

## Medieval and Early Modern India: 'Muslim' or Something Else?



## How to make sense of the Muslim domination of South Asia?

- Start with Metcalf (p. 27)
  - “For roughly half a millennium Muslim dynasties dominated political life in the subcontinent...”

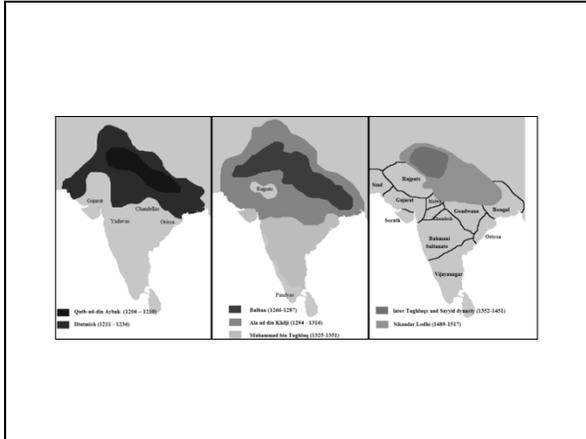


### Early Muslim Rulers of India: The Delhi Sultanate

- 5 short-lived kingdoms from early 13<sup>th</sup> to early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries
- began in northern India but expanded into central India (the Deccan)
- descended from Turks + Mongols
- solidified notion of warrior class
  - “professional warrior imperialism” (Ludden, p. 68)
- early claim to fame: repelled Genghis Khan

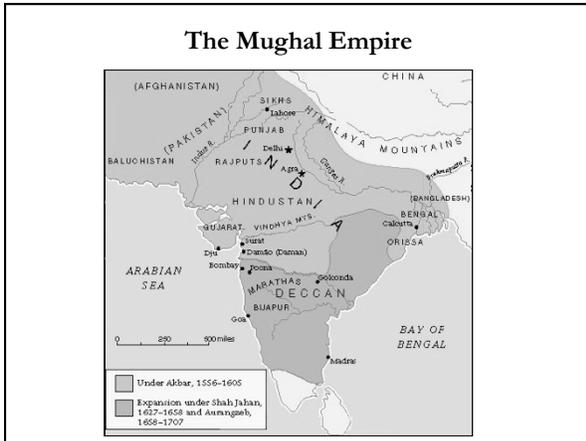
### Legacy of the Sultanate Period

- Adoption of Sufi traditions
- Patronage of arts, law, learned disciplines
- new military technologies
- roads, infrastructure
- most important: ethnic and linguistic pluralism
- issue of conversion:
  - forced? voluntary?
  - Metcalf, pp. 6-7



### Commonalities between Muslim and 'Hindu' Traditions

- Sufi devotion
- Bhakti
  - Vaishnavites (devotion to Vishnu)
  - Shaivites (devotion to Lord Shiva)
- common erotic narratives
  - to represent relationship between human and divine
- Architecture (temples became mosques came temples)



- Babar (1483-1530): first Mughal emperor
  - descendent of
    - Timur (father's side)
    - Genghis Khan (mother's side)
  - comparable to the early princes of the Renaissance in Europe
  - ruled for 4 years
  - but consolidated immense territory
- hybrid architecture
- Babri Mosque



### Akbar (1542-1605)

- Greatest Mughal emperor
- established a diverse and inclusive ruling elite
- main idea of the regime was: “loyalty focused on the person of the ruler”
  - loyalty expressed through architecture, ceremony, sufi allegiance, artistic allegory
- see any parallels to European situation?



*Louis XIV devant Maastricht (1673)*  
Pierre Mignard

### Under the Mughals

- state of noble class: *mansab* rank
- rise of *zamindar* class
- state of peasantry
  - two different interpretations (Metcalf, p. 20)
- considerable autonomy to regional kingdoms
- considerable mixing of Hindu and Muslim customs
  - intermarriage
  - bureaucracies
  - loyalty
  - forms of devotion
- beginning of significant cohesion among non-Muslim kingdoms
  - Maharathas, Jats, etc.

### The Taj Mahal

- White marble mausoleum in Agra
  - begin construction in 1632, finished early 1650s
- Built by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his third wife Mumtaz Mahal
- most famous example of Mughal architecture



Collapse of the Mughals

- Reasons?
- social cohesion among enemies
- empire too big
- Aurangzeb (1618-1707)
- The British