

## SPECIAL LECTURE SERIES 2

The department of History has organized a special lecture series in 2021. Dr Priyanka Guha Roy Assistant Professor in History, Kazi Nazrul University, West Bengal delivered a special lecture on "Third Urbanization: Feudal Thrive or Proliferate Urbanity" on 25/06/2021 on the google meet platform.

### Introduction

The Early medieval Age experienced an expansion of Rural Economy that may be considered as both the cause and effect of de-urbanization as suggested to be very peculiar to that age. This is because of increased practice of granting lands favouring agrarian spread and growth. The languishing long distance trade also explained the decay of urban centres in the AD 600-AD1000 phase.

The decay of a number of prominent towns in India, especially in the Ganga Valley, during AD 300-900, resulting in a general urban decay that did not however, engulf the subcontinent as a whole. The diagnosis of urban anaemia leading to ruralization and peasantization may not serve as an all purpose key. The decline or otherwise of long –distance trade cannot be taken as the principal determinant of urban development and decay in Indian conditions. The absence of external trade cannot be regarded as major determinants of Urban developments. The greater the convergence of economic , political and cultural (including religious) activities at an urban centre, more eminent would be its position than cities with a predominantly single functional role mainly as being trade centre.

### The Predecessor

The second urbanization in Indian history (c. 600 BC- AD 300) had its epicenter in the Ganga valley (or more precisely in the middle Ganga valley) which acted as a platform for the development of secondary urban centres. In the early medieval period Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya does not find any such epicenter generating urban impulses to disparate regions . Urban centers from AD 600 onwards, on the other hand appear to have been strongly oriented to their local roots and therefore may be judged in terms of their respective local developments and local formations. Such local formations were largely helped by agrarian expansion, generating resources for local or supra-local ruling groups. The mobilization of resources and the urge to procure exotic and luxury items by rulers would encourage movements of products, both within the region and also beyond it.

### The initial Causations of the decline if that was really so

The ruins of cities such as Vaishali, Pataliputra, Mathura, Indraprastha, Hastinapur, Sravasthi, Kausambi, in post Gupta phase suggested a kind of urban decline. R. S. Sharma has pointed out that although the Gupta period is called the golden age of Indian History, archaeologically it has not been made bright.

The reason for this decline suggested by R. S. Sharma was mainly deforestation of the hinterland which mainly supported these towns in the Hinterland. The preservation of cattle wealth as propounded by Gautama Buddha became an article of faith in the post Gupta phase with the result much of the uneconomical cattle for the sake of protection was increasingly fed resulting in grave grazing and . This over grazing and clearing of forests reduced nitrogen and oxygen. This reduced rainfall. This naturally impoverished the hinterland on which the towns were based.

### Cities However Thrived

In spite of such declining mode, cities showed a constant rise leading to the upsurge of Urban proliferation. This theory however proved to be very applicable to the development of localised urban stratas. While several leading Urban sites show downward slide as pointed out by R.S Sharma, some others were recovered undesserted. Chirand, Varanasi, Ahichhatra, Purana Quila, Ahar, Ujjaini emerged as major urban centers and showed uninterrupted habitation during AD 700-AD 1200. There existed though other major factors that led to the emergence of third urbanization. This may need thorough discussion to arrive at the vantage point of the study.

### Urban terms and Trade

A series of urban terms denoting several urban cities and trade conducted through them may support heavily to suggest an urban trend that early medieval India witnessed. Prithudaka or Pehoa in Haryana derived its material strength from horse trade (Ghotakayatra). The emergence of urban space at Tattanandapura (Bulandshahar), labelled as a purapattana in epigraphic records of AD 867-907, is proved by the existence of Brihadrathya (high street), Kurathya (small road), hattamarga (road leading to market). Siyaduni, also labelled as a pattana where a mandapika stood, was an urban center of prominence, marked by trade in essentials. Here existed a number of markets such as Dosihatta, caturhatta, prasannahatta, vasantmahattaka each of which specialized in a particular craft. The term kotta was used to denote administrative-cum- military headquarters. Hattika denotes small rural market. Pura is being frequently used to denote urban center for example Dhritpura in early medieval Vanga under the Chandra Kings is a case in point. The extensive development of Purvahattapradesha that is a market place in the eastern frontier of the urban area.

### Emergence of Nodal Centers

Agrarian expansion leading to surplus production also operated as prelude factors to promote urbanization. This often led to increased ruralisation. Large-scale agrarian activities in South India point to the process of rural expansion. This process of rural expansion can be suggested through the mention of increased grants of land, creation of Brahmhadeyas, agrarahars. This large scale agrarian activities led to the emergence of exchange centers or nodes or Manadapikas among clusters of rural settlements transacting agricultural products. Trade centres developed at a point of convergence for movements among the villages. Naddula was one of the gramas in Rajasthan got transformed into mandapika or trade centre. Thus the

chahamanas made Noddula their political citadel. Venugrama or Begam in Karnataka too emerged as an eminent point of convergence of merchants of various types.

These nodes or Nagarams were not only urban centres but also served as interregional trade. These were linked further at the local level with rural units while at the upper level with pattana, eriviripattinam, mangaram. They maintained horizontal connections with other pattinams thus emerging as big trade units. Apart from regional trade, large scale exportation of cotton cloth from Rahma or Bengal, Teak from Rashtrakuta kingdom, spices transported from South India to Indian Colonies at Quilon suggested that a vast network of both internal and external trade operated to achieve a state that was very urban. This has been pointed out by Ibn Khurdadbeh, an Arabian traveller of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The towns of Red Sea, Arabia and India enjoyed an influx of people. The Geniza records of the Jews in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries refer to shipments of wheat, vessels, clothing, lead, household goods, silk from Aden to India. The records show that the goods were frequently transacted not only from Tripoli or Morocco but also Nafusa, Urbus (places under king of Kish or Qais or Kindah kingdom in Yemen) and other small places.

#### Spurt in Bhakti Appeal

Excessive growth in urban centres was also the result of the growth of Vaishnava and Saiva Sectarian devotional cults. There is extensive growth of temples who dominated the urban centres. Thanjavur or Gangaikondacholapuram were examples to this. The monumental temple of Brihadisvara, according to Champakalaxmi, stood at the very center of Thanjavur. Around the temple was located the quarter for the political and priestly classes, forming the uppermost crust of the elites and thus forming the urban space closest to the shrine.

#### The rise of Angadis

The temple complexes also had markets (angadis). The residential area around temples housed various urban groups, including the residence of merchants. The requirements of the temple rituals and services generated demands, and this generated transactional functions in milk, flowers, betel nuts and areca nuts. Around the city lived farmers, herdsmen and artisans.

#### Trade in Betel nuts and Areca Nuts, Growth of Temple Colleges

Champakalaxmi has pointed out about two cities of the Cholas: Kudamukku-Paliyarai, situated in the most fertile tracts in the Kaveridelta, the core area of the Cholas. While Paliyarai was the site of the palace, Kudamukku functioned as the sacred centre having a number of temples. The twin cities were located on an important trade route and noted for its transaction in two bulk items, areca nuts and betel nuts. The two cities had access to and linkages with the hinterland for the supply of local agrarian products mainly betel nuts apart from other agrarian products. Thus local agrarian production immensely contributed to the growth of urban centers. A Temple college at Tirumukkudal in Chingleput district and another at Salotgi in Kaladgi district attracted students from far off places. Mathas were attached to temples and jointly they contributed an institutional influence in Urban Growth.

## Conclusion

Thus the emergence of urbanization was not the outcome of any single factor, but what is interesting, is that the factors became important not all throughout the period from 700 AD to 1200 AD. The importance of the factors can be filtered out in specific periods as 600 AD to 750 saw the large scale agrarian expansion. AD 750 – 1000 AD saw the rise of powerful kingdoms. The rise of big commercial centres can be witnessed more from 1000AD to 1200 AD. The combinations of these formations helped the emergence and development of an early medieval urban structures which by their distinctiveness are situated by Brajadulal Chattopadhyay in the third phase of urbanization in Indian History.

## References

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