

New Kings and Kingdoms in India

We have already read in the previous class that Marshals vast empire broke up after his death. Many small kingdoms appeared in India after the downfall of Harsha's empire and before the Turkish invasions. There was a constant struggle for power between the ruling kings and the chieftains of these small kingdoms. They fought to increase the land and wealth of their kingdom.

NEW KINGS AND KINGDOMS

The seventh century witnessed the emergence of big landlords or chieftains in various regions of the subcontinent. They were often considered as subordinates or samantas to the kings. They offered extravagant gifts to the kings. Also/ they maintained small armies which were used by the kings in the times of war. Over the period, many chieftains or samantas became very powerful. Some of these chieftains became ambitious and asserted their independence and set up their own small kingdoms. The **Rashtrakuta**, **Gurjaras** and **Pratihara** dynasties are the instances. Their origin is discussed later in the chapter.

THE RAJPUTS

Many Rajput dynasties ruled small kingdoms. They called themselves Rajput or Rajputrameaning 'son of a king'. There are many theories about the origin of the Rajputs. Some called themselves **Suryavanshi**, 'descendants of the Sun God', or **Chandravanshi**, 'descendants of the Moon God'. Some were called **Agnikulas**. They are believed to have been born out of a fire pit. The following tale tells us about the origin of the Agnikula Rajputs.

Once a warrior saint, Parshurama, got very angry and destroyed all Kshatriyas. As a result, there were no warriors left. Therefore, all the Brahmanas got together and decided to do something about it. They organized a large fire pit at Mount Abu. After many chants and prayers, four warriors emerged from the fire pit. It is believed that these were the ancestors of the Agnikulas.

The Rajputs were courageous and valiant. However, they constantly fought amongst themselves to show off their strength. Therefore, they could not set up a unified empire. Several small dynasties belonging to the Rajputs gradually rose to power and established their supremacy. Some of these were the Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas and the Palas.

THE PRATI HARAS

The Pratiharas established a large empire in the region of Gujarat and Rajasthan from 6th to the 18th century CE. This dynasty was founded by **King Harishchandra**. He was a samanta of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. **Nagabhata I** ascended the throne in the 8th century. His capital was Ujjain. He fought many wars and extended his empire. He also defeated the Arabs and prevented their entry into India. The Pratiharas were involved in a constant conflict with the Rastrakutas and Palas. All the three dynasties wanted control over **Kanauj**. Under the rule of King Bhoja, Kanauj came under the Pratihara rule. The power of the dynasty began to decline in the middle of the 10th century CE. Finally, the Rashtrakutas defeated the Pratiharas and ended their rule.

THE PALAS

This dynasty was founded by **Gopala** who ascended the throne in 750 CE. He brought peace and prosperity to his empire and also extended it. He looked into the welfare of the people. The Pala empire can be considered as the "Golden Era of Bengal".

History Reveals

The Pala dynasty was called so because their names ended with Pala which means protector.

Gopala was succeeded by **Dharampala** who conquered **Kanauj**. His successor **Devpala** further extended the boundaries of the empire. There was continuous conflict with the Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas. After Devpala, the Pala Empire declined.

The Palas were patrons of Buddhism. They revived the famous university of Nalanda and established the University of Vikramshila.

THE RASHTRAKUTAS

Originally, the Rashtrakutas were samantas of the Chalukya dynasty in Karnataka. The founder of this dynasty was **Dantidurga**. He defeated the Chalukyas of Badami and became a sovereign. He performed the hiranaya-garbha ceremony. The Rashtrakutas built a huge empire which included Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The capital was **Manyaketa** in Karnataka. This dynasty produced many famous kings.

The Rashtrakutas were well known for patronizing art and architecture. They built the famous **Kailasa Temple** in the Ellora Caves. The Elephanta Caves near Mumbai were also made by them.

History Reveals

Maharashtra got its name from the Rashtrakutas.

ADMINISTRATION, LAND REVENUE AND LAND GRANTS

In these kingdoms, though the king was the supreme authority, the supreme and the associations of peasants, Brahmanas and traders were also powerful.

The king obtained resources through taxes levied on common people. The tax could be in kind, in which they had to give a portion of what was produced to the king. Traders also had to pay revenue. The king needed resources for the administration, to fight wars, to construct temples and forts and also for the royal expenses. Money spent on wars yielded returns after victory in the form of war booty, more land acquisition and access to trade routes. The king appointed officials, often from within the family, for revenue collection. The position was mostly hereditary.

The Brahmanas were commissioned to write prashastis. These were accounts depicting the qualities of the ruler. Often the ruler gave land to the brahmanas. These land grants were recorded in copper plate inscriptions. Most prashastis were written in praise of the ruler. The only exception is **Kalhana**. He composed a long poem throwing light on the history of the kings of Kashmir. He has given a critical account of the policies of the rulers and their reign.

THE TRIPARTITE STRUGGLE

Kanauj was located in the fertile Gangetic plains and hence coveted by all the dynasties. It was believed that whoever had control over Kanauj would have access to rich agriculture, minerals and booming trade of the entire region. Thus, all the three dynasties were eager to conquer Kanauj. The constant struggle for

Kanauj is known as the '**Tripartite Struggle**'. This went on for about three centuries and weakened all three dynasties. The other important Rajput dynasties were Chauhans, Chandellas, Gahadavalas and Paramaras. They lacked unity and were in



Map No. 2.1 Tripartite Struggle

Conflict to establish their own supremacy over another. These conflicts weakened them.

Q. If the three dynasties had not been weakened by the tripartite struggle, do you think the Muslim invaders could have defeated them?

THE CHOLAS

The Cholas occupy a vital place in history. They were a powerful dynasty from the 9th century onwards. The dynasty was founded by Vijayalaya in 850 CE. His capital was at **Tanjore**. **Rajaraja** and his son **Rajendra** I were the greatest Chola rulers.



Map No. 2.2 Kingdoms of south India

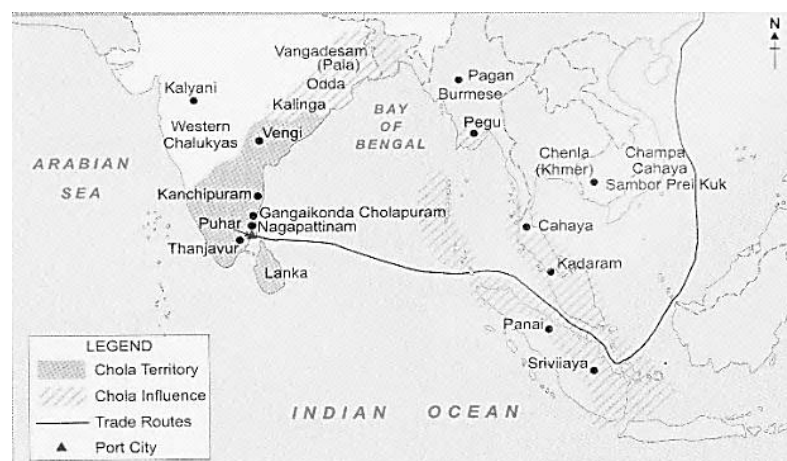
Q. can you think of other kings who had performed the Ashwamedha sacrifice?

Rajaraja

He was an excellent commander and defeated the Pandyas and the Cheras. He was also a good sailor and commanded an impressive navy. He conquered the Kalinga kingdom and annexed parts of northern Ceylon and even conquered the Maldives.

Rajendra I

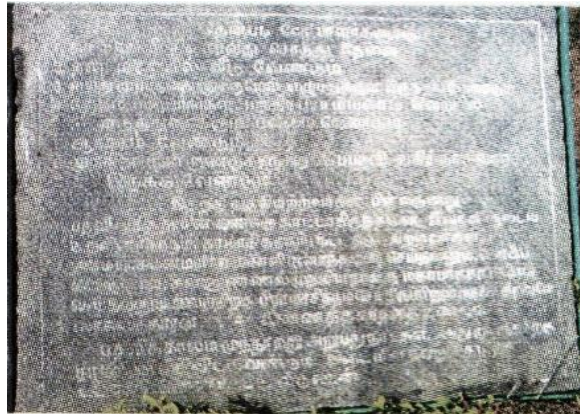
He conquered the Sumatra islands, Ceylon and many places in the Malay Peninsula. He went northwards and defeated king Mahipala of Bengal. On his return, he built a new capital, Gangaikondacholapuram (city of the Chola conqueror of the Ganges) and assumed the title of 'Gangaikondachola' or 'the Chola conqueror of the Ganges'. He even performed the Ashwamedha sacrifice. He maintained friendly relations with China and carried on trade with it.



Map no. 2.3 Extent of the Chola Empire under Rajendra Chola

Sources of Information

Many inscriptions have been found that tell us about the Chola Empire. One such inscription is Chola copper plate, which consists of five copper plates strung in a copper ring, the ends of which are secured with the Chola seal. A portion of this inscription is in Sanskrit and the rest Tamil. The arrangements made for several services in the temple are described in this inscription. The **Uttaramerur** inscription reveals a lot about the Chola administration.



An inscription at Uttaramerur

SALIENT FEATURES OF CHOLA EMPIRE

Art and Architecture

The Cholas were patrons of art and architecture. They built magnificent temples. The kings and the rich donated generously to the construction and maintenance of temples.

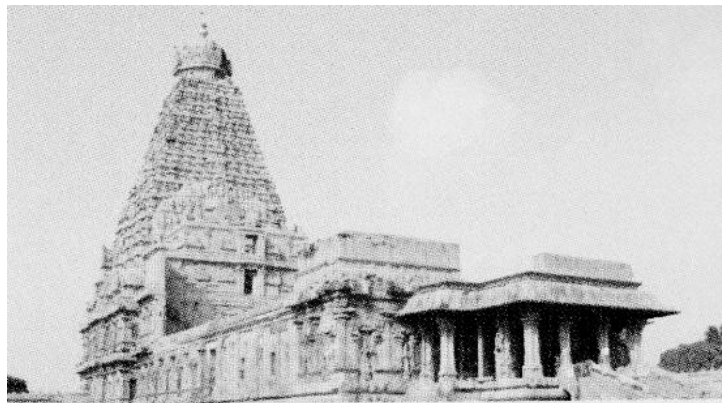
Rajaraja Chola built the famous Brihadeshwara Temple at Tanjore. Built in the shikara style, it has a Pyramidal thirteen-storey tower. The temple is devoted to Lord Shiva. It is situated inside a fort and surrounded by a moat. It is crowned by a massive dome made of a single stone block weighing about 80 tons.



A bronze sculpture of Chola dynasty

Temples were not only the place of worship, they were centres of social life and economic activities. They used to collect revenue and get free land grants. Festivals were celebrated in the temples with great pomp and splendour. People met here to discuss social problems and solve issues. They became centres of political power. Schools and even hospitals were attached to these temple complexes which were self-sufficient communities with priests, craftsmen, dancers, musicians, tailors, goldsmiths, accountants, cooks and many others.

Many stone and metal sculptures of the Chola period have been found. Metal statues were also sculpted during this period. The subject of these sculptures were mostly deities and devotees. The bronze idol of Natraja is very famous.



The Brihadeshwara Temple in Tamil Nadu. It is a world Heritage Site

Military and Navy

The Cholas maintained an extensive army and navy. The army was large and competent and included elephants, cavalry and infantry. Horses were imported from Arabia. The army was usually led by the king. The soldiers were skilled in the art of warfare. Overseas conquests were possible because of the naval strength. Many types of weapons and ships were used by the navy.

Trade and Commerce

In spite of many wars, both internal and external, trade flourished. Roads were built to assist the movement of goods and troops during wartime. Elephants, cardamom and cotton textiles were exported. The Chola rulers also encouraged the development of cottage industries. Kanchipuram was an important centre of textile industry. The taxation policies of the rulers were also favourable for trade.

Administration

The Cholas set up a sound administrative system. It was a three-tier system. The three levels were the **central government**, the **provincial government** and the local **government**.

Central Administration

The king was the head of the central administration. He was considered as god's representative on earth. His idol was kept in the temples. His position was hereditary and the heir was called yuvraj. The king enjoyed enormous powers and lived luxuriously. All the powers were vested in the king. The royal symbol was the tiger. The king was assisted by ministers called Peruntaram.

Provincial Administration

The Chola Empire was divided into provinces and a governor was in charge of each province. The provinces were called mandalams. The mandalas' were usually headed by a member of the royal family. He took instructions from the king and reported to him.

Each mandalam was divided into a number of valanadus which was subdivided into nadns. Each nadu was further divided into urs or villages. The village was the smallest unit of administration. The most important feature of Chola administration was the village autonomy. The Uttaramerur inscriptions speak much about the Chola administration.

Nadu

The nadu was an important unit of administration. It had representative assemblies. It was looked after by the nattar and the council was the nattavai.

Ur and Sabha

Ur was a common village assembly while the **Sabha** consisted of learned men. Their functions included maintenance of law and order, public services, revenue collection, temples and education. They also helped people in times of need. The sabha functioned effectively with the help of **variyams** or committees. These consisted of male members of the village. The qualifications and term of the variyams varied. These variyams were in charge of one branch of administration e.g. water supply. They did this on an honorary basis. The variyams contributed to the efficiency of the administration.

According to the Uttaramerur inscriptions, the members of the village committees were chosen by the **Kudavolai** system in which the names of the contestants were written on palm leaves and put in a pot. A young boy then picked out the names of the winners from the pot. These winning members constituted the committees. The Uttaramerur inscriptions, also tells the qualifications required to be a member of the sabha.

Economy

The Chola economy mainly depended on trade and agriculture. The Chola kingdom was prosperous and strong. The villages were self-sufficient in most aspects. The main source of revenue for the government was through agricultural yield, land tax and trade tax. The tax depended on the quality of the land. Generally, it was 1/6th of the produce. Taxes were also collected on mines, ports, forests and houses.

Irrigation

Irrigation was important because the area had non-perennial Rivers. There was shortage of water for irrigation. Many tanks, canals and wells were constructed by the Chola kings. These were maintained by the kings, the village community and the brahmanas. Edicts mention that there were tank maintenance communities.

Society

The caste system was followed. Slavery was also prevalent. The inscriptions throw light on the sale of slaves. Women enjoyed freedom and a high status in society. They even held high positions in the administration. However, social evils like sati and child marriage were prevalent.

FOREIGN INVASION IN INDIA DURING THIS PERIOD TURKISH INVASION

Mahmud of Ghazni



Mahmud of Ghazni

Mahmud of Ghazni was the Sultan of the Ghaznavid dynasty of Afghanistan. He was extremely courageous and ambitious. He wanted to make Ghazni rich and powerful. He was attracted to the wealth of India and wanted to plunder it. He invaded India seventeen times from 1001 CE to 1025 CE. His targets were against which he Mahmud of Ghazni carried out successful expeditions. He looted and destroyed the rich temple towns of Thanesar, **Mathura**, **Dwarka** and **Nagarkot**.

Mahmud's most important expedition was against the Somnath temple of Gujarat in 1025 CE. This temple was extremely rich.

History Reveals

The Somnath Temple was served by 2000 priests. Devotees thronged the temple. It had hundreds of musicians, dancing girls and barbers. Mahmud was amazed by its fabulous wealth.

Mahmud used the wealth to create a beautiful Ghazni. He built libraries, mosques, gardens, a university and a museum in Ghazni which also became a centre of fine arts and culture. Mahmud died in 1030 CE leaving behind a large empire. His successors were inefficient and took no interest in India. His invasions had far reaching effects. Punjab became a Muslim territory for nearly 150 years. Also, temples and works of art were destroyed. The economy was devastated as large amounts of wealth were carried away to Ghazni. Most importantly, these invasions paved the way for further invasion- that changed India's history.

Muhammad of Ghor



Muhammad of Ghor

Muhammad was the governor of the Ghori dynasty of Ghor, a province that laid near Ghazni. He conquered Ghazni in 1160 CE. He was also attracted to the wealth of India. He conquered Punjab, Multan and Sind and attacked Prithviraj Chauhan, the Rajput ruler of Delhi. The armies confronted each other at Tarain in 1191 CE.

History Reveals

In the First Battle of Tarain, Prithviraj Chauhan's army had 300 elephants. However, the Turkish soldiers had never seen an elephant before.

A fierce battle was fought between the armies of Muhammad of Ghor and Prithviraj Chauhan which came to be known as the **First Battle of Tarain**. The Rajput army defeated the Muslim army and Muhammad was badly injured and was captured as prisoner. Prithviraj later on pardoned and released him. However, Muhammad came back the next year to take revenge for his defeat. The two armies met again on the same battlefield and the **Second Battle of Tarain** was fought in 1192 CE. Muhammad came with a large well-equipped army and attacked the Rajput army in the early hours of morning when they were caught unawares. The Rajputs fought valiantly but were defeated and Prithviraj Chauhan was killed.

Q. what was the most important effect of the

Turkish invasions? The Second Battle of Tarain is believed to be the most significant battle in the history of India as it opened the path for other conquerors into India. Muhammad Ghori appointed **Qutb-ud-din Aybak** as his viceroy in India. Qutb-ud-din became the first Muslim Sultan of Delhi after the death of Muhammad of Ghor and established the Delhi Sultanate. Muhammad Ghori is rightfully called the founder of the Muslim Empire in India.

Around the World



The Bosphorus Strait dividing Europe and Asia. Istanbul lies on the left landmass

Osman Bey became the chief of the Ottoman tribe in 1284 CE. He founded the Ottoman Empire in 1299 CE. This empire reached its zenith in the 16th and 17th century CE and controlled South-Eastern Europe, South-western Asia and North-Africa. Constantinople was its capital. Throughout the middle ages, Constantinople was Europe's largest and wealthiest city. Today, it is known as Istanbul, the capital of Turkey.