the 'transcendental' norm.

Another dimension of this central focus becomes noticeable with the crystallization of the Puranic order, implying the ascendancy of the Bhakti ideology. In sectarian terms, Bhakti could lead to the growth of conflicts in society, but from the standpoint of the state, Bhakti could, perhaps much more effectively than Dharmastra-oriented norms, be an instrument of integration. If there was opposition between Dharmastra-oriented norms and community norms, Bhakti, at least ideally, provided no incompatibility: local cults and sacred

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34 For details, see P.V. Kane, History of Dharmastra (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law), vol. 3, 2nd edition (Poona, 1973), ch. 33; also Heesterman, The conundrum.

35 Heesterman, 'Power and Authority...'.


37 Bhakti could provide the illusion of equality among the lower orders which in reality remained a delusion even in the ritual area; R.N. Nandi convincingly points to the shift in the ideology of the Bhakti movement as also to the change brought about by its temple base and Sanskrit-educated priesthood, supported by members of ruling families, 'Some Social Aspects of the Nalayira Prabandham', Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 37 session (Calicut, 1976), pp. 118–23; Kesavan Veluthat, 'The Temple Base of the Bhakti Movement in South India', ibid., 40 session (Waltair, 1979), pp. 185–94.
centres could be brought within the expansive Puranic fold through the process of identification. Though originating in an earlier period, the temple grew to be the major institutional locus of Bhakti in the early medieval period and for temporal power the temple as a symbol in material space of the sacred domain could provide a direct link with that domain in two ways: (i) The king could seek to approximate the sacred domain through a process of identification with the divinity enshrined in the temple. The practice initiated by the Pallavas and augmented by the Colas taken to be similar to the Devanāga cult of south-east Asia is an example of such a process. (ii) the second way was to surrender temporal power to the divinity, the cult of which was raised to the status of the central cult and to act as its agent. This process is illustrated by the stages through which the cult of Jagannatha emerged as the central cult in Orissa and the ritual surrender of temporal power to the divinity by King Anangabhadra.

The centrality of the cult in relation to others in this process implied the centrality of its agents as well. The Cola and Coḍaganga practices are perhaps facets of the same concern—to have direct links with the sacred domain.

The process of legitimization thus cannot be viewed simply in terms of a newly emerged local polity seeking validation through linkage with a respectable Kṣatriya ancestry or by underlining its local roots. The constant validation of temporal authority really relates to the complex of ideological apparatus through which temporal power was reaching out to its temporal domain. (If) the State is a special apparatus exhibiting a peculiar material framework that cannot be reduced to the given relations of political domination then it be

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38 Nanda: Indian Religion Institutions and Cults in the Deccan (Delhi 1973) pp. 10ff Veluthat
39 K. Veluthat: Royalty and Democracy: Legitimation of Monarchical Power in the South, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 39th sess. on (Hyderabad 1979) pp. 311-312 see also B. Sircar: Steam & Saty (pp. 334ff)
41 An interesting analysis of this process, H. Kulke: Legitimisation and Town planning in the Feudatory States of Central Orissa in Rural Space in India: Studies on Archaeological Anthropology Jan Poper ed. (pp. 39-40).
comes imperative to study the pattern of use of the available ideological apparatus which constituted an integral part of the overall political order. From the perspective of the interdependence between temporal power and sacred authority, it becomes understandable that assignments such as brahmadeyas and devadanäs were not an administrative but a socio-religious necessity for the temporal power; the earthly agents of the sacred domain—and such agents were ultimately defined by the changing contexts of both the temporal and the sacred order—generated a pattern of dominance in their areas of preserve, but it would not be compatible with the argument presented here to generalize either that temporal power in early medieval India was a tool in the hands of the brahmanäs and the temple managers, or that massive support to the representatives of the sacred domain meant parcelization of temporal power, an assumption which in any case will have to presuppose that temporal power emanated from a single source. It needs also to be underlined that the duality of the temporal and sacred domains does not necessarily imply that the relationships between the domains remained unchanged from the Vedic times to eternity. From the standpoint of temporal power, Vedism, Purãñism, Tantrism and other forms of heterodoxism could simultaneously acquire the connotation of the sacred domain. What is required is to

43 Poulantzas further explains (ibid., p. 37): Ideological power is never exhausted by the State and its ideological apparatuses. For just as they do not create the dominant ideology, they are not the only, or even primary factors in the reproductions of the relations of ideological domination/subordination. The ideological apparatuses simply elaborate and inculcate the dominant ideology.

44 This view seems to be projected by both K. Veluthat, 'Royalty and Divinity' and P.M. Rajan Gurukkal who considers the Kulašekhara state of Kerala to be 'in a way the creation' of a dominant landed group among the brahmanäs, 'Medieval Landrights: Structure and Pattern of Distribution', ibid., pp. 279–84.

45 See footnotes 31 and 90.

46 This requires to be underlined in view of the changing patterns of patronage in different periods. For the early medieval period, the relative neglect of the implications of the deep penetration of Tantrism into religion and polity will bear out the point I am trying to make. Devangana Desai argues that the patronage of Tantrism is reflective of feudal degeneration, as it served the two dominant interests of the kings and feudal chiefs of early medieval India: War and Sex, 'Art under Feudalism in India', The Indian Historical Review, 1:1 (1974), p. 12; also Idem, Erotic Sculpture of India (Delhi, 1975). This seems to be too narrow a view to take of the profound impact of Tantrism in early medieval society. If Tantrism represented
analyze the regional and group perception of the sacred domain. This will help us understand the curious contradiction between general support and cases of persecution. The overwhelming domination of the brahmana groups and temples in South India juxtaposed with the incorporation of Jain tenets in the religious policies of individual rulers of Western India or the appointment of a devapatananayaka, an official in charge of uprooting images of gods from temples and of confiscation of temple property, by an early medieval ruler of Kashmir. Taking even the uncommon cases as aberrations would be to bypass the issue; the point is how in the early medieval context the relevance of the sacred domain was defined by temporal power.

Another aspect of the complexity we have talked about concerns the territorial limits of the temporal domain. Temporal domain was defined by the extent of royal power but kingdom was not defined in concrete territorial terms. Even the ja tapadi or rastra, one of the constituent limbs of the state in the Saptanga formulation, was not internally coherent and closed towards the outside. The state was thus not a static unit but one that was naturally dynamic. Even the territory of the Mauryas, which for the period of Asoka alone can be clearly defined by the distribution of his edicts, was designated as vigraha or vyajwasana—an area over which the rule of the emperor extended.

esoter c knowledge then the remark of F. Edelstein, make clear, that in the Upani-

dads, seems relevant here. Knowledge true esoteric knowledge is the maga key to

Omnipotence absolute power. By it one becomes autonomous. Upanisads.


R Nand, Religious Institutions in Early Medieval Karnataka (c. AD 500-1200) (Delhi, 1975); B D Chattopadhyaya, Rel g on in a Royal Household: A Study of Some Aspects of the Karnataka dynasty in this volume.


Keertipran 

De Casparis, Inscriptions and South Asian Dynastic Traditions.

Major Rock Ed etc., ll, 11; see D C S, Helen and Ficin, l pp. 1235-6.
The territorial composition of the Mauryan empire in Asoka's period can be characterized as a combination of several nodes such as Pārāliputra, Ujjayinī, Takṣasāla, Tosali and Suvarṇagiri as well as areas of such peoples as Bhojas, Rathikas, Pulindas, Nābhakas and that of the ātavikas or forest people.\(^{52}\) Such fluid situations—for there is no guarantee that this territorial composition remained static throughout the Mauryan period—are schematized in the mandala concept of the political theorists who locate the vijīgīṣu at the core of the mandala,\(^{53}\) and the 'royal mystique',\(^{54}\) represented by the Cakravartin model of kingship, is a logical follow-up of this formulation. It has been the bane of writings on the political history of early and early-medieval India to search for approximations of the Cakravarti among the kings of big-sized states;\(^{55}\) the ideal is only a recognition of the existence of disparate polities and of military success as a precondition of the Cakravarti status which was superior to the status represented by the heads of other polities.

IV

Within the parameters of the interdependence of temporal and sacred domains, and more precisely the essentially dynamic contours of these domains, the political processes of early medieval India may be sought to be identified. I would venture to begin by suggesting that political processes may be seen in terms of parallels with contemporary economic, social and religious processes. The essence of the economic process lay in the horizontal spread of rural agrarian settlements, and

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) The concept is found in such texts as Arthāśāstra, 6.2: Kāmandakiya Nitiāra, 8.45 and so on. See Beni Prasad, Theory of Government, . . ., pp. 143ff; Altekat, pp. 293ff; for recent comments, Heesterman, Power and Authority . . ., pp. 77–8.

\(^{54}\) T.R. Trautmann, 'Tradition of Statecraft in Ancient India', in R.J. Moore, ed., pp. 86–102. Trautmann defines 'royal mystique' as 'a network of interrelated symbols' its vehicles being 'works of art such as courtly epics, royal biographies and ornate ideologies found in inscriptions'; he takes Rajendra Cola's expedition to the north and north-east as an expression of this 'mystique'.

\(^{55}\) Even R. Inden, who by no means suffers from the limitations of traditional political historiography, cannot seem to resist the search for a 'paramount king of all India', 'Hierarchies of Kings in Early Medieval India', Contributions to Indian Sociology, N.S. 15, 1–2 (1981), p. 99.
this remains true even for the early historical period despite the accent on urban economy or money economy of the period. The process of caste formation, the chief mechanism of which was the horizontal spread of the dominant ideology of social order based on the varna-division—despite again the ascendency of heterodoxy in the early historical period—remained the essence of the social process which drew widely dispersed and originally outlying groups into a structure which allowed them in a large measure to retain their original character except that this character was now defined with reference to the structure. In the related religious process too the major trend was the integration of local cults, rituals, and sacred centres into a pantheistic supra local structure. The mechanism of integration was by seeking affiliation with a deity or a sacred centre which had come to acquire supra local significance. Applied to the study of the political

36 R. S. Sharma, Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India (Delhi 1983) ch. 10

37 For example, despite the substantial support extended to the Buddha at times by both the Satavahanas and the Western Ksatrapas, the dominance of Varna ideology is evident in their records of the express 'abhi evam vyavaharam anuvartayate' applied to Gaya pratistha Satyakarni in a prabandha and in his memory. The express on utpala varna abhi evam vyawaharam anuvartayate applied to Saka Ahdadatman in the Jamagadh inscription of AD 150, S. C. Sinha, Inscriptions, 3 pp 177-204

38 Despite their differences in many respects, N. K. Bose's model of 'rel ab sorption' and M. N. Srinivas's model of Sanskritization are being drawn upon to make this generalization. A useful review of the contributions of these two authors with complete bibliographic references will be found in S. Munshi, 'Total Absorption and Sanskritization in Hindu Society', Contributions to Indian Sociology, N.S., 13.2 (1979) pp 293-317. It must be made clear that total absorption is merely a broadly defined process, and not the only process and that the continuuity of internal organization in a large measure does not imply status of equality within the social order in the 'maturng' of the caste formation process would totally mis the hierarchical ordering in the caste structure down to the level of the untouchables. Secondly the ethnic group as a whole in view of the complex operation of the social mobility process does not retain its pre-caste character otherwise we would not have had brahmans, kshatriyas, sudras, and so on emerging from the same stock. For a useful discussion see Jaswal, Studies in Early Indian Social History

39 Synoptic studies on processes of cult formation in early medieval India are not known to me but the excellent study on the cult of Jagannath in may help fit in with the process. A. Eschmann et al., eds, The Cults of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa, particularly chs 3-5, pt. 2 chs 13-14. In the case of Tam Maru in the Cola period, note the remark of R. Champakalakshmi, 'The early Chola temples
process, these parallels would suggest consideration at three levels: the presence of established norms and nuclei of the state society, the horizontal spread of state society implying the transformation of pre-state polities into state polities, and the integration of local polities into structures that transcended the bounds of local polities. In other words, in trying to understand the political processes and structures in early medieval India it may be more profitable to start by juxtaposing the processes of the formation of local state polities and supra-local polities than by assessing the structures in terms of a perennial oscillation between forces of centralization and decentralization.

The parallelism drawn here is in a sense misleading since in polity, as in society or religion, no given structures could be immutable in view of the underlying dynamism I have already drawn attention to, but the point about the process essentially being a range of interactions still remains valid. The specific complexities of early medieval political formation have, therefore, to be stated in clear empirical terms. The first major point which may be put forward with regard to the post-Gupta polity is that the state society, represented by the emergence of ruling lineages, had covered all nuclear regions and had progressed well into peripheral areas by the end of the Gupta period. I assume details of political geography need not be cited to substantiate this generalization. And yet, it is significant that inscriptions from the seventh century alone, from different regions of India, begin to produce elaborate genealogies, either aligning the alleged local roots of ruling lineages with a mythical tradition or by tracing their descent from mythical heroic lineages. The emergence of genealogy has been taken as a shift from 'yajña to vamsa', indicating a change in the nature of kingship, but in the totality of its geographical distribution, the genealogical evidence has a more significant implication: the pro-

... systematically used the śrīva mainly due to its assimilative character as the only aniconic form which could incorporate in canonical temples, local and popular cult practices centring round the Rāma or pillar-and-tree, thus providing a constantly widening orbit for bringing in divergent socio-economic and ethnic groups into Saiva worship. Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India: A Review Article, The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 18, 3-4 (1982), p. 420.

60 De Casparis.

61 Ditto, Political Authority and Structural Change.
liberation of actual ruling lineages defining the domain of political power. The state society even in nuclear areas did not have a stable focus: the mobilization of military strength could not only displace a ruling lineage but could create a new focus and a new network of political relations. The shift from the Badami Calukyas to the Rastrakutas and then again to the Calukyas of Kalyana or from the Pallavas and the Pandyas to the Colas was not simply a change from one lineage to another; each change redefined the locus of the state in a geographical context which had nevertheless experienced a long and interrupted history of the state society. In such contexts, the use of the term state formation primary secondary or even tertiary would be highly inappropriate and would obscure the distinction with areas which were indeed experiencing the passage from the pre-state to the state society on a significant scale. The distinction remains valid throughout Indian history due to the uneven pace of change and transitions from the pre-state to the state society have been documented through the medeval to modern times.

I have been using expressions such as lineage domain and state society without a clear reference to the state in the early modern times.


45 Lineage is simply used here to transcribe such terms as kula, varna or an upa which were suffixed to the names of the ruling family. Lineage in this sense does not denote a pre-state stage of polity as it may have done in the ascent age of the emergence of the state in the Indus Valley. (Romila Thapar, From Lineage).

46 The range of definitions of the state is enormous and to view the state as opposed to ch flooding in terms of the men's capacity to exercise force in society and in terms of a centralized and hierarchically organized political system (R. Cohen, State Origins: A Reappraisal, in The Early State, pp 35-6) will not be compatible with the term which is of state society. Morton Fried's definition (The Evolution of Political Society, New York, 1967, p. 129) of the state as a complex of institutions by means of which the power of the society is gained on a basis superior to kinship also does not seem sufficient. The real question is the context of power since the basis of the state is not separable between producing and non-producing groups if the is no incompatibility between state society and the
context. This is because of some definitional problems which could be clearly stated by working out the geography of the loci of political power over a few centuries. I can however make a very brief reference to a selected span of time—the eleventh century—the two reasons for considering the span as significant being: (i) evidence for this period—particularly from south India—has recently resulted in the urge for a revaluation of commonly used concepts on the state; (ii) the eleventh century, in relation to the centuries preceding and following it, does not present any major fluctuations in the list and geography of the distribution of ruling lineages. At a rough estimate the number of ruling lineages of this century could be put around forty; the number is reconstructed on the basis of specific references to lineage names and excludes cases where, despite the use of a regal title or a title approximating it, descent is not clearly indicated. In a sense the reconstruction of such numbers would be futile since I am not sure that I can convert these numbers into the number of states and say that forty states existed in India in the eleventh century. Terms such as the Cola State, Câñukya State or Pâla State in place of 'kingdoms' or 'empires' may not raise serious objections, but I am doubtful if I would be equally justified in going ahead with the use of this terminology in relation to, say, the Kadambas of Vanavâsi, Hangal and Goa, the Câhamânas of Sâkambhari, Broach, Dholpur, Prataghar, Nadol and Ranthambhor; the Paramâras of Malwa, Lâta, Candrâvatî, Arbuda and Suvarṇâgiri; and similarly, Nořamba State, Bâna State

organization of political power along lineage ties or/and in other terms. State society, however, only points to the existence of this separation and does not suggest the historical specificity of the total complex of a State structure.

65 This estimate is based on: H.C. Ray, The Dynastic History of Northern India (Early Medieval Period), 2 vols., reprint (Delhi, 1973); F. Kielland, 'A List of Inscriptions of Northern India', Appendix to Epigraphia Indica, 5, 1-96; D.R. Bhandarkar, 'A List of the Inscriptions of Northern India in Brâhmî and its Derivative Scripts, from about 200 A.C.', Appendix to Epigraphia Indica, vols. 19-23; F. Kielland, 'Synchronistic Tables for Southern India, AD 400-1400', Epigraphia Indica, 8.


67 Dasarath Sharma; also 2nd edition (Delhi, 1975).

68 P. Bhatia, The Paramâras (Delhi, 1968); also, H.V. Trivedi, Inscriptions of the Paramâras (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 7.2) (New Delhi, n.d.).
or Raja State signifying the domains of these respective lineages may be found to be equally inappropriate. The reason is not simply the status of a lineage - the point really is whether there is always a necessary correspondence between a lineage and a static territorial limit. Early medieval evidence suggests that this is not so. I have cited the cases of the Kadambas and the Cahamanas many more are readily available. The Kalacuris, an ancient lineage are found in western Deccan in a comparatively early period but they established several nuclei of power as in Tripun and Ratnapur in the upper Narmada basin in the early medieval period whereas one of its segments ventured into such a remote area of northeastern India that it came to be designated as Sarayupara. The movements of the Kamaras outside Karnataka although the particular lineages involved are not always specified led to the establishment of new ruling families in Bengal and Bihar, and possibly also to the formation of such Rajput clans as the Solankis and Rathods. The ruling lineage in its entirety is the point of reference in the case of major lineages in many records as suggested by expressions like Pallavanam or Kadambanam. What I am, therefore, arguing is that since the changing distribution patterns of ruling lineages do not necessarily correspond to static territorial limits an initial study of policy has to start with an analysis of the


70 For the records of different Kalacuri line see V V Matil Inscrts. of the Kalasura Cheda Era (Carp et Inscrn. primum Indic. vol. 4 pp. 1-2) (Cotta Acad. 1955)

71 For a recent discussion on see D C S race Pala Sena Yoger Vamaniyasarasa (I. Bengali) (Calcutta 1982)

72 The common origin of the Calukyas of Karnataka and the Calukyas of Gujara has been doubted by many including A.K. Majumdar but Majumdar himself points to the existence of common traditions among them. S Rathod is derived from Rasthakota the name being in existence at Dholpur and Hathunji in Rajasthan in the early medieval period. D. Sharma ed Rajasthan Through the Ages. I (Bombay 1966) p. 287 also Chattopadhyaya, ‘The Origin of the Rajput’ in this volume.

73 De Casparis.
formation of lineages and of the pattern of the network they represent, both territorially and in inter-lineage combinations, at different levels in the organization of political power. Such an analysis may ultimately clarify relations in the structures of supra-local polities, which alone seem to be issues in historiographical debates on the polity of early medieval India. The focus then will have to shift from extremities like ‘virtual absence of’ or ‘construction and collapse of’ the administrative apparatus. In fact, as the empirical evidence from regions like Rajasthan suggests, the distribution of political authority could be organized by a network of lineages within the framework of the monarchical form of polity, retaining at the same time areas of bureaucratic functioning.74 A remark, made with reference to medieval Deccan, seems pertinent here: ‘The development of State bureaucracy and private lordly organization was neither mutually exclusive nor confined to two different stages of a process. In this agrarian society private and State interests developed simultaneously and in terms of one another’.75

The formation and mobilization of lineage power did not, of course, develop along a single channel; it could involve the colonization of areas of pre-state polity and change of the economic pattern of the region by expansive lineages;76 in particular contexts, the emergence of ruling lineages would correspond to ‘primary state formation’ and the introduction of the monarchical ideology of rule; it could even be the simple replacement of one lineage by another. All these processes could and did operate simultaneously but—and this needs to be underlined if we are to take an all-India perspective—not in isolation from one another. Polities were interactive and interlocking—if nothing else, inventories of battles fought in the early medieval period would be a sure index of this—and this often resulted in the formation of new blocks and networks of power in which the original identity of a lineage was obliterated.77

74 Chattopadhyaya, ‘Origin of the Rajputs’.  
75 Perlin, p. 279.  
76 Yadava, Society and Culture, p. 103, fn. 623; Chattopadhyaya, pp. 63–4; an example of this is provided by the Ajayagadh rock inscription in which Ananda, the brother of Candella Trailokyaivarman, is said to have reduced to submission the ‘wild tribes of Bhillas, Sabaras and Pulindas’, Epigraphia Indica, I, p. 337.  
77 Apart from the cases of the Solankis and the Rathods, those of the Codagangas
Two further points about lineages as bases for the study of political power may be made. First, the Kalkurum or Cahamani evidence has shown that lineages could be remarkably expansive but there are other levels at which the relationships between lineages and territories can be examined. Pre-ninth century evidence from Tamilnadu has been cited to show that the nucleus of the power of a lineage could be an area comprised of two or three districts. The relationship between the lineage and its territory was expressed in the form of the name of the area in which the lineage was dominant. Examples of this are common in the south and in the Deccan. Cola nala Cera nala Tondai nala Oyna nala Irupolli pad Ganga pad Nulimbi pad. To mention a few bear out this relationship. The growth of a lineage into a supra local or supra regional power would result in the reorganization of the radius or pad into administrative units as suggested by the emergence of the nala radius and nulimbi radius in the Cola State.7 but from our point of view what is important is that such administrative units emerged by integrating pre-existing lineage areas. It must be conceded that the pattern available for the south and the Deccan cannot be applied to all regions in Bengal for example, such details of lineage geography are simply not available elsewhere as in early medieval Rajasthan and Gujarat the trend seems to have been towards the parcellization of the area variously called Gunjara bhumi Gunjara dharani and Gunjaradhata—all obviously derived from the ethnic term Gunjara7—into strongholds of several lineages only some of which traced their descent from the Gunjara stock.7

Secondly, the formation of ruling lineages can be seen also from the perspective of the social mobilization process in early medieval India.

and Veng Calukyas may be cited to illustrate this process.
7 Y Subbarayalu, Mandala as a Political Geographical Unit in South India. Proceeding of the Indian History Congress 39 sess on (Hyderabad 1978) pp 84-6. For details of the political geography of the Cola country see idem Political Geography of the Chola Country (Madras 1973) Subbarayalu convincingly argues to show that radius were basically a geographical and not an tribal administrative divisions (Political Geography pp 32-3) but from the point of view of political the importance of these administrative units is the correlation of many cases between chief radius and radius and padas (Political Geography ch 7) see also A K Mukundar pp 17-22. Mamata Chatterjee. 

7 Chatterjee
In a situation of open-ended polity and of a congenial climate for 'Kṣatriyization', any lineage or segment of a larger ethnic group, with a coherent organization of force, could successfully make a bid for political power and lay the foundation of a large state structure. The origin of the Hoysala State, which lasted for about three centuries and a half, goes back to the malepas or the hill chiefs of the Soseyūr forests and the hill forces that the chiefs could command at that stage. Here too the pattern of the formation of a lineage and the level of power a lineage would reach would not be identical in all areas. Generally, the mobility upward was from a base which could be broadly characterized as agrarian, and political changes from the seventh century, again in western India, provide an idea of the sequences in the political mobility process. We have noted that Gurjaratru or Gurjarabhūmi was the base from which several lineages tracing descent from the Gurjaras emerged; the separation of the ruling lineages from the common stock is suggested by the general name Gurjara-Pratihāra used by the lineages, and while the base of one such lineage in the Jodhpur area seems to have been established by displacing pre-existing groups, in the Alwar area in eastern Rajasthan there is clear indication of a sharp distinction which had developed between Gurjara cultivators and the Gurjara-Pratihāra ruling lineage. It is on this base that the Gurjara-Pratihīra supra-regional power, which began with the expansion of one of the lineages and extended at one stage possibly as far east as Bengal, was built up. Elsewhere, for example, the presence of Vellāla generals and warrior elements and of feudatories in the Pallava and Cola polities in south India or the formation of the Dāmaras into a major political group in the Lohara period (c. AD 1000–1170) in Kashmir would

81 See references in note 31.
84 Dirks, 'Political Authority and Structural Change', p. 130; Stein, *Peasant State* , p. 188; for reference to Velirs of Kodumbalur as feudatories of the Pallavas, see Govindaswamy, *The Role of Feudatories in Pallava History*, pp. 70ff.
85 Kosambi writes, 'The essential question is: Were the Dāmaras feudal lords? Did they hold land as feudal property? The answer is fairly clear, in the affirmative...
suggest a similar process of the emergence of potentially dominant elements from within local agrarian bases.

The structure of supra-local or supra-regional politics has then to become understandable in a large measure with reference to its sub-stratum components and it is in the characterization of this reference that the perspectives of historians substantially differ. Before the debate is taken up for review the geographical loci of large politics need to be briefly touched upon. The large politics tended to emerge throughout Indian history in what geographers call nuclear regions providing such politics with a resource base potentially much richer and easier to integrate administratively than relatively isolated pockets where state formation a chronologically phased phenomenon would reveal less integrative patterns of politics. The Ganges basin Kaveri basin Krishna Godavari doab and Raichur doab are cited as examples of nuclear regions and indeed the large state structures of the early medieval period all thrived in these regions. Two qualifications are however necessary. First, a nuclear region is finally a historical chronological and not purely a geographical region; the nuclearity of

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Origin of Feudalism in Kashmir: Yadava Secular Landgrans p 90 note refers to a merchant called Jayyaka who amassed wealth and became a Damara chief. These assertions seem to result from a misreading of the Keshar-King evidence. The reference relating to Jayyaka (VII 93 95) seems to show him to be from a peasant family who traded in foodgrains with foreign countries and achieved the status of a Damara (see also IV 347-48). The post-Raj tribal background of the Damaras' their transformation into peasantry and emergence into a dominant section may have striking parallels with the Veilbas and other dominant peasant sections elsewhere. See the Appendix on Damaras in Krishna Mohan.

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The concept of nuclear regions or even sub-nuclear regions has been used by historians working on this period Kulke, Royal Temple Policy B Stein Integration of the Agrarian System in South India in R.E. Frykenberg, ed. Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History (Madison 1969) pp 175-216. Theoretical discussions will be found in R.I. Crane, ed., Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies (Duke University 1966) E. Schwartzenberg The Evolution of Regional Power Configurations in the Indus Subcontinent in R.G. Fox ed. pp 197-233. I have, however, mainly followed the idea of the relative order of regions outlined in O H K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmouch India and Pakistan (University Paperback, Delhi, 1972) chs 6 13.
a region is related to the way historical factors converge on it and not merely to its resource potential. Warangal, away from the nuclear Krishna-Godavari doab, remained a base of the large structure of the Kākatīya State; the Caulukya State of Gujarat, with its base at Anahilapāṭaka, emerged in a region which, from the point of view of its basic agrarian resource potential, was not sufficiently "nuclear". Secondly, larger politics did not necessarily originate in nuclear areas; military mobilization could generate a movement towards nuclear areas and result in major transformations in polity. The movement of the Pratiharas from Rajasthan to Kanauj, of the Pālas from southeast Bengal to the middle and the lower Ganges basin, the descent of the Hoysalas from the hilly region of the Soseyūr forests into the areas of south Karnataka held by the Gangas for centuries, produced a steady growth of political structures of substantial dimensions in these regions.

I have already noted in the beginning that recognition of the dispersed foci of political power was present even in traditional historiography in the form of the formulation of "feudal tendencies", although the formulation was applied generally to a pattern of polity which was considered not sufficiently large in terms of its approximation to an all-India empire and which could not, therefore, be considered centralized. Recent perspectives specifically related to only early medieval India have shifted from acceptance of "centralization" and "bureaucracy" as essential characteristics of a large state structure to detailed analyses of dispersed foci of power within such structures. This concern appears to be common both to those who characterize these structures in terms of "feudal polity" and their critics to whom the "feudal" model is either "outworn" or is an exclusively European formation which hinders a proper understanding of the uniqueness of the Indian political system. Where then does the difference lie?

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88 However, for irrigation and development of the agrarian base of the Caulukyan state structure, see V.K. Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India (AD.1000–1300)* (Delhi, 1990), ch. 2; for Rajasthan, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan" in this collection.
89 D.C. Sircar, *Pāla-Sena Yuge*...
90 This particular brand of criticism in respect of Indian polity has emanated,
Reducing the discussion to the level of political relations alone, the fundamental difference seems to lie as I understand it between their respective notions of parcelized sovereignty and "shared sovereignty. Opposition to the feudal model" is best articulated in the model of the segmentary state which is currently bandied about, at least in the circle of Western Indologists as a major breakthrough in our understanding of the traditional Indian political system. The model which is directly lifted from the analysis of a pre-state polity in East Africa but in the Indian context is mixed up with concepts of kingship derived from literature, presents the following characteristics of the segmentary state: (i) limited territorial sovereignty which further weakens gradually as one moves from the core to the periphery and often shades off into ritual hegemony; (ii) the existence of a centralized core with quasi-autonomous foci of administration; (iii) the pyramidal repetition of the administrative structure and functions in the peripheral foci; (iv) the absence of absolute monopoly of legitimate force at the centre and (v) shifting allegiances of the periphery of the

curiously from a set of prevalent institutions and in the context of early medieval polity been inscribed by B. Stein. "The State and Agrarian Order in Medieval South India" A Hstorigraphical Critique" in B. Stein ed. Essays on South India (Delhi 1976) pp 64-91. Stein proposed the alternative model of a segmentary sys te m ("The Segmentary State") which has proved a rallying point for South Asia experts from these Institutions and even foci of natural demarcations. For example, D. R. (Political Authority and Structural Change, p 126) in 1966 declared, "The segmentary state model is neither well defined to index changes in political or social relations nor is it culturally sensitive enough to identify the differences between East Africa and India, or even more particularly between north and south India". (Emphasis added) the implication of perhaps is that the differences between north India and south India are greater than those between East Africa and India.)

By 1979 his critique of the model had mellowed down considerably (Structure and Meaning of Political Relations, R. Inden contends the model a real break with previous approaches to ritual, Authority and Cycles of Time in Hindu Kingship, p 117, J.S. Richards, ed., pp 28-73; also B. Stein, All the Kings' Men, Perspectives on Kingship, p 126 Medival South India, pp. 113-67. Deem. Maharashtrian Medieval and Modern Kingship in South India, in B. L. Smith, ed. Essays on Gupta Culture (Delhi 1983) pp 67-92. The real point of convergence in these writings is that they view the Indian state system, whatever the period, as a ritual system.

The discussion here is restricted only to the construct of feudal polity and to the particular brand of estateism it has recently been subjected to. It does not take into account the total range of the critique of the feudal format on
system. In the schema of the segmentary state, as it has been variously worked out in the Indian context, the major integrative factor is 'ritual sovereignty' rather than 'political sovereignty', and attempts at explications of the concept of 'ritual sovereignty' locate the king as the principal ritualist. The 'new modality of relations between the chiefs and the King', one writer argues in the context of the later phase of Pallava polity, (which) 'represents the expansion of a regional system into a trans-regional system' is nothing more than a shift from an earlier ritual system, and the different foci of power nothing more than ritual accessories. It is the kingship which is 'incorporative' and, one may say by extending this logic, whatever be the territorial spread of the state, it is ritual space.

All this is a fine example of the study of the state sans politics.

92 See note 9 for references to Southall's writings in which the 'segmentary state model has been constructed. The applicability of the model has been debated in the volume edited by R.G. Fox; various points regarding the empirical validity of its application to the Cola State by Stein have been raised by R. Champakalakshmi, 'Peasant State and Society...', and in greater detail by D.N. Jha, 'Relevance of Peasant State and Society to Pallava and Cola times', The Indian Historical Review, vol. 8, Nos. 1-2 (1981-82), pp. 74-94. I do not wish to re-examine the question of empirical validity here, but will briefly touch upon the internal consistency or the validity of the model itself. Southall constructs his model by drawing a distinction between the 'segmentary state' and the 'unitary state', which is, for a historian, as irrelevant as the dichotomy between the 'early state' and the 'industrial state'. If pre-state polity has a varied range (and according to Southall's own characterization, his East African Alur polity would approximate the 'chiefdom' category), so too has State polity, and to equate the State with a 'unitary state' is to totally ignore historical experience. Curiously, Southall's 'segmentary state' and 'unitary state' are not ultimately distinctly separate categories either; they are two extreme points in the same structure, which change positions, depending on the degree of centralization or decentralization in existence in the structure at any given point of time (p. 260). Secondly, Southall posits the 'segmentary state' as a counter-point to 'feudal polity' but ends up by suggesting its applicability to a series of historical political structures ranging from feudal France to 'traditional states of India, China and inner Asia' (pp. 252-4). There is no dearth of models one can draw upon (for example, the model of a 'galactic' state constructed by Tambiah on the basis of evidence from Thailand), and Stein is certainly not unaware of the curious position taken by Southall (Stein, 'Segmentary State...'), but the point remains that the model is projected as a key to our understanding of polity in 'traditional' India. Is it that it is being used to fill the vacuum created by the decline of 'Oriental Despotism' or of the venerated tradition of East-West dichotomy?

93 Dirks, 'Political Authority and Structural Change...
While the analytic inseparability of State structure from State ritual is understandable particularly in South India where material for the study of such a relationship is plentiful the subordination of the political and economic dimensions of the state structure to its ritual dimension has led to the inevitable neglect of two imperatives under which a state is expected to operate (i) stability in its power structure (ii) resource mobilization which logically cannot be separated from the process of the redistribution of resources to integrative elements within the state structure. To briefly illustrate the implications of these omissions too narrow a definition of the core of the Cola territory would leave unanswered why the Cola territorial reorganizations included apparently peripheral areas like Ganga vaḍi and Nolamba vaḍi or why territorial conquests of strategic areas and areas of resource potential sought to eliminate existing powerholders and to convert them in some cases at least into extensions of patrimonial holdings. The concept of a core area as remaining permanently limited to the lineage area in the context of a supra-local polity is untenable its definition too has to be seen more as functional than geographical. The second omission has resulted in the postulate of

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91 Dikes, Structure and Meaning of Political Relations
92 See Eisenstadt xv-xvi pp 7-8
93 Subbarayalu Mandalam as a Polico-Geographical Unit
94 The emergence of Cola power had its basis in the m m not on of Muttaraiyar power and then its penetration into Tonda mand lam Kongsula Pandya country Gangavat and Vengi to mint on only a few regions lay fins de the orb of the Cola political crescent irrespective of the durat on and fluctuations in actual control whereas on the fringes of the Cola region proper local hegemonies could continue although Subbarayalu thinks that the families of the Chiefs were enlisted for the Chola army and admin strative salar (Poli cal Geography p 80) For an attempt to determine the coe of the Cola domain through a study of the ambition pattern of Cola records see G W Spencer and K R Hall Toward an Analysis of Dynamic Hierarchies The Imperial Cholas of 11th Century South India Annan Profile 2.1 (1974) pp 51-62.
95 I have already referred to the dispersed nodes of the Mauryan State (note 52) in the case of the hujanas too Gandhara in the north-west was a core region and Mathura in the upper Ganges-Yamuna basin was another such region I.B.D Chat
96 topadhyaya Mathurā from Sunga to Kujāna Times An Historical Outline in Daris M Srinivasan ed Mathurā The Cultural Heritage (Delh 1989) pp 19-30
97 Core in the context of supra-local polity has thus to acquire a flexible connotation
the 'politics of plunder' as the major mechanism of resource acquisition and redistribution— in fact, a mechanism which is essentially identical with the one present in the polity of the 'chiefdoms' of the Sangam age. It is indeed curious that the postulate of the 'politics of plunder' has been put forward in relation to the Cola State in which a vast agrarian surplus sustained integrative elements in society and in which the state penetration into growing networks of trade and exchange could diversify and expand its resource bases enormously.

The 'segmentary state' model or the concept of 'ritual sovereignty' cannot in fact resolve the problem of the political basis of integration since a rigid use of the 'segmentary state' concept relegates the different foci of power to the 'periphery' and does not really see them as components of the state structure. The phenomenon of different foci

99 Stein, 'The State and Agrarian Order ...'; the idea has been elaborated by G.W. Spencer, 'The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh Century Cylon', Journal of Asian Studies, 33.3 (1976), pp. 405–19. (Since I have not been able to consult Spencer's new publication, Politics of Expansion: The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya (Madras, 1983), I can only state his formulations in the article cited here). Spencer's own evidence contradicts his conclusion since it shows that Cola expansion was motivated more by strategic-commercial considerations, particularly considerations relating to the Pāṇḍya country, than by resource acquisition through raids. One may suggest that despite the revenue survey evidence of the time of the Colas and the actual occurrence of revenue terms (N. Karashima & B. Sitaraman, 'Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions', Journal of Asian and African Studies, 5 (1972), pp. 88–117; N. Karashima, 'Land Revenue Assessment in Cola Times as Seen in the Inscriptions of the Thanjavur and Gangaikondacolipuram Temples', cyclostyled copy) the revenue yield may have been limited, but the real issue is whether it was 'plunder' or agricultural surplus which sustained the ruling and non-ruling elites of society in eleventh century India. The answer is, of course, obvious, and studies on both the north and the south suggest that revenue demand in the early medieval period was on the increase.

100 R.S. Kennedy, 'The King in Early South India, as Chieftain and Emperor', The Indian Historical Review, 3, 1 (1976), pp. 1–15.

101 A recent detailed study on this is K.R. Hall, Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Colas (Delhi, 1980); Idem, 'International Trade and Foreign Diplomacy in Early Medieval South India', Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, 21 (1978), pp 75–98. In fact, the phenomenon of the emergence of networks of exchange from the ninth–tenth centuries, which, in littoral regions, converged with those of international trade of that period was widespread; for Gujarat, see V.K. Jain; for local centres of exchange coinciding with centres of ruling lineages in various parts of India, see B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview' in this volume.
of power was not peculiarly south Indian but cut across all major political structures of the early medieval period and the issue thus a need for a common perspective irrespective of the quality or the volume of material available from different regions. These diffused foci of quasi autonomous power are represented by what is broadly labelled as the samanta system which although present in some form or the other in all major polities has not been taken proper cognizance of by the protagonists of the segmentary state model. Simanta is of course a broad spectrum category and encompasses a profiting range of designations in use in the early medieval period. Not all the designations emerge simultaneously, but by the twelfth thirteenth centuries such terms as mahasamanta samanta mahamandalevara mandalevara, ranaka rauta, thakkura and so on came to indicate a political order which was non bureaucratic and in the context of which the rajap ta rasas constituting the bureaucracy had only a limited part to play. The order assumed the characteristics of a hierarchical formation and this is clear not only in the binary hierarchy of mahasamanta and samanta or mahamandalevara and mandalevara but in the attempted schematisation of the order in early medieval texts like the Aparajita preecha as well. The samanta in its trans political connotation corresponded to the landed aristocracy of the period in addition the space of land assignments and other forms of presentation to various categories of denizens including those rendering military service to the state were

102 Stein, The Pastoral State (1928) talks of local autonomous chiefs in connection with Pala but his study of the Cola’s are has virtually no reference to the actual political linkage between them and the organizers of Cola power. The report presented by N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu (ed. Ail, Study of the Cola Names in Tamil Inscription, Interim Report, Computation and Analysis of Indian and African Languages No. 3, 1976, pg 9–20) on records from the Kota state in south India. The title “Householder” refers to their association with the atri tradition and in the Ail’s interpretation of the names of the different patterns of political and kin linkages, see Balambal, also R. S. Sharma, Social Changes in Early Medieval India (c. 500–1200), (Delhi, 1969) a detailed study of the evidence has recently been made by R. Inden, Hierarchy of Kings. See note 24
factors which, apart from the presence of the *samanta* landed aristocracy, weakened, it is believed, the hold of the state over both the polity and the revenue potential of its constituent territorial units.

The composition of the elites in any given state structure may have varied, but my argument requires that we begin with an explanation of the formation of a political structure rather than with a statement of its decentralized character. In other words, if the *samanta* system was, as has been suggested, the keynote of early medieval polity, then it needs to be recognized that from a pattern of relations characterized by *grahana-moksa* (i.e., capture and release) in the early Gupta phase, there was a shift towards a pattern in which the *samantas* were integrated into the structure of polity and in which the overlord-subordinate relation came to be dominant over other levels of relations in the structure. The political exigency of this integration from the Gupta period specially—and I posit *political integration* as a counterpoint to the decentralized polity of the feudal model—lay in the interrelatedness of polities caused by what I have called the horizontal spread of the state society and represented, geographically, by the lineages at their varied local bases. The exigency is expressed with some clarity in the following quote: 'The larger the unit the greater the King's power, and hence the greater his chances of being efficient within his geographical scope. Hence the constant urge to conquer...'

The structure of polities was only partly based on the elimination of existing bases of power, by the expansion of the kin network of the lineage that emerged as dominant or by the organization of a bureaucracy that could connect different nodes in the structure, but the fact that political relations were regularly expressed as those between the overlord and his feudatories suggests that the dominant mode in the formation of the structure was by encapsulation of the existing bases of power, the spearhead in the structure being the overlord.

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107 Derrett, p. 177.
The current state of research on the political history of the period makes it impossible to advance any general statement from the vast corpus of early medieval material regarding the composition of the feudal estates but two suggestions may be made: (i) since the emergence of the overlord himself had its basis mostly in local innate power the expansion of a lineage into a supra-local power was through pooling military resources and perhaps other forms of support of other lineages (ii) more importantly pooling not only required a circulation or redistribution of resources but required a system of ranking as well. These suggestions are in consonance with integrative policy and the transformation of the samanta into a vital component of the political structure is itself an evidence of ranking and in turn clarifies the political basis of integration. Ranking was associated with roles and services and it may be postulated that a correlation was worked out between such roles as those of the datta, sandhu, graha, and danda-raya and so on and ranking in the samanta hierarchy. The gradual crystallization of

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98 A detailed examination of the extensive and complex mechanism of the growth of the overlord feudatory as a was not thorough the assignment of land and the transfer of state power. The Pra haras, for example in the process of their emergence as a supra-regional power received support from the Ch. as of Gujarat, Cithis and other m. Pra haras in the mid 9th and the 10th centuries were basically created. K.K. Gopal, K.K. Gopal, The assembly of the samanta as a new form, in the Cita Rasa, Pala, and Cola political see J. R. Sen, All India's Manu Gondaswar and Baburab (works cited above).


100 Sha ma (Social Changes) too uses the term feudal ranks but not in the sense of a system which emerges in the context of an independent power. Ranking is suggested by the presence of other forms of combina util bringing the samanta with designations which are base-level titles given to warriors, etc. For details see Jadav, Society and Cult, ch. 3 although Jadav does not use the expression from the position of which I would like to take also L. Gopal for his south see Kashmira and Suvarnayana: Statistical Study of Dance, Mabala, and Gondaswar and Baburab (works cited above).
ranking permeated the early medieval society to such an extent that the status of members within individual ruling lineages came to be expressed in terms of ranks, and that ranks extended to even non-ruling groups and individuals. And in terms of the social process, the transformation of political ranking could in the long run take the form of caste ranking.

Rank as the basis of political organization implies differential access to the centre as also shifts within the system of ranking. The description in the Aparājitaprechā, although built up around an overlord of the ideal cakravartī model, nevertheless points to the relative positioning of different categories of ruling elites including dandanaṇyas, māndaleśas, māndalikas, mahāsāmantaś, sāmantaś, lahuśāmantaś, caturāśikas, rājaputras and so on. The system of ranking in relation to the overlord as offered in the text which was composed at the Calukyan court in Gujarat may be reflective more of the text's perception of Cakravartī power than an actual order, but significantly, a correlation between territorial political hold and rank can be detected in its description. Since the basis of territorial and political hold was not static, rank was not static either. In fact, even inadequate studies available so far would suggest that ranks held by individual families underwent changes, that ranks varied from one generation to the next and that aspirations for higher ranks were operative within

\footnote{111} Cf. the interesting case of the great queen Bammaladevi being addressed as Mahāmāndaleśvarī in a record of 1179, Epigraphia Carnatica, 12, Tm. 35; for evidence from Rajasthan, see Chattopadhyaya, 'Origin of the Rajputs.

\footnote{112} Śūlapanī who was the head of the Varendraka-sīlī-gothis ('guild of sāmādharas of north Bengal) is mentioned as a rāṇakā in the Deopara pañcarī of the twelfth century, Strcr., Select Inscriptions, 2, p. 121; a record of 1263 from Jalāpur refers to the 'head worshipper' of a Mahāvīra temple as Bhāttāraka Rāvala, Appendix to Epigraphia Indica, 19–23, No. 563.

\footnote{113} K.P. Ammakutty, 'Origin of the Samanta Caste in Kērala', Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 41 session (Bombay, 1980), pp. 86–92. In Bengal and Orissa, sāmanta, māhāpata, pāṭṭanāyaka and so on are related to caste position.

\footnote{114} R. Inden, 'Hierarchies of Kings.

\footnote{115} For example, a record of 1151 from Tumkur district, Epigraphia Carnatica, 12, Tm. 9: the range is between Pānacamahāśālade mahāsāmanta and nāyaka.

individual political structures. 11 If the idea of ranking as the political basis of the organization of both local and supra-local structures be accepted then it may be followed up for locating the potential sources of tension on the political plane between the rank holders as also between them and the overlord. Channels open for the diffusion of such tensions would not have been many. Expansion of the kinship network itself encompassed by the system of ranking assignments in return for services as a means of displacing locally entrenched lineage power or diversification of the composition of ruling elites by drawing in non-ruling groups in the system of ranking 12 could only create new loci of power. Crisis was thus built into the process of the formation of the structures, a concrete statement of the crisis as it manifested itself in individual cases is a detail which has still to be satisfactorily worked out.

VI

Before concluding I wish to reiterate what I said in the beginning what has been presented is essentially a statement of my groping for a framework for the study of early medieval polity. I have said that the genesis of the specific features of early medieval polity cannot be satisfactorily comprehended either by isolating a single unit and analyzing the relationship of its segments in ritual terms or by the notion of decentralized polity in which bases of power are created from above through individual or institutional agents. If we take an all-India perspective the shifting political geography of the lineages of the period seems on the other hand, to suggest that the structure of early medieval polity was a logical development from the territorially limited state society of the early historical period to a gradual but far greater penetration of the state society into local agrarian and peripheral levels generating continuous fissions at such levels. The feudatory and other intermediary strata in the early medieval structures of polity in the absence of a definite correlat on between service assignments and the

11 Robert P. 179
12 For examples of big merchants and merchant families being elevated to the ranks of danda-pan, dana-pan and even in pan with appropriate insignia see V.K. Jain, pp. 323ff.
formation of these strata, may thus be seen in terms of an ‘integrative polity’, with potential sources of tension built into the structures. The early medieval phase of polity was perhaps in a way an intermediate phase—a prelude to the exercise of greater control by the medieval state through its nobility and its regulated system of service assignments, but then if the broad-spectrum samanta category was a dominant element in early medieval polity, so did the broad-spectrum category of ‘zamindars’ continue as an ‘irritant’ in the medieval state structure.

All this, at the moment, is essentially a hypothesis, but I venture to place the hypothesis before you because of my conviction that historical studies progress through sharing, though not necessarily through consensus, and that History is not only a continuous dialogue between historians and their material from the past but is also an equally continuous dialogue between historians themselves.

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119 H. Kulke (‘Fragmentation and Segmentation Versus Integration? Reflections on the Concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History’, *Studies in History*, vol. 4, No. 2 (1982), pp. 236–7), also speaks of integration at the regional level but generally avoids discussing the political mechanism of integration.

Religion in a Royal Household
A Study of Some Aspects of Rājaśekhara’s Karpūramaṇjari

Rājaśekhara, who lived between the close of the ninth and the early part of the tenth century was in many ways a man of the world and a man of worldly connections. His ancestry is made to look impeccable in his own works; he was descended from Yavatara-kula, a lineage which is repeatedly eulogised in his works and with which were believed to have been connected such eminent literatures as Akala Jalada Surananda Tarala and Kaviraja. In fact it is quite possible that Akala Jalada was Rajaśekhara’s grandfather and was a source of poetic inspiration to him. Two other connections must have substantially enriched his direct experience regarding contemporary life in society: (i) the association of his family with royalty, and (ii) his marriage. Rajaśekhara’s father Durdaka was a mahamantri, and his own connections with the Pratihara family, one of the most eminent royal families of the period, opened up for him the exclusivist world of the courtly culture of early medieval India. He was a Kṣisa raja at the court of Mahendrapala who regarded Rajaśekhara as his guru; he continued his association with the Pratihara court during the period of Mahipala but later shifted to Tripuri which was the capital...

Reprinted from P. Jash ed. Religion and Society in Ancient India (Calcutta 1984)

prominence under the Kalacuris. His Kalacuri connection is curiously reflected in a verse in the Bilhari stone inscription of Yuvaraja II which puts forward the claim that the composition of the epigraph would evoke admiration from the great poet Rājaśekhara.² Rājaśekhara was married to Avantisundari who is described as Cāhuinakulamolimāliya in the Karpuramanjari;³ the Cāhamāna clan was already on the way to becoming one of the major Rajput families in the early medieval period.⁴

Rājaśekhara was thus, by virtue of his descent and personal connections, eminently suited to assess the courtly culture of his period. In one respect, they must have given him an opportunity to grasp the essentials of the political and cultural situation on a pan-Indian scale. Even if we do not consider him as primarily a commentator of politics and culture of his time, his awareness of the key politico-cultural areas of his period comes out clearly in the repeated references he makes in his works to the contemporary janapadas and their linguistic, literary and other cultural traits. It was perhaps almost an obsession with him, so much so that a fellow litterateur, Kṣemendra, could not resist making a bawdy joke at Rājaśekhara’s expense in his Aucitya-vicāracarcā:

Karnaśidānāmkta-sitamahārāṣṭrikaśākṣaṁtāṁ
Praudhāndhrastanapīdita-pranayinībhṛubhaṅga-Vitruṣītāṁ
Lātiḥāvīvesṭitaṁ-Malayāstṛarjani-belāṁ
Sojan sampratī Rājaśekhara-Vaṁnasim vānchati.⁵

[Our translation:

Rājaśekhara, who has acquired marks (on his body by being bitten) with the teeth of the females of Karnaṭa, who has been wounded by the sideways glances of the fair women of Mahārāṣṭra, who has been oppressed (being

² Mirashi, p. 207.
³ Karpuramanjari, I, II. In the preparation of this paper the text and translation of Karpuramanjari as available in Konow and Lanman and in Manomohan Ghosh have been followed.
⁴ See D. Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties (A study of Chauhan political history; Chauhan political institutions and life in the Chauhan dominions from c. 800 to 1316 AD) (Delhi, 1959), passim; also, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, ‘Origin of the Rajputs: Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Medieval Rajasthan’ in this volume.
⁵ Cited in N. Chakrabarti, p. 22.
pressed) by the breasts of the mature women of Andil ra and threatened by the artfully twisted eyebrows of the beloved who has been encircled by the arms of the females of Lārṣa and who has received threats from the rebuking forefingers of the women of Malaya. "Now des res (refuge) in Vārañ)a."

All this points to a rich possibility for the historian. As Rājaśekhara must have observed the royalty and the court culture from close quarters, it may be legitimately presumed that his works constitute valuable source material for the study of early medieval society. The point is to what extent do his works actually reflect his awareness? This brief essay does not purport to answer this question fully, but an attempt is made to explore a single work of Rājaśekhara, namely, the Karpuramanya and to analyze how trends in religion, which are a vital part of the social orientation of this period, are reflected in his work, at least at the level of the royalty. It is hoped that the sections that follow will provide the raison d'etre of the selection of the text for such an analysis.

II

There are a few useful references in the Karpuramaṇa jari to the daily rites performed by the members of the royal household. At the end of Act I, the king retires to his evening worship (sanyāhaṃ vandidadा)6. In Act II, the application of saṃbüṣa mark (niṃ då) forms a part of the toilet of the heroine Karpuramaṇaṇi.7 These incidental notices, however, do not really relate structurally to the play and in the case of Karpuramaṇaṇi it is only an analysis of its central elements that may be expected to reveal the religious nuances embedded in it.

The cast of Karpuramaṇaṇi is small and stereotyped as is its plot. Almost throughout the play the king, who is on the way to becoming a saṅkhaṭaṇi (saṅkhaṭaṇi) is in the company of his jester and their combined thoughts and efforts are directed to winning for the king, the hand of Karpuramaṇaṇi, the heroine. What makes the plot significant for our purpose is the character of Bhairavana, who is at the centre of all that happens in the play, and even of all that happens

6 Kenow and Lennman p 242
7 Karpuramaṇi, II 12.
verges on the realm of the supernatural, it is the element of supernaturality which ultimately connects the play with the religious world of the early medieval period.

Bhairavānanda enters the play in Act I and gains easy access to the king and the queen as he is popularly reported to be an atyad-bhūtasiddhi, i.e. ‘one who has achieved miracles’. His maiden speech is revealing in several ways and merits close study:

*Manto na tando na-a kim-pi jāne Jhāmmam-ca na Kim-pi guruppasādā Majjam pivāmo mahilaṃ ramāmo Mokkham-ca jāmo kulamaggalaggā.*

[M. Ghosh’s translation:

‘I do not know any mantra or ritual, nor do I know any meditation. (But) by favour of my master I shall drink wine and have intercourse with the wife (lit. woman) and attain liberation attached to the Kaula way.’]*

Bhairavānanda thus makes a frank confession of his ignorance of mantra and tantra but this negative side has a complementary positive aspect. Bhairavānanda is primarily interested in the pleasures of the flesh (majja, mānisa and mahila) but that they do not constitute purely secular pleasures is amply clear from what follows. The speech continues:

*Rāṇḍā Candā dikkhidā dhammadārā Mamijjam mānsam pījāe khajjae-a Bhikkhā bhovjam Cambakhandam-ca sejja Kolo dhanno Kassa no bhādi rammo.*

[M. Ghosh’s translation:

‘A widow or a Candāla woman I may take as my legal wife. Wine may be drunk and meat may be eaten; begging may bring me food and a piece of hide may be my bed. To whom will the Kaula way not appear as lovely?’]*

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8 Ibid., I, 21.
9 M. Ghosh, pp. 91, 193. The translation offered by Ghosh requires some form of correction. For example, his translation, ‘My Master’ has to be understood in the sense of ‘my guru’ or ‘preceptor’, and ‘wife’ in the sense of ‘female’.
10 Ibid., I. 22; M. Ghosh, pp. 91, 193.
The text thus firmly establishes the *kaula* *dharma* or *kaula* sectarian affiliation of Bharavānanda. For comparison, a summary of *kaula* practices in early medieval India may be cited. *Kaulas* believed in *stakamatra*, which consists in indulgence in drink and meat and worship of Śiva in the company of a female partner sitting on the left during the rites. The *kaula* worshipper played the role of Śiva as united with Parvati and exhibited the yoni-mūdra. For the *kaula*, Bhāravānanda, the path of salvation is not through trance, holy sites and the Vedas preached by Viṣṇu and Brahma, his source of salvation is Uma’s dear lover through suraakeli suraaschir. The relevant passage runs as follows:

&n M Mūnīma ṇhaṃm u Hanbha nhamuhd-va ṇa  
Ihaṇeṇa Veṣaḍi evaṃe ṇa Kuḍukkhahim  
Ekṣenama ṇa-ṇam madaṇdemeni ṇa  
Mokha uṇam suṣaakeli suṣaarasch it

[M. Ghosh’s translation]

Even gods like Viṣṇu and Brahma say that salvation comes from education on recitation of the Vedas and performing sacrifices. Only the dear consort of Uma (i.e., Śiva) sees salvation with love, sports and drinking of liquor.

Bharavānanda’s maiden speech thus appears to be of great significance in several ways. To the *Kaulaśastra* Śiva is not only the supreme godhead to him the Puranic Trinity and orthopraxy of the form of reference to the Vedas as the fountainhead of religion is totally redundant. That it confirms the picture of the emergence of new sects and of growing sectarian separation in the early medieval period needs hardly to be stated. What is important is the context of the royal court in which the king and his brahmin *vatsisaka* become subservient to the supernatural powers wielded by Bharavānanda. For the supernatural powers operate towards an end which is the ultimate objective of a king, namely the attainment of the status of a *ekāraṇa*. Unlike in Rajāśekhara’s *Vidhātakalabija* *āsṇaka* in the *Karpuramaṭṭa* this seems to happen without any military feat. Bharavānanda produces *Karpura*.

11 Devangana Desai *Park Sculpture of India* (New Delhi 1975) p. 171
12 K. puramamita, 1-24
13 M. Ghosh, pp. 91, 193
manjari, the heroine, at the court through his supernatural powers, and it is her marriage with the king, again accomplished through Bhairavānanda's intervention, that bestows upon the king the desired sovereign status.\textsuperscript{14}

Perhaps Rājaśekhara was trying to offer an explanation, in line with what was considered plausible in the period, for a widespread contemporary phenomenon, namely the presence of Tāntric elements close to the royalty. Tāntrism permeated a wide range of sectarian practices from the Gupta period onward, and there is a curiously ambivalent attitude towards the practitioners of the Tāntric cults among the litterateurs. The attitude generally is one of disdain, but esoterism also commands fear and respect from a distance and this may explain why, despite the tone of disapprobation towards the Tāntric practitioners, there was no way of avoiding referring to them altogether. Devangana Desai has collected a few references where the Tāntrikas are spoken of disapprovingly.\textsuperscript{15} For example, in the Mālaś-Madhava, the Kāpālika Aghoraghaṇṭa and his female disciple, Kapālakundalā, are called cāndalas. And yet in the same play, Mādhava, the son of a minister who condemns the Kāpālikas, himself goes to the cremation ground for offering his own flesh. King Puspabhūti, Harsa's forefather, is said to have visited a cremation ground with Bhairavācārya. Puspabhūti even offered to place himself, his harem, his court and his treasury at the ascetic's disposal. Kaulācāri Bhairavānanda, around whom Rājaśekhara weaves the Kṛpuramaṇjari has thus a long ancestry and is not a creation of pure imagination.

III

Two other references in the Kṛpuramaṇjari, to practices associated with the ladies of the royal seraglio, are worth analyzing. One is to the swing festival of Gaurī mentioned in Act II.\textsuperscript{16} The swing festival has normally a Vaiṣṇavite association but the Kṛpuramaṇjari certainly

\textsuperscript{14} For the English translation of Viddhaśāśabhaṅjikā, see Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. 27, pp. 1–71.
\textsuperscript{15} Devangana Desai, pp. 123–4.
\textsuperscript{16} Konow and Lanman, p. 246.
points in the existence of its Śvāne counterpart. This phenomenon was perhaps early medieval in origin although one cannot be too certain on this score. In the Kārpuramanjanī reference what is significant is not really the swing festival of Gauni by itself but rather Bhairavānanda’s association with it. On the fourth day of the festival the queen pays homage to the goddess by offering Keśaka flowers—an offering made possible by Bhairavānanda who makes the Keśaka blossom in Cātra—unlike the swing festival associated with Kṛṣṇa is when the swing festival of Parvatī takes place. It is believed that the swing festival in honour of Gauni represents a vrata, spoken of as Cāturāca in other texts which takes place on the third day of the bright half of Cātra. This is not unlikely because the Kārpuramanjanī contains another and more direct reference to a vrata called Vājraśuramahāsusā. Vājraśuramahāsusā definitely corresponds to Vājraśuramahāsusā mentioned in a number of early medieval and medieval texts. It generally took place on the fourteenth day of the bright half of Jyestha and was performed by women whose husbands were living or even by sotless widows. Kane has compiled some data is of this vrata and it is necessary to examine these data in order to understand the significance of the Kārpuramanjanī evidence. The procedure of the vrata, as set out in the Vīrakṣa and other later medieval works is briefly as follows: The woman should make a sāntāpa in the form “I shall perform Śārvasūra for securing long life and health to my husband and my sons and for securing freedom from widowhood in this and subsequent lives.” She should then sprinkle water at the root of the vajra tree and surround it with cotton threads and should perform its worship with the āpacaras and then offer worship to Śavitrī (with image or mentally).

Vājraśuramahāsusā is as all other vrata are clearly magical in import.

17 Several references to the swing festival with Śavitrī association, compiled by B.P. Mazumdar all occur in the context of the early medieval period. Socio-Economic History of North India (1030–1194 AD) (Calcutta, 1960) p 277
18 Kārpuramanjanī, II 7
19 Konow and Lanman p. 246 fn 6; also B.P. Mazumdar p. 280
20 Kārpuramanjanī, IV 10
21 P.V. Kane History of Dharmastūra, vol 5 pt 1 second ed. (Poona, 1974) pp. 91–4
22 Ibid. p. 93
However, in the *Karpūramañjarī*, *Vadāsvāttimahusava* does not seem to be a mere domestic magical rite, and there are several elements which somewhat distinguish it from the corresponding *vrata* mentioned in the texts. Act IV of the play refers several times to the installation of an image of Cāmundā, a Kaula-Kapalika deity per excellence, in a sanctuary by Bhairavānanda. The sanctuary is constructed at the foot of a *vata* tree. A close scrutiny of Act IV thus easily establishes the connection between the image of Cāmundā (a surrogate for Śāvitrī?) and the *vata* in the context of the performance of the festival. Second, the king is invited by the queen to witness from the palace terrace certain spectacles in connection with the *vrata* and what the king witnesses is a series of dances, performed only by women, which are distinctly connected with the *vrata* ritual. The description of the item may bring out further the affiliation of the ritual:

'Yet others, bearing in their hands offering of human flesh and terrible with their groans and shrieks and cries and wearing the masks of night-wondering ogresses, are enacting a cemetery-scene.'

The *Vadāsvāttimahusava* of *Karpūramañjarī* thus does not exactly correspond to the ideal type of the *vrata* which Kane has reconstructed. It has a different significance and fits in more closely with the ritual activities, throughout the play, of Bhairavānanda and with the incantation that he offers to Cāmundā: 'A dissolution of the universe is he pleasure-house; the blood of the demons is her fiery drought; victorious is Kāli as she quaffs it, in presence of Kāla, from a goblet made of the skull of Paramesthin.'

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23 *Karpūramañjarī*, IV, 19.
25 Konnow and Lanman, p. 281.
26 Ibid., p. 283.
In the final section of this essay it is necessary to point out that through his use of various elements associated with the Kaula Kapalika rites in the Karpuramangari Rajasekhara has not projected a situation which may be considered universal. Nevertheless in several ways the play makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the early medieval religious world and of the contemporary attitude towards it. Rajasekhara has brought—one cannot be entirely sure whether he has done so deliberately or not—two streams of magical rites to converge in the Karpuramangari. The magical aspect was basic to Tantrism and it was basic to the udra rites as well. Perhaps through effecting a convergence of these two streams in the Karpuramangari Rajasekhara was trying to posit a contrast between what may be broadly labelled as the Tantric and the non-Tantric world although he is not seen to indulge in any direct value judgement. It has already been remarked that in many ways the early evil attitude towards the world of Tantrism was ambivalent: this is understandable because of its wide prevalence as also the character of its clientele apart from its sheer esoterism Rajasekhara does not like Kshna Misra the author of Prabodhachandrodaya and also a recipient of courtly favour from the contemporary Candilas offer Vamshabhis as the panacea for all Tantric and heterodox evils as one sharing the same type of clientele he concludes Karpuramangari with a prayer in the form of a quotation from Bharata.

May the forest fire of Poverty which day after day gleams far and wide

27 Dwangan Desai p 145
28 Kane p 94 has disparaged the attempt of B.A. Gupta to find symbolism in the udra ritual. According to Gupta ‘The Samvira is the annual celebration of Mother Earth’s marriage with nature’ ten days after the end of the monsoon. The Symbol of Sav is-vrata. The Indian Antiquary vol 35 (1906) pp 116-19 Gupta’s specific interpretation may not be valid, but this does not invalid the magical character of the vrata. See Abhijnadana Tagore, Bangler 45, a (Bharghuta) 1936 p 54.

29 See S.K. Nambiar Prabodhachandrodaya of Kshna Misra (Delh Varanar Panda 1971) ch 14 and pass. m. The Prabodhachandrodaya also contains valuable data relating to sectarian rivalry and the attitude of hostility towards Tantric schools
which brings to naught all the excellences of men of learning, be quenched
by the rain of the side-long glances of fortune.\footnote{Konow and Lanman, p. 288. For an understanding of the sentiment expressed in these lines, refer to the statement made by D.D. Kosambi in his analysis of Bhartrihari, despite the obvious differences which may have existed between Bharata, Bhartrihari and Rājakūṭa: 'He is unmistakably the Indian intellectual of his period, limited by caste and tradition in fields of activity and therefore limited in his real grip on life. The only alternatives open to any member of his class seem to have been the attainment of patronage at court, or retirement to the life of an almsman. The inner conflict, the contradiction latent in the very position of this class, could not have been made clearer than by the poet's verses.' D.D. Kosambi, 'The Quality of Renunciation in Bhartrihari's Poetry', in \textit{Exasperating Essays (Exercise in the Dialectical Method)} (reprinted in Pune, 1986), pp. 72–93. The ambivalence of Rājakūṭa, present among his contemporaries as well with regard to the Kaula Kapālika practices, represents perhaps more acutely an attitude of compromise characterizing patronage-seeking orthodox elements in society.}
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Abhayapala Nadol Cahamana prince 53 55
Abh ni 62 65 93 128
Abhira Brahmanas 65
Kesryas, 65
Sudras 65
Acleswar (Mt Abu) 86
Aharya G O 109n 111n 112n 173
Adams R.M 160n 177n 178
Adi sutha a title 123
Aghatapura (Ahat) 102
Aghoraghatan kapatika 228 230n
Agr kula, on n myth 57
Agrawala R.C. 44n 85n 121n 124n 125n 127n 143n
Agrawala V.S 90n 149n
Ahada or Ahat (Uda pur) 40 41 48 54 102 104 109 114n
117n 124 125 135 136 137 146n 145n 151 161n
Ahuschatra (Barcelno et st) 63 151 180
Ayar A.V Subramanian 26n
Ajarati (Ajari) (Jodhpur district) 47 18 53
Ayapala Cahamana ruler 123
Ayana Nadol Cahamana prince 52 115n
Ayasantha Nadol Cahamana ruler 53
Aksala Jalada litterateur 223
Al Beruni 155n
Alaaddin 197n
Alha na Nadol Cahamana ruler 75 78
Alhunsdev queen 78
Al Athar 186n
Allata Guha la ruler 62
Alchin Bridge and Raymond 16n
Altekar A.S 142n 188n 189n
Amankopa 44n 97n
Amarendra Nath 18
Ambaraka personal name 125
Ammakutty K.P 220n
Ampata Ga li of Vagada 53
Ana of Ravakuta family
(Rajas han) 79
Anah laparaka (also Anah lapura
Anahilavada) 97 112 & n
139 156n 212
Ananda of Candella family 208
Anandapura place name 68
Anangal kma rulers of Orissa 199
Anantapala rajaputra 80
Anderson Perry 46n 56t 185 187
Annalladevi queen 78
Anasti Z.D 40n
Apapuraka place name 140
Aparyayaputra, Con 217 220
Appadora A 107n
Aqu que Md 152n
Arabs (the) 147
Arghsections irrigat on well 43n
44n 45 46 47 48 49 50 52
53 54 55 56
Aranyakupagiri place name 92
The Making of Early Medieval India

Bābhata, ruler, 92
Badari, place name, 96, 100
Bagai, Anjali; 103n
Bahughrāṇā, deity, 54n
Bairat (nāla), 39 & n, 41
Baladevapura, place name, 133
Balādhikṛta, official designation, 137, 138
Balambal, V., 207n, 217, 219n
Bālāmbhattā, commentator, 108n
Bali (Pali district); 47, 54n, 106n
Bamimaladevi, queen, 220n
Bamnera (Jódhpur district), 47, 48, 51, 55n, 82 & n
Bāna, ruling family, 41, 206
Bandrol (nāla), 41
Bandyopadhaya, N.C., 191n, 194n
Banerjee, J.N., 230n
Bancerji, R.D., 141n
Bangangā (river), 41
Banjara, 115n
Bāpāka, 72
Bāppā, Rāval, 72
Barlu, place name, 128
Bārygaza, 179
Basarh (Vaishali distt., North Bihar), 134n
Basham, A.L., 189
Bassi, place name, 123
Bayana (Bharatpur), 95, 124
Beal, S., 150n
Belgaum, 173, 175, 176
Belshaw, Cyril, 89 & n
Berach (basin), 45n
Berasar, place name, 125
Bhadund, place name, 47
Bhitālasvānī, deity, 54, 137, 143
Bhairavānanda, Kaulakapālīka, 225–230
Bhakti, 198 & n, 199
Bhamma ha deśī, itinerant traders, 109
Bhandarkar, D.R., 39n, 67n, 71n, 111n, 206
Bharata, 231 & n
Bharthari, poet, 213n
Bharukaccha (Bārygaza), 78
Bhatia, P., 206
Bhāṭika Samvat, 123, 124
Bhattacharya, B., 155n
Bhattacharya, D.C., 26n
Bhattacharya, P.K., 156n
Bhattacharyya, N.N., 191
Bhattacharya, S., 155n, 196n
Bhattāraka Śrī Nagnaka, deity, 116n
Bhattī (clan) of Jaisalmer, 77, 78
Devarai, sub clan, 84, 85
Devaraja, ruler, 76, 77
Devaraja, cult of south-east Asia, 199
Devapattana, official designation, 201
Deyell, John, S, 115n, 135n
Dhaidara, Gubhiaputra, Ravala, 84
Dhalopa 100
Dhalopsthana (near Nadiol), exchange centre, 97
Dharapadra (Mewar), 52
Dharkata (Dhakada), clan name 85, 91, 110, 111n, 113, 126n, 127
Dharkata Jate, 110
Dharkata lineage & Khandasa gotra, 110n
Dhanyavad, 47
Dhavagart, place name, 61
Dhiku, 47, 48, 53, 55
Dhikwada, 51
Dhmandu (or Dhivada), 45, 46, 48, 49
Dhil, river, 41
Dhad (Bhulwara disti), 93, 95
Dholpur, 47
Dhor, place name, 47
Dhotra, clan name, 85, 127
Dhula, personal name, 124
Dhurara, family name, 91, 110
Dugby, Simon, 184n
Dikshit, G.S, 6n, 61n
Dinara, coin name, 91
Dinks, Nicholas B, 190n, 196n, 204n, 213n, 214n, 215n, 219
Doda, 83, 85, 127
Doddanavaya, 83
Doda (Subdivision of Patamara), 86
Dramma, coin name, 107, 108, 114, 115, 117n, 118 & n, 143 & n
Advarahadrama, 144 & n, 172, 173
Panseyakadrama, 144n
Vigrabapala-drama, 144n
Vigrabapalya-drama, 144n
Duggiyara Tikana personal name, 174
Dudasadha, administrative designation, 74
Dulabhadeva Chandela, 125
Dumont, L, 196n
Dungarpur place name, 82
Durduka personal name, 223
Durabharaja of Prasthara Jatu, 127
Dutaka, official designation, 138
219
Dutta, B.B, 149n, 156n
Edgerton, F, 201n
Eggermont, P.H.L, 159n
Eisenstadt, S. N, 6n, 186n, 215n
Eklingajy (temple), 62
Ecsoby, G, 132n
Fa hien, 148
Finley, M.F, 181 & n
Fox, G Richard, 186n, 187n, 214n
Fried, Morton, 21n, 205n
Fussman, G, 15n
Ghadavala, ruling family, 147n
Gandhakasilevi, deity, 143
Gandhakuanik trading community, 140, 141
Gangavadi, territorial division, 215 & n
Ganga padi, 209
Gangas, ruling family, 212
Gangesivdeva ruler, 151
Gatauda (in Șatpañcāsatt), (Udaipur district), 53
Gaurī, deity, 228, 229
Gaurīvarta, 229
Gautamiputra Șatakarnī, ruler, 203n
Gaya, 152
Ghaggar, 41
Ghagsa (Chitorgarh district), 48
Ghamgala, clan name, 85, 126n, 127
Ghamghaka, place name, 133
Ghatiyala (near Jodhpur), 61, 95, 100
Inscription, 128n
Ghauligrāma, village, 112
Ghosal, U.N., 108n
Ghos, A., 132n, 134n, 147n, 151n, 153n, 158n
Ghos, Manomohan, 223n, 224n, 226 & n, 227 & n
Giligitta (Gilgit), 41n
Gogrāha, cattle-raid, 128
Goa, 206
Godawar area (Pali Dist), 89n, 95, 103
Goetz, H., 85n, 120n, 122 & n
Gogaki-talaï, place name, 124
Gopagiri (Gwalior), 134n, 137, 138n, 139 & n, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144n
Gopal, Lallānjī, 44n, 142n, 143n, 146n, 147n, 154n, 167n, 218n, 219n
Gopal, K.K., 74n, 75n, 194, 219
Gosthī, corporate body, 55
Gosthīka, 83, 91, 111
Gotirītha, place name, 133
Govardhanadivaja, memorial stone, 85, 121
Govardhanasat, 122 & n, 123, 124, 126n
Govindarāja, ruler, 74
Govindaswamy, M.S., 207n, 210n, 217n, 219n
Guha, A., 205n
Guhilas, 64, 65, 71, 74, 78, 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 93, 95, of Mewar, 68, 73
of Chatsū, 68
of Dhavagarta, 72
of Kiskindhā, 68, 72
of Mangalapura, 71
of Nagda-Ahar 62
Subdivision, 86, 127
Guhilots, 126n
Gujarat, 22
Guneśvara, deity, 55
Gupta, Chitrarekha, 12n, 108n
Gupta, P.L., 146n
Gupte, B.A., 231
Gurgi, place name, 181n
Gurjara, 64, 72, 98, 209, 210
Gurjara of Nāndipūri, 64, 65, 66, 73
Gurjaradharā, 209
Gurjara-bhūmi, 209, 210
Gurjara-deta, 108n
Gurjara-Prāthārā (see also
Prāthāra), 64, 74, 75, 77, 82, 117n, 133n, 134, 136, 137n, 138, 140, of Rajor, 67, 73
Gurjara-dharitī, 209
Gurjaratī, 209
Gurukkal, Rajan, P.M., 23n, 200n
Gururajāchar, S., 177, 179n
Habib, Irfān, 43n, 44n, 46, 56n, 80n, 113n, 149, 167n, 222n
Index

Hail, K.R., 116n, 157n, 169n
    178n, 179n, 215n, 216n
Hamal, 161 & n
Haard, T., 29n
Hari deity, 227
Harindra (brähman), ruler, 72
Hara (king), 73, 75, 153, 188, 228
Hasula, place name, 107, 108n
Hasan, S. Nand, 131n
Hankundikâ, 95, 103
Hasanapur, 91n
Hasta, market place, 93, 94, 95
    96, 97, 99, 136, 137, 139, 149
    & n, 166n, 172, 176
Hattamurga, 93, 134
Hattuka, 137
Hattan, 136
Hatuna (village), 42n
Hedavika (Hedavuka Hedâvuka),
    horse dealers, 107 & n, 109
Heeramman, J.C., 187n, 193n,
    197n, 198n, 202
Henge, David P., 58n
Hiravadena, Tha (known), 123
Huyen Băng 39n, 103n, 130n
    148n, 150, 151, 152, 153
Huyunch, ruling family, 210, 212
Hulicz, E., 137n
Hunsa, 63, 64, 83, 87
Huley, Aldous, 1
    1
Ilayakkur (of the Ktta age), 70
Inden Roland 2n 202n, 213n
    217
Ihada, desy, 69
Ingalls, Daniel H H., 32 & n
Irungsala padà, lineage territory, 209
Irwan John, 122n
Išānakīpa, place name, 93
Išan, personal name, 124
Islam Shah, ruler, 56n
Iśwa, 140n
Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), 169
Jacobi H., 90n
Jagannatha cult of, 199, 203n
Jagatsvamī (temple), 108
Jain B C., 170n
Jain, K.C., 60n, 7th, 156n
Jain, V K., 112n, 113n, 114n
    212n, 216n, 221n
Jasput 33n, 34n, 92, 110, 125
Jasalmer 123 124
Jasswal, S., 20n, 27n, 196n, 203n
Jayaka prince, 108n
Jalasala personal name, 123
Jâlot, place name, 87, 220n
Jânapada 201, 224
Jangaladesa territorial division, 63
Jawai (river), 46
Jayaraka, poet, 115n
Jayapura, village, 138
Jayyaka merchant, 211n
Jentaka, 92
Jia D N., 8n, 12n, 29n, 37n
    130n, 182n, 190, 214n
Jha V., 4n, 80n
Jhalavari, place name, 56n
Jhalrapatan, 126n
Jodhpur, 93, 100, 124, 126, 127,
    128n, 149
Jonaraja, commissar, 115n
Joshi, N. C., 44n
Juna 109n
Juna Yadmer (near Fardar) 97
Junagadh, 203
Kadambas, ruling family, 206, 207
Kaidmal place name, 51, 53
Kakanya, ruling family, 212
Kakka, of Prašāda family, 77
Kakkuka, Pratihāra ruler, 60, 61, 
63, 64, 128n, 149
Kāla, 230
Kalacuris, ruling family, 169, 172, 
207 & n, 209, 224
Kāli, deity, 320
Kalibangan (Ganganagar district), 
40n
Kalyanpur (Udaipur distt), 92, 127
Kaman, Bayana, Bharatpur, 95, 99
Kāmandakiya Nīśāra, 202
Kāmyakīyakoṭṭa, place name, 75
Kanauj, 153, 212
Kāñcanagirigadha, fort, 76n
Kāñcanaśridevi (Kanakadevi), 
deity, 135, 143, 144
Kane, P.V., 198n, 229 & n, 231n
Kānyakubja, place name, 133, 150
Kapālakundalā, female-Kāpālīka, 
228
Kāpālīka, 228
Kapardaka, cowrie, 144
Kapilavāstu, 174
Kapileśvara, deity, 174
Karāla-Cāmunda, temple of, 230n
Karanikā, official designation, 138, 
141
Karashima, N., 27n, 164n, 216
Karitalai, place name, 169, 170 & 
n, 172
Karna, ruler, 66
Karpūranaṇjari, 67n, 201n, 224 
& n, 225 & n, 228, 229 & n, 231
Kārāpana, coin, 91n
Kasahradgrama, 111, 112
Kasipur (Nainital), 144n, 152n
Kārāha, place name, 90
Kataki, Banikanta, 32 & n, 33n
Katha (river), 42n
Kathiawar, 109n
Kaḷācāra, 227, 228
Kaḷā-Kāpālika, 230, 232n
Kauptika, 138
Kaṇḍambī, 91n, 150, 152, 161, 
180
Kaveri valley, 168
Kavirāja, litterateur, 223
Kāśyapamāṁśa, 134n
Kekind (Jodhpur), 49, 55
Kelhana, Nadol Cāhāmana ruler, 
53, 78
Kennedy, R.S., 216n
Kharāṣṭra, script, 159
Khalabikā, levy, 170
Khaluvala, place name, 125
Khamnor (near Udaipur), 96
Khan, A.R., 222n
Khan, Iqtadar Alām, 168
Khāndela, place name, 92n
Khāṇḍaragachhāpattāvali, 118
Khāṭṭakūpa, place name, 93n
Kielhorn, F., 136, 206n
Kirāṭakūpa (Kiradū), 96
Kittisambha, memorial pillar, 122n
Kirttripāla, Cāhāmana prince, 75
Kisengarh, 126n
Kishkindhā, place name, 42, 47
Kiu-pi-shwang-na, 151 & n
Know, S., 223n, 224n, 225n, 
228n, 229n, 230n, 231n
Kodumbalur, Velis of, 210n
Kolikupaka, place name, 93n
Komatis, 182n
Kongudēla, territory, 215n
Kooij, K.R. Van, 33 & n
Korāṇṭaka (Korta), village, 46, 52, 
53
Kosambi, D.D., 4n, 9 & n, 130n, 
131n, 152n, 189n, 191n, 192n, 
210n, 231n, 232n
Kosavāha, irrigation-device, 47
Mahâvarāha, clan name, 85, 86, 127
Mahendrapâla, Pratihāra king, 67n, 223
Mahabaladevi, queen, 53
Mahipâla, king, 67n
Mahodaya, 141
Maity, S.K., 38n, 146n
Majumdar, A.K., 55n, 113n, 154n, 201n, 209
Majumdar, R.C., 4n, 18n, 154n, 188n
Mala (Dungarpur district), 48
Malārī-Madhava, 228, 230
Malaya, place name, 225
Malayasaṁśha, feudatory of the Cedis, 56n
Maleyalal (Kešalā), 174
Mālikaha-Mahārāja, head of the gardeners, 141
Mallani, place name, 109n
Malwa, 114n, 132, 180
Māmallapuram, place name, 177
Mānasāra, 156n
Manda, place name, 56n
Mandakila Tal, place name, 82, 92 & n, 110
Mandala, administrative unit, 75, 170, 202
Mandala of Samyaña (Sanjan), 147, 172
Mandala of Satyapura (Sanchor), 51
Mandalams, 209
Māndalesvari, 217
Māndalesvara (Panahera), deity, 53
Māndalesvara-Mahādeva, deity, 172
Māndalika, 220
Māndalika-rāja, 189n
Māndapikā, exchange centre, 94, 96, 100, 106, 140, 143, 170, 172, 176
Māngalapura-śīlkanandapikā, 109n
Naddula-talapada-śīlkanandapikā, 96, 98
Māndapikādāyā, levy, 106 & n, 116 & n
Mandavi, 96, 108n
Mandor, place name, 44n, 61, 100, 110
Mangalāna (Jodhpur district), 48, 50, 51
Māngaliya (Māngaliya), clan name, 85, 86, 127
Mangatol, 109n
Mānįśthā (madder), 102, 103, 104, 105
Māntrī, 112
Manusālaya-Candrikā, text, 156
Manusmṛti, 133n
Marwar, place name, 89n
Marx, Karl, 132n, 166n
Mātangas (i.e. Caṇḍalas), 141
Mathana, Gurjara-Pratihāra king, 65, 98, 210
Mathura, 140, 215
Māthura jātiya (vanijñā), 141
Kārttavya, Raṭṭa ruler of Saṅdattī, 173, 174n
Mautya, 65, 191, 192, 215n
Mayamata, 156n
Mazumdar, B.P., 177n, 189n, 191n, 229n
Medapīṭa (Mewar), 54, 126n
Medas, 63, 64, 87
Medhatithi, 140n
Medvedev, E.M., 130n, 148n, 149 & n, 150n, 153 & n
Meghadutam, 137n
Meghasenācārya, personal name, 126n
Mehra R.N 161n
Merrington John 166n 182n
Mewar 22
Mina tribe 63
Murshu VV 169n 181n 207n 223n 224n
M. shro BN 159n
Mishra, S.C. 97n
Mitra V.C. 38n 56n
Mitra VN 45n
M. tekanā 108n 142n
Mithila 152
Mittee V. Shnu 40n
Mohan Krishna, 191n 211n
Mohla clan name 85 86 88 125
Mohul clan name 127 128n
Moore R.J. 19n 186n 187n 196n
Morres G.M. 206n
Morrison B.M. 148 & n
Moushara name, 128n
Mr Abu (Swroh) 87 111 112
Mujeeb M. 147n
Mukherjee BN 148n
Mukherjee SN 13n
Mukha H 8n
Mufaraja I Cauluka's rulers 51
Mulgund place name 142n
Mummundandes, merchant group, 174 175
Munshi S. 203n

Nabhadkas 202
Nadgulat adm n strç & unit, 75
Nadlu place name 105 109 114
Nadol place name 87n 96 98 100 111
Nadodass sub div on of
Cahamanas 87n
Nagw territorial unit 209 & n 217n
Naduladag ka (Narlal) place name 97 100
Nagapura (i.e. Nagaur) 125
Nagar place name, 110
Nagaram 163 & n 165
Nagaram, 116n 168n
Nagari (Ch toga refreshment) 39n
Nagamswamy R. 122n
Nagajunakonda 159
Nahar F.C. 81 96n 105n, 110n
Nagama Kayastha 126
Nagama merchant family 92 163
Nana 63
Nakaramu 102 merchants of 102
gevat 182
Nalanda 149
Namb a S.K. 231n
Nanana (Paú district) 47 49 54 & n 55
Nandabhagavantevi temple of
135
Nand R.N 8n 11n 13n 20n
59n 160n 163n 191n 198n
199n 201n
Nannaya Chandela personal name 125
Narasahana Guhla rulers 79
Narayanabharat's devote 137
Narayanoo M.C.S. 29n
Nasik 141
Nath R. 44n
Nemakunun k salt merchants 141
142
Nigama, 134
Nimbadi rya personal name 137
Ninnay (Pragaya family) 112
N edil ka Jan memorial 126n
Niran kepal a a part of hapa,
96n 97n
Nyog P 139 146n 155n
177n 180n
Nolamba state, 206
Nolamba-vādi/pādi, territorial division, 209, 215
Noria, irrigation device, 43n, 46
Obeyesekere, G., 5n, 30n
Oisavala, merchant community, 113
Ojha, G.H., 95n, 96n
Ośthalada, Čāhamāna queen, 123
Oswals, 111 & n, 112
Oyma-nāḍu, territorial division, 209
O’Leary, Brendan, 3n, 8n, 56n
Pādi, territorial unit, 209 & n
Padmasenācārya, personal name, 126n
Padmini, of the Bhāṭṭi clan, 77
Paithan, place name, 179
Pāla, ruling family, 138, 206n, 212
Palania, personal name, 124
Pali (district), 47, 89, 96, 97, 105
Paliyas, memorial relics, 85, 121, 122, 123
Pallava, ruling family, 199, 205, 210
Palli; village, 134
Palli (Pali, Jodhpur region), 43
Pallival Brahmins, 126
Panahera (Banswara), 49, 100
Paṇčakulas, administrative body, 55, 136, 143
Paṇcatantra, 44n
Paṇḍava, lineage, 197n
Paṇḍyas, 205, 215n, 216n
Panigrahi, K.C., 151n
Panikkar, K.M.; 29n
Paramāra, ruling family, 84, 85, 86, 87, 96, 127, 180
Paramāra clan, 80 of Arbuda, 206 of Čandrāvati, 206 of Lāra, 206 of Kota, 75 of Malwa, 206 of Sirohi, 84 of Suvarṇagiri, 206
Parameśthin, 230
Pāriyātra/P’o-li-yé-ta lo, 39n
Partabgarh, place name, 47
Pārvati, deity, 227, 229
Pārāliputra, 152, 179, 202
Patanarayana (Sirohi district), 47
Pāthak, V.S., 70n
Patolasahideva, 41n
Pattana, 136, 163n
Pattanavara, 96
Purapatta, 170
Pattanayaka, 220n
Pāṭṭanagas, itinerant traders, 174
Pavara, clan name, 85, 127
Pehoa (Karnal distt., Haryana), 106, 133, 139n, 140, 142, 144
Penugonda, City, 182n
Perlin, Frank, 187n, 208n
Persian wheel, 43n, 45n
Peter Skalník, 15n, 21n
Philinigrāma, place name, 112
Pilani, 127
Pimpala-Gaudala, place name, 124
Pipadia, clan name, 86, 88
Pippalapada, place name, 88
Pokian, place name, 124
Possehl, G.L., 158n
Poulantzas, N., 199, 200
Prabandhacintāmani, of Merutunga, 80
Prabodhacandraṇa, of Krāṇa
Mitra, 231 & n
Ratnapur (or Ratanpur), 100
Raṭṭas, 174, 207
Rāutā (rāutā), 80, 83, 86, 128, 217
Rāvala (rājakula), 80
Raverty, H.C., 133n
Ray, H.C., 76n, 206n
Ray, Nihar Ranjan (Ray, N.R.), 1, 8n, 13n, 26n
Rāyakka, township, 141
Rāyapāla (Rāyapāladeva), 106n, 109n
Raychaudhuri, H.C., 64n, 153n, 189n
Rewa, place name, 56n
Rewasa, 125
Richards, J.F., 186n, 196n
Rohinsakūpa (Rohinsakūpaka), place name, 62, 93 & n, 95, 97
Roman coins, 146
trade, 146, 147
Ropi, place name, 76
Rudradāman, Śaka Kṣatrapa, 203n
Rūpaka, coin name, 115, 173
Rūpoun, place name, 126n
Rydh, Hanna, 38n, 41
Śabāras, 62, 208n
śabdakalpādrumā, 44n
śabdārthacintāmanī, 63n
Saciya, official designation, 112
Sādhārana, personal name, 118
Sahilavada, place name, 111, 112
Sahni, D.R., 39n; 41n, 134n
Sailabhasta, official designation, 53n
Śākala, 150
Śakambhari, or Jāngaladeśa, centre of the Cāhamānas, 69
Saladhi (near Ramapur), 44n
Sammānaka, place name, 55
Sāmanta, subordinate ruler, 80, 83, 149, 188, 195, 217, 218 & n, 220 & n, 222
Sāmantāsimha, ruler, 96n
Samarāicz-kāba, of Harbhādra Śūri, 90, 91n
Samarānganāsūtradhāra, of Bhoja, 149n
Samipāṭi-pattanā, 53, 96
Samoli, place name, 93
Samudragupta, 218n
Sancora, subdivision of Cāhamānas, 87n
Sānderav, place name, 50
Śaṅdhivigrasikā, official designation, 219
Sankalia, H.D., 40n, 41n
Śankara (Aligarh), 151
Śāntinātha, Jaina deity, 174
Śapādalakṣa, territory of Cāhamānas, 61
Śaptāṅga, 201
Sarankadika, place name, 133
Sarayūpāra, place name, 207
Sākara, H., 122, 159n
Śārtha, 97, 109 & n
Śārīhavāha, 137, 141, 143
Sarvamangala, deity, 135
Sāstri, K.A. Nilakanta, 27n, 188n
Sāstri, T. Gānapatī, 149n
Sātavāhana, ruling family, 131n, 191, 203n
Sāti, 123
sati stone, 121, 127
Śatapura (Sancho), 51
Śatyarāja, of Paramāra dynasty, 78
Saurāshtra, 75
Śauvānakavaṇikmaḥājanas, goldsmiths, 141, 143
Śavitrī, deity, 230
Śāvitrivrata, 229
Schoff, W.H., 179
Šrī Tihunaka, queen, 54n
Šrī Umāmāheśvara, deity, 145n
Šrī Vamśagottiyā, rāuta, 81
Šrī Yaśovarmanā, 141
Šrīkāṭukaraja, 53
Šrīmadhava, deity, 52
Šrīmadindrādityadeva, deity, 52
Šrīmahāvīra Jiña, deity, 114n
Šrīmālā, place name, 87, 112, 113
Šrīmālā-kula, 111 & n, 112
Šrīmāliyakoṭṭa, fort, 76, 77
Srinvas, M.N., 203n
Śrīpala, personal name, 54
Śrīpatha, place name, 95, 100
Śrīsarveśvarapura, place name, 137, 139
Śrīvastava, B., 154n
Śrīvatsasvāmīpura, place name, 137
Śrīvidagdha, personal name, 52
Stein, Burton, 6n, 23n, 155n, 168n, 179n, 187n, 190n, 199n, 209n, 210n, 211n, 213n, 214n, 216n, 217n
Śhānādhiśvara, Śhānādhiśthita, official designation, 143
Subbarao, B., 16n
Subbarayalu, Y., 191n, 209n, 215n
Śubhacandra Bhaṭṭāraka, personal name, 173
Śuhagū, personal name, 125
Śukla, D., 149n, 220n
Śūlapāṇi, personal name, 220n
Śulka (maṇḍapikā) (also see maṇḍapikā), 96, 98
Śurānanda, literate, 223
Śurārāṇa, Sanskritized title of Sūltān, 197n
Śūryavamśa, 69
Śūryavansi, B., 65n
Śūtradbhāra, 82, 220n
Śuvarṇagirī (Jalor), 88, 111, 202
Śuvarṇagirīdurgā, 76
Świng festival (of Gaurī), 228, 229 & n
Tabaqat-i-Nasīrī, 133
Tagara, trading centre, 90
Ṭajikas (Arabs), 147 & n
Takahashi, H.K., 132n
Takakusu, J., 140n
Ṭakka, place name, 102
Takṣakagadha, fort, 76
Talsād (Bansawara), 96, 100
Tām (Ṭākā), coin, 56n
Tambhā, S.J., 193n, 214n
Tāmrālīpta, 90, 140
Tarala, literate, 223
Ṭāṭaka, reservoir for irrigation, 49
Tattāṇandapura, urban centre, 134, 135, 136, 137n, 138, 139 & n; 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 149, 153, 154
Taxila, place name, 161, 202
Ter, place name, 179
Thakarā (former Durgapur state), 42
Ṭhakura rāuta, title, 81
Ṭhakura, title, 133, 217
Thakur, V.K., 130n, 139n, 140n, 160n
Thaneswar, trading centre, 151, 153
Thapar, R., 1n, 2n, 15n, 19n, 56n, 59n, 184n, 187n, 192n, 196n, 205n
The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, 179n
Tiruvvidaimarudur, urban centre, 168n
Tod, James, 62n
Toda-Raising, place name, 56n
Tondamadalam, territorial unit, 215n
Tondai mādhū, territorial unit, 209
Tosah, place name, 202
Traighāraka locality, 133
Traumānn, T.R., 202n
Trībhuvanēsvāta, rānaka, 78
Trīlokyaśvarman, Candela ruler, 208n
Trupti, place name, 207
Trīṣayulakapuramacāna, 80
Trivedi, H.V., 95n, 96n, 99n, 102n, 104n, 114n, 115n, 172n, 206
Tr̥nakupaka, place name, 75, 93n
Turukis (Turks) 147
Tur̥nakadandha, 122, 147n
Udaipur, place name, 89n, 93, 100, 102, 127
Udayaditya, of Paramāra dynasty, 77
Uesavāla jñātiya, merchant lineage, 111
Ujjainī, place name, 90, 137, 159 & n, 202
Umā, deity, 227
Umbharanikasrayulagramam, place name, 112
Unstra, place name, 128n
Upadhye, A.N., 90n
Uśher, A.P., 44n
Utpaliṣka, locality, 133
Uttarāpattana, trade route, 107
Vacas, sage, 70
Vādāmatimāsthana, festival (see also Śāvitrī), 229, 230
Vagada, place name, 78
Vagin (Sirohi district), 48
Vāgūra, territorial division, 61
Vidarbha, region, 18n
Vidhatalabhanjika, of
Raja Sekhar, 227, 228n
Vigrahara, of Cahamana family, 74, 107
Vijayanagar, period, 190n
Vijayaraja, ruler, 123
Vijayasimha, Guhila king, 43, 51, 61, 62
Vijanevara, personal name, 142
Vilapadra, place name, 77
Vimala, personal name, 112
Vimalasenapandita, personal name, 126n
Vinisopaka, coin, 115, 144
Vishviniopaka, 173n
Varahakayaavinopaka, 144n
Virasimha, personal name, 83
Virata, place name, 61
Virapura (Udaipur-district), 48, 53
Visaladeva Raso, 75
Visaya, administrative unit, 57, 93
Vishubhataraka, deity, 143
Vishudatta, personal name, 92
Vishvakarmapakasa, text, 156n
Vrata, religious vow, 229, 231n
Vratarka, 229
Vusava, place name, 100
Vyaharu, Guhilputra, Raval, 84
Wagle, N., 163n
Warangal, 212
Warmington, E.H., 146n, 159
Waters, T., 39n
Wheeler, R.E.M., 159n
Wills, C.U., 76n
Wittfogel, K.A., 186n
Yadava, B.N.S., 13n, 24n, 26n, 31n, 60n, 63n, 129n, 178n, 190n, 191n, 193n, 194n, 195n, 208n, 211n, 217n, 219n
Yasodhara, Sreebi, 111
Yazdani, G., 64n, 212n
Yueh-Chih, 65
Yuga, coin, 144n
Yuvatsa II, ruler, 170, 224
Ziegler, N., 59n
Zvelebil, Kamil V., 28n
Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan