
UNIT 1 : SOURCES: LITERARY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to know various literary and archaeological sources for the reconstruction of the early medieval Indian history,

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The paucity of sources has always been an obstacle in re-constructing early medieval history. The advent of the Muslim rulers though brought about the culture of writing history as it prevailed in central and west Asia. The court histories are partisan history but the information's are useful. Moreover, during this time travellers and chroniclers from near and far came to India and left their account that again is a valuable source of history. Thus, the main source of history of the early medieval period should be the historians and the foreign travellers of this period. The Malfuzat text and Bardiclores again can add to information but are difficult to be corroborated with other work. Apart from this the information provided by archaeological (monuments, epigraphy, and numismatics) and literature is very important as traditional source of history for the early medieval period.

1.2 LITERARY SOURCES

1.2.1 Indigenous Literatures

From c.700 CE onwards a particular type of literary text called the Charita, (Eulogies on the life of a particular political ruler) started to emerge. This tendency started with the Harshacharita by Banabhatta (court-poet of Harshavardhana), which speaks of

the deeds of Harshavardhana. It is not free from limitations, due to the use of hyperbolic statements. Such Charitas need to be constantly checked and verified with information from other contemporary sources, before a historian can accept its statements.

Similarly Sandhyakaranandi's Ramacharitam speaks of the gradual waning of the mighty Pala power, or of the last flicker of its existence during the time of Ramapala, who tried to recapture the lost territory of Varendri (present day northern part of Bangladesh), which the Pala's had lost. The recovery of Varendri constitutes the major focus of the Ramacharitam. The text revolves around the career of Ramapala, and points to many interesting political aspects of the last phase of the Pala rule in northern Bengal.

The Vikramankadevacharita of Bilhana, a poet of the eleventh century, describes the career and achievements of his patron, a powerful south Indian ruler Vikramaditya-VI, in a similar fashion.

A fascinating textual account of a particular region was Kalhana's Rajatarangini (River of Kings), which possibly outclassed the other historical chronicles written in ancient times. This text gives a connected account of the history of Kashmir from very remote times (according to some it goes back to the nineteenth century BCE).

Kalhana's account about the pre-seventh century CE was mostly based on hearsay, legends and tales, but from the seventh century CE onwards, it was based on evidence available to him, and was more factual and dependable. Kalhana, a Kashmiri Brahmin, belonged to the twelfth century CE. He states that he checked, read, and studied earlier evidence in the form of coins, accounts, and dynastic chronicles, in order to compose his text. His approach to these sources, itself surprises us, as he went about his work with remarkable balance and critical judgment. Romila Thapar sees the culmination of the Itihasa Purana type of textual narrative in Kalhana's Rajatarangini. It is noteworthy that this work was fundamentally different from the Charitas, as the latter were composed in a spirit of hero worship, or patron pleasing, while the Rajatarangini was the outcome of a detached and impartial mind, viewing the past and the present with great historical insight.

1.2.2 Foreign Accounts

Besides indigenous texts, foreign accounts (Chinese and Arab) are also useful sources for early medieval India. Yijing or Itsing (635–713 CE), visited India in 7th century CE and his accounts contain the socio-religious condition of those days. One of Yijing's works gives an account of Buddhist doctrines and practices in India. The important Arab works include the 9th–10th century writings of travellers and geographers such as Sulaiman, Al-Masudi, Abu Zaid, Al-Biduri, and Ibn Haukal. Later Arab writers include Al-Biruni, Al-Idrisi, Muhammad Ufi, and Ibn Batuta. Such accounts are especially useful for information on trade. Al-Biruni gave important information about India. He was Arab scholar and contemporary of

Mahmud of Ghazni. Al-Biruni studied Sanskrit and acquired knowledge of Indian society and culture through literature. Therefore, his observations are based on his knowledge about Indian society and culture, but he did not give any political information of his times. Works of Al Masudi (early tenth century), Al Idrisi (twelfth century) etc., are helpful for understanding overseas trade both in the west and east of India.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

1.3.1 Art and Architecture

The study of architecture and sculpture helps in forming an impression of the cultural life of early medieval India. The emergence of structural temples usually monumental in size, in the period from 600-1300 CE is marked by the expression of very strong regionalism in Indian culture, which is also reflected in the beginnings of regional vernaculars. Three distinct temple styles emerged in three distinct zones of the sub-continent. The north Indian temple styles with its tapering shikhara, in which the super structure of the main temple is labelled the nagara style of temple. In contrast to this was the Dravida type of temples in south India where we observe a very tall super structure constructed in a pyramidal shape over the main shrine. In the areas of present day Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh there emerged another distinct style called Vesara which in a way represented an admixture or meeting point of the north Indian and the far south Indian styles. The sculpture of this period also displays distinct regional features in both stone as well as metal sculptures. The excellence of metal sculpting comes from the Chola areas in south India, celebrated for the fascinating images of Nataraja Shiva. The wonderful images of Buddha belonging to the period of Pala rule, over present day Bangladesh, West Bengal, and partly Bihar deserve special mention. In spite of the fact that the iconography in the subcontinent was derived from the common source of Puranic stories, myths and legends pertaining to different divinities, the styles employed were distinctly regional and had their own regional appeal, thus nurturing the growth and development of multifaceted sculptural traditions.

1.3.2 Inscriptions

Tamil copper-plate inscriptions are copper-plate records of grants of villages, plots of cultivable lands or other privileges to private individuals or public institutions by the members of the various South Indian royal dynasties. The study of these inscriptions, has been especially important in reconstructing the history of Tamil Nadu. These records were an essential component of a highly-structured system of taxation that kept the royal treasuries full by ensuring that all tax obligations were met. The grants range in date from the tenth century CE. to the mid nineteenth century CE. A large number of them pertain to the Chalukyas, the Cholas and the Vijayanagar kings. These plates are valuable epigraphically because they provides an insight into the social conditions of medieval South India; they also help fill

chronological gaps in the connected history of the ruling dynasties. Unlike in neighboring Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh where early inscriptions were written in Sanskrit, the early inscriptions in Tamil Nadu used Tamil exclusively. Tamil has the oldest extant literature amongst the Dravidian languages, but dating the language and the literature precisely is difficult. Literary works in India were preserved either in palm leaf manuscripts (implying repeated copying and recopying) or through oral transmission, making direct dating impossible. External chronological records and internal linguistic evidence, however, indicate that the oldest extant works were probably compiled sometime between the second century BCE and the tenth century CE.

Epigraphic attestation of Tamil begins with rock inscriptions from the second century BCE, written in Tamil-Brahmi, an adapted form of the Brahmi script. Beginning in the sixth century both stone and copper-plate inscriptions were also written in Sanskrit, and some were bilingual. Indian archaeologists have discovered hundreds of inscriptions during the last 120 years. Professor E. Hultzsch began collecting South Indian inscriptions systematically from the latter part of 1886, when he was appointed Epigraphist to the Government of Madras. The earliest of the extant copperplate inscriptions date from the tenth century CE. Of these, the Leyden plates, the Tiruvalangadu grant of Rajendra Chola-I, the Anbil plates of Sundara Chola and the Kanyakumari inscription of Virarajendra Chola are the only epigraphical records discovered and published so far, that give genealogical lists of Chola kings. The *Tiruvalangadu* copperplates discovered in 1905 CE is one of the largest so far recovered and contains 31 copper sheets. They contain both Sanskrit and Tamil texts, which seems to have been written at least a decade apart. These plates record a grant made to the shrine of the goddess at Tiruvalangadu by Rajendra Chola-I. The list of the legendary Chola kings forms the preamble to the Sanskrit portion of these plates.

A typical Chola copperplate inscription currently displayed at the Government Museum, Chennai, India, is dated c. tenth century C.E. Five copper plates are strung in a copper ring, the ends of which are secured with a Chola seal bearing, in relief, a seated tiger facing the right, with two fish to its right. These three figures have a bow below them, a parasol and two fly-whisks (Chamaras) above them, and a lamp on each side. Around the margin is engraved in Grantha characters, "*This is the matchless edict of King Parakesarivarman, who teaches justice to the kings of his realm*". A portion of this inscription is in Sanskrit and the rest is in Tamil. The plates contain an edict issued at Kachhippedu (Kanchipuram) by the Chola king Ko-Parakesarivarman (Uththama Chola, an uncle and predecessor of Rajaraja Chola-I), at the request of his minister, to confirm the contents of a number of stone inscriptions, which referred to certain dues to be paid to the temple of Vishnu at Kachhippedu. Arrangements made for several services in the temple are also described. Uththama Chola was an uncle and predecessor of Rajaraja Chola-I.

1.3.3 Coins

Though numerous coins have been found on the surface, many have been found while digging the mounds. Coins are a good source of administrative as well as constitutional history. Coins portray kings and gods, and contain religious symbols and legends, by which one can get an idea of the art and religion of the time.

There is a whole category of Indian coins, in the "Indo-Sassanian style", also sometimes called *Gadhaiya paisa*, that were derived from the Sasanian coinage in a rather geometric fashion, among the Gurjaras, Pratiharas, Chaulukya-Paramara and Palas from circa 530 CE to 1202 CE. Typically, the bust of the king on the obverse is highly simplified and geometric, and the design of the fire altar, with or without the two attendants, appears as a geometrical motif on the reverse of this type of coinage.

The coins of the Chola Empire bear similarities with other South Indian dynastic issue coins. Chola coins invariably display a tiger crest. The appearance of the fish and bow on Chola issue coins that were emblems associated with the Pandyas and Cheras respectively suggests successful political conquest of these powers as well as co-option of existing coin issuing practices.

The coins of various Rajput princes's ruling in Hindustan and Central India were usually of gold, copper or billon, very rarely silver. These coins had the familiar goddess of wealth, Lakshmi on the obverse. In these coins, the Goddess was shown with four arms than the usual two arms of the Gupta coins; the reverse carried the Nagari legend. The seated bull and horseman were almost invariable devices on Rajput copper and bullion coins.

Check Your Progress

1) Write a note on indigenous literary sources of early mediaeval India.

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2) Discuss different inscriptional sources of early mediaeval India.

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1.4 LET US SUM UP

By now it has become clear that these literary and archaeological sources are important enough to provide welcome light to the economic activities of the early Indians. It has also become clear that any single source cannot explain all aspects of the economic history of the early Indians. Different sources together can help us to explain the economic history of a people of a particular region during a particular period. The historian writes it by using the sources relevant to the enquiry. But the use of sources depends on what question the historian raises. Accordingly, s/he finds out new sources, if necessary, or evaluates the known sources in order to find out the answer to his or her question. Thus the historian makes sources work for solving the problem s/he deals with.

1.5 KEY WORDS

Shikhara : spire of a free-standing temple like mountain.

Nagara style : Temple architecture of Northern India.

1.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress

- 1) See Sub-section 1.2.1
- 2) See Sub-section 1.3.2

UNIT 2 : EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL STRUCTURES: RAJPUTS AND CHOLAS

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Rajputs
 - 2.2.1 Origin of Rajputs: Debates
 - 2.2.2 Rise of the Rajput States: Tripartite Struggle – Emergence of the Gurjara-Pratiharas
 - 2.2.3 Major Rajput States after Gurjara-Pratiharas
 - 2.3.4 Later Rajput States of Western and North-Eastern Rajasthan
 - 2.3.5 Proliferation of Rajput Clans
 - 2.3.6 Political and Military System of the Rajputs
- 2.3 Cholas
 - 2.3.1 Territorial Expansion
 - 2.3.2 Chola Kingship
 - 2.3.3 Local Administration: *Ur* and *Nadu*
 - 2.3.4 Brahmadeya and Nagaram
 - 2.35 King, Officials and Chiefs
- 2.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5 Key Words
- 2.6 Answers to Check Your Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about

- territorial expansion and political processes of the Rajputs and Cholas,
- nature of monarchical polities of the Rajputs and Cholas, and
- administrative and institutional structures of the Rajputs and Cholas.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Political changes in Indian history have been marked by dynastic shifts. Each dynasty has had its own genealogy and chronology which represented its rule in India. The structures of polities in ancient India have been generally identified by scholars in the context of centralization or decentralization. Centralized polities denoted unified rule over a vast area under one political power in contrast to decentralization which represented centrifugal regional tendencies. Themes such as state formation, structure of polity, nature of power and political control etc. have been a subject of historical studies. The aim of this unit is to introduce the emergence

of Rajputs and Cholas in India in the form of regional political powers, especially in North and the Deep South respectively.

2.2 RAJPUTS

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2.2.1 Origin of Rajputs: Debates

The origin of Rajputs is shrouded under mystery. Scholars are hardly in unison over their origin and a number of views are in currency pertaining to their origin.

i. *Agnikula Origin of the Rajputs : A Myth*

Chand Bardai in his Prithvirajraso (12th century) refers that the Chalukyas, Pratiharas, Paramaras and Chahamanas have their origin from the fire pit of Vashistha. According to Raso, Vishvamitra, Agastya, Vashistha and other sages began a great sacrifice at Mt. Abu. Daityas (demons) interrupted it and then Vashistha created from the sacrificial pit three warriors in succession: the Padihara (Pratihara), the Solanki, and the Paramara. The bardic text also mentions that none of the created warriors, however, succeeded in completely removing the demons.

The modern scholars who believe in the Agnikula origin of the Rajputs are Watson, Forbes, Camphel, D. R. Bhandarkar etc.

They believe that all the so-called agnikula Rajputs are of Gurjara stock. The Gurjara origin of the Rajputs is being criticised by Pratipal Bhatia. She argues that the Gurjara is not only the name of a people but also a country and of all the people who inhabited it, to whichever caste or clan they might have belonged. We only knew about the solar and lunar Kshatriyas in the ancient texts. The solar and lunar origin of the Rajputs is mentioned in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. The earliest tradition of the Chandella family found mentioned in their inscriptions traces the origin of the Chandellas from Moon, identifying them as the lunar race of the Kshatriyas. It appears that the concept of the solar and lunar Kshatriyas of the Sanskrit literary texts was replaced in the bardic account of Raso and inscriptions during the early medieval period by that of agnikula origin.

ii. *Other Views*

B. N. S. Yadav has traced the emergence of the early Rajput clans in Rajasthan and Gujarat during the period of political and social confusion and chaos which may be characterised by a declining economy following the invasions and settlements of the foreigners and collapse of the Gupta empire. The rising feudal tendencies, according to him, created favourable circumstances for the emergence of ruling landed aristocracy connected intimately with land. Attached to this background, he traced out the rise of the military clans of the Gurjaras, Guhilots, Chahamanas, Chapas etc. in northern India during 650-750 CE. However, their rise as independent ruling clans may be traced back to the 8th century, when Gurjara-Pratiharas as the first Rajput ruling clan established their hold over Kanauj and other regions in the northern India. D. C. Sircar puts forth that in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* the term *rajputra* is used in the sense of a mere landowner. They claimed birth from 36 clans of the Rajputs. It indicates that by the beginning of the 12th century CE, these clans had already come into existence. During this period *rajputras* had become a class by themselves.

iii. *Recent View: Processual Theory*

B. D. Chattopadhyaya examines the emergence of the Rajputs as a process, which in different periods and different regions was not almost alike but differed in context of time and place. According to him, their emergence should not be looked in terms of ancestry. The term *rajputra* in early medieval literary texts and inscriptions, in reality, represented a mixed caste constituting a fairly large section of petty land holding chiefs. The status of the clan was generally counted a lot during the early medieval period, which was known for hereditary offices and a stereotype system of administration. The contemporary status of the clan was, thus, the criterion for the inclusion in the Rajput clans mentioned in *Rajatarangini*, *Kumarapalcharita* and *Varnaratnakara*. It is to be noted that the list of 36 clans mentioned in all the literary texts is dissimilar. Political dominance may altogether be the prominent criterion which might have added to the status of a clan. Thus, it was perhaps owing to the political dominance of the Pratiharas and Chahamanas that their name was retained regularly in the lists. He suggests that the process of the emergence of Rajputs in early medieval records is found linked with political, economic and social developments. Chattopadhyaya, on the basis of the study of the sources, has traced the following developments which were directly linked to the process of the emergence of Rajputs.

Agrarian and Territorial Settlements: The colonization of new areas resulted in the expansion of a number of settlements and also of agrarian economy. The comparison of the list of early historic sites with those of early medieval period and appearance of new place names in the contemporary inscriptions clearly suggest an increase in the number of settlements. The inscriptions of the western and central India also refer to the territorial expansion of the Rajput power by suppressing the tribal settlements of the Bhils, Pulindas and Sabaras. The Guhila kingdom was

founded in the 7th century on the Bhil settlements, according to tradition. Similar movements of expansion are found in case of the Chahamanas of Nadol. Shakambhari – the capital of the main line of the Chahamaans – also came out of the colonization, which was earlier a forest land (janggaladesha). The present region of Rajasthan, according to Chattopadhyaya, in the period when Rajput polity was beginning to emerge was in its various areas undergoing a process of change from tribalism.

Mobility to Kshatriya Status: All the Rajput clans did not emerge out of the process of colonization. The Meds reached to the Rajput status from a tribal background and the other group, namely Hunas, were assimilated in Indian society and acquired the status of Kshatriyas. Thus, a criterion for the inclusion of the Meds and Hunas was mobility to Kshatriya status which was more commonly practiced. For the majority of other newly emerging royal lines Brahma-Kshatra was a transitional status. Chattopadhyaya opines that brahma-kshtra might have been an open status during the early medieval period.

Political Eminence: The Gurjara-Pratiharas emerged out of different stocks of the Gurjaras acquiring political eminence in western India. However, in their inscriptions they have variously claimed their origin either from Brahman, Sun, Indra etc. in order to maintain the ancestral respectability. The sovereign or ruling families of a clan had a general tendency to frame the genealogies with respectable ancestry. It seems that a definite co-relation did exist between the political eminence and a movement towards corresponding social status.

Mobility from Feudatory to Independent Status: Some of the Rajput clans emerged out from the feudatory to the independent status, as is clear from the genealogical claims. The case of Gurjaras of Gujarat, Guhilas of Kiskindha and Dhavagarta, Guhilas of Mewar, Chahamanas of Gujarat and Rajasthan was a case of transition from feudatory to independent status. This transition and upward mobility was a result of the growth of the military strength. The emergence of the Rajputs, thus, in the existing hierarchical political structure was not sudden but a gradual process.

The System of Land Distribution: The process of the emergence of early Rajputs is associated at the level of economy, with certain new features of land distribution and territorial system. One feature of land distribution, the trend of which appears to have been higher in Rajasthan, was the distribution of land among royal kinsmen. This practice was common among the Pratihara, Chahamana, and Guhila clans. Such land assignments were also hereditary in nature. The specific thing was that while the other assignees were not authoritative to grant land independently out of their holdings and depended on the approval of the king, the kinsmen needed no such sanction and could make grant independently without king's approval.

Fortifications: The Rajput clans strengthened themselves by maintaining military power, one of the chief features of which was the construction and maintenance of

2.2.2 Rise of the Rajput States: Tripartite Struggle – Emergence of the Gurjara-Pratiharas

The post-Harsha period was a period of great political turmoil in north India. Kannauj, which was seat of Harsha, remained a bone of contention. Each one of the political powers was having an eye on it for the occupation. The major political powers which entered into a struggle – generally known as ‘tripartite struggle’ – were the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas and the Rashtrakutas. The results of this struggle were not decisive. Temporarily, the Pratihara king Nagabhata boldly annexed Kannauj in the 8th century CE. The Pratiharas, thus, gained the supreme power in the north after the conquest of Kannauj. The circumstances, which led the Pratihara king to such a usurpation of power, were the domestic seditions in the Rashtrakuta family. This triangular struggle did not end with the temporary success of the Gurjara-Pratiharas but it continued further under the successors of Nagabhata. The period of Bhoja-I (c.836-885 CE) – the grandson of Nagabhata – was a period of consolidation of Pratihara power. He re-established the supremacy of his family by restoring his authority over the Gurjaratrabhumi (Jodhpur or Marwar). The Gurjara-Pratiharas in early 8th century came into prominence first by establishing their seat of power in Ujjaini which was a major urban and political centre in western Malwa. The decline of the Pratihara dynasty in the 10th century CE opened the way for their own feudatory chiefs to declare themselves as independent powers. The Chaulukyas, Chandellas, Chahamanas, Gahadawalas, Paramaras, Kalachuris and Guhilas, all of whom were the feudatory chiefs of the Gurjara-Pratiharas in different regions, thus, became independent as distinct Rajput clans in their own territories.

2.2.3 Major Rajput States after Gurjara-Pratiharas

The Gahadawalas

The Gahadawalas occupied Kannauj in the 11th century. From Kannauj they ruled over the major portions of the Gangetic doab during 1090-1193. The Gahadawala king Jayachandra is usually styled as the king of Benares by the Muslim historians owing to his intimate connection with the city of Banaras, perhaps as the habitual abode due to its religious importance and geographically on account of its central location in India. The Gahadawalas had bitter struggle and enmity with the Chahamanas.

The Chahamanas

Chahamanas came into prominence after the decline of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. There were numerous branches of the Chahamanas but some of them were unquestionably the feudatories of Pratiharas of Avanti and Kannauj. It also remains a fact that during 750-950 CE most of the regions ruled by the Chahamanas formed part of Pratihara dominion. In 973 CE they became practically independent. The main branch of the Chahamanas was famous as the Chauhans of Sapadalaksha or Jangaladesh. The city of Ajayameru (modern Ajmer) founded by king Ajayaraja was their political centre

and seat of power. The Chahamanas dynasty, the rulers of which were indulged in the fratricidal wars with their neighbours, also came to an end with the second battle of Tarain (1192 CE) which brought the destruction of the greatest king, Prithviraja III. Besides the Gahadawalas, the bitterest enemies of the Chahamanas were their contemporaries: the Chalukyas and the Chandellas.

The Chandellas

Another contemporary political power was the Chandellas: one of the feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. The Chandellas ruled over central India between 10th-13th centuries CE. Their territory was known as Jejakabhukti (modern Bundelkhand). Their territorial extension varied from time to time. But the important places which remained included in their territory were: Kalanjar, Khajuraho, Mahoba, and Ajayagarh.

The Paramaras

Another contemporary Rajput political power – the Paramaras – emerged in the region of Gujarat, Malwa and Southern Rajputana out of the bitter struggle between the Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. The territory ruled over by the Paramaras of Malwa included Malwa proper and the adjoining districts. The principal areas of influence under the Paramaras were spread over modern cities and towns of Ujjain, Dhar, Bhilsa, Bhojpur, Shergarh, Udaipur, Mandu, Depalpur.

The Chalukyas

The region of Gujarat and Kathiawad was possessed by the Chalukyas around 950 CE as the feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. Taking advantage of the disturbance and anarchy in the Pratihara kingdom following the invasion of Indra III and then the rapid decline of the Rashtrakutas during c. 956-973 CE after the death of Krishna III, they became successful in carving out independent principality of their own in Saraswati valley. They ruled over parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan between 940-1244 CE. Their capital was Anhilawada, modern Patan (a detailed discussion on Chalukyas of Badami is done in Unit 6 of this Course).

The Vaghelas

The Vaghelas ruled over Gujarat including Anhilawada during the 13th century. Their capital was Dholka. The Dilwara temples of Mt. Abu were built by two Vaghela ministers Vastupala and Tejapala.

The Kalachuris

Kalachuris, who were in the service of the Gurjara-Pratiharas as feudatories, also did not hesitate to declare their independence. They were also known as Kalachuris of Chedi or Tripuri. They ruled the Chedi region from their capital Tripuri (modern Tewar near Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh). In the east, the centre of Kalachuri power was Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh). However, they lost some of their power owing to the rise of the Gahadawalas in the east. Later on, the central Indian dominions of the

Kalachuris had extended far up to the districts of Prayagraj and Varanasi (Banaras). In their efforts of extension, they came into conflict with the Paramaras and the Palas.

The Guhilas

The Guhilas earlier served the Pratiharas as feudatories. They succeeded in declaring themselves as independent rulers in Mewar during the second half of the 12th century. The last vestige of the Guhila power was Maharana Hammir, who recovered Chittor from the Muslims after it had been lost by Raval Ratnasimha in 1303 CE and, thus, revived the lost glory of the dynasty of Mewar for some time. Hammir occupied Chittor, ousted the Chauhans and laid down the foundation of Sisodia rule there. His influence was recognised by the rulers of Mewar, Amber and others as far as Gwalior, Raisen, Chanderi and Kalpi.

The Kachhapagatas

The Kachhapagatas were at first the feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. They made themselves masters of the fort of Gwalior after defeating the ruler of Kannauj. During the 10th and 11th centuries, the region of eastern Rajaputana and Gwalior residency was overruled by three independent branches of Kacchapagatas.

The Kachhawahas of Dubkund

The Kachhawahas of Dubkund were subordinates to the Chandellas, as we do not find imperial titles for the rulers of this line.

2.3.4 Later Rajput States of Western and North-Eastern Rajasthan

Being defeated by the Muslim invaders, the Rajput clans sought refuge in the protected land of Rajasthan. Full of the hilly regions and the desert areas, it could well provide abundant security to its immigrants. Thus, considering the geographical importance of this region, the princes belonging to the Guhila, Panwar, Chauhan, Sonigara, Solanki, Parmara and Deora clans carved out their small principalities at several places in western Rajasthan like Khed, Barmer, Sojat, Mandor, Jalor, Bhinmal, Mahewa, Sirohi and Abu. Some of the major Rajput clans of this region are as follows:

Rathors

Rathors emerged as a political power by having possession of a number of villages in that area and ultimately annexing Khed from Raja Pratapsi of the Guhila Clan (1398-1423 CE). Later on, their rule was extended over a large area of Pali, Khed, Bhadrajan, Kodana, Mahewa (Mallani), Barmer, Pokharan, Jaitaran, Siwana, and a large part of Nagpur district and some areas of Bikaner. The Rathor rule continued over these territories up to 1529 CE: the date of the death of Rao Ganga.

Bhattis

The north-eastern Rajasthan was ruled by the Rajput tribe of Bhattis. During the 12th century the main centre of their activities was Jaisalmer.

Deora Chauhans

Like the Bhattis, the region of Sirohi was ruled by the Deora branch of Chauhan clan.

Kachhapagatas

One branch of the Kacchhapagatas established their estate at Dhundhar (Amber and later on Jaipur or Sawaijaipur including Shekhawati), ousting the Minas from that area.

2.3.5 Proliferation of Rajput Clans

It is apparent from the literary and inscriptional evidence of early medieval period, which mention certain members belonging to a Rajput clan or descent, that the structure of Rajput polity may be defined in terms of proliferation. At the later stage, the inter-clan relationships governing the distribution of power consolidated the structure of Rajput polity as well. The emergence of minor clans and sub-divisions of major clans was a result of proliferation. The subclans emerged out from the movement of some members of a clan to newer areas. The proliferation of the Rajput clans with their establishment in different areas led to the further extension of the Rajput fold. It, thus, widened the process of emergence of the Rajputs which may safely be termed as "Rajputization". The absorption of local elements into sub-clans was also a common phenomenon. Usually, the already established clans came into social contact of the newly established clans and provided them a social network which naturally strengthened the latter ones.

2.3.6 Political and Military System of the Rajputs

Inter-state rivalries are represented by the struggle for supremacy. The king was the supreme head of the state and the conductor of the overall executive, judicial and military administration. To some extent, he was assisted in administrative matters by the queens, a number of whom figure in the records of different dynasties of our period. However, none of them is possibly found entrusted with any administrative post. Their involvement in administration is borne out indirectly in some of the land-grants. They are sometimes found granting landgrants with the formal permission of the King. The ministerial council acted as a consultative body on all the important matters of polity. The office of the ministers was generally hereditary. The officials often adopted the feudal titles like rajaputra, ranaka, thakkura, samanta, mahasamanta, raut etc. in addition to the administrative posts like mahasandhivigrahika dutaka, maha-akshapatalika and others. The combining hereditary position and feudal ranks made these officials more powerful. The territorial administration consisted of the vishayas, bhuktis and other sub-divisions

was usually fully governed by a class of power feudatories entitled usually as mandaleshvarars, mandalikas, samantas, thakkuras, ranakas, rajaputras etc. The administrative heads in villages apart from the village headman were the panchkulas (a body of five members in a village like panchayat), mahajanas and mahattaras (village elders). The official posts and designations of administrative officials at various levels were different under various Rajput clans.

The military system of any dynasty is always a direct reflection of its political organization. The feudalization of political structure of the Rajputs had also resulted in their military organization. The military functions were mainly played almost under all the Rajput clans by the feudatory chiefs of various ranks. The chief obligation on the part of such chiefs was to serve the king or the respective overlord at the time of war by fighting valiantly from his side. The literary sources like Lekhapaddhati, Prithvirajvijaya Mahakavya and the contemporary inscriptions throw sufficient light on such obligations and duties of the feudatories towards the state and the overlords. The personal grievances of the feudal lords like rajaputras, ranakas, rautas, samantas etc. created consternation in the whole administrative set up. The powerful feudatories did not hesitate to declare themselves as independent in the hour of the weak position of the king.

The political system of the Rajputs is to be defined as bureaucratic-cum-feudal in character. There was an absence of uniformity in adoption of strategy and the organization of troops in general. Different dynastic clans probably had the tendency to organize the various components of their army in war, in accordance with their own convenience. The chief weakness of the Rajput military was their backwardness in the field of military technology unlike the Turks who were fully conversant with the mounted archery and its strategic use in warfare. However, they prominently used mechanical devices known as munjaniqs and arradas (Persian names of siege machines) in siege operations to hurl heavy stones and projectile weapons on enemy's ranks and fortifications like the Arabs and Turks. That they used these machines in order to bombard enemy's troops from the ramparts of the forts by the Rajput rulers is known from a variety of sources. The Hindus were known to have learnt the use of these machines from the Arabs and Turks who, in turn, imitated the Greek and Romans in using these devices. The Greek and Roman siege machines, which were the variants of machines used by the Hindus and their Muslim adversaries including the Arabs and the Turks , were named as mangonel and catapults.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the connotation of the term rajputra during the early medieval period in India.

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2) Who were the Gurjara-Pratiharas? How did they emerge out as independent Rajput clan?

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3) Locate the major Rajput clans in northern India and their states.

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4) What do you mean by the proliferation of the Rajputs? Discuss.

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2.3 CHOLAS

The Cholas – the most powerful of the peninsular polities with the Kaveri valley as the nucleus of their power — succeeded in establishing the most enduring regional state in the Tamil macro-region.

2.3.1 Territorial Expansion

The Cholas as a ruling power rose to eminence in the 9th century CE when Vijayalaya seized Tanjavur from a feudatory chief of the Pallavas called Muttarayas. Henceforth, the Cholas were able to establish control over Pallava territories and subdued the Pandyan power. The Chola state stood on a firm footing deriving sustenance from the resource-pocket located in the fertile and rich area of the Kaveri valley. In the period of Rajaraja I and subsequent period, various feudatory chiefs were subjugated and the earlier category of Nadu was regrouped into Valanadu and

was placed under the subdued chiefs. The landed magnates were also incorporated into the state system and were provided prestigious titles and were assigned administrative and military duties which included collection and assessment of land revenue.

2.3.2 Chola Kingship

The Cholas traced their origin to the *Suryavamsha*. Mythical traditions are mentioned in the inscriptions especially in the *prashastis* containing the genealogies (Tiruvallangad Copper Plates, the larger Leiden Plates and the Anbil Plates, Kanya Kumari inscription of Vira Rajendra etc.) and these are interspersed with information about historical personages. It appears that these served the purpose of legitimization of the rule of the Cholas. The *prashastis* of the Cholas were based on the *Itihaasa-Purana* tradition. The dominance of the Sanskritic and the Brahmanical traditions is well attested. The Cholas also ascribe to the legacy of the *Sangam* period. The genealogies of the Cholas attribute eminent and prestigious lineage to the king to legitimize his position as king. The period from the eighth year of Rajaraja onwards is marked by absence of genealogical record in the Tamil *Meykkirttis*. These compositions narrate the military exploits of the kings, are inscribed on stone and address the Tamil landed magnates. The Cholas ascribe *Kshatriya* origin to themselves as is attested by the title *Kshatriyasikhamani* of the king Rajaraja. The *Yarman* suffix (Sanskritic) added to the names of the kings was also a part of the process of claiming *kshatriya* status e.g. Adityavarman (871-906 CE) and Parantaka Varman (707-755 CE). The practice of assuming names during coronation also existed under the Cholas e.g. Prakesarivarman, Rajakesarivarman and Arumolivarman (Tamil name with a Sanskrit suffix). The charters of the Cholas consist of the *prashastis* and genealogies in Sanskrit and the details regarding the grant in Tamil. Hiranyagarbha and Tulabhara ceremonies were conducted by the Chola kings. The anointment ceremony was also a means to claim *Kshatriya* position. A grant of Vira Chola points out that the king was advised by a *Brahmana* moral preacher (*dharmopadeshta*) that bestowment of land to *Brahmanas* would lead his forefathers to heaven. However, actual motive for making the grants was redistribution of resources in the form of land, gold, cattle etc. The gifts were bestowed for meritorious service provided by the *Brahmanas* and also to seek legitimacy from them in political sphere. We have proper records of land-grants but the grants of gold, cattle etc. were merely stated in *prashastis*. Through the land-grants the kings tried to convert unsettled areas into agrarian settlements. These grants did not simply serve a charitable purpose. Rajaraja is regarded as *Ulakalanda Perumel* (the great one who measured the earth like *Trivikrama*) and as Shiva who established control over the land of Bhargava Rama.

2.3.3 Local Administration: *Ur* and *Nadu*

The Chola copper plate evidence refers to the following while executing the land-grant:

- 1) Nattar
- 2) Brahmadeyakkilavar
- 3) a) Devadana
 - b) Palliccanda
 - c) Kanimurruttu
 - d) Vettapperu-Urkalilar
- 4) Nagarattar

Nattars were the representatives of Nadu (locality). The Brahmadeyakkilavars were the Brahmana donees of Brahmadeya (lands given to the Brahmanas). Nagarattars comprised of the trading community and belonged to the nagaram (settlement of a group of traders). Devadana, Palliccanda, Kavimurruttu and Vettapperu have been identified as tax-free villages. Y. Subbarayalu has pointed out that nattars were analogous to the Vellanvagai Urars (peasant villages) since a number of Urs constituted a Nadu. Subbarayalu considers the village (Ur) as a small component (fractional) of the Nadu. As a constituent of administrative structure the Nadu was important but it incorporated and represented the Urs (vellanvagai villages). Thus, in the territorial sphere Nadu comprised of Vellanvagai villages. Nattars were the important members (land holders) of the Nadu (locality). There are very few inscriptions related to the vellanvagai villages. It seems that the Ur being the common populace represented the section which was not literate. However, the inscriptional evidence related to Urs which is found in the temples is attributed to literate groups.

N. Karashima has analysed the two Tanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja-I and Gangaikkondacolapuram inscription of Vivarajendra. According to him, the vellanvagai villages comprised of agricultural lands, lands used by pastoralists, irrigation devices, funeral place, dwelling place etc. The dwelling area comprised of 1) habitation sites of landholders/cultivators (ur-nattam/ur-irukkai), 2) those of the artisans (kammanacceri), 3) those of agricultural labour (paraicceri).

Karashima is of the opinion that in the Vellanvagai villages differentiation is not noticed. Subbarayalu, however, refutes this argument and suggests the existence of a hierarchical structure in these villages comprising of cultivators (kaniyudaiyar), tenant cultivators (ulukudi), artisans and the agricultural labourers.

The cultivators were generally referred to as vellals. The functions of the Ur included: supervision of village lands viz. activities related to sale, purchase and gift. An important prerequisite for becoming a member of the Ur was to be a holder of land. From the inscriptional evidence we come to know that the members of the Ur also possessed the titles like Udaiyan, Kilan (kilavan), Velan, and Peraraiyan.

All these titles point to landholding. Thus, the epigraphical testimony enables us to infer that Ur was the group/assembly of non-brahmana land holders of a village.

Karashima has argued that the land was held in common in the Ur villages. In some other instances he refers to sale of land by members of Ur as individuals. Subbarayalu also refers to the tendency towards 'individual holdings' in this period. Nadus were named after a village which formed a part of a Nadu. Inscriptional evidence indicates that in several Nadus the main village was Brahmadeya (land given to Brahmanas). However, several nadus did not have Brahmadeya. Subbrayalu refers to increase in Nadus from the 9th century CE. Initially, Nadus emerged in fertile areas which had more villages and later spread to periphery (less fertile areas) where the number of villages was comparatively less. Nilakanta Sastri points out that the Nadu comprised of many villages which were the smallest component of administration. Mahalingam suggests that Nadu was an administrative unit and it was sub-divided into villages. There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars regarding whether Nadu comprised of only Vellanvagai or also consisted of Brahmadeya, Devadana etc. Subbrayalu points out that Nadu and Ur represented a locality comprising of Vellanvagai villages and its representatives participated in the assembly of Nadu. It is difficult to delineate the exact area over which the Nadus were spread. Nadus differed in size and they did not have any natural divisions (e.g. rivers). Therefore, they could not possibly have been artificially created units or divisions. Sometimes, Nadus covered the area beyond a river. In conventional historiography Nattar was regarded as a territorial assembly of a territorial unit Nadu which comprised of eminent members of every village. Other assemblies such as of Brahmedeya, Pallicandam were also considered subordinate to Nadu in the administrative machinery. Recently, historians have argued that Nadu was not an administrative unit created by the Chola state but it was a natural collection of peasant settlements which was incorporated into the state system of the Cholas as a legacy from the previous period. This is proved by the fact that these Nadus were not of same size and were nucleated. The Valanadus which came into existence in the period of Rajaraja I were artificially created as administrative divisions. Nadus initially emerged in fertile areas and later spread to comparatively less fertile zones. This is how the agrarian economy expanded. Nadus located in the fertile tracts were more populated than those in other areas.

There are several inscriptions which give us information about Nadus. Kiranur inscription of 1310 refers to the 'urom of villages Nanjil, Peruncevur, Viraikkudi...as qualified for the Nadu or Vada-chiruvayil-nadu.' (Veluthat 1993: 184). It is clear from the evidence of the records that the Nattars were the Vellals and the functions of Nattar (Nadu) were performed by the Vellala who held the title of Velan. The main occupation of Nattar was agriculture since Nadu was a collection of agricultural settlements. The copper plates which basically deal with land-grants address the Nattar and the execution of the grant made by the king was entrusted to them (deciding the limits of the lands granted by the establishment of superior rights of new grantees etc.) Nattar was subservient to the will of the ruler. Nattar also

supervised irrigation works. They bestowed land on temples. They also served as stockists of donation made to temples. They also supervised the grants made by individuals and exempted the lands donated from tax and, in return, took a certain sum of money as a deposit. Nadu also bestowed land on temples which was tax-free (nattiraiyili). The tax payments exempted on lands donated to the temple were now the responsibility of Nadu towards the state. Nadu seems to have levied a cess for meeting these expenses. These levies or imposts were Nadatci, Nattu viniyogan, or Nattu-vyavasthai.

The temple lands were sold and leased out, a process in which the nattar played an important role. Nadu seems to have been engaged in tax collection and assessment. Sometimes, the Nattar performed the revenue collection task on behalf of the state and sometimes king's personnel (komarravar) were responsible for this work. Mudaligal and Dandanayakam were functionaries deputed in nadu and as royal officials they were entrusted with administrative responsibility. Thus, the land holders in a locality were absorbed into the state system by the Cholas. These constituted the local landed magnates and worked on behalf of the king who exercised authority over them.

Nadu was the smallest unit for revenue administration. Nattup-puravu, Nattuvari (land revenue) and Nattukkanakku: all refer to revenue of Nadu. Nattukkanakku was the personnel responsible for revenue administration of Nadu. The collection and fixation of the revenue of a village was carried out within the context of Nadu where the village was located. When Ur exempted taxes this got reflected in Nadu accounts.

The king's decision to transfer the funds of temple for a specific purpose in the temple was reflected in the Variyilarkanakku (revenue register of royal authority) and the Nattuk-kanakku (revenue register of nadu).

This testifies to the relevance of Nadu as an important part of administrative system of the Cholas in spite of its locally independent character. Nadu-vagaiceyvar, Nadu-kurk-ceyvar, Nadu-kankani-nayagam and Nadu-kankatci were the personnel who represented royal power in Nadu. Nadu Kuru is mentioned in an inscription of Kulottunga I (1116 CE) who managed the functioning of new Devadana. These personnel were given the role of maintaining the accounts of temples in localities. Nadu vagai is mentioned as participating in the assembly of Brahmadeya (sabha). In an inscription Nadu-kankani-nayagam is placed below Senapati. These posts of Nadu officers were transferable. Some officers were entrusted with the administrative responsibility in more than one Nadu. Thus, they worked as part of royal administrative machinery.

2.3.4 Brahmadeya and Nagaram

Brahmadeyas constituted the category of Brahmanas who were landholders in the agricultural tracts and who had been endowed with land (tax-free) and had organised themselves into a distinct group. Nagaram comprised of traders who carried out

trading and exchange activities in the pockets which had developed into commercial centres on account of the spurt in craft production and other activities carried out by artisans.

When the Cholas emerged as an important ruling power in the middle of 9th century CE in Thanjavur, there already existed many Brahmadeyas which were densely populated and rich tracts in the Kaveri region. The Karantai plates of Rajendra I refer to 1080 Brahmanas who inhabited Tribhuvanamahadevi Caturvedimangalam. The assembly of these Brahmanas which inhabited agricultural tracts was called Sabha or Mahasabha. Most of the Brahmadeyas or Brahmana settlements were centred round the temple. Through the temple and the ideological focus based on the Puranas and Itihaasas, Bhakti and varnashramadharm the differentiated society and monarchical polity were legitimized. Therefore, the kings endowed lands to Brahmanas and created Brahmadeyas as a means to legitimize their power.

The inscriptions inform us that many of the Brahmadeyas in the Chola period were Taniyur (separate village) in a Nadu. They had a separate administrative system (revenue and justice). Many of the agricultural villages were clubbed together with a Taniyur. Sometimes a Taniyur was placed subordinate to a temple. Here the Mulparusai was the body which looked after the work of administration.

The inscriptions give the important prerequisites like age, landholding, knowledge, good behaviour for membership to an executive committee of Sabha. The Karantai plates (1080 Brahmanas) refer to Brahmadeyas but do not inform us how the Sabha and other committees were formed. They were not established by royal authority. Their origin may be attributed to Dharamashastric norms. The Sabha and its committees supervised the temple lands, cattle and other resources. They assigned lands to tenants and levied rent. They kept a record of revenue collected and expenses incurred. They supervised the temple functionaries from priest to cleaner and organised the daily services of temples. Sabha acted as a group and the decisions taken were for the benefit of the organisation and not individuals.

The Brahmadeya settlements where the temple played a pivotal role lost importance in the later phase of the Chola period. After mid-11th century CE we find fewer Brahmadeya tracts and more temples were constructed and the older ones were improved upon. Sometimes, the Mahasabha, unable to pay the amount taken from a temple due to shortage of funds, was forced to fall back upon its income from the neighbouring village.

Nagaram settlement was a tract where traders and others (including artisans) lived. "An inscription of 1036 CE from Chidambaram distinguishes between non-brahmana inhabitants of superior status (kudiga) and those of inferior status (kil kalanai). Kudiga included two merchant groups: Sankarappadiyar (lower group) and Vyaparin (higher group) plus three other groups - Vellals (cultivators), Saliyar (cloth merchants) and Pattinavar (fishermen). The subordinate workmen (kil kalanai) were

Taccar (carpenters), Kollar (blacksmiths), Tattar (goldsmiths) and Koliyar (weavers)” (Stein, 1980).

Nagarattar was the representative body of traders. Nagaram settlement was a separate area. Committee of Nagarattar was referred to as Nagaravariyam. Nagaram also held land in common called Nagarakkani. This they acquired through purchase but they also leased out land and performed the task of levying taxes and rendering services to the local groups. They maintained their records regarding income and expenditure. They also paid royal levies in the form of gold and paddy. They also allocated taxes to the local temples viz. Kadamai (tax on land), Nagaraviniyogam (a tax for sustenance of Nagaram) etc. In some cases Nagaram were independent of Nadu (taniyur).

2.3.5 King, Officials and Chiefs

A number of officers were responsible for administration in the Chola kingdom. Although there is no clear evidence of a council of ministers but Uddan-kottam seems to have served this purpose. Upward and downward mobility is noticed in the administrative hierarchy. According to conventional historiography Perundanan and Sirutaram were higher and lower category officials respectively. Senapatis (commander of troops) had the middle position referred to as Sirudanattup Perundaram. Nyayattar (judges) were of both category. Recently, historians have pointed out that these divisions are not conclusively borne out by evidence. Officials were paid by allotting land rights. Tax on land was levied in cash and kind both. Officials were referred to as holders (udaiyan, kilan) of lands. They could further sub-assign land or even sell it. Communal ownership was prevalent and customary rights of villagers were recognised. The lowest unit of administration was the village. They combined to form a Nadu. A Valanadu comprised of a few Nadus. Taniyur was a separate village or settlement site. Above Valanadu there was Mandalam which was equivalent to a province. Karumigal and Panimpkkal meant officers and servants. Anbil plates refer to a Brahmana Manya Sachiva. He was granted land by the king. The king conveyed his orders orally (triuvaykkelvi) especially with regard to gift to temples. The directive was conveyed through a letter (sri-mukham) issued by Anatti (executive officer) appointed by the king. The local bodies were appraised and when the process was completed a record was prepared in the presence of the local magnates called Nattukkon, Nadukilavan, Urudaiyan.

Officers associated with the process of bestowment and registration of landgrants were many and some are also referred to as Uttaramantris. Puravuvari-tinaikkalam was the department of land revenue. Varipottagam was the record of land rights and Vari-pottagak-kanakku was the register of revenue department. Officers associated with the task of maintaining records and registers of land rights and land revenue department were Varipottagam and Variyiledu. Kankanis (supervisors) were the audit officers. Entry in a record was called Variyilidu. Mugavettis wrote royal letters and Pattolais were junior functionaries of land revenue department. Officers of Nadu (of the status of adhikari) were Nadu kuru (revenue assessment and settlement

officer) and Nadu vagai (revenue official). Mandira olai was the officer who wrote the Tirumugam (letter containing the royal order). The term Naduvirukkai was used for Vijnapti (vaykkelvi) or petitioner and Anatti (executive officer) who served as a link between monarch and the persons who wished to approach the king. The king made oral orders (trivaykkelvi) regarding the issues brought to him by the officers. These requests transformed into orders were sent to local administration and central administration for implementation. The Olai nayagam were the officers who verified the letters written by Mandira-olai. The oral order of the king was put to writing (eluttu) and compared (oppu) and then entered (pugunda). Vidaiyil adigari got the order listed in the record. The document was called Tittu and the charity deed, aravolai. Justice was carried out by the village assemblies through the committees comprising of Nyayattar. The central court of justice was the Dharmasana which conducted its affairs through Dharmasana bhattas (Brahmanas proficient in law). It appears that civil and criminal offences were not dealt separately. The penalty for crime committed by a person affecting the king or ruling dynasty was decided by the king himself. Several methods of punishment prevailed viz. imposition of fines, capital punishment etc.

Adhikaris were the king's officers. They possessed the titles Udaiyan, Kilan/Kilavan, Velan, Muvendavelan, Brahma, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan and other chiefly nomenclature. Sometimes, more than one nomenclature was adopted. At times the name of the Chola ruler or his epithet was used as a prefix by the Adhikaris. Naduvirukkai were mostly Brahmana (held titles like Bhatta, Barhmadhirajan) officers and acted as a link between the royal authority and the bureaucracy and they are always referred to in connection with the adhikaris.

Personnel in charge of temples were Srikaryam but they did not look after the ritual related aspects like worship etc. In some cases we have the evidence of Adhikaris holding the Srikaryam office. Generally, they had a distinctive position in the administrative system. The titles held by them were Kilan/Kilavan, Velan, Muvendavelan, Brahma, Bhatta, Kon, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan, Nadu title, King's title. Senapati was in charge of military affairs. They bore the king's title/name and other titles such as Udaiyan, Brahma, Araiyan, Kilans. The office of Dandanayakam was probably akin to the Senapati (military office). The title mentioned for this office is Pallavaaraiyans. The titles held by Senapatis were Udaiyan, Brahma, Araiyan etc.

The office of Tiru-mandira olai nayakam was an important office associated with preparation of land-grant documents. The titles of these officers were Muvendavelan, Brahma etc. Officers deputed at Nadu who discharged their duties at the behest of the king were Nadu Vagai who were revenue assessment officers. Kottam-vagai was deputed in Tondaimandalam area and performed the same function as Nadu vagai. Nadukankaninayakam had control over more than one Nadu and had a higher position than Nadu vagai. The titles which occur with the office of Nadu vagai were:

Araiyan and Udaiyan. Muvendavelan was borne by Nadu kuru (officer of nadu) who was an officer of the rank of Adhikari.

Rajaraja-I (1001 CE) adopted an elaborate land revenue fixation and assessment mechanism and thus, Valanadus were created and this practice was also adopted by other rulers. The land revenue department was called Puravuvvari tinaikkalam. This department was an administrative division of the king's government and had the following personnel:

- Puravu vari,
- Vari pottagan,
- Mugavetti,
- Vari pottaga,
- Kanakku,
- Variyi/idu,
- Pattolai etc.

In the time of Rajendra-II the administrative personnel had more elaborate designations: Puravu-vari-tinaikkala-kanakkar etc. The period of Kulottunga-I witnessed few officers Puravu-vari-Srikarana, Nayagam and Mugavetti.

Later, the term Variyilar refers to personnel of revenue department as a general terminology. These officers had the epithets: Udaiyan, Muvendavelan etc.

The titles held by the king's personnel such as Udaiyan, Kilan and Kilavan refer to possession. Other titles were Velan and Muvendavelan. The latter is a typical Chola title and occurs from the time of Parantaka. These titles suggest that those who bore them were land-holders or associated with land. The title Muvendavelan was bestowed by the Chola King and K. Veluthat points out: "...the strong association of those who bore this high title with offices of some importance is ... borne in mind, demonstrating that the major Vellal landed magnates were enlisted in the service of the king by which process they became an integral part of the state system." It appears that the title used by chiefs and their families *viz.* Araiyan was used by other eminent people as well. In the period of Rajaraja I the chiefly rule suffered a setback but the number of Araiyan title holders was on the rise. This title was more prestigious than Muvendavelan. It is conjectured that the chiefs were subdued to the position of landed magnates or cultivators from the period of Rajaraja and his successors although they still held the title.

The cattle herders (manradi) supervised the grants for lighting lamps in the temples. Merchants held the titles of Cetti, Mayilatti and Palan. They even occupied the important offices like Senapati and accountant. Peruntaccan and Perunkollan were titles used by artisan category but at the most their important positions were confined to royal palace and the temple connected with it.

We do not get clear evidence of a council of ministers but there existed officers like Purohita (dharmopadeshta), Rajagurus, Tirumandira olai, Adhikari, Vayilketpar (officer who noted the king's directives) etc.

M. G. S. Narayanan points out that Udan kuttams were like king's companions of honour. They might have had a head because we have mention of Adhikari of Udankuttam. There are references to the court in literature (Periyapuram etc.). The king's court comprised of Brahmana advisors, priests, Rajaguru, Adhikaris, Tirumandira olai nayagams, Vayilketpar, head of the king's bodyguards, and Samantas (feudatory chiefs).

The various levies of this period were Antarayam, Eccoru, Kadamai (produce-rent), Kudimai, Muttaiy-al, Vetti (labour-rent) and Tattar-pattan (cash payment).

Most of the imports were exacted in kind viz. paddy.

The Cholas undertook military expedition to Sri Lanka (during the time of Rajaraja I) and SriVijaya (during the time of Rajendra I). This shows the military strength of the Chola state. It seems that the cavalymen (kudiraiccevagar), Anaiyatkal (those who fought on elephant), archers (villigal, anukkar) were names of the categories constituting the military force. Valangai (right hand) Velaikkarar were the soldiers recruited from among the peasants. Soldiers were also recruited from the artisan groups (idangai - left hand). These were basically mercenary soldiers. Chola Meykkirttis refer to Kantalur Salai which has been interpreted as an educational institution in the Chera kingdom which imparted military education and training to the Brahmanas which is mentioned in Meykkirttis was the place where Chera fleet was destroyed by the Chola king. This proves that Chola military prowess was insurmountable.

The chiefs held an important position in the state system. In the Pandyan kingdom the only category of chiefs was Ays. In the Sangam literature there is reference to many chiefs viz. Ays, Vels, Muvas, Kodumbalurs and Adigamans. The records of the Pallavas refer to chiefs such as Gangas and Adigamans. The various other chiefs who accepted the suzerainty of Pallavas were Banas, Vettuva-adiaraiyan, Muttaraiyar etc. The chiefs of the Chola period were Paluvettaraiyar, Vels, Malavas, Gangas, Banas etc.

It appears that the chiefs were assigned land and collected dues from it in return for padi kaval (protection of territory). In the post-Kulottunga period there is reference to Nilamaittittu: diplomatic agreement between two or more chiefs. These chiefs also had their soldiers and retainers. Their services were utilized by the Chola kings.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss briefly Chola territorial expansion.

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2) Trace the characteristic features of Chola kingship on the basis of prashastis.

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2.4 LET US SUM UP

The 7th-12th century Rajput polity presents a picture of disunited India after the death of Harsha. The first Rajput clan of Gurjara-Pratiharas, who were earlier the feudatory chiefs of Harsha in Ujjain, emerged as an independent political and military power to rule over Kannauj and the neighbouring regions of Northern India. The political and military strength was, thus, to be regarded as a major pointer at this stage in the emergence of the Rajputs. At the second stage the emergence of the feudatories of Gurjara-Pratiharas in different areas of central and western India as independent clan holders was also a ramification of the same trend of the possession of supreme military strength, which led to the independence or dominance of politically and militarily superior clans over the less powerful ones. The allotment or distribution of land among royal kinsmen and to different grades of the feudatories and officials was necessarily a step in the creation of the different grades of feudatories, many of whom later on emerged as clans or sub-clans. The consolidation of the Rajput clans in different parts of central and western provinces of India has also been reflected by the presence of innumerable impregnable forts, which obviously represented the military strength of the clans. The social relations maintained by the marriage alliances among the members of the different clans provided a legitimate position. The emergence of the Rajputs has, thus, to be understood in reality not in terms of the mythological traditions of the Agnikula and solar and lunar dynastic origins. It should be regarded as a process in terms of the political, social and economic developments in the history of early medieval northern India. B. D. Chattopadhyaya's contention of the origin of the Rajput seems juxtaposed in the light of the evidence of the contemporary epigraphs. The origin of the Rajputs has to be traced from different strata of indigenous population including the Kshatriyas, Brahmanas and some tribes including the aboriginal ones.

This Unit has dealt with the political formations in the peninsular India during the 9th-13th centuries. In the Konkan region Kadambas re-emerged and particularly on account of their advantageous rich coastal region Kadambas of Goa held prominent position in the northern Karnataka region. The Cholas re-emerged on the scene as the most powerful polity in the Tamil macro-region with the nucleus of their activities in the Kaveri delta. The decline of the Western Chalukyas, the Pandayas and the

Pallavas paved the way for the rise of the Chalukyas of Badami in the northern Karnataka, while Hoyasalas overran the entire Chera country. The political history of the period was marked by warfare and territorial expansion. Simultaneously, it also led to migration of people resulting in agrarian expansion. State as well as the local officials paid special attention towards irrigation and constructed a number of tanks and wells. In the territories of the Kadambas, Cholas and Hoyasalas flourished brisk trading activities; particularly the western coastal region was flooded with foreign merchants. There existed close interaction between the state and the traders. A number of traders in the Hoyasala country occupied administrative offices. Traders were also involved in digging up tanks and wells for the welfare of the inhabitants.

2.5 KEY WORDS

- Rajputra** : literally, a son of the king, but with the development of feudalism the term began to be used for a class of feudal chiefs holding estates.
- Panchkula** : a committee of five members governing towns and villages.
- Ranaka** : a title of feudatory chief in Northern India.
- Thakkura** : another title of feudatory chief in Northern India.
- Mahajana** : a local governing body at village level consisting of its leading members.
- Overlord** : the uppermost feudatory chief in feudal hierarchy who commanded and controlled the lesser ranks of feudatory chiefs.

2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-section 2.2.1
- 2) See Sub-section 2.2.2
- 3) See Sub-section 2.2.3
- 4) See Sub-section 2.2.5

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 2.3.2
- 2) See Sub-section 2.3.4

UNIT 3 : LEGITIMIZATION OF KINGSHIP: *BRAHMANAS AND TEMPLES*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Concept of Legitimization of Kingships
- 3.3 Role of *Brahmanas*
- 3.4 Growth and Importance of Temples
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Key Words
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- understand the importance of Concept of Legitimization of Kingships,
- know about the role of *Brahmanas* in the society and state affairs, and
- explain the growing importance of the temples during early medieval period.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The origin and growth of legitimacy refers to ‘a situation in which the rulers and the ruled shared the conviction that rule of the government is right. Legitimacy means the justified existence of concentrated political power wielded by a portion of a community. A new state generally justified its new institutions; hierarchy and power, by introducing new cultural ideas and maintaining traditional ‘belief system’. Historians have identified a few steps in the process of legitimation of power of the kingdom emerging from tribal phase. First step was the construction of a fabricated genealogical link of the ruling (tribe) family. Redistribution of concentrated surplus through the construction of public works and building of religious institution was another step. Third step was ‘adoption of Indo-Aryan (non-tribal) culture’ including language and literature. This adoption and cultivation of new culture went alongside the maintenance of the primordality, resulting in synthesis of adopted and ‘primordial culture’. ‘Synthesis of culture’ that resulted from kingdom formation process eventually resulted into the evolution of ‘new cultural phenomena’ in northeast India.

3.2 CONCEPT OF LEGITIMIZATION OF KINGSHIPS

Construction of a fabricated divine kingship was an essential pre-requisite of early medieval Indian kingdoms and empires. Prior to the formation of the kingdoms, traditional structure of tribal society were based on clan villages maintained through lineage and kinship. With the territorial extension and growth of complexity, the chief and his allies came forward to assume the responsibility of management of the emerging kingdom. Thus the tribal chief was declared as 'King' by the Brahmins who performed the rituals of coronation. The position of the king with regard to both the control of his central area and his relations with his samantas called for a specific emphasis on the legitimacy of kingship to enhance his personal power. This was done by means of highlighting his divine mission and his ritual sovereignty. The Brahmins were instrumental in providing the necessary ideology for this purpose. Many documents recording land grants to Brahmins show this very clearly. In the Gupta empire such land grants had often been made in distant, uncultivated areas where the Brahmins were obviously meant to act as missionaries of Hindu culture. But from the tenth century onwards land grants followed a rather different pattern. Kings adopted the practice of granting land, or rather the revenue of whole villages, to Brahmins sometimes even in the territories of their samantas. Such a grant was really at the expense of the samanta rather than the king who gained a loyal follower, because the Brahmin would look upon his loyal patron as his true benefactor. The samantas could not object to such grants as they were sanctified by tradition. There was another important change in the policy of granting land to Brahmins. Whereas previously single families or, at the most, small groups had received such grants, the records of the tenth and eleventh centuries suddenly mention large numbers of Brahmin of the Gahadavala dynasty, for instance, granted one and a half revenue districts with more than a hundred villages to 500 Brahmins in 1093 and 1100 CE. The area concerned was in the immediate vicinity of Varanasi (Benares) which was the second capital of the Gahadavalas. The king was obviously keen to strengthen his hold on this newly conquered region and did not mind the substantial loss of revenue which he incurred in this way. The following methods are adopted for the legitimized kingship:

a) Role of the Brahmins

It was a common phenomenon in tribal polities of northeast Indian that the Brahmins projected and popularized the ruling tribe as ruling caste or as Kshatriya to legitimize their rule. The king also brought Brahmins from different places of India and settled them in the kingdom with land and honour and adopted culture of the Hinduism to legitimize his kingship. The Brahmins conferred him a kingship of an extraordinary origin. There was a super-structured construction of divine link of the founder king of the kingdom and it was a by-product of state patronage to the Brahmins. Thorough propagation of the religious myths, the authority of kings received natural acceptance from the ruled or the common people by the end of the sixteenth century.

b) Coronation of the Kings

Coronation of the king in Hindu style was a means of legitimation of kingship. At the time of coronation, the king and his successors were compared with the popular deities like Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Indra, Aditi, Vayu, Varuna, Kuvera and Ganesh. The Brahmins had also upgraded the status of the kings and mentioned them in some inscriptions at par with the epic heroes of ancient India like – Arjuna, Dadhichi, Karna and Kandarpa. Composition of inscribed verses of extra-ordinary origin in Sanskrit and performance of coronation ceremony of the kings by the Brahmins helped in reimagining of tribal control. On the contrary, the king established his control over the tribe. Adoption of Hindu titles also had elevated the social status of the chiefs to that of Kshatriya king, i.e. legitimate ruler.

c) Distribution of Concentrated Surplus

Another step in legitimation process of pre-colonial kingdoms of eastern and north-eastern India was the distribution of concentrated surplus through the universal construction of beneficial construction projects and diffusion of new cultural ideologies. They adopted a policy of constructing roads and public tanks for the benefit of the people. The Public road of the region constructed by the rulers, i.e. facilitated the easy movement of the commercial transport which contributed to the growth of trade and commerce. The kings concentrated on construction for tanks for public utility. Construction of these roads and tanks are considered to be a sort of distribution of the surplus accumulated by the kings to popularize their rule among the people.

d) Samantisation of the Regional Kingdoms

The construction of these temples coincide with the increasing samantisation of the regional kingdoms of India. The temples were obviously supposed to be a counterweight to the divisive forces prevailing in those kingdoms. In order to fulfil this function they were endowed with great grants of land often located near the capital but also sometimes in distant provinces and even in the territories of the samantas. For the performance of the royal ritual hundreds of Brahmins and temple servants were attached to these temples. The very detailed inscriptions of donors at the great temple of Tanjavur tell us exactly from which villages the 137 guards of the temple came. The inscriptions contain instructions to the respective villages to supply the guards coming from those villages with rice. Samantarajas and royal officers were obliged to perform special services in the temple. The personal priest of the king, the Rajguru, was also the head priest of the royal temple and the manager of its enormous property.

e) Upholding the Democratic Values

The kings also paid attention to the diffusion of Indo-Aryan (non-tribal) culture, which they adopted voluntarily. They found the neo - vaishnavism and *Brahmanical*

Hinduism as the dominant religious form having deep and great impact and influence on the ordinary people of the region. The democratic values and simplicity advocated by religious leaders of that time had united the different communities of the kingdom in the name of a particular sect of religion. The discourse of the saints and their disciples also touched the hearts of the heterogeneous communities through their religious teachings and transformed the neo - Vaishnavism into a popular cult of the region. In return the *brahmanas*, priests and servants of the temples were provided the grant of lands with the attachment of the temples. Lucrative grants had allured the Brahmins to settle in the region.

f) Adoption of Indo-Aryan Languages

Adoption and diffusion of new ideology for political legitimacy of the different kingdoms. They adopted Indo-Aryan languages like Sanskrit and Bengali in their courts. Hinduism a general and Vaishnavism as patronized by the state in particular was significantly linked with the language and literatures. Most of the kings were well-versed in Sanskrit, including Vedas, Sanskrit grammar, Puranas and smritis. The knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature was considered a prerequisite for entering into the services of the royal courts in the mid-sixteenth century CE.

g) Realignment of Society

The kings of early medieval India followed the principle of internal or 'vertical' process of legitimation. In the Hindu tribal frontier area: legitimacy of political power had a twofold aspect- internal (or vertical) and external (or horizontal). The impact of the new kingship, which led to social change and class-oriented stratification in a previously egalitarian society, the appropriation of the surplus by the king and his retinue and kings divine affiliation, ascribed to him by foreign *Brahmanical* norms rather than by tribal consensus, required special means of legitimation to win and maintain the loyalty and compliance of social groups within the territory. Remote Hindu court depended upon the loyalty of surrounding tribes for their survival. At the Hindu tribal frontier, which often crisscrossed the territory of the great Hindu kingdoms, political power was based largely on the establishment of an internal of vertical legitimation vis-à-vis the tribes.

h) Role of Tribal Deities

Tribal deities had always played an important role in the process of legitimation of kingships. Patronage to a specific tribal deity for the purpose of royal legitimation was a common phenomenon in northern India throughout the medieval period. Whether the Hinduized Chiefs of Hindu king had ascended from the local tribes or whether they had entered the respective areas as roaming freebooters, most of them accepted the dominant deities for their territories as family and tutelary deities of their principalities. Ritual space and legitimation of the new power was linked to the extension of political power. The kings or the rajas accepted them as the new *istadevatas*. They donated land for the maintenance of their priests and rituals and in

all cases they either built, or considerably enlarged, temples for the new tutelary deities. In contrast to the tribal god, the non-tribal was no less than their counterpart, the tribal.

i) Construction of Royal Hindu Temples

In order to keep the loyalty of the non-tribal populace the kings constructed many Hindu temples in their territories. It only served, “as symbol of a new Hindu kingship, was still the main source of external or horizontal legitimation rather than of any great significance for the political status of the rajas within the society”. They build many mostly Hindu temples, in different parts of their kingdom and made extensive donation of villages and land grants for regular and elaborate performance of these temples. The rise of the great royal temples symbolized the power and religious identity of the respective realm. From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries such large temples were built in various regional kingdoms of India. They were often three to four times bigger than earlier temples. Some important examples are the Kandariya Mahadeva temple at Khajuraho (around 1002), the Rajarajeshvara Temple at Thanjavur (Tanjore) (around 1012) and the Udayeshvara Temple at Udaipur, the capital of the North Indian kingdom of the Paramaras (c. 105-80). Orissa can boast of the particularly impressive sequence of such temples: the Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar (around 1060), the Jagannath temple of Puri (c.1135) and the great Sun temple (c. 1250). So far these temples have mainly attracted the attention of the historians of art and architecture and they have not been placed into the context of political history.

j) King and Royal Ritual

The economic and political functions of the temple were realized in the role of the king in the royal ritual. The Linga, the phallic symbol of Shiva, in the sanctum of the temple was often named after the king who had donated it, *e.g.* the Udayeshvara-Linga or the Rajarajeshvara- Linga in the temples established by Udayaditya and Rajaraja in their respective capitals. Paintings in the temple and sculptures outside it showed the king depicted like a god and the gods in turn were decorated with royal attributes. In order to gain additional legitimation some kings even solemnly transferred their realm to the royal god and ruled it as the god’s representative or son (Putra). In this way they could use the royal temple and its staff as instruments of government and could threaten disobedient samantas with the wrath of the royal god if they did not obey the king’s order. The settlement of Brahmins and the establishment of royal temples served the purpose of creating a new network of ritual, political and economic relations. This network was centred on the king and was thus an antidote to the centrifugal tendencies of the Samantachakra.

k) Matrimonial Alliances

In order to consolidate their supremacy over a vast geographical area the kings followed the policy of matrimonial alliances with different feudatories marriage was

an institution explicitly used to build political alliance and open avenues of economic exchange between 'house' families as politico-economic units. For the ruling elite of medieval Indian courts, of putative Kshatriya lineage, selections and marriage was the most important method of sealing political alliance between kings. Wars between rival kings were often concluded with the defeated house offering women in marriage to the visitors.

3.3 ROLE OF BRAHMANAS

The Indian social organization during five hundred years under discussion (8th-13th centuries) was extremely vibrant and responsive to changes taking place in the realms of economy, polity and ideas. There is an extremely wide ranging source material, both literary and epigraphic, for the reconstruction of social organization during half a millennium (circa eight to the thirteenth centuries). Practically all major powers of India are known to us through copious inscriptional data. These inscriptions are available in a variety of languages and scripts. These records help us in identifying regional and local peculiarities of the sub-continental scene. The literary sources are also very varied. It is not merely the writings on *dhannashastras* in the form of commentaries and other '*dharma-nibandhas*' which tell us about the ups and downs in the social system. Even work belonging to the realms of *kavyas* (poetic works), *dharma*, technical and scientific works as well as treatises and architecture throw enormous light on the post-Gupta developments in the sphere of society. Kahana's *Rajatarangini*, *Naistwdhiyacbarita* of Shriharsha, *Prabandha Chintamani* of Merutunga, Soddhala's *Udaya-Sundari-Katha*, *Adipurana* of Jinasena, the *dohas* of the Siddhas, Medhatithi's and Vigymeshwar's commentaries on the *Manusmriti* and *Yajnavalkyasmriti* respectively, and works such as *Manasollasa*, *Mayamata* and *Aparajitapriccha* are useful aids for reconstructing the social fabric of India during the period under discussion.

a) Growing Rigidity for Brahmins

During the 6th centuries Buddhism and Jainism raised doubts about the rationale of castes based on birth. His anger was particularly related to the *brahmanas*. Though these voices could not achieve significant breakthrough in the long run, they did not cease either. Simmering discontent against the *brahmanical* social order raised its head at regular intervals. In Dhanuapariksha (eleventh century) Jaina Amitagati determined caste on the basis of personal conduct. The caste superiority of the *brahmanas* was challenged by the Jainas in such works as the *Khthakushprakarana*. A satirical work called *Latakamelaka* mentions a Buddhist monk who denies importance of caste, regards it as baseless and denounces pollution and caste - based segregation. Kshemendra, the literary genius of Kashmir refers to *Kula-Jati-darpa* (vanity of caste and clan) as a disease of the society for which he himself was a physician. The *padmapurana* reveals a conflict of two ideologies- the orthodox one enjoining the *shudras*, a life of penury and the heterodox one urging upon his the importance of wealth. An eleventh century work focuses on social ranks and divisions based not on

birth but on occupations. While the priests of different religions are called hypocrites, the second broad social classification of householders takes note of the following six-categories : (i) the highest included chakravartins, (ii) the high ones comprised the feudal elite, (iii) the middle ones included traders, moneylenders, possessors of cows, buffaloes, camels, horses etc. (iv) small businessmen and petty cultivators, (v) the degraded ones such as the members of the guilds of artisans and craftsmen and (vi) the highly degraded included chandalas and others following ignoble occupations such as killing of birds and animals.

b) Changing Social Order

The above conflicting trend shows that the social organization was in a flux and far from being harmonious. One single factor which seems to have set the tone of the post-Gupta society, especially from the eighth-century, was the every growing phenomenon of land grants which changed the entire social outlook. This was coupled with : i) a fillip to tendencies of localization, ii) its bearing on fluctuations in the urban setting, iii) its nexus with the monetary system, iv) its role in increasing social and economic immobility and subjection of peasantry, v) non-agricultural toiling workers, and the resultant hierarchy of ruling landed aristocracy. A new social ethos was in the making and that was the feudal formation. In the realm of political organization, a great majority of power centres were marked by feudal tendencies based on graded land rights. The resultant social changes demolish the myth of an unchanging and static social organization of India which was propagated by colonialist and imperialist historians.

The post-eighth century social organization which seems to have prevailed till at least the establishment of the Turkish political power in the thirteenth century, was marked by : (i) newly founded *brahmanical* order in Bengal and South India where in the intermediary varnas were absent, (ii) modifications in the varna system such as the transformation of shudras into cultivators thereby, bringing them closer to the vaishyas, (iii) rise of the new literate class struggling for a place in the varna order, and (iv) reduced position of the *brahmans*.

c) Establishments of Brahmin Colonies

Eventually, by the beginning of the seventh century, the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami, and the Pandyas of Madurai emerged as the rulers of the three major states. The Chalukyas were succeeded by the Rashtrakutas in the western Deccan and the Pallavas were succeeded by the Chola in the Kaveri plain. Besides in the Andhra region the eastern Gangas and several minor ruling dynasties come into existence. All the above dynasties patronized *Brahmanas* by extending land grants to them and the Brahmins help them to strengthen their rule in frontier region of their kingdoms. This resulted in spread of *Brahmana* culture. The earlier period is marked by numerous crafts, internal and external trade, widespread use of coins, and a large number of towns. Trade, towns, and coinage seem to have been in a state of

decline in the subsequent period, but in that phase numerous land grants free of taxes were made to the temples and *brahmanas*. The grants suggest that many new areas were brought under cultivation and settlement. This period therefore saw a far greater expansion of agrarian economy as well as spread of Brahminical religion to remote areas.

d) Royal patronization of *Brahminism*

There was the march of triumphant Brahmanism in the peninsula as it records many instances of the performance of Vedic sacrifices by the kings. This phase also marked the beginning of the construction of stone temples for Shiva and Vishnu in Tamil Nadu under the Pallavas, and the Karnataka under the Chalukyas of Badami. Culturally, the Dravidian element seems to have dominated the scene in the first phase, but during the second phase Aryanization and Brahmanisation came to the fore. This happened because of land grants made by the rulers who were either *brahmanas* or firm supporters of them. As managers of temple lands, the *brahmanas* guided cultural and religious activities. They spread Sanskrit, which became the official language.

In northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha (Berar), the Satavahanas were succeeded by the Vakatakas, a local power. The Vakatakas, who were *brahmanas* themselves, are known from a large number of copperplate land grants issued by them. They were great champions of the *brahmanical* religion and performed numerous Vedic sacrifices.

The Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Chalukyas of Badami, and their other contemporaries were great champions of Vedic sacrifices. They performed 'ashvamedha' and 'vajapeya' sacrifices which legitimized their position, enhanced their prestige, and enormously increased the income of the priestly class. The *brahmanas* therefore, emerged as an important class at the expense of the peasantry, from whom they collected their dues directly. They also received as gifts a substantial proportion of the taxes collected by the king from his subjects. Later the Rashtrakuta and the imperial Chola accelerated the process of Brahmanisation of southern India. Besides the performance of Vedic sacrifices, the worship of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, especially of the last two, was becoming popular. From the seventh century onwards, the Alvar saints, who were great devotees of Vishnu popularized the worship of this god. The Nayanars rendered a similar service to the cult of Shiva. From the seventh century onwards, the cult of Bhakti began to dominate the religious life of South Indians, and the Alvars and Nayanars played a great part in propagating it.

e) Emergence of Shudras

The expansion of the rural space and agricultural activities had been responsible for changes in notion about persons entitled to undertake these. The law books of the post Gupta centuries include agriculture in the *samanya-dharm* (common

occupation) of all the varnas. The smriti of Parashar further emphasizes that in addition to their traditional six-fold duties (studying, teaching, sacrificing, officiating as sacrifice to help others acceptance of gifts from a worthy person of three higher varna and making of gifts), the *brahmanas* could also be associated with agricultural activities, preferably through labour of shudras. It was also enjoined upon *brahmanas* that in order to avoid any kind of sin, they should provide proper treatment to oxen and offer certain fixed quantities of corn to king, gods and fellow *brahmanas*.

Such formalities indicate that very significant development was being made in the *brahmanical* social order and the varna norms were being sought to be redefined. A major indicator of this effort was the bridging of the gap between the vaishyas and the shudras. While this trend makes its beginnings, in the early centuries of the Christian era, it is significant that in the post-gupta centuries the vaishyas practically lose their identity as a peasant caste. The famous Chinese traveler of the early seventh century, Hsuan-Tsang, mentions shudras as agriculturists, Al-biruni, who came to India along with Mahmud Ghaznavi in the first quarter of the eleventh century, also notes the absence of any difference between the vaishyas and shudras.

The Skanda Purana talks about the pitiable conditions of the vaishyas. By the eleventh century they came to be treated with the shudras, both ritually and legally. Al-beruni, for example, says that both vaishyas and shudras were punished with amputation of the tongue for reciting the vedic texts. There were certain shudras who were called *bhojyanna*, i.e. food prepared by whom could be taken even by *brahmanas*. Many tantric and siddha teachers were shudras performing works of fishermen, leather workers, washermen, blacksmiths, etc. A text of the eighth century states that thousands, of mixed castes were produced as a result of marriages between vaishya women and men of lower castes. There is also a mention of 'anashrita shudras' (shudras who were not dependent) who were well-to-do and sometimes became members of the local administrative committees and even made their way into the ruling aristocracy.

f) Absence of Intermediary Varnas

The emergence of a social order typified by an absence of intermediary *varnas* in Bengal and South India. The new *brahmanical* order in these areas provided mainly for *brahmanas* and shudras. This may have been partly due to the influence of non-*brahmanical* religions in these regions. However, the nature of the progress of Brahmanism also contributed to this development. Tribal and non-*brahmanical* population in the peripheral regions were admitted to the *brahmanical* system as shudras. In south India, a Shaiva *brahmana* teacher called basava preached religious equality of men and women. The tendency to eliminate intermediary varnas also noticeable in the status of scribes. The kayasthas, karanas, lekhakas and lipikaras are classed as shudras. Same was true of gavundas (modern day Gowdas in Karnataka) in medieval Deccan.

g) Rise of a New Literate Class

A class of writers and record keepers was mentioned in pre-Gupta inscriptions from Bengal, who were involved in record keeping activities. A part from kayasthas, these classes included karnas, karanikas, pustapala, lekhaka, aksharachanchu, dharmalekhin, aksyapatalika, etc. Though these classes were being recruited from different varanas, later they got crystallized into distinct castes. From the ninth century we hear of a large number of kayastha families such as valabha, ganda, mathur, katana, shrivastavya, Negam etc. individual kayasthas began to play leading role in learning and literature. Tathagatarakshita of Odisha who belonged to a family of physicians by profession and kayastha by caste, was a reputed professor of tantras in the Vikramashila University (in Bihar) in the twelfth century.

h) Reduced positions of *Brahmanas*

There was phenomenal increase of the new mixed castes because no varna seemed to have remained homogeneous and got fragmented on account of territorial affiliations, purity of *gotras* and pursuance of specific crafts, professions and vocations. The multiplication of castes as a phenomenon appears to be most pronounced among *brahmanas*. As already mentioned, they were no longer confined to their traditional six-fold duties. Apart from occupying high governmental positions such as those of ministers, purohitas, judges, etc. They had also started performing military functions. For example, the senapati of Prithviraj Chauhan was a *brahmana* named Skanda and another *brahmanas* named Rak was leading the army of a ruler of Sapadalaksha (in Rajasthan) The eleventh century Kashmiri writer Kshemendra mentions *brahmanas* performing functions of artisans, dancers; horse dealers and betel sellers and indulging in the sale of wine, butter milk, salt, etc. Mitakshara, the famous commentary on the Smriti of Yangyavalkya speaks of the ten-fold gradation of *brahmanas* ranging between Deva (who is a professor and devoted to religion and shastras) and chandal, who does not perform sandhya three times a day. In between were the shudras- *brahmanas* who lived by profession of arms and temple priests.

Division within the *brahmana* varna were also caused by territorial affiliations. In north india we heard sarasvat, kanyakubja, Maithi, Ganda and Utkal *Brahmanas*. The Gujarat and Rajasthan they were identified in terms of their 'mula' (original place of habitation) and divided into modha, udichya, Nagra, etc. By the late medieval times, the *brahmanas* were split into about 180 mulas. There were also the feelings of superiority. While there was a phenomenal migration of *brahmanas*, certain regions were considered to be papadeshas' (inauspicious regions). These included Saurashtra, Sidh and Dakshmapath.

3.4 GROWTH AND IMPORTANCE OF TEMPLES

The centuries between the seventh and the thirteenth gloriously stands for the making of cultural traditions in India. The most notable feature of the traditions is

regionalism. Which gets reflected in every sphere like: the formation of political power or the development of arts or the transformations in languages and literature or even religious manifestations. The emergence of regional cultural units such as Andhra, Assam, Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharastra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, etc. was the outcome of significant material changes.

The '*Mudrakshasa*', a play written in Sanskrit by Vishakhadatta, speaks of different regions whose inhabitants differ in customs, clothing and language. The identity of some kind of sub-national groups is recognized by the Chinese Pilgrim Huien Tsang who visited India in the first half of the seventh century. The '*Kuvalayamala*', a Jain text of the eighth century and largely concerned with Western India, notes the existence of 18 major nationalities and describes the anthropological character of sixteen peoples, pointing out their psychological feature and citing the examples of their language. The '*Brabmavaivarta Purana*', ascribed to the thirteenth century Bengal explicates '*deshabheda*'- differences based on regions / territories. Indian temples have symbolized the very ethos of life-style of people through the millennia. The panorama of Indian temple architecture may be seen across at extremely wide chronological and geographical horizon. From the simple beginnings at Sanchi in the fifth century of the Christian era to the great edifices at Kanchi, Jhanjavur and Madurai is a story of more than a millennium. The prominent '*Shipashastras*' that deal with the subject of temple architecture are: Mayamata, Manasam, Shilparatna, Kamikagama, kashyapasbipa and Ishanagurudevapaddhati.

a) Growth of Temple Cites

The Pallava kings constructed a number of stone temples in the seventh and eighth centuries for housing these gods. The most famous of them are the seven ratha temples at Mahabalipuram, at a distance of 65 km from Chennai. These were built in the seventh century by Narasimkhavarman, who founded the port city of Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram. This city is also famous for the Shore temple, which was a structural construction erected independently and not hewn out of rock. In addition, the Pallavas constructed several such structural samples at their capital Kanchi. A very good example was the Kailashnath temple built in the eighth century. The Chalukyas of Badami erected numerous temples at Aihole, which has as many as seventy, from about 610 CE. The work was continued in the adjacent towns of badami and Pattadakal. Pattadakal has ten temples built in the seventh and eighth centuries, the most celebrated of which are the Papanatha temple (c. 680 CE) and the Virupaksha temple (c. 740 CE). The first of these, although 30m long, has a low and stunted tower in the northern style; the second was constructed in purely southern style. The latter is about 40m in length and as a very high square and storeyed tower (Shikhara). The temple walls are adorned with beautiful pieces of sculpture, representing scenes from the Ramayana. During the Chola rule Dravidian temple reached its zenith. After the eighth century, land grants to temples became a common practice in South India, and usually they were recorded on the walls of the temples. Most temples were managed by the *brahmanas*, by early medieval times, such

temples came to own three-fifths of the arable land, and became centres of religious rituals and caste-based ideology in south india. However the earlier temples seem to have been constructed and maintained out of the taxes directly collected by the king from the common people. Some temples in Karnataka under the Chalukyas were erected by Jaina traders. The common people worshipped their village gods by offering them paddy and toddy, but those who could afford it might have made rich offerings to acquire status and satisfy the religious cravings.

b) Major Styles of Indian Temples

The ancient texts on Indian temple architecture broadly classify them into three orders. The terms Nagara, Dravida and Vesard indicate a tendency to highlight typological features of temples and their geographical distribution. These terms describe respectively temples that primarily employ square, octagonal and apsidal ground plan which also regulate the vertical profile of the structure. Nagara and Dravida temples are generally identified with the northern and southern temple styles respectively. All of northern India, from the foothills of the Himalayas to the central Plateau of the Deccan is furnished with temples in the northern style.

There are, of course, certain regional variations in the great expanse of this area. A work entitled 'Aparajitapriccha' confines the Nagari (Nagara) style to the Madhyadesha (roughly the Ganga-Yamuna plains) and further mentions Lati and Vairati (Gujarat and Rajasthan respectively) as separate styles. The local manuscripts of Orissa recognize for main types of Orisa style temples, viz., the Rehka, Bhadra, Kharkhara and Gaudiya. The Dravida or Southern style, comparatively speaking, followed a more consistent development track and was confined to the most southernly, portions of the sub-continent, specially between the Vindhya and the river Krishna. At certain periods there occurred striking overlapping of major styles as influences from different regions confronted each other, e.g. the temples of the early Chalukyas whose kingdom was strategically positioned in the middle of the peninsula in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Kandariya Mahadeva temple in Khajuraho is another striking example where the various architectural elements combined into an integrated whole. Similarly, the Kerala temples display variety in their plan types.

c) Presiding Deities

Temples were dedicated not only to the two great gods of the *Brahmanical* religion. Such as; Shiva and Vishnu but to the Great Mother Goddess as well. The 'devas' and 'asuras' and countless folk deities such as 'yakshas', 'yakshis', 'apsaras' and 'kinnaras' represent a world of their own. Even the animal or bird 'vehicles' (*vahanas*) of these divinities become eloquent carriers of meaningful symbolism. Thus, 'Nandi', the agricultural bull of Shiva and 'Tiger', the mount of Durga embodies her fierce strength and aggressiveness. The river goddesses, Ganga and Yamma are identified by their *vahanas*, like crocodile and tortoise respectively.

Lakshmi's association with elephants, lotus flowers and water not only symbolise her popularity as the goddess of fortune but more importantly as a divinity conveying the magical power of agricultural fertility. Swan carrying saraswati typified not only her grace and elegance but the tremendous intellectual discerning capacity which is an internal element of this goddess of learning. Thus, the 'Shantamurtis' (peaceful, calm and serene deities) are to be installed in Nagara; couples of moving deities in vesara shrines; and heroic dancing or enjoying deities in the Dravida structures.

Check Your Progress

1) How king was the central figure in the medieval polity.

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2) Discuss the role of Brahmanas during early medieval period.

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3) Write a note on the importance of temples during the early medieval India.

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

Political processes and the idea of kingship have always been central to the understanding of the culture and history of early medieval India. Several scholars viz, Prof. Hermann Kulke Prof. Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, Dr Yaaminey Mubayi, and Meenakshi Vashisth have contributed significantly to this field of study through their works on state formation. Historians are unanimous on the fact that this phase in Indian history had a distinct identity and as such differed from the preceding early historical and succeeding medieval. This in turn brings home the presence of the

elements of change and continuity in Indian history. It is identified as a phase in the transition to the medieval. Perception of a unilinear and uniform pattern of historical development is challenged. Changes are identified not merely in dynastic upheavals but are also located in socio-economic, political and cultural conditions.

3.6 KEY WORDS

Caste-peasant base : Referring to early settled agricultural society whose members were socially classified along caste lines.

Commensality : Eating and interacting together as a group for mutual benefit.

Samanta : A feudatory chief

3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress

- 1) See Section 3.2
- 2) See Section 3.3
- 3) See Section 3.4

UNIT 4 : ARAB CONQUEST OF SINDH: CAUSES AND IMPACT

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The Rise and Spread of Islam in 7th 8th Centuries
- 4.3 The *Chach Nama*
- 4.4 The Conquest of Sindh
- 4.5 Arab Administration
- 4.6 Arab Conquest of Sindh: A Triumph without Results?
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Key Words
- 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will know:

- the background for understanding the foreign invasions from Arabia in early medieval period,
- the sources on the Arab conquest of Sindh,
- the reasons for the capture of Sindh by the Arabs,
- the phases of conquest of Sindh; the colonial understanding of Sindh conquest, and
- cultural comingling between the Arab and Indian cultures.

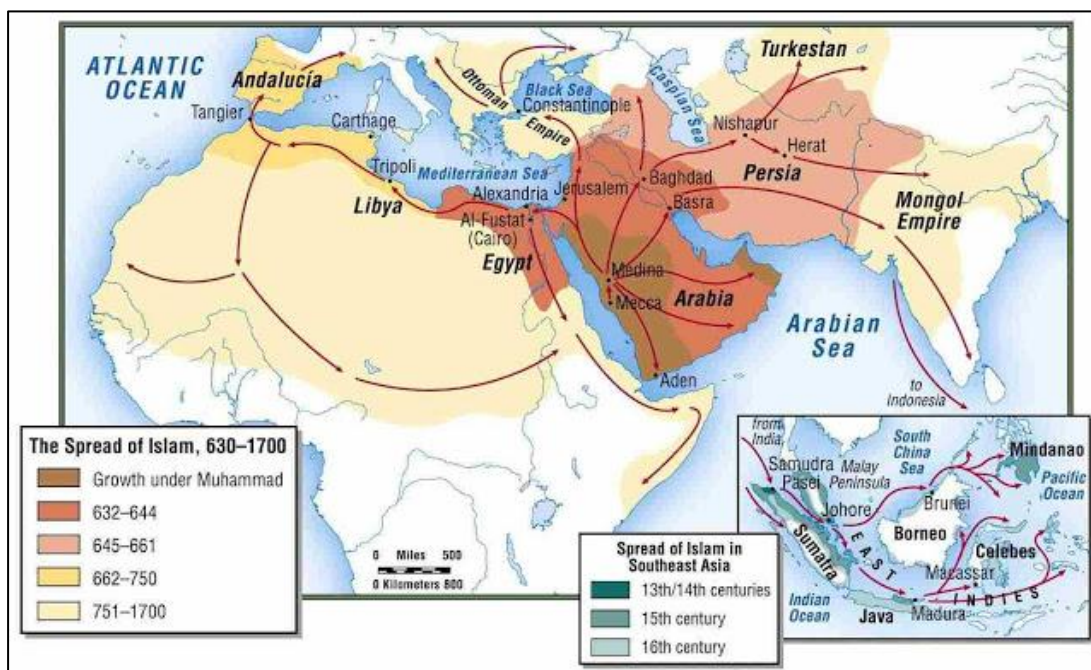
4.1 INTRODUCTION

The rise of Islam in west Asia and the Muslim conquests around the world is atypical of the early medieval period. In this unit, we will study one such inter-related development in the Indian subcontinent. This is the Arab conquest of Sindh in the north-western region of the subcontinent.

4.2 THE RISE AND SPREAD OF ISLAM IN 7TH-8TH CENTURIES

The religion of Islam was founded in the 7th century by Muhammad: an Arabian merchant from Mecca. At this time, the region of Arabia was inhabited by several warring Bedouin tribes following pagan faiths, worshipping many deities. They constantly fought with each other over economic or religious issues. However,

Muhammad unified these Arabian tribes with his monotheistic teachings. Perhaps this was the biggest contribution of Muhammad in Arabia. Along with bringing this unity, his new faith had greatly influenced the political and economic policies of the future Muslim states as well. After his death, the rapid expansion of the Muslim polity in and outside the Arabian Peninsula happened under the Rashudin and Umayyad Caliphates. The expanded empire stretched from Central Asia across the Middle East and North Africa to the Atlantic. Some scholars opine that the political formation of a state in the Arabian peninsula and religious unity and mobilization were the most significant reasons for the establishment of the largest empire in the pre-modern period. This empire formed by the Islamic caliphate was around 13 million square kilometers. With Islam as their religion and the new empire as their booty, the Arabs lived amongst a vast array of people belonging to different race, among which they formed a ruling minority of conquerors. However, the gradual end of wars and the development of economic life produced a new governing class of administrators and traders, heterogeneous in race, language and ethnicity. This is how the Muslim population kept spreading in and around the Arabian Peninsula. The conquest of Sindh in the Indian subcontinent was an extension of this endeavor by the Muslim world.



Map Show the Spread of Islam (<https://images.app.goo.gl/iZjHoAxZCz9Qsg7E7>)

4.3 THE CHACH NAMA

As far as the historical sources on the Arab conquest on Sindh are concerned, there is a miserable dearth. Even the Arab sources only give brief, scant details or passing reference to this episode while discussing the rise and expansion of early Islam. The conquest is compressed into a few pages of the Futuh al Buldan of Al-Baladhuri. Al-Madaini gives plentiful information on the Arab conquest of Transoxiana, but Sindh finds little mention in his account. However, this dearth of the Arab sources on the

theme is largely compensated for by the *Chach Nama*, a Persian text written by Ali Kufi in 1226 CE. It is a reliable historical work that claims to be the translation of a lost Arab account dealing with the history of this conquest; it is only to the ChachNama that one can give the credit of providing detailed information on the Arab invasion of Sindh.

The ChachNama details on the history of Sindh from 680-718 CE. Etymologically, the term ChachNama means the story of Chach. He was the Hindu Brahmin ruler of Sindh. This book was a Persian prose work written in the city of Uchch, which was the political capital of Sindh in those times. Presently, it can be located around 70 kilometers north of the port city of Karachi in Pakistan.

As an important historical source of Muslim India, the ChachNama has not received its due share of attention. Its partial translation in English was done by Elliot and Dowson, and a full translation from Persian to English was done in 1900 by Mirza Kalich Beg, the first Sindhi novelist. The first and only edition of the Persian text appeared in 1939.

The ChachNama has not been given adequate importance since most historians, like the colonial and the nationalist historians, have seen it only as a narrative on the advent of early Islam to the Indian subcontinent. However, Ali Kufi's claim of the ChachNama being a translation of an 8th century work in Arabic shows that it can be a repository of other types of information apart from that on the advent of Islam. In fact, the text indeed gives more information. Scholars like Yohanan Friedmann, Manan Ahmed Asif etc., who have read and analyzed it, contend that it has a wide variety of information, and no systematic attempt has been made to classify and analyse all the available data. After its detailed examination, they certified the fact that it has relevant information on the history of Sindh, its government and politics. Therefore, the scholars who have read this text realize the dire need to read and understand this medieval source in entirety, and refrain from seeing it only as a text on the advent of early Islam and its capture of Sindh.

Narrative of ChachNama

As mentioned before, historians like Friedmann and Ahmed Asif have rejected the view of seeing it only as a history of conquest of Sindh. Their detailed study throws light on other aspects as well. Friedmann opines that the text may be divided into four parts starting from the varied details on the praise of Prophet Muhammad, the Arab warriors and the Arab manuscript describing Muhammad Bin Qasim's military exploits in Sindh. Further, it describes the Arab invasion of Sindh.

Starting from king Chach, it gives the intricate details on his successors. It enumerates the journey of a Brahmin named Chach bin Silaj from being the chief minister of the king of Sindh to his own rise to power with the queen's help after the king's death. As a king, Chach established a successful state of Sindh by capturing forts, signing agreements and winning over both the Buddhist and Hindu subjects. It was a mixture of his offensive, defensive and tolerant policies that enabled him to

rule over Sindh for a long time. However, his success as a good ruler was undone by the war of succession between his two sons Dahar and Daharsia. As the text shows, Dahar came to power, and it was he who welcomed the Arab rebels, pirates and warlords to Sindh. This had raised the ire of the Muslim state of Iraq in the 8th century.

According to Ahmed Asif, this text is divided into three portions. The first one discusses three intertwined themes of the need of legitimacy for the king, the good counsel of the advisor and the requirement for creating a justly governed polity. The second describes the history from the Caliphs to Walid. It talks about the time of Caliph Umar (c. 634-644 CE) when the Muslim campaigns were led to Sindh and Hind. It gives intricate details on the governors dispatched to regions such as Makran, Zabulistan and Qandahar, as also the rebellious Muslim groups running away to the frontiers. The revolting troops conspiring against the state in Damascus have also been discussed. It is mentioned here that in order to fight such groups and assert political control over the region, the governor of Iraq had sent the young commander named Muhammad Bin Qasim to Sindh in 711 CE. This is when the regions of Makran, Dabol or Daybul, Nerun were attacked and taken over. The forces of Raja Dahar were defeated in a battle fought at the banks of river Indus. After defeating the king of Sindh, Qasim also occupied the regions of Aror, Brahmanabad and Multan. This is how Dahar was avenged for supporting the Arab rebels and pirates against Iraq.

The end narrative discusses the downfall of Qasim at length. As it shows, Qasim was killed at the orders of the caliph at Baghdad after being accused of sexual violence by the daughters of Dahar. The last portion of the text revolves around the themes of good governance, good advisory and the political theory needed for the creation of a successful polity. This part is a discussion of the military campaigns of both Chach and Qasim. According to Ahmed Asif, the text contains speeches on policy and taxation, private conversations between commanders and their prophecies and dreams. It also discusses the statements of significant men on political theory and governance.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Who was Ali Kufi and why is he important to the study of Indian history?

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2) What is the *ChachNama*?

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4.4 THE CONQUEST OF SINDH

The region of Sindh is located on the south eastern-zone of present-day Pakistan. This area on the western coast of the Indian subcontinent has a long history. Since ancient times, it has been a hotbed of trade and commerce. The Arab merchants had active trade relations with their Indian and south-east Asian counterparts. They were known to the sea routes to the western coast of India. To be precise, these merchants sailed from Siraf and Hormuz on the Persian Gulf to the mouth of the Indus, and thence to Sapera and Cambay, and further to Calicut and other ports on the Malabar coast. They brought back tidings of Indian wealth and luxury goods like gold, diamond, jewelled idols etc. to Arabia. Therefore, as India had been famous for its riches for long, the Arabs wanted to conquer it. After their “Islamization”, they had the proselytizing zeal that made them overrun many regions in Middle East, Europe, Africa and Asia. The penetration of the Arabs in the coastal towns of Sindh in Indian subcontinent had started as early as 636 CE during the reign of caliph Umar, the second successor of the Prophet. The pillaging expeditions such as the one in Thane (near Bombay) in 637 CE continued for a long time. However, such expeditions were only plundering raids and not conquests. A systematic Arab conquest happened only in 712 CE during the reign of the Umayyad caliph al-Walid. It was then that Sindh was incorporated to the Muslim empire. As mentioned before, along with the aspiration to own Indian riches, the reason for the conquest of Sindh was the desire of the Arabs to spread Islam. But, the immediate cause was the Sindhi pirates who had plundered some Arab ships near the coast of Dabol/Daybul or Karachi. Historical evidences show that these ships carried gifts sent by the king of Ceylon for the Caliph of Baghdad, and also al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq. This was sent to establish cordial relations with Hajjaj. However, the ship was plundered by the pirates near the mouth of the river Indus, and the Arabs were detained at the port of Dabol. A demand for restitution was made to Dahar, the king of Sindh, to compensate for the outrage and punish the offenders. But, he refused to do so. He showed his inability to control the pirates as a reason behind his refusal. Nevertheless, he was not trusted, and was rather accused by Baghdad of protecting the pirates. So, Hajjaj took the permission of caliph Walid for attacking Sindh. Thereafter, three military expeditions, one after the other, were led against the king. It was in the third expedition by Muhammad Bin Qasim in Debal that Dahar was defeated and killed. Subsequently, all the neighbouring towns of Nirun, Rewar, Brahmanabad, Alor and Multan were also captured. This is how the state of Sindh was finally conquered by the Arabs in 712 CE.

Muhammad Bin Qasim, the Conqueror, and his Expeditions

He was the 17 years old Umayyad general who had led the conquest of Sindh. This adolescent conqueror followed in the footsteps of Alexander in carrying a new faith

and a new culture into the Indus basin. He has been mentioned in the ChachNama between the years 709-711 CE when Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq, had made him the head of an expedition against Sindh. Qasim was the nephew of Hajjaj, and being an able commander he was appointed by his uncle as the head of the frontier district of Makran. He was given a mission of conquest in the direction of Sindh. Qasim's expedition against Sindh was prepared with utmost care. The backbone of his force consisted of 6,000 men of the gund of Syria, and also various other contingents. Shiraz was the base for planning the eastward campaign. Under Hajjaj's orders, Qasim had stayed there for months concentrating on his troops. From here, he moved eastward with Muhammad ibn Harun (who died during this march), his predecessor in the command of the frontier district. As the Arab sources show, the Indus basin was ruled by a king named Dahar in the 8th century. He was the son and successor of king Chach. The Arab forces wanted to conquer this basin. According to the ChachNama, Chach had a vast empire that extended from Makran, Kashmir, etc. But, that ruled by his son was not as expansive, and it only comprised of the lower Indus region consisting of cities like Brahmanabad, Aror, Debal, etc. Therefore, the huge empire established by Chach could sustain only till his lifetime. After him, it was reduced to a small state under king Dahar, especially after the Arab invasion.

As a general, Qasim reached the delta of the Indus besieging the city of Debal by land; the additional war materials reached him by sea. Debal was a great city on the mouth of river Indus that was ruled by a lieutenant of king Dahar. After this, the forces proceeded upwards in the Indus valley. They reached Nirun (near to present-day Hyderabad in Pakistan), and it surrendered peacefully. After this, many other regions like Sadusan, Sawandri, Basmad, etc. were captured. Finally, Qasim aimed to tackle Dahar himself by crossing the river Indus. On his part, Dahar along with his strong army valiantly fought the invaders for many days. However, he was badly defeated and killed by the Arab forces. Subsequently, the capital of Brahmanabad, and also Alor were captured. Moving further northwards towards the eastern bank of the Indus, Qasim aimed to conquer Multan. The ChachNama mentions that Hajjaj had directed Qasim to capture Multan as the final goal.

As a matter of principle and policy, even after getting a series of victories in Sindh, this conquest by Qasim did not blindly lead to en masse conversion to Islam. Though the Arab conquests in Debal and Multan were followed by massacre, there were examples like Alor, Nirun, Surast, Sawandri, etc. that saw negotiations and settlement between the victor and the vanquished. The principle of tolerance and religious freedom practiced by Qasim in Alor paved the way for the co-existence of conquering Islam with the religion and culture of India. As the ChachNama says, Qasim followed a policy of tolerance towards the defeated population. He allowed religious freedom to both the Brahmanic and Buddhist people. He preserved the privileges of the priests from both religions. It shows Qasim to be upholding the Indian social tradition of privileging the Brahmins. In fact, ChachNama mentions that he used to call the Brahmins as "good and faithful people", and after the siege of Brahmanabad they were reappointed to the same positions as they had held under the

Hindu dynasty. Furthermore, these positions were also made hereditary by him. The common people were also left free to worship as per their wish, provided they paid the Arabs the same taxes as they had paid to Raja Dahar. In short, he did not meddle with the social systems of Sindh, and agreed to maintain peace in many regions. Such a policy was followed by Qasim under the instructions of Hajjaj who believed in granting religious freedom to people. Therefore, as the ChachNama states, Qasim had left Brahmanabad in an orderly and peaceful condition to proceed northward towards Alor. Such a policy of elasticity and tolerance was peculiar to Islam during its initial period of conquest, and its followers practiced it.

Death of Muhammad Bin Qasim

The end of this valiant general was tragic. There are different narratives regarding his end journey. The ChachNama attributes his demise to the two virgin daughters of king Dahar named Suryadevi and Palmaldevi who were sent to the caliph Walid as prisoners of war after the death of their father. As a revenge of their father's death, they had accused Qasim of having violated them. This incurred the wrath of the Caliph who had ordered to kill him instantaneously. He ordered that wherever he might be, Qasim was to get himself sown in cow's skin, and be sent to the Caliph. After his death, when his body was shown to the two daughters they revealed the truth of avenging Qasim for killing their father and destroying their family. Subsequently, even they were punished with death by the Caliph. On the other hand, another text titled Futuh ul Buldan of Baladhuri gives an altogether different reason for the downfall and death of Muhammad Qasim. It says that Qasim was captured and tortured to death by caliph Sulaiman who had bitter enmity with Hajjaj, the uncle of Muhammad Bin Qasim.

Baladhuri contends that his end was related to the contemporary political situation in the Arab empire and was interconnected with the reactions of caliph Sulaiman, who succeeded his brother Walid in 715 CE. As a blind follower of caliph Walid, Hajjaj had supported him against his brother Sulaiman. Walid had toyed with the idea of putting aside Sulaiman's claim to succession by appointing his son instead of him, and Hajjaj had supported this plan of Walid. This is how Sulaiman was deprived of his right to succession, and this had enraged him especially against the powerful governor of Baghdad. The hatred reached its zenith when the Umayyad prince gave asylum to Yazid Bin al-Muhallab who had escaped the persecution by Hajjaj. The rivalry between the Hajjajites and Muhallabites was born like this. It was seen during the entire period of Arab empire under the caliphates of Walid, Sulaiman and Yazid II, and this rivalry struck hard at the roots of the Umayyad empire that had seen both the Muhallabites and Hajjajites as loyal servants.

The anti-Hajjajites reaction broke out when Sulaiman came to power with the Muhallabites as his faithful servants. This reaction could have affected Hajjaj the least, since as per his wish he had died a little before his caliph Walid. However, the rivalry had definitely affected the faithful protégés and kinsmen of Walid. The first and the foremost victim of this reaction was Qutaiba Bin Muslim, who was

persecuted for rebelling against the new caliph Sulaiman. Qutaiba is known in the pages of history as the Arab conqueror of Central Asia. Likewise, the next victim was the favourite of Hajjaj – Muhammad Bin Qasim. Though evidences do not substantiate Qasim’s declaration regarding the lapse of Sulaiman’s right to succession in the territories conquered by him. But, it is believed that Qasim had followed this order of Hajjaj. Therefore, the destiny meted out to him was more than expected after the deaths of Hajjaj and Walid. In that case, the story of being sewn in cow’s skin remains a fictitious narrative. As per the popular practice, perhaps he was arrested by Yazid Bin Kabsha asSaksaki, his successor in the government of Sindh. This had happened under the order of the new financial governor of Iraq named Salih Bin Abd ar-Rahman. After four years of adventurous campaigns for enlarging the dominion of Arabism and Islam, Qasim was put behind bars at Wasit. It was here that he was put together with the other relatives of Hajjaj, and was tortured to death in 715 CE. This is how a tragic destiny waited for almost all the architects of the great Arab conquests during their second and final wave of expansion.

4.5 ARAB ADMINISTRATION

After being conquered, the region of Sindh saw the Arab form of administration. This was the same pattern that was practiced by the Arab conquerors in the other regions they had conquered. Scholars opine that this pattern of administration was more liberal than the later systems. This was mainly because the school of Islamic law in the earlier centuries was not as strict as that in the later ones. For the same reason, the Muslim regimes around the world in the later centuries were seen to be more austere comparatively. The cases of the Turkish or Mughal rules in India from 12th to 18th centuries can be cited as examples of this trend.

In contrast, the Arab rule of the early medieval period was more lenient and flexible. The Arab victors or conquerors followed a general policy of keeping the local practices unhindered. As one of the creators of the Arab system of administration, caliph Umar disallowed the Arabs from either interfering with the local administration or acquiring landed property in subjugated areas. Even though the chief military general of a conquered region was made its governor, he could not have interfered with its civil administration. It was mainly in the hands of the local chiefs, who mostly were non-Muslims. Such an arrangement of Qasim made after his victory over Dahar was known as the ‘Brahmanabad Settlement’. It mainly comprised of the treatment of the Hindus as “the people of the book” or the zimmi (the protected ones). This settlement was mainly the work of Hajjaj under the instructions of the caliph. It was outlined that since the zimmi had agreed to pay taxes to the Caliph, they were taken under the latter’s protection. They were given the permission to follow their faith and worship their own gods. Also, the Arab rulers or administrators were disallowed from snatching away their property. Such a pronouncement was mainly the result of a plea from the people of Brahmanabad to repair their temple and practise their religion. This request to Qasim was forwarded to Hajjaj, and Hajjaj, in turn, consulted the Caliph on it; the latter adopted a policy of

tolerance which, in turn, was diligently carried forward by Hajjaj and Qasim. The aforementioned cases of Qasim's tolerant policy towards the Brahmins and the native tradition can be understood in this light.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss the narratives in the *ChachNama* about Muhammad Bin Qasim's death.

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4.6 ARAB CONQUEST OF SINDH: A TRIUMPH WITHOUT RESULTS?

The Arab conquest of Sindh has been seen as “a triumph without results” by scholars like Stanley Lane Poole, Elphinstone, etc. because there was no major victory for either the Muslim Arabs or the Indian rulers. They opine that this victory of the Arabs was without any impact or result on the history of the Indian subcontinent. It could not affect the political or military conditions of the rest of India. The Arab rule only got confined to the Sindh region, and the Indian rulers ruled their states without fearing or ousting the Arabs from their frontiers. The influence of the Arabs was restricted to only a small part of the subcontinent. They could not get a foothold in the Indian subcontinent, unlike the Turks who had established a full-fledged state a few centuries later (*i.e.* the Delhi Sultanate from 12th century onwards).

However, the scholars critiquing this viewpoint have given varied arguments for refuting it. They hold that even though the conquest did not have any substantial effect on the political geography of India, it had definite political influences on both sides. As seen before from the sources, Muhammad Bin Qasim was as able an administrator as a warrior. After his victories, he maintained the law and order of a region, and believed in placing good administration under the Muslim rule. The arrangements made by him with the non-Muslims provided the basis for later Muslim policy in the subcontinent. Under the able guidance from his uncle Hajjaj, he had given socio-cultural and religious freedom to the defeated population. By the time Islamic law had been codified, stringent provisions were given for the idolaters. The reason why we find these provisions were not followed on the Hindus was mainly due to the tolerant policies of Qasim. He exhibited the political acumen to keep the native social customs and traditions intact. Neither did he lead to forceful conversion of the non-Muslims nor to end the social institutions like caste system etc. This was how the caste system remained untouched and was followed as ever before.

The prevalence of such practices showed the internal weaknesses of the Indian social and political systems to the Arabs and the Muslim world. Therefore, these fissions in the social fabric were used by them to their own advantage. As discussed before, perhaps the Brahmins of Brahmanabad were termed as faithful people by him to continue their all-round support in running the Arab polity and administration. Undoubtedly, the Arab invasion did not affect the political set up of India then, but it definitely gave a good view of the social weaknesses of the region. These were used by the invaders a few centuries later.

Further, the cultural intermingling between the Indian and Arab cultures showed its effects on various other fields like literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, etc. Such contacts at an intellectual level led to the mutual growth and development of both the cultures. The earliest recorded Indo-Arab intellectual contact happened in 771 CE when a Hindu astronomer and mathematician reached Baghdad with a Sanskrit work called *Brahma Siddhanta* by Brahmagupta. This text was translated into Arabic with the help of an Arab mathematician, and was named as *Sindhind*. It had the greatest influence on the development of Arab astronomy even though three other works on mathematics were also translated to Arabic. In mathematics, the most important contribution of the Indian culture to Arab learning was the Arabic numerals.

Similarly, even greater attention was given to Indian medicine by the Arabs. At least 15 Sanskrit works were translated, including those of Charaka and Sushruta. The Indian doctors were given great prestige and honour at Baghdad, and so they were found in good numbers there. Manka was one such doctor who had earned prestige and money by curing the ailing caliph Harun-al-Rashid.

Further, astrology and palmistry also gained the Arab attention, and many books from these fields were translated into Arabic. They, too, have been preserved in the Arab historiographies. Other translations were from the fields of statecraft, art of war, logic, ethics, magic, etc. This is how the famous *Panchatantra* was translated and known as the story of *Kalila and Dimna* in Arabic.

Indian music had a considerable influence on Arabic music even if no translated works have been found. The work of an Arab author named Jahiz reveals the appreciation got by the former at Baghdad. He called the music of the people of Indian subcontinent as pleasing. Another such reference on Indian music was from an Arab author who talks about an Indian book on tunes and melodies. It has been suggested by some scholars that many of the technical terms for Arab music were borrowed from Persia and India. Likewise, even Indian music incorporated many Perso-Arab airs like *Yeman* and *Hijj*.

As against the availability of such information from the Arab works on the vibrant relations between the Indian and Arabic cultures, it will be unreasonable to call the Arab conquest of Sindh as a triumph without results. In other words, it would be

incorrect to give leverage to the political consequences alone and negate the socio-cultural or other impacts or results.

Check Your Progress 3

1) What is the colonial argument on the consequences of the conquest of Sindh?

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2) Discuss the cultural contacts between the Indians and Arabs in the early medieval period.

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

The rise of Islam in the early medieval period had far-reaching political, socioeconomic and cultural implications around the world. Its first contact with the Indian subcontinent in the 8th century is mostly known from the Persian text named ChachNama, a source that enumerates the history of Sindh in general. However, the colonial understanding of it was one of origin of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. The trend of seeing it only as a source on the rise of Islam or conquest of Sindh sprang from this understanding, and it has largely been refuted by the contemporary historiographers. They see the details of the conquest only as one of its aspects. The text is an enumeration of the history of Sindh in general. The descriptive account of the conquest involves the discussion of a young general named Mohammad Bin Qasim, who valiantly conquered the region of Sindh. The text elucidates the tolerant and broad minded approach of this Muslim conqueror towards the vanquished Hindu population. However, his rise as well as fall depended upon his relations with the caliphate, and the change of the caliph led to the downfall and decline of him and many other able and promising Arab conquerors. Such politics at the court of the caliphate greatly affected the fate of Arab conquests in Indian subcontinent and around the world. The containment of Arab empire to the north-western region of India should be understood under this light. The inability of the Arab conquerors and rulers of Sindh to extend their influence into India cannot be seen as their complete failure; their triumph over Sindh cannot be belittled under this light by simply calling it a triumph without results. Even if the Arabs could not affect the political situation inside India, they definitely influenced the Indian culture in various other ways. The cultural proximity between the Indian and Arab cultures has its definite imprints on

their literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, etc. Over and above this, the successful invasion of India by the Muslim Turks like Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghouri in the 11th and 12th centuries respectively can be seen as the climax of the background prepared by the conquest of Sindh in the 8th century.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Adequate	: Sufficient
Containment	: Action of preventing the expansion of something
Dearth	: Shortage
Elucidate	: Throw light on
Endeavour	: Attempt
Etymology	: The study of the sources and development
Opine	: Suggest
Pronouncement	: A formal and authoritative announcement or declaration
Proximity	: Nearness
Tenacity	: Ability to grip something firmly
Tidings	: Information
Repository	: A place where things are stored
Resounding	: Unmistakable; loud enough to echo
Vanquished	: Defeated
Vis-a-vis	: In comparison to

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sec. 4.3, 2) See Sec. 4.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sec. 4.2.4

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sec. 4.6, 2) See Sec. 4.6

SUGGESTED READINGS

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