In the work published in the last two years, most striking is perhaps the renewed interest in the early medieval period of Indian history, roughly the four or five centuries preceding the Turkish conquests. J. S. Deyell, *Living without Silver: The Monetary History of Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990) is an important study which argues, against most of the historiography of the period (the essential contours of which crystallized in the 1960s), that this was not a period of 'feudalization' and decline of trade, nor one of 'demonetization'. As Deyell says: 'There is a definite paucity of coin *types* in this period, but this is not evidence of a scarcity of a circulating medium'. The book offers a thorough reconstruction of the monetary systems of North India in this period, concluding that rather than an absence of precious metals there was a clear excess of demand over supply, which is indicative of continued growth of the economy even in this 'dark age'. A second work which deals, partly, with this period, is R. B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990). Inden's final chapter (pp. 213-262) offers a reconstruction of the Rashtrakuta polity of the Western Deccan in the 8th to 10th centuries. This is a highly contrived
account, focusing on aspects of ritual and social and political institutions. The earlier chapters offer a critique of what Inden calls our 'essentialist' knowledge of India. Here an attempt is made somehow to reconcile R. G. Collingwood's ideas about human 'agency' with the idea of a deterministic 'discourse' as developed by M. Foucault and, with reference to Islamic studies, Edward Said. It is not easy to see why Inden permits himself the essentialism that he denies others. The question arises why Orientalists should not be allowed to have their 'agency' and remain passive victims of Anglo-French and US-USSR discourses, while Rashtrakuta peasants are promoted to 'citizenship' and 'complex agents'. Equally biased appear to be Inden's selective accounts of translations from Arabic texts on early medieval India, which he maintains, are 'non-essentialist', unlike those of latter-day Orientalists, which is clearly not true. A third book, D. N. Maclean's Religion and Society in Arab Sind (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989) addresses the problem of conversion to Islam in early medieval Sind, a phenomenon which he tries to link to the disappearance of Buddhism. Against Y. Friedmann and others, Maclean makes the point, not without ingenuity, that Buddhists converted to Islam rather than Hindus. This analysis cannot convince, as it is obvious that Buddhism was already being transformed and had in fact already disappeared in most parts of India before conversion to Islam occurred. Even in Sind it is very questionable that the two processes are related and that the outcome can be explained by a clearcut 'class basis', as Maclean maintains.

Many of these issues return in a number of books of the last two years which are set within the wider analytical framework of the Indian Ocean, or Asia, or even the global economy as a whole. My own Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Vol. I, Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, Seventh to Eleventh Centuries (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990, 1991; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990) tries to relate the developments in the Indian subcontinent of this period, as well as in Indianized Southeast Asia, to the expansion of Islam in Sind, Central Asia, and along the maritime