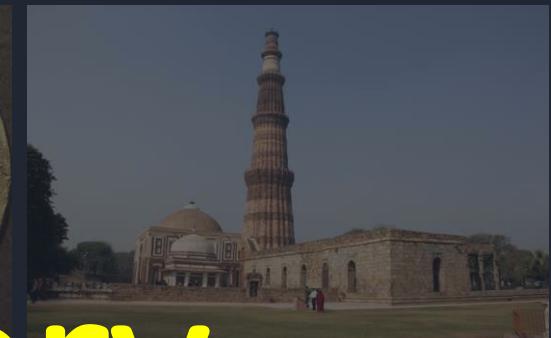
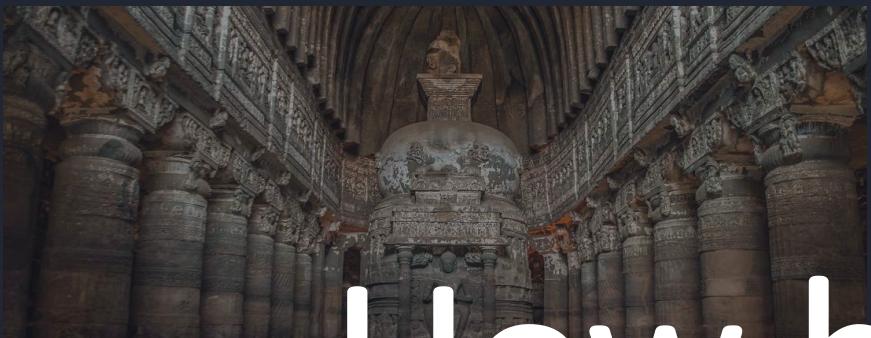


How has History Been Studied in India



Itihasa

- “The Myth of the **Eternal Return**”
 - Revealed, not rationally investigated
- **Shruti** : Oral traditions; Authoritative but Authorless
 - Vedas, Upanishad
- **Smriti** : Written; Author known but text derivative, inexact
 - Mahabharata, Ramayana, Puranas, Dharmashastras, literature
- Massive cosmological cycles; no distinction b/w human and divine
- *Itihasa* (history) is **predestination**

Lokayat Traditions

- Rejected predestination; even anything supernatural / divine
 - Events due to **natural causes** and **human action**
- Knowledge can be gained only by **perception** and logic- **reason**
 - History is about **what has happened** in this world (**empirical**)
- No direct sources remain; systematically destroyed
 - We know what little we do from **hostile references** in Vedic, Puranic, Buddhist and Jaina literature

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- These traditions of history writing died out and merged into *itihasa* / mythology
- Two historical traditions remained
 - Family genealogies and court chronicles

Orientalists

- Conquerors! But eager to study India's philosophies and histories
 - Collected Material Artefacts, Texts, Oral Traditions, and Customs
 - Thought highly of Indian society, economy, culture
- *Asiatick Society* formed by William Jones (1784, Fort William Calcutta)
 - "...enquiries will be extended to whatever is performed by man or produced by nature."
- H H Wilson, 1808, Indians made members
- Asiatic Society Bombay, 1805
- This was the dominant perspective till c. 1820s

Liberals and Utilitarians

- James Mill, *The History of British India*, 1806 to 1817
 - Never set foot in India, knew no India language, *thus* claimed objectivity
- Thomas Babington Macaulay c. 1830
 - Minutes on Education
 - Indian Penal Code
- Argued Indian society and culture were brutish, savage, backward
- British Rule had a moral mission: **Make India Modern / Civilised**
 - Based on a vision of Equality and Liberty of (hu)Man
 - “White Man’s Burden”

British View

- PERIODISATION: Hindu, Muslim, British
 - Hindu India from beginning of history to Muslim invasions (Golden Period)
 - Muslim India from 10th century BCE till establishment of British Rule (Tyranny)
 - British India as modern and progressive
- 1857: Victory of Conservative Liberalism
 - Entrenched a deep fear of Indians AND a sense of British racial superiority
 - Indians beyond reform or civilising; Rule by stressing British Superiority
- THREE AXIS of Indian History / Society: Religion, Caste, and Language

Important Milestones

- Discovery of Kharoshti, **Brahmi script**
 - James Princep
 - Devanampriya Piyadasi
- Archeological Survey of India (1861)
 - Alexander Cunningham
 - Buddhist traditions, Ashoka, Khajuraho
- History Departments in Calcutta and Bombay University
 - Indian History and “**Indology**” in English, German, other Western Universities
- Mohenjodaro and Harappa
 - Known since 1856-7
 - Full discovery in 1921-22
 - Pushed Indian history back by **three millennia**
- National **Archives** of India
 - Imperial Records Department (1891)
 - Gazetteers; Land and Forest Settlement Reports; Census 1872, then 1881
- **Indian Historians**
 - R.C. Dutt
 - Jadunath Sarkar
 - D.D. Kosambi

Main “Schools”

- British / Colonial
- Nationalist
- Marxist
- Subaltern

Differences

- PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORY: WHAT HAPPENED, HOW AND WHY
- METHOD OF DOING HISTORY: WHICH SOURCES, THEIR INTERPRETATION

British / Colonial History of India

- Claimed there was nothing called “India” or “Indian”
 - Convenient geographical moniker of British Empire, not a nation or culture
 - Too many disparities, no unity
 - Each community, group, region, and caste had separate history
- Identified Oriental Despotism, and Village Community
- Claimed British Rule was *agent of change* as well as unification
- Claimed Indians do not want independence but share of power
 - Only the elites and not the masses
 - Protests are not nationalism but self-interest of “seditious babus”
- “Cambridge School”
 - John Gallagher, Anil Seal, Gordon Johnson, P J Marshall, D K Fieldhouse, C.A. Bayly

Nationalist History

- India had History and a tradition of History writing
- Stressed the greatness of **unifying empires...**
 - Ashoka, Gupta, Kushan, Mughal
- ...**Unifying ideologies**
 - Vedas, Buddhism, Shankaracharya, Bhakti, Religious Tolerance....
- **Sought causes for conquest**
 - by British **or** Muslims, depending on political tilt
- Worked to write **one Indian history**
- Romesh Chunder Dutt; Jadunath Sarkar
 - Mughals, Rajputs, Shivaji, Bengal, Economic History, Sanskrit sources
- Jawaharlal Nehru
 - Discovery of India
- Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra

Marxist Historians

- D. D. Kosambi
 - History needs **scientific tools**
 - Look for material reason (class interests) in historical events
 - Critique **physical** and **literary** sources; do not accept at face value
 - **Question British periodisation**
- R. S. Sharma, Irfan Habib, Sumit Sarkar, D. N. Jha, Satish Chandra, K. N. Panikkar...
 - Identified **economic and social foundations** of Indian History
 - Fore-grounded class struggle and **role of common people**
 - Freedom Struggle against **both** British Rule and Indian oppressors
 - India became a nation in and through its freedom struggle

Subaltern Studies

- Based their interpretation on the **Elite – Subaltern** divide
 - Post-Structuralist, Post-Colonial
- History has to be from “**Indigenous World-view**” of peasant and tribal
 - British, Nationalist, Marxist perspectives were all “Western”, “Elite”
 - How do we know what large masses of people did, or believed, when they have left no records
- Foregrounded **cultural** history, psycho-social aspects of historical events
- 1981, *Subaltern Studies* Volume I (total 13 till now)
 - Spread from India to the world
 - Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gyanendra Pandey, Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Dipesh Chakravarty, David Hardiman...

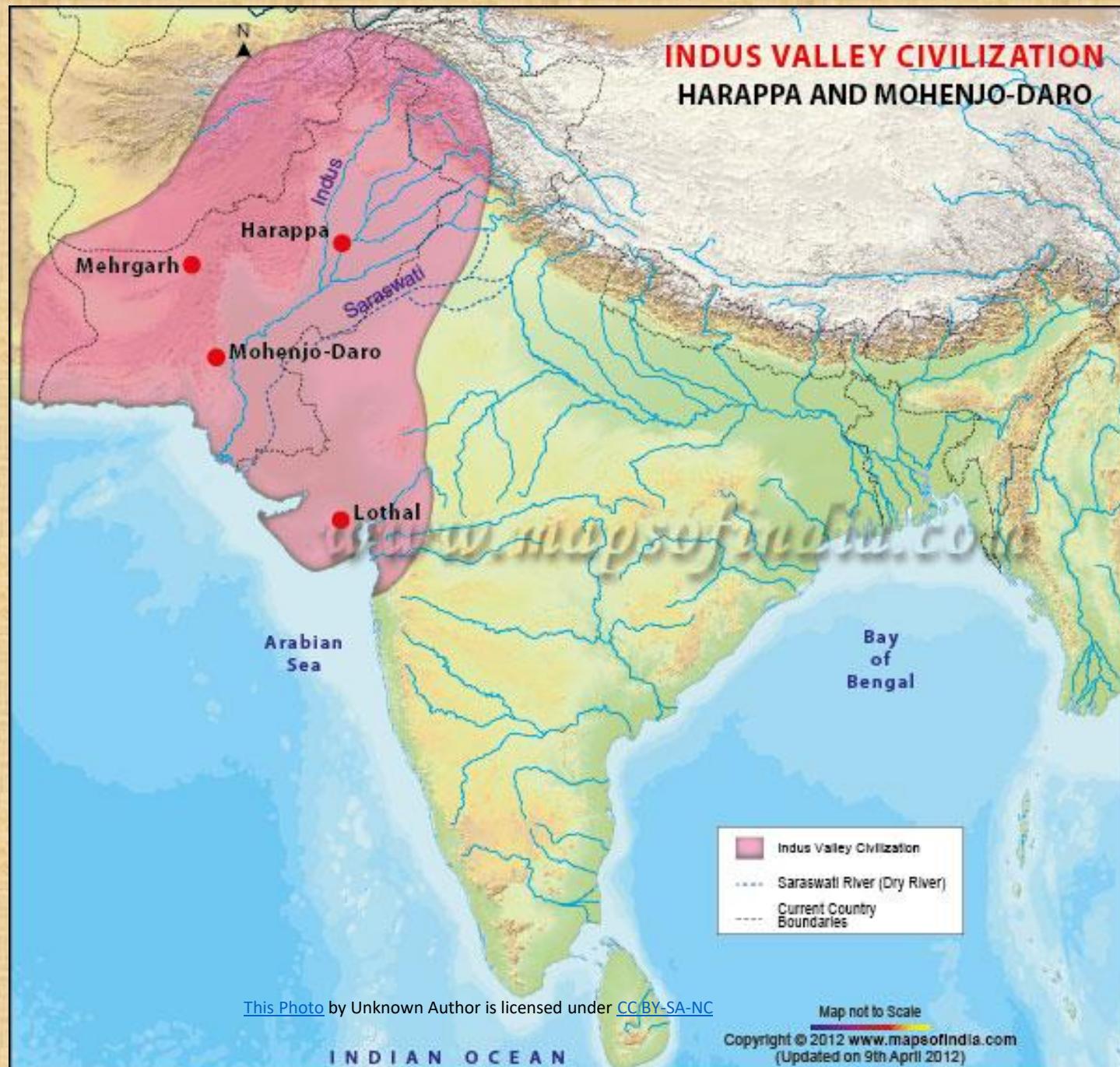
History in India Today

- New Directions of studying environment, technology, *Mentalité*
- New methodologies using computational tools
- Oral Histories
- New Sources and Archives
- History is the most political of disciplines!

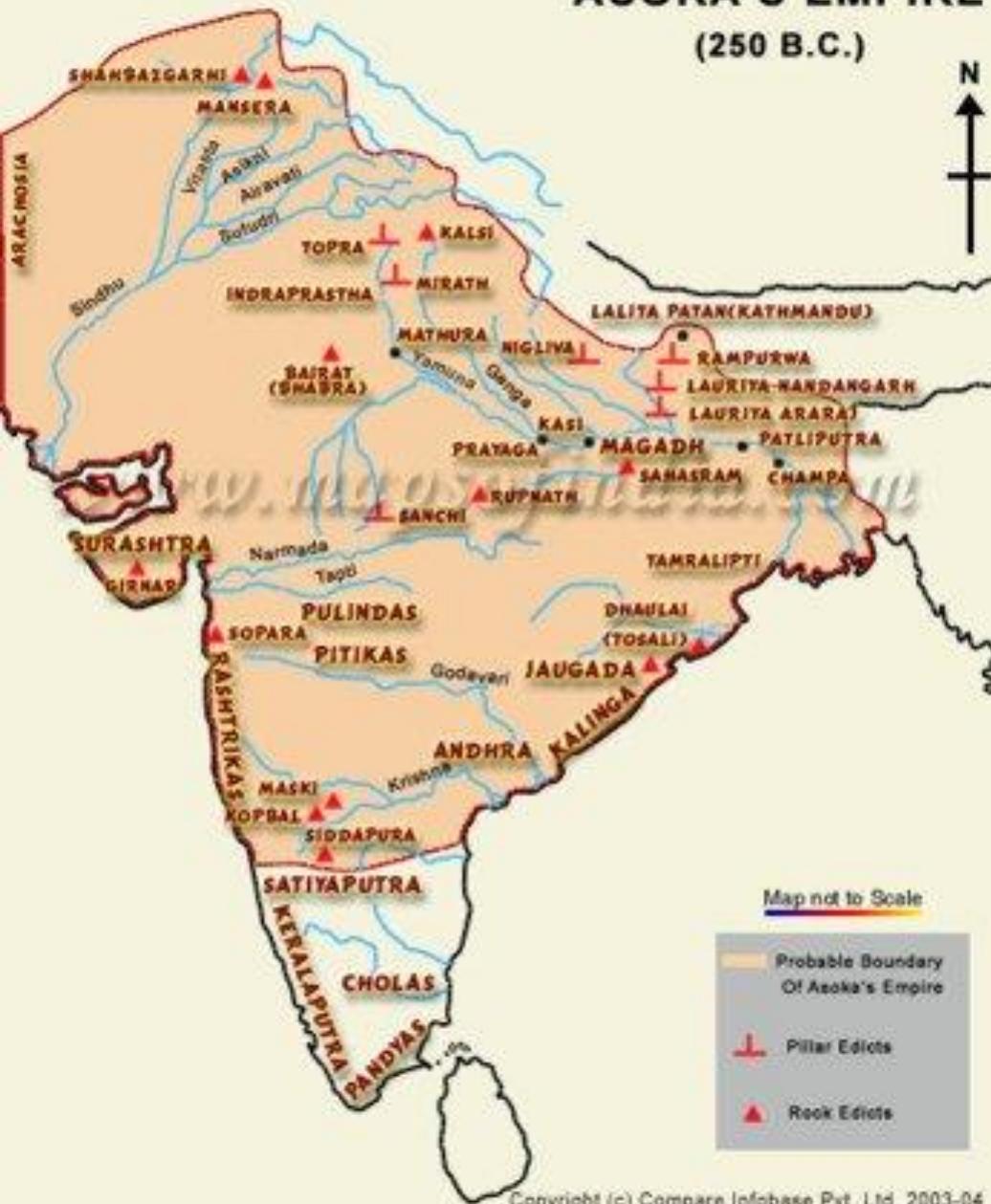
Some Historical Milestones

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ASOKA'S EMPIRE (250 B.C.)



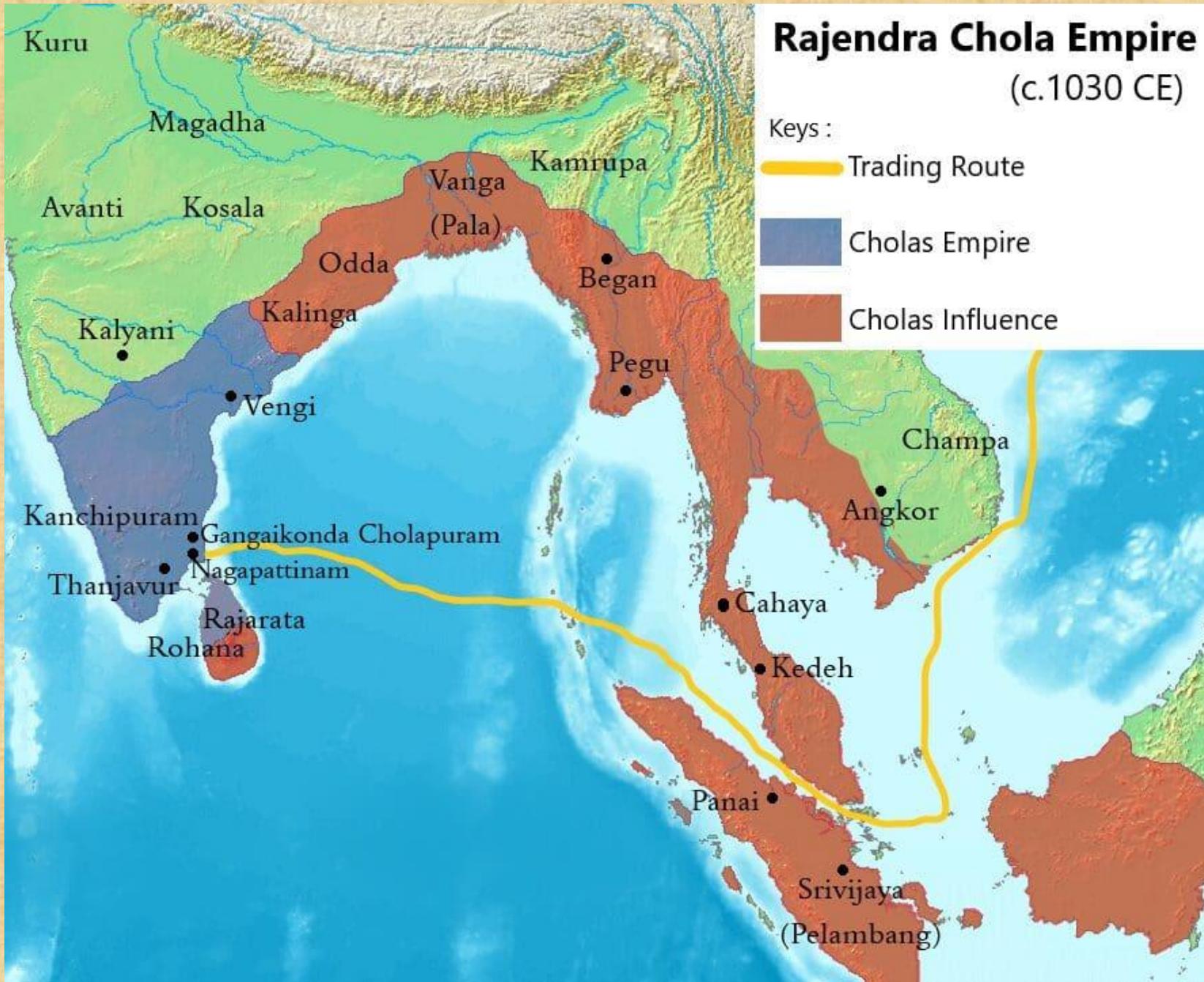
Map not to Scale

Probable Boundary
Of Asoka's Empire

Pillar Edicts

Rock Edicts

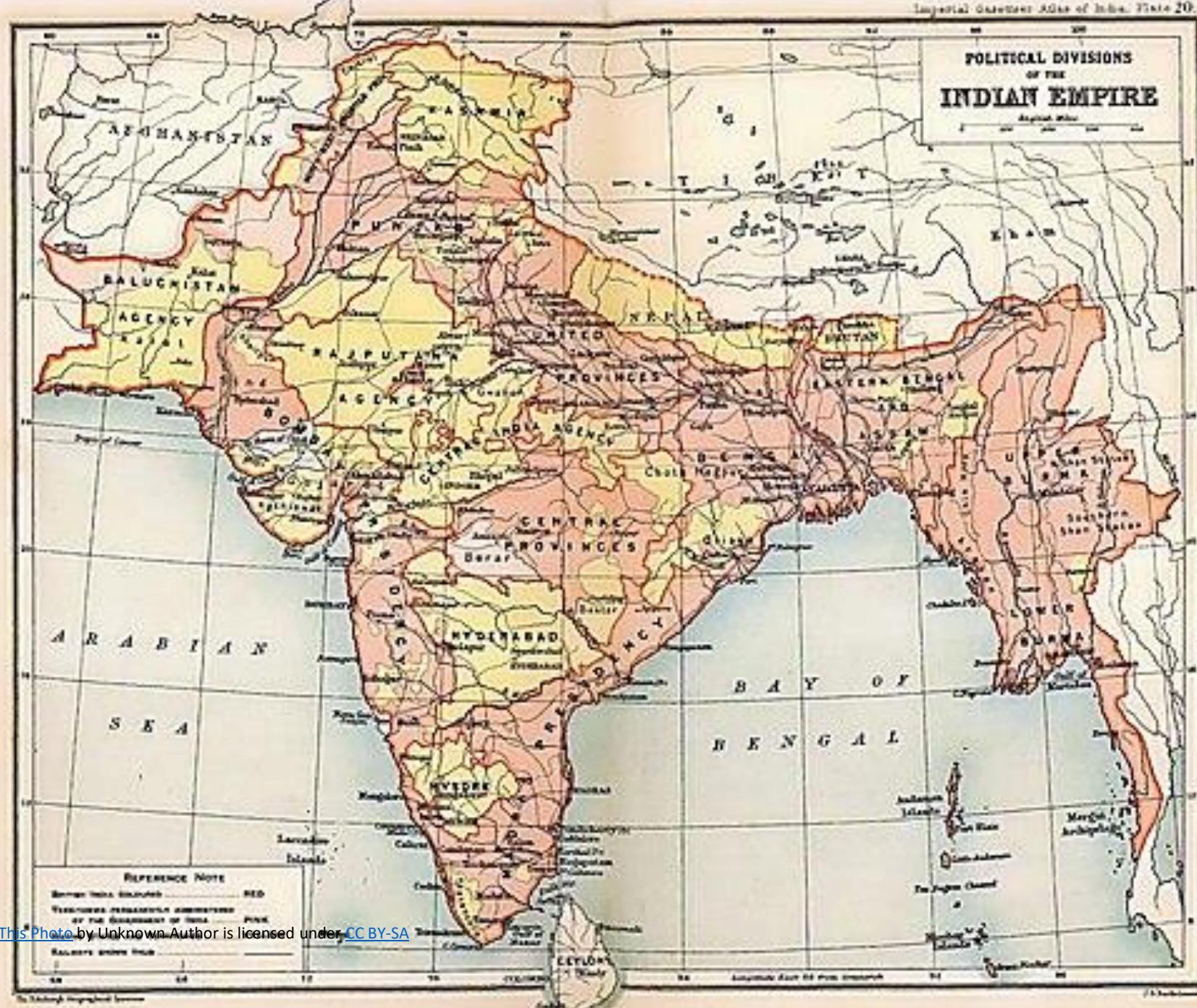




MUGHAL EMPIRE 1530-1707

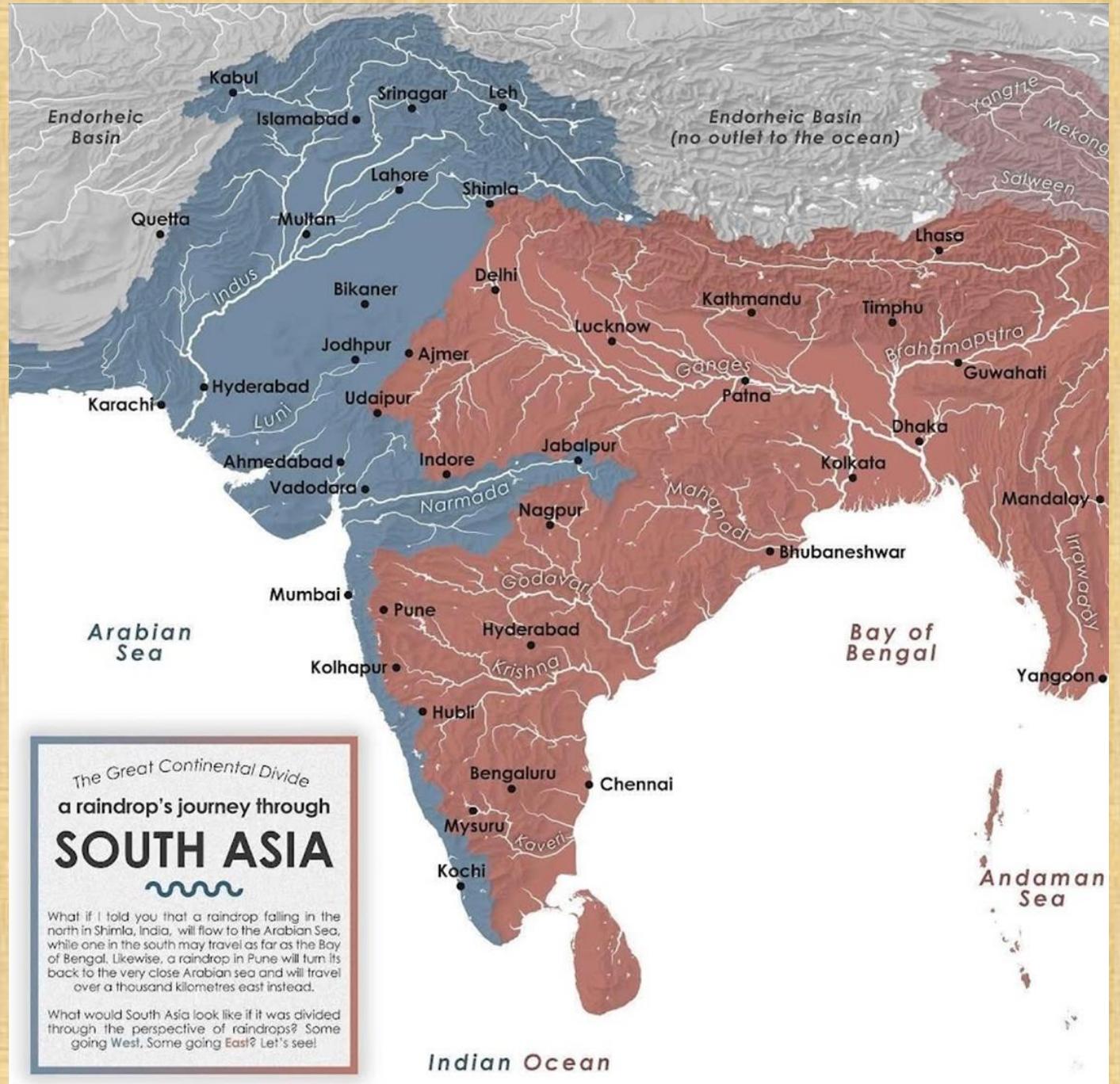


POLITICAL DIVISIONS
OF THE
INDIAN EMPIRE



River Basins

- Each river basin sustained life
- Self Contained
- Not just water
- Historical units
- Divided by
 - Mountains
 - Forests
 - Human artefacts



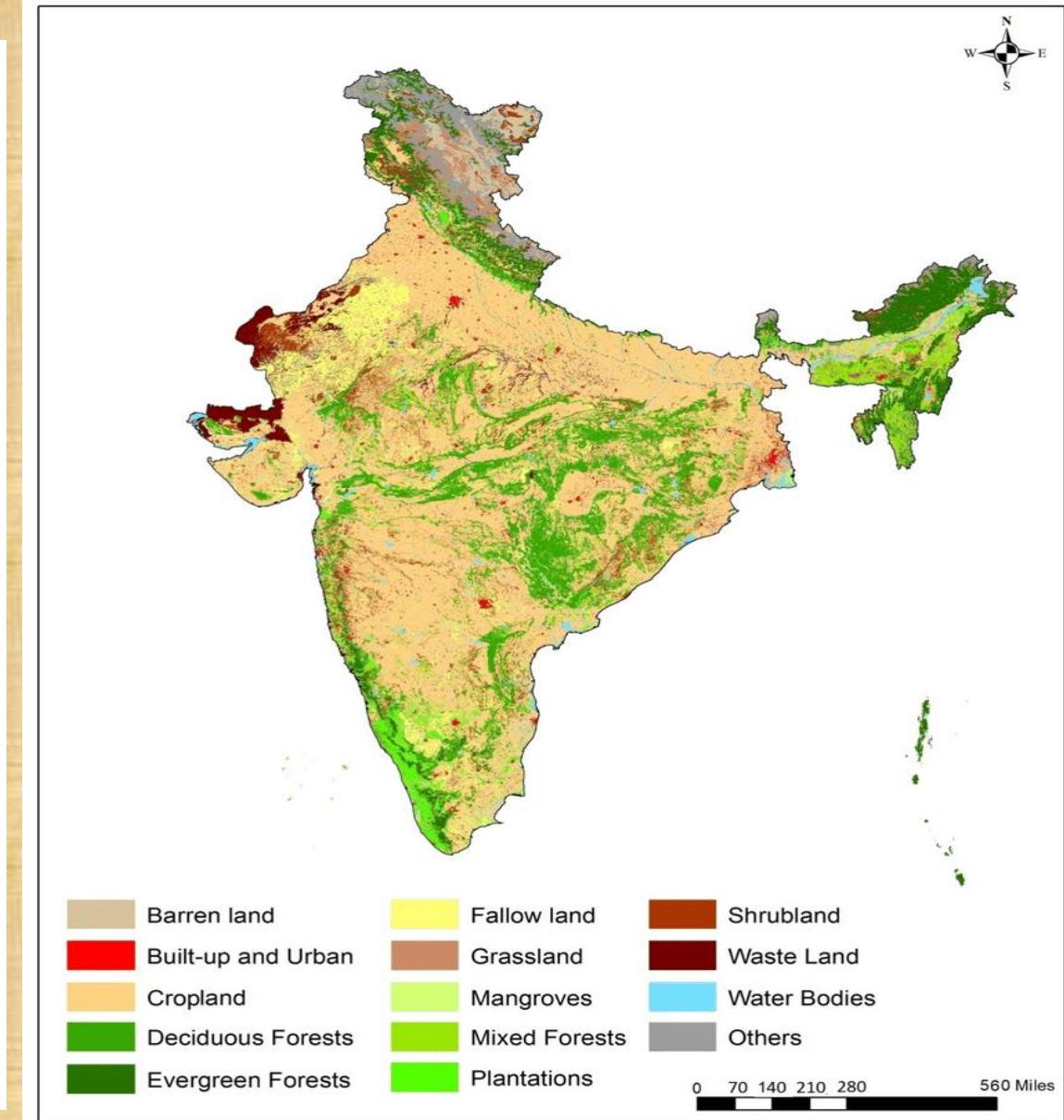
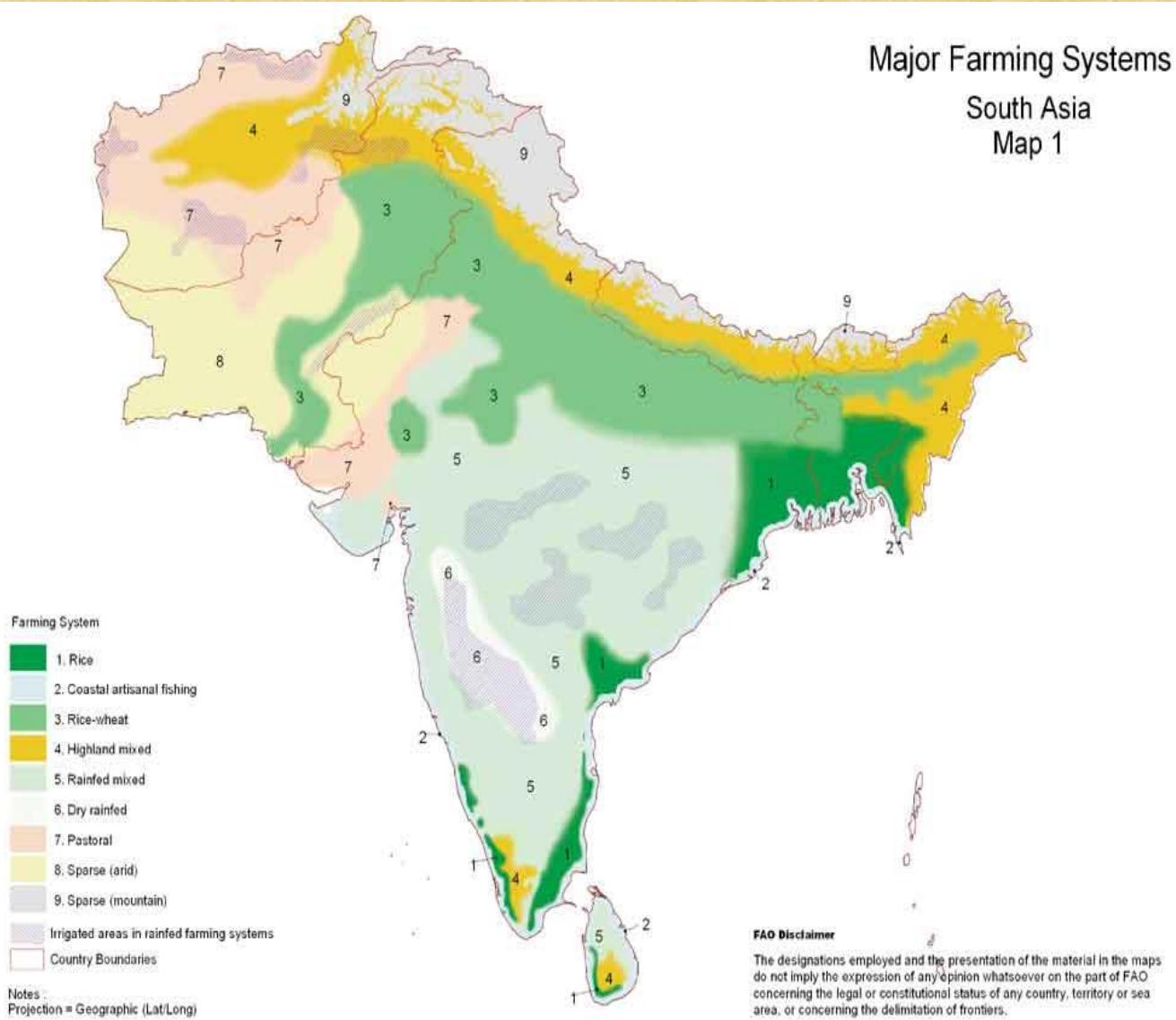
Mountains and Rivers

- Notice the size of the Indus and Ganges plains
- River Valleys sustained stable agriculture, manufacturing, trade, cities, and States
- Mountains a barrier to State formation





Forest, Agriculture and Land Use



River, Field, Forest, Mountain

- Conflict between Forest and Field (Agriculture)
- Complementarity between Forest and Field
 - River as life sustaining and uniting
 - River as life threatening and dividing (border)
 - Mountains as protectors, as landmarks, as boundaries

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THESE FOUR HAVE
DEFINED INDIA'S PAST

Movement and Stability



- Human movements within the Indian Sub-continent
 - First humans (hominids) traced back 1.5 million years (if not a million years more)
 - Ancestral North Indians and Ancestral South Indians; Tibeto-Burmese; Austroasiatic
 - Present day human populations dated to 50,000 to 75,000 years
- Populations grew in places with river, field, forest, mountains
 - Settled agriculture spread to river flood-plains only 2,500 years ago
 - Settled and nomadic populations: a **constant dialectic**

▼ Geography, History, Society

- Rivers, mountains, fields, forests, etc have defined human experience in the Indian sub-continent
- Provide determining factors and limiting conditions
- The Indus-Ganges valley has been the centre
 - Geographical determinism?
 - But based on the mastery of horse, fire and iron
- Mountains have proved inhospitable to State and civilisation
 - Until the 19th Century
- Similarities among river plains and among highlands, forests, deserts

River and Forest

- Thick forests of the Ganges plains
- Long process of **de-forestation**
 - Two millennium (c. 1000 BCE – c. 1000 CE)
 - From Delhi to Dhaka
- On the basis of **Iron** Technology
- Created new environmental conditions
 - New forms of agriculture
 - New forms of settlements
 - New forms of social organization
 - New economies and polities
- All States and Social Formations **from c. 300 BCE till c. 1800 CE** shared a similar ecological, social, economic, political structure



India as Modern Nation

- Similarities within populations around river flood-plains
 - Family
 - Caste
 - Religious practices
 - Languages
 - State structures
- Historically, **State Anchored in the Field and River**
- British changed this historical geography which had held since c. 3500 BCE
 - Grew from sea-coast
 - Falling importance of River flood-plain
 - New routes of trade and travel opening up
- New Facts on the Ground



New Facts: Population

- Estimations of population, territory, revenue, trade were **approximations**
 - Lack of modern mathematics, record keeping, statistics
- First modern census
 - Allahabad 1824; Banaras 1827; Dacca 1830
- Five yearly returns of population, 1849
 - 1851-52, 1856-57, 1861- 62, and 1866-67
- General Census ordered (1856) for 1861
 - Postponed due to Rebellion of 1857
- Between 1865 – 1869 Census taken in NW Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces, Berar, Punjab, lower districts of Bengal, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras...

Modern Census

- 1871-72
 - Non-Synchronous (over six months); House Registry; Separate Questions for Males and Females
- 1881
 - Synchronous: Midnight of 17 Feb 1881; Single Schedule of Questions; Demographic, Economic, Social Classifications
- 1891 - 1921
 - Full Coverage of British India
- 1931
 - Most Extensive Demographic record of economic, social conditions

Census Generates Facts

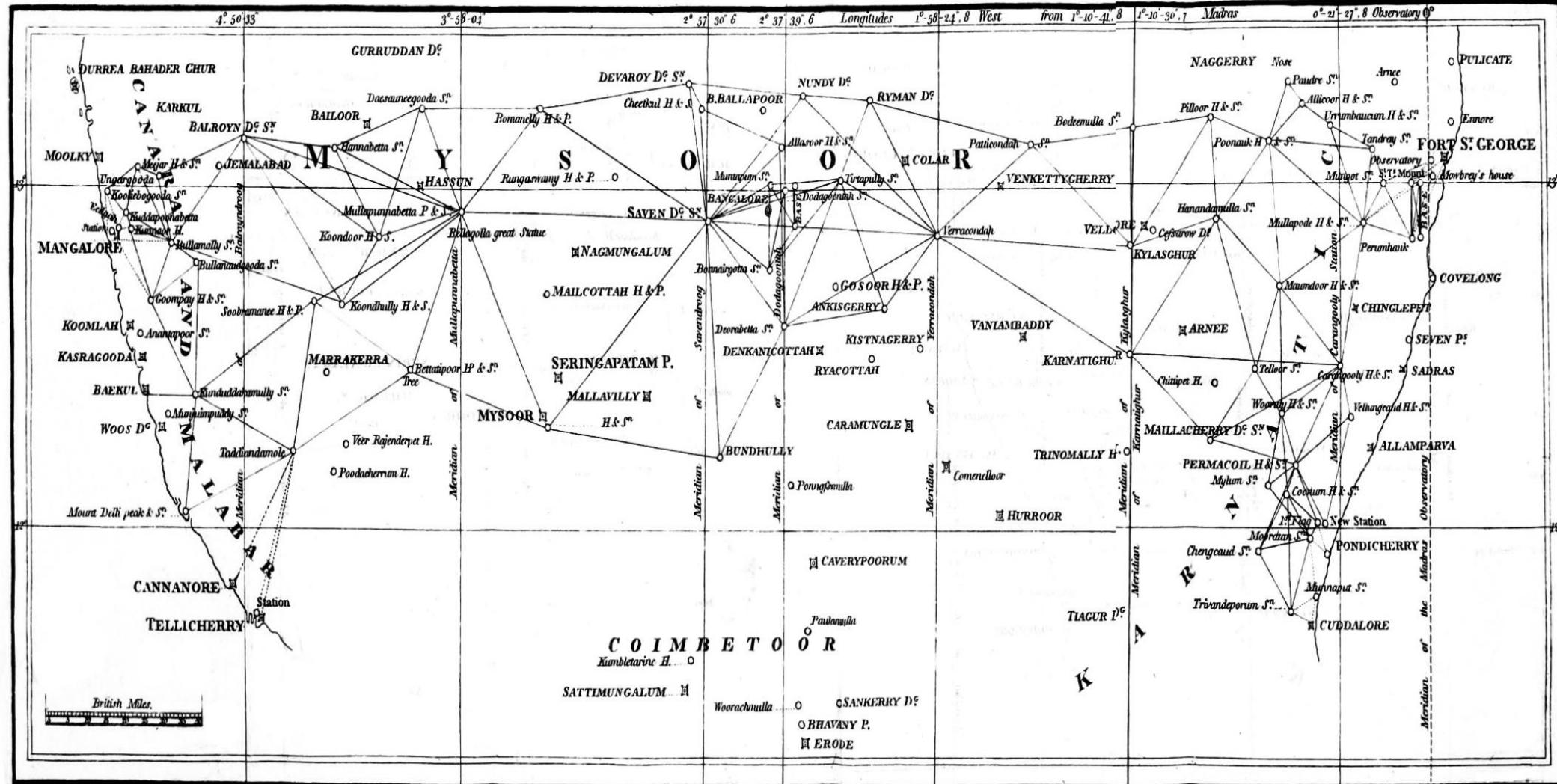
- Public Document
- Social, cultural, linguistic **identities now get Quantitative Values**
- Role in **formation of identity**
 - Religion, caste, language, etc
- Role in political mobilisation
- Role in self-aware populations
- Vande Mataram; Jana Gana Mana

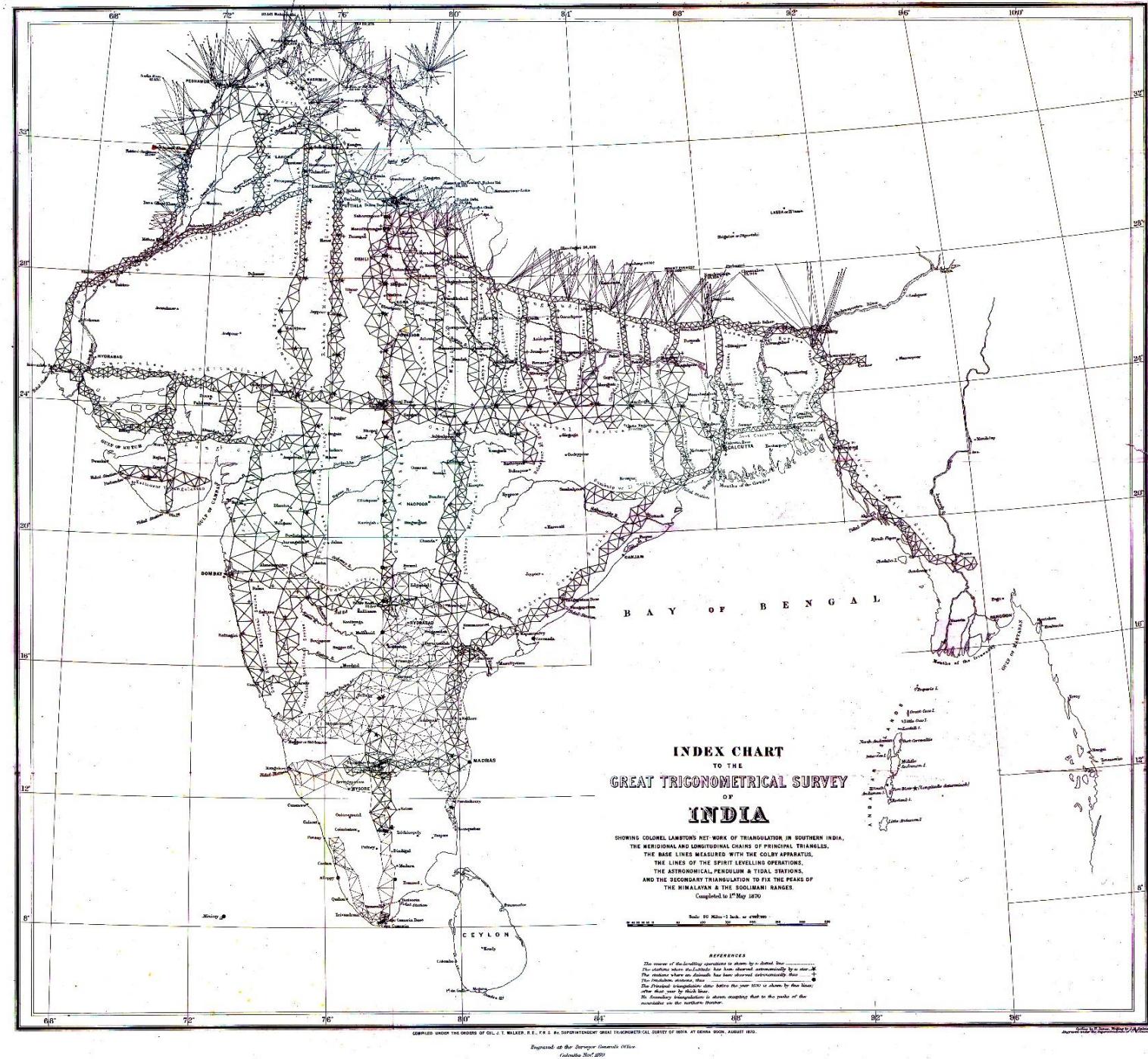
New Facts: Geography

- New Technology of Making Maps
 - Trigonometry
 - Mapping Entire Territory using **trigonometrical calculations** to determine distance, altitude, and other features
 - On a **curved surface**
- Great Trigonometrical Survey of India (1802-1872)
- Latitude and Longitude
 - Latitude is a scientific calculations based on Sun position; has been known for long
 - Longitude is a **political** decision; took many centuries to determine

First Triangulation Madras to Mangalore through Mysore

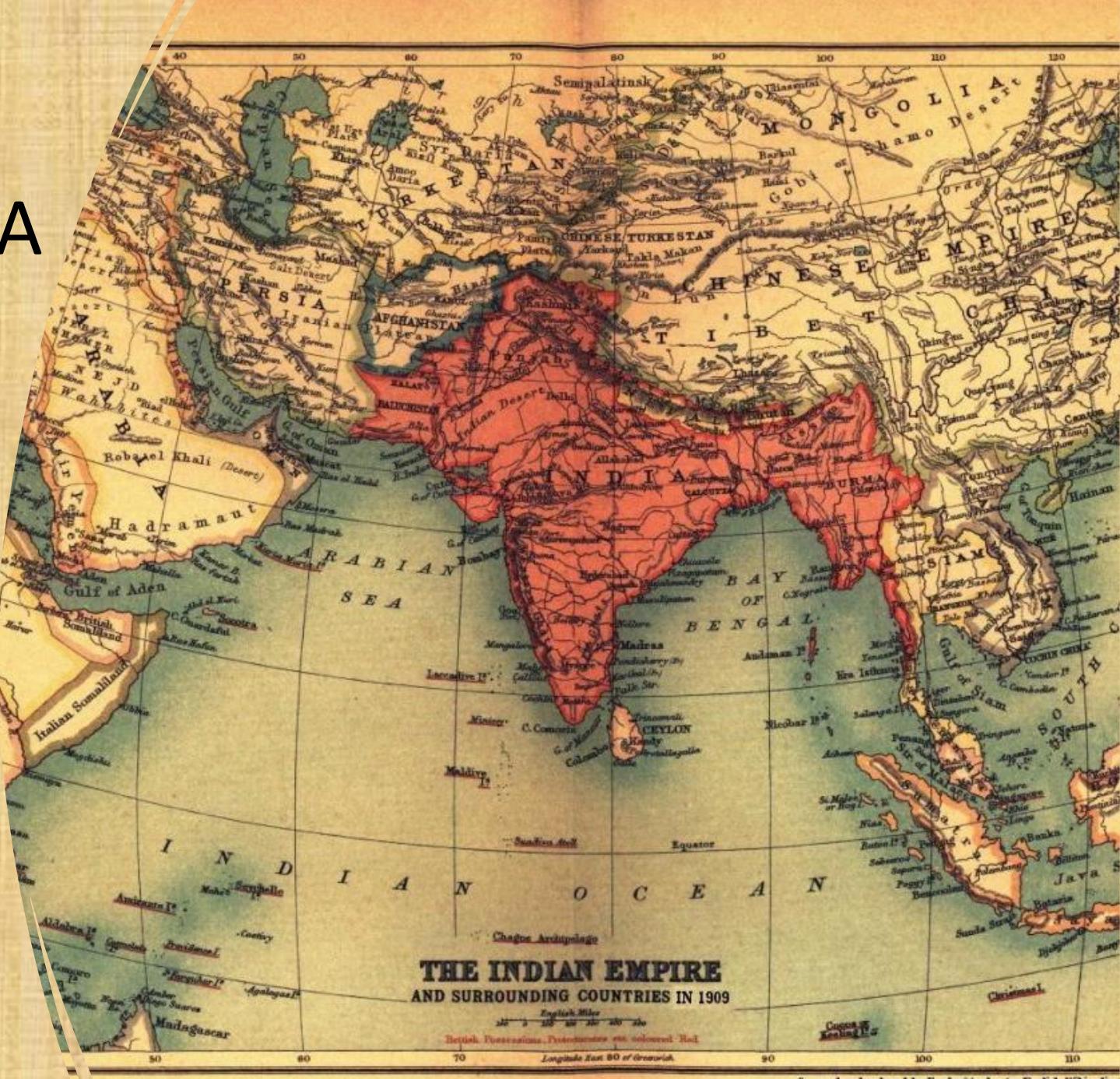
GENERAL PLAN OF THE TRIANGLES.



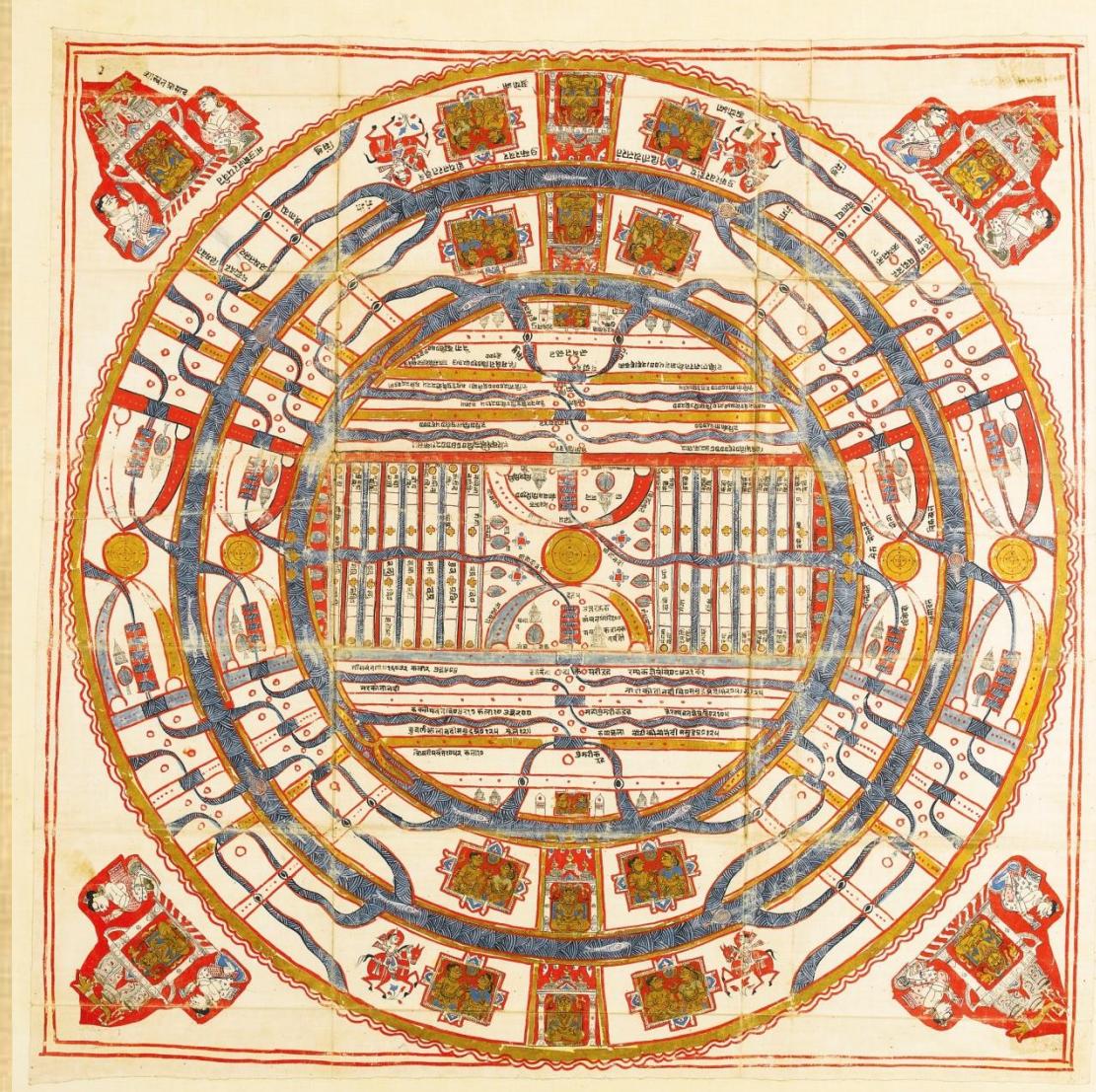


MAP OF BRITISH EMPIRE IN INDIA 1909

It was only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that India's cartographic visual look came to be what we recognise today.



Idea of India over History



End of the History Lectures

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