

Palas, Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas

The struggle for domination – Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas – tripartite struggle

- There was a common struggle between these kingdoms over the control of Kannauj which enabled them to control the fertile upper Gangetic plains

The Palas

- They dominated Eastern India.
- Founded by Gopala in 750 AD and succeeded by Dharam Pala. The Pala rulers were defeated by the Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas in the North.
- They were patrons of Buddhism.
- Dharmapala revived the Nalanda University by setting aside 200 villages for its expenses. He also founded Vikramashila University and built many Viharas for Buddhist monks.
- They had trade contacts and cultural links with South-East Asia. Sailendra Dynasty sent many ambassadors and asked permission to build a monastery near Nalanda

The Pratiharas

- They dominated Western India and Upper Gangetic valley
- The real founder and major ruler was Bhoja with title Adivaraha
- Al-Masudi, a Baghdad traveller, visited India during the times of Pratiharas in 915-16 AD
- Rajashekar, a great Sanskrit poet, and dramatist lived at the court of Mahipala
- The attacks by Rashtrakuta rulers, Indra III and Krishna III led to the faster dissolution of the empire

The Rashtrakutas

- They dominated Deccan and certain territories in North and South India. Kingdom was founded by Dandi Durga with capital at Malkhed
- Amogavarsha was a great king. He was credited with writing the first poetics book in Kannada. He also built the Capital city, Manyakhet.
- They were in the constant contest with the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Chalukyas in the South
- Krishna I built the rock-cut temple of Shiva at Ellora
- They had a tolerant religious policy which favoured their foreign trade

Political ideas and Organizations

- The king was the centre of administration and his position became hereditary
- Royal household = Antahpur
- Administration in Palas and Pratiharas
 1. Bhukti – Province under Uparika
 2. Mandala or Visaya – district under Visayapati
 3. Group of Villages – Samanthas or Bhogapatis.

4. Pattala – smaller unit
- Administration in the Rashtrakutas
 1. Rashtra – Province under Rashtrapati
 2. Visaya – district
 3. Bhukti – smaller unit
 - Grama-Mahajana – Village elder
 - Kotwal – responsibility to maintain law and order
 - Nad-Gavundas/Desa-gramakutas – hereditary revenue officers in Deccan

The Chola Empire

- The Chola empire, which arose in the 9th century, brought a large part of the Peninsula under their control. With a strong Navy, they conquered Sri Lanka, Maldives and had a strong foreign trade.
- The empire was founded by Vijaylala, a feudatory of Pallavas, in 850 AD.
- Rajaraja (985-1014) and Rajendra I (1014-1044) were the greatest Chola kings. They followed a policy of annexation which included annexing Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pandyas and Cheras to control the prosperous trade with South-East Asian countries
- Rajarajeshwara temple was built in 1010 at Tanjore.
- Rajendra I assumed the title Gangaikondachola (the Chola conqueror of Ganga) and instituted a new capital at the banks of Kaveri called “Gangaikondacholapuram”
- Rajendra I also undertook a naval expedition against revived Sri Vijaya Empire of Indo-China
- The ruler of Sailendra dynasty had built a Buddhist monastery at Nagapattinam.
- The strong navy of Chola led to the conversion of Bay of Bengal into “Chola lake”
- The Cholas encouraged Local Self-Government in the villages under their administration

Chola Government

- The King administered his territories with advice from his Council of Ministers
- Chola administration
 1. Mandalams – Provinces
 2. Valanadu – minor provinces
 3. Nadu – district
 4. Kurram – a group of villages
- Infrastructure: Royal roads were built, irrigation projects were undertaken
- Village assemblies: the Ur – general assembly of the village; the Mahasabha – the gathering of adult men in Brahmana villages which were called Agraharas

Cultural life

- They were great builders of Cities (Tanjore, Gangaikondacholapuram), large palaces, banquet halls, spacious gardens, and terraces etc.
- Dravida style of temple architecture attained its climax. The temple had become so elaborate like a mini-city and enjoyed revenue-free grants of lands for its expenses
- Kailashnath temple in Kanchi, Brihadeswara temple in Tanjore are examples of Dravidian architecture
- After the fall of Cholas, the Hoysalas continued the tradition with building temples in Halebid (Hoysaleswara temple), an example of Chalukyan architecture.

- Sculpture art attained its heights with Gomateshwar statue in Sharvana Belagola and Bronze Nataraja statue
- Along with Sanskrit literature, the local language literature also grew in this region
- Bhakti movement started with Alvars and Nayanars flourished in 6th to 9th Their writings “Tirumurai” is seen as Fifth Veda. Kamban’s Ramayan is also considered as a classic in Tamil literature.
- Pampa, Ponna, and Ranna are regarded as the three gems of Kannada Poetry

Thus, this period had a flourishing trade and commerce, great temple building activities and promising literary works.

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