



The Story of Indian State

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Relevance for study of history of state formation in India

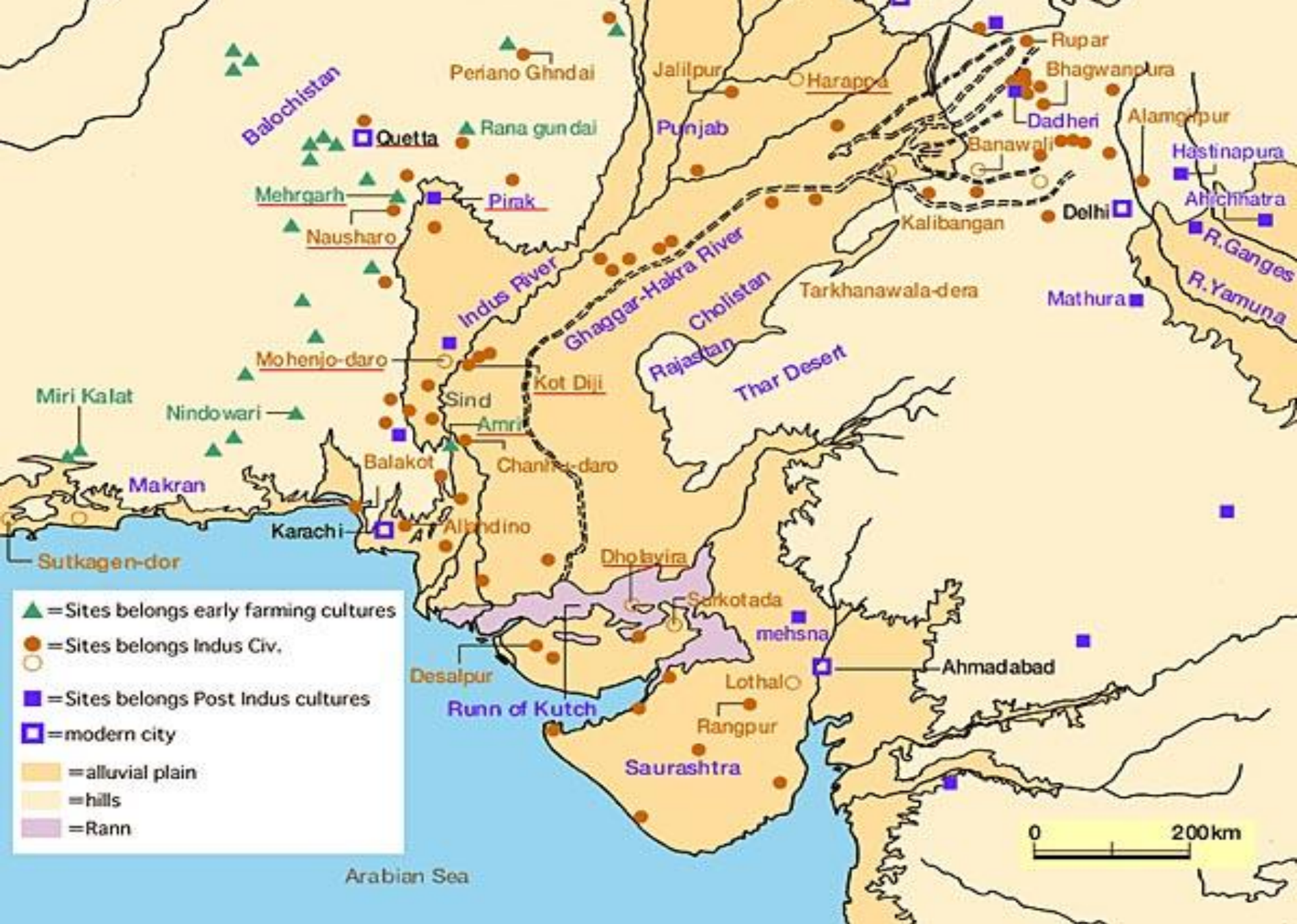
1. Nature of state has to be studied in the context of perspective building for the civil servants
2. History as a discipline is not a study of names, places and dates but of processes, events and their outcomes over time
3. So that every executive action of the modern state, whether in conceptualising 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

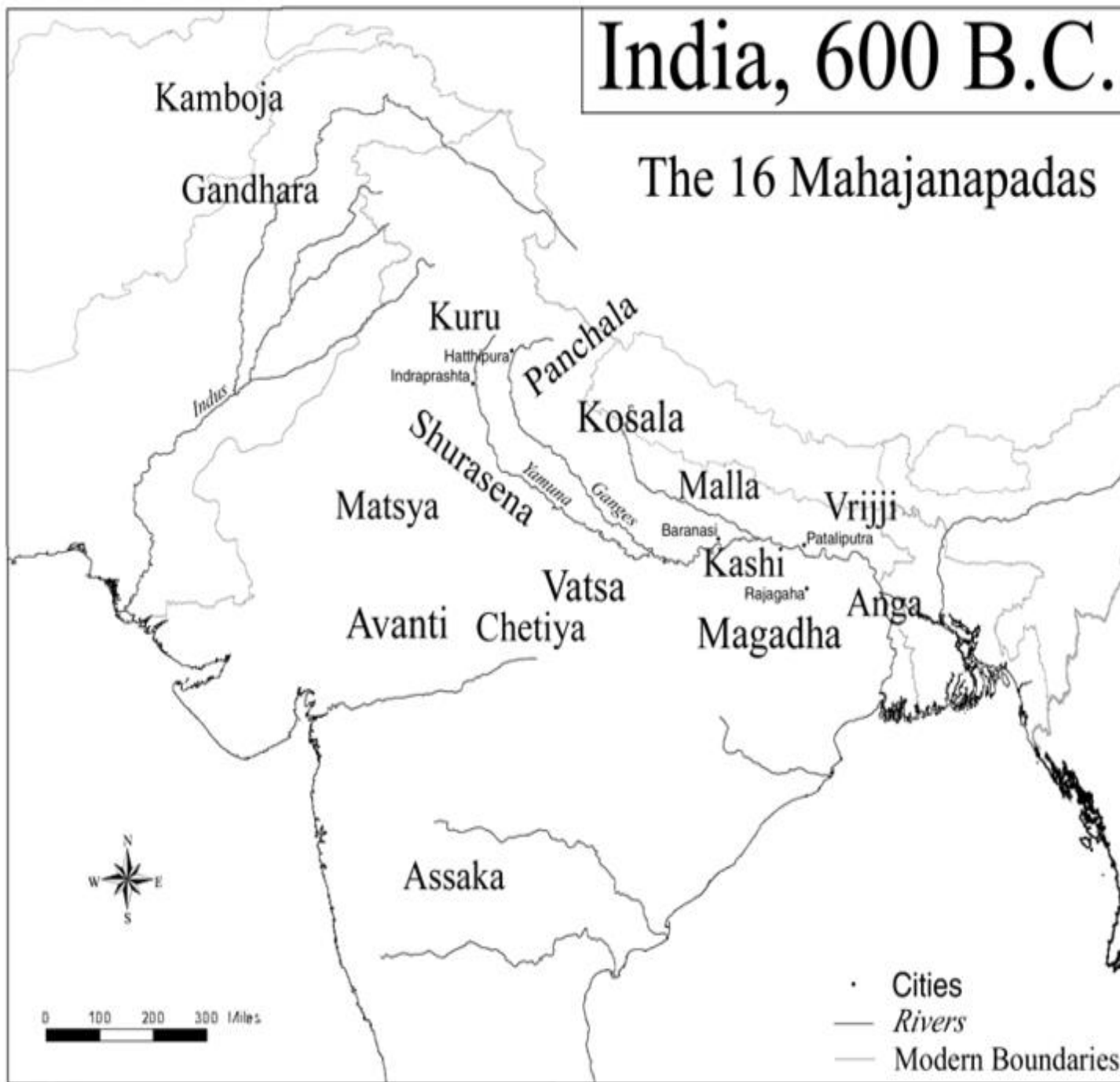
- State formation: a natural transition from a tribal society to a segmentary state
- to a republic,
-to monarchies
-to empires
- transition is characterised by growth in surplus, brought about by agrarian expansion, military expansion and in India.....by co-option of local population and cultures

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 war)
- 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-prakertayah*) 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 (*subrd/ mitra*)

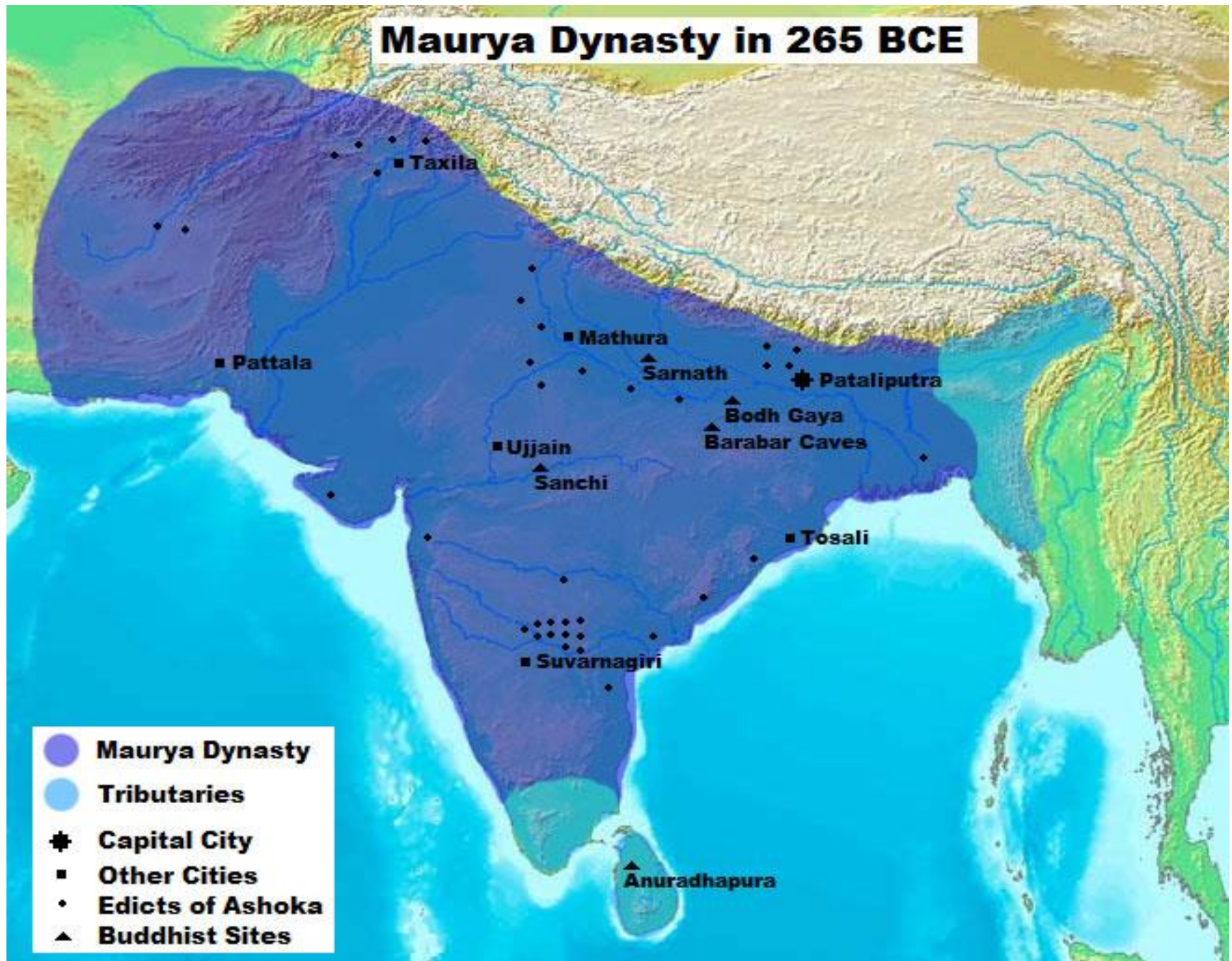
Elements of the State - contd.

- 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**

Maurya Dynasty in 265 BCE





SOGDIANA

FERGHANA

Kucha

Turfan

CHINA

Kashgar

BACTRIA

PAMIR

Bactra

Surkh Kotal

Begram

HINDU-KUSH

GANDHARA

Taxila

HIMALAYAS
(Imaus)

ARACHOSIA

**KUSHAN
EMPIRE**

Mathura

GEDROSIA

Indus

Barbaricum

**WESTERN
SATRAPS**

Ujjain

Saketa

Pataliputra

Barygaza

Bandhara

Pune

Pratishthana

**SATAVAHANA
EMPIRE**

Amaravati

**PANDYAN
KINGDOM**

CHOLAS

**TAMRAPARNI
KINGDOM**

STATE FORMATIONS IN THE DECCAN

- Ecology: River deltas, tank irrigation (Hydraulic state)
- 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
- Interplay of Central vs Segmentary theme: dry peripheral vs rich and fertile Central

Age of the Rajputs and state formation after Hun invasions in North India 5th-10thC

- 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 10th C
- external impulses of trade in the Indian ocean and Arabian Sea led to a new dynamics of state 9th-10th century

East Hemisphere, 700 AD

Created by Thomas A. Lessman
www.WorldHistoryMaps.info

Updated: 8-11-2008



Numbered Countries:

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

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

THE ERA OF THE DELHI SULTANATE

13th-16th 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

Eastern Hemisphere, 1300 AD

Created by Thomas A. Lessman
Source: www.WorldHistoryMaps.info

Updated: 2-19-2008

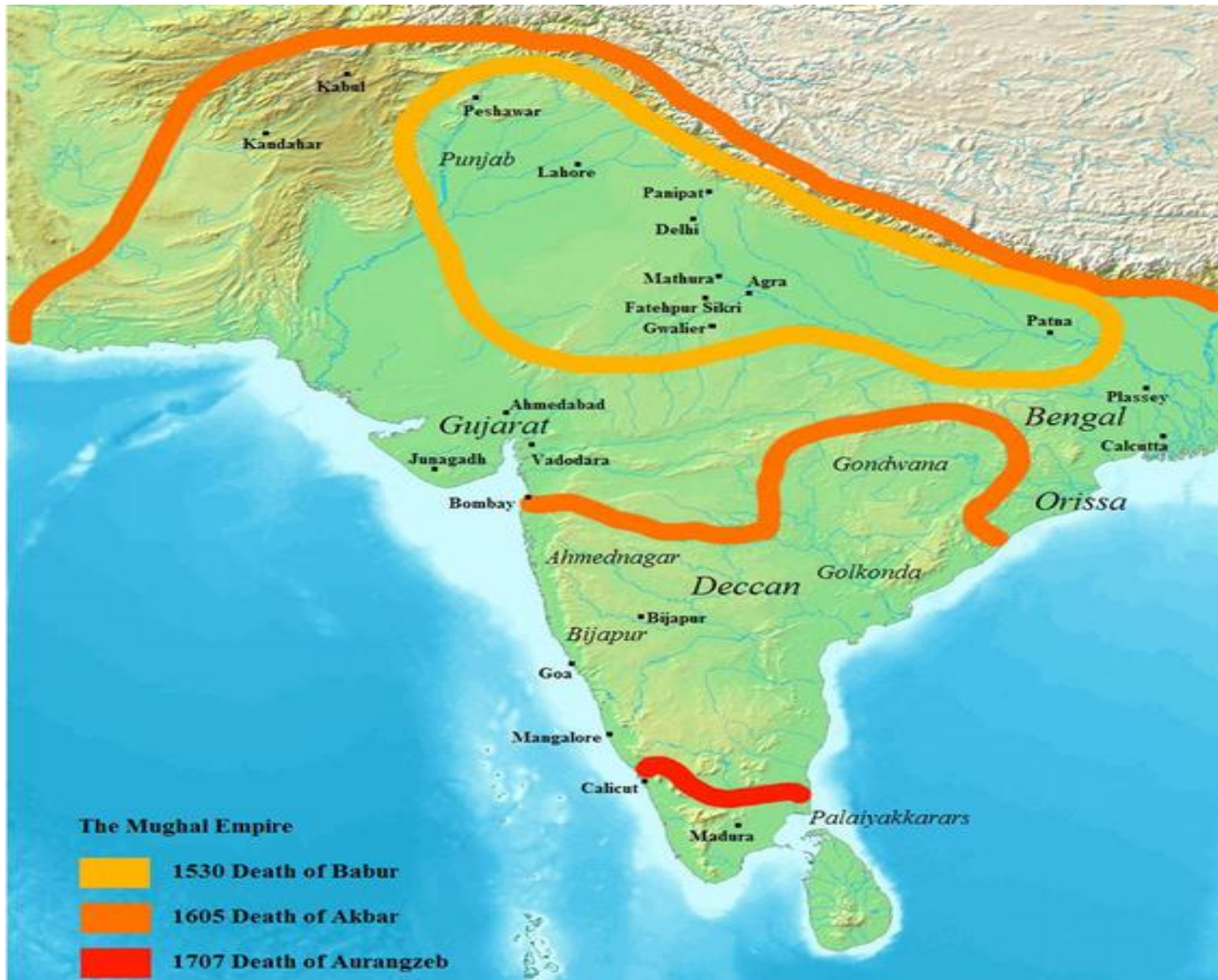


Nature of state and contradictions:

- 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

Contradiction addressed in the Mughal period 16th-18th century:

- Mughal state more centralised and efficient in appropriation (increased Khalisa, Todar Mal reforms)
- linkages of nodal centres and towns with rural hinterland
- therefore increasing urbanization, which is at once cause and effect of trade (%of urban population more in 17th century than 19th century)
- Administratively a proto-bureaucratic structure, assisted by an integration of the local elites (Rajputs and Marathas). More broad based in its ethnic composition



State in the times of Mughals:

- More Indian in nature (elite born in India, speaking Indian languages, literature local, theme local, no need for religious sanction)
- It helped sustain the empire for nearly 200 years
- The decline of Mughul empire understood more in terms of its inability to integrate provinces
- which were growing in their right and developing linkages with the regional social and economic formations
- Emergence of new institutions in trade and commerce along the coast

QUESTIONS ???

The Story of Indian State II: *Nationalism and Evolution of Modern Indian State*

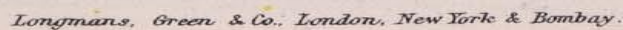
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Dominant political trends in the 18th century

- *Growing trade, urbanisation and the increasing centrifugal forces (in Bengal, Deccan and the Maratha areas) led to the formation of new political power centres*
- *North west decline post Abdali due to decline in trade (overland trade lost out to maritime trade), weakening of Persia and Central Asian states*
- *In these turbulent times, emergence of new powerful institutions like the East India Company altered the power equations*
- *Expansion via the East coast and the South towards the north*

In the time of Clive
1760

50 100 200 300



Driving force behind expansion

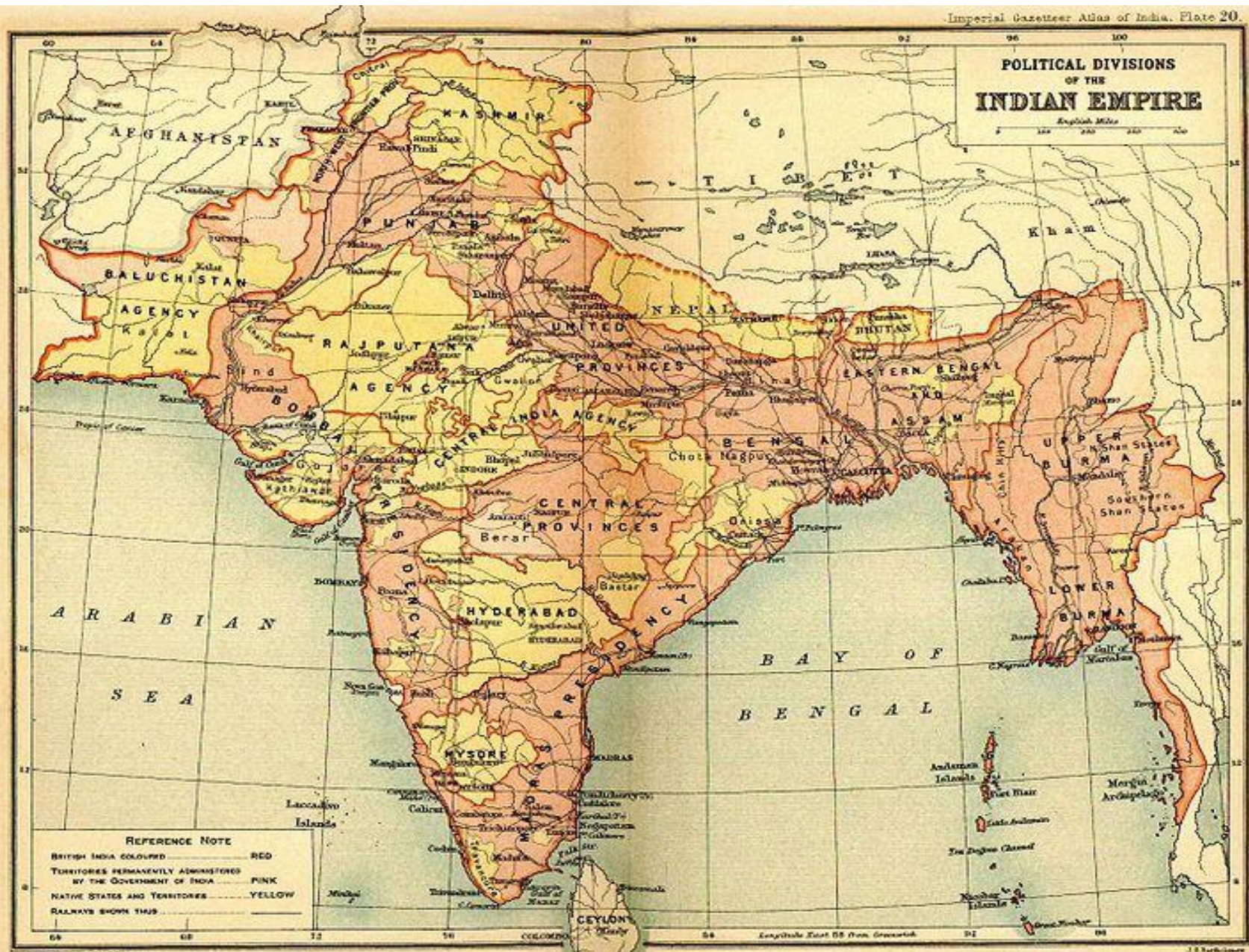
- Commercial: Trade
- Opportunism (to deny other European powers)
- and later Strategic: to safeguard the commercial interests
- East India Company's drive assisted by a case-to-case handholding by British govt
- British government bailed out East India Company financially and militarily on a number of occasions
- Wars were inevitably the last resort
- Main adversaries: Mysore, Marathas, Avadh and the Sikhs

British Supremacy over India established through:

- Institutional superiority of the Europeans (Joint stock company, better Accounting and sound finance principles)
- Standing army: better trained
- better leadership
- Better use of alliances and dissensions

BUT BASICALLY A FAILURE OF WEAK AND OUTMODED STATE INSTITUTIONS

British Indian Empire 1909



Nature of British Indian State

- *Despotic and Racist*
- *Predominance of commercial and mercantile interests and strategic considerations*
- *Evident from the fact that British India constituted only 65% of the total territory (areas of agrarian surplus, deltaic areas, markets and areas with industrial potential) of the sub-continent was under direct rule*
- *Led to impoverishment, rural and urban*
- *Drain of Wealth: Phases of imperialism*

The Modern State

However, the importance of British rule is that it ushered in the era of modern state.

The 'modern state' characterised by:

- *Impersonal institutions of governance: as opposed to person-centric*
- *Civil Services based on merit: the ICS, IP*
- *Government penetration vertically and horizontally*
- *Territorial Integrity*
- *Introduction of the concept of private property*
- *Rule of law*
- *Western Education*
- *Greater economic role of the state: New forms of taxes (Income tax, wealth tax etc)*

Structure of the government

Three tier structure:

- **Secretary of State for India** (responsible to the British Govt): had overriding powers
- **Viceroy** (as opposed to Governor General, i.e the king's deputy) who was the real executive (executive council: like the cabinet portfolios)
- **Provincial government** (under Governor/Lt Governor/Chief Commissioner)
- Underlying idea was to ensure a more direct control of the British Government

Constitutional reforms:

- *From 1858-1947 there were a series of Acts passed*
- *The trend was to broad base governance with checks and balances (Secretary of State vs the Viceroy; Nationalists vs Imperialists; nationalists vs the princes)*
- *Idea to devolve more powers to the Indians (but delegation with a view to Divide and Rule: as Britain has been doing to all its colonies): progression from 1909, 1919 and 1935*
- *Culminating in 1947 Independence Act*
- *Greater autonomy also (ostensibly) to the Indian government viz-a-viz the British Parliament and the office of the Secretary of State.*
- *Reforms were initiated in response to political pressure (Nationalist)*
- *Reforms only political in nature not social*

Such Political changes went hand in hand with the institutional changes in the economy:

- *Growth of modern capitalism: including home-grown business*
- *Investment in infrastructure: Growth and Improvement*
- *Joint Stock companies, Managing agencies (box-wallahs)*
- *Greater monetisation and cash crops with land becoming a commodity*
- *modern industries*
- *participation in global trade*

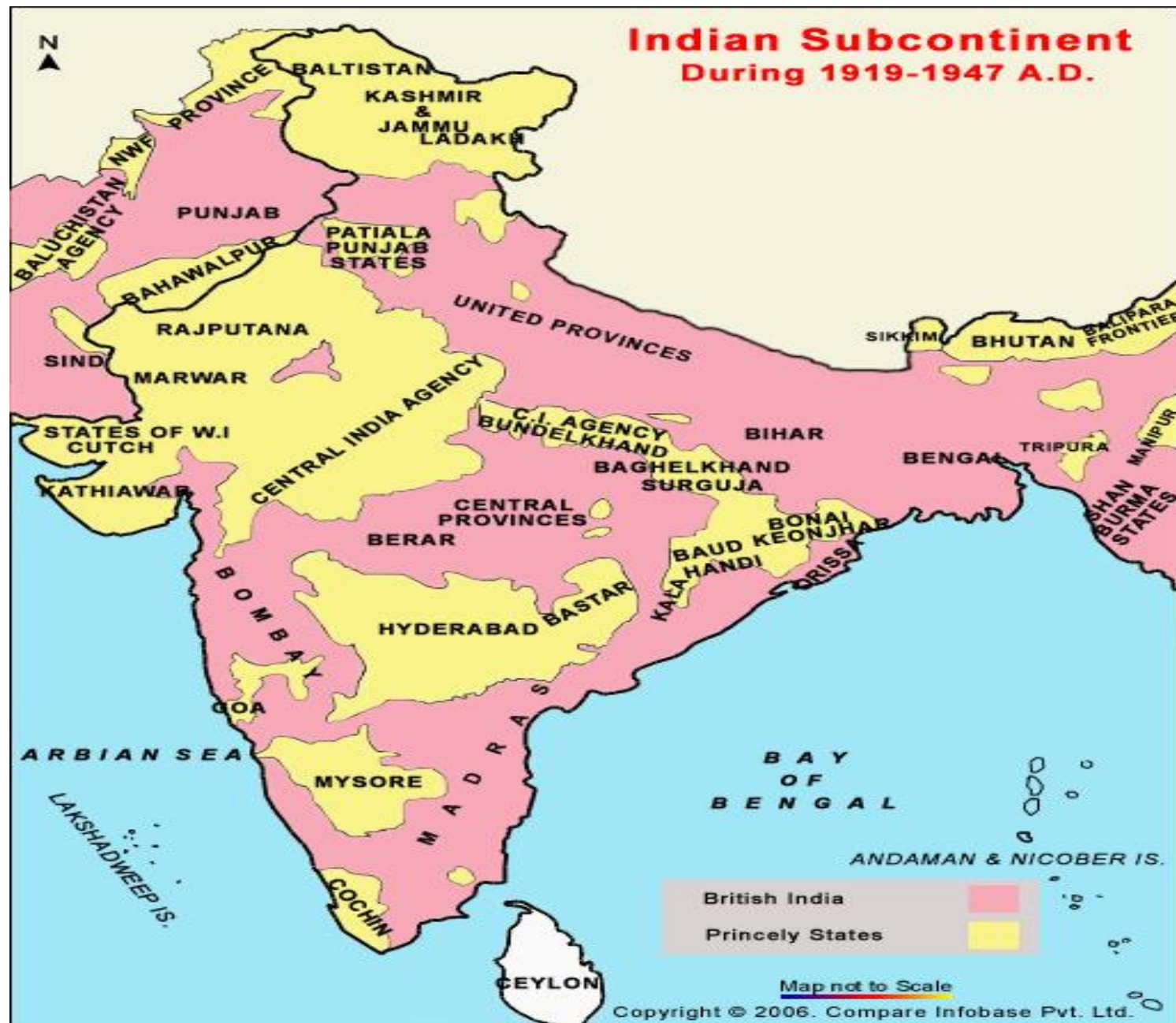
Growth in the economy was nevertheless designed to fit in the imperial scheme of things

Consequently, the society also underwent rapid changes as an outcome of the British Raj:

- *Greater mobility: social and geographical*
 - brought about by territorial integrity,*
 - rule of law*
 - western education*
 - integration of the village societies with the market*
- *Social and religious reform movements*
- *Challenges to the traditional social order: caste and anti-brahmanical movements; growing religious movements*

Social Impact of the British Raj contd:

- *Change in the patterns of dominance: certain castes and communities growing as opposed to other*
- *Uneven pattern of regional growth: between provinces and within the provinces*
- *Policy of seeing everything in black and white & policy of divide and rule led to:*
 - Crystallization of identities- Seeds of communalism*
 - Increase in regional/caste identities*





Nationalism explained.

- "...it is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."- Benedict Anderson
- "Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. ...nations are the artefacts of men's convictions, loyalties and solidarities..... It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non- members." (Gellner)
- The term 'nationalism' is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments.
 - "A nationalist argument is a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions:
 - a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character.
 - b) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values.
 - c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty." (John Breuilly)

- **NATIONALISM:** A political phenomenon, ideal is a 'nation-state' created (ideally) through spread of a national consciousness among its people (also called nation building)
- "Has a moral, ethical, philosophical implication. But actualization of the concept is achieved through the nation state. Therefore the study of nations is inextricably linked to that of the nation-state. When certain nations are not able to become nation-states it creates issues and the striving forever is for a state."
- **DIFFUSION:** Through Isomorphism, Anti-colonial, Top down state building, Through Separatist movements or through Irredentism
- Why should we understand the phenomenon, as civil servants
- Because it is linked with the state, the Nation State
- Idea of State Nation

Indian nationalism and the national movement (Bipan Chandra)

- Modern outlook, progressive, democratic
- Vision for a modern State
- Committed to secularism and civil liberties
- Broad based: Ideologically, socially
- Anti-Colonial: not Xenophobic
- Economic dimension
- Pro-poor orientation: From different strands of Socialism to Gandhian ideology
- Had a broad international outlook: Tagore
- Distinct techniques and methods

Nature of Modern Indian State

- Being a “child” of British rule that ushered in the modern state (seen in the 1935 Act, modern civil service & the army), the post independence Indian state is.....
.....outcome of colonial experience, freedom struggle, partition and a reaction to Colonialism
- *Articulator of nationalism*
unity, nationalism, sovereignty are key words; national symbols
- Ideals and the mission articulated beautifully in the Constitution
- Bold experiment in democracy (Universal adult franchise, parliamentary democracy)

Nature of modern post-independence Indian state

- Civilian control
- Federal & Secular parliamentary democracy
- Acknowledgement of diversities: states' reorganization in the 50s, 60s, 70s
recent cases
- External threats and their impact
- State as guarantor of rights & liberty;

Modern (post independence) Indian State:

- *Directional and Interventionist:*
"Welfare State": Economic role
Agent of social equity and justice
- *Bureaucracy's role even more important: -*
agent of change and "steel frame"
 - *politically neutral*
 - *Selection based on merit*
 - *protection from political arbitrariness.*

New themes in state discourse

- Theme of centre vs state still dominant: Struggle for resources, control, power
- Role of pressure groups and interest groups: language, caste, regional, ideology, now civil society
- Political parties: nature: major players in the polity
- Primordial loyalties still relevant: Spirit of Nationalism still nascent
- Impact of globalisation and wired world
- Externalities: Energy, geo-strategic concerns

Challenges before the Modern Indian State:

- *Change from direct intervention to laissez faire to a Regulatory (Fukuyama matrix: Scope vs strength)*
- *Governance deficit: Non-willingness and inability to govern*
 - *Leading to erosion of credibility of institutions*
 - *Judicial Activism*
 - *Rise of "civil society"*
- *Demographic bulge: need for economic growth more imperative than ever*
- *Aspirations of a burgeoning middle class*
- *Aspirations of the marginalized and the peripheral populations*
- *Crux of the problem: Leadership & no rule of law*

"State of - the Indian State":

- *Parliamentary Democracy and crisis of legitimacy and representativeness of politics: Is it a leader and articulator of mass aspirations ?*
- *Interplay of centre-state issues*
- *New players: Civil Society, NGOs and media and social networking*
- *Role of global actors: MNC, Non-state actors, Multi-Lateral agencies*
- *"Soft State": for whatever compulsions*
- *In a global context: "A Reluctant Power"*
- *Role of the civil services: change in outlook and the structure*

Indian State in the next 40 years:

- More representative: because that is the only way out
- Therefore more inclusive and therefore stronger: since demand drivers will compel short term tough decisions which will reap long term benefits
- Demographic dividends will continue till 2035
- Environmental issues and energy and water crisis: technology and enforcement
- Governance will be the principal determinant: civil services, political leadership the key
- What if....."strong society and economy but a weak polity and state" syndrome stays?
- "A functioning Anarchy".....

MANTRA:

*BUILD A STRONG STATE-NATION ONLY THEN WE CAN HAVE
A STRONG NATION-STATE*

THANK YOU