SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER VI

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In the foregoing pages attempts have been made to delineate in detail as far as possible the varied available archaeological data in the form of architectural, sculptural and epigraphical remains so as to formulate a complete picture of the early-medieval period of Chanderi as far as possible. It is important to mention here that as regards the settlement history of the region under study we find that it gathered momentum during the early-medieval period with as many as 22 sites providing evidence of settlement within the tehsil of Chanderi. It is also a matter of note that all the settlements appear to have developed around religious establishments, both Brahmanical and Jaina. In this respect it seems to have mirrored the general trend of the early-medieval centres in central India in particular. As regards the relative obscurity of the antecedent cultural and historical phases in the study area we may surmise that this was in all probability because of the geographical terrain of Chanderi. Presumably Chanderi formed part of the peripheral landscape of the civilized society (Gopagiri and Siyadoni) because of its dense forests and rugged terrain. The early-medieval period in central India was a kaleidoscope of a number of politico-economic-religio-social processes that invested it with distinct characteristic features. It was fait accompli that Chanderi which for long remained in the shadows of the civilized world should find itself in the middle of a vibrant upsurge that not only brought it to the fore of state formation during the early-medieval period but also came to be recognized as a military stronghold in the succeeding medieval period also. However, before drawing up the complete picture it will not be unwise to place the different historical-societal processes that have been postulated by the historians with respect to the early-medieval period in general in the temporal and spatial context of Chanderi.
At the very first instance the geographical location of Chanderi seems to have contributed immensely to the local state formation during the early-medieval settlement. As delineated in the first chapter Chanderi is nestled in the riverine landscape of the Betwa and is surrounded by chains of hills of the Vindhyas covered with thick jungles. Such a geographical area thus formed a part of the ‘peripheral zone’ around the central nuclear area as visualized in Kulke’s process of integrative state formation\(^1\). The region of Chanderi conformed to what in epigraphic records is referred to as *ātavi* i.e. the forest dwellers in Asoka’s 13\(^{th}\) rock edict and *ātavika-rajasya* in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta. However, though defeated in battles it is still a matter of doubt whether there was continued political control over them (the forest dwellers) in light of their difficult terrain. Another interesting factor with respect to Chanderi is its emergence during this period which conforms to the second stage of local state formation when royal power of the nuclear areas (Gwalior) began advancing into the ‘peripheral zones’. The incursion into Chanderi seems to have begun during the time of the Imperial Gurjara-Pratiharas. This penetration of political process in the hinterland was generally motivated by two factors- availability of arable land and the control over the lines of communication with the neighbouring regions. In the case of Chanderi the second motive appears to have been the more potent factor. Chanderi lies mid way between two important political centres of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, i.e. Gopagiri (Gwalior) and Siyadoni (Sironj Khurd, dist. Lalitpur). While Gopagiri was the military stronghold, Siyadoni was the administrative and mercantile centre under the Pratiharas. Epigraphic records state that Siyadoni was under the feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratiharas\(^2\). The presence of mercantile communities at both Gopagiri and Siyadoni suggest the presence of long distance trade relations and routes which definitely passed through the Chanderi region and therefore necessitated the need for a settlement mid-way between the two centres. It would also not come as a surprise that the new settlement partook of the vibrant trading network and developed itself along those lines as a mercantile
settlement. This is corroborated by the presence of a large Jaina community at Chanderi which profitably invested in trading pursuits. Chanderi also seems to have played an important role within the wider ambit of Central Indian trading network encompassing sites like Vidisha, Bhojpur, Raisen, Shivpuri, Narwar etc. Due to the limited scope of the present study it was not possible to explore this aspect to the fullest extent at this point however, it remains an area of exciting possibilities.

The political process of the early-medieval has come to be understood as a complex matrix of local, supra-local, regional and sometimes even supra-regional monarchical polities. Closely inter-related with this phenomenon of the rise of the royal lineages, between the 7th-13th centuries AD, is the rise of the 'Rajputs' as a socio-political group. Process of 'Rajputization' as Chattopadhyaya describes was a gradual transition from tribal to state polity. This transition took place over a period of time from the feudatory to an independent stage. The different stages of this transition are mirrored in the epigraphic records which become more grandiose in their genealogical claims with the upward mobility of political fortunes from the initial feudatory stage. From the epigraphic records mentioned in the previous chapters we can definitely state that Chanderi flourished during the early-medieval period under the Pratiharas which seem to have been originally a feudatory branch of the Imperial Gurjara-Pratiharas. The idea of the almost contemporaneous existence of different branches of same lineages is not a novel feature in fact, this seems to have been a common feature of the different dynasties claiming to be Rajputs. As tabulated by Chattopadhyaya there appears to have existed at least six Gurjar/ Pratihara/ Gurjara-Pratihara lineages between the 7th-10th centuries AD in different parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh having varying degrees of political ascendancy. Interestingly, almost all of them claim an exalted ancestral ascendancy by tracing descent from Lakṣmaṇa of the family of Raghu and hence call themselves as Sūryavarmśi. With respect to the Pratiharas of...
Chanderi it may be mentioned that so long as they served as the feudatories of the Imperial Pratiharas their epigraphic records have not come to light however, with their changed political fortunes after the decline of the Imperial Pratiharas their epigraphical records became ostentatious with exalted genealogical claims and use of titles like *nṛpacakravarti* and *mahārājādhirāja* (Kadwaha fragmentary stone inscription of Hariraja). From the Siyadoni stone inscription⁵ we learn that during the time of the rule of the Imperial Pratihara kings like Bhoja, Mahendrapala, Kshitipala and Devapala successively, Siyadoni was administered by four local rulers referred to as 'mahāsamanmatādhipati’. The rule of these feudatories under the Imperial Pratiharas was from c. 900 AD to AD 968-9. The first official is named as Undabhatta (c. 900 AD), thereafter Durbhata around AD 912-13 to AD 951-52, Nishkalanka around c. 968-9 AD and another whose name is given as ...bhaya or Nirbhayanarendra. Of these Durbhata may be identified with the powerful ruler Durbhata mentioned in the Kadwaha fragmentary stone inscription⁶. The inscription states that Durbhata belonged to the family of Hariraja. This conclusively proves that the ancestors of Hariraja were the feudatory rulers (under the Imperial Pratiharas) responsible for the administration of Siyadoni. It will perhaps not be impossible to postulate that the other rulers mentioned in the Siyadoni inscription also belonged to the Pratihara family which later grew more prominent after the downfall of the Imperial Pratiharas. The second part of the Siyadoni inscription clearly states that Hariraja was the 'rājā' of the place i.e. Siyadoni, when a Brahmin named Vasishtha visited Siyadoni on business matters.

Connected with the development of local state formation is the legitimization function of the Brāhmīns. This was achieved in a two-pronged strategy where in the first instance the Brāhmīns accorded respectable ancestry to the new local ruling dynasty by fabricating a mythical progenitor of a remote mythical antiquity and sometimes even directly to a divinity and in the second by the construction of temples.
At Chanderi after the fall of the Imperial Pratiharas a minor branch of the Pratiharas which so long served as the feudatories of the former exerted their independence. The first step towards the legitimization of their claim was the weaving of an exalted ancestry. A fine example of this is the Chanderi stone inscription of Jaitravarman. Here the composer of the inscription, a Brāhmaṇī named Pandit Sahadena states that the Pratihara family ruling over Candrapura traced their descent from Lakṣmaṇa, the younger brother of Rāma. Further ostentatious claims regarding the valour of the rulers of this family were made by comparing them with gods and epic heroes. The feats of Hariraja, the second ruler, are equated with those of Ḫaṅ (Viṣṇu), while those of Bhimadeva, the third ruler, with those of the epic hero Bhīma7. Similarly, the Kadwaha stone inscription of Kirttipala states that the Pratihara family traces its origin from the Śūrya, the Sun-god8. The Chanderi fragmentary stone inscription also makes reference to the feats of the different rulers of the Pratihara family (Hariraja, Bhimadeva, Ranapala, Vatsaraja and Abhayapala) and compares them with gods and epic heroes9. Various inscriptions made claims according to the different stages in the assumption of political power. From the inscriptive records it becomes clear that Hariraja was the first independent ruler of this dynasty and therefore assumed titles like ṇṛpacākraṇaṁ and mahārājadhiraja10. Furthermore, the Thubonji inscription of Hariraja states that he held Sri Harsa and Dhanga as his subordinates11.

The second step towards the legitimization process of the ruling dynasty was the institution of land-grants, peasantization of the local populace and the construction of temples, both activities again closely associated with the Brāhmaṇīs. The Bharat Kala Bhavan copper plate inscription of Hariraja states that at Siyadoni he donated lands in three villages to a Brāhmaṇi on the occasion of a solar eclipse12. This is an instance of the reciprocal patronage of the Brāhmaṇi community which as a social group enjoyed privileged socio-religious status in return for socio-political legitimization of the ruling
lineages. The Kadwaha fragmentary stone inscription also mentions about the gift of some villages by Hariraja to a Śaiva ācārya whose name is no more extant on the inscription but is said to have belonged to a long and illustrious line of Śaiva ascetics. Chanderi fragmentary stone inscription mentions about the construction of temple either by a Pratihara ruler or during the reign of a Pratihara king.

As mentioned earlier the emergence of Chanderi was at first presumably along the trading network operating between Siyadoni and Gopagiri. It will not be wrong to presume that the beginning of the settlement was through the migration of some trading families from the above mentioned two places. Taking this presumption one step further we may also suggest, based on the present demographic profile of the trading community at Chanderi in present times, that the majority of these trading families were believers of the Jaina ideology. Thus we can safely postulate that while much has been written about the role of Brahmanical mode of appropriation in the process of local state formation virtually nothing exists about the role of the Jaina trading communities who appeared to have invested vigorously in trading pursuits thereby contributing to economic stability of the new dynasties. With the growth in the settlement however, it did not take long to realize that a large settlement could not wholly subsist on trade alone. This lacuna was sought to be removed by the absorption of the local tribal populace of the region, subsisting on primitive hunting-gathering strategies, into the peasant society to meet the demands of the burgeoning population. This step alone played an important role in not only meeting the subsistence requirement of the settlement but contributed immensely in assimilating the ‘peripheral’ society within the folds of ‘civilized’ society.

Closely related with the above phenomenon was the practice of cult appropriation. An important and effective means for guaranteeing the longevity of the
new local dynasty in a peripheral region was the endorsement of the autochthonous local and tribal cults and their assimilation with the courtly cult. This vertical legitimization effected religious integration on two levels, firstly, the assimilation of the autochthonous cult into the royal cult and secondly, in the widespread diffusion of the organized religious cult into every nook and corner of the peripheral area. At Chanderi the phenomenon of cult appropriation is visible in the inclusion of the local tribal Nāga cult within the mainstream religious ideology. An apt example of this is the Nāgī figure found from Mamon (Pl. 5.27c). A cursory glance at the physical attributes of the figure will draw attention to its facial features. The round face with thick lips, broad flat nose and open eyes makes it stand apart from the other sculptural specimens that have been reported so far from the different regions of the study area. The characteristic facial features identify her as a tribal goddess fabricated in their own likeness (for iconographic details refer to p. 47). An almost similar composition was found from Thubonji (Pl. 5.27a). There can be little doubt to the similarity of the two sculptures with emphasis on the child cradled in the left hand and the serpent head canopy over the deity’s head. The latter becomes an example of Brahmanical appropriation of a tribal deity with added emphasis on the Brahmanical aspect by the inclusion of the figures of Gaṇeśa and the navagrahas. The autochthonous nature of this cult in the region under study is also attested by a Nāga couple figure found from Surail. As in other places in Madhya Pradesh the Nāga cult enjoyed local support and propagation in Chanderi also.

As mentioned above, the existence of Chanderi as an early-medieval settlement was primarily in the context of trade relations between Siyadoni and Gopagiri and that it participated in equal measure in this process is also a bygone conclusion. It would thus be logical that Chanderi mirrored some of the socio-religious-economic processes that were present at both Siyadoni and Gopagiri. As at Siyadoni temples formed an integral part of the settlement at Chanderi also. From the epigraphic sources we learn about the
constructions or renovations of a number of temples and images. Thubonji stone inscription of Harirajadeva mentions about a temple dedicated to Janardana-Vasudeva. The archaeological evidence of the large number of temple ruins that have been documented from the different parts of the study area sustains the above view. Furthermore, apart from the royal patronage we can also surmise that a number of temples were also built by the merchant community both Brahmanical and Jaina and were under their continued patronage as at Siyadoni.

The almost contemporaneous existence of the monumental features of the structural edifices of both the Jainas and the Brahmanical at Chanderi in association with a large body of sculptural remains of diverse iconographic forms attests to the cultural complexity of the period concerned.

Thus, the picture that emerges from the present study of the early-medieval period at Chanderi is similar to what was witnessed over a large part of the country during the period under study. At Chanderi it was possible to view the different stages of early-medieval state formation with the help of archaeological and epigraphic records. The different historical-societal-economic-religious theories that have been propounded by the historians accounting for the development of the early-medieval process finds its echo in Chanderi. The conclusions that we draw at the end of the present study justifies the title of the thesis as a 'Case Study of Early Medieval Chanderi'.

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REFERENCES:


