The Aryan Influence in India

India was invaded around 1500 BCE by a group of people known as the Aryans. They conquered the primary inhabitants of India, who were known as the Dayus (Sharma 844). The Aryans were comprised of quite different physical and cultural features in contrast to the Dayus; the Aryans were a white race and the Dayus were a dark race (Sharma 846). The primal Indians in the north believed in supreme gods and spirits and never believed in idolatry (Snaitang, 2004). The Aryans spoke a different language, worshipped different gods, and had different cultural practices (Habib 99). Their influence in India was prominent as the majority of Indians today speak and value the Indo-Aryan language and culture (Habib 99). This article will discuss the identity of the Aryans that migrated eastwards into India by examining their culture, language, religious beliefs and how these characteristics intermingled to form the caste system and shape society.

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The Aryans had a rich culture that still influences India today. The Aryans were primarily warrior-nomadic people and their main source of wealth was cattle (Kosambi 76). However, after the migration into India there was a greater urgency to retain copper, iron ore, and minerals for profits (Kosambi 101). During this time, the head of the household gained respect primarily through trade, manufacturing, or farming (Kosambi 101). The Aryan society was patriarchal and much of the importance was placed on the male, therefore an abundance of Aryan gods were males (Kosambi 76). The women in the Aryan culture were usually housewives and the women were said to be very skilled in weaving (Kosambi 80). In technological advancements, the Aryans were mostly interested in making chariots, tools and weapons and did not concentrate much
The Aryans annexed various tribes and communities on their journey towards India and were successful because they were nomadic people and their food supply of cattle was easy to transport (Kosambi 76). They had mastered the art of using horse-chariots for war and they also held great knowledge of heavy transportation using ox-carts (Kosambi 76). The male’s communal life consisted of sabha, “denoting both the tribal assembly and its mote hall”, which was for the males only, and featured gambling, fights, chariot races and female dancers (Kosambi 81). The Aryans had a simplistic culture; however, their language was influential and distinctive.

The unique language of the Aryans was a key factor in distinguishing them from other races. Aryan is a term that can define a linguistic group, which is a group of people classified as speaking the same language, or can be defined as a race, which is a group of people who comprise of specific and distinct characteristic (Kosambi 72). The prevalent evidence throughout history suggests that Aryan was referred to as a unity of language and people. For example, the emperor Darius refers to himself as an ‘Aryan of Aryan descent’, the Vedas speaks of the Aryans as a race that worshipped the gods mentioned in the Vedas and the Medes, ancient Iranian people, used to bear the name Aryans (Kosambi 75). The language spoken by the Aryans came from the classical Aryan language which is a tree that consists of three important branches. These are Sanskrit, Greek and Latin; Sanskrit being the bearer of the Indo-Aryan Language which was spoken by the Aryans (Kosambi 72). The earlier derivatives of Sanskrit used by the Aryans are called “Pali” or “Magadhi” and “Prakrits” (Kosambi 73). The Dravidians of India, however communicated in their own language which is not a part of the classical Aryan language tree (Kosambi 73). Later on, during the Rigvedic period, Sanskrit was the predominant language. The text and verbal communication were all practiced in Sanskrit (Kosambi 84). The Aryans’ language was very influential, however their religious and social beliefs crafted the way we see India today.

The religious beliefs of the Aryans were not heavily enforced, which left them open to influence by other cultures. The Aryans invaded India around 1500 BCE and rivaled against the dark skinned inhibitors of India. The Aryans stamped the dark skinned people as “non-believers” and called them “phallus worshippers” because of the cultural difference between the two races (Kumar 2). The Aryans considered the dark skinned people to be barbarians and emphasized their superiority in the realms of their mentality, physicality, sociality and religiosity (Kumar 2). However the Dravidians, other dark skinned inhabitants of India, were considered to be tolerable by the Aryans (Kumar 2). The Dravidians had their own language and culture, which was not threatened by the Aryans (Kumar 2). The Aryans were religiously open-minded and understood the importance of non-Aryan thoughts and culture, however, they limited themselves to affiliating with cultures they found tolerable or of some importance (Kumar 3). The Upanishads, which are important Aryan religious texts, are described as having “elements of Aryan thoughts as well as non-Aryan thought” (Kumar 42). The incorporation of the Dravidian god Siva into the Vedas can also testify to the tolerant Aryan culture (Kumar 4). The open-minded Aryans also conquered many tribes and communities and made use of any foreign knowledge, as well as uniting the new communities under an Aryan language (Kosambi 77).
Religiously, the Aryans recognize the Vedas as their most valued religious text which consists of many hymns dedicated to the Aryan gods (Kosambi 77). The Vedas consist of four different texts which are the Rgveda, Yajurveda, Sasmaveda and Atharvaveda. The two focal Vedic gods depicted are Agni, the god of fire for whom the most verses in the Vedas are dedicated, and Indra, the lord of war and rain who fights the evil daemons and is profoundly known for his indulgence in Soma (Kosambi 79). Other Aryan gods includes the sun god, the creator, the destroyer and many other various gods (Kosambi 79). The Vedas are considered to be part real and part mystical. They depict real life, history, sacrifices and location, while also depicting mystical and spiritual tales (Kosambi 80). The Aryans also believed in sacrifices in order to align themselves with the cosmos which were outlined in the Vedas; some of the sacrifices included the horse sacrifice and the cattle sacrifice (Kosambi 102). The Rgveda talks about important historical events such as the Dasarajna, which is the battle of the ten kings where the Bharatas emerged victorious (Singh 6). The Bharatas are the Rgvedic tribe from which India derived its name Bharat (Singh 6). Other important texts of the Aryans were Samhitas, Barhmanas, Upanishads and Sutras (Singh 13). Hinduism is the fruit that emerged from the complex mixing of the Dravidian culture and the Aryan culture (Wolpert 575). Their deities, epics, religious texts and history merged to form the fundamental pillars of Hinduism (Wolpert 575). Hinduism is further known for the segregation of their society into different classes and castes.

The Aryans introduced the caste system to make sure they were prevalent over the other races (Wolpert 575). To create this complex new society in favor of the Aryans, the castes were divided into four classes which were the Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras (Kosambi 15). The Brahmins consisted of the priestly class who were responsible for the prayers, sacrifices and the people who have a connection with the gods (Sharma 846). They were given the highest respect in the society and carried a sense of authority over other castes. The Ksatriyas were the warriors and they were responsible for the protection of the communities. The Vaisay were the traders and normal commoners. The Sudras were the conquered dark skinned people who were considered the lowest class and given servant like duties such as cleaning, repairs and janitorial works (Sharma 846). Lastly, there were also the untouchables who did not fit into any caste. They were therefore not worthy of interacting with anyone in the caste system which led them to be isolated from society (Sharma 865). The Aryans had an enormous influence in India where the caste system is still prevalent in modern day.

The Aryans were the warrior nomadic people that migrated to the Indian subcontinent with their influential culture, religion and language. On further inspection we can see that the Aryan culture played a vital role in sculpting Hinduism by influencing the religion with their epics, texts and religious ideologies. The Aryans mixed with the Dravidians to create the complex religion of Hinduism. The emergence of this religion and the Aryans seeking higher recognition in contrast to the commoners led to the creation of the caste system. The caste system divided the people into various sects who were responsible for different duties within the frameworks of society; such as religious worship, trading, protecting the public and cleaning.
Bibliography


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Article written by: Bikky Regmi March (2012) who is responsible for its content.

D. ALEXANDER THE GREAT

ALEXANDER THE GREAT IN INDIA

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Alexander was born in Macedonia in 356 BCE to Philip II and his wife, Olympias. They belonged to the race of Epeiros and claimed to
be descended from the Homeric hero Achilles (M'Crindle 15). Alexander was 20 years old when his father was assassinated at a family wedding. Following his death, Alexander quickly won the support of the Macedonian army and assembly as Philip's heir (Hamilton 44). [Some believe the Macedonian assembly had the right to elect or depose a king. It is not clear if this is true, but Alexander did address the assembly with the seeming purpose of winning their support (King 384-385)]. Anyone who opposed his authority was quickly executed and he was crowned king of Macedonia in 336 BCE (Freeman 315).

During the reign of Philip II, Macedonia had conquered Greece and formed the League of Corinth. Philip was the head of the League, and all Greek city-states, with the exception of Sparta, were forced to join (Freeman 314). When the Greeks heard of Philip's death, there was widespread dissent and unrest. Alexander reaffirmed Macedonian control of the Greeks in a relatively bloodless campaign during which he was reaffirmed as the leader of the League of Corinth. The Greeks gave Alexander troops and appointed him commander of a campaign of revenge against Persia (Bosworth 28).

Alexander's campaign into Persian began in 334 BCE and lasted until approximately 330 BCE. [Darius III was defeated in the fall of 331 BCE and in 330 BCE, the last great palace of Xerxes was sacked]. It was during this campaign that Alexander travelled to Egypt. The Egyptians welcomed him as a god and proclaimed him the King of Upper and Lower Egypt and the son of Ra (the sun god). It was also during this campaign that he travelled to the oracle of Ammon at Siwah in the Libyan Desert. [Ammon was a local god who was often equated with Zeus]. It is said that the priests at Siwah declared Alexander to be the son of Zeus himself (Freeman 319-322).

After the death of Darius III, another man, Bessus claimed to be the heir to the Persian throne. So Alexander crossed the Hindu Kush in 329 BCE to meet him. Bessus was hunted down and executed. This area, Bactria and Sogdiana (modern day Pakistan and Afghanistan), was very unstable and the local leaders resented Alexander's invasion. The terrain was well suited for guerilla warfare and Alexander spent two years fighting down pockets of resistance (Freeman 325).

With the death of Bessus, Alexander's campaign to conquer Persia was completed. He had no reason to attack the countries East of Persia, yet Alexander chose to continue campaigning (Narain 156). According to some scholars, his desire to continue likely stemmed from the fact that at one point India, or part of India, was within the Persian Empire. Darius I had ruled "India" and there were also claims that Cyrus had ruled all of India to the "eastern ocean" (Tarn 85-87). When Alexander crossed the Indus, it is clear that he was interested in conquering India and it is thought that he also hoped to reach the "eastern ocean" (Narain 156). [Alexander knew nothing of northern or eastern Asia; to him 'Asia' simply meant the empire of Darius I. He would have had no idea how far the "eastern ocean" was from Persia (Tarn 85-87)]

In 327 BCE, Alexander recrossed the Hindu Kush. He sent half of his phalanx and most of his cavalry under two of his generals,
Hephaestion and Perdiccas, through the Khyber Pass to the Indus River to build boats and prepare pontoons (Burn 149; Narain 156). Alexander, with the rest of the army, took a more Northern route through the mountain country of Bajaur and Swat (Bosworth 120-121). Any city that resisted or opposed Alexander was attacked and their men were massacred. At the city of Massaga, 7000 mercenaries were killed by Alexander when they refused to join his armies (Freeman 326; Narain 157). He saw the inhabitants of this area as his subjects and expected instant submission; those who did not submit were killed or enslaved (Bosworth 121).

Alexander was wounded in one of these skirmishes. He took an arrow to the shoulder while storming a hill fortress at the beginning of his campaign through the mountain country. When they captured the fortress the next day, Alexander made an example of them. Anyone defending the city that did not escape was killed and the settlement was destroyed (Bosworth 121).

The only city spared by Alexander on his journey to the Indus was Nysa. He granted this city their freedom and independence based on their claim that the city was the birthplace of the Greek god Dionysus (Freeman 326). Alexander reached the Indus and met up with the rest of his army almost a year after separating (Bosworth 125; Narain 156). The men who had been sent ahead under Hephaestion and Perdiccas had successfully bridged the river and in 326 BCE Alexander and his army crossed the Indus (Freeman 326; Narain 157). Alexander knew very little about the land he was entering. When he saw crocodiles in the Indus, he thought the river must be the headwaters of the Nile. The men did not understand the caste system of India. They assumed the ksatriya class to be mercenaries, which they were familiar with in the Greek world. Alexander classified the Brahmin class as philosophers and saw them, with their resilient nationalism, as his greatest opponents (Burn 150).

Alexander was greeted and welcomed by the ruler of Taxila; when Alexander reached the Indus, gifts from this state were waiting for him. However, it appears that the motive of this ruler was to use Alexander and his army to defeat rival Indian princes to the East (Freeman 326; Arrian 259). One of these princes, Porus, had heard of Alexander’s invasion and mobilized to resist him. He waited for Alexander on the East side of the Hydaspes River (Freeman 326).

When Alexander reached the Hydaspes, Porus was on the far side with his army, which included about 200 elephants. The river was swift and high due to the melting snow from the Himalayas and Porus was intent on preventing Alexander from crossing (Burn 152). Alexander, however, was determined to cross. Porus had scouts who kept watch over Alexander’s movements; it was not as simple as just moving up or down the river and crossing, since Porus would hear of the plan long before they could reach the other side. Alexander made it known that he planned to cross the river and that he would wait until the winter (when the river would be fordable) if necessary. He began to collect enough food to supply his army for a long time. He also had his men constantly moving up and down the river threatening to cross. All this movement began to wear down the enemy’s alertness. While this continued, monsoon season arrived. Alexander selected the spot for his actual crossing some seventeen
miles away from his main camp. He crossed the river at night during a thunderstorm. His preparations and the weather gave Alexander the time he needed. He was able to get across just in time to form a front against the first of Porus' troops (Burn 153-154).

The battle was extremely hard fought but was one of Alexander’s most crushing victories. His ingenuity in opposing Porus' elephants was a significant contribution to his victory. The Macedonian infantry shot those driving the elephants and attacked the elephants as they charged. This caused the elephants to retreat back into the infantry lines, trampling anyone in their way (Burn 155-156; Freeman 326). Most of the elephant drivers were killed. The elephants were wounded, bewildered, and angered by fear and pain. They panicked and began attacking those around them. The Macedonians had room to move and maneuver and therefore could avoid the crazed animals. The Indians, however, were relatively boxed in and the elephants became a bigger threat to them than the Macedonians were (Arrian 278-279). As the elephants tired and slowed their charges, Alexander surrounded the remaining Indian army. The Indians suffered terrible losses, but some were able to find a gap in the Macedonian cavalry and flee (Arrian 279).

Porus fought bravely to the end. When it was clear that the battle was over, he rode away on his elephant. He was bleeding from a wound on his shoulder and was almost completely alone on the battlefield (Freeman 326). Alexander was deeply impressed with his heroism (Bosworth 130). He sent after Porus and asked him what he would like, and Porus replied that he wished to be treated as a king. Alexander reaffirmed Porus as king and even added further territory to his kingdom (Burn 156-157; M'Crindle 308-309).

Alexander wished to continue further into India, but his army was weary from years of campaigning. Furthermore, monsoon season was upon them and they had suffered seventy days of continuous rainfall by the time they reached the Beas River (Freeman 326-327). Here the army mutinied and refused to march any further East. Alexander was upset, but eventually gave in to his men. To preserve his dignity, he offered a sacrifice on the bank of the river and found the omens to be unfavourable. Therefore he announced his decision to continue no further (Narain 159-160).

While he may have conceded to continue no further East, Alexander refused to return by the route they had come. They followed the Indus River south until they reached the ocean. Many of the tribes that lived along the Indus River were hostile and their cities were stormed and conquered as the army moved south (Freeman 327). Alexander was nearly killed in one of these conquests against the Malloi tribe. He took an arrow to the chest and for days his men thought he would die. Many believe that this wound severely weakened him and contributed to his early death (Burn 160-162; Narian 160).

The army reached the ocean in 325 BCE and then marched west across the Makram desert. It took sixty days to cross the desert and some sources believe that they suffered great losses during this journey. After escaping the desert, the army under Alexander continued on to Persepolis in the heart of the Persian Empire (Freeman 327). Alexander continued to dream of future campaigns,
but in 323 BCE, less than two years after returning from India, he was dead. There is debate over the exact cause of his death. Some sources believe his earlier wound played a great role, some think he may have been poisoned, and many simply say that he fell ill (Freeman 327-329).

Alexander’s legacy lived on and he became a role model for future leaders. The Romans especially looked up to Alexander (Freeman 331-332). However, not all aspects of Alexander’s campaign were as remarkably successful. Although he went further east than anyone before him, he left no permanent mark in India. His influence and name are not found in Indian literature, life, or government. Some Indian historians argue that while he did campaign into India, he did not meet any of the great nations of the Hindusthan. Some also remark on the unprovoked nature of Alexander’s invasion and the suffering afflicted upon the Indian people (Narian 162).

The lasting effect of Alexander’s campaign in India is reminiscent of an encounter Alexander was said to have had with a group of Indian philosophers. Arrian tells that as Alexander marched by, the sages simply stomped their feet and showed no other interest in him. When Alexander asked them what they meant by this, they replied:

King Alexander, every man can possess only so much of the earth’s surface as this we are standing on. You are but human like the rest of us, save that you are always busy and up to no good, travelling so many miles from your home, a nuisance to yourself and to others. Ah well! You will soon be dead, and then you will own just as much of this earth as will suffice to bury you. (Arrian 349)

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Article written by: Raiah Hark (March 2012) who is solely responsible for its content.
The medieval period in India is not romanticized period like its European counterpart, but it is nonetheless important for the development of both modern Indian Society and the Hindu religion. Like Europe at the same time, areas of the Indian subcontinent were ruled by dynastic kings, and one of the most influential and important of them is the Cola Dynasty of the Tamil region. The Cola's conquered almost the entirety of the South of India, using their military to expand their borders. The Cola Dynasty lasted from the 9th century C.E. to the 14th century C.E. and oversaw a period of religious transformation, particularly in the Hindu tradition. One of the most important leaders of the Dynasty was Rajaraja I (r. 985-1017 C.E.), who was responsible for a great deal of religious change, and was perhaps best known for his temple reforms focused on taking the power away from bhakti temples and placing it in his own sphere of influence (Vasudevan 15).

Like so many other kingships throughout the medieval world, power was passed along within the family lineage. The importance of a ruler having a son was therefore intensified in its importance, and the emphasis placed on having a male heir is still seen today (Kaimal 34). In medieval India, kings were especially emphatic about honouring their lineage and any warrior ancestors from whom they had descended. This was done as a way of legitimizing their own power and status as a great warrior, which was necessary of a king (Kaimal, 35). The early Cola kings were no different in this regard, as they focused on making their family and themselves appear to be great
warriors and in many ways godlike (Veluthat 30). However, the Cola’s also began to use religion as a way to legitimize their position by financing the construction of temples and using them as places of worship and administration. Temples in the Hindu tradition were steadily gaining importance throughout the first millennium C.E., as Brahmanical Hinduism based around temple worship gained more and more influence (Vasudevan, 13). This was especially true during the reign of Rajaraja I, who sought to bring the focus of worship to his own royal temples and in turn advance his personal prestige and influence. Rajaraja was known as ‘The Great Cola King’ in part because of his impressive usage of temple construction and administration to consolidate his power, and in part because of his successful military exploits.

Prior to the rule of Rajaraja, the borders of the Cola kingdom were confined strictly within the Tamil region on the Southern portion of the Indian subcontinent. When Rajaraja came to power, he went about conquering territories both to the North and South of the area he first controlled. He was ultimately quite successful in these military exploits, conquering the Telugu and Kannada regions to the North, and the area known as Ilam to the South (Vasudevan 16). As a result, Rajaraja became renowned as a great conqueror and military strategist who earned the complete loyalty of his soldiers, which helped to further secure his authority and respect of his subjects as a warrior king. The military conquests also gave him a large empire over which he tried to implement uniform administration practices (Vasudevan 43). In order to do this, Rajaraja strategically placed armies and military resources throughout the conquered regions and had them enforce his will and laws. However, this was a costly way to administer an empire, and the Cola king schemed new ways to administer his domain peacefully. The solution to the problem was to build and use temples as both a place of worship and as a place where the king could exercise considerable political power in order to better control his subjects and add to his kingdoms wealth (Vasudevan, 16). This in turn led to a resurgence in large scale temple building spearheaded by the central government of Rajaraja. Such building operations not only allowed for Rajaraja to better control his subjects and earn more prestige, but to be the cause of the further entrenchment of Brahmanical Hinduism in Southern India.

During Rajaraja’s reign, the temple became a political and economic centre that functioned in a way similar to a Lordly estate did in Europe at around the same time. Many of the tasks and duties assigned to temples under Rajaraja were similar in nature to those of a Lord to his peasants in a feudal system, though the relationships between priests and commoners were much different. Temples were given land grants by the king or private patrons so they could raise the money needed to run the services they had to provide; this was known as devadana (Vasudevan 62). The temples acted as banks in that they lent money and earned profit on the interest, as well as invested in local business ventures in things such as agriculture and so on. Another duty was to oversee land exchanges and other business transactions. All of these ventures were designed to make the temple money, and since Rajaraja sponsored so many, much of the profit from these royal temples went straight back to the crown. On top of these duties temples already had in the community under Rajaraja, they also acted as his personal tax collectors, with the
Great Royal Temples like Rajarajesvaram acting as the feudal-like lord of multiple villages (Vasudevan 62). In this regard Temples played a key role in the day to day affairs and running of the Cola kingdom during the rule of Rajaraja.

While temples functioned as the economic and political centres of a given area, they also served their purpose as places of religious worship as well. In the temples, Brahmin priests performed the rituals they were requested of upon payment to those who qualified via their class or jati. This is a relatively obvious function for a religious temple, though what particular god was focused on individual temples was varied. For example, in the very large royal temple of Rajarajesvaram, which was built by Rajaraja, Siva appears to be the most commonly worshipped god (Schwindler 163). Hindu deities appear all over the temple in carvings and sculptures, but Siva is depicted the most and in the most prominent places. This could be partly due to Siva’s high place in the pantheon, but it is equally likely that this was done because of the parallel between Siva being a great warrior and Rajaraja also being a great warrior, or at the least wishing to be portrayed like one (Schwindler 164). At this location, an inscription on a done at the behest of the king recorded all of the individuals in the temple’s employ. In total, there were over seven hundred people on the payroll of the temple; some for religious purposes and others to take care of the temple’s other duties (Vanamamalai 27). It has been thought that this temple was built by Rajaraja in dedication to Siva, using the arts as a means to draw people to the temple (Vanamamalai 27). Siva worship was therefore obviously an important aspect to the rule of Rajaraja, as was the recording of any business transactions in which the temple was involved.

In conclusion, the rule of Rajaraja I was complex and important to the history of India and the Hindu tradition. ‘The Great Cola King’ ushered in an era of prosperity for his kingdom and became a renowned figure in the history of India. He was able to vastly increase the size of his kingdom and give himself an empire by conquering vast areas of lands to the North and South, essentially stretching the Cola’s borders from sea to sea. Rajaraja was able to accomplish this through brilliant military strategy and commanding the complete loyalty of his armies, creating himself into an all important great warrior king like his ancestors before him. He was also a skilled politician and ruled his domain extremely well through both the use of occupational military forces and temples. Temples under Rajaraja were the major centres of the kingdom, responsible for most social, economic and political duties in a given region. This extension of temples as a form of power for the king led to the mass building of royally funded and patronized temples, the most magnificent being Rajarajesvaram. The new temples were used to bring power to the king at the expense of public, or bhakti temples. Siva worship was very important in these new temples, as it drew a comparison between the Siva as a great warrior and Rajaraja as a great warrior king. All in all, the system created by Rajaraja I to administer his kingdom was complex and important to the development of the Hindu tradition in Southern India.

Bibliography
One of the largest and most influential dynasties in Indian history was the Mauryan Dynasty. It is speculated that in 321 BCE, a man named Candragupta Maurya and his army defeated the Macedonian army to seize the throne of Magadha. The previous rulers of the throne, labeled the Nanda Dynasty, had belonged to the vaisya caste. Candragupta on the other hand, is thought to have been raised by a clan of peacock-tamers in Magadha (Avari 106). In various texts Candragupta is thought to have belonged to the Sudra caste as well.
as the kshatriya caste, so it is not entirely certain exactly where and how Chandragupta was raised. After Chandragupta defeated the Nanda Dynasty and came into power, he continued across the Indian subcontinent. The civil war in Punjab, caused by one of Alexander the Great’s successors, Peithon, allowed Chandragupta the opportunity to capture the capital, Taxila, and with it the Punjab territory. After discussions with another of Alexander’s successors, Seleucus, Chandragupta was able to unite the Indus and Ganges Valley establishing a powerful empire. The capital of the Mauryan Dynasty was located at Pataliputra and was known as one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Candragupta, Bindusara, and Asoka are the most renowned emperors, with Asoka being the most known. Hinduism had a very strong influence throughout the Mauryan Dynasty (Habib and Jha 138). However, during the course of the Mauryan Dynasty, Vedic sacrifice began to decline in popularity (Habib and Jha 138). Although sacrificial rituals were on the decline, the worshipping of various deities was still widespread. Many of the gods and goddesses worshiped during this period are still popular amongst Hindus today; examples being Indra, Agni, and Visnu (Singh 350). During the reign of the Mauryan Dynasty, Hindu sects involved with worshipping a major deity also existed (Singh 359). These sects are seen as reform movements within Hinduism. Examples of these sects include Vaisnavism and Saivism. Both of these sects focused their devotion on one of the two most popular deities in Hinduism: Vaisnavism on Visnu and Saivism on Siva. The Arthasastra was written during Chandragupta’s reign of the Mauryan Dynasty by Kautilya and outlined the duties and responsibilities of a king (Sharma 182). It encouraged a king to consider anything that pleases himself as dangerous, but whatever pleases his people should be considered good (Sharma 182). Kautilya was Chandragupta’s Prime Minister during his reign and has also been referred to as Visnugupta and Canakya in various texts across different religions. The Arthasastra helped enforce Hinduism as the prevalent religion during the time. An example of how it did this was by asking, “that the king have as his most important minister a purohita, or Brahmin priest” (Singh 138).

Hinduism has remained the prevalent religion in India for many thousands of years; however, during the Mauryan Dynasty a few other religions were patronized. These religions are seen as heterodox religions as they do not follow the Hindu system. The founder of the dynasty, Chandragupta, was thought to have favored Jainism. In his late and final years Chandragupta performed the ritual of santhara in the city of Karnataka (Avari 107). This “fasting death” is common among people who follow the Jain tradition and “is the first significant indication of the influence that the heterodox religions were to have on the future rulers of India” (Avari 107). There is little known about the second major emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty, Bindusara, but it is thought that he favored Hinduism. The third major emperor, Asoka, is the most recognized of the three and is credited with helping spread Buddhism. It is usually thought that Asoka favored Buddhism over Hinduism; however, he believed that no religion is better than another. Asoka had been set on expansion of his empire and had done so through several wars. His second, labeled the Kalinga war, left a very deep impression on Asoka. This eventually led Asoka to Buddhism, which he promoted
ahimsa (non-violence) and Dharma for the rest of his reign. A quote by Asoka shows his peaceful ways, "There will be no beating of wardrum but the drum of Dharma will be beaten" (Sharma 185). Dharma has different meanings in the different religions. Examples of this are Buddhism and Hinduism. The Dharma that Asoka preached is not seen as a clear definition, but is seen as a "moral law independent of any caste or creed" (Sharma 222). This is due to the fact that Asoka accommodated all religious systems and did not believe one to be better than another.

Before Asoka converted to Buddhism, he had been practicing the traditional religion of his ancestors (Sharma 216). During his first thirteen years of rule, he worshipped various gods and goddesses, his favorite being Siva. After his conversion to Buddhism, Asoka began to promote the Buddhist tradition. He did so in various ways, examples being the pillars he erected throughout his empire and the holding of the Third Buddhist Council. The chairman of the Council was Moggaliputta Tissa. The Council was held to resolve the disputes among the various monastic sects across the dynasty. The sects had different views on issues such as monastic discipline. The pillars had inscriptions on them outlining various Buddhist ideals, such as the practice of ahimsa. To this day many of the pillars still stand and scholars have been able to decipher and study the pillars to understand more about the Mauryan Empire under Asoka’s rule.

During the rule of Candragupta, a Greek ambassador by the name of Megasthenes helped introduce the knowledge of India to the western world. Megasthenes was raised in Ionia (modern day Turkey) and when he travelled to India, represented the interests of Seleukos (Avari 108). Although much of Megasthenes’ information collected and written in his diary, the Indica (which is now lost), was incorrect, he still was able to provide a good idea of Indian society during Candragupta’s rule. In his diary, he mentions the presence of seven “estates”. Although this formulation is incorrect, his description of the castes provides us with a good understanding of society during that time. At the top of his list were what he called philosophers, who can be seen as Brahmins and renouncers who “performed public sacrifices” as well as roaming about naked (Avari 109). The second estate consisted of those Megasthenes called cultivators, which were the majority of the Indian people. The third estate consisted of herdsmen and hunters and the fourth of traders and artisans. The fifth estate consisted of soldiers, who did nothing but fight, and the sixth consisted of spies and intelligence officers. The seventh and final estate contained “those who constituted the political and imperial establishment” (Avari 109).

Another piece of valuable information that was attained from Megasthenes Indica was his description of the capital city, Pataliputra (Avari 110). His description ranges from describing the business of the streets, to the peace and tranquility in the city’s royal park. Megasthenes’ description of the city coupled with the Arthasastra, makes rule under Candragupta seem as “a highly ordered and well-regulated world” (Avari 110). Megasthenes also describes the way the municipal government was set up during the Mauryan rule. He mentions that the municipal government consisted of six bodies. The first were involved with anything relating to the industrial arts (Habib and Jha 42). The second was involved with entertaining strangers, examples of this are assigning
housing as well as taking care of them when sick. The third group was involved with “what time and in what manner births and deaths occur” (Habib and Jha 42). This was done not only for tax purposes, but also to try and help prevent deaths. The fourth group was involved with retail and barter by having charge of the different units of measurements for different products on the market. The fifth and final group was involved with selling articles by public notice. The markets were set up in which new items were sold apart from old ones; in which someone was charged a fine if they sold them together.

In Kautilya’s *Arthasastra*, he outlines the details concerning the Royal Council. The Royal Council was not founded during the Mauryan Dynasty, but was important in shaping the rule of the Mauryan Dynasty. The meetings took place in a Council Chamber, which was held at a location that was said to not be easily accessible (Sharma 196). Members selected to be on the council were to meet several criteria in order to be eligible, which are outlined in the *Arthasastra*. Some of these qualities include; being a native of the empire, coming from a noble family, and honesty (Sharma 197). The council’s role was to provide advice to the king. This advice did not need to be taken by the King, but he generally did use it. Some of the other roles the Council provided for the Dynasty were the control of military expeditions, as well as religious and military functions (Sharma 197). This council was a major influence within the Mauryan Dynasty.

After the death of Asoka, the Mauryan Dynasty began a slow decline. The first successor that took the throne was Kunala, one of Asoka’s three sons. Although Kunala was blind, he ruled for eight years. He was not seen as the true ruler of the dynasty, but instead as a head of state (Sharma 250). After his reign was over, his son, Samprati replaced him on the throne. Samprati was a known follower of the Jain tradition and is thought to have built many Jain temples throughout his reign. At the time of his appointment to the throne, Asoka’s vast empire had been divided into two parts. Samprati controlled the eastern portion while his brother, Dashratha, controlled the western portion (Sharma 250). The last emperor of the dynasty, Brihadratha, was eventually killed by Pushyamitra Sunga, who then established a new dynasty labeled the Sunga Dynasty.

There are many causes leading to the downfall of the Mauryan Dynasty. One of the biggest causes was the weakness of the emperors that followed Asoka. Since the territory acquired by the first three rulers of the dynasty had become so vast, its successors needed to be strong rulers like Candragupta and Asoka were. Unfortunately, the successors were not, which is said to have helped in the decline of the dynasty. Another cause of the downfall was the policy of *ahimsa* proposed by Asoka. Asoka’s successors continued his policy of *ahimsa*, thus leading to the decline of military strength. With a weak military, the dynasty was very vulnerable to incoming empires, which ultimately led to the takeover by Pushyamitra.

**References and Further Recommended Readings**

I. SOUTH INDIAN KINGDOMS

THE PANDYAN DYNASTY
The Pandyan Empire started around the 6th century and ended around the 15th century. It extended from the Southern Vellaru river, to the North down to Cape Comorin, and from the Coromandel Coast on the East to the Achchhankovil Pass leading into Southern Kerala, or Travancore. The modern districts of Madurai, Tinnevelly and parts of the Travancore State were parts of the Pandyan Kingdom (Smith 206). The Pandyan dynasty started out ruling from the city of Korkai but in later times they moved to the city of Madurai, which is known as the capital city.

The Pandyan Empire was one of three ancient Tamil states in southern India. The other two states were the Chola and Chera. The three southern states were constantly in turmoil and confrontation, and there were many wars between them. Tamil literature contains indications that the kings of the Pandyan Empire were looked upon as bloodthirsty. The literature contains hints of massacres with cannibal feasts after the battle (Basham 63). The Pandyan dynasty was in power three separate times. The never-ending wars and revolutions did not bring about any development of political organizations. No republics were formed and no free towns were established. All the states continued to be governed by dictatorial kings, each of whom could do what he pleased, so long as he was in power.

The Dravidian religion and social customs differed from those of northern India. Religious ideas from northern India, such as the worship of the Vedic gods and the doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism, were known to the people of the south. Few people followed these religions, most people still worshipped their gods and goddesses and practised their own religious ceremonies (Chander 12). The caste system of Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra was very foreign to the southern states. The Jains of the Pandyan Kingdom suffered great persecution. Kuna Sundra, who was also known as Nedumaran Pandya was particularly tyrannical. He was originally a Jain, however, he converted to Saivism by a Chola queen. Those that refused to follow his example and convert to Saivism were persecuted greatly. Kuna Sundra signalled his change of creed by outrages on the Jains. Tradition claims that eight thousand Jains were impaled. To this day the Hindus of Madurai, where the tragedy took place, commemorate the anniversary of the impalement of the Jains as a festival known as Utsava (Smith 214,215).

The earliest Pandyan coins were square, die-struck, with an elephant on one side and the other side being blank. Between the 7th and 10th centuries the Pandyan coins bore a fish emblem. The fish appears sometimes single, sometimes in pair, and sometimes in conjunction with other symbols like the Chola standing figure or the Chalukyan boar. The inscription on the silver and gold coins is in Sanskrit and most of their copper coins make mention of Tamil legends. (Sastri 1955:16)

Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan was a Pandyan king, who ruled regions of South India between 1250-1268. Under his rule the Pandyan empire rose to the peak of its power (Sastri 1972:195). Jatavarman Sundra Pandyan had many conquests; he participated in
wars against the Cheras, Cholas, Hoysalas, Kadavas, and Sri Lanka. He sent an expedition north where he defeated many armies. He was succeeded by Maravarman Kulasekara Pandyan I in 1268 and died in 1271.

Some chiefs of the Pandyan Empire were even said to have participated in the battle at Kurukshetra, known as the Great War in the *Mahabharata* (Thapar 233). Some scholars believe that the Great War spoken of in the *Mahabharata* took place 2000 years later than the date in the Epic. Some scholars believe that the Pandyas took part in this war and they sided with the Pandavas, helping the Pandavas defeat the Kauravas. Other scholars believe this claim to be absurd due to the fact that the Pandavas and Kauravas were in the North and it the Great War only concerned a small area in the South (Smith 31).

Trade occurred between the Egyptians and the Pandyan Empire. We hear of a mission to Augustus from King Pandion, the Pandya king of Madurai in the far south (Smith 143). During the first and second centuries of the Christian era the trade between southern India and the Roman empire was extensive. Korkai and Algankulam are recently excavated sites, thought to have been exchange centres in Pandyan territory. The horse trade was of considerable political importance and a good part of the revenues went towards the purchase of horses for the king and the army. Marco Polo says: “Here are no horses bred; and thus a great part of the wealth of the country is wasted in purchasing horses” (Sastri 1972:192). The Pandyan territory has long been famous for its pearls. Marco Polo, on his visit to the Pandyan territory, said this about the pearls. “In his kingdom they find very fine and great pearls.” The king benefited greatly from the pearl fishery and demanded a tenth of all pearls (Sastri 1972:194).

Marco Polo’s visit to the Pandyan territory gives a great view of what life was like in the territory. He described in great detail what the king’s life was like. The king had a great deal of treasure and all the best pearls in his territory. Marco Polo speaks of the jewelry that the king wears. He says: “…has a necklace entirely of precious stones, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds… fine silk thread strung with 108 large pearls and rubies… three gold bracelets thickly set with pearls of great value, anklets and toe rings of this such as well… what the king wears is worth more than a city’s ransom…” (Sastri 1972:195-196).

Marco Polo was amazed at the dress of the common people for everybody walked around naked with only loin cloths. He noticed that all the people do this. Men and women, rich and poor, even the king himself. Commoners are also claimed to have spread cow dung on their houses. Dried cow dung is a great plaster for houses and it is also odorless. Another aspect of the common peoples’ lives was the custom of rubbing cow-dung all over their houses. Marco Polo goes on to give great detail of other aspects of common peoples’ everyday social life. He mentions that everyone washes their body two times every day. They only use their right hand when eating, and on no account touch their food with their left hand. Every person drinks from their own drinking vessel and when they drink they don’t let the vessel touch their lips. They have strict laws when it comes to abstaining from wine. If a debtor can’t pay back his creditor
and keeps making incomplete promises, and the creditor can draw a circle around the debtor, then the debtor cannot leave that circle until the debt is paid. If he does then he is punished with death (Sastri 1972:197-198).

References and Further Recommended Reading


Related Topics for Further Investigation

Dravidian

History of South India

Madurai

Sangam Literature

Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan
Marco Polo’s visit to Madurai

South Indian Coins

Chola Dynasty

Chera Dynasty

Korkai

Kuna Sundra

Nedumaran Pandya

**Noteworthy Websites Related to the Topic**

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandyan_Dynasty

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/441143/Pandya-dynasty

http://www.gloriousindia.com/history/pandyan_kingdom.html

http://www.tamilnadu.ind.in/tamilnadu_history/pandiya/pandiya.php

Article written by: Jeff Redford (April 2010) who is solely responsible for its content.

**G. THE DECCAN EMPIRES**

**THE CHALUKYA DYNASTY**

**JUNE 10, 2010**

The Chalukya Dynasty was an ancient Indian empire that reigned over the Deccan Plateau [Deccan comes from the Sanskrit word *dakshina* meaning “the south”] in southern India (Pruthi 69). They controlled this region for over 600 years, between the sixth and twelfth centuries. This empire ruled as three close but separate dynasties. The earliest dynasty, the Badami Chalukya or early Western Chalukya Dynasty ruled from its capital of Vatapi (modern day Badami, in the state of Karnataka) from 543 to 757 CE (Hoilberg 307). The Eastern Chalukya or Vengi Chalukya had their capital in Vengi (near present day Eluru in the state of Andhra Pradesh) from 626 to 1070 CE (Hoilberg 307). The later Western Chalukya or Kalyani Chalukya ruled from the city of Kalyani (modern day Basavakalyan in the state of Karnataka) from 975 to 1189 CE (Hoilberg 307). At the close of the Kalyani Chalukya Dynasty, their reign extended from the state of Gujarat in the north to the Kaveria Basin in the south (Sen 387).

Dr. D.C. Sircar believes the origin of the Chalukyas dates back to an indigenous Kannada family, coming from the state of Karnataka in the southern part of India, who had obtained the status of *kshatriyas* (the nobility caste in Hindu society) (Mahajan167). This theory is
thought to be accurate since the Chalukyan kings wanted the Kannada [one of the oldest and well known Dravidian languages spoken in southern India] dialect to be used in both their language and literature. Inscriptions found throughout the Chalukya temples are written in Kannada, as well as in Sanskrit [ancient Indian language used in the sacred writings of the Vedas] (Dikshit297). Professor N. Laxminarayana Rao notes that some of the names of the Chalukya princes end in a typical Kannada regal suffix, arasa, (king or chief) (Kamath 57). However, Dr. A. F. Rudolf Hoernle, an Indologist, believes their language is of a non-Sanskrit origin, as Chalukya is derived from a Turki root, chap (to gallop) (Hoernle 1906). The family name Chalukya is spelt in their ancient records [inscriptions have been found recorded on rocks, caves, pillars, temples, images, walls, slabs, and tablets (Dikshit 8)] in various ways, such as, Chalkya, Chalikya, and Chalukya. Sircar believes the original name of their ancestors was Chalka, whereas Nilakanta Sastri suggests Chalkya was the original form and was later embellished to Chalukya (Dikshit 19).

The Chalukya reign began under King Jayasimha Vallabha (500-520 CE) and his son, Ranaraga (520-540 CE) (Tripathi 395). However, the true founder of the Chalukya Dynasty was Pulakesin I (535-566 CE). Pulakesin I of Badami was a feudatory to Krsna Varman II, a Kadamba king; however, Pulakesin I overpowered his ruler and took control of the Kadamba empire in 540 CE (Kamath 35). Upon gaining independence, Pulakesin I established a small hill-fort kingdom with Vatapi (Badami) as its capital (Dikshit 2). He unified the Deccan region through his political prowess and knowledge of the Laws of Manu [or Manava Dharama Shastra, sacred book given to Manu, an ancient guru, by Brahma, that deals with religious and social aspects of ancient Indian life (Buhler 1886)] (Sen 359). Pulakesin I performed sacrificial rituals such as the asvamedha (horse sacrifice) to assert his dominance over other empires (Sen 359). He also performed agnistoma (the praise of Agni) [a ritual carried out once a year during the spring, including a feast for all the gods where hymns from the Sama Veda were recited] and vajapeya [a ritual to become a successful emperor and achieve complete domination over other rulers] (Orissa 28) which illustrated his deep faith in the Vedic religion [historical Hindu religion originated during the Vedic Period 1- 6th century BCE] (Dikshit37).

Pulakesin II (608-642 CE) is considered the greatest ruler of the Chalukya Dynasty as he transformed the small Chalykyan kingdom into an extensive empire (Thorpe 58). His many victories in battle enhanced his prestige and made him the absolute sovereign of southern India. He followed a technique of conquer and then dominate bordering empires that enabled him superiority over his enemies (Jayapalan 147). The rulers of neighboring kingdoms (Kosala and Kalinga) were so terrified of Pulakesin II that they immediately surrendered to him, instead of doing battle with his armies (Chaurasia233).

The newly won territory of the eastern Deccan [former region of the Kalinga Empire] was placed under Pulakesin’s II younger brother, Kubja Vishnvardhana (Dikshit 5). Vishnvardhana eventually formed the Eastern Chalukya Dynasty in 624 CE and made Vengi his capital (Madras 32). The Eastern Chalukya Dynasty’s domain was the coastal land between the rivers of the Mahanadi and the Godavari
The Vengi Chalukya Dynasty came to an end when Vijayaditya VII died in 1070 CE (Bhatt 24).

The Aihole Prasasti (634 CE) written by Ravikirit, a Jain court poet, gives a detailed account of Pulakesin’s many military accomplishments (Jayapalan147). Pulakesin II was also a notable statesmen, he established diplomatic relations with the king of Persia (Iran) (Tripathi 399). Furthermore, he was considered a great administrator as he had succeeded in unifying a large part of south India under his rule (Jayalaplan 147). In 637 CE, Pulakesin II took the title of parameswara (paramount overlord or lord of lords) (Dikshit 68). The Pallava leader, Narashimba Verman I stormed Vatapi in 642 CE and killed Pulakesin II ending the Chalukya’s reign over much of southern India (Chaurasia 234). The Badami Chalukya Empire then came under the control of the Rashtrakuta Dynasty who ruled large parts of central and northern India between the sixth and tenth centuries. However, in 967 CE the Rashtrakuta Empire was defeated by Somesvara I, king of Western Chalukya, and the Chalkyan capital was moved from Vatapi to Kalyani (Sinha 169).

Vikramaditya VI (1076-1126 CE) was considered the greatest of the later Western Chalukya rulers. He was believed to have been the ideal king; noble, generous, who ruled solely for the sake of his people. Although he was known for his military successes, his reign was also a time of peace. Vikramaditya VI reign marked the end of the use of the Saka Varsha (Indian calendar, the Saka Era) as he introduced a new period of time known as the Chalukya-Vikrama Varsha Era. (Sen386). Many Hindu temples were built during his rule, such as the Mahadeva Temple (1112 CE), which is dedicated to Siva and contains an inscription, which reads Devalaya Chakravarati (Emperor Among Temples) (Kamath 117). He improved his region’s administrative system and gave great attention to the welfare of his subjects; legend states that he gave land away to the needy everyday (Bhatt 20). Vikramaditya VI encouraged the development of art and literature and was a well-known patron of learning (Sen 386). The Sanskrit poet, Bilhana, wrote Vikramankedeva Charita, a Kavya (literary style of writing used by Indian court poets) which details the adventures of his patron king (Sen386). Bilhana considered Vikramaditya’s VI rule as ramarajya (reign of righteousness), “no single rule of Karnataka prior to Vikramaditya VI has left so many inscriptions as this monarch and of these records, a large majority are grants to scholars and centres of religion” (Bhatt 20). The Chalukya Dynasty came to a close in 1189 CE. The Seuna Dynasty captured the northern portions of the Chalukya territories, and the rest of the Chalukyan kingdom was captured by the Kakatiya and the Hoysala Empires (Bhatt 21). “The Chalukyan rulers strove for the welfare and happiness of their people. Though kings had unbridled authority, they could not have behaved like tyrants for that would have provoked rebellion” (Dikshit 205).

Brahmanical Hinduism was the official religion throughout the Chalukya Dynasty (Smith 354). Yajna (sacrificial fire rituals) received special attention during this period, as well as, vrata (religious vows performed, such as fasting or mantra repetition) and dana (the generous giving of gifts) (Sastri 391). Rock cut cave temples and elaborate structural temples were erected throughout the state of Karnataka, testifying to the Chalukyan kings’ great faith in Hinduism (Smith 354). The ritual sovereignty, a king was believed to have
divine, sacred powers that were established through his Brahmical legitimization in the temple, therefore large temple complexes were built as centres for the regional kingdoms (Flood 114). Each of these ancient temples was dedicated to one of the major deities, such as, Siva or Visnu (Flood 114). Both Saivism (worshipers of the god Siva) and Vaishnavism (followers of the god Visnu) flourished during the Chalukya period (Chopra 191).

Today, throughout the state of Karnataka hundreds of temple structures still dot the landscape. Temples play an important role in Hinduism as these structures are scared dwellings where spiritual knowledge is obtained. Hindu temples are centres where the boundaries between man and the divine can be explored. The temple is the heart of the intellectual and artistic life of the Hindu community, serving as a holy place of worship, but also as the focal point where all artistic activities are established (Michell 58).

Badami, Aihole, and Pattadakal are considered the earliest group of the ancient temple complexes; today, Badami is still regarded as a place of pilgrimage (Hardy 65). These early monuments were built to showcase the king’s outstanding power and skill, as well as, the region’s courage and strength. In Pulakein’s I fortress of Vatapi (Badami) there are three beautiful rock cut cave temples that have been carved out of the side of a sandstone cliff (Javid 108). The Chalukya sculptors were among the greatest creators of Hindu iconography and many of the Hindu gods were depicted in stone for the first time (Kulke 120). The three cave temples are of the Hindu faith and contain many mythological sculptures, exquisite carvings, beautiful murals, and inscriptions describing in detail the achievements of the Chalukya kings. Cave One was carved in 578 CE and is dedicated to Siva, featuring a sculpture of an eighteen-armed Siva as Nataraja (The Lord of Dance) and also Harihara (half Siva and half Visnu) (Burgess 413). Cave Two is dedicated to Visnu where he is depicted in various avatars (incarnations) (Burgess 412). [Visnu is the defender of the world and the restorer of dharma (righteous order) and his ten avatars appear on earth when there is chaos.] Cave Three, also called The Great Cave, is almost twenty-two metres wide, and is dedicated to Visnu (Burgess 410). This cave contains a sculpture of Visnu seated on the body of the great snake Ananta (Burgess 407). Visnu is also represented in the cave as Chatturbhuj (four armed) holding a sankha (conch shell), a saranga (bow), a padma (lotus), and a chakra (discus) in his four hands with Garuda (the king of birds) as his vahana (vehicle) (Burgess 408).

The Chalukya Dynasty started a new style of architecture called Vesara (to blend or a mixture) that was used primarily in the construction of their temples (Gupta 2566). The Vesara style contains elements found in both Dravida (pyramid shaped temples of southern India) and Nagara (beehive-shaped and multi-layered tower temples of northern India) architecture (Gupta 2567). An example of Verara architecture can be found in Pattadakal at the Virupaksha Temple that has been functioning uninterrupted since its completion (Javid 136). The temple was constructed by Queen Lokamahedevi to commemorate King Vikramditya’s II (733-747 CE) victory over the Pallava rulers (Javid 136). Inside the temple are carvings of Siva, whom the temple is dedicated to, as well as elaborate carved scenes from the Hindu
The Chalukyan kings supported and promoted knowledge and higher education for all their subjects. They encouraged the development and growth of the Kannada literature which reached great heights under the Chalukyan rulers (Reddy 68). During the ninth century, Durgasimba (a Brahman scholar, foreign minister under Jayasimha II) wrote the *Panchatantra* (Five Principles), translations from the tales of *Baital Pachisi* that had first appeared in the Indian epic *Brihatkatha of Gunadhya* (Asiatic Society 12). Pampa, Ponna, and Ranna were called *Ratna-Trimaya* (the three gems) of Kannada literature, as they contributed greatly to the advancement of Kannada literature (Reddy 68). Pampa, considered the Father of Kannada Poetry, (Kamath 18) was called the *adi* (first) *kavi* (poem or poet) and wrote the *Vikramarjuna-vijaya* (Victory of the Mighty Arjuna), a narrative of the epic *Mahabharata*, with Arjuna as the hero (Garg 67). Ponna (939–968 CE) wrote both in Sanskrit and in Kannada, and was given the title of *ubhaya-kavi-chakravarti* (imperial poet of two languages) (Singh 29). In 950 CE, Ponna wrote *Ramakatha*, a secular epic based on the *Ramayana* adventure (Garg 67). Ranna authored the *Gadayuddha* [which is considered one of the greatest works of Kannada literature] an epic describing the Chalukya rulers’ fight for power and control of the surrounding land around Karnataka (Garg 67). Ranna received the title *kavi-chakravarti* (emperor of poets) from King Tailapa for his masterful writings (Narasimhachar 68). Also, furthering the progression of Kannada literature was Nagavarma I, a Jain poet and author of *Chandombudhi* (Ocean of Prosody) (990 CE), which is an early study of poetic metres (Reddy 68). Nagavarma I also wrote *Karnataka Kadambari* that explains the concept of the *chandalas* (untouchables) in the Hindu caste system (Naronakar 8). Basava (1106–1167 CE) a philosopher and humanitarian introduced *Vachana* literature to convey high philosophical ideas to the common man in simple language (Reddy 68). In this example of a *Vachana* by Basava, the message of the poem states the fact that even a poor individual can contribute to temple building.

“Those who have means will not devote them to the building of a temple to God Siva. Then I, though a poor man, will build Thee one, O Lord. My legs shall be the pillars, my body the shrine, my head the golden finial.

Hearken, O Kudala Sangamadeva! [important temple for pilgrimages]

The fixed temple of stone will come to an end; but this movable temple of the spirit will never perish (Rice 57).”

Brahmasiva, being a court poet of Western Chalukya was well versed in the Vedic scriptures, the Puranas (ancient Hindu religious texts) and the religious texts of Saivism (Datta 2006:576). Brahmasiva wrote the *Samayapariksa*, the first satirical work in the history of Kannada literature, which criticizes other religious faiths (Datta 576) and in 1100 CE he received the title *kavi-chakravarti* with honours from Chalukya King Traialokyamalla (Narasimhachar...
Vijnaneshwara, a scholar in the Western Chalukya court during the twelfth century and author of Mitaskshara (a legal treatise on inheritance), introduced Hindu law to the citizens of Karnataka. The Mitaskshara was used during the time the British administrated the law in India and today the book has become one of the most important texts used in Hindu law (Manek 25).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER RECOMMENDED READING


Related Topics for Further Investigation

Aihole Temple
Badami Cave Temple
Pattadakal Temple
Virupaksha Temple
Mahadeva Temple
Karnataka
Kannada
Andhra Pradesh
Badami
Deccan Plateau
Pulakesin I
Pulakesin II
Vikramaditya VI
Somesvara I
Kubja Vishnvardhana
Bilhana
Chalukya Vesara Architecture
Laws of Manu
Asvamedha
Agnistoma
Vajapeya
Chalukya-Vikrama Era
Vikramankedeva Charita
Vesara
Durgasimba

Pampa

Ponna

Ranna Nagavarma I

Basava

Brahmasiva

Vijnaneshwara

**Noteworthy Websites Related to the Topic**


http://www.search.com/reference/Badami_Cave_Temples

http://www.indiaheritage.org/history/history_ancient_south.htm

http://www.indianetzone.com/3/the_chalukya_dynasty.htm

http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2201/stories/20050114000106500.htm


Article written by: Kyle Orpin (April 2010) who is solely responsible for its content.
The Chola Dynasty was a Tamil dynasty that flourished from the 9th century through the 13th century. The bhakti period, starting in the 14th century, saw the rise of temples built for principal gods and a decline in Jainism and Buddhism. Not only does the Hindu temple bring communities together with religion, but it also has social, economic and political affects. The Pallava kings were the first to build stone temples in the Tamil country and were defeated by the Chola dynasty in the 8th century. (Vasudevan 10-20).

The Chola empire extended its power over the whole of South India from each coast. In the north, the empire stretched to the Tungabhadra river, and far south, even to include Sri Lanka for a short time. During expansions, the Chola kings established a Tamil culture over the controlled regions and introduced Brahmanical rituals in the temples.

Many kings of the Chola dynasty would build several temples and even rebuilt existing temples in stone. Atitya I (r. 871-907 CE) was one of the earliest conquering kings in the Chola Empire and brought gold back from his conquests of the Kaveri river valley. This gold was used to rebuild a gold shingled roof on the Cit Sabha in Cidambaram, which was then adopted as the family temple for the Chola kings (Younger 16-17). Credit is given to Atitya’s son, Parantaka I (r. 907-55 CE), who was next in line and completed this monumental task of putting the gold on the temple’s roof (Younger 94). This temple complex is known as the Siva Nataraja and is the only Hindu temple that contains Siva in his dancing form (Younger 1).
become a redistribution centre of wealth and services. The greatest period for the dynasty began in 985 CE with the rise of Rajaraja I (r. 985-1017 CE) to the throne. Rajaraja I wanted to change the focus of worship from Cidambaram to his own royal temple. Rajaraja’s reign was followed by his son Rajendra I (r.1012-44 CE), who would help complete the conquests of his father. During the reign of Rajaraja I, the great temple, Rajarajesvara, was constructed near the king’s palace in Tanjavur, the new capital of the Chola kingdom. Rajaraja used this temple to help control the empire and as a political tool to demonstrate the power and authority of the Chola kingdom. The temple was built in 1010 CE and is almost 200 feet high. (see Lippe 29-36). These Hindu temples became an institution to unite different regions and cultures.

When the reign of Rajaraja ended, the empire had no successor and a period of chaos occurred. A Calukyan ruler from Central India seized the throne and took the name Kulottunka I. Under Kulottunka’s reign a general in his army by the name Naralokaviran began a rebuilding program at Cidambaram. This included constructing two gateway towers, an inner wall around the central shrine, expanding the temple of the goddess Sivakamacuntari, adding stairs and porches to the water tank, building of the main outer wall and the addition of other doorways and golden vessels for ritual use (Younger 100). Vikrama (r. 1118-33 CE), Kulottunka’s son wanted to take credit for the construction at Citamparam and in 1118 CE attended the rededication of the temple. Kulottunka II (r. 1133-50 CE) became a strong supporter of Citamparam and did not allow any inscription carvings in the temple (Younger 100-110).

Temples in Southern India host two different types of worship. The everyday worship is carried out by priests who have a defined ritual pattern. The other type of worship is seen during festivals when huge crowds gather in the courtyards and the deities are carried around the streets. The deities leave the temple to be entertained, bathed and honored by their worshipers (Younger 48). In Tirukkovalur, a Vaisnavite temple is at its center and the rest of the town is built around it. The temple was rebuilt and an additional wall was added in the eleventh century (Heitzman 802). A large number of workers were employed including drummers, dancers, and musicians. These workers had an income to support their family but were not granted a high status because their work seemed demeaning (Younger 50).

The Cidambaram temple complex contains four major shrines as well as ten minor shrines. The shrine of Lord Natarajan is at the heart of the temple followed by the shrine to the goddess Sivakamacuntari. The temple of Murukan, the Mulastana temple and the Deva Sabha are the other three major temples in the complex. Priests and assistants are present each day to complete the daily feeding, bathing and pray to for the deities that are found in the major and minor temples (Younger 24-30).

Markali Tiruvaturai is the great festival that occurs in Cidambaram, which corresponds with the winter solstice. This time is considered a dangerous time and Indian astrology considers it inauspicious. The major event occurs during the morning of the tenth day when the
deities are taken out of their shrines to be bathed in a ritual procedure involving priests and worshipers. Another event is the daily reading of the Tiruvempavai [hymn of Manikkavacakar] which celebrates the daily bathing that the women and girls do in the morning during the festival month. Before the festival begins, the Ditcitar priests prepare clothes for the deities to wear and perform special prayers to Vinayakan who is responsible for auspicious events. The name of a priest is drawn out of a pot (by a child) and will become the head priest for the festival. During the first day of the festival a flag is raised to signify the beginning of the celebrations. The flag is a forty yard long white cloth that has a picture of an ox and a trident. A procession with the head priest riding an elephant and the temple musicians playing behind him occurs through the corridors to the priest home. Worshipers in the streets bow to him and place garlands around his head. The temple musicians then participate in a preparation ceremony as the head priest brings out a special brass drum from the sanctum that was donated by the bull, Nandi, who is Siva’s vehicle and gate keeper. A drummer is selected to perform a special concert with an unusual beat that is connected with this sacred drum. To finish the day, a concert is put on for the five deities who are brought out from the temple. After the concert the priests chant to the nine gods for protection during the festival. The middle days of the festival have similar structure with processions in the morning and evening with a different theme each day. A third procession is placed in on the eighth day in which the beggar form of Siva is worshipped (Younger 54-74).

When the deities are brought out of their temples, there are three major events that occur. The chariot pull, the bathing ritual and the Royal Audience on the tenth day. During the chariot pull, worshipers pull the statues of the deities down the streets. Because of poorly constructed chariots and muddy roads, these chariots can sometime get stuck in the streets. The holiest moment occurs on the tenth day at 4 A.M. when the Dancing God and goddess images are bathed with water, milk, curd, honey, sugarcane juice, lemon water and coconut water by the head priest. Mantras are spoken as each of the liquids is poured on the images, with Lord Natarajan being bathed first. The images are then covered with garlands and perfumes after which they are bathed using apple juice, grape juice and rose water. The most auspicious moment occurs when water brought from the Ganges River and is poured over the statues. The final bath occurs in sandal paste water, composed of ground up sandalwood, and afterwards worshipers try to receive a drop of the precious liquids the priests begin to hand out (Younger 54-74).

The Royal Audience is the event which brings the festival to a close. Worshipers line up for a blessing but many are turned away. People are selected to help push the images of the deities back into their shrines (Younger 60-70).

The Citamparam temple became a showcase of the Chola kings and their imperial status. Though Rajaraja I and Rajendra I tried to develop their own temples away from Citamparam, the later Chola kings spent much of their time at the Citamparam temple complex (Younger 233-35).


RELATED TOPICS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Atitya I
Citamparam
Ditcitar
Kulottunka I
Kulottunka II
Markali Tiruvaturai

Pallava
Parantaka I
Rajendra I
Rajaraja I
Sivakamacuntari
Sivan Natarajan
Tamil
Tanjavur
Tirukkovalur
Vikrama
Vishnu
The Chandella Dynasty began in the first quarter of the 9th century C.E.. They controlled an area known as Jejakabhukti, the capital city of which is believed to be Khajuraho. Khajuraho is well known for its extravagant temples and buildings erected during the reign of the Chandellas. The Chandellas were of the Ksatriya class but their origin is greatly debated. Legend says that they descended from Hemavati’s union with the moon (Dikshit 3). It is thought that the legend is used to explain the questionable status of the Chandellas. Historians believe that they originated from aboriginal tribes such as the Gonds, Gahawars and the Bhars (Bose 8). There is no way to come to a definite conclusion but theory supports an ancestry of the Bhars, because of similar traditions, especially evident in their buildings (Bose 9).

Texts found tell us that the founder of the dynasty is known as Nannuka or Candravarman. The small community that he created for the Pratiharas was gradually expanded with each generation.
The dynasty was maintained by Nannuka’s descendents for almost a century until Harsadeva. Harsa reigned from around 905 until 925 C.E., and in this time he contributed to many great changes that occurred in Northern India. By assisting in a dispute between two very influential brothers, Harsa increased the power of the Chandella name in India. Harsa’s grandson Dhanga, who reigned from about 950 to 1008 C.E., continued to expand the Chandella territory. He also cut off ties with the Pratiharas, of whom the Chandellas had previously been vassals. According to many inscriptions, Dhanga was a very powerful leader and had control over many other kings. Although there are minimal records of his reign, Dhanga’s grandson Vidyahara is portrayed by Muslim historians as incredibly powerful. The most important changes in central to north-western India in the early 11th century are attributed to him (Bose 22-51). Vidyahara’s son, of whom we can only speculate, is thought to be credited with the decline of the Chandellas (Bose 68). The decline continues until Kirtivarman’s reign from approximately 1060 to 1100 A.D.. There is a story in which Visnu is incarnated into Gopala to help Kirtivarman revive the dynasty (Bose 74). Kirtivarman’s revival lasted until the reign of Jatavarman from 1115 to 1120 A.D. when it began to collapse again. Decline and wars continued until around 1308 when the dynasty collapsed. Some of their land was retained and the Chandella name is still around today as in central India (Bose 115).

Chandella society appears to have been separated into four different classes or varnas, the Brahmanas, Ksatriya, Vaisya, and Sudras. Those in the Brahmana varna were responsible for religious studies and were often used as ministers and counsellors to the rulers (Bose 151, Mitra 169). Brahmanas often counselled for their benefit, both to enjoy many privileges of the high class and to maintain their foothold of power. The Ksatriya varna is seldom mentioned, but it was known to exist. It appears as though maintaining class divisions declined in importance during this time and gave way to the prominence of Kula, or family. More mention is made of highly regarded family names than of the specific classes they belonged to (Bose 152). Little evidence of the lower classes is known, which implies that, like Kula, individuals put more emphasis on their profession rather than class (Bose 154).

Religious views varied largely. There are temples found in Khajuraho constructed for different deities ranging from Hanuman, Nanda and Ganesh to Siva, Visnu, and Sakti. Siva appears to have accumulated the greatest number of worshippers. Sakti, the Great, Supreme or Mother Goddess seems to have been as popular as Siva. She is often seen as Siva’s consort as well as having many different names (Prakash 137). Visnu was the next most popular deity of the time. All ten of his incarnations are present but not all were equally regarded (Prakash 139). Some evidence of Jainism and Buddhism has also been found. Buddhism seems to have had a small following but was dying out (Prakash 142). Small images have been found but nothing of great significance. Jains had a much larger following and a substantial number of temples were present in Khajuraho (Prakash 141). Religious tolerance would have been very important during this time and in these areas because of so many different beliefs. This is apparent in the occurrence of Brahmanical
deities in Jaina temples as well as in temples of different deities (Prakash 144).

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Article written by: Cassandra Howard (April 2010) who is solely responsible for its content.

H. OTHER EMPIRES

THE KUSHAN/KUSHANA DYNASTY

JUNE 9, 2010

A Chinese nomadic tribe known as the Yuzhi founded the Kushan Dynasty. The Kushan Dynasty lasted from approximately 20-225
AD (Smith: 248). The Yuzhis have many variations for their name, which includes Yueh-chih and Yueh-chi and they lived on the northern steppe of agricultural China (Liu: 264). Some of the Yuzhi were farmers but most were known as traders. They often were involved in the long distance trading of jade and horses to the rulers of agricultural China (Liu: 286). The Yuzhi were one of the stronger tribes in China but did, however, live near an extremely aggressive nomadic tribe called the Xiongue (Liu: 265). According to the Shih-chi text, the Yuzhi people took their Xiongue neighbors lightly thinking they were non-threatening. The consequences of this carelessness was devastating to the Yuzhi as the Xiongue attacked and overthrew the Yuzhi, and proceeded to kill the Yuzhi king making a drinking vessel out of his skull (Pulleyblank: 154). The date of this event is disputed but it can be placed at around 200-100 BCE (Christian: 201). As a result of this defeat, the Yuzhi were forced to migrate westward in search of fresh pastures (Smith: 248).

The Yuzhi migration was one of mass proportions. Some scholars believe that their migration of people comprised of one to two hundred bowmen and the group at large ranged from half a million to a million people of all ages and genders (Smith 1999: 248). In their westward search for adequate agricultural land the Yuzhi encountered numerous hostile groups. The first of these groups, the Wu-san, were located along the basins of the Ili River (Smith 1999: 248). It is believed by some historians that the Yuzhi slew the Wu-san chief and continued westward (Smith 1999: 249). A small group of Yuzhi, known as the Little-Yuzhi, separated from the main group, the Great Yuzhi (Smith 1999: 249). Some scholars believe that the Little-Yuzhi settled in the Turfan region (Christian 1998: 211). The Great Yuzhi continued traveling westward and met another group, the Sakas. This group, who had a larger number of individuals then the Wu-san, and also tried to defend themselves but fell to the mass fighting force of Yuzhi. The Yuzhi then settled in the prosperous agricultural region occupied by the Sakas (Smith 1999: 249).

The Yuzhi remained in this agricultural region for fifteen to twenty years (Smith: 249). The Yuzhi’s ancient enemy, the Xiongue, along with the son of the slain Wu-san chief, who the Xiongue had protected and raised, forced the Yuzhi further westward (140 BCE) (Smith: 250). The Yuzhi continued their march westward and settled in the valley, Oxus where they conquered the Ta-hai who had lived there (Smith: 250). Over one or more generations, the Yuzhi lost their nomadic habits and settled down to become a territorial nation, occupying the land to the north and Bactria lands to the south (Smith: 250). Over the course of this time, the Yuzhi formed five distinct tribes, or yabghus (Christian: 211). Some scholars believe that not all five of these tribes were Yuzhi, but had leaders that were appointed by the Yuzhi, in order to maintain control in these regions. This was the case as this specific structure of government was not present until the Yuzhi settled in the Bactria (Yu: 72). This system of government lasted somewhere between 15-50 CE where the leader of the main yabhus, Kujula Kadphises or Kadphises I, defeated the four tribes and set a unified empire in Bactria (Christian: 212). This event marks the beginning of the Kushan Dynasty.

The Kushans under the power of Khadphises I, began to expand their empire. Khadphises I began by attacking the Parthians, a group
The Kushan began trading with the Romans using this route around 100 CE (Christian: 213). The Kushans traded precious items such as silks, spices, gems and dyestuffs in return for Roman gold coins. Roman coins were used along this route and Khadphises imitated Roman coinage by making his own coins with his own depiction on them (Christian: 213).

The successor that ruled after Khadphises II was Kaniska, and his reign started around 78 CE (Smith: 252). While some scholars believe that Kaniska was the son of Khadphises II, others believe that he was just a relative (Christian: 213 & Smith: 258). The Kushan dynasty was at the peak of its power during the ruling of Kaniska (Christian: 213). Kaniska, like his predecessors, continued to expand the empire. His expansion continued into regions that include modern Tajikistan, parts of Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and north and east parts of India. Kaniska also moved the capital of the empire from Bactra to Purushapura (Christian: 213). The new capital was a guarded city, situated along the main road from the Afghan to the Indian plains (Smith: 261). Later on Kaniska moved the capital city again, to Mathura on the river Yamuna.

As Kaniska aged he became a devout Buddhist and during his reign, Kaniska erected an enormous relic (Smith: 261). The relic was believed to be carved out of wood and reached approximately 400 ft high and was surrounded by an iron pinnacle (Smith: 261). This relic was burned down three times and was repaired after each time and stood until about the 8th century (Smith: 262). Kaniska also built a great monastery next to this relic. The monastery served as a flourishing place for Buddhist education (Smith: 262).

The next two successors of Kaniska were Husvishka and Vasudeva I. Along with Kaniska; these three rulers are generally regarded as the ‘Great Kushans’ (Christian: 213). Their power can be credited to ruling during a time when Parthian power was declining (Christian: 213). The Kushan dynasty ended around the end of the third century with Vasudeva I being the last king.

All of the kings of the Kushan Dynasty had a major role of shaping the political, social and religious aspects of their empire. The Kushans were known for taking ideas from different cultures and incorporating them into their own. The Kushan pantheon included
Iranian, Greco-Bactrian and local deities along with Buddhist gods and influences from Jainism and Vaisnavism (Christian: 213). Kaniska as indicated was an avid Buddhist and had set up the fourth and final Buddhist Councils (Hunter: 175). His council compromised of five hundred monks that made commentaries on the Buddhist faith (Hunter: 175). The council produced many works; one of such is the Mahavibhāsha (Smith: 268). Kaniska devoted hours of his time under the guidance of a monk to studying Buddhist texts (Smith: 267). The Kaniska Council at one point made Buddhism the state religion (Hunter: 148). Some scholars believe that the Kushan kings adopted Buddhism because the kings believed that Buddhist propaganda and the patronage would help in political and religious areas. The Kushan rulers gave themselves the title of ‘Son of God’ or ‘Son of Heaven’ in order to solidify their legitimacy. The divine rulers made use of imagery in order to attempt to assimilate all of the different cultures into one distinct society (Aldrovandi: 307).

The population structure of the Kushan was quite diverse; it ranged from small villages and towns, to cities and mountain communities (Christian: 216). The land in the small villages and towns was owned mostly by the elites, while city land was mostly owned by merchants (Christian: 216).

The Kushan Empire was successful for many reasons including such things as achieving political stability over a wide area, creating vast trade networks, and royal support of irrigation (Christian: 217). Agriculture that needed irrigation was the main income system of the Kushan Empire (Christian: 217). One large scale irrigation network that was created was the Khorezm system. Scholars believe that this system needed approximately 15 000 laborers to complete the work and some 6000 - 7000 laborers to maintain the system. Cereals, cotton, fruits and poppies were the different types of crops that grew using the water from this system (Christian: 217). The population grew substantially in the Kushan Dynasty because of its large amounts of agriculture and trading (Christian: 217).

The Kushans played an important role in the spread of Buddhism to Parthia, Central Asia and in China (Christian: 215). The first Buddhist texts to reach China were given by the Yuzhi as a gift (Christian: 215). This form of Buddhism that spread out of the Kushan Dynasty was not the same as the Buddhism preached by the Buddha. The Kushan Dynasty Buddhism was influenced by other religions including Hellenism and went through centuries of social and economic change before it was expanded (Liu: 284). The spreading of Buddhism is correlated to the vast amount of goods and ideas that constantly traveled along the trading routes of the Silk roads (Christian: 284).

The role that the Kushans had in trading with other nations had a huge effect on formulating the culture in the Kushan Empire. The Yuzhi were known for being great traders in their former land of China, where they constantly were trading their resources, which included such things as jade and horses (Liu: 285). According to Sima Quin, an ancient historian, the Yuzhi may be considered as the people that initiated the trading along the Silk Roads. He also adds that the Yuzhi started the horse for silk transactions, and thus gave fame to the Chinese silk products (Liu: 278). Perhaps another important legacy of the Kushan Dynasty is the expansion of the
Buddhist religion in central Asia. The Kushans also affected Hinduism negatively in their empire as another religion, Buddhism, was spread and became the state religion.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS


Related Topics for Further Investigation

4 Buddhist Councils

Sakas

Wu-san

Silk Roads

Xiongue

The Mahavibhasha

Greeks

Parthians

Hellenism
Buddha
Turks
Migration
Aryans
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Egyptians
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Central Asia

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Article written by: Ryan Honish (March 2010) who is solely responsible for its content.
The Hoysala dynasty ruled in southern India from the 11th to 14th Century and were located in southern India in the southern part of Karnataka (Kulke et. al. 113). The Hoysalas are believed to have come from a hilly region in this area. Their empire reached its peak of power early on and slowly declined until it's eventually disappearance into history leaving only temples that were constructed under their reign.

The Hoysala begin as a vassal state of a larger kingdom called the Calukya. They eventually gained their own independence through military might. They had a relatively fast rise to power because the area was politically unstable. This was because none of the kingdoms had any huge advantage over the other, creating a balance of power that could easily shift back and forth (Kulke et. al. 114). This lead to a situation where a great deal of small kingdoms didn’t last for long periods of time intermingled with a few large ones that would assimilate the smaller kingdoms. Nrpakama was the first of the Hoysala kings with his capital in Sosavur (Yaguchi 184). Nrpakama's capital was located in an area that is believed to be where the Hoysala dynasty originated. The Hoysala kingdom was located between two large powers at the time, the Calukya and the Cola. The area that became the Hoysala kingdom had been a buffer area between these two large kingdoms in the past (Foekema 13). This made it so the Hoysala had to choose sides and became a feudatory of the Calukya (Foekema 14). The Calukya allowed the Hoysala to grow over time allowing them to become a medium sized kingdom creating the Calukyas own demise. There is little certainty as to when Nrpakama took the throne or when he passed it on to his son Vinayadita. This uncertainty can be attributed to their relative size and how unimportant they were during this time. They are only vaguely mentioned in an epigraph with no specifics. Vinayadita succeeded at expanding his power very successfully during his reign and moved the capital to Dorasamudra (Ramanathan 326).
Hoysala were very prosperous under the Calukya, but knew that this prosperity could not continue with their desire to expand. The Calukya would not give them free reign forever and allow a potential enemy to develop. The Hoysala were always just a buffer state to help protect the Calukya from the Cola kingdom in the south.

Exquisite and profuse sculptures adorn the Hoysalesvara Temple at Halebidu in Karnataka

Ballala I was the first to not continue his loyalty to the Calukya emperor instead building up military power (Yaguchi 184). This occurred largely because the Calukya became engaged with the Cola dynasty and kingdoms to the north of them. This made it so the Calukya Kingdom was unable to respond to the Hoysala’s rebellion. The Hoysala Dynasty had reached a point where it was large enough to fend for itself in this war torn area. In 1106 AD, Ballala I began to rule in his own name instead of the Calukya emperor (Rice 528). Ballala I however died and was succeeded by his younger brother, Visnuvardhana in 1108 BCE, who continued with his brother’s cause of expanding the Hoysala kingdom (Yaguchi 184). It took Visnuvardhana 25 years, but by that time he had taken suzerainty of the Calukya emperor and created a new capital (Yaguchi 184). The Calukya became embroiled in a series of wars with neighbouring kingdoms giving the Hoysala kingdom the chance it needed (Yaguchi 184). To attain Hoysala independence a series of brutal wars were fought in which the Hoysala had become renowned for their ferocity (Foekema 14). Most of the territory of the Calukya was eventually taken by another kingdom, but Hoysala secured its independence. Visnuvardhana crushed the Cola forces taking claim over some of their lands that were bordering his kingdom. The Hoysala’s, at this point, destroyed their two largest enemies, making them the dominant power in their area for the time.

Visnuvardhana became increasingly interested in construction projects throughout his empire, creating edifices for Visnu after he had converted Vaisnavism of the Srivasnava sect (Yaguchi 184). This construction continued under his son Narasimha I, the next king in the Hoysala dynasty. Since he focused so heavily on construction Narasimha I lost territory in the northern area of his kingdom (Yaguchi 184). Ballala II was the next in line, taking the throne in 1173 AD, pushing the Hoysala dynasty to the height of its powers (Yaguchi 184). He gained a great deal of territory especially in the southern Tamil region.

Narasimha II took the throne in 1220 AD from his father Ballala II. He became more involved in the Tamil region because of his marriage to a Cola princess (Yaguchi 184). The Hoysala reached its pinnacle during his rule, even assimilating what was left of the Cola kingdom. He managed to gain the Cola kingdom while losing territory in the north caused by a rebellion of a vassal state that even attacked his capital. After this point the Hoysala dynasty began its decline until its eventual disappearance into history.

The Hoysala’s power began a steep of decline when it was difficult for one king to rule their kingdom effectively. A second capital was created in the Tamil region and the capitals were ruled by two step brothers, Narasimha III and Ramanatha. The brothers had conflicting interests and began to fight amongst themselves. This
allowed outside forces to attack the Hoysala with less fear of a unified response. Eventually the Hoysala kingdom was repeatedly invaded by foreign forces. These invasions continued the decline of the Hoysala kingdom. This began with the Seunas, a kingdom from the North of the Hoysala invading Narasimha III territory several times (Yaguchi 184). It was eventually realized that if the Hoysala were to survive they would have to unite again and become a unified kingdom.

The kingdom was eventually reintegrated under Ballala III, but it was too little too late. This new unity came as the Muslim empire pushed south trying to convert people to Islam and take control of their land. The Muslims originally only wanted tribute, but that didn’t last as they tried to achieve political control. Ballala III realized that there was no chance of defeating the Islamic empire due to their sheer size. Kingdoms that were larger than his own were wiped out by the huge Muslim forces. Ballala III chose instead to accept Muslim lordship in order to survive (Foekema 16). The Hoysala continued to prosper under the Muslims, but that didn’t last because of their desire to be free of the Islamic rule. The Hoysala rulers knew that if they were to stay under Muslim rule there would be huge changes to their culture and religious beliefs. The Hoysala participated in a revolt in southern India against the Muslims. Ballala III died during the fighting and his territory became part of a Hindu kingdom that encompasses south India. Their land was swallowed up by a growing Hindu kingdom concerned about protecting their religious beliefs. Ballala III’s son Ballala IV was not given an opportunity to rule the Hoysala kingdom, putting an end to two hundred years of Hoysala rule (Foekema 16). The Hindus managed to fend off the Muslims creating for the first time, a large Hindu kingdom in the south called the Vijayanagara Empire (Foekema 16). Ballala IV’s kingdom became a part of this empire to help ensure that the Hoysala were not ruled again by the Islamic empire. This was the end of the Hoysala dynasty and the beginning of the Vijayanagara kingdom.

The Hoysala developed a political system with governances similar to modern systems (Pollock 263). The Hoysala centralized their power unifying their emperor at a time when tribal alliances were the only thing holding many nearby kingdoms together. A great deal of their success comes from their ferocity in battle which is represented in their crest with a royal warrior stabbing a lion.

Under the Hoysala rule there was a great development in poetry and art. The prosperity that they gained from their kingdom was put into building of temples, which had been a tradition. This tradition of building temples is known as Dravida and originated sometime in the 6th or 7th century (Foekema 11). Very few of these temples were actually commissioned by the dynasty itself, but largely due to the peace that they created in their kingdom. Due to the peace created in the kingdom many small communities built their own temples. Their temples were not different than those from neighbouring kingdoms, what was special was the consistence of them, with them being far more of the temples located in this area. There were no more of their temples built after their fall. Instead temples being built were constructed in a new style from elsewhere in India, similar to the ones found in Tamil Nadu (Foekema 12). Due to the assimilation of the Hoysala Kingdom rather than a destructive
invasion the temples have been left standing. Their temples have become a major tourist and pilgrimage attraction in south India and will continue for future generations.

It took 100 years for the Hoysala dynasty to gain independence and another 100 to reach the peak of their power. It then took 150 years for their decline and eventual disappearance into a far larger kingdom. The Hoysala were not completely destroyed, only assimilated into an empire that covered a range that had never been seen in south India. This ensured that what had been created under the Hoysala rule survived to the modern day. The architectural legacy of the Hoysala Kingdom enhances the mosaic of modern India.

References and Related Reading


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Related Research Topics

Hoysala Temples, Cola Dynasty, Calukya Dynasty, South India temples, South India history, formation of Vijayanagara kingdom

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Article written by: Doug Sedgwick (April 2010) who is solely responsible for its content.
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According to consensus in modern genetics, anatomically modern humans first arrived on the Indian subcontinent from Africa between 73,000 and 55,000 years ago. However, the earliest known human remains in India date to 30,000 years ago. Settled life, which involves the transition from foraging to farming and pastoralism, began in Greater India around 7,000 BCE. At the site of Mehrgarh, presence can be documented of the domestication of wheat and barley, rapidly followed by that of goats, sheep, and...