



The Sixteen Mahajanapadas (PDF)

Types of Mahajanapadas

Monarchical Mahajanapadas

- The hereditary king or chieftain controlled the state in Monarchical Mahajanapadas.
- The rulers in this region valued Brahmanas and Vedic rituals.
- Monarchical administration was practised in Mahajanapadas such as Kosala and Magadha.

Republican Mahajanapadas

- The king was elected from a group of Rajas renowned for their fighting ability in Republican or oligarchic Mahajanapadas, and he runs the administration with the aid of an assembly called Sabha.
- The Brahmanas and Vedic sacrifices were not accorded much weight in this society. According to a few Buddhist texts, the Brahmanas were put in the social hierarchy below the Kshatriyas.
- The oligarchy system of government was used in Vajji. Gana sangha were Mahajanapadas like this.

List of Sixteen Mahajanapadas

Below is the list of Sixteen Mahajanapadas

1. Kosala
2. Malla
3. Chedi/Cheti
4. Anga
5. Magadha
6. Kamboja
7. Kasi
8. Vajji
9. Vatsa
10. Kuru
11. Matsya
12. Surasena/Shurasena
13. Assaka
14. Avanti
15. Gandhara
16. Panchala

The Sixteen Mahajanapadas

- **Magadha (Patna, Gaya and Nalanda districts)** – The first capital was Rajagriha and the later capital was Pataliputra.
- **Anga and Vanga (Munger and Bhagalpur)** – The capital was Champa. It was a prosperous business centre.
- **Malla (Deoria, Basti, Gorakhpur region)** – The capital was Kushinagar. It was the seat of many other smaller kingdoms. Their main religion was Buddhism.
- **Vatsa (Allahabad and Mirzapur)** – The capital was Kaushambi. The most important ruler of this kingdom was King Udayan.
- **Kashi (Benaras)** – The capital was Varanasi. Though many battles were fought against the Kosala kingdom, eventually Kashi was merged with the Kosala kingdom.



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- **Kosala (Ayodhya)** – Though its capital was Shravasti which is identical to Sahet-Mahet but Ayodhya was an important town in Kosala. Kosala also included the tribal republican territory of Sakyas of Kapilvastu.
- **Vajji (Muzaffarpur and Vaishali)** – Vajji was the seat of a united republic of eight smaller kingdoms of which Lichchavis, Janatriks, and Videhas were also members.
- **Kuru (Thaneswar, Meerut and present-day Delhi)** – The capital city was Indraprastha.
- **Panchala (Western Uttar Pradesh)** – Its capital was Kampila. Earlier a monarch state, it later became an independent republic. Kannauj was an important town in this kingdom.
- **Matsya kingdom (Alwar, Bharatpur and Jaipur)** – Its capital was Viratanagar.
- **Ashmaka (Between Narmada and Godavari)** – Its capital was at Pertaai and Brahamdatta was its most important ruler.
- **Gandhara (Peshawar and Rawalpindi)** – Its capital Taxila was important as a trade and education center (Ancient Taxila university) during the later Vedic age.
- **Kamboj (Hazara dist of Pakistan, North-east Kashmir)** – Its capital was Rajapur. Hazara was an important trade and commerce center of this kingdom.
- **Avanti (Malwa)** – Avanti was divided into two parts north and south. The northern part had its capital at Ujjain and the southern part had its capital at Mahismati.
- **Chedi (Bundelkhand)** – Shaktimati was the capital of Chedi. Chedi kingdom was spread between Yamuna and Narmada rivers. One of the families from this kingdom later merged into the Kalinga kingdom from this royal family.
- **Shurasena (Brajmandal)** – Its capital was Mathura, and its most famous ruler was Avantiputra.

Rise of Magadha Empire

- Bimbisara followed the policy of Conquest and aggression and annexed various kingdoms to the Magadha empire. He also strengthened his position by marriage alliances.
- Rajgir was surrounded by hills and stone-walls constructed made it impregnable
- The rich iron deposits led to making weapons, clearing forests and development of the agricultural economy
- Elephants were also used on a large scale in its war against its neighbours

Dynasties

Haryanka Dynasty

1) Bimbisara (544BC-492BC)

1. Haryanka is the name of a new dynasty founded in Magadha by Bimbisara. He was also called Seniya who was the first Indian to have a regular and standing army
2. Bimbisara was a contemporary of Buddha.
3. Pataliputra and Rajagriha were the capitals of the Magadha kingdom. Magadha falls in the Patna region of Bihar.

2) Ajatashatru (492BC-460BC)

1. He followed a more aggressive policy. Gained control of Kashi and Vajji. Built the fort of Rajgir.
2. He convened the 1st Buddhist council

3) Udayin (460BC-440BC)

1. He laid the foundation of Pataliputra and shifted the capital from Rajgir to Pataliputra

Shishunaga Dynasty (412BC-344BC)

- People elected Shishunga over Nagadasaka (last Haryanka ruler) thereby ending the Haryanka dynasty
- Shishunga was succeeded by Kalashoka who convened the 2nd Buddhist council



Nanda Dynasty (344BCC-323BC)

- Mahapadma Nanda was the founder and the first king of the Nanda dynasty.
 - He overthrew the Magadha dynasty and established the new Empire. He was known as Sarvakshatrantak and Ugrasena
 - Mahapadma was known as Ekkrat – the sole monarch
 - Initially, the Nanda Dynasty inherited a large kingdom of Magadha and subsequently, the boundaries of the Nanda Dynasty were expanded in all directions by its rulers.
 - Dhana Nanda was the last ruler of the Nanda Dynasty. During his rule, Alexander invaded northwest India in 326 BC
- In 322-21 BC Chandragupta Maurya founded the Mauryan dynasty.

Mahajanapadas: The Political Structure

- The Mahajanapadas represent a transition from a semi-nomadic tribal society to one that was centred on agriculture and had a well-developed trading network and political structure. The majority of these organisations were monarchies, but a few were "ganasangha" republics. The executive branch of Ganasangha's oligarchic government was led by an elected monarch who was backed by a large council. Although the situation was very close to democracy, the ordinary citizen had no say in how it was run.
- The majority of countries were monarchies; however, there were republics, also known as Ganas or Sanghas.
- In these Republican States, the entire Jain and Buddhist founding families began. Each Mahajanapada had a capital city that functioned as the centre of development.
- Craftsmen and traders established guilds (shrem) as well as a banking and lending structure. They also minted coins and made writing, the first of which were silver-bent bars and silver and copper punch-marked coins.



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