



# State in Indian History - I

Jayant Singh  
Deputy Director (Senior)

# Relevance for study of history of state formation in India

1. Nature of state has to be studied in the context of perspective building for the civil servants
2. History as a discipline is not a study of names, places and dates but of processes, events and their outcomes over time
3. So that every executive action of the modern state, whether in conceptualising or in planning or in executing can be tested against the barometer of the similar actions or processes in the past
4. And to learn from the mistakes and successes of that past in building a strong, durable, prosperous and inclusive nation state

# Objectives

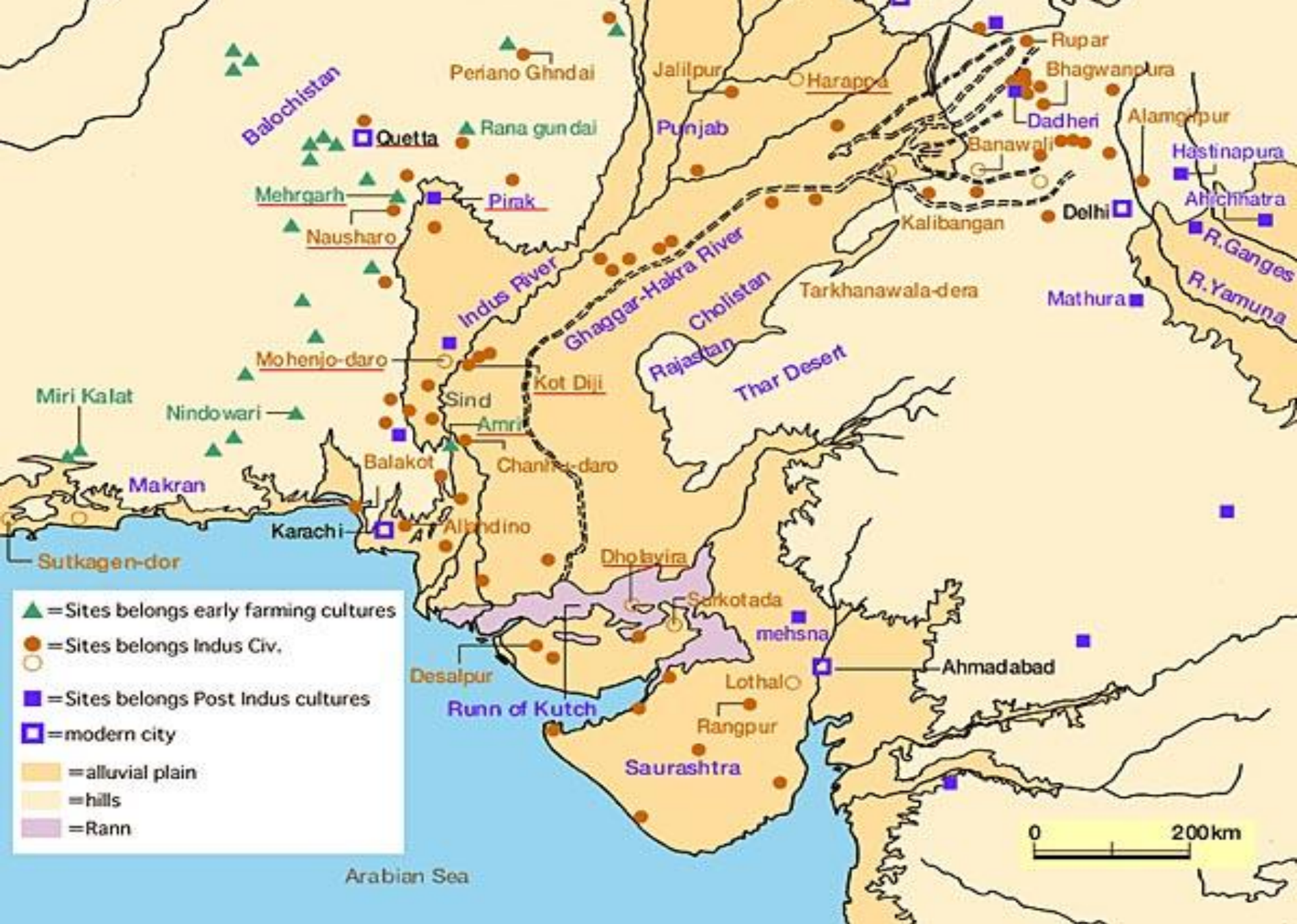
- To appreciate the evolution of the State in Indian history
- To examine the determinants of the state formation in ancient and medieval history and the establish a continuum for emergence of State in modern India
- To understand nature and attributes of State in ancient and medieval history and the establish a continuum for emergence of modern India

# State defined...

- A **State** is a **set of institutions** that possess the **authority** to make the **rules** that **govern** the **people** in one or more societies, having internal and external **sovereignty** over a definite **territory**.
- In *Max Weber's* influential definition, it is that organization that has a "**monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.**" It thus includes such institutions as the armed forces, civil service or state bureaucracy, courts and police.
- "**Geographically delimited segment of human society bound by a common obedience to a single sovereign.**"

# Process of State Formation

- State formation: a natural transition from a tribal society to a segmentary state
- .... to a republic,
- ....to monarchies
- .....to empires
- transition is characterised by growth in surplus, brought about by agrarian expansion, military expansion and in India.....by co-option of local population and cultures



- ▲ = Sites belongs early farming cultures
- = Sites belongs Indus Civ.
- = Sites belongs Post Indus cultures
- = modern city
- (orange) = alluvial plain
- (light orange) = hills
- (purple) = Rann

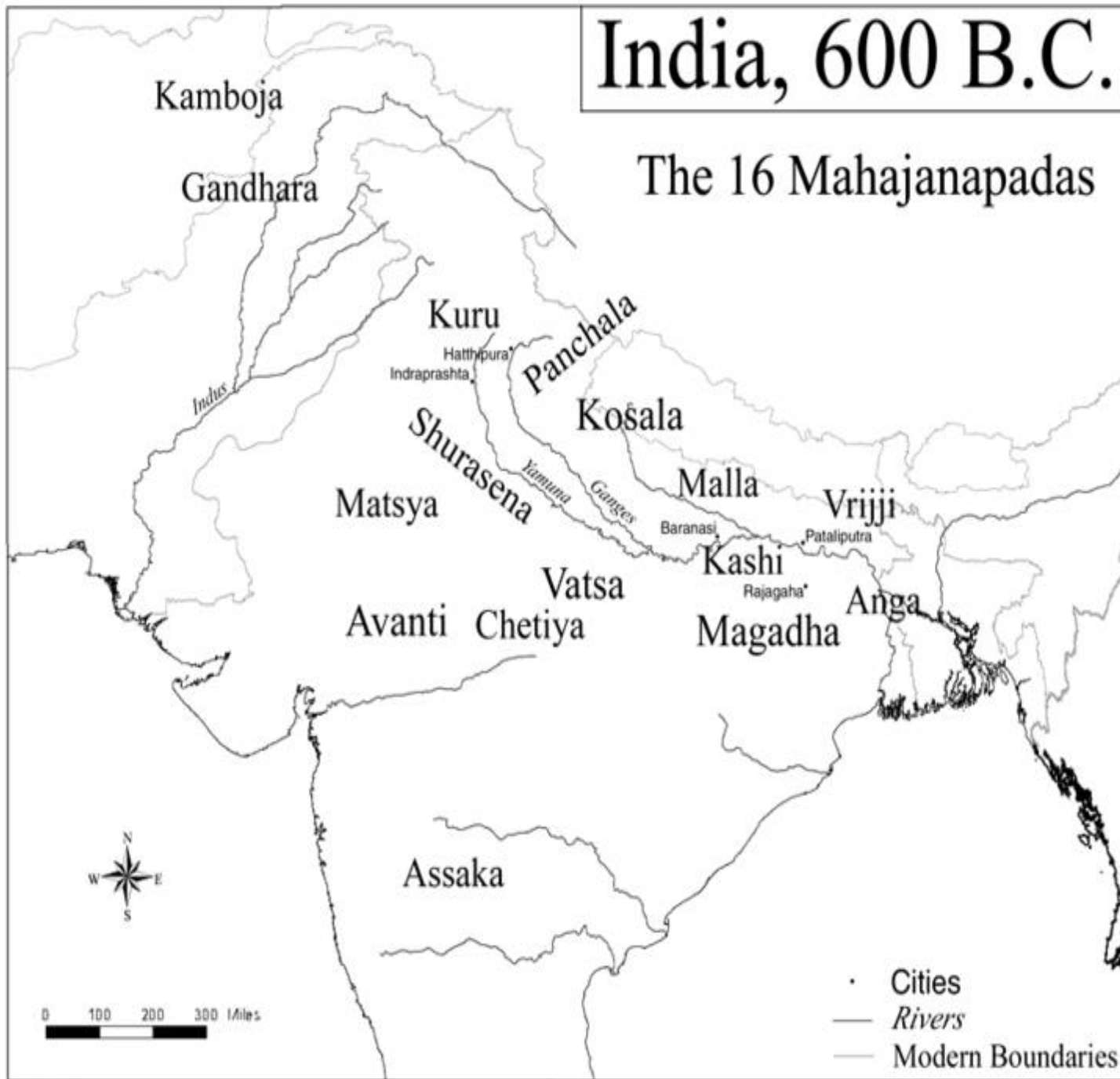
0 200 km

## *Beginning of state formation in India*

- State could come about only through creation and appropriation of surplus
- Therefore state formation is linked with growth and spread of agriculture, consequently trade, industry and urbanisation
- In ancient India this process began with the spread of agriculture along river valleys
- Agricultural surplus generated led to trade, commerce and urbanisation
- The first states (Janapadas) came about in these river valleys
- Pattern replicated in the South and east

# India, 600 B.C.

## The 16 Mahajanapadas



# State formation contd

- The process of co-option was brought about by Sanskritisation, land grants and granting of legitimacy
- Even in Buddhist tradition; legitimacy imparted through sacred sanction\_ we see this continuity even in the early Islamic states in Asia and India (investiture by Caliph)
- End of patrimonial lineages (Mahabharata)
- Extolling the ideal of a universal sovereign monarch (Rama)

# Monarchy

- The over-riding theme in the texts is of a unified expansive state. Ideal is Chakravarti, borne out from the epics and treatises like Arthashastra
- Allusion to Matsya Nyaya in Manusmriti
- Magadha kings used **administrative and military abilities** as basis of their **legitimacy**
- **Ritual sanction** - buttressed by sacrifices such as *rajasuya* (enthronement ceremony), *raja-abhisekha* (coronation), *asvamedha* (horse-sacrifice). Endorsed by Buddhist tradition too
- Asoka's time - inscriptions show **allusion to divinity** - *devanampiya piyadassi* (beloved of the Gods)
- **Military prowess** however remained the mainstay of the monarchical state

# Elements of the State

- In ancient India, kingdom (*rajya*) is constituted of **seven elements** (*sapta-prakrtayah*) or **seven limbs** (*sapta-anga*)
- According to Manu-Smriti (1-2 century AD), these were :
  - King (*swamin*)
  - Minister (*amatya*)
  - City (*pura*)
  - Domain/ territory (*rastra*)
  - Treasury (*kosa*)
  - Army (*danda*)
  - Ally (*suhrd/ mitra*)

# Elements of the State - contd.

- In a monarchy, **king** considered cornerstone and integral element of *rajya* - **determinant of a State's destiny**
- *Kautilya* underscores this by writing "**the king is** (the basis of ) **the kingdom**" (*raja rajyam*)
- Besides *raja*, *amatya* refers to bureaucratic government, *pura* to cities and citizens, *rastra* to territory and populations, *kosa* to financial matters, *danda* to military power and *mitra* to international relations
- Arthasastra refers to *janapada* (slight variant of *rastra*) and *durga* (a fortified city)

# Government organization

- At the apex of the tier were *Amatyas* or *Mahamatras* - **influential ministers** became members of king's council (*parisad*)
- Military organized in **4 elements** (*caturanga*) - elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry - led by *senapati*
- **State sustained by taxes** - propertied men called *grhapatis* - urban traders organized into *srenis* or guilds - **rise of Magadha State** also seen as response to expansion of guilds and desire to expand activities - **commercial underpinnings**
- Period also is co-terminus with bringing lower Ganges valley under plough and settlements - **territorial expansion**

**East Hemisphere in 200 BC**  
[www.WorldHistoryMaps.info](http://www.WorldHistoryMaps.info)  
 Author: Thomas A. Lesman  
 Updated: 8-23-2009



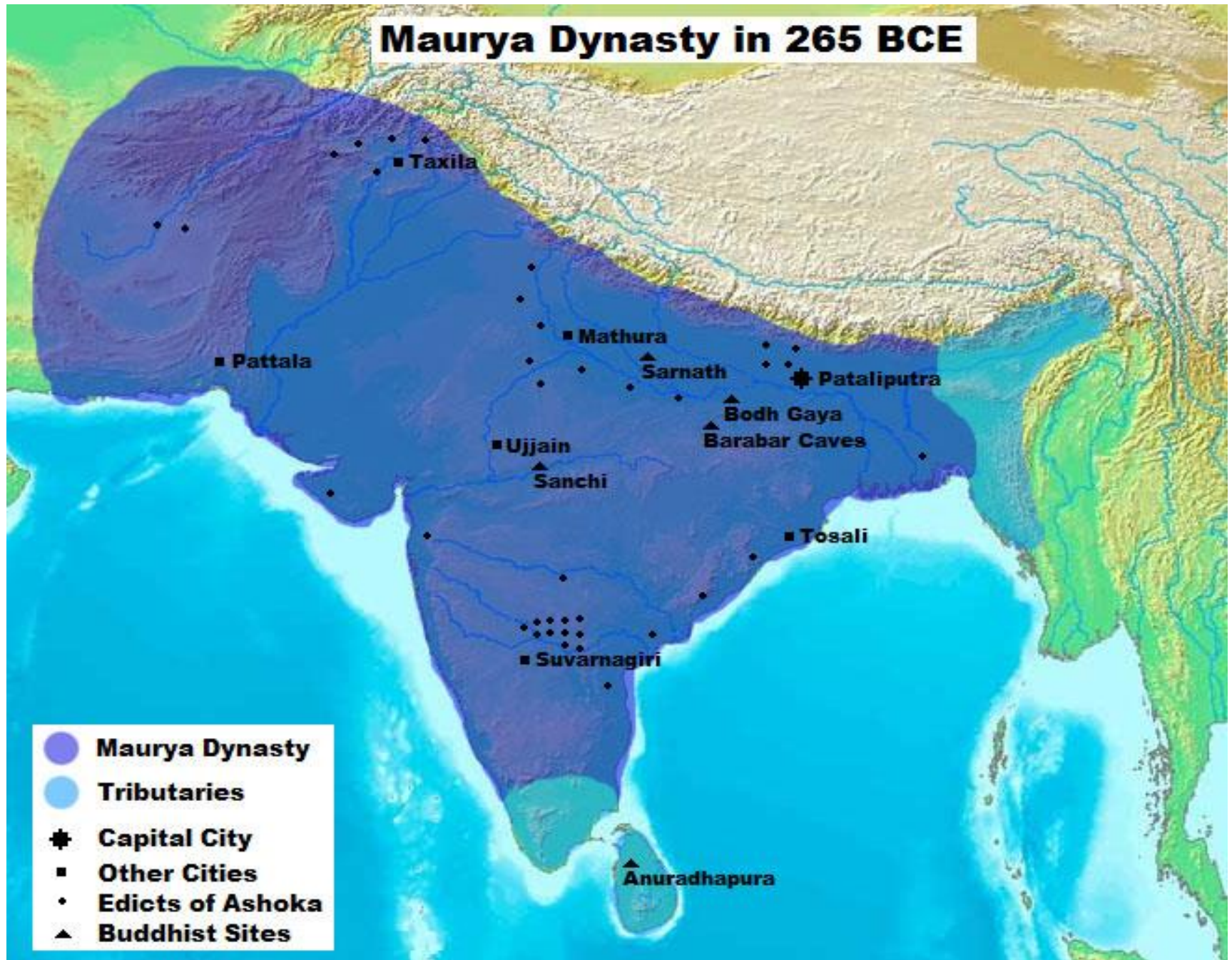
**Numbered Countries:**  
 1. Achaean League  
 2. Sparta  
 3. Jewish Kingdoms  
 4. Cappadocia  
 5. Parthians  
 6. East India  
 7. Koguryo  
 8. Chosin  
 9. Moryul  
 10. Parthians

**Red Names = Rome & its Vassals**  
**Blue Names = Hellenistic Nations**  
**Green Names = Iranian Nations**

**Disclaimer:** The information depicted in this map is only as accurate as the sources available to me, which are listed in detail at [www.WorldHistoryMaps.info](http://www.WorldHistoryMaps.info).

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# Maurya Dynasty in 265 BCE





**SOGDIANA**

**FERGHANA**

**Kucha**

**Turfan**

**CHINA**

**Kashgar**

**BACTRIA PAMIR**

**Bactra**

**Surkh Kotal**

**Begram**

**HINDU-KUSH GANDHARA**

**Taxila**

**KUSHAN EMPIRE**

**HIMALAYAS (Imaus)**

**ARACHOSIA**

**GEDROSIA**

**Mathura**

**Barbaricum**

**WESTERN SATRAPS**

**Saketa**

**Pataliputra**

**Ujjain**

**Barygaza**

**Bandhara**

**Pune**

**Pratishthana**

**SATAVAHANA EMPIRE**

**Amaravati**

**PANDYAN KINGDOM**

**CHOLAS**

**TAMRAPARNI KINGDOM**

## Age of the Rajputs and state formation after Hun invasions in North India 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>C

- break in trade, spread of agriculture
- new dynasties in the North and South
- sanctified by revival of Brahmanism as agency of new social formation
- based on ritual sanction and grants
- Indian Feudalism-continued upto 10<sup>th</sup> C
- external impulses of trade in the Indian ocean and Arabian Sea led to a new dynamics of state 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century

# *STATE FORMATIONS IN THE DECCAN*

- Ecology: River deltas, tank irrigation
- Segmentary state formation: Role of village assemblies (collective ownership of resources), Nadus
- Dynasties gaining precedence with control over fertile deltaic plains: army, bureaucracy
- Role of rituals and land grants to temples (Brahmadeya) having a royal sanction
- Chola legacy: four centuries of peace, agrarian expansion, cultural efflorescence, urbanization led by temple towns, spread of Indian Culture
- growth of trade led to emergence of surplus
- Soon the Eastward expansion of the Cholas to SE Asia consolidated the centralized state
- Ecological limitations

# East Hemisphere, 700 AD

Created by Thomas A. Lessman  
[www.WorldHistoryMaps.info](http://www.WorldHistoryMaps.info)

Updated: 8-11-2008



### Numbered Countries:

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Wessex           | 9. Crimean Goths   |
| 2. Sussex           | 10. Tabaristan     |
| 3. Essex            | 11. Bamiyan        |
| 4. Carantanians     | 12. Turk-Shahi     |
| 5. Slovenes         | 13. Udyana         |
| 6. Narentonians     | 14. Hidambas       |
| 7. Moravians        | 15. Harapunchai    |
| 8. Waag Basin Slavs | 16. Dvaravati/Lavo |

Red names = Roman Empire  
Blue names = Germanic Nations  
Green names = Islamic Nations  
Italicized names = Slavic Nations

# Eastern Hemisphere, 1025 AD

Created by Thomas A. Lessman  
www.WorldHistoryMaps.info

Updated: 2-27-2008



# Eastern Hemisphere, 1200 AD

Created by Thomas A. Lesman  
 www.WorldHistoryMaps.info  
 Updated: 1-12-2008

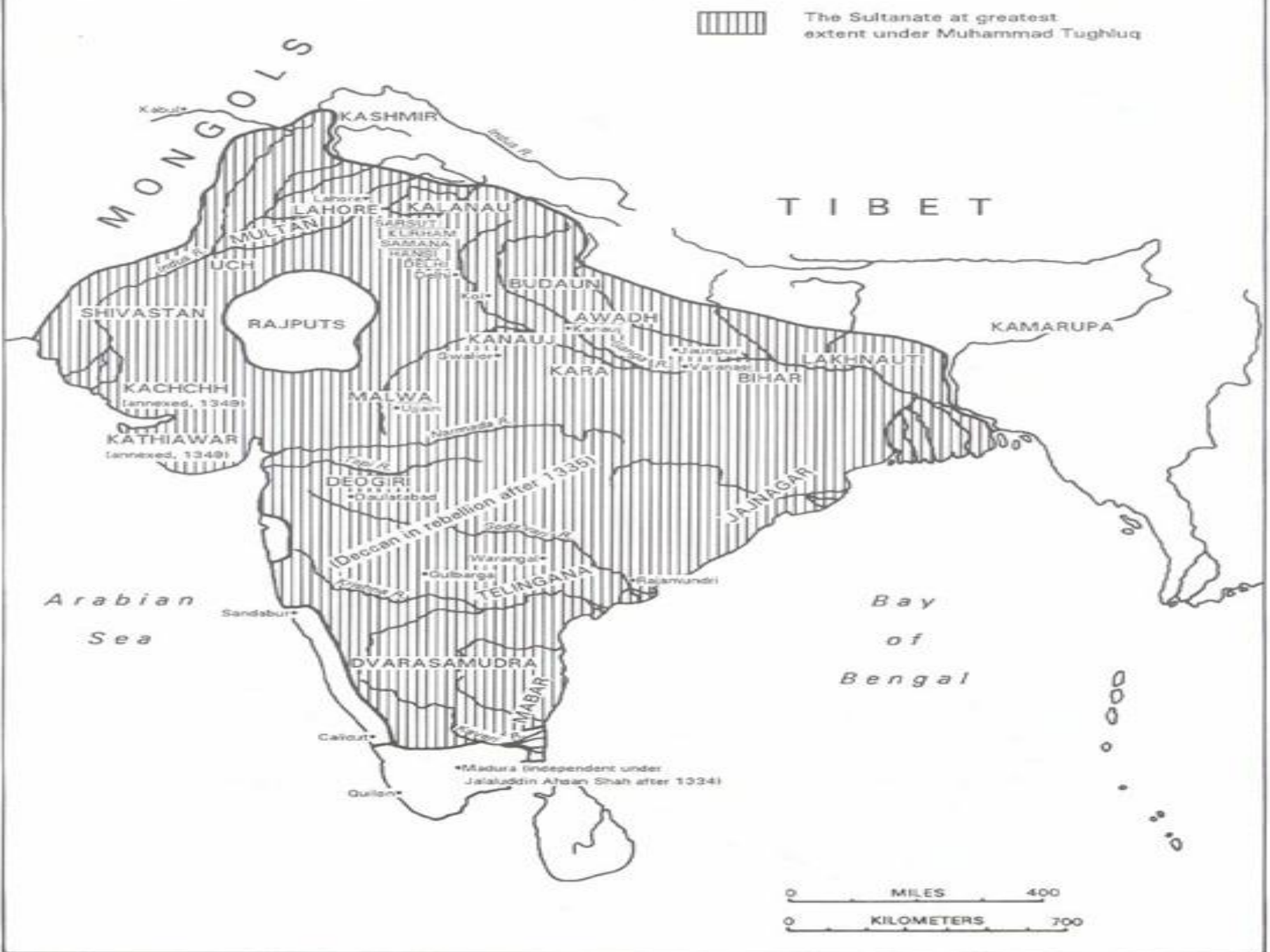


- Numbered Countries:**
- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Navarre           | 21. Moks              |
| 2. Toulouse          | 22. Yaresna           |
| 3. Provence          | 23. Ghiryu            |
| 4. Flanders          | 24. Sama              |
| 5. Brabant           | 25. Jenne             |
| 6. Holland           | 26. Gogjam            |
| 7. Blois             | 27. Damot             |
| 8. Genoa             | 28. Shewa             |
| 9. Unknown           | 29. Fetegar           |
| 10. Unknown          | 30. Dawaro            |
| 11. Venice           | 31. Harar             |
| 12. Bosnia           | 32. Pandyas           |
| 13. Jersika          | 33. Unknown (Bengal?) |
| 14. Novgorod-Seversk | 34. Harapunchai       |
| 15. Trmutorakan      | 35.                   |
| 16. Unknown          | 36.                   |
| 17. Unknown          |                       |
| 18. Unknown          |                       |
| 19. Sassun           |                       |
| 20. Shah Armen       |                       |
- Blue Names = Germanic Nations**  
**Green Names = Islamic Nations**

# THE ERA OF THE DELHI SULTANATE

## 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century

- Delhi is central because it was the paradigm for the shape of the things to come in the rest of the subcontinent
- Political economy based upon organized military & state building institutions
- Delhi's importance grew as the nuclei for the Turko-Persian elite following the Mongol invasions
- State formation assisted by: invasions, garrison towns, long distance trade, flow of bullion
- fusion of new towns with settled agrarian societies



Map 17.4 The Delhi Sultanate under Muhammad Tughluq

## *Nature of state and contradictions:*

- The state essentially a military oligarchy, bound by primordial affiliations
- Religious legitimacy, sustained by a strong institution of a standing army
- Reinforced by infusion of the Central Asian groups
- But the contradiction of the superimposition of a foreign elite on an Indian superstructure not resolved
- Explains the emergence of numerous regional states in the sub-continent with a strong Indian elements

# *The recurring themes in state formation in Indian History*

- *Indian history has been a product of changes occurring in the society and the political economy of Asia especially Central Asia*
- *Great riverine plains treasure-trove for the agrarian surplus up for grabs*
- *The state, especially the imperial state should be seen as a series of corridors of authority connecting pockets of agricultural, trade, minerals besides areas of strategic importance.*
- *Narrative of the Indian state has been that of interplay between the centripetal and centrifugal forces*

# Enduring themes in state formation contd

- *Ideal throughout has been of a strong centralised state*
- *Strong society has precluded the growth of a strong state*
- *Role of social formations and Jatis in state formation and development*
- *No sudden dislocation: decimation of civilisation, a cultural and civilisational continuity that has helped India to emerge as a nation and a sub-continent.*
- *All state formations/empires that have endured have been pluralistic and inclusive*
- *Enduring states have had a vital role of military and a strategic vision*

QUESTIONS ???

*THANK YOU*