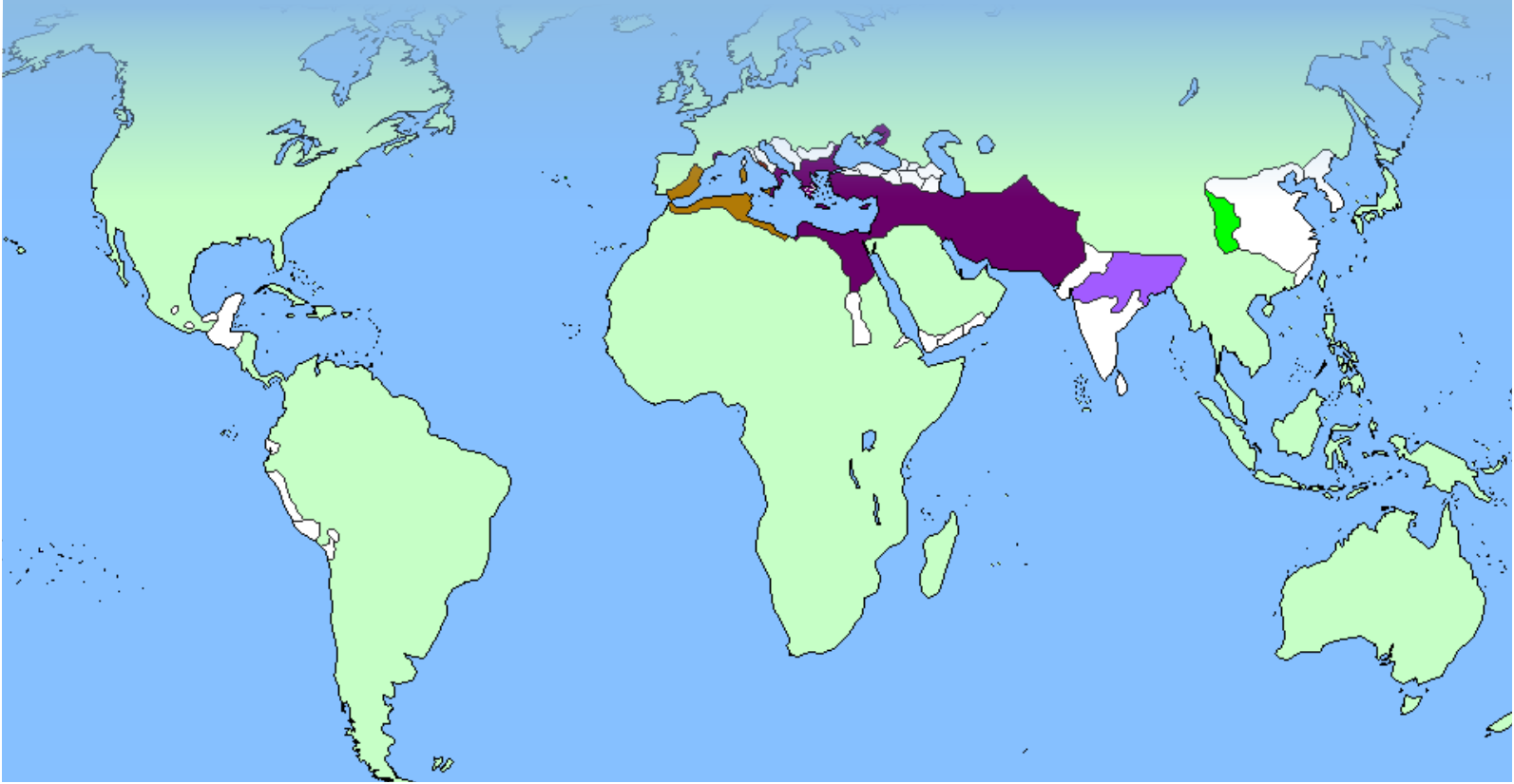
Indian History
4th Century

Manuel Elliott



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Indian History: 4th Century
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Ebook ISBN: 9781984667977

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Chapter 1

Chandragupta I

- Chandragupta I (r. c. 319-335 or 319-350 CE) was a king of the Gupta dynasty, who ruled in northern India. His title *Maharajadhiraja* ("great king of kings") suggests that he was the first emperor of the dynasty. It is not certain how he turned his small ancestral kingdom into an empire, although a widely accepted theory among modern historians is that his marriage to the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi helped him extend his political power. Their son Samudragupta further expanded the Gupta empire.

Period of reign

Chandragupta was a son of the Gupta king Ghatotkacha, and a grandson of the dynasty's founder Gupta, both of whom are called *Maharaja* ("great king") in the Allahabad Pillar inscription. Chandragupta assumed the title *Maharajadhiraja* (𑀫𑀳𑀸𑀭𑀸𑀚𑀸𑀥𑀺𑀭𑀸𑀚 "great king of kings") and issued gold coins, which suggests that he was the first imperial ruler of the dynasty. Chandragupta certainly reigned in the first quarter of the 4th century CE, but the exact period of his reign is uncertain. His assumption of the title *Maharajadhiraja* has led to suggestions that he founded the Gupta calendar era, and that the epoch of this era marks his coronation. Based on this argument, several historians, including V. A. Smith and P. L. Gupta, date Chandragupta's ascension to 319-320 CE, which they believe

to be the beginning of the Gupta era. However, this is merely an assumption, and the identity of the founder of the Gupta era is not certain. Some historians, such as D. C. Sircar and R. C. Majumdar, theorize that the Gupta era marks the coronation of his son Samudragupta. S. R. Goyal theorizes that the era was started by the later king Chandragupta II, but its beginning was dated to Samudragupta's ascension.

Chandragupta I probably had a long reign, as the Allahabad Pillar inscription suggests that he appointed his son as his successor, presumably after reaching an old age. However, the exact period of his reign is debated.

Various estimates for Chandragupta's reign include:

- A. S. Altekar: 305-325 CE
- S. R. Goyal: 319-350 CE
- Tej Ram Sharma: 319-353 CE
- Upinder Singh: 319-335 CE or 319-350 CE

Marriage to Kumaradevi

Chandragupta married the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi. Lichchhavi is the name of an ancient clan that was headquartered at Vaishali in present-day Bihar during the time of Gautama Buddha. A Lichchhavi kingdom existed in the present-day Nepal in the first millennium CE. However, the identity of Kumaradevi's Lichchhavi kingdom is not certain.

An 8th century inscription of the Lichchhavi dynasty of Nepal claims that their legendary ancestor Supushpa was born in the royal family of Pushpapura, that is, Pataliputra in Magadha.

According to some historians, such as V. A. Smith, the Lichchhavis ruled at Pataliputra during Samudragupta's time. However, this inscription states that Supushpa ruled 38 generations before the 5th century king Manadeva, that is, centuries before Chandragupta's period. Therefore, the claim made in this inscription, even if true, cannot be taken as concrete evidence of the Lichchhavi rule at Pataliputra during Chandragupta's time.

The Lichchhavi kingdom of Kumaradevi is unlikely to have been located in present-day Nepal, because Samudragupta's Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions Nepala (that is, Nepal) as a distinct, subordinate kingdom. Given lack of any other evidence, historian R. C. Majumdar assumed that during Chandragupta's time, the Lichchhavis ruled at Vaishali, which is the only other base of the clan known from the historical records.

Impact of marriage

The gold coins attributed to Chandragupta bear portraits of Chandragupta and Kumaradevi, and the legend *Lichchhavayah* ("the Lichchhavis"). Their son Samudragupta is described as *Lichchhavi-dauhitra* ("Lichchhavi daughter's son") in the Gupta inscriptions. Except Kumaradevi, these inscriptions do not mention the paternal family of the dynasty's queens, which suggests that the Gupta family considered Kumaradevi's marriage to Chandragupta an important event.

Numismatist John Allan theorized that Chandragupta defeated a Lichchhavi kingdom headquartered at Vaishali, and that Kumaradevi's marriage to him happened as part of a peace

treaty. He suggested that the Guptas considered this marriage a prestigious one simply because of the ancient lineage of the Lichchhavis. However, the ancient text *Manusamhita* regards the Lichchhavis as "unorthodox and impure" (*vratya*). Therefore, it is unlikely that the Guptas proudly mentioned Samudragupta's Lichchhavi ancestry to increase their social prestige. Also, it is unlikely that the Guptas allowed the name of the Lichchhavis to appear on the dynasty's coins after defeating them.

It is more likely that the marriage helped Chandragupta extend his political power and dominions, enabling him to adopt the title *Maharajadhiraja*. The appearance of the Lichchhavis' name on the coins is probably symbolic of their contribution to the expansion of the Gupta power. After the marriage, Chandragupta probably became the ruler of the Lichchhavi territories. Alternatively, it is possible that the Gupta and the Lichchhavi states formed a union, with Chandragupta and Kumaradevi being regarded as the sovereign rulers of their respective states, until the reign of their son Samudragupta, who became the sole ruler of the united kingdom.

Extent of kingdom

Little is known about Chandragupta other than his ancestry, his marriage, and his expansion of the Gupta power, as evident from his title *Maharajadhiraja*. The territorial extent of Chandragupta's kingdom is not known, but it must have been substantially larger than that of the earlier Gupta kings, as Chandragupta bore the title *Maharajadhiraja*. Modern historians have attempted to determine the extent of his

kingdom based on the information from the *Puranas* and the Allahabad Pillar inscription issued by his son Samudragupta.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription names several kings subjugated by Samudragupta. Based on the identity of these kings, several modern historians have tried to determine the extent of the territory that he must have inherited from Chandragupta. For example, since the king of the northern part of the Bengal region is not mentioned among the kings subjugated by Samudragupta, these historians theorize that northern Bengal was a part of Chandragupta's kingdom. However, such conclusions cannot be made with certainty, as the identity of several of the kings subjugated by Samudragupta is a matter of debate. Nevertheless, the information from the inscription can be used to determine the territories that were not a part of Chandragupta's kingdom:

- In the west, Chandragupta's kingdom probably did not extend much beyond Prayaga (modern Prayagraj), as Samudragupta defeated the kings of present-day western Uttar Pradesh.
- In the south, Chandragupta's kingdom did not include the Mahakoshal area of Central India, as Samudragupta defeated the kings of the forest region, which is identified with this area.
- In the east, Chandragupta's kingdom did not include southern Bengal, because the Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions Samatata in that region as a frontier kingdom. Moreover, the Delhi Iron Pillar inscription suggests that Vanga kingdom in that region was conquered by the later king Chandragupta II.

- In the north, the Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions Nepala (in present-day Nepal) as a frontier kingdom.

A passage in the *Vayu Purana* states that the Guptas ruled over Saketa (modern Ayodhya), Prayaga, and Magadha. Based on this, multiple modern scholars have theorized that Chandragupta ruled over these territories. However, this conclusion is not certain, as the *Vayu Purana* does not mention the name of a specific ruler. Scholars critical of this theory argue that the passage describes the territories of either the dynasty's founder Gupta or its 6th century rulers who oversaw the kingdom's decline. Critics also point out that the corresponding passage in the *Vishnu Purana* states that the Guptas and the Magadhas jointly ruled over Prayaga and Magadha, and does not mention Saketa at all. The corresponding passage in the various manuscripts of *Bhagavata Purana* either does not mention the word "Gupta", or uses it as a common noun meaning "protected" instead of using it as the name of a specific dynasty. Even somes manuscripts of the *Vayu Purana* use the words "Guhya", "sapta" or "Manidhanyaka" instead of "Gupta". Supporters of the theory dismiss these as scribal mistakes. Historian Ashvini Agrwal argues that the *Vayu Purana* passage cannot be a reference to the Gupta territories during the empire's period of decline, as it does not mention Bengal, which formed a part of the Gupta kingdom during this period.

According to historian R. C. Majumdar, Chandragupta's kingdom may have included the whole of present-day Bihar, and a part of present-day Uttar Pradesh and Bengal. Historian Dilip Kumar Ganguly believes that he ruled a large kingdom

extending from Allahabad in the west to the Ganges river in Bengal in the east; the kingdom excluded south-eastern Bengal (Samatata), northern Bengal (Vanga), eastern Bengal, and western Bengal (the kingdom of Chandravarman). Historian Ashvini Agrwal states that his kingdom included central and eastern Uttar Pradesh (including Prayaga and Awadh), and Bihar; but not Bengal.

Coinage

Gold coins bearing portraits of Chandragupta and Kumaradevi have been discovered at Mathura, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Sitapur, Tanda, Ghazipur, and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh; Bayana in Rajasthan; and Hajipur in Bihar. The obverse of these coins depicts portraits of Chandragupta and Kumaradevi, with their names in the Gupta script. The reverse shows a goddess seated on a lion, with the legend "*Li-ccha-va-yah*" (𑌲𑌿𑌚𑍍𑌛𑌵𑌯𑌃, "the Lichchhavis").

Various scholars, including numismatist John Allan, have considered that the gold coins bearing the portraits of Chandragupta and Kumaradevi were issued by Samudragupta to commemorate his parents, while others have attributed the issue of these coins to Chandragupta himself, or even suggested that these coins were issued by the Lichchhavis.

V. S. Pathak theorized that the coins show the royal couple in the *vaivahika* (nuptial) pose, but there is no concrete evidence that the coins depict the royal wedding. S.V. Sohoni theorized that the coins depicted Chandragupta taking leave of Kumaradevi while going on a military campaign, but this is

doubtful given the lack of a phrase indicative of military prowess (unlike the coins of their son Samudragupta). The coins probably simply depict Chandragupta and Kumaradevi as joint rulers.

The identity of the female figure appearing on the reverse of these coins is uncertain. It is unlikely that she was a Gupta queen, as the depiction of a female figure seated on a lion is characteristic of a goddess in historical art of India. Some historians, such as A. S. Altekar, have identified the goddess as Durga. However, although Durga is often represented as seated on a lion, this attribute is not unique to her: Lakshmi has also been depicted as seated on a lion. For example, Hemadri's works mention *Simha-vahini* ("having lion as her vahana") Lakshmi, and images from Khajuraho depict *Simha-vahini* Gajalakshmi. Some scholars, such as John Allan, have identified the goddess on the coins as Lakshmi, who is the goddess of fortune and the wife of Vishnu. She may have been featured on the coins as a symbol of the Guptas' royal prosperity, or as a mark of their Vaishnavite affiliation, but this cannot be said with certainty. The goddess may also have been a tutelary goddess of the Lichchhavis, whose name appears below her image, but this cannot be said with certainty either.

Successor

The Allahabad Pillar inscription and the Eran stone inscription of Samudragupta state that his father Chandragupta selected him as the next king. The Allahabad Pillar inscription states that Chandragupta appointed him to "protect the earth", which

suggests that Chandragupta renounced the throne in his old age, and appointed his son as the next king.

The discovery of the coins issued by a Gupta ruler named Kacha have led to some debate about Chandragupta's successor. According to one theory, Kacha was another name for Samudragupta. Another theory is that Kacha was the elder brother of Samudragupta, and succeeded their father Chandragupta.

The *Kaliyuga-raja-vrttanta* section of the *Bhavishyottara Purana* mentions that Kacha was a son of Chandragupta I from a Lichchhavi princess. It describes Kacha as jointly ruling with his father, and states that Samudragupta killed their father. However, these passages (and possibly the entire text) are a modern forgery.

Chapter 2

Samudragupta

- **Samudragupta** (350-375 CE) was the second emperor of the Gupta Empire of Ancient India, and one of the greatest rulers in Indian history. As a son of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta I and the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi, he greatly expanded his dynasty's political power.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription, a *prashasti* (eulogy) composed by his courtier Harishena, credits him with extensive military conquests. It suggests that he defeated several kings of northern India, and annexed their territories to his empire. He also marched along the south-eastern coast of India, advancing as far as the Pallava kingdom. In addition, he subjugated several frontier kingdoms and tribal oligarchies. His empire extended from Ravi River in the west to the Brahmaputra River in the east, and from the Himalayan foothills in the north to central India in the south-west; several rulers along the south-eastern coast were his tributaries.

Samudragupta performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice to prove his imperial sovereignty, and according to his coins, remained undefeated. His gold coins and inscriptions suggest that he was an accomplished poet, and also played music. His expansionist policy was continued by his son Chandragupta II.

Period

Modern scholars variously assign the start of Samudragupta's reign from c. 319 CE to c. 350 CE.

The inscriptions of the Gupta kings are dated in the Gupta calendar era, whose epoch is generally dated to c. 319 CE. However, the identity of the era's founder is a matter of debate, and scholars variously attribute its establishment to Chandragupta I or Samudragupta. Chandragupta I probably had a long reign, as the Allahabad Pillar inscription suggests that he appointed his son as his successor, presumably after reaching an old age. However, the exact period of his reign is uncertain. For these reasons, the beginning of Samudragupta's reign is also uncertain.

If Samudragupta is regarded as the founder of the Gupta era, his ascension can be dated to c. 319-320 CE. On the other hand, if his father Chandragupta I is regarded as the founder of the Gupta era, Samudragupta's ascension must be dated to a later date. Samudragupta was a contemporary of king Meghavarna of Anuradhapura Kingdom, but the regnal period of this king is also uncertain. According to the traditional reckoning adopted in Sri Lanka for Buddha's death, he ruled during 304-332 CE; but the modified chronology adopted by modern scholars such as Wilhelm Geiger assigns his reign to 352-379 CE. Accepting the former date would place Samudragupta's ascension to c. 320 CE; accepting the latter date would place it around c. 350 CE.

The end of Samudragupta's reign is also uncertain. Samudragupta's granddaughter Prabhavatigupta is known to have married during the reign of his son Chandragupta II, in c. 380 CE (assuming c. 319 CE as the epoch of the Gupta era). Therefore, the end of Samudragupta's reign can be placed before this year.

Various estimates of Samudragupta's regnal period include:

- A. S. Altekar: c. 330-370 CE
- A. L. Basham: c. 335-376 CE
- S. R. Goyal: c. 350-375 CE
- Tej Ram Sharma: c. 353-373 CE

Ascension

Samudragupta was a son of the Gupta king Chandragupta I and queen Kumaradevi, who came from a Licchavi family. His fragmentary Eran stone inscription states that his father selected him as the successor because of his "devotion, righteous conduct, and valour". His Allahabad Pillar inscription similarly describes how Chandragupta called him a noble person in front of the courtiers, and appointed him to "protect the earth". These descriptions suggest that Chandragupta renounced the throne in his old age, and appointed his son as the next king.

According to the Allahabad Pillar inscription, when Chandragupta appointed him as the next ruler, the faces of other people of "equal birth" bore a "melancholy look". One interpretation suggests that these other people were

neighbouring kings, and Samudagupta's ascension to the throne was uncontested. Another theory is that these other people were Gupta princes who made a rival claim to the throne. If Chandragputa I indeed had multiple sons, it is likely that Samudragupta's background as the son of a Lichchhavi princess worked in his favour.

The coins of a Gupta ruler named Kacha, whose identity is debated by modern scholars, describe him as "the exterminator of all kings". These coins closely resmble the coins issued by Samudragupta. According to one theory, Kacha was an earlier name of Samudragupta: the king adopted the regnal name Samudra ("Ocean"), after extending his territory up to the ocean. An alternatively theory is that Kacha was a distinct king (possibly a rival claimant to the throne) who flourished before or after Samudragupta.

Military career

The Gupta inscriptions suggest that Samudragupta had a remarkable military career. The Eran stone inscription of Samudragupta states that he had brought "the whole tribe of kings" under his suzerainty, and that his enemies were terrified when they thought of him in their dreams. The inscription does not name any of the defeated kings (presumably because its primary objective was to record the installation of a Vishnu idol in a temple), but it suggests that Samudragupta had subdued several kings by this time. The later Allahabad Pillar inscription, a panegyric written by Samudragupta's minister and military officer Harishena, credits him with extensive conquests. It gives the most detailed

account of Samudragupta's military conquests, listing them in mainly geographical and partly chronological order. It states that Samudragupta fought a hundred battles, acquired a hundred wounds that looked like marks of glory, and earned the title *Prakrama* (valourous). The Mathura stone inscription of Chandragupta II describes Samudragupta as an "exterminator of all kings", as someone who had no equally powerful enemy, and as a person whose "fame was tasted by the waters of the four oceans".

Modern scholars offer various opinions regarding Samudragupta's possible motivations behind his extensive military campaigns. The Allahabad Pillar inscription suggests that Samudragupta's aim was the unification of the earth (*dharani-bandha*), which suggests that he may have aspired to become a Chakravartin (a universal ruler). The Ashvamedha performances by the Nagas, whom he defeated, may have influenced him as well. His southern expedition may have been motivated by economic considerations of controlling the trade between India and South-East Asia.

Early victories

The early portion of the Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions that Samudragupta "uprooted" Achyuta, Nagasena, and a ruler whose name is lost in the damaged portion of the inscription. The third name ends in "-ga", and is generally restored as Ganapati-naga, because Achyuta, Nagasena and Ganapati-naga are once again mentioned in the later part of the inscription, among the kings of Aryavarta (northern India) defeated by Samudragupta. These kings are identified as the rulers of present-day western Uttar Pradesh (see below). According to

the inscription, Samudragupta reinstated these rulers after they sought his forgiveness.

It is not clear why the names of these three kings is repeated later in the inscription. According to one theory, these three kings were vassal rulers who rebelled against Samudragupta after the death of his father. Samudragupta crushed the rebellion, and reinstated them after they sought his forgiveness. Later, these rulers rebelled once more, and Samudragupta defeated them again. Another possibility is that the author of the inscription thought it necessary to repeat these names while describing Samudragupta's later conquests in Aryavarta, simply because these kings belonged to that region.

Samudragupta dispatched an army to capture the scion of the Kota family, whose identity is uncertain. The Kotas may have been the rulers of present-day Punjab, where coins bearing the legend "Kota", and featuring a symbol of Shiva and his bull, have been discovered.

The inscription states that the Gupta army captured the Kota ruler, while Samudragupta himself "played" (or pleased himself) in a city called Pushpa (the name Pushpa-pura referred to Pataliputra at Samudragupta's time, although it came to be used for Kanyakubja in the later period). Modern scholars have interpreted the word "played" in various ways: According to one theory, this portion describes Samudragupta's achievements as a prince. An alternative interpretation is that Samudragupta dispatched his army on these campaigns, while he himself stayed at the capital. It is also possible that the poet intended to convey that these

campaigns were minor affairs that did not require the king's direct involvement at the battlefront.

Southern conquests

According to the Allahabad Pillar inscription, Samudragupta captured (and later released) the following kings of Dakshinapatha, the southern region:

- Mahendra of Kosala
- Vyaghra-raja of Mahakantara
- Mantaraja of Kurala
- Mahendragiri of Pishtapura
- Svamidatta of Kottura
- Damana of Erandapalla
- Vishnugopa of Kanchi
- Nilaraja of Avamukta
- Hastivarman of Vengi
- Ugrasena of Palakka
- Kubera of Devarashtra
- Dhananjaya of Kusthalapura

The exact identification of several of these kings is debated among modern scholars, but it is clear that these kings ruled areas located on the eastern coast of India. Samudragupta most probably passed through the forest tract of central India, reached the eastern coast in present-day Odisha, and then marched south along the coast of Bay of Bengal.

The inscription states that Samudragupta later released these kings, and favoured (*anugraha*) them. Most modern scholars theorize that Samudragupta reinstated these rulers as his

tributaries. M. G. S. Narayanan interprets the word *anugraha* differently based on its occurrence in the *Arthashastra*; he theorizes that Samudragupta gave "protection and aid" to these kingdoms in order to secure their alliances.

Some scholars, such as J. Dubreuil and B. V. Krishnarao, theorized that Samudragupta only advanced up to the Krishna river, and was forced to retreat without fighting a battle, when the southern kings formed a strong confederacy to oppose him. According to these scholars, the claim that Samudragupta released these kings is an attempt by Samudragupta's courtier to cover up the emperor's failure. However, there is no evidence of the southern kings forming a confederacy against Samudragupta. Historian Ashvini Agrawal notes that setting free a captured king is inline with the ancient Indian political ideals. For example, Kautilya defines three types of conquerors: the righteous conqueror (*dharma-vijayi*), who restores the defeated king in exchange for his acknowledgment of the conqueror's suzerainty; the coveteous conqueror (*lobha-vijayi*), who takes away the possessions of the defeated king but spares his life; and the demoniac conqueror (*asura-vijayi*), who annexes the territory of the defeated king and kills him. Such political ideals existed in the Gupta period too, as evident from Kalidasa's statement in *Raghuvamsha* that "the righteous victorious monarch (Raghu) only took away the royal glory of the lord of Mahendra who had been captured and released, but not his kingdom." Therefore, it is likely that Samudragupta acted like a righteous conqueror, and restored the defeated kings as his vassals.

- Mahendra of Kosala

- Kosala here refers to Dakshina Kosala, which includes parts of present-day Chhattisgarh and Odisha. One theory identifies Mahendra of Kosala with a Nala king named Mahendraditya.
- Vyaghra-raja of Mahakantara
- Historian K. P. Jayaswal identifies Mahakantara (literally "great wilderness") as the Bastar-Kanker area in present-day Chhattisgarh. According to another theory, Mahakantara is same as Mahavana, a synonym used as the name for the forest region around present-day Jeypore of Odisha.
- Earlier historians identified Mahakantara as a region in central India, and identified Vyaghra-raja with the Vakataka feudatory Vyaghra-deva, whose inscriptions have been found at Nachna. However, this identification is now considered incorrect, as Samudragupta is not known to have fought against the Vakatakas.
- Mantaraja of Kurala
- The Rawan inscription of the Sharabhapuriya king Narendra, who ruled in the Dakshina Kosala region, mentions an area called Mantaraja-bhukti ("the province of Mantaraja"). Therefore, some historians such as K. D. Bajpai theorize that Mantaraja was a king who ruled in the Dakshina Kosala region. Historian A. M. Shastri disputes this theory, arguing that the ruler of Kosala (that is, Dakshina Kosala) has been mentioned separately in the Allahabad Pillar inscription.
- Lorenz Franz Kielhorn speculated that Kurala was same as Kaurala (or Kunala) mentioned in the Aihole inscription of the 7th century king Pulakeshin II,

and identified it as the area around the Kolleru Lake in present-day Andhra Pradesh. H. C. Raychaudhuri disputes this identification, pointing out that this region was a part of Hastivarman's Vengi kingdom, which has been mentioned separately in the Allahabad Pillar inscription.

- Other proposed identifications of Kurala include Kolada near Bhanjanagar (former Russelkonda) in Odisha; and Kulula, a region mentioned in the Mahendragiri inscription of the 11th century king Rajendra Chola, and identified with Cherla in present-day Telangana.
- Mahendragiri of Pishtapura
- Pishtapura is modern Pithapuram in Andhra Pradesh. The word *giri* mentions hill in Sanskrit, and therefore, J. F. Fleet speculated that "Mahendragiri" could not have been a person's name: he suggested that the verse (*Mahendragiri-Kautturaka-Svamidatta*) referred to a king called "Mahendra", and a place called "Kottura on the hill" which was ruled by Svamidatta. However, Fleet's translation is incorrect: the verse clearly mentions Mahendragiri of Pishtapura and Svamidatta of Kottura as two distinct persons. G. Ramdas interpreted the verse to mean Svamidatta was the ruler of Pishtapura and "Kottura near Mahendragiri", while Bhau Daji translated it as "Svamidatta of Pishtapura, Mahendragiri and Kottura". However, these translations are also incorrect. The concern about the king's name is invalid: several historical records mention names ending in the word *giri* or its synonym *adri*.
- Svamidatta of Kottura

- Svamidatta was probably one of the chiefs who resisted Samudragupta's passage through the Kalinga region. Kottura has been identified with modern Kotturu (or Kothur) in Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh (near Paralakhemundi, Odisha). Alternative proposals identify it with other similarly named places in present-day Andhra Pradesh.
- Damana of Erandapalla
- Proposed identifications of Erandapalla include Errandapali near Srikakulam, a town near Mukhalingam, Yendipalli in Visakhapatnam district, and Endipalli in West Godavari district.
- Vishnugopa of Kanchi
- Vishnugopa is identified as the Pallava ruler of Kanchipuram: Samudragupta's invasion probably occurred when he acted as a regent for his nephew Skandavarman III.
- Nilaraja of Avamukta
- The identity of Avamukta is uncertain. The *Brahmanda Purana* mentions an area called "Avimukta-kshetra", located on the banks of the Gautami river (that is, Godavari), which may be identified with Avamukta of Samudragupta's inscription. Some historical texts use the name Avamukta-kshetra for the region around Varanasi, but Varanasi is not located in Dakshinapatha, and therefore, was certainly not the Avamukta mentioned in the inscription.
- Hastivarman of Vengi
- Hastivarman was the Shalankayana king of Vengi (modern Pedavegi) in Andhra Pradesh.
- Ugrasena of Palakka

- J. Dubreuil identified Palakka with the place referred to as Palakkada in several Pallava inscriptions; this location was probably the headquarters of a Pallava viceroyalty. For example, the Uruvapalli grant inscription of *Yuva-maharaja* (Prince) Vishnugopa-varman was issued from Palakkada.
- G. Ramdas identified it with Pakkai located between Udayagiri and Venkatagiri in the Nellore district, and theorized that it was same as the place referred to as Paka-nadu, Panka-nadu, or Pakai-nadu in the inscriptions of the 10th century Chola king Rajaraja I.
- Kubera of Devarashtra
- According to one theory, Deva-rashtra was located in the historical Kalinga region of present-day northern Andhra Pradesh. The Srungavarapukota inscription of the Vasishtha king Anantavarman, issued from Pishtapura in this area, describes his grandfather Gunavarman as *Deva-rashtradhipati* ("Lord of Deva-rashtra"). The Kasimkota inscription of the 10th century Vengi Chalukya king Bhima I mentions a *vishaya* (district) called Deva-rashtra in Kalinga. Based on this, J. Dubreuil identified Devarashtra as a location in the present-day Yelamanchili taluka of Andhra Pradesh. During Samudragupta's period, the Kalinga region appears to have been divided among several small kingdoms, which may have included Kottura, Pishtapura, and Devarashtra.
- Dhananjaya of Kusthalapura
- B. V. Krishnarao speculated that Dhananjaya of Samudragupta's inscription may be same as the Dhananjaya from whom the chieftains of

Dhanyakataka (modern Dharanikota in Andhra Pradesh) claimed descent. He identified Kusthalapura with modern Kolanupaka (or Kollipak) located on the banks of the Aleru River in present-day Telangana. Another theory identifies Kusthalapura with a tract around the Kushasthali river near Dakshina Kosala.

Northern conquests

According to the Allahabad Pillar inscription, Samudragupta "forcibly uprooted" the following kings of Aryavarta, the northern region:

- Rudradeva
- Matila
- Nagadatta
- Chandravarman
- Ganapatinaga
- Nagasena
- Achyuta
- Nandin
- Balavarman

Unlike the southern kings, the inscription does not mention the territories ruled by these kings, which suggests that their kingdoms were annexed to the Gupta empire. The inscription also mentions that Samudragupta defeated some other kings, but does not mention their names, presumably because the poet saw them as unimportant.

- Rudradeva

Rudradeva may be same as a king named Rudra, whose coin has been found at Kaushambi. Another theory identifies Rudradeva with a Western Kshatrapa (Shaka) king of Ujjain, either Rudradaman II or Rudrasena III.

- Some earlier scholars, such as K. N. Dikshit and K. P. Jayaswal, identified Rudradeva with the Vakataka king Rudrasena I. However, this identification seems to be inaccurate, because Samudragupta's inscription explicitly mentions Rudradeva as a king of the northern region (Aryavarta), while the Vakatakas ruled in the southern region (Dakshinapatha). An argument cited in support of this identification is that Rudrasena bore the title *Maharaja* ("great king") as opposed to *samrat* ("emperor"), signifying his subordinate status to Samudragupta. However, multiple sovereign Vakataka kings bore the title *Maharaja*: only Pravarasena I assumed the title *samrat* after performing a *vajapeya* ritual sacrifice. An inscription of Rudrasena's descendant Prithvishena II mentions that the Vakataka kingdom had been prospering for a hundred years, suggesting that the Vakataka rule remained uninterrupted during Rudrasena's reign.
- Matila
- The identity of Matila is not certain. Earlier, Matila was identified with Mattila, who is known from a terracotta seal discovered at Bulandshahr. However, there is no evidence that this Mattila was a ruler, and epigraphist Jagannath Agrawal has dated the seal to the 6th century on palaeographic basis.
- Nagadatta

- Nagadatta is not known from any other inscriptions or coins, but his name has led to suggestions that he may have been the ruler of a Naga branch. D. C. Sircar theorized that he was an ancestor of a family of Gupta viceroys, whose names ended in -datta. Tej Ram Sharma speculates that he may have been a Naga ruler, whose successors were sent as Gupta viceroys in Bengal after the family accepted the Gupta suzerainty.
- Chandravarman
- Chandravarman of Samudragupta's inscription has been identified with Chandravarman, the ruler of Pushkarana (modern Pakhanna) in present-day West Bengal. P. L. Gupta and some earlier scholars have identified this ruler with another Chandravarman, who has been mentioned in an inscription discovered at Mandsaur in present-day Madhya Pradesh. Tej Ram Sharma disputes this identification, arguing that Samudragupta "exterminated" all kings of Aryavarta and annexed their territories, as suggested by the Allahabad Pillar inscription; however, Naravarman - a brother of Chandravarman of Mandsaur - is known to have been ruling as a feudatory in 404 CE.
- Ganapatinaga
- Ganapati-naga is identified as a Naga king. Several coins bearing the legend Ganapati have been discovered at Padmavati, Vidisha, and Mathura. Although these coins do not bear the suffix "naga", they are similar to the ones issued by the other Naga kings such as Skanda-naga, Brihaspati-naga, and Deva-naga. Since hundreds of Ganapati's coins have

been found at Mathura, it appears that he was the ruler of a Naga branch headquartered at Mathura.

- Nagasena
- The 7th century text *Harshacharita* refers to the Naga king Nagasena, who "met with his doom in Padmavati, as his secret plan was divulged by a *sarika* bird". Assuming this describes a historical person, it appears that Nagasena was the ruler of a Naga branch headquartered at Padmavati in present-day Madhya Pradesh.
- Achyuta-nandin
- Achyuta-nandin seems to be same as Achyuta, who is mentioned earlier in the inscription; his name may have been shortened in the earlier verses for metrical purposes. An alternatively theory identifies Achyuta and Nandin as two distinct kings.
- Achyuta was the ruler of Ahichchhatra in present-day Uttar Pradesh, where coins attributed to him have been discovered. These coins bear the legend "Achyu", and are similar to the coins issued by the Naga rulers. This has led to suggestions that the Achyuta-nandin defeated by Samudragupta was the ruler of a Naga branch headquartered at Ahichhatra.
- Balavarman
- V. V. Mirashi identified Bala-varman (or Balavarma) as a ruler of the Magha dynasty of Kosambi. U. N. Roy suggested that Bala-varman may have been an ancestor of the Maukhari kings, who initially served as Gupta vassals, and whose names ended in -varman. Another theory identifies him with the successor of Shridhara-varman, the Shaka ruler of Eran. Samudragupta may have ended the dynasty of

Eran, as suggested by the discovery of his inscription at Eran.

- K. N. Dikshit identified Balavarman with Balavarman, a ruler of the Varman dynasty of Kamarupa; however, Balavarman was not a contemporary of Samudragupta. Moreover, Kamarupa has been mentioned as a distinct frontier kingdom later on in the Allahabad Pillar inscription.

Conquests in the forest region

According to the Allahabad Pillar inscription, Samudragupta reduced all the kings of the forest region (*atavika*) to subservience. This forest region may have been located in central India: the inscriptions of the Parivrajaka dynasty, which ruled in this area, state that their ancestral kingdom was located within the 18 forest kingdoms.

Frontier kings and tribes

The Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions that rulers of several frontier kingdoms and tribal oligarchies paid Samudragupta tributes, obeyed his orders, and performed obeisance before him. The inscription explicitly describes the five kingdoms as frontier territories: the areas controlled by the tribes were also probably located at the frontier of Samudrgupta's kingdom.

Historian Upinder Singh theorizes that the relationship of these frontier rulers to the Gupta emperor had "certain elements of a feudatory relationship". According to historian R. C. Majumdar, it is likely that Samudragupta's conquests in

Aryavarta and Dakshinapatha increased his reputation to such an extent that the frontier rulers and tribes submitted him without a fight.

The frontier kingdoms included:

- Samatata, located in the present-day Bengal.
- Davaka, located in present-day Assam.
- Kamarupa, located in present-day Assam.
- Nepala, located in present-day Nepal. According to one theory, Nepala here refers to the Licchavi kingdom, whose rulers may have been the maternal relatives of Samudragupta.
- Karttripura, probably located in the present-day Uttarakhand: the inscription appears to name frontier kingdoms in geographical order proceeding from Bengal to Assam to Nepal; Uttarakhand would be next in the sequence. A now-obsolete theory identified Karttripura with Kartarpur in present-day Punjab, but Kartarpur was established much later, in the 16th century, by Guru Arjan.

The tribal oligarchies included:

- Malavas: During Samudragupta's period, they were probably headquartered at Karkota-nagara (present-day Nagar Fort in Rajasthan), where several thousands of their coins have been discovered.
- Arjunayanas: Their coins have been found in the Mathura region. According to numismatist John Allan, the Arjunayanas resided in the triangle connecting the present-day Delhi, Jaipur and Agra.

- Yaudheyas: They ruled the area between the Sutlej and the Yamuna rivers after the Kushans. They seem to have become Samudragupta's tributaries.
- Madrakas: They are generally placed between the Ravi and the Chenab rivers.
- Abhiras: Epigraphic and literary evidence suggests that they ruled in western India during Samudragupta's period.
- Sanakanikas: They appear to have ruled the region around Udayagiri in present-day Madhya Pradesh. An inscription found at Udayagiri refers to a Sanakanika chief as a feudatory of Chandragupta II: this chief and his two predecessors are described as "Maharajas", which suggests that Samudragupta allowed the Sanakanika chiefs to rule as his governors after conquering their territory.
- Kakas: They may have been the rulers of the area around the Sanchi hill, which has been mentioned as Kakanada in ancient inscriptions.
- Prarjunas They may be identified as the Prarjunakas mentioned in the *Arthashastra*, but their location is uncertain. Various theories place them in central India, including around the present-day Narsinghpur or Narsinghgarh in Madhya Pradesh.
- Kharaparikas: They may be same as the "Kharaparas" (literally "thief" or "rogue") mentioned in a 14th-century stone inscription found at Batiyagarh (or Battisgarh) in Damoh district. These Kharaparas are variously identified as an indigenous tribe or freebooters of this region.
- Some later sources suggest that the Kharaparas were a foreign tribe (possibly Mongols), and the Dingal-

language texts use the word "Kharapara" as a synonym for "Muslim", but such an identification is not applicable to Samudragupta's period.

- There is also some speculation about the Kharaparikas being same as the Gardabhilas mentioned in the *Puranas*, as the words "Khara" and "Gardabha" both mean "donkey" in Sanskrit. However, very little is known about the Gardabhilas from historical sources.

Relations with other rulers

Samudragupta's inscription mentions that several kings tried to please him by attending on him personally; offering him their daughters in marriage (or, according to another interpretation, gifting him maidens); and seeking the use of the Garuda-depicting Gupta seal for administering their own territories. These kings included "Daivaputra-Shahi-Shahanushahi, Shaka-Murundas, and the rulers of the island countries such as Simhala".

- Daivaputra-Shahi-Shahanushahi
- Numismatist John Allan theorized that Daivaputra, Shahi, and Shahanushahi were three different states; or alternatively, Shahi-Shahanushahi was a single state. Historian D. R. Bhandarkar argued that Daivaputra ("a descendant of Devaputra") cannot be a stand-alone name, and identified Daivaputra-Shahi-Shahanushahi as a single ruler, possibly Kidara I, who had established a new kingdom Gandhara (present-day Afghanistan).

- According to historian Tej Ram Sharma, Daivaputra refers to a Kushan king (Devaputra being a Kushan title); Shahi refers to a sub-branch of the Kushans; and Shahanushahi refers to the Sasanians. These kings controlled parts of present-day Punjab and Afghanistan.
- Historian Ashvini Agrwal theorizes that Kidara, who initially ruled as a vassal of the Sasanian king Shapur II, may have formed an alliance with Samudragupta to overthrow his Sasanian overlord. In *Raghuvamsha*, the Gupta court poet Kalidasa states his hero Raghu defeated the Parasikas (Persians): Agrwal speculates that this description may be inspired from the Kidraite-Gupta victory over the Sasanians.
- According to Abraham Eraly and others, the expression *Devaputra Shāhi Shāhānu Shāhi* evidently designates the Kushan princes, being a deformation of the Kushan regnal titles *Devaputra, Shao and Shaonanoshao*: "Son of God, King, King of Kings". This suggests that by the time of the Allahabad inscription the Kushans still ruled in Punjab, but under the suzerainty of the Gupta Emperor.
- Shaka-Murundas
- Some scholars believe that the term "Shaka-Murundas" refers to a single entity. For example, scholars such as Sten Konow assert that "Murunda" is a Shaka title meaning "lord"; the Kushans also used similar titles (for example, Kanishka is titled a "muroda" in his Zeda inscription).
- Other scholars, such as K. P. Jayaswal, believe that Shakas and Murundas are two different groups of

people. According to this theory, Shakas here most probably refers to the Western Kshatrapa rulers of Ujjain. Jayaswal notes that the *Puranas* mention the rule of 13 Murunda kings, and Hemachandra's *Abhidhana-Chintamani* describes Murunda as people of Lampaka (in present-day Afghanistan). However, Agrwal points out that these sources are of relatively late origin, and it is possible that a branch of the Shakas had come to be known as "Murundas".

- The exact location of the Shakas mentioned in Samudragupta's inscription is not certain. V. A. Smith identified them with the Western Kshatrapas, who controlled the western Malwa and Saurashtra regions. D. R. Bhandarkar alternatively identified the Shaka-Murunda ruler with Shridhara-varman, a Shaka ruler whose inscriptions have been discovered at Sanchi (Kanakerha inscription) and Eran. Eran then came under the direct control of Samudragupta, as attested by his Eran inscription.
- Simhala and other islands
- According to the Chinese sources, Meghavarna, the king of Simhala (present-day Sri Lanka), sought to build a monastery at Bodh Gaya, for the convenience of the pilgrims from his kingdom. He sent rich presents for this purpose, and Samudragupta sanctioned his request to build the monastery. Using poetic exaggeration, Samudragupta's courtier Harishena appears to have described this act of diplomacy as an act of subservience. Similarly, the 7th-century Chinese traveler Xuanzang, who visited this monastery, appears to have regarded the rich presents sent by Meghavarna as tribute: he states

that Meghavarna "gave in tribute to the king of India all the jewels of his country".

- The "other islands" may be the Indianized kingdoms of South-East Asia, but there is no evidence that their rulers were subordinate to Samudragupta. They probably sent embassies to the Gupta empire, and maintained friendly relations. The sea ports of the Gupta Empire, such as Tamralipti, were probably connected to these kingdoms through the marine routes. The widespread use of Sanskrit in these kingdoms may have happened as a result of Gupta influence.

Extent of the empire

Samudragupta's empire included a core territory, located in northern India, which was directly controlled by the emperor. Besides, it comprised a number of monarchical and tribal tributary states. Historian R. C. Majumdar theorizes that Samudragupta directly controlled an area extending from the Ravi River (Punjab) in the west to the Brahmaputra River (Bengal and Assam) in the east, and from the Himalayan foothills in the north to the Vindhya hills in the south. The south-western boundary of his territory roughly followed an imaginary line drawn from present-day Karnal to Bhilsa.

In the south, Samudragupta's empire definitely included Eran in present-day Madhya Pradesh, where his inscription has been found. The Allahabad Pillar inscription suggests that he advanced up to Kanchipuram in the south. However, since the claims in the Allahabad Pillar inscription are from a royal

eulogy, they must be treated with caution. The southern kings were not under his direct suzerainty: they only paid him tribute.

According to historian Kunal Chakrabarti, Samudragupta's military campaigns weakened the tribal republics of present-day Punjab and Rajasthan, but even these kingdoms were not under his direct suzerainty: they only paid him tribute. Samudragupta's claim of control over other kings is questionable. Historian Ashvini Agrawal notes that a gold coin of the Gadahara tribe bears the legend Samudra, which suggests that Samudragupta's control extended up to the Chenab river in the Punjab region.

Some earlier scholars, such as J. F. Fleet believed that Samudragupta had also conquered a part of Maharashtra, based on the identification of Devarashtra with Maharashtra, and Erandapalla with Erandol, where some Gupta-era remains have been found. However, this theory is no longer considered correct.

Coinage

The coinage of the Gupta Empire was initially derived from the coinage of the Kushan Empire, adopting its weight standard, techniques and designs, following the conquests of Samudragupta in the northwest of the subcontinent. The Guptas even adopted from the Kushans the name of *Dinara* for their coinage, which ultimately came from the Roman name *Denarius aureus*. The standard coin type of Samudragupta is highly similar to the coinage of the later Kushan rulers,

including the sacrificial scene over an altar, the depiction of a halo, while differences include the headdress of the ruler (a close-fitting cap instead of the Kushan pointed hat), the Garuda standard instead of the trident, and Samudragupta's jewelry, which is Indian.

The following types of Samudragupta's coins, inscribed with Sanskrit language legends, have been discovered:

- Standard type
- Obverse legend: *Samara-shata-vitata-vijayo-jita-ripurajito-divam-jayati*. Translation: "The unconquered one who has conquered his enemies [and] has continuously attained victories in a hundred battles, wins heaven"; Alternative translation: "The conqueror of the unconquered fortresses of his enemies, whose victory was spread in hundreds of battles, conquers heaven".
- Reverse legend: *Prakramah*
- Archer type
- Depicts Samudragupta standing fully dressed with a bow on his left hand and an arrow on his right hand.
- Obverse legend: *Apratiratha vijitya kshitim sucharitair (or avnipatir) divam Jayati*. Translation: "Unopposed by hostile chariots, conquering the earth, he conquers heaven by his good deeds".
- Reverse legend: *Apratirathah*
- Battle-axe type
- Obverse legend: *Kritanta-parshur-jayatyajitarajajetaji-tah*. Translation: "Wielding the

axe of Kritanta (the god of death), the unconquered conqueror of unconquered kings is victorious"

- Reverse legend: *Kritanta-parashuh*
- Tiger-slayer type
- Depicts the king wearing turban and waist-cloth, and trampling a tiger
- Legend: *Vaghra-prakramah*. Translation: "Having the prowess of a tiger".
- Lyrist type
- Depicts Samudragupta wearing waist-cloth and seated cross-legged on a couch, playing a veena that lies on his knees.
- Legend: the king's name
- Ashvamedha type
- Obverse legend: *Rajadhirajah prithvim avitva divam jayatyahritavaji-medhah* ("the overlord of kings, who has performed the horse-sacrifice, having protected the earth, conquers the heaven") on the reverse.
- Some coins have an alternative legend: *Rajadhirajah prithvim avitva divam jayatya-prativarya-viryah* ("the overlord of kings, of irresistible valour, having protected the earth, wins heaven").
- Reverse legend: *Ashvamedha-prakramah* ("possessing the valour to perform the horse-sacrifice")

Various scholars, including numismatist John Allan, consider that the gold coins bearing the portraits of Chandragupta and Kumaradevi were issued by Samudragupta to commemorate his parents, while others have attributed the issue of these coins to Chandragupta himself.

Inscriptions

Two inscriptions from Samudragupta's reign have been discovered:

- Allahabad Pillar inscription
- Eran stone inscription

Fleet theorized that the Allahabad Pillar inscription was posthumous, and was issued during the reign of Chandragupta II, but modern scholars disagree with this theory.

Two other records are attributed to Samudragupta's reign, but the genuineness of these records is disputed:

- Nalanda inscription, dated to the regnal year 5
- Gaya inscription, dated to the regnal year 9

Both these inscriptions state that they were written at the order of the Gupta officer Gopaswamin. Like the Mathura stone inscription of Chandragupta II, these records describe Samudragupta as the "restorer of the Ashvamedha sacrifice". It seems suspicious that records issued so early in Samudragupta's reign mention this claim, which does not appear in the later Allahabad Pillar inscription. One possibility is that these records were issued during Samudragupta's reign, and were damaged after some time, because of which they were restored during the reign of Chandragupta II.

Eran inscription

At Eran, an inscription by Samudragupta seems to succeed that of a local Saka ruler named Sridharavarman, already known from the Kanakerha inscription at Sanchi and another inscription in Eran. Samudragupta may therefore have ousted Sridharavarman in his campaigns to the West. The Eran Inscription of Samudragupta is presently stored in Kolkata Indian Museum. The inscription, in red sandstone, was found not far to the west of the ruined temple of the boar. It reads:

(Lines 1 to 6, containing the whole of the first verse and the first half of the second, are entirely broken away and lost.)
(Line 7.)— .....in giving gold ..... [by whom] Prithu and Râghava and other kings [were outshone.]
(L. 9.)— . . . . . there was Samudragupta, equal to (the gods) Dhanada and Antaka in (respectively) pleasure and anger; . . . . . by policy; (and) [by whom] the whole tribe of kings upon the earth was [overthrown] and reduced to the loss of the wealth of their sovereignty;—
(L. 13.)— [Who], by . . . . . satisfied by devotion and policy and valour,—by the glories, consisting of the consecration by besprinkling, &c., that belong to the title of 'king,'— (and) by . . . . . combined with supreme satisfaction, — ..... (was) a king whose vigour could not be resisted;—
(L. 17.)— [By whom] there was married a virtuous and faithful wife, whose dower was provided by (his) manliness and prowess; who was possessed of an abundance of [elephants] and horses and money and grain; who delighted in the houses of .....; (and) who went about in the company of many

sons and sons' sons;—
(L. 21.)— Whose deeds in battle (are) kindled with prowess; (whose) . . . . . very mighty fame is always circling round about; and whose enemies are terrified, when they think, even in the intervals of dreaming, of (his). . . . . that are vigorous in war; —
(L. 25.) . . . . . in a place in Airikina (Eran), the city of his own enjoyment. . . . . has been set up, for the sake of augmenting his own fame.
(L. 27.) — . . . . . when the king said . . . . . .

(The rest of the inscription is entirely broken away and lost.)

- —*Eran inscription of Samudragupta*

Religion

Samudragputa's Eran inscription records the installation of a Vishnu idol in a temple. The Nalanda and Gaya inscriptions attributed to Samudragupta explicitly call him a devotee of Vishnu (*parama-Bhagavata*), but the authenticity of these inscriptions is doubtful. He was also tolerant towards Buddhism, and permitted the construction of a Buddhist monastery commissioned by the Anuradhapura king Meghavarna at Bodh Gaya in his territory.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription states that Samudragupta was engaged in the performance of the Brahmanical ceremonies of Sattra (Soma sacrifices) and Diksha. It describes him as "the giver of many hundreds of thousands of cows". The Mathura

stone inscription of his son Chandragupta II also describes him as the giver of "millions of cows and gold". It appears that Samudragupta donated these cows to the Brahmins who officiated his Sattra and Diksha ceremonies. The Eran inscription states that Samudragupta surpassed Prithu, Raghava and other legendary kings in giving gold.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription alludes to his divine kingship, comparing him to the *Parama Purusha* (supreme being), and also with deities such as Dhanada (Kubera), Varuna, Indra, and Antaka (Yama). The Eran inscription states that he was equal to Kubera and Yama in pleasure and anger respectively. The Mathura stone inscription similarly describes him as equal to the deities Kubera, Varuna, Indra, and Yama.

Ashvamedha

Samudragupta performed the Ashvamedha ritual, which was used by the ancient Indian kings to prove their imperial sovereignty, and issued gold coins (see Coinage section) to mark this performance. The copper-plate inscriptions of Samudragupta's granddaughter Prabhavati-Gupta, who was a Vakataka queen, describe him as the performer of multiple horse sacrifices. According to one theory, Samudragupta indeed performed more than one horse sacrifices, as attested by the presence of two different legends on his Ashvamedha coins. Another theory dismisses the claim on Prabhavati-Gupta's inscriptions as an exaggeration or a scribal error since this claim does not appear on the inscriptions of Samudragupta or his successors.

The Mathura stone inscription of Chandragupta II describes Samudragupta as "the restorer of the Ashvamedha sacrifice that had been long in abeyance" (Smith's translation). This claim also appears in the inscriptions of the subsequent Gupta kings, as well as the spurious Gaya and Nalanda inscriptions attributed to Samudragupta. However, several kings including those from Bharashiva, Vakataka, Shalankayana, and Pallava dynasties had had performed Ashvamedha in the preceding years. Different scholars have attempted to explain this anomaly in different ways: H. C. Raychaudhuri suggests that the Gupta court poet did not know about these kings. According to R. C. Majumdar, Samudragupta was the first king several centuries to perform the sacrifice in the Magadha region. Majumdar also theorizes that the Ashvamedha ceremony performed by Bharashiva, Vakataka, and other near-contemporary kings was "more of a religious nature", while Samudragupta's ceremony actually involved proving his imperial sovereignty. Similarly, scholars such as S. K. Aiyangar and D. R. Bhandarkar, theorize that unlike the other kings, Samudragupta performed a "full-fledged" Ashvamedha ceremony. Others, such as V. S. Pathak and Jagannath Agrawal, interpret the verse to mean that Samudragupta performed the horse-sacrifice that lasted for a long-time.

The surviving verses of Samudragupta's own Allahabad Pillar inscription do not mention the Ashvamedha ceremony. According to one theory, this inscription was put up to mark the beginning of the ceremony, as the panegyrics of the sacrificer were an essential part of the Ashvamedha ceremony. It is possible that its first four lines, which are now lost, contained a reference to the ceremony.

Personality

Samudragupta's coins depict him as a man of tall stature and muscular physique. The Allahabad Pillar inscription presents him as a compassionate ruler, stating that his "mind was engaged in providing relief to the low, the poor, the helpless, and the afflicted". It also mentions that he reinstated many royal families which had lost their kingdoms, including the kings defeated by him. At the same time, it states that he maintained strict administration ("Prachanda shasana").

The inscription states that Samudragupta became famous among the learned people because of his poetical works, and earned the epithet "king of poets". This suggests that he composed some poetical works, but none of these works now survive.

The inscription also boasts that Samudragupta put to shame the celestial musician Tumburu and Narada by his lovely performances of music. Samudragupta's musical talents are also corroborated by his gold coins which depict him playing a veena.

The inscription praises Samudragupta's wisdom and intellect, stating that he put to shame the preceptor of the Lord of the Gods (that is, Brihaspati) by his sharp intellect.

Succession

The official records of the Gupta dynasty state that Samudragupta was succeeded by Chandragupta II, who was his son from queen Dattadevi. Based on a reconstruction of the partially-lost Sanskrit play *Devichandraguptam*, a section of modern historians believe that Samudragupta was succeeded by Ramagupta, who was later dethroned by Chandragupta II.

Chapter 3

Kadamba Dynasty

The **Kadambas** (345–525 CE) were an ancient royal family of Karnataka, India, that ruled northern Karnataka and the Konkan from Banavasi in present-day Uttara Kannada district. The kingdom was founded by Mayurasharma in c. 345, and at later times showed the potential of developing into imperial proportions. An indication of their imperial ambitions is provided by the titles and epithets assumed by its rulers, and the marital relations they kept with other kingdoms and empires, such as the Vakatakas and Guptas of northern India. Mayurasharma defeated the armies of the Pallavas of Kanchi possibly with the help of some native tribes and claimed sovereignty. The Kadamba power reached its peak during the rule of Kakusthavarma.

The Kadambas were contemporaries of the Western Ganga Dynasty and together they formed the earliest native kingdoms to rule the land with autonomy. From the mid-6th century the dynasty continued to rule as a vassal of larger Kannada empires, the Chalukya and the Rashtrakuta empires for over five hundred years during which time they branched into minor dynasties. Notable among these are the Kadambas of Goa, the Kadambas of Halasi and the Kadambas of Hangal. During the pre-Kadamba era the ruling families that controlled the Karnataka region, the Mauryas and later the Satavahanas, were not natives of the region and therefore the nucleus of power resided outside present-day Karnataka. The Kadambas were the first indigenous dynasty to use Kannada, the

language of the soil at an administrative level. In the history of Karnataka, this era serves as a broad-based historical starting point in the study of the development of region as an enduring geo-political entity and Kannada as an important regional language.

History

Origin

There are several legends regarding the origin of the Kadambas. According to one such legend the originator of this dynasty was a three-eyed four-armed warrior called Trilochana Kadamba (the father of Mayurasharma) who emerged from the sweat of the god Shiva under a Kadamba tree. Another legend tries to simplify it by claiming Mayurasharma himself was born to Shiva and Bhudevi (goddess of the earth). Other legends tie them without any substance to the Nagas, and the Nandas of northern India. An inscription of c.1189 claims that Kadamba Rudra, the founder of the kingdom, was born in a forest of Kadamba trees. As he had "peacock feather"-like reflections on his limbs, he was called Mayuravarman. From the Talagunda inscription, one more legend informs that the founding king of the dynasty, Mayurasharma was anointed by "the six-faced god of war Skanda".

Historians are divided on the issue of the geographical origin of the Kadambas, whether they were of local origin or earlier immigrants from northern India. The social order (caste) of the Kadamba family is also an issue of debate, whether the founders of the kingdom belonged to the Brahmin caste as

described by the Talagunda inscription, or of local tribal origin. Historians Chopra et al. claim the Kadambas were none other than the Kadambu tribe who were in conflict with the Chera kingdom (of modern Kerala) during the Sangam era. The Kadambus find mention in the Sangam literature as totemic worshipers of the Kadambu tree and the Hindu god Subramanya. According to R.N. Nandi, since the inscription states the family got its name by tending to the totem tree that bore the beautiful Kadamba flowers, it is an indication of their tribal origin. However the historians Sastri and Kamath claim the family belonged to the Brahmin caste, believed in the Vedas and performed Vedic sacrifices. According to the Talagunda and the Gudnapur inscriptions, they belonged to the *Manavya Gotra* and were *Haritiputrās* ("descendants of *Hariti* lineage"), which connected them to the native Chutus of Banavasi, a vassal of the Satavahana empire. According to Rao and Minahan, being native Kannadigas, the Kadambas promptly gave administrative and political importance to their language Kannada after coming to power.

Birth of Kingdom

One of their earliest inscriptions, the Talagunda inscription of crown prince Santivarma (c.450) gives what may be the most possible cause for the emergence of the Kadamba kingdom. It states that Mayurasharma was a native of Talagunda, (in present-day Shimoga district of Karnataka state) and his family got its name from the Kadamba tree that grew near his home. The inscription narrates how Mayurasharma proceeded to Kanchi in c.345 along with his guru and grandfather Veerasharma to pursue his Vedic studies at a *Ghatika* ("school"). There, owing to some misunderstanding between

him and a Pallava guard or at an *Ashvasanstha* ("horse sacrifice"), a quarrel arose in which Mayurasharma was humiliated. Enraged, the Brahmin discontinued his studies, left Kanchi swearing vengeance on the Pallavas and took to arms. He collected a faithful group of followers and routed the Pallava armies near the Srisailam region. After a prolonged period of low intensity warfare against the Pallavas and other smaller kings such as the Brihad-Banas of Kolar region, he proclaimed independence. Unable to contain Mayurasharma, the Pallavas had to accept his sovereignty. The Talagunda inscription also confirms Mayurasharma was the progenitor of the kingdom. The inscription gives a graphic description of the happenings after the Kanchi incident:

That the hand dexterous in grasping the *Kusha* grass, fuel and stones, ladle, melted butter and the oblation vessel, unsheathed a flaming sword, eager to conquer the earth

Thus, according to Ramesh, in an act of righteous indignation was born the first native kingdom of Karnataka, and the Pallava King Skandavarman condescended to recognize the growing might of the Kadambas south of the Malaprabha river as a sovereign power. Majumdar however feels even an inscription as important as the Talagunda pillar inscription leaves many a detail unanswered. Scholars such as Moraes and Sastri opine that Mayurasharma may have availed himself of the confusion in the south that was created by the invasion of Samudragupta who in his Allahabad inscription claims to have defeated Pallava King Vishnugopa of Kanchi. Taking advantage of the weakening of the Pallava power, Mayurasharma appears to have succeeded in establishing a new kingdom. According to epigraphist M.H. Krishna, Mayurasharma further subdued

minor rulers such as the Traikutas, the Abhiras, the Pariyathrakas, the Shakasthanas, the Maukharis, the Punnatas and the Sendrakas. The fact that Mayurasharma had to travel to distant Kanchi for Vedic studies gives an indication that Vedic lore was quite rudimentary in the Banavasi region at that time. The Gudnapur inscription which was discovered by epigraphist B.R. Gopal states that Mauryasharma, whose grandfather and preceptor was Veerasharma and his father was Bandhushena, developed the character of a Kshatriya (warrior caste). Sen feels the successor of Mayurasharma, Kangavarma changed his surname from "Sharma" to "Varma".

Expansion

Mayurasharma was succeeded by his son Kangavarma in c. 365. He had to fight the Vakataka might to protect his kingdom (also known as Kuntala country). According to Jouveau-Dubreuil he was defeated by the King Prithvisena but managed to maintain his freedom. Majumdar feels Kangavarma battled with King Vidyasena of the Basin branch of the Vakataka kingdom with no permanent results. His son Bhageerath who came to power in c.390 is said to have retrieved his fathers losses. According to Kamath, the Talagunda inscription describes Bhageerath as the sole "lord of the Kadamba land" and the "great Sagara" (*lit*, "great Ocean") himself indicating he may have retrieved their losses against the Vakatakas. But contemporary though Vakataka inscriptions do not confirm this. His son Raghu died fighting the Pallavas in c. 435 though some inscriptions claim he secured the kingdom for his family. He was succeeded by his younger brother Kakusthavarma in c.435. Kakusthavarma was the most powerful ruler of the dynasty. According to Sastri and Moraes, under the rule of

Kakusthavarma, the kingdom reached its pinnacle of success and the Talagunda record calls him the "ornament of the family". The Halasi and Halmidi inscriptions also hold him in high esteem.

From the Talagunda inscription it is known that he maintained marital relations with even such powerful ruling families as the imperial Guptas of the northern India. One of his daughters was married to King Madhava of the Ganga dynasty. According to the Desai one of his daughters was married to Kumara Gupta's son Skanda Gupta (of the Gupta dynasty), and from Balaghat inscription of Vakataka king Prithvisena we know another daughter called Ajitabhattarika was married to the Vakataka prince Narendrasena. He maintained similar relations with the Bhatari vassal and the Alupas of South Canara. According to Desai and Panchamukhi evidence from Sanskrit literature indicates that during this time the notable Sanskrit poet Kalidasa visited the Kadamba court. Moraes and Sen feel the visit happened during the reign of Bhageerath. According to Sen, Kalidasa was sent by Chandragupta II Virakmaditya to conclude a marriage alliance with the Kadambas.

His successor Santivarma (c. 455) was known for his personal charm and beauty. According to an inscription he wore three crowns (*pattatraya*) to display his prosperity, thus "attracting the attention of his enemies", the Pallavas. When the Pallava threat loomed, He divided his kingdom in c.455 and let his younger brother Krishnavarma rule over the southern portion and deal with the Pallavas. The branch is called the Triparvata branch and ruled from either Devagiri in the modern Dharwad district or Halebidu. Majumdar considers Krishnavarma's rule

as somewhat obscure due to lack of his inscriptions though the records issued by his sons credit him with efficient administration and an *ashvamedha* (horse sacrifice). It is known that he possibly lost his life in battle with the Pallavas. According to the Hebbatta record his successor and son Vishnuvarma had to accept the suzerainty of the Pallavas despite showing initial allegiance to his uncle Santivarma ruling from Banavasi whom he described in an earlier record as "lord of the entire Karnata country". In c.485, his son Simhavarma came to power but maintained a low profile relationship with Banavasi. In the northern part of the kingdom (the Banavasi branch), Santivarma's brother Shiva Mandhatri ruled from c.460 for more than a decade. In c. 475 Santivarma's son Mrigeshavarma came to the throne and faced the Pallavas and Gangas with considerable success. The Halasi plates describes him the "destroyer of the eminent family of the Gangas" and the "destructive fire" (*pralayaanala*) to the Pallavas. His queen Prabhavati of the Kekaya family bore him a son called Ravivarma. Mrigeshavarma was known to be a scholar and an expert in riding horses and elephants.

After Kakusthavarma only Ravivarma (c. 485) was able to build the kingdom back to its original might during a long rule lasting up to c. 519. Numerous inscriptions from his rule, starting from fifth up to the thirty-fifth regnal years give a vivid picture of his successes which was marked by a series of clashes within the family, and also against the Pallavas and the Gangas. He is credited with a victory against the Vakatakas as well. A Mahadeva temple constructed during his rule finds mention in a Greek writing of the period. According to the Gudnapur inscription, lesser rulers such as the Punnatas, the Alupas, the Kongalvas and the Pandyas of Uchangi were dealt

with successfully. The crux of the kingdom essentially consisted of significant areas of the deccan including large parts of modern Karnataka. King Ravivarma of the Banavasi branch killed king Vishnuvarma of the Triparvata branch according to Moraes and successfully dealt with a rebelling successors of Shiva Mandhatri at Ucchangi. The Pallava king Chandadanda (another name for Pallava king Santivarman) also met the same fate according to Sathianathaier. Ravivarma left two of his brothers, Bhanuvarma and Shivaratha to govern from Halasi and Ucchangi.

Decline

After Ravivarma's death, he was succeeded by his peaceful son Harivarma in c. 519 according to the Sangolli inscription. According to the Bannahalli plates, Harivarma was killed by a resurgent Krishnavarma II (son of Simhavarma) of the Triparvata branch around c.530 when he raided Banavasi, thus uniting the two branches of the kingdom. Around c.540 the Chalukyas who were vassals of the Kadambas and governed from Badami conquered the entire kingdom. The Kadambas thereafter became vassals of the Badami Chalukyas. In later centuries, the family fragmented into numerous minor branches and ruled from Goa, Halasi, Hangal, Vainad, Belur, Bankapura, Bandalike, Chandavar and Jayantipura (in Odisha). That the Kadambas of Banavasi were a prosperous kingdom is attested to by the famous Aihole inscription of the Chalukyas which describes Banavasi in these terms:

Resembling the city of gods and a girdle of swans playing on the high waves of the river Varada

Administration

The Kadamba kings, like their predecessors the Satavahanas, called themselves *Dharmamaharajas* (*lit*, "Virtuous kings") and followed them closely in their administrative procedures. The kings were well read and some were even scholars and men of letters. Inscriptions describe the founding king Mayurasharma as "Vedangavaidya Sharada" ("master of the Vedas"), Vishnuvarma was known for his proficiency in grammar and logic, and Simhavarma was called "skilled in the art of learning".

This wisdom and knowledge from the ancient Hindu texts called (the *Smritis*) provided guidance in governance. Mores identified several important positions in the government: the prime minister (*Pradhana*), steward of household (*Manevergade*), secretary of council (*Tantrapala* or *Sabhakarya Sachiva*), scholarly elders (*Vidyavriddhas*), physician (*Deshamatya*), private secretary (*Rahasyadhikritha*), chief secretary (*Sarvakaryakarta*), chief justice (*Dharmadhyaksha*) above whom was the king himself, other officials (*Bhojaka* and *Ayukta*), revenue officers (*Rajjukas*) and the writers and scribes (*Lekhakas*). The Gavundas formed the elite land owners who were the intermediaries between the king and the farmers collecting taxes, maintaining revenue records and providing military support to the royal family. The army consisted of officers such as *Jagadala*, *Dandanayaka* and *Senapathi*. The organization was based on the strategy called "Chaurangabala". Guerrilla warfare was not unknown and may have been used often to gain tactical advantage.

A crown prince (*Yuvaraja*) from the royal family often helped the king in central administration at the royal capital. Some governed in the far off provinces. This experience not only provided future security and know-how for the king to be, but also kept administration controls within trusted family members. This is seen in the case of kings Shantivarma, Kakusthavarma and Krishnavarma. King Kakusthavarma had appointed his son Krishnavarma as viceroy of Triparvatha region. King Ravivarma's brothers Bhanu and Shivaratha governed over Halasi and Uchangi provinces respectively. Some regions continued to be under hereditary ruling families such as the Alupas, the Sendrakas, the Kekeyas and the Bhataris. While Banavasi was the nerve center of power, Halasi, Triparvata and Uchangi were important regional capitals. The kingdom was divided into provinces (*Mandalas* or *Desha*). Under a province was a district (*Vishayas*), nine of which have been identified by Panchamukhi. Under a district was a Taluk (*Mahagramas*) comprising numerous villages under which were the villages in groups of ten (*Dashagrama*). The smallest unit was the village (*Grama*) which appears to have enjoyed particular freedoms under the authority of headman (*Gramika*).

Apart from the various divisions and sub-divisions of the kingdom, there was a concept of urban settlement. The fifth-century Birur copper plate inscription of king Vishnuvarma describes Banavasi as "the ornament of *Karnata desa*, adorned with eighteen *mandapikas*" (toll collection centers) indicating it was a major trade center at that time. Numerous inscriptions make reference to the rulers at Banavasi as "excellent lords of the city" (*puravaresvara*). Excavations have revealed that Banavasi was a settlement even during the Satavahana period. By the fifth century, it was a fortified settlement and the

Kadamba capital (*Kataka*). A later inscriptions of c.692 of the Chalukyas refer to Banavasi and its corporate body (*Nagara*) as a witness to the granting of a village to a Brahmin by the monarch. A reference to the mercantile class (*Setti*) further indicates the commercial importance of Banavasi.

One sixth of land produce was collected as tax. Other taxes mentioned in inscriptions were the levy on land (*Perjunka*), social security tax paid to the royal family (*Vaddaravula*), sales tax (*Bilkoda*), land tax (*Kirukula*), betel tax (*Pannaya*) and professional taxes on traders such as oilmen, barbers and carpenters. Inscriptions mention many more taxes such as internal taxes (*Kara* and *anthakara*), tax on eleemosynary holdings (*panaga*), presents to kings (*Utkota*) and cash payments (*Hiranya*). The capital Banavasi had eighteen custom houses (*mandapika*) that levied taxes on incoming goods. In recognition of military or protective service provided by deceased warriors, the state made social service grants (*Kalnad* or *Balgacu*) that supported their family. In addition to erecting a hero stone which usually included an inscription extolling the virtues of the hero, the grant would be in the form of land. Such land grant could be as small as a plot, as large as several villages, or even a large geographical unit depending on the heroes status.

Economy

Inscriptions and literature are the main source of information about the economy and the factors that influenced it. According to Adiga, from studies conducted by historians and epigraphists such as Krishna, Kalburgi, Kittel, Rice, B.R.

Gopal and Settar, it is clear the kingdom depended on revenues from both agricultural and pastoral elements. Numerous inscriptions, mainly from the modern Shimoga, Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwad and Uttara Kannada regions (the ancient divisions of Belvola-300, Puligere-300, Banavasi-12,000) mention cattle raids, cowherds and shepherds. The numerous hero stones to those who fought in cattle raids was an indication of not only lawlessness but also of the importance of herding. The mention of the terms *gosai* (female *goyiti*), *gosasa*, *gosasi* and *gosahasra* in the adjective, the imposition of taxes on milk and milk products, the existence of large cattle herds and the gifting of a thousand cows as a mark of the donors affluence (*gosahasram pradarum*) indicate cow herding was an important part of the economy. There are records that mention the shepherd settlements (*kuripatti*), cowherd settlements (*turpatti*) and numerous references to small hamlets (*palli*).

Mixed farming, a combination of grazing and cultivation, mostly controlled by the wealthy Gavunda peasantry (today's Gowdas), seems to be the thing to do, for both the quantum of grain produced and number of cattle head determined opulence. There are several records that mention the donation of both gracing and cultivable land in units of *kolagas* or *khandugas* to either those who fought cattle thieves or to their families. A nomadic way of life is not prevalent in most communities, with the exception of hill tribes called Bedas. A semi-nomadic community, according to Durrett, they frequently depended on cattle thieving from outlying farms and the abduction of women. The Bedas subsisted by selling to merchants stolen cattle and such produce from the forest as

meat, sandalwood and timber, and crops from disorganized agriculture.

From inscriptions three types of land are evident; wet or cultivable land (*nansey*, *bede*, *gadde* or *nir mannu*) usually used to cultivate paddy (called *akki gadde*,*akki galdege* or *bhatta mannu*) or a tall stout grain yielding grass called *sejje*; dry land (*punsey*, rarely mentioned) and garden land (*totta*). A sixth-century grant refers to garden land that grew sugarcane (*iksu*). Other crops that were also cultivated were barley (*yava*), areca nut (*kramuka*), fallow millet (*joladakey*), wheat (*godhuma*), pulses (*radaka*), flowers were mostly for temple use and such lands called *pundota*, fruits such as plantains (*kadali*) and coconuts are also mentioned.

Village (*palli*) descriptions in lithic and copper plate records, such as the Hiresakuna 6th-century copper plates from Soraba, included its natural (or man made) bounding landmarks, layout of agricultural fields, repairs to existing and newly constructed water tanks, irrigation channels and streams, soil type and the crops grown. Repairs to tanks and construction of new ones was a preoccupation of elite, from kings to the *Mahajanas*, who claimed partial land ownership or a percentage of produce irrigated from the tank or both. Taxes were levied on newly irrigated lands, an indication the rulers actively encourage the conversion of dry land to cultivable wet land. An important distinction is made between types of landholdings: *Brahmadeya* (individual) and *non-Brahmadeya* (collective) and this is seen in inscriptions as early as the third-fourth century in South India. Records such as the Shikaripura Taluk inscription indicate occasionally women were village headmen and counselors, and held land (*gavundi*).

Functioning purely on the excess produce of the rural hinterland were the urban centers, the cities and towns (*mahanagara*, *pura*, and *Polal*) that often find mention in Kannada classics such as *Vaddaradhane* (c. 900) and *Pampa Bharata* (c. 940). References to townships with specialized classes of people such as the diamond and cloth merchants and their shops, merchant guilds (corporate bodies), important temples of worship and religious hubs, palaces of the royalty, vassals and merchants (*setti*), fortifications, courtesan streets, and grain merchants and their markets are a clear indication that these urban entities were the centers of administrative, religious and economic activity.

Culture

Religion

The end of the Satavahana rule in the third century coincided with the advent of two religious phenomena in the Deccan and South India: the spread of Brahminical Hinduism, and Jainism and Buddhism. This was a direct result of the Gupta dynasties ardent patronage to Hinduism in northern India and their aversion to other religions. According to Sastri, till about the fifth century, South India witnessed a harmonious growth of these religions and the sects related to them without hindrance. Appeasement of local deities and local practices which included offerings of sacrifices often went alongside popular Vedic gods such as Muruga, Shiva, Vishnu and Krishna. However, from the seventh century onward, the growing popularity of Jainism and Buddhism became a cause

for concern to the Hindu saints who saw the growth of these new faiths as heretic to mainstream Hinduism. This new found Hindu resurgence, especially in Tamil country, was characterized by public debates and enthusiastic rebuttals by itinerant saints. Their main purpose was to energize and revive Hindu Bhakti among the masses and bring back followers of sects considered primitive, such as the Kalamukhas, Kapalikas and Pasupatas, into mainstream Hinduism.

The Kadambas were followers of Vedic Hinduism as evidenced by their inscriptions. The situation was the same with their immediate neighbors, the Gangas and the Pallavas. According to Adiga, their patronage to Brahmins well versed in the Vedas is all too evident. Inscriptions narrate various land grants to Brahmins that specify their lineage (*gotra*) as well as Vedic specialization. According to Sircar, the early rulers called themselves *Brahmanya* or *Parama-brahmanya*, an indication of their propensity toward Vaishnavism (a branch of Hinduism). The founding king Mayurasharma was, according to the Talagunda inscription, a Brahmin by birth though his successors may have assumed the surname*Varma* to indicate their change to Kshatriya (warrior) status. An inscription of Vishnuvarma describes him as the "protector of the excellent Brahmana faith". His father Krishnavarma-I performed the Vedic *ashvamedha* ("Horse sacrifice"). There are numerous records that record grants made to Brahmins. According to Sircar, some fifth and sixth century inscriptions have an invocation of *Hari-Hara-Hiranyagarbha* and *Hara-Narayana Brahman* (Hari and Hara are another name of the Hindu gods Vishnu and Shiva).

The Talagunda inscription starts with an invocation of the Hindu god Shiva while the Halmidi and Banavasi inscriptions start with an invocation of the god Vishnu. Madhukeshvara (a form of Shiva) was their family deity and numerous donations were made to the notable Madhukeshvara temple in Banavasi. Inscriptions mention various Shaiva sects (worshipers of the god Shiva) such as Goravas, Kapalikas, Pasupatas and Kalamukhas. Famous residential schools of learning existed in Balligavi and Talagunda. Vedic education was imparted in places of learning called *Agrahara* and *Ghatika*. However, they were tolerant to other faiths. The Kadamba kings appear to have encouraged Jainism as well. Some records of King Mrigeshavarma indicate describe donations to Jain temples and that King Ravivarma held a Jain scholar in high esteem. Names of such noted Jain preceptors as Pujyapada, Niravadya Pandita and Kumaradatta find mention in their inscriptions. Jainas occupied commanding posts of importance in their armies. According to Adiga, image worship, which was originally prohibited, was now popularized among the common man and the monks. This helped raise funds for the construction of Jain temples (*Chaitya*). Installation of images of Jain monks (*Jaina*) in temples and a steady move toward ritualistic worship among the laymen undermined the concept of "quest for salvation" and the ascetic vigor of the religion.

Grants were made to Buddhist centers as well. According to Kamath, the royal capital Banavasi had long been a place of Buddhist learning. In the seventh century, the Chinese embassy Xuanzang described Banavasi as a place of one hundred *Sangharamas* where ten thousand scholars of both the Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism lived. However, according to Ray, while there is evidence to prove that certain

pre-Kadamba royal families, such as the Mauryas and Chutus may have patronized Buddhism, there is not much to say regarding the ruling Kadamba family, vast majority of whose inscriptions are Brahminical grants. In fact, according to Ray, the traces of Buddhist stupa sites that have been discovered in Banavasi are located outside the town.

Society

The caste system was prevalent in the organized Hindu society with the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas at the top. This had a deep impact on such socially important events as marriage. Even Jainism and Buddhism which initially found popularity by avoiding social hierarchy began to develop the trappings of a caste-based society. This particular feature was, according to Singh, a unique feature of Jainism in what is modern-day Karnataka during the early medieval period. Both the sects of Jainism, the Digambara and the Svetambara followed a strict qualification process for persons worthy of initiation. Jinasena's classic *Adipurana* counts purity of ancestry, physical health and soundness of mind as the main attributes that made a person worthy of such initiation. Both Jinasena and Ravisena (author of *Padmapurana*) discuss the existence of a *varna* (distinction or caste) based society and the responsibilities of each *varna*.

Majumdar notes that the Buddhist and Jain literature of the period accounts for the four *varna* by placing the Kshatriya above the Brahmin. While the Brahminical literature points to a tradition that permitted a Brahmin man to marry a woman of Kshatriya caste, a Brahmin woman was not allowed to marry a non-Brahmin man. Just the contrary seems to be the case with

Buddhist and Jain literature which deema the marriage of a Brahmin man to Kshatriya woman as unacceptable but that of a Kshatriya man to a Brahmin woman as acceptable. Thus a caste system was in play with all the three main religions of the times. However, Majumdar does point out the highly assimilate nature of the Hindu society where all the early invaders into India, such as the Kushans, the Greeks, the Sakas and the Parthians were all absorbed into the Hindu society without a trace of their earlier practices.

A unique feature of medieval Indian society was the commemoration of the deceased hero by the erection of memorial stones ("hero stone"). These stones, the inscriptions and relief sculptures on them were meant to deify the fallen hero. According to Upendra Singh, The largest concentration of such stones, numbering about 2650 and dated to between the fifth and thirteenth centuries, are found in the modern Karnataka region of India. While most were dedicated to men, a few interesting ones are dedicated to women and pets. The Siddhenahalli, the Kembalu and the Shikaripura hero stones extol the qualities of women who lost their lives fighting cattle rustlers or enemies. The Gollarahatti and the Atakur inscription are in memory of a dog that died fighting wild boar, and the Tambur inscription of a Kadamba king of the Goa branch describes his death from sorrow of losing his pet parrot to a cat, and the Kuppatur stone was in memory of a bonded servant who was given the honorific "slayer of the enemy" (*ripu-mari*) for bravely fighting and killing a man-eater Tiger with his club before succumbing to his injuries.

According to Altekar, the practice of *sati* appears to have been adopted well after the Vedic period, because there was no

sanction for the practice in the funeral hymns of the Rig Veda. According to him, even in the Atharva Veda, there is only a passing reference of widow being required to lie by the side of her husband's corpse on the funeral pyre, then alight from it before it was lit, for the chanting of hymns to commence that blessed her with future wealth and children. This was an indication that window remarriage was in vogue. Altekar points out that even the authors of the *Dharmasutras* (400 BCE – c. 100)and the *Smritis* (c.100-c.300), such as Manu and Yagnavalkya, do not make any mention of any ritual resembling *sati* in their description of the duties of women and widows in society, but rather prescribed the path of worldly renunciation as worthy. It is from about c. 400 that the practice of *sati* begins to appear in the literature of Vatsyayana, Bhasa (*Dutagatotkacha* and *Urubhanga*), Kalidasa (*Kumarasambhava*) and Shudraka (*Mirchchhakatika*), with a real case in c. 510 when deceased general Goparaja's wife immolated herself on her husband's pyre. Then around 606, the mother of King Harshavardhana decided to predecease her terminally ill husband.

This however did not find immediate support with noted poets such as Bana (c.625) and other tantra writers who considered *sati* inhuman and immoral. However around c. 700, the tide began to turn in northern India, especially in Kashmir, but found a later stronghold in Rajasthan. The belief in *sati* began to appeal, especially to the warrior classes, and the theory that performing *sati* cleansed the deceased husband of earthly sins and assured the couple a place in heaven caught on. Occasionally concubines, mothers, sisters, sisters-in-law and even ministers, servants and nurses joined in the act. This took its time to reach the Deccan (Kadamba territory) and the

deep south (Tamil country) where the earliest cases, voluntary as they were, are seen by about c.1000. What was once a Kshatriya only practice came to be adopted by the Brahmins and even some Jains from around c. 1000. In the modern Karnataka region (Kadamba territory), there are only eleven cases between c.1000-c.1400 and forty-one cases between c.1400 – c.1600, mostly in the warrior communities indicating an overall lack of appeal.

Physical education was very popular with men. The book *Agnipurana* encouraged men to avoid calisthenics with either partially digested food in their body or on a full stomach. Bathing with cold water after exercises was considered unhealthy. Medieval sculptures depict youth in physical combat training, doing gymnastics such as lifting the weight of the body with both hands, and doing muscular exercises such as bending a crowbar. The terms *malla* and *jatti* occur often in literature indicating wrestling was a popular sport with the royalty and the commoners. Wrestlers of both genders existed, the woman fighters meant purely for the entertainment to a male audience. Several kings had titles such as *ahavamalla* ("warrior-wrestler"), *tribhuvanamalla* ("wrestler of the three worlds"). The book *Akhyanakamanikosa* refers to two types of combative sports, the *mushtiyuddha* ("fist-fight") and *mallayuddha* (or *mallakalaga*, "wrestling fight"). Wrestlers were distinguished based on their body weight, age, skill, proficiency and stamina. Those who exemplified themselves were recognized and maintained on specific diets.

Much of the information we get about activities such as archery and hunting is from classics such as the *Agni Purana* (post 7th century) and others. The *Agni Purana* says "one who

has made the vision of both of his mental and physical eyes steady can conquer even the god of death". An archers proficiency, which depended as much on his footwork as on his fingers and keen eyesight, was proven if he could hit bullseye by just looking down at the target's reflection (*Chhaya-Lakshya* in *Adipurana* of c. 941, or *Matsya-vedha* in *Manasollasa* of c. 1129). Additional information is available in medieval sculptures which depict various archery scenes including one where a lady is taking aim from a chariot. Hunting was a favorite pass time of royalty in forest preserves. It served as entertainment, physical exercise and a test of endurance (*mrigiyavinoda* and *mrigiyavilasa*). The medieval sculptors spared no effort in depicting hunting scenes. The *Manasollasa* describes twenty one types of hunt including ambushing deer at waterholes with the hunting party dressed in green and concealed in the hollows of trees. It mentions a special breed of hunting dogs chosen from places such as the modern Jalandhar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha which were preferred for their stamina in chasing and cornering the prey. According to the *Vikramankadevacharita* queens and courtesans accompanied the king on horseback.

Architecture

According to Kamath, the Kadambas are the originators of the Karnataka architecture. According to Moraes their architectural style had a few things in common with the Pallava style. Kamath points out that their *Vimana*style (sanctum with its superstructure) is a Kadamba invention. A good example of this construction is seen in the Shankaradeva temple at Kadarolli in the modern Belgaum district. The structures themselves were simplistic with a square

garbhagriha (sanctum) with an attached larger hall called *mantapa*. The superstructure (*Shikhara*) over the sanctum is pyramidal with horizontal non-decorative stepped stages tipped at the a pinnacle with a *Kalasha* (or *Stupika*).

The beginnings of Kadamba architecture can be traced to the fourth century based on evidence in the Talagunda pillar inscription of c. 450. The inscription makes mention of a Mahadeva temple of the Sthanagundur *Agrahara* which Adiga identifies with the protected monument, the Praneshvara temple at Talagunda. The Praneshvara temple bares inscriptions of Queen Prabhavati (of King Mrigeshavarma) from the late fifth century and of their son King Ravivarma. From these inscriptions, Adiga concludes the temple existed in the late fourth century. Further, according to Adiga, the pillar inscription supports the claim that the earliest structure existed there as early as the third century and was under the patronage of the Chutu Satakarnis of Banavasi.

Most of their extant constructions are seen in Halasi and surrounding areas with the oldest one ascribed to King Mrigeshavarma. Other notable temples in Halasi include the Hattikesavara temple with perforated screens by the doors, the Kallesvara temple with octagonal pillars, the Bhuvaraha Narasimha temple and the Ramesvara temple which shows a *Sukhanasa* projection (small tower) over the vestibule (*Ardhamantapa*) that connects the sanctum to the hall. All temples at Halasi have pillars with decorative capitals. The Kadamba style of tower was popular several centuries later and are seen in the Lakshmi Devi Temple at Doddagaddavalli (built by the Hoysalas in the 12th century) and the Hemakuta group of temples in Hampi built in the 14th century. In addition to

temples, according to the art historian K.V. Soudara Rajan, the Kadambas created three rock-cut Vedic cave temples cut out of laterite at Arvalem in Goa. Like their temples, the caves too have an *Ardhamantapa* ("half mantapa") with plain pillars and a sanctum which contain images of Surya (the sun god), Shiva and Skanda.

In later centuries, Kadamba architecture was influenced by the ornate architectural style of their overlords, the Kalyani Chalukyas (Later Chalukyas). The best representations of this style are seen in the Mahadeva temple at Tambdi Surla in modern Goa built with an open *mantapa* in the late 12th-13th century by the Kadambas of Goa; the single shrined (*ekakuta*) Tarakeshvara temple (modeled after the Mahadeva Temple, Itagi) built prior to c.1180 with an open *mantapa* (and an ornate domical ceiling), a closed *mantapa*, a linked gateway and a Nandi *mantapa* (hall with the sculpture of the Nandi the bull); the Madhukeshwara temple at Banavasi which shows several Later Chalukyas style additions over a pre-existing Early Chalukya surroundings; and the 12th century, three shrined (*Trikutachala*) Kadambeshvara temple with open and closed *mantapa* at Rattihalli.

Language

According to the epigraphist D. C. Sircar, inscriptions have played a vital role in the re-construction of history of literature in India as well as the political history of the kingdoms during the early centuries of the first millennium. Some inscriptions mention names of noted contemporary and earlier poets (Aihole inscription of Ravikirti which mentions the Sanskrit poets Kalidasa and Bharavi). The development of versification and

the *Kavya* style ("epic") of poetry appears first in inscriptions before making their appearance in literature. Further some *Kavya* poets were the authors of inscriptions too (Trivikramabhatta composed the Bagumra copper plates and the Sanskrit classic *Nalachampu*). In the early centuries of the first millennium, inscriptions in the Deccan were predominantly in the Prakrit language. Then came a slow change with records appearing in bilingual Sanskrit-Prakrit languages around the middle of the fourth century, where the genealogy information is in Sanskrit while the functional portion was in Prakrit. From around the fifth century, Prakrit fell out of use entirely and was replaced by the Dravidian languages. In the Kannada speaking regions in particular, the trend was to inscribe in Sanskrit entirely or in Sanskrit-Kannada.

The credit of the development of Kannada as a language of inscriptions between the fourth and sixth centuries goes to the Kadambas, the Gangas and the Badami Chalukyas. Among the early ones are the Halmidi stone inscription and the Tagare copper plates which are ascribed to the Kadambas. While the main content of the inscriptions were in Sanskrit, the boundary specifications of the land grant were in Kannada. In subsequent two centuries, not only do inscriptions become more numerous and longer in size, these inscriptions show a significant increase in the usage of Kannada, though the invocatory, the implicatory and the panegyric verses are in Sanskrit. Settar points out that there are inscriptions where the implicatory verses have been translated verbatim into Kannada also. In fact Kannada composed in verse meters start making their appearance in inscriptions even before being committed to literature.

Inscriptions in Sanskrit and Kannada are the main sources of the Kadamba history. The Talagunda, Gudnapur, Birur, Shimoga, Muttur, Hebbatta, Chandravalli, Halasi and Halmidi inscription are some of the important inscriptions that throw light on this ancient ruling family of Karnataka. Inscriptions of the Kadambas in Sanskrit and Kannada ascribed to Kadamba branches have been published by epigraphists Sircar, Desai, Gai and Rao of the Archaeological Survey of India. The Kadambas minted coins, some of which have Kannada legends which provide additional numismatic evidence of their history. The Kadambas (along with their contemporary Ganga dynasty of Talakad) were the first rulers to use Kannada as an additional official administrative language, as evidenced by the Halmidi inscription of c. 450. The historian Kamath claims Kannada was the common language of the region during this time. While most of their inscriptions are in Sanskrit, three important Kannada inscriptions from the rule of the early Kadambas of Banavasi have been discovered.

Recent reports claim that the discovery of a 5th-century Kadamba copper coin in Banavasi with Kannada script inscription *Srimanaragi* indicating that a mint may have existed in Banavsi that produced coins with Kannada legends at that time. The discovery of the Talagunda Lion balustrade inscription at the Praneshvara temple during excavations in 2013, and its publication by the ASI in 2016, has shed more light on the politics of language during the early Kadamba era. The bilingual inscription of c.370-380 written in Sanskrit and Kannada is now though to be the oldest inscription in the Kannada language.

In modern times

Kadambotsava ("The festival of Kadamba") is a festival that is celebrated every year by the Government of Karnataka in honor of this kingdom. The creation of the first native Kannada kingdom is celebrated by a popular Kannada film, *Mayura* starring Raj Kumar. It is based on a popular novel written in 1933 with the same name by Devudu Narasimha Sastri. On 31 May 2005 Defence minister of India Pranab Mukherjee commissioned India's most advanced and first dedicated military naval base named INS Kadamba in Karwar.

The Indian state government of Goa owned bus service is named after the Kadambas Dynasty and is known as Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTCL).The royal lion emblem of the Kadambas is used a logo on its buses. The lion emblem logo became an integral part of KTCL since its inception in 1980 when the Corporation was set up to provide better public transport service.

Chapter 4

Vakataka Dynasty

The **Vakataka Empire** (IAST: *Vākā□aka*) was a dynasty from the Indian subcontinent that originated from the Deccan in the mid-3rd century CE. Their state is believed to have extended from the southern edges of Malwa and Gujarat in the north to the Tungabhadra River in the south as well as from the Arabian Sea in the west to the edges of Chhattisgarh in the east. They were the most important successors of the Satavahanas in the Deccan and contemporaneous with the Guptas in northern India.

The Vakataka dynasty was a Brahmin dynasty.

Little is known about Vindhyashakti (c.250 – c.270 CE), the founder of the family. Territorial expansion began in the reign of his son Pravarasena I. It is generally believed that the Vakataka dynasty was divided into four branches after Pravarasena I. Two branches are known and two are unknown. The known branches are the Pravarapura-Nandivardhana branch and the Vatsagulma branch. The Gupta emperor Chandragupta II married his daughter into Vakataka royal family and with their support annexed Gujarat from the Saka Satraps in 4th century CE. The Vakataka power was followed by that of the Chalukyas of Badami in Deccan. The Vakatakas are noted for having been patrons of the arts, architecture and literature. They led public works and their monuments are a visible legacy. The rock-cut Buddhist viharas and chaityas of Ajanta Caves (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) were built under the patronage of Vakataka emperor, Harishena.

Vindhyashakti

The founder of the dynasty was Vindhyashakti (250-270), whose name is derived from the name of the goddess Vindhyavashini. The dynasty may be originated there. Almost nothing is known about Vindhyashakti, the founder of the Vakatakas. In the Cave XVI inscription of Ajanta he was described as the *banner of the Vakataka family* and a *Dvija*. It is stated in this inscription that he added to his power by fighting great battles and he had a large cavalry. But no regal title is prefixed to his name in this inscription. The Puranas say that he ruled for 96 years. He was placed variously at south Deccan, Madhya Pradesh and Malwa. K.P. Jayaswal attributes Bagat, a village in the Jhansi district as the home of Vakatakas. But after refuting the theory regarding the northern home of the Vakatakas, V.V. Mirashi points out that the earliest mention of the name Vakataka occurs in an inscription found on a fragment of a pillar at Amravati which records the gift of a *Grihapati* (householder) Vakataka and his two wives. This Grihapati in all probability was the progenitor of Vidhyashakti. It appears from the Puranas that Vindhyasakti was a ruler of Vidisha (in the present day Madhya Pradesh state) but that is not considered to be correct.

As per Dr Mirashi, who has rejected the identification of Rudra deva in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta with Rudra sena I. He has also pointed out there are no coins of Vakataka and there are no inscriptions of them in the north of Vindhyas. Hence, a south home of Vakatakas is correct. However, it is true that they have ruled on some of these places, since the epigraphs were available in MP etc.

Pravarasena I

The next ruler was Pravarasena I (270-330), who maintained the realm as a great power, he was the first Vakataka ruler, who called himself a *Samrat* (universal ruler) and conducted wars with the Naga kings. He has become an emperor in his own right, perhaps the only emperor in the dynasty, with his kingdom embracing a good portion of North India and whole of Deccan. He carried his arms to the Narmada in the north and annexed the kingdom of Purika which was being ruled by a king named Sisuka. In any case, he certainly ruled from Bundelkhand in the north (though Dr Mirashi does not accept that he has crossed the Narmada) to the present Andhra Pradesh in the south. The puranas assign him a reign of 60 years.

As per V.V. Mirashi, it is unlikely that he made any conquest in Northern Maharashtra, Gujarat or Konkan. But, he may have conquered parts of North Kuntala comprising Kolhapur, Satara and Solapur districts of Maharashtra. In the east, he may have carried his arms to Dakshina Kosala, Kalinga and Andhra. He was a follower of Vedic religion and performed several *Yajnas* (sacrifices) which include Agnishtoma, Aptoryama, Ukthya, Shodasin, Atiratra, Vajapeya, Brihaspatisava, Sadyaskra and four Asvamedhas. He heavily donated to the Brahmins during the Vajapeya sacrifice as per the Puranas. He also took up the title of *Dharmamaharaja* in addition to *Samrat*. He called himself as *Haritiputra*. His prime minister Deva was a very pious and learned Brahmin. The Puranas say that Pravarasena I had four sons. He married his son Gautamiputra to a daughter of King Bhavanaga of the

powerful Bharashiva family, which might have proved to be helpful. However, Gautamiputra predeceased him and he was succeeded by his grandson Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamiputra. His second son, Sarvasena set up his capital at Vatsagulma (the present day Washim). Nothing is known about the dynasties set up by the other two sons.

Branches of Vakataka dynasty

It is generally believed that the Vakataka ruling family was divided into four branches after Pravarasena I. Two branches are known and two are unknown. The known branches are the Pravarpura-Nandivardhana branch and the Vatsagulma branch.

Pravarapura-Nandivardhana branch

The Pravarapura-Nandivardhana branch ruled from various sites like Pravarapura (Paunar) in Wardha district and Mansar and Nandivardhan (Nagardhan) in Nagpur district. This branch maintained matrimonial relations with the Imperial Guptas.

Rudrasena I

Not much is known about Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamiputra, who ruled from Nandivardhana, near Ramtek hill, about 30 km from Nagpur. There is a mention of

Rudradeva in the Allahabad pillar inscription, bundled along with the other rulers of Aryavarta. A number of scholars, like A.S. Altekar do not agree that Rudradeva is Rudrasena I, since if Rudrasena I had been exterminated by Samudragupta, it is extremely unlikely that his son Prithivishena I would accept a Gupta princess (Prabhavatigupta) as his daughter-in-law. Secondly, no inscription of Rudrasena I has been found north of the Narmada. The only stone inscription of Rudrasena I's reign discovered so far was found at Deotek in the present-day Chandrapur district, so he can not be equated with Rudradeva of the Allahabad pillar inscription, who belonged to the Aryavarta.

Prithivishena I

Rudrasena I was succeeded by his son named Prithivishena I (355-380), and Prithivishena I was succeeded by his son named Rudrasena II.

Rudrasena II, Divakarasena and Pravarasena II

Rudrasena II (380–385) is said to have married Prabhavatigupta, the daughter of the Gupta King Chandragupta II (375-413/15). Rudrasena II died fortuitously after a very short reign in 385 CE, following which Prabhavatigupta (385 - 405) ruled as a regent on behalf of her two sons, Divakarasena and Damodarasena (Pravarasena II) for 20 years. During this period the Vakataka realm was practically a part of the Gupta Empire. Many historians refer

to this period as the Vakataka-Gupta age. While this has been widely accepted more than 30 years ago, this line of argument has no proper evidence. Prabhavati Gupta's inscription mentions about one "Deva Gupta" who is her father and the historians equated him with Chandra Gupta II. However, there is no other source to prove that Deva Gupta is really Chandra Gupta II. Pravarasena II composed the *Setubandha* in Maharashtri Prakrit. A few verses of the *Gaha Sattasai* are also attributed to him. He shifted the capital from Nandivardhana to Pravarapura, a new city of founded by him. He built a temple dedicated to Rama in his new capital.

The highest number of so far discovered copperplate inscriptions of the Vakataka dynasty (in all 17) pertain to Pravarasena II. He is perhaps the most recorded ruler of ancient India after Ashoka the Great. See: Shreenand L. Bapat, A Second Jamb (Khandvi) Copperplate Grant of Vakataka Ruler Pravarasena II (Shravana Shuddha 13, Regnal Year 21), Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. 91, pp. 1–31

Narendrasena and Prithivishena II

Pravarasena II was succeeded by Narendrasena (440-460), under whom the Vakataka influence spread to some central Indian states. Prithivishena II, the last known king of the line, succeeded his father Narendrasena in c. 460. He was Defeated by Vishnukundina King Madhava Varma II, After his death in 480, his kingdom was probably annexed by Harishena of the Vatsagulma branch.

Vatsagulma branch

The Vatsagulma branch was founded by Sarvasena, the second son of Pravarasena I after his death. King Sarvasena made Vatsagulma, the present day Washim in Washim district of Maharashtra his capital. The territory ruled by this branch was between the Sahydri Range and the Godavari River. They patronized some of the Buddhist caves at Ajanta.

Sarvasena

Sarvasena (c. 330 - 355) took the title of *Dharmamaharaja*. He is also known as the author of *Harivijaya* in Prakrit which is based on the story of bringing the *parijat* tree from heaven by Krishna. This work, praised by later writers is lost. He is also known as the author of many verses of the Prakrit *Gaha Sattasai*. One of his minister's name was Ravi. He was succeeded by his son Vindhyasena.

Vindhyasena

Vindhysena (c. 355 - 400) was also known as Vindhyashakti II. He is known from the well-known Washim plates which recorded the grant of a village situated in the northern marga (sub-division) of Nandikata (presently Nanded) in his 37th regnal year. The genealogical portion of the grant is written in Sanskrit and the formal portion in Prakrit. This is the first known land grant by any Vakataka ruler. He also took the title of *Dharmamaharaja*. Vindhyasena defeated the ruler of

Kuntala, his southern neighbour. One of his minister's name was Pravara. He was succeeded by his son Pravarasena II.

Pravarasena II

Pravarasena II (c. 400 - 415) was the next ruler of whom very little is known except from the Cave XVI inscription of Ajanta, which says that he became exalted by his excellent, powerful and liberal rule. He died after a very short rule and succeeded by his minor son, who was only 8 years old when his father died. Name of this ruler is lost from the Cave XVI inscription.

Devasena

This unknown ruler was succeeded by his son Devasena (c. 450 - 475). His administration was actually run by his minister Hastibhoja. During his reign, one of his servant Svaminadeva excavated a tank named *Sudarshana* near Washim in c. 458-59.

Harishena

Harishena (c. 475 - 500) succeeded his father Devasena. He was a great patron of Buddhist architecture, art and culture. The World Heritage monument Ajanta Caves is surviving example of his works. The rock cut architectural cell-XVI inscription of Ajanta states that he conquered Avanti (Malwa) in the north, Kosala (Chhattisgarh), Kalinga and Andhra in the east, Lata (Central and Southern Gujarat) and Trikuta (Nasik district) in the west and Kuntala (Southern Maharashtra) in the south. Varahadeva, a minister of Harishena and the son of

Hastibhoja, excavated the rock-cut vihara of Cave XVI of Ajanta. Three of the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, two viharas - caves XVI and XVII and a chaitya - cave XIX were excavated and decorated with painting and sculptures during the reign of Harishena. According to an art historian, Walter M. Spink, all the rock-cut monuments of Ajanta excluding caves nos. 9,10,12,13 and 15A (Ref: Page No. 4, Ajanta-A Brief History and Guide - Walter M. Spink) were built during Harishena's reign though his view is not universally accepted.

Harishena was succeeded by two rulers whose names are not known. The end of the dynasty is unknown. They were probably defeated by the Kalachuri of Mahismati.

The *Dashakumaracharita* version of the end

According to the eighth *ucchvāsa* of the *Dashakumaracharita* of Dandin, which was written probably around 125 years after the fall of the Vakataka dynasty, Harishena's son, though intelligent and accomplished in all arts, neglected the study of the *Dandaniti* (Political Science) and gave himself up to the enjoyment of pleasures and indulged in all sorts of vices. His subjects also followed him and led a vicious and dissolute life. Finding this a suitable opportunity, the ruler of the neighbouring *Ashmaka* sent his minister's son to the court of the Vakatakas. The latter ingratiated himself with the king and egged him on in his dissolute life. He also decimated his forces by various means. Ultimately, when the country was thoroughly disorganised, the ruler of Ashmaka instigated the ruler of Vanavasi (in the North Kanara district) to invade the

Vakataka territory. The king called all his feudatories and decided to fight his enemy on the bank of the Varada (Wardha). While fighting with the forces of the enemy, he was treacherously attacked in the rear by some of his own feudatories and killed. The Vakataka dynasty ended with his death.

Coinage

Although the Vakatakas replaced the Satavahanas, it does not seem that they continued their coin-minting tradition. As of today, no Vakataka coins have ever been identified.

Chapter 5

Chandragupta II

Chandragupta II (Gupta script: 𑀘𑀦𑁆𑀤𑁆𑀭𑀕𑀼𑀧𑁆𑀢*Cha-ndra-gu-pta*, r. c. 380 – c. 415 CE), also known by his title **Vikramaditya**, was one of the most powerful emperors of the Gupta Empire in northern India.

Chandragupta continued the expansionist policy of his father Samudragupta: historical evidence suggests that he defeated the Western Kshatrapas, and extended the Gupta empire from the Indus River in the west to the Bengal region in the east, and from the Himalayan foothills in the north to the Narmada River in the south. His daughter Prabhavatigupta was a queen of the southern Vakataka kingdom, and he may have had influence in the Vakataka territory during her regency.

The Gupta empire reached its zenith during the rule of Chandragupta. Chinese pilgrim Faxian, who visited India during his reign, suggests that he ruled over a peaceful and prosperous kingdom. The legendary figure of Vikramaditya is probably based on Chandragupta II (among other kings), and the noted Sanskrit poet Kalidasa may have been his court poet.

Names and titles

Chandragupta II was the second ruler of the dynasty to bear the name "Chandragupta", the first being his grandfather Chandragupta I. He was also simply known as "Chandra", as

attested by his coins. The Sanchi inscription of his officer Amrakardava states that he was also known as Deva-raja. The records of his daughter Prabhavatigupta, issued as a Vakataka queen, call him Chandragupta as well as Deva-gupta. Deva-shri (IAST: Devaśri) is another variation of this name. The Delhi iron pillar inscription states that king Chandra was also known as "Dhava": if this king Chandra is identified with Chandragupta (see below), it appears that "Dhava" was another name for the king. Another possibility is that "dhava" is a mistake for a common noun "bhava", although this is unlikely, as the rest of the inscription does not contain any errors.

A passage in the *Vishnu Purana* suggests that major parts of the eastern coast of India - Kosala, Odra, Tamralipta, and Puri - were ruled by the Devarakshitas around the same time as the Guptas. Since it seems unlikely that an obscure dynasty named Devarakshita was powerful enough to control substantial territory during the Gupta period, some scholars, such as Dasharatha Sharma, theorize that "Deva-rakshita" (IAST: Devarak□ita) was another name for Chandragupta II. Others, such as D. K. Ganguly, oppose this theory, arguing that this identification is quite arbitrary, and cannot be explained satisfactorily.

Chandragupta assumed the titles *Bhattaraka* and *Maharajadhiraja*, and bore the epithet *Apratiratha* ("having no equal or antagonist"). The Supiya stone pillar inscription, issued during the reign of his descendant Skandagupta, also calls him "Vikramaditya".

Early life

Chandragupta was a son of Samudragupta and queen Dattadevi, as attested by his own inscriptions. According to the official Gupta genealogy, succeeded his father on the Gupta throne. The Sanskrit play *Devichandraguptam*, combined with other evidence, suggests that he had an elder brother named Ramagupta, who preceded him on the throne. In the play, Ramagupta decides to surrender his queen Dhruvadevi to a Shaka enemy when besieged, but Chandragupta goes to the enemy camp disguised as the queen and kills the enemy. Sometime later, Chandragupta dethrones Ramagupta, and becomes the new king. The historicity of this narrative is debated among modern historians, with some believing it to be based on true historical events, while others dismissing it as a work of fiction.

Period of reign

The Mathura pillar inscription of Chandragupta II (as well as some other Gupta inscriptions) mention two dates: several historians have assumed that one of these dates denotes the king's regnal year, while the other date denotes the year of the Gupta calendar era. However, more recently, Indologist Harry Falk (2004) has theorized that the date understood to be the regnal year by the earlier scholars is actually a date of the *kālānuvarttamāna* system. According to Falk, the *kālānuvarttamāna* system is a continuation of the Kushana calendar era established by emperor Kanishka, whose coronation Falk dates to 127 CE. The Kushana era restarts

counting after a hundred years (e.g. the year after 100 is 1, not 101).

The date portion of the Mathura inscription reads (in IAST):

- candragupta-sya vijarajya-sa□vatsa[re] ... kālānuvarttamāna-sa□vatsare eka□a□□he 60 ... [pra]thame śukla-divase pa□cāmya□

The letters before the words *kālānuvarttamāna-sa□vatsare* are abraded in the inscription, but historian D. R. Bhandarkar (1931-1932) reconstructed them as *gupta*, and translated the term *gupta-kālānuvarttamāna-sa□vatsare* as "year following the Gupta era". He translated the entire sentence as:

- "In the ... year of ... Chandragupta, ... on the fifth of the bright half of the first (Ashadha) of the year 61 following the Gupta era".

Historian D. C. Sircar (1942) restored the missing letters as "[pa□]cāme" ("fifth"), and concluded that the inscription was dated to the Chandragupta's fifth regnal year. The missing letters have alternatively been read as "prathame" ("first"). According to these interpretations, the inscription is thus dated in year 61 of the Gupta era, and either the first or the fifth regnal year of Chandragupta. Assuming that the Gupta era starts around 319-320 CE, the beginning of Chandragupta's reign can be dated to either 376-377 CE or 380-381 CE.

Falk agrees that the missing letters denote a numerical year, but dismisses Sircar's reading as "mere imagination", pointing out that the missing letters are "abraded beyond recovery". In

support of his Kushana era theory, Falk presents four Gupta inscriptions (in chronological order) that mention the term *kālānuvarttamāna-sa□vatsare*:

Falk notes that the "dynastic year" in the table above appears to be a year of the Gupta era. The *kālānuvarttamāna* year cannot be regnal year, because Chandragupta I is not known to have ruled for as long as 61 years. If we assume "61" of the Mathura pillar inscription denotes a year of the Gupta era (as assumed by Bhandarkar, Sircar and other scholars), we must assume that "15" of the Buddhist image pedestal also denotes a year of the Gupta era: this is obviously incorrect, since Kumaragupta I ruled after Chandragupta II. Scholars K.K. Thaplyal and R.C. Sharma, who studied the Buddhist image pedestal inscription, speculated that the scribe had mistakenly interchanged the years 121 and 15, but Falk calls this assumption unnecessary.

According to Falk, the discrepancy can be explained satisfactorily, if we assume that the *kālānuvarttamāna* era denotes a system that restarts counting after a hundred years. The Yaksha figure inscription is dated to year 112 of the Gupta era (c. 432 CE), which corresponds to the *kālānuvarttamāna* year 5. Thus, the *kālānuvarttamāna* era used during Kumaragupta's time must have started in 432-5 = 427 CE. The years mentioned in the Buddhist image pedestal inscription also suggests that the epoch of this era was c. 426-427 CE. Since the *kālānuvarttamāna* system restarts counting every 100 years, the *kālānuvarttamāna* era used during the reign of Chandragupta II must have started in 327 CE. Thus, the Mathura inscription can be dated to 327+61 = c. 388 CE. While Falk's theory does not change the Gupta chronology

significantly, it implies that the date of the Mathura inscription cannot be used to determine the beginning of Chandragupta's reign.

The Sanchi inscription, dated to 412-413 CE (year 93 of the Gupta era), is the last known dated inscription of Chandragupta. His son Kumaragupta was on the throne by the 415-416 CE (year 96 of the Gupta era), so Chandragupta's reign must have ended sometime during 412-415 CE.

Military career

The Udayagiri inscription of Chandragupta's foreign minister Virasena suggests that the king had a distinguished military career. It states that he "bought the earth", paying for it with his prowess, and reduced the other kings to the status of slaves. His empire seems to have extended from the mouth of the Indus and northern Pakistan in the west to the Bengal region in the east, and from the Himalayan terai region in the north to the Narmada River in the south.

Chandragupta's father Samudragupta and his son Kumaragupta I are known to have performed the Ashvamedha horse sacrifice to proclaim their military prowess. In the 20th century, the discovery of a stone image of a horse found near Varanasi, and the misreading of its inscription as "Chandramgu" (taken to be "Chandragupta"), led to speculation that Chandragupta also performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice. However, there is no actual evidence to support this theory.

Western Kshatrapas

Historical and literary evidence suggests that Chandragupta II achieved military successes against the Western Kshatrapas (also known as Shakas), who ruled in west-central India. The Allahabad Pillar inscription of Chandragupta's father Samudragupta names the "Shaka-Murundas" among the kings who tried to appease him. It may be possible that Samudragupta reduced the Shakas to a state of subordinate alliance, and Chandragupta completely subjugated them.

Virasena's Udayagiri inscription describes him as a resident of Pataliputra, and states that he came to Udayagiri in Central India with the king who sought to "conquer the whole world". This indicates that Chandragupta had reached Udayagiri in central India during a military campaign. The theory that Chandragupta led an army to Central India is also corroborated by the c. 412-413 CE (Gupta year 93) Sanchi inscription of Amrakardava, who is said to have "acquired victory and fame in many battles and whose livelihood was secured by serving Chandragupta." A c. 401-402 CE (Gupta year 82) inscription of Chandragupta's feudatory *Maharaja* Sanakanika has also been discovered in Central India. The only important power to have ruled in this region during Chandragupta's period were the Western Kshatrapas, whose rule is attested by their distinct coinage. The coins issued by the Western Kshatrapa rulers abruptly come to end in the last decade of the 4th century. The coins of this type reappear in the second decade of the 5th century, and are dated in the Gupta era, which suggests that Chandragupta subjugated the Western Kshatrapas.

The exact date of Chandragupta's victory is not known, but it can be tentatively dated to sometime between 397 and 409 CE. The last of the 4th century Kshatrapa coins - that of Rudrasimha III - can be dated to the Shaka year 310 or 319 (the coin legend is partially lost), that is 388 CE or 397 CE. Chandragupta's coins, dated to 409, are similar to the Kshtrapa coins, with the Shakas' Buddhist vihara symbol replaced by the Gupta symbol of Garuda.

Literary evidence also corroborates Chandragupta's victory over the Western Kshatrapas. The Sanskrit play *Devichandraguptam*, whose historicity is disputed, narrates that Chandragupta's elder brother Ramagupta agreed to surrender his queen Dhruvadevi to a Shaka chief when besieged, but Chandragupta went to the enemy camp disguised as the queen, and killed the Shaka chief. Chandragupta bore the title *Vikramaditya*, and several Indian legends talk of king Vikramaditya who defeated the Shakas. Several modern scholars have theorized that these legends may be based on Chandragupta's victory over the Shakas.

As a result of his victory over the Western Kshatrapas, Chandragupta must have extended his empire up to the Arabian Sea coast in present-day Gujarat.

Other military victories

The iron pillar of Delhi contains an inscription of a king called "Chandra". Modern scholars generally identify this king with Chandragupta II, although this cannot be said with complete certainty.

While alternative identifications have been proposed, there is strong evidence for identifying Chandra of the iron pillar inscription as Chandragupta II:

- Chandragupta's coins refer to him as "Chandra".
- According to the iron pillar inscription, Chandra was a devotee of Vishnu. Chandragupta was also a Vaishnavite, and is described as a *Bhagvata* (devotee of Vishnu) in the Gupta records.
- The iron pillar is said to have been set up by king Chandra in honour of Vishnu, on a hill named Vishnu-pada, but the king seems to have died shortly before the inscription was engraved, as the inscription states that "the king has quit the earth and gone to the other world". A similar Vishnu-*dhvaja* (flagpole in honour of Vishnu) was set up the Gupta emperor Skandagupta (a grandson of Chandragupta) after the death of his father Kumaragupta I.
- According to his Udayagiri inscription, Chandragupta went on a *digvijaya* ("conquest of all quarters") campaign. He is known to have been a powerful sovereign emperor, and this fits in well with the iron pillar inscription's description of king Chandra as someone who "attained sole supreme sovereignty in the world acquired by his own arm and (enjoyed) for a very long time".
- The iron pillar inscription states that the southern ocean is "perfumed by the breezes" of Chandra's prowess. This may be a reference to Chandragupta's extension of the Gupta rule to the Arabian Sea after his conquest of the Western Kshatrapa territory.

Arabian Sea was located to the south of the Gupta empire, and thus, the term "southern ocean" is applicable to it in this context.

- The iron pillar inscription states that "his name was Chandra and he was holding the glory of a full moon on his face". This is reminiscent of his descendant Skandagupta's Mandasaur inscription, which describes Chandragupta as "a moon in the galaxy of Gupta kings with the famous name Chandragupta".

The iron pillar inscription credits Chandra with the following victories:

- Defeated an alliance of enemies in the Vanga country
- Crossed the "seven faces" of the river Sindhu (Indus) during a war, and defeated the Vahlikas.

Punjab region

If Chandra is identified with Chandragupta, it appears that Chandragupta marched through the Punjab region, and advanced up to the country of the Vahlikas, that is, Balkh in present-day Afghanistan. Some short Sanskrit inscriptions at the Sacred Rock of Hunza (in present-day Pakistan), written in Gupta script, mention the name Chandra. A few of these inscriptions also mention the name Harishena, and one particular inscription mentions Chandra with the epithet "Vikramaditya". Based on the identification of "Chandra" with Chandragupta, and Harishena with the Gupta courtier Harishena, these inscriptions can be considered as further evidence of a Gupta military campaign in the area. However,

this identification is not certain, and Chandra of the Hunza inscriptions could have well been a local ruler.

According to Sten Konow, the term "seven faces", mentioned in the iron pillar inscription, refers to the seven mouths of Indus. Historians R. C. Majumdar and K. P. Jayaswal, on the other hand, believe that the term refers to the tributaries of Indus: the five rivers of Punjab (Jhelum, Ravi, Sutlej, Beas, and Chenab), plus possibly the Kabul and the Kunar rivers.

It is quite possible that Chandragupta passed through the Punjab region during this campaign: his political influence in this region is attested to by the use of the Gupta era in an inscription found at Shorkot, and by some coins bearing the name "Chandragupta". However, there is no evidence that Chandragupta annexed Punjab to the Gupta Empire, which suggests that Chandragupta's victory in this region was not a decisive one. There is little evidence of Gupta influence in Punjab after his reign: numismatic evidnece suggests that Punjab was ruled by petty chieftains after his death. These chieftains bore Indian names, but issued coins that imitate the Kidarite coinage: they may have been Hinduized foreigners or Indians continuing the usage of foreign-style coinage.

Bengal region

The identification of Chandra with Chandragupta II also suggests Chandragupta achieved victories in the Vanga area in the present-day Bengal region. According to the Allahabad Pillar inscription of his father Samudragupta, the Samatata kingdom of the Bengal region was a Gupta tributary. The

Guptas are known to have been ruling Bengal in the early 6th century CE, although there are no surviving records of the Gupta presence in this region for the intervening period.

It is possible that a large part of the Bengal region was annexed to the Gupta empire by Chandragupta, and that this control continued into the 6th century. The Delhi iron pillar inscription suggests that an alliance of semi-independent chiefs of Bengal unsuccessfully resisted Chandragupta's attempts to extend the Gupta influence in this region.

Personal life and matrimonial alliances

Gupta records mention Dhruvadevi as Chandragupta's queen, and the mother of his successor Kumaragupta I. The Basarh clay seal mentions Dhruva-svamini as a queen of Chandragupta, and the mother of Govindagupta. It is unlikely that Chandragupta had two different queens with similar names: it appears that Dhruvasvamini was most probably another name for Dhruvadevi, and that Govindagupta was a uterine brother of Kumaragupta.

Chandragupta also married Kuvera-naga (alias Kuberanaga), whose name indicates that she was a princess of the Naga dynasty, which held considerable power in central India before Samudragupta subjugated them. This matrimonial alliance may have helped Chandragupta consolidate the Gupta empire, and the Nagas may have helped him in his war against the Western Kshatrapas.

Prabhavati-gupta, the daughter of Chandragupta and Kuvera-naga, married the Vakataka king Rudrasena II, who ruled in the Deccan region to the south of the Gupta empire. After her husband's death in c. 390, Prabhavati-gupta acted as a regent for her minor sons. In the two copper-plate inscriptions issued during her regency, the names of her Gupta ancestors with their imperial titles appear before the name of the Vakataka king with the lesser title *Maharaja*. This suggests that the Gupta court may have had influence in the Vakataka administration during her regency. Historians Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund believe that the Vakataka kingdom was "practically part of the Gupta empire" during her 20-year long regency. The Vakatakas may have supported Chandragupta during his conflict with the Western Kshatrapas.

The Guptas also appear to have entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Kadamba dynasty, the southern neighbours of the Vakatakas. The Talagunda pillar inscription suggests that the daughters of the Kadamba king Kakusthavarman, married into other royal families, including that of the Guptas. While Kakusthavarman was a contemporary of Chandragupta's son Kumaragupta I, it is noteworthy that some medieval chiefs of present-day Karnataka (where the Kadambas ruled) claimed descent from Chandragupta. According to the Vikramaditya legends, emperor Vikramaditya (a character believed to be based on Chandragupta) sent his court poet Kalidasa as an ambassador to the lord of Kuntala. While the Kuntala king referred to in this legend has been identified by some scholars with a Vakataka king, it is more likely that he was a Kadamba king, because the Vakataka king did not rule over Kuntala, and was never called the lord of Kuntala.

Administration

Several feudatories of Chandragupta are known from historical records:

- *Maharaja* Sanakanika, a feudatory known from the Udayagiri inscription that records his construction of a Vaishnava temple.
- *Maharaja* Trikamala, a feudatory known from a Gaya inscription engraved on a Bodhisattva image
- *Maharaja* Shri Vishvamitra Svami, a feudaotry known from a seal found at Vidisha
- *Maharaja* Svamidasa, the ruler of Valkha, was also probably a Gupta feudatory if we assume that his inscription is dated in the Gupta calendar era; according to another theory, his inscription is dated in the Kalachuri calendar era.

The following ministers and officers of Chandragupta are known from various historical records:

- Vira-sena, foreign minister, known from the Udayagiri inscription recording his construction of a Shiva temple
- Amrakardava, a military officer, known from the Sanchi inscription recording his donations to the local Buddhist monastery
- Shikhara-svami, a minister; according to historian K. P. Jayaswal's theory, he was the author of the political treatise *Kamandakiya Niti*

Navaratnas

Jyotirvidabharana (22.10), a treatise attributed to Kalidasa, states that nine famous scholars known as the Navaratnas ("nine gems") attended the court of the legendary Vikramaditya. Besides Kalidasa himself, these included Amarasimha, Dhanvantari, Ghatakarapara, Kshapanaka, Shanku, Varahamihira, Vararuchi, and Vetala Bhatta. However, there is no historical evidence to show that these nine scholars were contemporary figures or proteges of the same king. *Jyotirvidabharana* is considered a literary forgery of a date later than Kalidasa by multiple scholars. There is no mention of such "Navaratnas" in earlier literature, and D. C. Sircar calls this tradition "absolutely worthless for historical purposes".

Nevertheless, multiple scholars believe that one of these Navaratnas – Kalidasa – may have indeed flourished during the reign of Chandragupta II. These scholars include William Jones, A. B. Keith, and Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi among others. It is possible that Kalidasa was a court poet of Chandragupta.

Religion

Many gold and silver coins of Chandragupta, as well the inscriptions issued by him and his successors, describe him as a *parama-bhagvata*, that is, a devotee of the god Vishnu. One of his gold coins, discovered at Bayana, calls him *chakra-vikramah*, literally, "[one who is] powerful [due to his possession of the] discus", and shows him receiving a discus from Vishnu.

An Udayagiri inscription records the construction of a Vaishnava cave temple by Chandragupta's feudatory *Maharaja* Sanakanika, in year 82 of the Gupta era (c. 401-402 CE).

Chandragupta was also tolerant of other faiths. The Udayagiri inscription of Chandragupta's foreign minister Virasena records the construction of a temple dedicated to the god Shambhu (Shiva). An inscription found at Sanchi near Udayagiri records donations to the local Buddhist monastery by his military officer Amrakardava, in year 93 of the Gupta era (c. 412-413 CE).

Faxian's visit

Chinese pilgrim Faxian visited India during the reign of Chandragupta, and spent around six years in the Gupta kingdom. He was mostly interested in Buddhist religious affairs, and did not bother to record the name of the reigning king. His account presents an idealized picture of the Gupta administration, and not everything he states can be taken at face value. However, his description of the kingdom as a peaceful and prosperous one seems to be generally true, attested by the fact that he did not face any brigandage unlike the later Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang.

Faxian describes Madhya-desha ("Middle Kingdom"), the region to the south-east of Mathura, as a populous region with good climate and happy people. He mentions that the citizens were not required to "register their households or attend to any magistrates and their rules". Faxian mentions that wicked repeated rebels had their right hand cut off by the king's

administration, but otherwise, there was no corporal punishment for crimes: the criminals were only fined, lightly or heavily, according to the severity of the crime. According to Faxian, the king's bodyguards and attendants all received salaries.

Faxian mentions that other than the untouchable Chandalas, the people did not consume meat, intoxicating drinks, onions or garlic. The Chandalas lived apart from other people, and struck a piece of wood to announce their presence when they entered a city or a marketplace: this would enable other people to avoid contact with them. Only the Chandalas engaged in the fisheries and hunting, and sold meat. In the general markets, there were no butchers' shops or alcohol dealers, and the people did not keep pigs or fowl. According to historian R. C. Majumdar, Faxian's observations about the people's food habits seem to have been based on his contact with the Buddhist religious community, and may not be applicable to the general public.

Faxian mentions that the people used cowries for buying and selling goods.

Faxian mentions the Pataliputra region as the most prosperous part of the Middle Kingdom, describing its people as benevolent and righteous. He describes an annual Buddhist celebration, which involved a procession of 20 grand carts of Buddhas, the Brahmanas's invitation to the Buddhas to enter the city, and music performances. He mentions that in the cities, the Vaishya chiefs had established centers for dispensing charity and medical help to the destitute. These centres attracted the poor, the orphans, the widowers, the childless, the

handicapped, and the sick, who were examined by doctors and given food and medicine until they got better.

Inscriptions

The following inscriptions of Chandragupta have been discovered:

- Mathura pillar inscription, dated to the year 61 of the Gupta era. The date has been interpreted as c. 380-381 CE by earlier scholars, but Harry Falk (2004) dates it to 388 CE (see Period of reign section above).
- Mathura pillar inscription, undated
- Udayagiri cave inscription, dated to the year 82 of the Gupta era
- Udayagiri cave inscription, undated
- Gadhwa stone inscription, dated to the year 88 of the Gupta era
- Sanchi stone inscription, dated to the year 93 of the Gupta era
- Mehrauli iron pillar inscription, undated

Coinage

Chandragupta continued issuing most of the gold coin types introduced by his father Samudragupta, such as the Sceptre type (rare for Chandragupta II), the Archer type, and the Tiger-Slayer type. However, Chandragupta II also introduced several

new types, such as the Horseman type and the Lion-slayer type, both of which were used by his son Kumaragupta I.

Chandragupta's various gold coins depict his martial spirit or peacetime pursuits.

- Lion-slayer type
- These coins depict Chandragupta slaying a lion, and bear the legend *simha-vikrama*. Similar coins issued by his father Samudragupta depict the king slaying a tiger, and bear the legend *vyaghra-parakramaha*. Historian R. C. Majumdar theorizes that Chandragupta's conquest of present-day Gujarat (where the Asiatic lion is found) may have presented him with an opportunity to hunt lions, resulting in the substition of tiger with lion on the imperial coins.
- Couch-and-flower type
- These coins depict Chandragupta seated on a couch, and holding a flower in his right hand. The legend "rupa-kriti" occurs below the couch. These coins are similar to Samudragupta's coins which depict the king playing a musical instrument.
- Rider type
- These coins depict the king riding a fully-caparisoned horse.

In addition, Chandragupta II was the first Gupta king to issue silver coins. These coins were intended to replace the silver coinage of the Western Kshatrapas after Chandragupta II defeated them, and were modelled on the Kshatrapa coinage. The main difference was to replace the dynastic symbol of the

Kshatrapas (the three-arched hill) by the dynastic symbol of the Guptas (the mythic eagle Garuda). The obverse of these coins depicts a bust of the king, with corrupted Greek legend "OOIHU". The reverse features the Brahmi script legend "Chandragupta Vikramaditya, King of Kings, and a devotee of Vishnu", around Garuda, the mythic eagle and dynastic symbol of the Guptas.

Personality

The Udayagiri inscription of Virasena describes Chandragupta as a "king of kings" as well as an ascetic *rajadhirajarshi*, and declares that his activities were "beyond comprehension".

Identification with the legendary Vikramaditya

Vikramaditya is a legendary emperor of ancient India, who is characterised as the ideal king, known for his generosity, courage, and patronage to scholars. A number of historians believe that at least some of the Vikramaditya legends are based on Chandragupta II. These historians include D. R. Bhandarkar, V. V. Mirashi and D. C. Sircar among others.

Based on some coins and the Supia pillar inscription, it is believed that Chandragupta II adopted the title "Vikramaditya". The Khambat and Sangli plates of the Rashtrakuta king Govinda IV use the epithet "Sahasanka" for Chandragupta II.

The name "Sahasanka" has also been applied to the legendary Vikramaditya.

The legendary Vikramaditya is said to have defeated the Śaka invaders, and was therefore, known as Śakari ("enemy of the Śakas). Chandragupta II conquered Malwa after defeating the Western Kshatrapas (a branch of Śakas); he also expelled the Kushanas from Mathura. His victory over these foreign tribes was probably transposed on upon a fictional character, resulting in the Vikramaditya legends.

According to most legends, Vikramaditya had his capital at Ujjain, although some legends mention him as the king of Pataliputra. The Guptas had their capital at Pataliputra. According to D. C. Sircar, Chandragupta II may have defeated the Shaka invaders of Ujjain, and placed his son Govindagupta as a viceroy there. As a result, Ujjain might have become a second capital of the Gupta empire, and subsequently, legends about him (as Vikramaditya) might have developed. Guttas of Guttavalal, a minor dynasty based in present-day Karnataka, claimed descent from the imperial Guptas. The Caudadanapura inscription of the Guttas alludes to the legendary Vikramaditya ruling from Ujjayni, and several Gutta royals were named "Vikramaditya". According to Vasundhara Filliozat, their reference to the legendary Vikramaditya is simply because they confused him with Chandragupta II. However, D. C. Sircar sees this as further proof that the legendary Vikramaditya was based on Chandragupta II.

Vikram Samvat

Vikrama Samvat, an Indian calendar era beginning in 57 BCE, is associated with the legendary Vikramaditya. However, this association did not exist before 9th century CE. The earlier sources call this era by various names, including *K□□a*, *the era of the Malava tribe*, or simply, *Samvat*. Scholars such as D. C. Sircar and D. R. Bhandarkar believe that the name of the era changed to "Vikram Samvat" after the reign of Chandragupta II, who had adopted the title *Vikramaditya*.

Chapter 6

Kumaragupta I

Kumaragupta I (Gupta script:  *Ku-ma-ra-gu-pta*, r. c. 415-455 CE) was an emperor of the Gupta Empire of Ancient India. A son of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II and queen Dhruvadevi, he seems to have maintained control of his inherited territory, which extended from Gujarat in the west to Bengal region in the east.

Kumaragupta performed an Ashvamedha sacrifice, which was usually performed to prove imperial sovereignty, although no concrete information is available about his military achievements. Based on the epigraphic and numismatic evidence, some modern historians have theorized that he may have subdued the Aulikaras of central India and the Traikutakas of western India.

The Bhitari pillar inscription states that his successor Skandagupta restored the fallen fortunes of the Gupta family, which has led to suggestions that during his last years, Kumaragupta suffered reverses, possibly against the Pushyamitras or the Hunas. However, this cannot be said with certainty, and the situation described in the Bhitari inscription may have been the result of events that happened after his death.

Early life

Kumaragupta was a son of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II and queen Dhruvadevi. Chandragupta's last inscription is dated c. 412 CE, while Kumaragupta's earliest inscription is dated c. 415 CE (year 96 of the Gupta era). Therefore, Kumaragupta must have ascended the throne in or shortly before 415 CE.

Kumaragupta bore the titles *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parama-bhattaraka*, and *Paramadvaita*. He also adopted the title Mahendraditya, and his coins call him by several variants of this name, including Shri-Mahendra, Mahendra-simha, and Ashvamedha-Mahendra. Shakraditya, the name of a king mentioned in Buddhist texts, may also have been a title of Kumaragupta (see #Religion section).

Reign

Kumaragupta had inherited a large empire built upon the conquests of his father Chandragupta II and his grandfather Samudragupta. No concrete information is available about his military achievements. The inscriptions issued during his reign have been discovered in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bangladesh; an inscription of his son has been discovered from Gujarat. In addition, his garuda-inscribed coins have been discovered in western India, and his peacock-inscribed coins have been discovered in the Ganges valley. This suggests that he was able to maintain control over the vast territory that he inherited. Thus, even if his reign was

militarily uneventful, he must have been a strong ruler for being able to maintain a stable government in a large empire, as indicated by epigraphic and numismatic evidence.

There are some indications that Kumaragupta's reign was not devoid of wars and disturbances. For example, he worshipped the war god Karttikeya, and his gold coins suggest that he performed the Ashvamedha ceremony which was used by ancient kings to prove their sovereignty. However, since there is no concrete information available about any military conquest by him, it is not certain if this performance is indicative of any conquests.

Possible south-western conquests

Kumaragupta's coins have been found in present-day Maharashtra, which was located to the south-west of the core Gupta territory. These include 13 coins from Achalpur, and a hoard of 1395 silver coins from Samand in Satara district. His coins discovered from south Gujarat resemble the coins issued by the Traikutaka dynasty, which ruled this region. This has led to suggestions that Kumaragupta defeated the Traikutakas.

Possible annexation of Dashapura

The 423 CE Mandsaur inscription mentions a line of kings whose name ends with -varman, who probably had their capital at Dashapura (modern Mandsaur). The inscription describes one of these kings, Nara-varman, as an "Aulikara", which seems to have been the dynasty's name. The inscription describes a guild of silk-weavers who had migrated from the

Lata region of present-day Gujarat to Dashapura. It then abruptly moves away from this topic and mentions "while Kumaragupta was ruling the whole earth". It further states that a sun temple was built in c. 436 CE during the reign of Nara-varman's grandson Bandhu-varman: it was later destroyed or damaged by other kings, and the guild had it repaired it in c. 473 CE.

According to one theory, Bandhuvarman ruled Dashapura as a feudatory of Kumaragupta I, the subject of this article. However, historian R. C. Majumdar argues that the "Kumaragupta" referred to in the inscription is the later king Kumaragupta II. According to Majumdar's theory, the temple was built in c. 436 CE when Bandhuvarman ruled as a sovereign, and was repaired in c. 473 CE during the reign of Kumaragupta II. Bandhuvarman's grandfather Naravarman and his father Vishvavarman seem to have been independent rulers, because none of the three inscriptions issued during their reigns refer to a Gupta overlord. Therefore, according to Majumdar, irrespective of who the "Kumaragupta" mentioned in the Mandsaur inscription is, the Dashapura area seems to have been annexed to the Gupta empire sometime after this inscription was issued, that is, during c. 424-473 CE. Majumdar theorizes that the Dashapura region was annexed to the Gupta empire during the reign of Kumaragupta I, either through military conquest or diplomacy.

Other possible campaigns

Some coins of Kumaragupta's coins depict him as a rhinoceros-slayer, which some scholars such as Tej Ram Sharma see as possible evidence of his successes against the king of

Kamarupa in present-day Assam, where the Indian rhinoceros is abundant. Another category of his coins portray him as a tiger-slayer, which according to historian H. C. Raychaudhuri, may allude to his incursions of the territory to the south of the Narmada River, where tigers are abundant. However, historian S. R. Goyal dismisses both of these coin-based theories as fanciful.

Administration

Epigraphic evidence suggests that Kumaradeva ruled his empire through governors (Uparikas), who bore the title *Maharaja* ("great king"), and administered various provinces (Bhuktis). The districts (vishayas) of the provinces were administered by district magistrates (Vishyapatis), who were supported by an advisory council comprising:

- the town president or mayor (Nagara-Shreshtin)
- the representative of the merchant guild (Sarthavaha)
- the chief of the artisan guild (Prathama-Kulika)
- the chief of the guild of writers or scribes (Prathama-Kayastha)

Ghatotkacha-gupta (not to be confused with his ancestor Ghatotkacha) governed the Eran region during Kumaragupta's reign. His c. 435-436 inscription suggests that he was a member of the Gupta royal family, probably a son or younger brother of Kumaragupta. He is most probably same as the Ghatotkacha-gupta mentioned in a seal found at Vaishali, and the Ghatotkacha-gupta who is known to have issued a gold

coin. He may have assumed independence for a short period, possibly after the death of Kumaragupta.

Chirata-datta ruled the Pundravardhana-bhukti (province) in present-day Bengal as a subordinate of Kumaragupta. His known dates range from c. 443 to c. 447 (years 124-128 of the Gupta era).

The 436 CE Karamdanda inscription mentions Prithivishena, who was initially *mantrin* and *kumaramatya* (minister) of Kumaragupta I, and later became his *mahabaladhikrita* (general). His father Shikharasvamin had served Chandragupta II as a *mantrin* and *kumaramatya*.

Kumaragupta seems to have established diplomatic relations with the Liu Sung emperors of China, as suggested by visits of Chinese delegations to India, and the exchange of an Indian envoy.

Personal life

Kumaragupta had at least two sons: Skandagupta and Purugupta. The inscriptions of Skandagupta, who became the next king, do not mention the name of his mother, in a departure from the tradition. Purugupta was the son of *Mahadevi* (queen) Anantadevi. Historian R. N. Dandekar theorizes that Anantadevi was a Kadamba princess, as the Talagunda pillar inscription suggests that the Kadamba king Kakusthavarman established a matrimonial alliance with the Guptas.

The Bihar stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta suggests that Kumaragupta also married the sister of one of his ministers. As mentioned above, Ghatotkacha-gupta (not to be confused with the earlier king Ghatotkacha) was probably a son or younger brother of Kumaragupta.

The Chinese traveler Xuanzang mentions Budhagupta after king Shakraditya (identified as Kumaragupta I by some scholars) while naming the patrons of the Nalanda monastery. Based on this, historian R. K. Mukherjee theorizes that Budhagupta was also a son of Kumaragupta I. However, the epigraphic evidence makes it clear that Budhagupta was a son of Kumaragupta II, not Kumaragupta I.

Religion

Epigraphic evidence indicates that various faiths including Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, and Jainism, flourished during Kumaragupta's reign. Kumaragupta's silver coins describe him as a devotee of the god Vishnu (*parama-bhagavata* or *bhagavata*). His gold, silver, and copper coins feature Vishnu's vahana Garuda. He was also a devotee of the war god Karttikeya (also known as Skanda): his coins feature Karttikeya seated on a peacock. He named his son Skandagupta after the god, and his own name "Kumara" appears to have been based on another name of the god.

According to the Buddhist writers Xuanzang (7th century) and Prajnavarman (8th century), the Buddhist mahavihara at Nalanda was established by a king called Shakraditya. Modern

scholars identify king Shakraditya with Kumaragupta based on the following points:

- "Shakra" and "Mahendra" are names of the Indian deity Indra, and Kumaragupta bore the title Mahendraditya.
- The earlier Chinese traveler Faxian, who toured India during 400-411 CE does not mention the existence of any monastery at Nalanda, which was located near other places visited by him, such as Pataliputra and Gaya. The omission of such an important Buddhist site can be explained by the assumption that the Nalanda monastery was established after 411 CE, during the reign of Kumaragupta.

Xuanzang mentions Budhagupta (a successor of the later king Kumaragupta II) after Shakraditya: he states the monastery was enriched by the endowments of the kings Shakraditya, Budhagupta, Tathagatagupta, and Baladitya. This casts some doubt on the identification of Shakraditya with Kumaragupta I.

Last years

The earliest known regnal date of Kumaragupta's son Skandagupta is c. 455 CE (year 136 of the Gupta era). This proves that Kumaragupta's reign ended in or before this year. Historian V. A. Smith read the dates on some of Kumaragupta's coins as c. 455 CE (years 134 and 135 of the Gupta era), based on which modern scholars theorize that Kumaragupta ruled until 455 CE. However, numismatist P. L. Gupta has disputed

Smith's reading, and has dated the end of Kumaragupta's reign to c. 450 CE.

According to one theory, the later years of Kumaragupta's reign were not peaceful. This theory is based on the c. 448 CE Mankuwar Buddha inscription issued during Kumaragupta's reign, and the Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta:

- The Bhitari inscription states that Skandagupta defeated his enemies and re-established the "ruined fortunes" of his family when his father died, and then visited his mother whose "eyes were full of tears of joy". The enemies mentioned in the inscriptions include the Pushyamitras or the Hunas; an alternative interpretation reads "yudhyamitras" (a generic term for enemies) instead of Pushyamitras.
- The Mankuwar Buddha inscribed with "year 129 in the reign of Great King Kumaragupta" (448 CE, at the end of the reign of Kumaragupta) only uses the feudatory title *Maharaja* (𑀫𑀳𑀸𑀭𑀸𑀚, "Great King") for Kumaragupta instead of the imperial title *Maharajadhiraja* ("Great King of Kings"). This has led to suggestions that he suffered reverses in the later part of his reign, possibly against the Pushyamitras or the Hunas.

However, it cannot be said with certainty that Kumaragupta faced trouble during his last years. For example, it is possible that the drafter of the Man Kuwar inscription used a wrong title simply because of carelessness or ignorance. Thus, it is possible that the troubles referred to in the Bhitari inscription occurred *after* Kumaragupta's death: these troubles probably

resulted from a disputed succession to the throne, and caused a civil war. However, this is a mere conjecture, and according to another theory, the situation described in the Bhitari inscription may have been the result of a Huna invasion. This theory is based on the Junagadh inscription which suggests that Skandagupta defeated the mlechchhas (foreigners, possibly the Hunas) before c. 455 CE. It is also possible that both of these theories are true: Skandagupta may have been dispatched to the frontier to check a Huna invasion; meanwhile, Kumaragupta died in the capital, leading to a succession dispute.

According to one theory, Kumaragupta's sons Skandagupta and Purugupta may have been involved in a succession dispute. Another possibility is that Purugupta - the son of the chief queen - was a minor at the time of Kumaragupta I's death, because of which Skandagupta - the son of a junior queen - ascended the throne. Skandagupta succeeded Kumaragupta, and was succeeded by Purugupta, whose descendants became the subsequent kings.

Coinage

Among the Gupta kings, Kumaragupta issued the largest varieties of coins. His 628 coins in the Bayana hoard belong to 14 different types.

The varieties of his coins include the following:

- Archer type: Similar to the archer-type coins of Chandragupta II. The reverse legend reads *Shri-*

Mahendrah. The coins appear in several varieties, with different obverse legends:

- *Mahdrajadhiraja-Shri-Kumdraguptah* ("King of kings, the illustrious Kumaragupta")
- *Gunesho mahitalam jayati Kumarah* ("Prominent in merit Kumara conquers the world")
- *Vijitavanir avanipatih Kumaragupto divam jayati* ("King Kumaragupta who has conquered the earth wins heaven")
- *Jayati mahitalam Shri-Kumaraguptah* ("The illustrious Kumaragupta conquers the earth")
- *Jayati mahitalam Shri-Kumaraguptah sudhanvi* ("The excellent archer, the illustrious Kumaragupta conquers the earth")
- *Parama-rajadhiraja-Shri-Kumaragupta* ("The illustrious Kumaragupta, the highest king of kings")
- Horseman type: Similar to the horseman-type coins of Chandragupta II, but the reverse of some of these coins features a new image, that of a goddess feeding a peacock, with the legend *Ajita-Mahendrah* ("Undefeated Mahendra"). The coins appears in several sub-types, with different obverse legends:
- *Prithvital-ambarashashi Kumaragupto jayaty-ajitah* ("The moon in the firmament of the earth, the invincible Kumaragupta is victorious")
- *Jayati nripo ribhir-ajitah* ("Victorious is the king who is never defeated by the enemies")
- *Kshitipatir-ajito vijayi Kumaragupto divam jayati* ("The unconquered and victorious king Kumaragupta wins the heaven")

- *Guptakula-vyoma-shashi jayaty-ajeyo jita Mahendrah* ("The unconquered and invincible Mahendra, who is a moon in the sky of the Gupta family, is victorious")
- *Guptakul-amalachandro Mahendrakarm-ajito jayati* ("The Spotless Moon [in the firmament] of the Gupta family, the invincible hero who is valorous as Indra, is victorious")
- *Kshitipatir-ajito vijayi Kumaragupto jayaty-ajitah* ("The invincible and victorious king Kumaragupta carries the day, being undefeated")
- *Prithvi-taleshvarendrah Kumaragupto jayaty-ajitah* ("The lord of the rulers of this earth, the invincible Kumaragupta is victorious")
- Swordsman type: A new type introduced by Kumaragupta. Bears an image of the king holding the sword, with a garuda emblem, and the legend *Gamavajitya sucharitaih Kumaragupto divam jayati* ("Having conquered the earth, Kumaragupta wins the heaven by his meritorious deeds"). The obverse depicts goddess Lakshmi sitting on a lotus, and bears the legend *Shri-Kumaraguptah*.
- Lion-slayer type: Similar to the lion-slayer-type coins of Chandragupta II. The reverse bears the legend *Shri-Mahendrasimhaah* or *Simha-Mahendrah*. The coins appear in several sub-types, with different obverse legends:
- *Kshitipatir-ajita-Mahendrah Kumaragupto divam jayati* ("Kumaragupta, unconquered Mahendra, the lord of earth, wins heaven")
- *Kumaragupto vijayi simha-Mahendro divam jayati* ("The victorious Kumaragupta, lion-like Mahendra, wins the heaven"")

- *Kumaragupto yudhi simhavikramah* ("Kumaragupta, who is as valorous in the battle as a lion")
- *Sakshadiva Narasimho simha-Mahendro jayatyanisham* ("Narasimha, as it were incarnate, the lion-like Mahendra is ever victorious")
- Tiger-slayer type: Similar to the tiger-slayer-type coins of his grandfather Samudragupta. The reverse side of Kumaragupta's coins feature a new image: that of a goddess standing on a crocodile, and feeding a peacock. The obverse legend reads *Shriman vyaghra-bala-parakramah* ("The glorious [king] whose prowess is like that of a tiger". The reverse legend reads *Kumaraguptodhiraja*.
- Elephant-rider: Shows the king riding a caparisoned elephant using a goad, with an attendant holding an umbrella over his head. The legend reads 'Kshataripu-Kumaragupto rajatrata jayati ripun *("Kumaragupta, who has destroyed his enemies and protects [subordinate] kings, is victorious over his foes." The reverse features goddess Lakshmi standing on a lotus, with the legend* Shri-Mahendragajah *("The elephant of the illustrious Mahendra").*
- Elephant-rider lion-slayer type: Similar to the elephant-rider type, but the king is shown holding a dagger to slay a lion in front of the elephant. The reverse is also similar, but the goddess holds an indistinct object in her hand, which a peacock is looking at. The reverse legend reads *Simhanihnata Mahendragajah* ("The elephant of king Mahendra, destroyer of lion").
- Rhinoceros-slayer (Khadgatrata) type: This gold coin is unique to Kumaragupta, and shows the king riding

a horse and attacking a rhinoceros with his sword. The legend reads *khadgatrata Kumaragupto jayaty-anisham* ("Ever victorious is the lord Kumaragupta, who is saviour of rhinoceroses"). The reverse shows goddess Ganga, with a female attendant holding a chhatra (umbrella). The goddess stands on an elephant-headed crocodile, which holds a lotus stalk in its trunk. The reverse legend reads *Shri-Mahendrakhadga* ("The illustrous Mahendra [saviour of] rhinoceros").

- Ashvamedha-type: Similar to the Ashvamedha-type coins of Samudragupta. The legend is unclear, but historian A. S. Altekar has read it as *Devo jitashatruth Kumaragupto dhiraja* ("King Kumaragupta, the supreme lord, who has conquered his enemies"). The reverse legend reads *Shri-Ashvamedha-Mahendrah*.
- Karttikeya type: Shows the god Karttikeya, who is also known as "Kumara". The legend is unclear: Altekar has read it as *Jayati svagunair-guna Mahendra-Kumarah* ("Victorious is Mahendra-Kumara by his own merits"). The obverse shows the king feeding a peacock, who is the vahana (mount) of the god, with the legend *Shri-Mahendra Kumarah*.
- Chhatra-type: Similar to the chhatra-type coins of Chandragupta II. The obverse legend begins with *Jayati mahitalam*; the rest of it is lost. The reverse legend reads *Shri-Mahendraditya*.
- Apratigha-type: The obverse depicts a man (possibly the king) flanked by a man on his left and a woman in vitarka mudra on his right. The vertical legends beside the central figure read *Kumara* and *guptah*;

there is a circular legend which is unclear. The reverse shows the goddess Lakshmi sitting on a lotus, with the legend *Apratighah* ("unconquered").

- Lyrist type: Similar to the lyrist-type coins of Samudragupta; shows the king sitting on a couch and playing a lute. The legend reads *Maharajadhiraja-Shri-Kumaraguptah*. The reverse shows a woman sitting on a couch and holding a flower, with the legend *Shri-Kumaragupta*.
- King and queen-type: Similar to the coins of Chandragupta I. The obverse shows king presenting a bunch of flowers to the queen, with an unclear legend. The reverse shows a goddess seated on a lion, with the legend *Shri-Kumaraguptah*.

Some repoussé coins discovered at Khairatal have also been attributed to Kumaragupta by earlier scholars. These coins depict a garuda with outstretched wings and legend *Mahendraaditya*. The other side is blank. It is likely that these coins were not issued by Kumaragupta or any other Gupta ruler.

Inscriptions

At least 18 inscriptions from Kumaragupta's reign are available. All of these inscriptions were issued by private individuals rather than the Gupta royals, and most of them aim to record religious matters. Nevertheless, they provide valuable historical information, such as a genealogy of the Gupta kings, dates, locations of places in the Gupta empire, and names of royal officers. The earliest extant Gupta

inscriptions from the Bengal region were issued during Kumaragupta's reign.

Chapter 7

Skandagupta

Skandagupta (Gupta script: 𑀲𑀓𑀦𑁆𑀤𑀕𑀼𑀧𑁆𑀢*Ska-nda-gu-pta*, r. c. 455-467) was a Gupta Emperor of India. His Bhitari pillar inscription suggests that he restored the Gupta power by defeating his enemies, who may have been rebels or foreign invaders. He repulsed an invasion by the Indo-Hephthalites (known as Hunas in India), probably the Kidarites. He seems to have maintained control of his inherited territory, and is generally considered the last of the great Gupta Emperors. The Gupta genealogy after him is unclear, but he was most probably succeeded by Purugupta, who appears to have been his half-brother.

Early life

Skandagupta was a son of the Gupta emperor Kumaragupta I. His mother may have been a junior queen or a concubine of Kumaragupta. This theory is based on the fact Skandagputa's inscriptions mention the name of his father, but not of his mother. For example, Skandagupta's Bhitari pillar inscription lists the chief queens (*mahadevis*) of his ancestors Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II, but does not mention the chief queen of his father Kumaragupta. J. F. Fleet read a line of the Bhitari inscription to state that Skandagupta was "raised to Aryan status by the panegyrics of bards". Based on this, A. L. Basham theorized that his mother was from a low-caste Shudra background.

Others, such as Dasharatha Sharma have criticized this theory, pointing out that the Bhitari inscription clearly suggests that Skandagupta's mother held a very exalted status in the eyes of her son. The inscription states that after restoring the fallen fortunes of his family by defeating his enemies, he visited his mother just like the legendary hero Krishna had visited his mother Devaki. Jagannath Agrawal theorizes that the composer of the inscription deliberately departed from convention and devoted a line to the king's mother: this was not because of the inferior status of the mother. Agrawal disputes Fleet's reading of the "Aryan status" line, providing an alternative reading: "whom nobility causes to blush by reason of the narrations of his exploits by means of songs and eulogies". This line seems to be inspired from a verse in Kalidasa's *Raghuva□śa*. Agrawal further argues that the Bhitari inscription is a *prashasti* aimed at glorifying the king, and its composer would not have made a derogatory insinuation about the low status of the king's mother.

Based on the inscription, some scholars have theorised that Devaki was the name of his mother. However, according to historian R. C. Majumdar, it is more likely that the description aims to highlight the degraded position of his mother just like that of the legendary Devaki, before Skandagupta restored her to a position of prestige and power, just like Krishna did for Devaki.

Ascension to the throne

Skandagupta ascended the throne in year 136 of the Gupta era (c. 455-456 CE). According to the Bhitari pillar inscription, he

restored "the fallen fortunes of his family". The inscription states that when he prepared to do so, he spent a night on the bare earth, and then defeated his enemies, who had grown wealthy and powerful. After defeating his enemies, he visited his widowed mother, whose eyes were "full of tears from joy".

Many scholars read the name of the enemies mentioned in the Bhitari inscription as "Pushyamitras", who according to the Puranas, were a tribe, and probably ruled an area located on the banks of the Narmada River. However, an alternative interpretation of the inscription reads "Yudhyamitras" (a generic term for enemies) instead of "Pushyamitras".

According to one theory, these enemies invaded the Gupta empire during the last years of Kumaragupta's reign, or shortly after his death, and Skandagupta defeated them. According to another theory, the conflict referred to in the Bhitari inscription resulted from a disputed succession to the throne. This theory is based on the following points:

- The Junagadh inscription states that after his father's death, Skandagupta became "the ruler of the earth" by his own prowess. This suggests that Skandagupta acquired the throne using force.
- His mother may was probably a junior wife of Kumaragupta rather than the chief queen (see Early life section above), and therefore, his claim to the throne was not legitimate.
- The Junagadh inscription states that Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, chose Skandagupta as her husband after rejecting all other "sons of kings". Some coins issued by Skandagupta depict a woman

offering him an uncertain object, probably a garland or a ring. Assuming this woman is Lakshmi, the depiction seems to be a visual representation of the statement made in the inscription. (Some scholars identify the woman as a queen rather than Lakshmi).

- The Bhitari inscription makes three mentions of the fallen fortunes of the Gupta family (*kula* or *vamsha*). The mention of *family*, rather than the *empire*, may be a reference to the disputed succession to the throne. The reading "Yudhyamitras", rather than "Pushyamitras", may be correct, and the enemies referred to in the inscription may be rival claimants to the throne.
- Various historical records suggest that multiple people in the Gupta empire assumed sovereign status after Kumaragupta's death. These people include Kumaragupta's brother Govindagupta, his relative Ghatotkacha-gupta, and Prakashaditya (who is known from some gold coins). These people may have been rivals of Skandagupta.

Another argument cited in favour of the disputed succession theory is that the records of the subsequent Gupta kings omit Skandagupta's name from the royal genealogy, listing Purugupta's name after that of Kumaragupta. An example is the Bhitari seal of the 6th century king Kumaragupta III. However, this omission may be explained by the fact that these subsequent kings were descendants of Skandagupta's half-brother Purugupta, and the genealogical lists in their records intend to list only their direct ancestors, rather than provide a comprehensive list of the earlier Gupta kings.

Conflict with the Hunas

During Skandagupta's period, the Indo-Hephthalites (known as the Hunas) invaded India from the northwest, advancing as far as the Indus River.

The Bhitari pillar inscription states that Skandagupta defeated the Hunas:

(Skandagupta), "by whose two arms the earth was shaken, when he, the creator (of a disturbance like that) of a terrible whirlpool, joined in close conflict with the Hûnas; . . . . . among enemies . . . . . arrows . . . . . proclaimed . . . . . just as if it were the roaring of (the river) Ganga, making itself noticed in (their) ears."

- —*Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta Line 15*

The date of the Huna invasion is not certain. The Bhitari inscription mentions it after describing the conflict with the Pushyamitras (or the *Yudhyamitras*), which suggests that it happened later during Skandagupta's reign. However, a possible reference to this conflict in the Junagadh inscription suggests that it may have happened at the beginning of the Skandagupta's reign or during the reign of his father Kumaragupta. The Junagadh inscription, dated to the year 138 of the Gupta era (c. 457-458 CE) mentions Skandagupta's success against the mlechchhas (foreigners):

...whose [Skandagupta's] fame, moreover, even [his] enemies, in the countries of the mlechchhas... having their pride broken

down to the very root, announce with the words "verily the victory has been achieved by him."

- —*Junagadh inscription*

The victory against the mlechchhas happened in or before the year 136 of the Gupta era (c. 455-456 CE), when Skandagupta ascended the throne and when he appointed Parnadatta as the governor of the Saurashtra region, in which Junagadh is located. Since Skandagupta is not known to have fought against any other foreigners, these mlechchhas were probably the Hunas. If this identification is correct, it is possible that as a prince, Skandagupta was sent to check the Huna invasion at the frontier, and Kumaragupta died in the capital while this conflict was happening; Skandagupta returned to the capital and overcame rebels or rival claimants to ascend the throne.

A sentence in the Sanskrit text *Chandra-Vyakarana* (c. 7th century) states *Ajayad-Gupto Hunan*, literally, "The Gupta conquered the Hunas". This may be a reference to Skandagupta's victory over the Hunas, although an alternative reading by scholar K. P. Jayaswal has "Jato" instead of "Gupto". A story in the *Kathasaritsagara* (11th century) states that the legendary king Vikramaditya ascended the throne after his father Mahendraditya abdicated it, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the mlechchhas. Since Mahendraditya was a title of Kumaragupta, and Vikramaditya that of Skandagupta, this may be a reference to Skandagupta's victory over the Hunas.

Western India

The Junagadh rock, which contains inscription of the earlier rulers Ashoka and Rudradaman, has an inscription engraved on the orders of Skandagupta's governor Parnadatta. The inscription states that Skandagupta appointed governors of all provinces, including Parnadatta as the governor of Surashtra. It is not clear if the verse refers to routine appointments made by the king, or his actions after a political turmoil resulting from a war of succession or invasion. The inscription outlines several qualifications required to be the governor of Surashtra, stating that only Parnadatta met these requirements. Again, it is not clear if these were actual qualifications required to be a governor under Skandagupta's rule, or if the verse simply aims to eulogise Parnadatta.

Parnadatta appointed his son Chakrapalita as the magistrate of the Girinagara city (near modern Junagadh-Girnar area), which was presumably the capital of Surashtra. The Junagadh inscription records Chakdrapalita's repairs to the Sudarshana lake, an ancient reservoir originally constructed by Chandragupta Maurya, and later improved by his grandson Ashoka. The dam was subsequently re-built by Rudradaman in c. 150, but burst in c. 456-457 (year 137 of the Gupta era). Chakrapalita is said to have spent an "immeasurable" amount of wealth to build an embankment, and is also credited with the construction of a Vishnu temple.

An inscription of the Vakataka king Narendrasena claims that his commands were obeyed by the rulers of Kosala, Mekala and Malava. The regnal dates of Narendrasena are not certain, but

he is generally thought to be a contemporary of Skandagupta. Since Malava was a part of the Gupta Empire at one time, it is possible that Narendrasena raided Gupta territories during Skandagupta's reign. Skandagupta would have restored Gupta control over the region soon after. A c. 460-461 inscription refers to the "tranquil reign of Skandagupta, the lord of hundred kings."

Succession

The last known date of Skandagupta is c. 467-468 CE (year 148 of the Gupta era), and he probably ruled for a few more years.

Skandagupta was most probably succeeded by Purugupta, who appears to have been his half-brother. Purugupta was a son of Kumaragupta I from his chief queen, and therefore, must have been his legitimate successor. It is possible that he was a minor at the time of Kumaragupta I's death, because of which Skandagupta ascended the throne. Skandagupta appears to have died heirless, or his son may have been dethroned by Purugupta's family.

Coinage

Compared to his predecessors, Samudragupta issued fewer gold coins, and some of these coins feature relatively less quantity of gold. It is possible that the various wars fought by him strained the state treasury, although this cannot be said with certainty.

Skandagupta issued five types of gold coins: Archer type, King and queen type, Chhatra type, Lion-slayer type and Horseman type. His silver coins are of four types: Garuda type, Bull type, Altar type and Madhyadesha type. The initial gold coinage was on the old weight standard used by his father Kumaragupta of approximately 8.4 gm. This initial coinage is quite scarce. At some point in his reign, Skandagupta revalued his currency, switching from the old dinar standard to a new *suvarna* standard that weighed approximately 9.2 gm. These later coins were all only of the Archer type, and this standard and type was followed by all subsequent Gupta rulers.

Chapter 8

Gupta Throne

The **Gupta Empire** was an ancient Indian empire which existed from the mid-to-late 3rd century CE to 543 CE. At its zenith, from approximately 319 to 467 CE, it covered much of the Indian subcontinent. This period is considered as the Golden Age of India by historians. The ruling dynasty of the empire was founded by the king Sri Gupta; the most notable rulers of the dynasty were Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II alias Vikramaditya. The 5th-century CE Sanskrit poet Kalidasa credits the Guptas with having conquered about twenty-one kingdoms, both in and outside India, including the kingdoms of Parasikas, the Hunas, the Kambojas, tribes located in the west and east Oxus valleys, the Kinnaras, Kiratas, and others.

The high points of this period are the great cultural developments which took place primarily during the reigns of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I. Many of the literary sources, such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, were canonised during this period. The Gupta period produced scholars such as Kalidasa, Aryabhata, Varahamihira, and Vatsyayana who made great advancements in many academic fields. Science and political administration reached new heights during the Gupta era. The period gave rise to achievements in architecture, sculpture, and painting that "set standards of form and taste [that] determined the whole subsequent course of art, not only in India but far beyond her borders". Strong trade ties also made the region an important

cultural centre and established the region as a base that would influence nearby kingdoms and regions in South Asia and Southeast Asia. The Puranas, earlier long poems on a variety of subjects, are also thought to have been committed to written texts around this period. Hinduism was followed by the rulers and the Brahmins flourished in the Gupta empire but the Guptas tolerated people of other faiths as well. Vedic sacrifices were reduced in the Gupta period

The empire eventually died out because of many factors such as substantial loss of territory and imperial authority caused by their own erstwhile feudatories, as well as the invasion by the Huna peoples (Kidarites and Alchon Huns) from Central Asia. After the collapse of the Gupta Empire in the 6th century, India was again ruled by numerous regional kingdoms.

Origin

The homeland of the Guptas is uncertain. According to one theory, they originated in the present-day lower-doab region of Uttar Pradesh, where most of the inscriptions and coin hoards of the early Gupta kings have been discovered. This theory is also supported by the Purana, as argued by the proponents, that mention the territory of the early Gupta kings as Prayaga, Saketa, and Magadha areas in the Ganges basin.

Another prominent theory locates the Gupta homeland in the present-day Bengal region, based on the account of the 7th-century Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing. According to Yijing, king Che-li-ki-to (identified with the dynasty's founder *Shri*

Gupta) built a temple for Chinese pilgrims near Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no (apparently a transcription of Mriga-shikha-vana). Yijing states that this temple was located more than 40 *yojanas* east of Nalanda, which would mean it was situated somewhere in the modern Bengal region. Another proposal is that the early Gupta kingdom extended from Prayaga in the west to northern Bengal in the east.

The Gupta records do not mention the dynasty's varna (social class). Some historians, such as A.S. Altekar, have theorised that they were of Vaishya origin, as certain ancient Indian texts prescribe the name "Gupta" for the members of the Vaishya varna. According to historian R. S. Sharma, the Vaishyas – who were traditionally associated with trade – may have become rulers after resisting oppressive taxation by the previous rulers. Critics of the Vaishya-origin theory point out that the suffix Gupta features in the names of several non-Vaishyas before as well as during the Gupta period, and the dynastic name "Gupta" may have simply derived from the name of the family's first king Gupta. Some scholars, such as S.R. Goyal, theorise that the Guptas were Brahmanas, because they had matrimonial relations with Brahmans, but others reject this evidence as inconclusive. Based on the Pune and Riddhapur inscriptions of the Gupta princess Prabhavati-gupta, some scholars believe that the name of her paternal gotra (clan) was "Dharana", but an alternative reading of these inscriptions suggests that Dharana was the *gotra* of her mother Kuberanaga.

History

Early rulers

Gupta (Gupta script:  *gu-pta*, fl. late 3rd century CE) is the earliest known king of the dynasty: different historians variously date the beginning of his reign from mid-to-late 3rd century CE. Sri Gupta founded the Gupta Empire c. 240-280 CE, and was succeeded by his son, Ghatotkacha, c. 280-319 CE, followed by Ghatotkacha's son, Chandragupta, c. 319-335 CE."Che-li-ki-to", the name of a king mentioned by the 7th century Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing, is believed to be a transcription of "Shri-Gupta" (IAST: Śrigupta), "Shri" being an honorific prefix. According to Yijing, this king built a temple for Chinese Buddhist pilgrims near "Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no" (believed to be a transcription of M□gaśikhāvana).

In the Allahabad Pillar inscription, Gupta and his successor Ghatotkacha are described as *Maharaja* ("great king"), while the next king Chandragupta I is called a *Maharajadhiraja* ("king of great kings"). In the later period, the title *Maharaja* was used by feudatory rulers, which has led to suggestions that Gupta and Ghatotkacha were vassals (possibly of Kushan Empire). However, there are several instances of paramount sovereigns using the title *Maharaja*, in both pre-Gupta and post-Gupta periods, so this cannot be said with certainty. That said, there is no doubt that Gupta and Ghatotkacha held a lower status and were less powerful than Chandragupta I.

Chandragupta I married the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi, which may have helped him extend his political power and dominions, enabling him to adopt the imperial title *Maharajadhiraja*. According to the dynasty's official records, he was succeeded by his son Samudragupta. However, the discovery of the coins issued by a Gupta ruler named Kacha have led to some debate on this topic: according to one theory, Kacha was another name for Samudragupta; another possibility is that Kacha was a rival claimant to the throne.

Samudragupta

Samudragupta succeeded his father around 335 or 350 CE, and ruled until c. 375 CE. The Allahabad Pillar inscription, composed by his courtier Harishena, credits him with extensive conquests. The inscription asserts that Samudragupta uprooted 8 kings of Aryavarta, the northern region, including the Nagas. It further claims that he subjugated all the kings of the forest region, which was most probably located in central India. It also credits him with defeating 12 rulers of Dakshinapatha, the southern region: the exact identification of several of these kings is debated among modern scholars, but it is clear that these kings ruled areas located on the eastern coast of India. The inscription suggests that Samudragupta advanced as far as the Pallava kingdom in the south, and defeated Vishnugopa, the Pallava regent of Kanchi. During this southern campaign, Samudragupta most probably passed through the forest tract of central India, reached the eastern coast in present-day Odisha, and then marched south along the coast of Bay of Bengal.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions that rulers of several frontier kingdoms and tribal oligarchies paid Samudragupta tributes, obeyed his orders, and performed obeisance before him. The frontier kingdoms included Samatata, Davaka, Kamarupa, Nepala, and Karttripura. The tribal oligarchies included Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, and Abhiras, among others.

Finally, the inscription mentions that several foreign kings tried to please Samudragupta by personal attendance; offered him their daughters in marriage (or according to another interpretation, gifted him maidens); and sought the use of the Garuda-depicting Gupta seal for administering their own territories. This is an exaggeration: for example, the inscription lists the king of Simhala among these kings. It is known that from Chinese sources that the Simhala king Meghavarna sent rich presents to the Gupta king requesting his permission to build a Buddhist monastery at Bodh Gaya: Samudragupta's *pangyerist* appears to have described this act of diplomacy as an act of subservience.

Samudragupta appears to have been Vaishnavite, as attested by his Eran inscription, and performed several Brahmanical ceremonies. The Gupta records credit him with making generous donations of cows and gold. He performed the Ashvamedha ritual (horse sacrifice), which was used by the ancient Indian kings to prove their imperial sovereignty, and issued gold coins (see Coinage below) to mark this performance.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription presents Samudragupta as a wise king and strict administrator, who was also

compassionate enough to help the poor and the helpless. It also alludes to the king's talents as a musician and a poet, and calls him the "king of poets". Such claims are corroborated by Samudragupta's gold coins, which depict him playing a veena.

Samudragupta appears to have directly controlled a large part of the Indo-Gangetic Plain in present-day India, as well as a substantial part of central India. Besides, his empire comprised a number of monarchical and tribal tributary states of northern India, and of the south-eastern coastal region of India.

Ramagupta

Ramagupta is known from a sixth-century play, the *Devichandragupta*, in which he surrenders his wife to the enemy Sakas and his brother Chandragupta has to sneak into the enemy camp to rescue her and kill the Saka king. The historicity of these events is unclear, but Ramagupta's existence is confirmed by three Jain statues found at Durjanpur, with inscriptions referring to him as the *Maharajadhiraja*. A large number of his copper coins also have been found from the Eran-Vidisha region and classified in five distinct types, which include the *Garuda*, *Garudadhvaja*, *lion* and *border legend* types. The Brahmi legends on these coins are written in the early Gupta style.

Chandragupta II "Vikramaditya"

According to the Gupta records, amongst his sons, Samudragupta nominated prince Chandragupta II, born of

queen Dattadevi, as his successor. Chandragupta II, *Vikramaditya* (the Sun of Power), ruled from 375 until 415. He married a Kadamba princess of Kuntala and of Naga lineage (*Nāgakulotpannnā*), Kuberanaga. His daughter Prabhavatigupta from this Naga queen was married to Rudrasena II, the Vakataka ruler of Deccan. His son Kumaragupta I was married to a Kadamba princess of the Karnataka region. Chandragupta II expanded his realm westwards, defeating the Saka Western Kshatrapas of Malwa, Gujarat and Saurashtra in a campaign lasting until 409. His main opponent Rudrasimha III was defeated by 395, and he crushed the Bengal chiefdoms. This extended his control from coast to coast, established a second capital at Ujjain and was the high point of the empire. Kuntala inscriptions indicate rule of Chandragupta in Kuntala region of Indian state of Karnataka. Hunza inscription also indicate that Chandragupta was able to rule north western indian subcontinent and proceeded to conquer Balkh, although some scholars have also disputed the identity of gupta king. Chalukyan ruler Vikramditya VI (r. 1076 – 1126 CE) mentions Chandragupta with his title and states 'why should the glory of the Kings Vikramaditya and Nanda be a hindrance any longer ?he with a loud command abolished that (era), which has the name of Saka, and made that (era) which has the Chalukya counting ”

Despite the creation of the empire through war, the reign is remembered for its very influential style of Hindu art, literature, culture and science, especially during the reign of Chandragupta II. Some excellent works of Hindu art such as the panels at the Dashavatara Temple in Deogarh serve to illustrate the magnificence of Gupta art. Above all, it was the synthesis of elements that gave Gupta art its distinctive

flavour. During this period, the Guptas were supportive of thriving Buddhist and Jain cultures as well, and for this reason, there is also a long history of non-Hindu Gupta period art. In particular, Gupta period Buddhist art was to be influential in most of East and Southeast Asia. Many advances were recorded by the Chinese scholar and traveller Faxian in his diary and published afterwards.

The court of Chandragupta was made even more illustrious by the fact that it was graced by the *Navaratna* (Nine Jewels), a group of nine who excelled in the literary arts. Amongst these men was Kālidāsa, whose works dwarfed the works of many other literary geniuses, not only in his own age but in the years to come. Kalidasa was mainly known for his subtle exploitation of the *shringara* (romantic) element in his verse.

Chandragupta II's campaigns against foreign tribes

The 4th century Sanskrit poet Kalidasa credits Chandragupta Vikramaditya with conquering about twenty-one kingdoms, both in and outside India. After finishing his campaign in East and West India, Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II) proceeded northwards, subjugated the Parasikas, then the Hunas and the Kambojas tribes located in the west and east Oxus valleys respectively. Thereafter, the king proceeded into the Himalaya mountains to reduce the mountain tribes of the Kinnaras, Kiratas, as well as India proper. In one of his works Kalidasa also credits him with the removal of the Sakas from the

country. He wrote 'Wasn't it Vikramaditya who drove the Sakas out from the lovely city of Ujjain?'.

The *Brihatkathamanjari* of the Kashmiri writer Kshemendra states, King Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II) had "unburdened the sacred earth of the Barbarians like the Sakas, Mlecchas, Kambojas, Yavanas, Tusharas, Parasikas, Hunas, and others, by annihilating these sinful Mlecchas completely".

Faxian

Faxian (or Fa Hsien etc.), a Chinese Buddhist, was one of the pilgrims who visited India during the reign of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II. He started his journey from China in 399 and reached India in 405. During his stay in India up to 411, he went on a pilgrimage to Mathura, Kannauj, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Vaishali, Pataliputra, Kashi, and Rajagriha, and made careful observations about the empire's conditions. Faxian was pleased with the mildness of administration. The Penal Code was mild and offences were punished by fines only. From his accounts, the Gupta Empire was a prosperous period. His writings form one of the most important sources for the history of this period.

Faxian on reaching Mathura comments––

"The snow and heat are finely tempered, and there is neither hoarfrost nor snow. The people are numerous and happy. They have not to register their households. Only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the gain from it. If they want to go, they go. If they want to stay on, they stay on. The king governs without decapitation or (other) corporal

punishments. Criminals are simply fined according to circumstances. Even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they only have their right-hand cut off. The king's bodyguards & attendants all have salaries. Throughout the whole country, the people do not kill any living creature, not drink any intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic."

Kumaragupta I

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his second son Kumaragupta I, born of *Mahadevi* Dhruvasvamini. Kumaragupta I assumed the title, *Mahendraditya*. He ruled until 455. Towards the end of his reign a tribe in the Narmada valley, the Pushyamitras, rose in power to threaten the empire. The Kidarites as well probably confronted the Gupta Empire towards the end of the rule of Kumaragupta I, as his son Skandagupta mentions in the Bhitari pillar inscription his efforts at reshaping a country in disarray, through reorganisation and military victories over the Pushyamitras and the Hunas.

He was the founder of Nalanda University which on 15 July 2016 was declared as a UNESCO world heritage site.

Skandagupta

Skandagupta, son and successor of Kumaragupta I is generally considered to be the last of the great Gupta rulers. He assumed the titles of *Vikramaditya* and *Kramaditya*. He defeated the Pushyamitra threat, but then was faced with invading Kidarites (sometimes described as the Hephthalites or

"White Huns", known in India as the Sweta Huna), from the northwest.

He repelled a *Huna* attack around 455 CE, but the expense of the wars drained the empire's resources and contributed to its decline. The Bhitari Pillar inscription of Skandagupta, the successor of Chandragupta, recalls the near-annihilation of the Gupta Empire following the attacks of the Kidarites. The Kidarites seem to have retained the western part of the Gupta Empire.

Skandagupta died in 467 and was succeeded by his agnate brother Purugupta.

Decline of the empire

Following Skandagupta's death, the empire was clearly in decline, and the later Gupta coinage indicates their loss of control over much of western India after 467–469. Skandagupta was followed by Purugupta (467–473), Kumaragupta II (473–476), Budhagupta (476–495), Narasimhagupta (495—530), Kumaragupta III (530—540), Vishnugupta (540—550), two lesser known kings namely, Vainyagupta and Bhanugupta.

In the 480's the Alchon Huns under Toramana and Mihirakula broke through the Gupta defences in the northwest, and much of the empire in the northwest was overrun by the Huns by 500. According to some scholars the empire disintegrated under the attacks of Toramana and his successor Mihirakula. It appears from inscriptions that the Guptas, although their power was much diminished, continued to resist the Huns. The

Hun invader Toramana was defeated by Bhanugupta in 510. The Huns were defeated and driven out of India in 528 by King Yashodharman from Malwa, and possibly Gupta emperor Narasimhagupta.

These invasions, although only spanning a few decades, had long term effects on India, and in a sense brought an end to Classical Indian civilisation. Soon after the invasions, the Gupta Empire, already weakened by these invasions and the rise of local rulers such as Yashodharman, ended as well. Following the invasions, northern India was left in disarray, with numerous smaller Indian powers emerging after the crumbling of the Guptas. The Huna invasions are said to have seriously damaged India's trade with Europe and Central Asia. In particular, Indo-Roman trade relations, which the Gupta Empire had greatly benefited from. The Guptas had been exporting numerous luxury products such as silk, leather goods, fur, iron products, ivory, pearl, and pepper from centres such as Nasik, Paithan, Pataliputra, and Benares. The Huna invasion probably disrupted these trade relations and the tax revenues that came with them.

Furthermore, Indian urban culture was left in decline, and Buddhism, gravely weakened by the destruction of monasteries and the killing of monks by the hand of the vehemently anti-Buddhist Shaivist Mihirakula, started to collapse. Great centres of learning were destroyed, such as the city of Taxila, bringing cultural regression. During their rule of 60 years, the Alchons are said to have altered the hierarchy of ruling families and the Indian caste system. For example, the Hunas are often said to have become the precursors of the Rajputs.

The succession of the 6th-century Guptas is not entirely clear, but the tail end recognised ruler of the dynasty's main line was king Vishnugupta, reigning from 540 to 550. In addition to the Hun invasion, the factors, which contribute to the decline of the empire include competition from the Vakatakas and the rise of Yashodharman in Malwa.

The last known inscription by a Gupta emperor is from the reign of Vishnugupta (the Damodarpur copper-plate inscription), in which he makes a land grant in the area of Kotivarsha (Bangarh in West Bengal) in 542/543 CE. This follows the occupation of most of northern and central India by the Aulikara ruler Yashodharman circa 532 CE.

A 2019 study by archaeologist Shanker Sharma has concluded that the cause of the Gupta empire's downfall was a devastating flood which happened around the middle of the 6th century in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Post-Gupta successor dynasties

In the heart of the former Gupta Empire, in the Gangetic region, the Guptas were succeeded by the Maukhari dynasty and the Pushyabhuti dynasty. The coinage of the Maukharis and Pushyabhutis followed the silver coin type of the Guptas, with portrait of the ruler in profile (although facing in the reverse direction compared to the Guptas, a possible symbol of antagonism) and the peacock on the reverse, the Brahmi legend being kept except for the name of the ruler.

In the western regions, they were succeeded by the Gurjaras, the Pratiharas, and later the Chaulukya-Paramara dynasties,

who issued so-called Indo-Sasanian coinage, on the model of the coinage of the Sasanian Empire, which had been introduced in India by the Alchon Huns.

Military organisation

In contrast to the Mauryan Empire, the Guptas introduced several military innovations to Indian warfare. Chief amongst these was the use of Siege engines, heavy cavalry archers and heavy sword cavalry. The heavy cavalry formed the core of the Gupta army and were supported by the traditional Indian army elements of elephants and light infantry.

The utilisation of horse archers in the Gupta period is evidenced on the coinage of Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I and Prakasaditya (postulated to be Purugupta) that depicts the emperors as horse-archers.

Unfortunately there is a paucity of contemporary sources detailing the tactical operations of the Imperial Gupta Army. The best extant information comes from the Sanskrit mahakavya (epic poem) Raghuva□śa written by the Classical Sanskrit writer and dramatist Kalidasa. Many modern scholars put forward the view that Kalidasa lived from the reign of Chandragupta II to the reign of Skandagupta and that the campaigns of Raghu – his protagonist in the Raghuva□śa – reflect those of Chandragupta II. In Canto IV of the Raghuvamsa, Kalidasa relates how the king's forces clash against the powerful, cavalry-centric, forces of the Persians and later the Yavanas (probably Huns) in the North-West. Here he makes special mention of the use horse-archers in the kings

army and that the horses needed much rest after the hotly contested battles. The five arms of the Gupta military included infantry, cavalry, chariot, elephants and ships. Gunaighar copper plate inscription of Vainya Gupta mentions ships but not chariots. Ships had become integral part of Indian military in the 6th century AD.

Religion

The Guptas were traditionally a Hindu dynasty. They were orthodox Hindus, but did not force their beliefs on the rest of the population, as Buddhism and Jainism also were accepted, and sometimes even supportive. Sanchi remained an important centre of Buddhism. Kumaragupta I (c. 414 – c. 455 CE) is said to have founded Nalanda. Modern genetic studies indicate that it was during the Gupta period that South Asian caste groups ceased to intermarry.

Some later rulers however seem to have especially promoted Buddhism. Narasimhagupta Baladitya (c. 495–?), according to contemporary writer Paramartha, was brought up under the influence of the Mahayanist philosopher, Vasubandhu. He built a sangharama at Nalanda and also a 300 ft (91 m) high vihara with a Buddha statue within which, according to Xuanzang, resembled the "great Vihara built under the Bodhi tree". According to the *Manjushrimulakalpa* (c. 800 CE), king Narasimhsagupta became a Buddhist monk, and left the world through meditation (Dhyana). The Chinese monk Xuanzang also noted that Narasimhagupta Baladitya's son, Vajra, who commissioned a sangharama as well, "possessed a heart firm in faith".

Gupta administration

A study of the epigraphical records of the Gupta empire shows that there was a hierarchy of administrative divisions from top to bottom. The empire was called by various names such as *Rajya*, *Rashtra*, *Desha*, *Mandala*, *Prithvi* and *Avani*. It was divided into 26 provinces, which were styled as *Bhukti*, *Pradesha* and *Bhoga*. Provinces were also divided into *Vishayas* and put under the control of the *Vishayapati*s. A *Vishayapati* administered the *Vishaya* with the help of the *Adhikarana* (council of representatives), which comprised four representatives: *Nagarasreshesthi*, *Sarthavaha*, *Prathamakulika* and *Prathama Kayastha*. A part of the *Vishaya* was called *Vithi*. The Gupta also had trading links with the Sassanid and Byzantine Empire.. The four-fold varna system was observed under the Gupta period but caste system was fluid. Brahmins followed non-Brahmanical profession as well. Khastriyas were involved in trade and commerce. The society largely coexisted among themselves.

Legacy

Scholars of this period include Varahamihira and Aryabhata, who is believed to be the first to consider zero as a separate number, postulated the theory that the Earth rotates about its own axis, and studied solar and lunar eclipses. Kalidasa, who was a great playwright, who wrote plays such as Shakuntala, and marked the highest point of Sanskrit literature is also said to have belonged to this period. The Sushruta Samhita, which is a Sanskrit redaction text on all of the major concepts of

ayurvedic medicine with innovative chapters on surgery, dates to the Gupta period.

Chess is said to have developed in this period, where its early form in the 6th century was known as *catura□ga*, which translates as "four divisions [of the military]" – infantry, cavalry, elephantry, and chariotry – represented by the pieces that would evolve into the modern pawn, knight, bishop, and rook, respectively. Doctors also invented several medical instruments, and even performed operations. The Indian numerals which were the first positional base 10 numeral systems in the world originated from Gupta India. The names of the seven days in a week appeared at the start of the Gupta period based on Hindu deities and planets corresponding to the Roman names. The ancient Gupta text Kama Sutra by the Indian scholar Vatsyayana is widely considered to be the standard work on human sexual behaviour in Sanskrit literature.

Aryabhata, a noted mathematician-astronomer of the Gupta period proposed that the earth is round and rotates about its own axis. He also discovered that the Moon and planets shine by reflected sunlight. Instead of the prevailing cosmogony in which eclipses were caused by pseudo-planetary nodes Rahu and Ketu, he explained eclipses in terms of shadows cast by and falling on Earth.

Art and architecture

The Gupta period is generally regarded as a classic peak of North Indian art for all the major religious groups. Although

painting was evidently widespread, the surviving works are almost all religious sculpture. The period saw the emergence of the iconic carved stone deity in Hindu art, as well as the Buddha-figure and Jain *tirthankara* figures, the latter often on a very large scale. The two great centres of sculpture were Mathura and Gandhara, the latter the centre of Greco-Buddhist art. Both exported sculpture to other parts of northern India.

The most famous remaining monuments in a broadly Gupta style, the caves at Ajanta, Elephanta, and Ellora (respectively Buddhist, Hindu, and mixed including Jain) were in fact produced under later dynasties, but primarily reflect the monumentality and balance of Guptan style. Ajanta contains by far the most significant survivals of painting from this and the surrounding periods, showing a mature form which had probably had a long development, mainly in painting palaces. The Hindu Udayagiri Caves actually record connections with the dynasty and its ministers, and the Dashavatara Temple at Deogarh is a major temple, one of the earliest to survive, with important sculpture.

Throne

A **throne** is the seat of state of a potentate or dignitary, especially the seat occupied by a sovereign on state occasions; or the seat occupied by a pope or bishop on ceremonial occasions. "Throne" in an abstract sense can also refer to the monarchy or the Crown itself, an instance of metonymy, and is also used in many expressions such as "the power behind the throne". The expression "ascend (mount) the throne" takes its

meaning from the steps leading up to the dais or platform, on which the throne is placed, being formerly comprised in the word's significance.

When used in a political or governmental sense, throne typically refers to a civilization, nation, tribe, or other politically designated group that is organized or governed under an authoritarian system. Throughout much of human history societies have been governed under authoritarian systems, in particular dictatorial or autocratic systems, resulting in a wide variety of thrones that have been used by given heads of state. These have ranged from stools in places such as in Africa to ornate chairs and bench-like designs in Europe and Asia, respectively. Often, but not always, a throne is tied to a philosophical or religious ideology held by the nation or people in question, which serves a dual role in unifying the people under the reigning monarch and connecting the monarch upon the throne to his or her predecessors, who sat upon the throne previously. Accordingly, many thrones are typically held to have been constructed or fabricated out of rare or hard to find materials that may be valuable or important to the land in question. Depending on the size of the throne in question it may be large and ornately designed as an emplaced instrument of a nation's power, or it may be a symbolic chair with little or no precious materials incorporated into the design.

When used in a religious sense, throne can refer to one of two distinct uses. The first use derives from the practice in churches of having a bishop or higher-ranking religious official (archbishop, Pope, etc.) sit on a special chair which in church referred to by written sources as a "throne", or “Cathedra”

(Latin for chair) and is intended to allow such high-ranking religious officials a place to sit in their place of worship. The other use for throne refers to a belief among many of the world's monotheistic and polytheistic religions that the deity or deities that they worship are seated on a throne. Such beliefs go back to ancient times, and can be seen in surviving artwork and texts which discuss the idea of ancient gods (such as the Twelve Olympians) seated on thrones. In the major Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Throne of God is attested to in religious scriptures and teachings, although the origin, nature, and idea of the Throne of God in these religions differs according to the given religious ideology practiced.

In the west, a throne is most identified as the seat upon which a person holding the title King, Queen, Emperor, or Empress sits in a nation using a monarchy political system, although there are a few exceptions, notably with regards to religious officials such as the Pope and bishops of various sects of the Christian faith. Changing geo-political tides have resulted in the collapse of several dictatorial and autocratic governments, which in turn have left a number of throne chairs empty, however the significance of a throne chair is such that many of these thrones - such as China's Dragon Throne - survive today as historic examples of nation's previous government.

Antiquity

Thrones were found throughout the canon of ancient furniture. The depiction of monarchs and deities as seated on chairs is a common topos in the iconography of the Ancient Near East.

The word *throne* itself is from Greek θρόνος (*thronos*), "seat, chair", in origin a derivation from the PIE root **dher-* "to support" (also in *dharma* "post, sacrificial pole"). Early Greek Δι□ςθρόνους (*Dios thronous*) was a term for the "support of the heavens", i.e. the axis mundi, which term when Zeus became an anthropomorphic god was imagined as the "seat of Zeus". In Ancient Greek, a "thronos" was a specific but ordinary type of chair with a footstool, a high status object but not necessarily with any connotations of power. The Achaeans (according to Homer) were known to place additional, empty thrones in the royal palaces and temples so that the gods could be seated when they wished to be. The most famous of these thrones was the throne of Apollo in Amyclae.

The Romans also had two types of thrones- one for the Emperor and one for the goddess Roma whose statues were seated upon thrones, which became centers of worship.

Hebrew Bible

The word "throne" in English translations of the Bible renders Hebrew אכסkissē'. The Pharaoh of the Exodus is described as sitting on a throne (Exodus 11:5, 12:29), but mostly the term refers to the throne of the kingdom of Israel, often called the "throne of David" or "throne of Solomon". The literal throne of Solomon is described in 1 Kings 10:18–20: "Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom." In the

Book of Esther (5:3), the same word refers to the throne of the king of Persia.

The God of Israel himself is frequently described as sitting on a throne, referred to outside of the Bible as the Throne of God, in the Psalms, and in a vision Isaiah (6:1), and notably in Isaiah 66:1, YHWH says of himself "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool" (this verse is alluded to by Matthew 5:34-35).

Christianity

Christian Bible

In the New Testament, the angel Gabriel also refers to this throne in the Gospel of Luke (1:32–33): "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Jesus promised his Apostles that they would sit upon "twelve thrones", judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). John's Revelation states: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" (Revelation 20:11).

The Apostle Paul speaks of "thrones" in Colossians 1:16. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, in his work, *De Coelesti Hierarchia* (VI.7) interprets this as referring to one of the ranks of angels (corresponding to the Hebrew *Arelim* or *Ophanim*).

This concept was expanded upon by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* (I.108), wherein the thrones are concerned with carrying out divine justice.

In Medieval times the "Throne of Solomon" was associated with the Virgin Mary, who was depicted as the throne upon which Jesus sat. The ivory in the biblical description of the Throne of Solomon was interpreted as representing purity, the gold representing divinity, and the six steps of the throne stood for the six virtues. Psalm 45:9 was also interpreted as referring to the Virgin Mary, the entire Psalm describing a royal throne room.

Ecclesiastical thrones

From ancient times, bishops of the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and other churches where episcopal offices exist, have been formally seated on a throne, called a *cathedra* (Greek: κάθεδρα, seat). Traditionally located in the sanctuary, the cathedra symbolizes the bishop's authority to teach the faith (hence the expression "ex cathedra") and to govern his flock.

"Ex cathedra" refers to the explicative authority, notably the extremely rarely used procedure required for a papal declaration to be 'infallible' under Roman Catholic Canon law. In several languages the word deriving from *cathedra* is commonly used for an academic teaching mandate, the professorial chair.

From the presence of this cathedra (throne), which can be as elaborate and precious as fits a secular prince (even if the

prelate is not a prince of the church in the secular sense), a bishop's primary church is called a cathedral. In the Roman Catholic Church, a basilica -from the Greek *basilikos* 'royal'-, now refers to the presence there of a papal canopy (*ombrellino*), part of his regalia, and applies mainly to many cathedrals and Catholic churches of similar importance and/or splendor. In Roman Antiquity a basilica was secular public hall. Thus, the term basilica may also refer to a church designed after the manner of the ancient Roman basilica. Many of the churches built by the emperor Constantine the Great and Justinian are of the basilica style.

Some other prelates besides bishops are permitted the use of thrones, such as abbots and abbesses. These are often simpler than the thrones used by bishops and there may be restrictions on the style and ornamentation used on them, according to the regulations and traditions of the particular denomination.

As a mark of distinction, Roman Catholic bishops and higher prelates have a right to a canopy above their thrones at certain ecclesiastical functions. It is sometimes granted by special privilege to prelates inferior to bishops, but always with limitations as to the days on which it may be used and the character of its ornamentation. The liturgical color of the canopy should correspond with that of the other vestments. When ruling monarchs attend services, they are also allowed to be seated on a throne that is covered by a canopy, but their seats must be outside the sanctuary.

In the Greek Orthodox Church, the bishop's throne will often combine features of the monastic choir stall (*kathisma*) with

appurtenances inherited from the Byzantine court, such as a pair of lions seated at the foot of the throne.

The term "throne" is often used in reference to Patriarchs to designate their ecclesiastical authority; for instance, "the Ecumenical Throne" refers to the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

Western bishops may also use a faldstool to fulfill the liturgical purpose of the cathedra when not in their own cathedral.

Papal Thrones

In the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope is an elected monarch, both under canon law as supreme head of the church, and under international law as the head of state - styled "sovereign pontiff"- of the Vatican City State (the sovereign state within the city of Rome established by the 1929 Lateran Treaty). Until 1870, the Pope was the elected monarch of the Papal States, which for centuries constituted one of the largest political powers on the divided Italian peninsula. To this day, the Holy See maintains officially recognised diplomatic status, and papal nuncios and legates are deputed on diplomatic missions throughout the world.

The Pope's throne (*Cathedra Romana*), is located in the apse of the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran, his cathedral as Bishop of Rome.

In apse of Saint Peter's Basilica, above the "Altar of the Chair" lies the *Cathedra Petri*, a throne believed to have been used by St Peter himself and other earlier Popes; this relic is enclosed

in a gilt bronze casting and forms part of a huge monument designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

Unlike at his cathedral (Archbasilica of St. John Lateran), there is no permanent *cathedra* for the Pope in St Peter's Basilica, so a removable throne is placed in the Basilica for the Pope's use whenever he presides over a liturgical ceremony. Prior to the liturgical reforms that occurred in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, a huge removable canopied throne was placed above an equally removable dais in the choir side of the "Altar of the Confession" (the high altar above the tomb of St Peter and beneath the monumental bronze baldachin); this throne stood between the apse and the Altar of the Confession.

This practice has fallen out of use with the 1960s and 1970s reform of Papal liturgy and, whenever the Pope celebrates Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, a simpler portable throne is now placed on platform in front of the Altar of the Confession. However, whenever Pope Benedict XVI celebrated the Liturgy of the Hours at St Peter's, a more elaborate removable throne was placed on a dais to the side of the Altar of the Chair. When the Pope celebrates Mass on the Basilica steps facing St. Peter's Square, portable thrones are also used.

In the past, the pope was also carried on occasions in a portable throne, called the *sedia gestatoria*. Originally, the *sedia* was used as part of the elaborate procession surrounding papal ceremonies that was believed to be the most direct heir of pharaonic splendor, and included a pair of flabella (fans made from ostrich feathers) to either side. Pope John Paul I at first abandoned the use of these implements, but later in his brief reign began to use the *sedia* so that he could be seen

more easily by the crowds. However, he did not restore the use of the flabella. The use of the *sedia* was abandoned by Pope John Paul II in favor of the so-called "popemobile" when outside. Near the end of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II had a specially constructed throne on wheels that could be used inside.

Prior to 1978, at the Papal conclave, each cardinal was seated on a throne in the Sistine Chapel during the balloting. Each throne had a canopy over it. After a successful election, once the new pope accepted election and decided by what name he would be known, the cardinals would all lower their canopies, leaving only the canopy over the newly elected pope. This was the new pope's first throne. This tradition was dramatically portrayed in the 1968 film, *The Shoes of the Fisherman*.

Medieval and Early Modern periods

In European feudal countries, monarchs often were seated on thrones, based in all likelihood on the Roman magisterial chair. These thrones were originally quite simple, especially when compared to their Asian counterparts. One of the grandest and most important was the Throne of Ivan "the Terrible". Dating from the mid-16th century, it is shaped as a high-backed chair with arm rests, and adorned with ivory and walrus bone plaques intricately carved with mythological, heraldic and life scenes. The plaques carved with scenes from the biblical account of King David’s life are of particular relevance, as David was seen as the ideal for Christian

monarchs. In practice, any chair the monarch occupied in a formal setting served as a "throne", though there were often special chairs used only for this kept in places the monarch often went to. Thrones began to be made in pairs, for the king and queen, which remained common in later periods. Sometimes they are identical, or the queen's throne may be slightly less grand.

The throne of the Byzantine Empire (Magnaura) included elaborate automatons of singing birds. In the 'regency' (nominally an Ottoman province, de facto an independent realm) of the Bey of Tunis, the throne was called *kursi*.

Though medieval examples tended to be retained in the Early Modern period, having acquired the aura of tradition, when new thrones were made they either continued medieval styles or were just very grand and elaborate versions of contemporary chairs or armchairs.

South Asia

In the Indian subcontinent, the traditional Sanskrit name for the throne was *si□hāsana* (lit., seat of a lion). In the Mughal times the throne was called *Shāhī takht* : □təxt]). The term *gaddi* (Hindustani pronunciation:], also called *rājgaddī*) referred to a seat with a cushion used as a throne by Indian princes. The term *gaddi* was usually used for the throne of a Hindu princely state's ruler, while among Muslim princes or Nawabs, save exceptions such as the Travancore State royal family, the term *musnad* ([məsnəd]), also spelt as *musnud*, was more common, even though both seats were similar.

The Throne of Jahangir was built by Mughal emperor Jahangir in 1602 and is located at the *Diwan-i-Khas* (hall of private audience) at the Agra Fort.

The Peacock Throne was the seat of the Mughal emperors of India. It was commissioned in the early 17th century by emperor Shah Jahan and was located in the Red Fort of Delhi. The original throne was subsequently captured and taken as a war trophy in 1739 by the Persian king Nadir Shah, and has been lost ever since. A replacement throne based on the original was commissioned afterwards and existed until the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's throne was made by the goldsmith Hafez Muhammad Multani about 1820 to 1830. Made of Wood and resin core, covered with sheets of repoussé, chased and engraved gold.

The Golden Throne or Chinnada Simhasana or Ratna Simahasana in Kannada is the royal seat of the rulers of the Kingdom of Mysore. The Golden throne is kept at Mysore Palace.

Southeast Asia

In Burma, the traditional name for a throne is *palin,* from the Pali term *palla□ka*, which means "couch" or "sofa." The Burmese *palin* in pre-colonial times was used to seat the sovereign and his main consort, and is today used to seat religious leaders such as sayadaws, and images of the Buddha. Royal thrones are called *yazapalin*, while thrones seating

images or statues of the Buddha are called *gaw pallin* or *samakhan*, from the Pali term *sammakha□□a*.

East Asia

The Dragon Throne is the term used to identify the throne of the Emperor of China. As the dragon was the emblem of divine imperial power, the throne of the emperor, who was considered a living god, was known as the Dragon Throne. The term can refer to very specific seating, as in the special seating in various structures in the Forbidden City of Beijing or in the palaces of the Old Summer Palace. In an abstract sense, the "Dragon Throne" also refers rhetorically to the head of state and to the monarchy itself. The Daoguang Emperor is said to have referred to his throne as "the divine utensil."

The throne of the Emperors of Vietnam are often referred to as *ngai vàng* ("golden throne") or *ngôi báu* literally "great precious" (seat/position). The throne are always adorned with the pattern and motif of the Vietnamese dragon, which is the exclusive and privileged symbol of the Vietnamese Emperors. The last existing imperial throne in Vietnam is the throne of Nguy□n Emperors placed in The Hall of Supreme Harmony, Imperial City of Hu□. It is designated as a national treasure of Vietnam. In Vietnamese folk religion, the gods, deities and ancestral spirits are believed to seat figuratively on thrones at places of worship. Therefore, on Vietnamese altars, there are various types of liturgical "throne" often decorated with red paint and golden gilding.

The Phoenix Throne (어좌*eojwa*) is the term used to identify the throne of the King of Korea. In an abstract sense, the Phoenix Throne also refers rhetorically to the head of state of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) and the Empire of Korea (1897–1910). The throne is located at Gyeongbok Palace in Seoul.

The Chrysanthemum Throne (*kōi*, lit. "Imperial position/rank") is the term used to identify the throne of the Emperor of Japan. The term also can refer to very specific seating, such as the *takamikura* throne in the Shishin-den at Kyoto Imperial Palace.

The throne of the Ryukyu Kingdom is located in Shuri Castle, Naha.

Modern period

During the Russian Empire, the throne in St. George's Hall (the "Greater Throne Room") in the Winter Palace was regarded as *the* throne of Russia. It sits atop a seven-stepped dais with a proscenium arch above and the symbol of the Imperial Family behind (the two-headed eagle). Peter I's Room (the "Smaller Throne Room") is modest in comparison to the former. The throne was made for Empress Anna Ivanovna in London. There is also a throne in the Grand Throne Room of the Peterhof Palace.

In some countries with a monarchy, thrones are still used and have important symbolic and ceremonial meaning. Among the most famous thrones still in usage are St Edward's Chair, on which the British monarch is crowned, and the thrones used

by monarchs during the state opening of parliaments in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, and Japan (see above) among others.

Some republics use distinctive throne-like chairs in some state ceremonial. The President of Ireland sits on a former viceregal throne during his or her inauguration ceremony while Lords Mayor of many British and Irish cities often preside over local councils from throne-like chairs.

Due to its symbolic nature, a toilet is often jokingly referred to as "a throne".

Chapter 9

Mayurasharma, Banavasi and Kannada

Mayurasharma

Mayurasharma or **Mayuravarma** (reigned 345–365 C.E.) a Kannada scholar and a native of Talagunda (in modern Shimoga district), was the founder of the Kadamba Kingdom of Banavasi, the earliest native kingdom to rule over what is today the modern state of Karnataka, India. Before the rise of the Kadambas, the centres of power ruling the land were outside the Karnataka region; thus the Kadambas' ascent to power as an independent geo-political entity, with Kannada, the language of the soil as a major regional language, is a landmark event in the history of modern Karnataka with Mayurasharma as an important historical figure. The earliest Kannada language inscriptions are attributed to the Kadambas of Banavasi.

Early life

There are several legends and tales that describe the progeny of the Kadamba family. One legend states the family descended from a three-eyed, four-armed being called *Trilochana Kadamba* who sprang to life from the drops of sweat from the forehead of Shiva falling at the roots of a Kadamba tree.

Another legend states Mayurasharma was born of Rudra (a form a Shiva) and the mother earth under an auspicious *Kadamba* tree and that he was born with a third eye on his forehead. According to yet another tale, Mayurasharma was born to the sister of a Jain Muni under a *Kadamba* tree. It appears that all these legends evolved so as to present the founder of the kingdom as a demi-god.

The Talagunda inscription of 450 is considered the most reliable source of information about the family of Mayurasharma and the origin of the Kingdom. The inscription is known to be free of legends, giving a realistic and true account of the Kadamba line of kings. According to the inscription, Mayurasharma was a *Vaidika* Brahmin scholar and a native of Talagunda. He was the son of Bandhushena, grandson of his *guru* (teacher) Veerasharma and a student at the *Agrahara* (place of learning) in Talagunda. The inscription confirms the family is named for the *Kadamba* tree that grew near the family home. It is further claimed that they were a Kannadiga Dravidian family inducted into the Brahminic fold as was popular in the medieval times. The Gudnapur inscription further confirms Mayurasharma's parentage and that he acquired the character of a Kshatriya.

Birth of a kingdom

According to the Talagunda inscription, Mayurasharma went to Kanchi the capital of the Pallavas to pursue his Vedic studies accompanied by his *guru* and grandfather Veerasharma. Kanchi was an important *Ghatikasthana* (centre of learning) at that time. There, having been humiliated by a Pallava guard

(horseman), in a rage Mayurasharma gave up his Brahminic studies and took to the sword to avenge his insult. The inscription vividly describes the event thus:

That the hand dextrous in grasping the *kusha* grass, fuel and stones, ladle, melted butter and the oblation vessel, unsheathed a flaming sword, eager to conquer the earth

It can be said that the rise of Mayurasharma against the Pallava hold over the Talagunda region was actually a successful rebellion of Brahmins against the domination of the Kshatriya power as wielded by the Pallavas of Kanchi. Thus was born, in a moment of righteous indignation, the first Kingdom native to present day Karnataka region. Other scholars however feel Mayurasharma's rebellion was well timed to coincide with the defeat of Pallava Vishnugopa by the southern invasion of Samudragupta of northern India. Mayurasharma first succeeded in establishing himself in the forests of Shriparvata (possibly modern Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh) by defeating the Antharapalas (guards) of the Pallavas and subduing the Banas of Kolar. The Pallavas under Skandavarman were unable to contain Mayurasharma and recognised him as a sovereign in the regions from the Amara ocean (western ocean) to Prehara (Malaprabha river). Some historians feel that Mayurasharma was initially appointed as a commander (*dandanayaka*) in the army of the Pallavas, as the inscription uses such terms as *Senani* and calls Mayurasharma *Shadanana* (six-faced god of war). However, after a period of time, availing himself of the confusion caused by the defeat of Pallava Vishnugopa by Samudragupta (from the Allahabad inscriptions), Mayurasharma carved out a kingdom with Banavasi (near Talagunda) as his capital. It is also known that

in other battles, Mayurasharma defeated the Traikutas, Abhiras, Sendrakas, Pallavas, Pariyathrakas, Shakasthana, the Maukharis and Punnatas. To celebrate his successes, Mayurasharma performed many horse sacrifices and granted 144 villages (known as *brahmadeyas*) to Brahmins of Talagunda. With an effort to rejuvenate the ancient Brahminic faith and to perform the royal rituals and the related functions of the government, Mayurasharma invited learned *Vaidika* Brahmins from Ahichatra. The Havyaka Brahmins claim descent from these early Brahmin settlers of the 4th century called the Ahichatra brahmins or the Ahikaru/Havikaru.

In popular media

- Mayurasharma was the protagonist in the 1975 Kannada film *Mayura* starring Rajkumar. The story is a depiction of the early years of conflict with the Pallava rulers and Mayurasharma's eventual ascension to the Kadamba throne.
- Literature : The famous Telugu writer, poet and scholar , a Jnanapeeth recipient, Padmabushan Visawanatha Satyanarayana wrote the story of Mayura Sharma as a novel named '*Kadimi Chettu* ' (Literal translation: The Kadamba Tree) in Telugu.

Banavasi

Banavasi is an ancient temple town located near Sirsi in Uttara Kannada in the South Indian state of Karnataka. Banavasi was the ancient capital of the Kannada empire

Kadamba who ruled entire Karnataka state. They were the first native empire to give prominence to Kannada and Karnataka.

History

- Banavasi is the oldest town in the Karnataka state. It has grown up around the Madhukeshwara Temple built in the 5th century and dedicated to Shiva the supreme God in Shaivism, a major branch of Hinduism.

5th-century copper coin was discovered here with an inscription in the Kannada script, one of the oldest such coins ever discovered.

Adikavi Pampa, the first poet of Kannada, wrote his epics in Banavasi.

The town once was the capital of the Kadamba rulers, an ancient royal dynasty of Karnataka. They established themselves there in A.D. 345 and ruled South India for at least two centuries.

Banavasi contains some of the oldest architectural monuments in southern India.

Location

Banavasi lies in Malenadu region and is surrounded by forests and villages, with the Varada river flowing around it on three sides. Sirsi, is the nearest town about 23 km away. It is 400

km from Bengaluru. The nearest railway stations are 70 km away in Haveri and Talaguppa. The district Headquarters is Karwar.

Agriculture

The soil is fertile around Banavasi and paddy, wheat, sugarcane, arecanut, spices and pineapple are grown. Its specially known for pineapples, bananas and ginger. There are many pineapple farms on the edge of the village.

Attractions

The annual December cultural festival, **Kadambothsava**, is a huge gathering, organised by the state government, and featuring folk dancers, drama troupes, classical musicians, art exhibitions while drawing together performers, artists, and writers from throughout south India.

Banavasi has long been a cultural centre, especially the Yakshagana art form. Today local artisans craft and sell the classical folk art Yakshagana masks here.

Kannada

- **Kannada** is a Dravidian language spoken predominantly by the people of Karnataka in the southwestern region of India. The language is also spoken by linguistic minorities in the states of

> Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala and Goa; and also by Kannadigas abroad. The language had roughly 43 million native speakers by 2011. Kannada is also spoken as a second and third language by over 12.9 million non-native speakers in Karnataka, which adds up to 56.9 million speakers. It is one of the scheduled languages of India and the official and administrative language of the state of Karnataka. Kannada was the court language of some of the most powerful empires of South and Central India, such as the Chalukya dynasty, the Rashtrakuta dynasty, the Vijayanagara Empire and the Hoysala Empire.

The Kannada language is written using the Kannada script, which evolved from the 5th-century Kadamba script. Kannada is attested epigraphically for about one and a half millennia and literary Old Kannada flourished in the 6th-century Ganga dynasty and during the 9th-century Rashtrakuta Dynasty. Kannada has an unbroken literary history of over a thousand years. Kannada literature has been presented with 8 Jnanapith awards, the most for any Dravidian language and the second highest for any Indian language.

Based on the recommendations of the Committee of Linguistic Experts, appointed by the ministry of culture, the government of India designated Kannada a classical language of India. In July 2011, a center for the study of classical Kannada was established as part of the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore to facilitate research related to the language.

Development

Kannada is a Southern Dravidian language and according to scholar Sanford B. Steever, its history can be conventionally divided into three stages: Old Kannada (*Halegannada*) from 450–1200 AD, Middle Kannada (*Nadugannada*) from 1200–1700 and Modern Kannada from 1700 to the present. Kannada is influenced to a considerable degree by Sanskrit. Influences of other languages such as Prakrit and Pali can also be found in Kannada. The scholar Iravatham Mahadevan indicated that Kannada was already a language of rich spoken tradition earlier than the 3rd century BC and based on the native Kannada words found in Prakrit inscriptions of that period, Kannada must have been spoken by a broad and stable population. The scholar K. V. Narayana claims that many tribal languages which are now designated as Kannada dialects could be nearer to the earlier form of the language, with lesser influence from other languages.

Sanskrit and Prakrit influence

The sources of influence on literary Kannada grammar appear to be three-fold: Pā□ini's grammar, non-Paninian schools of Sanskrit grammar, particularly *Katantra* and *Sakatayana* schools, and Prakrit grammar. Literary Prakrit seems to have prevailed in Karnataka since ancient times. The vernacular Prakrit speaking people may have come into contact with Kannada speakers, thus influencing their language, even before Kannada was used for administrative or liturgical purposes. Kannada phonetics, morphology, vocabulary,

grammar and syntax show significant influence from these languages.

Some naturalised (*tadbhava*) words of Prakrit origin in Kannada are: *ba□□a* (colour) derived from *va□□a*, *hunnime* (full moon) from *pu□□ivā*. Examples of naturalised Sanskrit words in Kannada are: *var□a* (colour), *paur□imā*, and *rāya* from *rāja* (king).

Kannada also has borrowed (*Tatsama*) words such as *dina* (day), *kopa* (anger), *surya* (sun), *mukha* (face), *nimi□a* (minute).

History

Early traces

Purava Hale Gannada is a Kannada term which literally translated means "Previous form of Old Kannada." It was the language of Banavasi in the late ancient period, the Satavahana, Chutu Satakarni (Naga) and Kadamba periods and thus has a history of over 2500 years. The Ashoka rock edict found at Brahmagiri (dated to 230 BC) has been suggested to contain words in identifiable Kannada.

In some 3rd–1st century BC Tamil inscriptions, words of Kannada influence such as *nalliyooraa*, *kavuDi* and *posil* were found. The use of the vowel *a* as an adjective is not prevalent in Tamil but its usage is available in Kannada. Kannada words such as *gouDi-gavuDi* transform into Tamil's *kavuDi* for lack of the usage of *Ghosha svana* in Tamil. Hence the Kannada word 'gavuDi' becomes 'kavuDi' in Tamil. 'Posil' ('hosilu') was

introduced into Tamil from Kannada and colloquial Tamil uses this word as 'Vaayil'. In a 1st-century AD Tamil inscription, there is a personal reference to *ayjayya*, a word of Kannada origin. In a 3rd-century AD Tamil inscription there is usage of *oppanappa vIran*. Here the honorific *appa* to a person's name is an influence from Kannada. Another word of Kannada origin is *taayviru* and is found in a 4th-century AD Tamil inscription. S. Settar studied the *sittanvAsal* inscription of first century AD as also the inscriptions at *tirupparamkunram*, *adakala* and *neDanUpatti*. The later inscriptions were studied in detail by Iravatham Mahadevan also. Mahadevan argues that the words *erumi*, *kavuDi*, *poshil* and *tAyiyar* have their origin in Kannada because Tamil cognates are not available. Settar adds the words *nADu* and *iLayar* to this list. Mahadevan feels that some grammatical categories found in these inscriptions are also unique to Kannada rather than Tamil. Both these scholars attribute these influences to the movements and spread of Jainas in these regions. These inscriptions belong to the period between the first century BC and fourth century AD. These are some examples that are proof of the early usage of a few Kannada origin words in early Tamil inscriptions before the common era and in the early centuries of the common era.

In the 150 AD Prakrit book *Gaathaa Saptashati*, written by Haala Raja, Kannada words like *tIr or Teer (*meaning *to be able)*, *tuppa*, *peTTu*, *poTTu, poTTa, piTTu (*meaning *to strike), Pode (Hode)* have been used. On the Pallava Prakrit inscription of 250 CE of Hire Hadagali's Shivaskandavarman, the Kannada word *kOTe* transforms into *koTTa*. In the 350 AD Chandravalli Prakrit inscription, words of Kannada origin like *punaaTa*, *puNaDa* have been used. In one more Prakrit inscription of 250

AD found in Malavalli, Kannada towns like *vEgooraM* (*bEgooru*), *kundamuchchaMDi* find a reference.

Pliny the Elder, a Roman historian, wrote about pirates between Muziris and Nitrias (Netravati River), called Nitran by Ptolemy. He also mentions Barace (Barcelore), referring to the modern port city of Mangaluru, upon its mouth. Many of these are Kannada origin names of places and rivers of the Karnataka coast of 1st century AD.

The Greek geographer Ptolemy (150 AD) mentions places such as Badiamaioi (Badami), Inde (Indi), Kalligeris (Kalkeri), Modogoulla (Mudagal), Petrigala (Pattadakal), Hippokoura (Huvina Hipparagi), Nagarouris (Nagur), Tabaso (Tavasi), Tiripangalida (Gadahinglai), Souboutou or Sabatha (Savadi), Banaouase (Banavasi), Thogorum (Tagara), Biathana (Paithan), Sirimalaga (Malkhed), Aloe (Ellapur) and Pasage (Palasige) indicating prosperous trade between Egypt, Europe and Karnataka. He also mentions Pounnata (Punnata) and refers to beryls, i.e., the *Vaidhurya* gems of that country. He mentions Malippala (Malpe), a coastal town of Karnataka. In this work Larika and Kandaloi are identified as Rastrika and Kuntala. Ptolemy writes that "in the midst of the false mouth and the Barios, there is a city called Maganur" (Mangalore). He mentions inland centres of pirates called Oloikhora (Alavakheda). He mentions Ariake Sadinon, meaning Aryaka Satakarni, and Baithana as the capital of Siro(e) P(t)olmaios, i.e., Sri Pulimayi, clearly indicating his knowledge of the Satavahana kings. The word *Pulimayi* means *One with body of Tiger* in Kannada, which bears testimony to the possible Kannada origin of Satavahana kings.

A possibly more definite reference to Kannada is found in the 'Charition Mime' ascribed to the late 4th century BC to early 2nd century AD. The farce, written by an unknown author, is concerned with a Greek lady named Charition who has been stranded on the coast of a country bordering the Indian Ocean. The king of this region, and his countrymen, sometimes use their own language, and the sentences they speak could be interpreted as Kannada, including *Koncha madhu patrakke haki* ("Having poured a little wine into the cup separately") and *paanam beretti katti madhuvam ber ettuvenu* ("Having taken up the cup separately and having covered it, I shall take wine separately."). The language employed in the papyrus indicates that the play is set in one of the numerous small ports on the western coast of India, between Karwar and Kanhangad (presently in Kerala). The character of the king in this farce refers to himself as 'the Nayaka of Malpe (Malpi-naik)'. B. A. Saletore identifies the site of this play as Odabhandeshwara or Vadabhandeshwara (ship-vessel-Ishwara or God), situated about a mile from Malpe, which was a Shaivite centre originally surrounded by a forest with a small river passing through it. He rejects M. Govinda Pai's opinion that it must have occurred at Udyavara (Odora in Greek), the capital of Alupas. Stavros J. Tsitsiridis mentions in his research work that *Charition* is not an exclusively prose or verse text, but a mixed form. The corrupt lines indicate that the text found at Oxyrhynchus (Egypt) has been copied, meaning that the original was even earlier in date. Wilamowitz (1907) and Andreassi (2001) say that for more precise dating of the original, some place the composition of the work as early as in the Hellenistic period (332–30 BC), others at a later date, up to the early 2nd century AD.

Epigraphy

The earliest examples of a full-length Kannada language stone inscription (*shilaashaasana*) containing Brahmi characters with characteristics attributed to those of proto-Kannada in *Hale Kannada* (*lit* Old Kannada) script can be found in the Halmidi inscription, usually dated c. AD 450, indicating that Kannada had become an administrative language at that time. The Halmidi inscription provides invaluable information about the history and culture of Karnataka. The Kannada Lion balustrade inscription excavated at the Pranaveshwara temple complex at Talagunda near Shiralakoppa of Shivamogga district, dated to 370–380 AD is now considered the earliest Kannada inscriptions replacing the Halmidi inscription of 450 AD. The 5th century Tamatekallu inscription of Chitradurga and the Siragunda inscription from Chikkamagaluru Taluk of 500 AD are further examples. Recent reports indicate that the Old Kannada *Nishadi* inscription discovered on the Chandragiri hill, Shravanabelagola, is older than Halmidi inscription by about fifty to hundred years and may belong to the period AD 350–400. The noted archaeologist and art historian S. Shettar is of the opinion that an inscription of the Western Ganga King Kongunivarma Madhava (c. 350–370) found at Tagarthi (Tyagarthi) in Shikaripura taluk of Shimoga district is of 350 AD and is also older than the Halmidi inscription.

Current estimates of the total number of existing epigraphs written in Kannada range from 25,000 by the scholar Sheldon Pollock to over 30,000 by the Amaresh Datta of the Sahitya Akademi. Prior to the Halmidi inscription, there is an abundance of inscriptions containing Kannada words, phrases and sentences, proving its antiquity. The 543 AD Badami cliff

inscription of Pulakesi I is an example of a Sanskrit inscription in old Kannada script. Kannada inscriptions are not only discovered in Karnataka but also quite commonly in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Some inscriptions were also found in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The northernmost Kannada inscription of the Rashtrakutas of 964 AD is the Jura record found near Jabalpur in present-day Madhya Pradesh, belonging to the reign of Krishna III. This indicates the spread of the influence of the language over the ages, especially during the rule of large Kannada empires. Pyu sites of Myanmar yielded variety of Indian scripts including those written in a script especially archaic, most resembling the Kadamba (Kannada-speaking Kadambas of 4th century AD Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh) form of common Kannada-Telugu script from Andhra Pradesh.

The earliest copper plates inscribed in Old Kannada script and language, dated to the early 8th century AD, are associated with Alupa King Aluvarasa II from Belmannu (the Dakshina Kannada district), and display the double crested fish, his royal emblem. The oldest well-preserved palm leaf manuscript in *Old Kannada* is that of *Dhavala*. It dates to around the 9th century and is preserved in the Jain Bhandar, Mudbidri, Dakshina Kannada district. The manuscript contains 1478 leaves written using ink.

Coins

Some early Kadamba Dynasty coins bearing the Kannada inscription *Vira* and *Skandha* were found in Satara collectorate. A gold coin bearing three inscriptions of *Sri* and an abbreviated inscription of king Bhagiratha's name called

bhagi (c. AD 390–420) in old Kannada exists. A Kadamba copper coin dated to the 5th century AD with the inscription *Srimanaragi* in Kannada script was discovered in Banavasi, Uttara Kannada district. Coins with Kannada legends have been discovered spanning the rule of the Western Ganga Dynasty, the Badami Chalukyas, the Alupas, the Western Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagar Empire, the Kadamba Dynasty of Banavasi, the Keladi Nayakas and the Mysore Kingdom, the Badami Chalukya coins being a recent discovery. The coins of the Kadambas of Goa are unique in that they have alternate inscription of the king's name in Kannada and Devanagari in triplicate, a few coins of the Kadambas of Hangal are also available.

Literature

Old Kannada

The oldest existing record of Kannada poetry in *Tripadi* metre is the Kappe Arabhatta record of AD 700. *Kavirajamarga* by King Nripatunga Amoghavarsha I (AD 850) is the earliest existing literary work in Kannada. It is a writing on literary criticism and poetics meant to standardise various written Kannada dialects used in literature in previous centuries. The book makes reference to Kannada works by early writers such as King Durvinita of the 6th century and Ravikirti, the author of the Airhole record of 636 AD. Since the earliest available Kannada work is one on grammar and a guide of sorts to unify existing variants of Kannada grammar and literary styles, it can be safely assumed that literature in Kannada must have

started several centuries earlier. An early extant prose work, the *Vaddaradhane* (ವಡ್ಡಾರಾಧನೆ) by Shivakotiacharya of AD 900 provides an elaborate description of the life of Bhadrabahu of Shravanabelagola.

Kannada works from earlier centuries mentioned in the Kavirajamarga are not yet traced. Some ancient texts now considered extinct but referenced in later centuries are *Prabhrita* (AD 650) by Syamakundacharya, *Chudamani* (Crest Jewel—AD 650) by Srivaradhadeva, also known as Tumbuluracharya, which is a work of 96,000 verse-measures and a commentary on logic (*Tatwartha-mahashastra*). Other sources date *Chudamani* to the 6th century or earlier. The *Karnateshwara Katha*, a eulogy for King Pulakesi II, is said to have belonged to the 7th century; the *Gajastaka*, a work on elephant management by King Shivamara II, belonged to the 8th century, and the *Chandraprabha-purana* by Sri Vijaya, a court poet of King Amoghavarsha I, is ascribed to the early 9th century. Tamil Buddhist commentators of the 10th century AD (in the commentary on *Nemrinatham*, a Tamil grammatical work) make references that show that Kannada literature must have flourished as early as the BC 4th century.

Around the beginning of the 9th century, Old Kannada was spoken from Kaveri to Godavari. The Kannada spoken between the rivers Varada and Malaprabha was the pure well of Kannada undefiled.

The late classical period gave birth to several genres of Kannada literature, with new forms of composition coming into use, including *Ragale* (a form of blank verse) and meters like *Sangatya* and *Shatpadi*. The works of this period are based on

Jain and Hindu principles. Two of the early writers of this period are Harihara and Raghavanka, trailblazers in their own right. Harihara established the *Ragale* form of composition while Raghavanka popularised the *Shatpadi* (six-lined stanza) meter. A famous Jaina writer of the same period is Janna, who expressed Jain religious teachings through his works.

The Vachana Sahitya tradition of the 12th century is purely native and unique in world literature, and the sum of contributions by all sections of society. Vachanas were pithy poems on that period's social, religious and economic conditions. More importantly, they held a mirror to the seed of social revolution, which caused a radical re-examination of the ideas of caste, creed and religion. Some of the important writers of Vachana literature include Basavanna, Allama Prabhu and Akka Mahadevi.

Emperor Nripatunga Amoghavarsha I of 850 AD recognised that the Sanskrit style of Kannada literature was *Margi* (formal or written form of language) and *Desi* (folk or spoken form of language) style was popular and made his people aware of the strength and beauty of their native language Kannada. In 1112 AD, Jain poet Nayasena of Mulugunda, Dharwad district, in his Champu work *Dharmamrita* (ಧರ್ಮಾಮೃತ), a book on morals, warns writers from mixing Kannada with Sanskrit by comparing it with mixing of clarified butter and oil. He has written it using very limited Sanskrit words which fit with idiomatic Kannada. In 1235 AD, Jain poet Andayya, wrote *Kabbigara Kava-* ಕಬ್ಬಿಗರಕಾವ (Poet's Defender), also called *Sobagina Suggi* (Harvest of Beauty) or *Madana-Vijaya andKavana-Gella* (Cupid's Conquest), a *Champu* work in pure

Kannada using only indigenous (*desya*) Kannada words and the derived form of Sanskrit words – *tadbhavas*, without the admixture of Sanskrit words. He succeeded in his challenge and proved wrong those who had advocated that it was impossible to write a work in Kannada without using Sanskrit words. Andayya may be considered as a protector of Kannada poets who were ridiculed by Sanskrit advocates. Thus Kannada is the only Dravidian language which is not only capable of using only native Kannada words and grammar in its literature (like Tamil), but also use Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary (like Telugu, Malayalam, Tulu, etc.) The Champu style of literature of mixing poetry with prose owes its origins to the Kannada language which was later incorporated by poets into Sanskrit and other Indian languages.

Middle Kannada

During the period between the 15th and 18th centuries, Hinduism had a great influence on Middle Kannada (*Nadugannada-* ನಡುಗನ್ನಡ) language and literature. Kumara Vyasa, who wrote the *Karnata Bharata Kathamanjari* (ಕರ್ಣಾಟಭಾರತಕಥಾಮಂಜರಿ), was arguably the most influential Kannada writer of this period. His work, entirely composed in the native *Bhamini Shatpadi* (hexa-meter), is a sublime adaptation of the first ten books of the Mahabharata. During this period, the Sanskritic influence is present in most abstract, religious, scientific and rhetorical terms. During this period, several Hindi and Marathi words came into Kannada, chiefly relating to feudalism and militia.

Hindu saints of the Vaishnava sect such as Kanakadasa, Purandaradasa, Naraharitirtha, Vyasatirtha, Sripadaraya, Vadirajatirtha, Vijaya Dasa, Jagannatha Dasa, Prasanna Venkatadasa produced devotional poems in this period. Kanakadasa's *Ramadhanya Charite* (ರಾಮಧಾನ್ಯಚರಿತೆ) is a rare work, concerning with the issue of class struggle. This period saw the advent of *Haridasa Sahitya* (*lit* Dasa literature) which made rich contributions to *Bhakti* literature and sowed the seeds of Carnatic music. Purandara Dasa is widely considered the *Father of Carnatic music*.

Modern Kannada

The Kannada works produced from the 19th century make a gradual transition and are classified as *Hosagannada* or Modern Kannada. Most notable among the modernists was the poet Nandalike Muddana whose writing may be described as the "Dawn of Modern Kannada", though generally, linguists treat *Indira Bai* or *Saddharma Vijayavu* by Gulvadi Venkata Raya as the first literary works in Modern Kannada. The first modern movable type printing of "Canarese" appears to be the *Canarese Grammar* of Carey printed at Serampore in 1817, and the "Bible in Canarese" of John Hands in 1820. The first novel printed was John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, along with other texts including *Canarese Proverbs*, *The History of Little Henry and his Bearer* by Mary Martha Sherwood, Christian Gottlob Barth's *Bible Stories* and "a Canarese hymn book."

Modern Kannada in the 20th century has been influenced by many movements, notably *Navodaya*, *Navya*, *Navyottara*, *Dalita* and *Bandaya*. Contemporary Kannada literature has been

highly successful in reaching people of all classes in society. Further, Kannada has produced a number of prolific and renowned poets and writers such as Kuvempu, Bendre, and V K Gokak. Works of Kannada literature have received eight Jnanpith awards, the highest number awarded to any Indian language.

Areas of influence

Besides being the official and administrative language of the state of Karnataka, Kannada language is present in other areas:

- Kannadigas form Tamil Nadu's 3rd biggest linguistic group and add up to about 1.23 million which is 2.2% of Tamil Nadu's total population.
- Goa has 7% Kannada speakers which accounts for 94,360 Kannadigas.
- The Malayalam spoken by people of Lakshadweep has many Kannada words.
- There are about 150,000 Kannadigas in North America (USA and Canada).
- Gulf countries of Middle-East, UK and Australia have minority numbers of Kannada speakers.

Dialects

There is also a considerable difference between the spoken and written forms of the language. Spoken Kannada tends to vary from region to region. The written form is more or less

consistent throughout Karnataka. The Ethnologue reports "about 20 dialects" of Kannada. Among them are Kundagannada (spoken exclusively in Kundapura, Brahmavara, Bynduru and Hebri), Nadavar-Kannada (spoken by Nadavaru), Havigannada (spoken mainly by Havyaka Brahmins), Are Bhashe (spoken by Gowda community mainly in Madikeri and Sullia region of Dakshina Kannada), Malenadu Kannada (Sakaleshpur, Coorg, Shimoga, Chikmagalur), Sholaga, Gulbarga Kannada, Dharawad Kannada etc. All of these dialects are influenced by their regional and cultural background. The one million Komarpants in and around Goa speak their own dialect of Kannada, known as Halegannada. They are settled throughout Goa state, throughout Uttara Kannada district and Khanapur taluk of Belagavi district, Karnataka. The Halakki Vokkaligas of Uttara Kannada, Shimoga and Dakshina Kannada districts of Karnataka speak in their own dialect of Kannada called Halakki Kannada or Achchagannada. Their population estimate is about 75,000.

Ethnologue also classifies a group of four languages related to Kannada, which are, besides Kannada proper, Badaga, Holiya, Kurumba and Urali.

Nasik district of Maharashtra has a distinct tribe called 'Hatkar Kaanadi' people who speak a Kannada (Kaanadi) dialect with lot of old Kannada words. Per Chidananda Murthy, they are the native people of Nasik from ancient times which shows that North Maharashtra's Nasik area had Kannada population 1000 years ago. Kannada speakers formed 0.12% of Nasik district's population as per 1961 census.

Status

The Director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Udaya Narayana Singh, submitted a report in 2006 to the Indian government arguing for Kannada to be made a classical language of India. In 2008 the Indian government announced that Kannada was to be designated as one of the classical languages of India.

Writing system

The language uses forty-nine phonemic letters, divided into three groups: *swaragalu* (vowels – thirteen letters); *vyanjanagalu* (consonants – thirty-four letters); and *yogavaahakagalu* (neither vowel nor consonant – two letters: *anusvara*ಂ and *visarga*ಃ). The character set is almost identical to that of other Indian languages. The Kannada script is almost entirely phonetic, but for the sound of a "half n" (which becomes a half m). The number of written symbols, however, is far more than the forty-nine characters in the alphabet, because different characters can be combined to form *compound* characters *(ottakshara)*. Each written symbol in the Kannada script corresponds with one syllable, as opposed to one phoneme in languages like English. The Kannada script is syllabic.

Dictionary

Kannada–Kannada dictionary has existed in Kannada along with ancient works of Kannada grammar. The oldest available Kannada dictionary was composed by the poet 'Ranna' called 'Ranna Kanda' (ರನ್ನಕಂದ) in 996 AD. Other dictionaries are 'Abhidhana Vastukosha' (ಅಭಿದಾನವಾಸ್ತುಕೋಶ) by Nagavarma (1045 AD), 'Amarakoshada Teeku'(ಅಮರಕೋಶದತೀಕು) by Vittala (1300), 'Abhinavaabhidaana'(ಅಭಿನವಾಭಿದಾನ) by Abhinava Mangaraja (1398 AD) and many more. A Kannada–English dictionary consisting of more than 70,000 words was composed by Ferdinand Kittel.

G. Venkatasubbaiah edited the first modern Kannada–Kannada dictionary, a 9,000-page, 8-volume series published by the Kannada Sahitya Parishat. He also wrote a Kannada–English dictionary and a *kli□tapadakōśa* (ಕ್ಲಿಷ್ಟಪಾದಕೋಶ), a dictionary of difficult words.

Grammar

The canonical word order of Kannada is SOV (subject–object–verb), typical of Dravidian languages. Kannada is a highly inflected language with three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter or common) and two numbers (singular and plural). It is inflected for gender, number and tense, among other things. The most authoritative known book on old Kannada

grammar is *Shabdhamanidarpana* by Keshiraja. The first available Kannada book, a treatise on poetics, rhetoric and basic grammar is the *Kavirajamarga* from 850 AD.

The most influential account of Kannada grammar is Keshiraja's *Shabdamanidarpana* (c. AD 1260). The earlier grammatical works include portions of *Kavirajamarga* (a treatise on *alaṅkāra*) of the 9th century, and *Kavyavalokana* and *Karnatakabhashabhushana* (both authored by Nagavarma II in the first half of the 12th century).

Compound bases

Compound bases, called *samāsa* in Kannada, are a set of two or more words compounded together. There are several types of compound bases, based on the rules followed for compounding. The types of compound bases or samāsas: tatpurusha, karmadhāraya, dvigu, bahuvreehi, anshi, dvandva, kriya and gamaka samāsa. Examples: *ta□gā□i*, *hemmara*, *kannusanne*.

Pronouns

In many ways the third-person pronouns are more like demonstratives than like the other pronouns. They are pluralised like nouns and the first- and second-person pronouns have different ways to distinguish number.

Chapter 10

Huna People

Hunas or **Huna** (Middle Brahmi script: 𑀳𑀽*Hū□ā*) was the name given by the ancient Indians to a group of Central Asian tribes who, via the Khyber Pass, entered the Indian Subcontinent at the end of the 5th or early 6th century. The Huna Kingdom occupied areas as far south as Eran and Kausambi, greatly weakening the Gupta Empire. The Hunas were ultimately defeated by a coalition of Indian princes that possibly included the Indian king Yasodharman. He and possibly the Gupta emperor, Narasimhagupta, defeated a *Huna* army and their ruler Mihirakula in 528 CE and drove them out of India. The Guptas are thought to have played only a minor role in this campaign.

The Hunas are thought to have included the Xionite and/or Hephthalite, the Kidarites, the Alchon Huns (also known as the Alxon, Alakhana, Walxon etc.) and the Nezak Huns. Such names, along with that of the Harahunas (also known as the Halahunas or Harahuras) mentioned in Hindu texts, have sometimes been used for the Hunas in general; while these groups (and the Iranian Huns) appear to have been a component of the Hunas, such names were not necessarily synonymous. Some authors suggest that the Hunas were Ephthalite Huns from Central Asia. The relationship, if any, of the Hunas to the Huns, a Central Asian people who invaded Europe during the same period, is also unclear.

Gujars are sometimes said to have been originally a sub-tribe of the Hunas.

In its farthest geographical extent in India, the territories controlled by the Hunas covered the region up to Malwa in central India. Their repeated invasions and war losses were the main reason for the decline of the Gupta Empire.

History

- Chinese sources link the Central Asian tribes comprising the Hunas to both the Xiongnu of north east Asia and the Huns who later invaded and settled in Europe. Similarly, Gerald Larson suggests that the Hunas were a Turkic-Mongolian grouping from Central Asia. The works of Ptolemy (2nd century) are among the first European texts to mention the Huns, followed by the texts by Marcellinus and Priscus. They too suggest that the Huns were an inner Asian people.

The 6th-century Roman historian Procopius of Caesarea (Book I. ch. 3), related the Huns of Europe with the Hephthalites or "White Huns" who subjugated the Sassanids and invaded northwestern India, stating that they were of the same stock, "in fact as well as in name", although he contrasted the Huns with the Hephthalites, in that the Hephthalites were sedentary, white-skinned, and possessed "not ugly" features:

The Ephthalitae Huns, who are called White Huns [...] The Ephthalitae are of the stock of the Huns in fact as well as in

name, however they do not mingle with any of the Huns known to us, for they occupy a land neither adjoining nor even very near to them; but their territory lies immediately to the north of Persia [...] They are not nomads like the other Hunnic peoples, but for a long period have been established in a goodly land... They are the only ones among the Huns who have white bodies and countenances which are not ugly. It is also true that their manner of living is unlike that of their kinsmen, nor do they live a savage life as they do; but they are ruled by one king, and since they possess a lawful constitution, they observe right and justice in their dealings both with one another and with their neighbours, in no degree less than the Romans and the Persians

The Kidarites, who invaded Bactria in the second half of the 4th century, are generally regarded as the first wave of Hunas to enter Indian Subcontinent.

The Gupta empire under Skandagupta in the 5th century had successfully repulsed one Hun attack in the northwest in 460 CE. However, over the period of the next several years, the Hunas under successive kings were able to make inroads into the subcontinent.

They were initially based in the Oxus basin in Central Asia and established their control over Gandhara in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent by about 465 CE. From there, they fanned out into various parts of northern, western, and central India. The Hū□as are mentioned in several ancient texts such as the Rāmāya□a, Mahābhārata, Purā□as, and Kalidasa's Raghuva□śa.

In Buddhist sources, Huna kings are described as 'rude and cruel'. They were responsible for the destruction of Buddhist monasteries and centers of learning in the Northwest regions of the country. In 528 CE, another campaign led by a coalition of Indian kings finally defeated king Mihirakula and his Huna army. The victory was inscribed on a stone pillar and erected in honor of (and in praise for) one of the leaders of the coalition, king Yashodharman, in Mandasaur in Central India.

The Mongolian-Tibetan historian Sumpa Yeshe Peljor (writing in the 18th century) lists the Hunas alongside other peoples found in Central Asia since antiquity, including the Yavanas (Greeks), Kambojas, Tukharas, Khasas and Daradas.

Religion

The religious beliefs of the Hunas is unknown, and believed to be a combination of ancestor worship, totemism and animism.

Song Yun and Hui Zheng, who visited the chief of the Hephthalite nomads at his summer residence in Badakshan and later in Gandhara, observed that they had no belief in the Buddhist law and served a large number of divinities."