
UNIT 9 EMERGENCE OF RAJPUTS*

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Meaning and Significance of the Term “Rajput”
 - 9.2.1 *Rajputra* as a Military Chief
 - 9.2.2 *Rajputras* as Sons of the Kings and Officials
 - 9.2.3 Thirty Six Rajput Clans
- 9.3 Origin of Rajputs: Debates
- 9.4 Rise of the Rajput States: Tripartite Struggle – Emergence of the Gurjara-Pratiharas.
- 9.5 Major Rajput States after Gurjara-Pratiharas
- 9.6 Later Rajput States of Western and North-Eastern Rajasthan
- 9.7 Proliferation of Rajput Clans
- 9.8 Political and Military System of the Rajputs
- 9.9 Rajput Forts/Strongholds
- 9.10 Summary
- 9.11 Key Words
- 9.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 9.13 Suggested Readings

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will:

- know about Rajput clans and their emergence in early medieval north India;
- understand the debate related to origin of Rajputs and find out the truth on the basis of evidence of contemporary sources; and
- know about political and military character of the Rajput clans which proved as a pedestal in their emergence and consolidation.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

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

9.2 MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM “RAJPUT”

The term *rajput* is derived from Sanskrit root *rajputra* (son of the king). Prakrit forms of the term *rajputra* are variously known as *rawat*, *rauta*, *raul* and *rawal*. A transformation in connotation of the term is noticeable from 7th century CE onwards as it began to be used in literary texts in the sense of a landowner rather than “son of the king”. In the *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta (7th century CE) the term has been used in the sense of a noble or landowning chief. In *Kadambari* also it is used for persons of noble descent who were appointed by the king as local rulers. In the capacity of local rulers they might have naturally governed a large portion of land under them and, thus, played an active role in political and administrative system of the state. In *Rajatarangini* the term *rajputra* is used in the sense of a mere landowner, acclaiming birth from 36 clans of the Rajputs. The reference of 36 clans clearly denotes their existence by 12th century CE.

The term began to be more commonly used from 12th century onwards. The 12th century *Aparajitprachha* of Bhatta Bhuvanadeva, which describes the composition of a typical feudal order, refers to *rajaputras* as constituting a fairly large section of petty chiefs holding estates, each one of them constituting one or more villages. Among the ruling elites, *rajputra* covered a wide range: from actual son of a king to the lowest ranking landholders.

9.2.1 *Rajputra* as a Military Chief

The appearance of *rajputras* as mercenary soldiers is proved as early as 7th century CE from the reference in Bakshali manuscript found in the North-West Frontier Province and subsequently from the *Chachnama* in Sindh in 8th century CE. In all bardic traditions of this period the Rajputs are depicted as horsemen. It may not be again ignored that the Pratiharas, one of the clansmen of the Rajputs of early medieval period felt pride to bear the title of *hayapati*, “the lord of horses”. The military character of the *rajputras* is also reflected from *Lekhpaddhati* (a collection of the models of documents from Gujarat and Western Marwar region) which refers to assignment of land-grants to them in return for the performance of military services to the state or the overlord. Regarding the military obligation, one of the charters in the above mentioned text provides us the details that a *rajputra* applies to a *ranaka* (feudal chief representing the state) for a fief and when he is granted a village he is required not only to maintain law and order within it and collect revenues according to the old just practices but also to furnish 100 foot-soldiers and 20 cavalrymen for the service of his *ranaka* overlord at his headquarter. The fact that he was not allowed to make gift of uncultivated land to temples and *Brahmanas* indicates his limited rights over the land granted to him, which he could sub-infeudate to others. Sometimes, the *rajputras* were also provided cash endowment for the supply of military soldiers in the service of the overlord. In addition to the military service rendered to his immediate overlord *ranaka*, the *rajputras* were also asked to pay the revenue in both cash and kind on the land assigned to him for cultivation. The amount of the revenue was strictly to be paid within the specified time limit. If the *rajputra* failed to do so, it was not to be paid without a fixed amount of interest imposed as late payment.

9.2.2 *Rajputras* as Sons of the Kings and Officials

The position of the *rajaputras* was distinct under the Gahadawalas and the Chahamanas, as the title was usually applied to the actual sons of the reigning kings. They exercised special powers in administration, acting as governors of estates assigned to them by the reigning kings. Under Gahadawalas, they were provided a special privilege of using their own seals with the separate insignia, differentiating them from the Gahadawala royal seal. On account of their keen interest in the affairs of administration some of the *rajputras* under the Chahamanas were endowed with the royal prerogatives and were given the charge of all the royal and administrative activities. They could also grant lands and villages with the consent of the reigning king. Under Chahamanas, the instances are there of the *rajputras* and *maharajputras* serving as governors. The Chahamanas princes were also given fiefs (*seja*) for their personal enjoyment. However, these fiefs were not regarded as their personal property, as sometimes the central government exercised its power of assigning revenues out of these fiefs. The right of alienating land out of their fiefs was not usually extended to these Chahamanas *rajputras*. But, often, they appear to have the right of assigning small portion of the land or its income as a gift for charitable purpose without the king's permission.

However, under the Chahamanas the *rajputras* who were not the actual sons of the king but bore the mere title, also worked as feudatory chiefs or officials to govern the functions of the landed estates under the strict control and supervision of the king and the viceroy.

9.2.3 Thirty Six Rajput Clans

Almost all the contemporary texts provided, the number of the Rajput clans is 36. The whole list is provided by *Prithvirajraso*, *Kumarapalacharita*, *Varnaratnakar* and by an ancient work from a Jaina temple in Marwar.

Col. James Tod has studied the clan names of the above sources and prepared his own list removing some vernacular errors.

However, the comparison of the above list with those of original literary texts reveals that Tod had also included the tribal groups of foreign origin and even those Rajput clans which had originated quite later as sub-clans.

9.3 ORIGIN OF RAJPUTS: DEBATES

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

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

Chand Bardai in his *Prithvirajraso* (12th century) refers that the Chalukyas, Pratiharas, Paramaras and Chahamanas have their origin from the fire pit of Vashistha. According to Raso, Vishvamitra, Agastya, Vashistha and other sages began a great sacrifice at Mt. Abu. *Daityas* (demons) interrupted it and then Vashistha created from the sacrificial pit three warriors in succession: the Padihara (Pratihara), the Solanki, and the Paramara. The

bardic text also mentions that none of the created warriors, however, succeeded in completely removing the demons.

The modern scholars who believe in the *Agnikula* origin of the Rajputs are:

- **Watson,**
- **Forbes,**
- **Camphel,**
- **D. R. Bhandarkar** etc.

They believe that all the so-called *agnikula* Rajputs are of Gurjara stock. The Gurjara origin of the Rajputs is being criticised by **Pratipal Bhatia**. She argues that the Gurjara is not only the name of a people but also a country and of all the people who inhabited it, to whichever caste or clan they might have belonged (Bhatia 1970: 14).

We only knew about the solar and lunar *Kshatriyas* in the ancient texts. The solar and lunar origin of the Rajputs is mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. The earliest tradition of the Chandella family found mentioned in their inscriptions traces the origin of the Chandellas from Moon, identifying them as the lunar race of the *Kshatriyas*. It appears that the concept of the solar and lunar *Kshatriyas* of the Sanskrit literary texts was replaced in the bardic account of *Raso* and inscriptions during the early medieval period by that of *agnikula* origin.

ii) **Other Views**

B. N. S. Yadav has traced the emergence of the early Rajput clans in Rajasthan and Gujarat during the period of political and social confusion and chaos which may be characterised by a declining economy following the invasions and settlements of the foreigners and collapse of the Gupta empire. The rising feudal tendencies, according to him, created favourable circumstances for the emergence of ruling landed aristocracy connected intimately with land. Attached to this background, he traced out the rise of the military clans of the Gurjaras, Guhilots, Chahamanas, Chapas etc. in northern India during 650-750 CE. However, their rise as independent ruling clans may be traced back to the 8th century, when Gurjara-Pratiharas as the first Rajput ruling clan established their hold over Kanauj and other regions in the northern India.

D. C. Sircar puts forth that in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* the term *rajputra* is used in the sense of a mere landowner. They claimed birth from 36 clans of the Rajputs. It indicates that by the beginning of the 12th century CE, these clans had already come into existence. During this period *rajputras* had become a class by themselves.

iii) **Recent View: Processual Theory**

B. D. Chattopadhyaya examines the emergence of the Rajputs as a process, which in different periods and different regions was not almost alike but differed in context of time and place. According to him, their emergence should not be looked in terms of ancestry. The term *rajputra* in early medieval literary texts and inscriptions, in reality, represented a mixed caste constituting a fairly large section of petty land holding chiefs. The status of

the clan was generally counted a lot during the early medieval period, which was known for hereditary offices and a stereotype system of administration. The contemporary status of the clan was, thus, the criterion for the inclusion in the Rajput clans mentioned in *Rajatarangini*, *Kumarapalcharita* and *Varnaratnakara*. It is to be noted that the list of 36 clans mentioned in all the literary texts is dissimilar. Political dominance may altogether be the prominent criterion which might have added to the status of a clan. Thus, it was perhaps owing to the political dominance of the Pratiharas and Chahamanas that their name was retained regularly in the lists. He suggests that the process of the emergence of Rajputs in early medieval records is found linked with political, economic and social developments. Chattopadhyaya, on the basis of the study of the sources, has traced the following developments which were directly linked to the process of the emergence of Rajputs.

- **Agrarian and Territorial Settlements:** The colonization of new areas resulted in the expansion of a number of settlements and also of agrarian economy. The comparison of the list of early historic sites with those of early medieval period and appearance of new place names in the contemporary inscriptions clearly suggest an increase in the number of settlements. The inscriptions of the western and central India also refer to the territorial expansion of the Rajput power by suppressing the tribal settlements of the Bhils, Pulindas and Sabaras. The Guhila kingdom was founded in the 7th century on the Bhil settlements, according to tradition. Similar movements of expansion are found in case of the Chahamanas of Nadol. Shakambhari – the capital of the main line of the Chahamaans – also came out of the colonization, which was earlier a forest land (*jangaladesha*). The present region of Rajasthan, according to Chattopadhyaya, in the period when Rajput polity was beginning to emerge was in its various areas undergoing a process of change from tribalism.
- **Mobility to Kshatriya Status:** All the Rajput clans did not emerge out of the process of colonization. The Meds reached to the Rajput status from a tribal background and the other group, namely Hunas, were assimilated in Indian society and acquired the status of *Kshatriyas*. Thus, a criterion for the inclusion of the Meds and Hunas was mobility to *Kshatriya* status which was more commonly practiced. For the majority of other newly emerging royal lines *Brahma-Kshatra* was a transitional status. Chattopadhyaya opines that *brahma-kshtra* might have been an open status during the early medieval period.
- **Political Eminence:** The Gurjara-Pratiharas emerged out of different stocks of the Gurjaras acquiring political eminence in western India. However, in their inscriptions they have variously claimed their origin either from *Brahman*, Sun, Indra etc. in order to maintain the ancestral respectability. The sovereign or ruling families of a clan had a general tendency to frame the genealogies with respectable ancestry. It seems that a definite co-relation did exist between the political eminence and a movement towards corresponding social status.
- **Mobility from Feudatory to Independent Status:** Some of the Rajput clans emerged out from the feudatory to the independent status, as is clear from the genealogical claims. The case of Gurjaras of Gujarat, Guhilas of

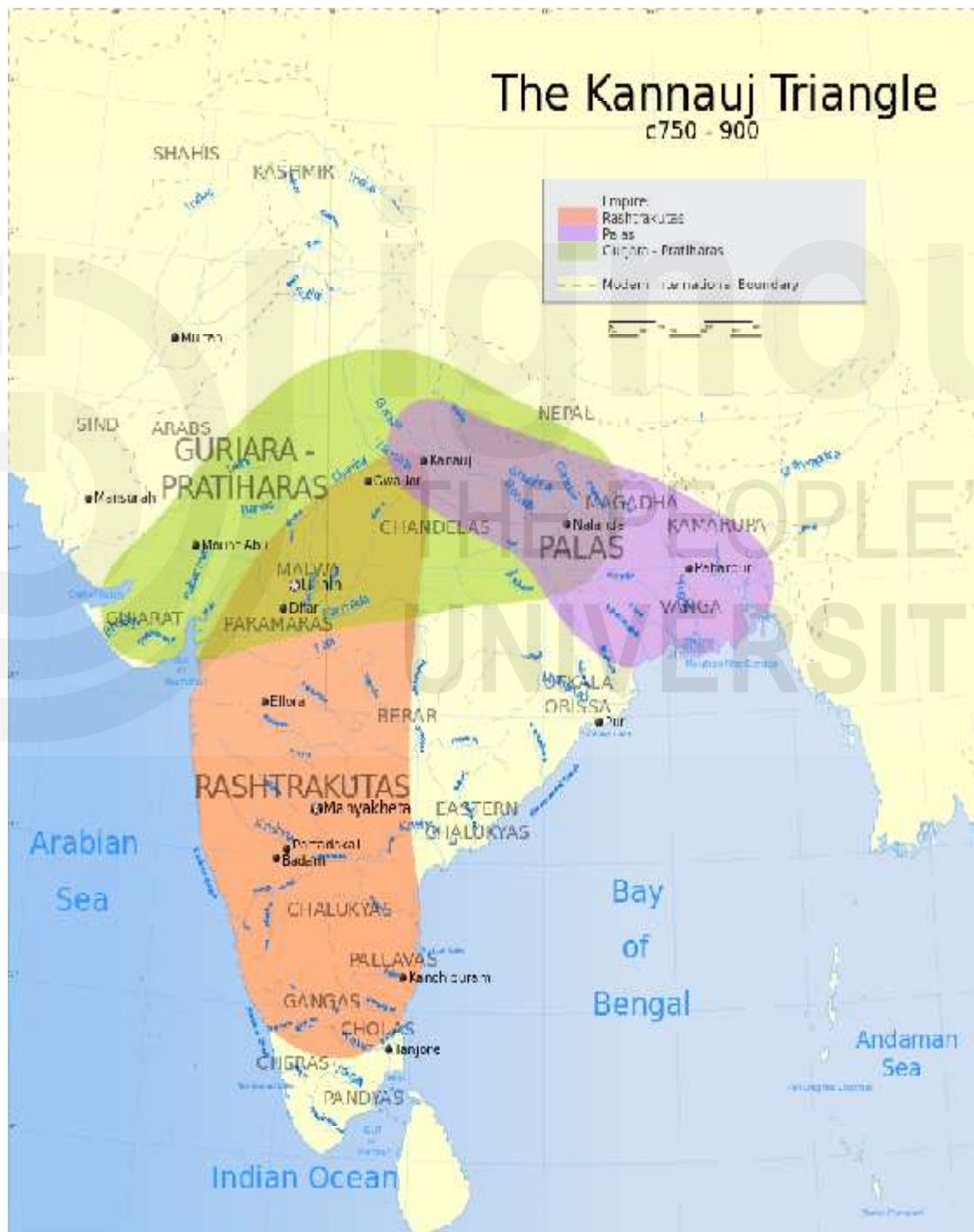
Kiskindha and Dhavagarta, Guhilas of Mewar, Chahamanas of Gujarat and Rajasthan was a case of transition from feudatory to independent status. This transition and upward mobility was a result of the growth of the military strength. The emergence of the Rajputs, thus, in the existing hierarchical political structure was not sudden but a gradual process.

- **The System of Land Distribution:** The process of the emergence of early Rajputs is associated at the level of economy, with certain new features of land distribution and territorial system. One feature of land distribution, the trend of which appears to have been higher in Rajasthan, was the distribution of land among royal kinsmen. This practice was common among the Pratihara, Chahamana, and Guhila clans. Such land assignments were also hereditary in nature. The specific thing was that while the other assignees were not authoritative to grant land independently out of their holdings and depended on the approval of the king, the kinsmen needed no such sanction and could make grant independently without king's approval.
- **Fortifications:** The Rajput clans strengthened themselves by maintaining military power, one of the chief features of which was the construction and maintenance of forts. The inscriptions of the early medieval period mentions about a number of fortresses in Rajasthan. Besides serving the defence purpose, the forts played wider functions such as maintaining linkage with big landholdings and existing composition of population. Rajasthan was a cradle land of such fortresses. Forts, thus, represented a process of consolidation of ruling clans.
- **Inter-clan Relations:** At the level of social relations, the consolidation of the Rajput clans and the acceleration of the process of "Rajputization" were through the marriage network among the clans (inter-clan relationships). The inter-clan relations maintained through marriage network provided social legitimacy. These marriages may have led to collaboration in wider areas of social and political activity. The new clans and the recognized sub-divisions of earlier clans were brought into the Rajput network by a few cases of marriage of which records are available. The consolidation of Rajput ascendancy was also due to the circulation of clan members in different kingdoms and courts and their participations at various levels of polity.

9.4 RISE OF THE RAJPUT STATES: TRIPARTITE STRUGGLE – EMERGENCE OF THE GURJARA-PRATI HARAS

The post-Harsha period was a period of great political turmoil in north India. Kannauj, which was seat of Harsha, remained a bone of contention. Each one of the political powers was having an eye on it for the occupation. The major political powers which entered into a struggle – generally known as 'tripartite struggle' – were the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas and the Rashtrakutas. The results of this struggle were not decisive. Temporarily, the Pratihara king Nagabhata boldly annexed Kannauj in the 8th century CE. The Pratiharas, thus, gained the supreme power in the north after the conquest of Kannauj. The circumstances, which led the Pratihara king to such a usurpation of power, were the domestic seditions in the Rashtrakuta family. This triangular struggle did not end with the

temporary success of the Gurjara-Pratiharas but it continued further under the successors of Nagabhata. The period of Bhoja-I (c.836-885 CE) – the grandson of Nagabhata – was a period of consolidation of Pratihara power. He re-established the supremacy of his family by restoring his authority over the *Gurjaratrabhumi* (Jodhpur or Marwar). The Gurjara-Pratiharas in early 8th century came into prominence first by establishing their seat of power in Ujjaini which was a major urban and political centre in western Malwa. The decline of the Pratihara dynasty in the 10th century CE opened the way for their own feudatory chiefs to declare themselves as independent powers. The Chaulukyias, Chandellas, Chahmanas, Gahadawalas, Paramaras, Kalachuris and Guhilas, all of whom were the feudatory chiefs of the Gurjara-Pratiharas in different regions, thus, became independent as distinct Rajput clans in their own territories.



Tripartite Struggle. Credit: w:user:Planemad. Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/45/Indian_Kanauj_triangle_map.svg).

Check Your Progress 1

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

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

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- 3) Which one of the following statements is wrong?

- i) The first reference of *rajputra* as mercenary soldier comes from the *Harshcharita* of Bana. ()
- ii) The *Lekhpadhati* is a source related to the Rajputs of Gujarat and western Marwar. ()
- iii) The nomenclature of the Rajput clans mentioned in the list of 36 clans in different sources is the same. ()
- iv) The first independent Rajput clan was that of the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kannauj. ()

9.5 MAJOR RAJPUT STATES AFTER GURJARA-PRATI HARAS

The Gahadawalas

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

The Chahamanas

Chahamanas came into prominence after the decline of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. There were numerous branches of the Chahamanas but some of them were unquestionably the feudatories of Pratiharas of Avanti and Kannauj. It also remains a fact that during 750-950 CE most of the regions ruled by the

Chahamanas formed part of Pratihara dominion. In 973 CE they became practically independent.

The main branch of the Chahamanas was famous as the Chauhans of Sapadalaksha or Jangaladesh. The city of Ajayameru (modern Ajmer) founded by king Ajayaraja was their political centre and seat of power. The Chahamana dynasty, the rulers of which were indulged in the fratricidal wars with their neighbours, also came to an end with the second battle of Tarain (1192 CE) which brought the destruction of the greatest king, Prithviraja III. Besides the Gahadawalas, the bitterest enemies of the Chahamanas were their contemporaries: the Chalukyas and the Chandellas.

The Chandellas

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

- Kalanjar,
- Khajuraho,
- Mahoba, and
- Ajayagarh.

The Paramaras

Another contemporary Rajput political power – the Paramaras – emerged in the region of Gujarat, Malwa and Southern Rajputana out of the bitter struggle between the Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. The territory ruled over by the Paramaras of Malwa included Malwa proper and the adjoining districts.

The principal areas of influence under the Paramaras were spread over modern cities and towns of Ujjain, Dhar, Bhilsa, Bhojpur, Shergarh, Udaipur, Mandu, Depalpur.

The Chalukyas

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

The Vaghelas

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



Parshvanath Temple, Dilwara. Credit: Pratyk321. Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Dilwara_Prashvantha_Temple_%282%29.jpg).

The Kalachuris

Kalachuris, who were in the service of the Gurjara-Pratiharas as feudatories, also did not hesitate to declare their independence. They were also known as Kalachuris of Chedi or Tripuri. They ruled the Chedi region from their capital Tripuri (modern Tewar near Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh). In the east, the centre of Kalachuri power was Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh). However, they lost some of their power owing to the rise of the Gahadawalas in the east. Later on, the central Indian dominions of the Kalachuris had extended far up to the districts of Prayagraj and Varanasi (Banaras). In their efforts of extension, they came into conflict with the Paramaras and the Palas.

The Guhilas

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

The Kachhapagatas

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

The Kachhawahas of Dubkund

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

9.6 LATER RAJPUT STATES OF WESTERN AND NORTH-EASTERN RAJASTHAN

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

Rathors

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

Bhattis

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

Deora Chauhans

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

Kachhapagatas

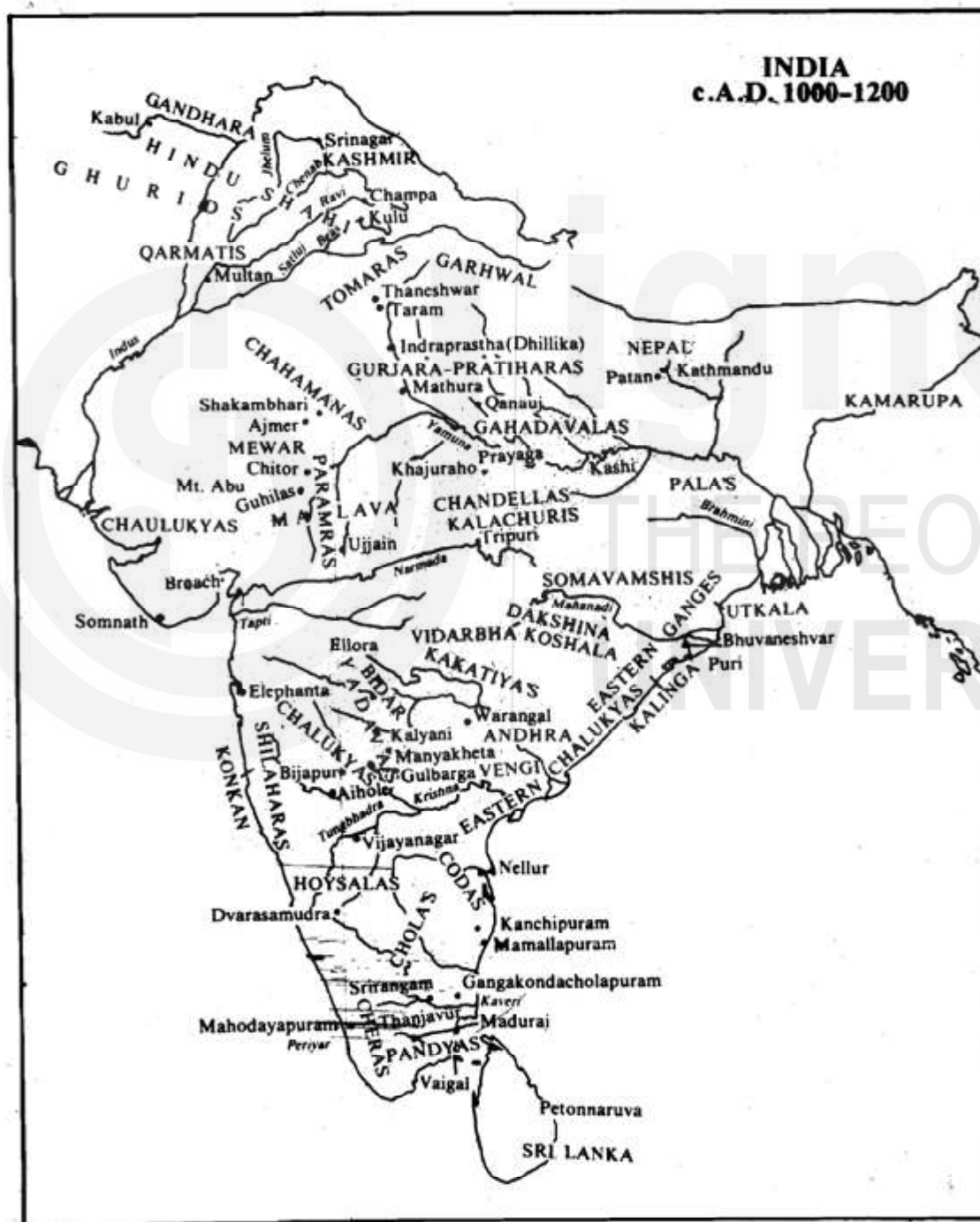
One branch of the Kacchapaghatas established their estate at Dhundhar (Amber and later on Jaipur or Sawaijaipur including Shekhawati), ousting the Minas from that area.

9.7 PROLIFERATION OF RAJPUT CLANS

It is apparent from the literary and inscriptional evidence of early medieval period, which mention certain members belonging to a Rajput clan or descent, that the structure of Rajput polity may be defined in terms of proliferation. At

the later stage, the inter-clan relationships governing the distribution of power consolidated the structure of Rajput polity as well. The emergence of minor clans and sub-divisions of major clans was a result of proliferation. The sub-clans emerged out from the movement of some members of a clan to newer areas. The proliferation of the Rajput clans with their establishment in different areas led to the further extension of the Rajput fold. It, thus, widened the process of emergence of the Rajputs which may safely be termed as “Rajputization”.

The absorption of local elements into sub-clans was also a common phenomenon. Usually, the already established clans came into social contact of the newly established clans and provided them a social network which naturally strengthened the latter ones.



India: c. 1000-1200 CE. Source: EHI-03: *India from 13th to 15th Century AD*, Block-3, Unit 8: “Nature of Regional Politics”, Map-1, p. 10.

Check Your Progress 2

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

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

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3) Which of the following statements are right or wrong?

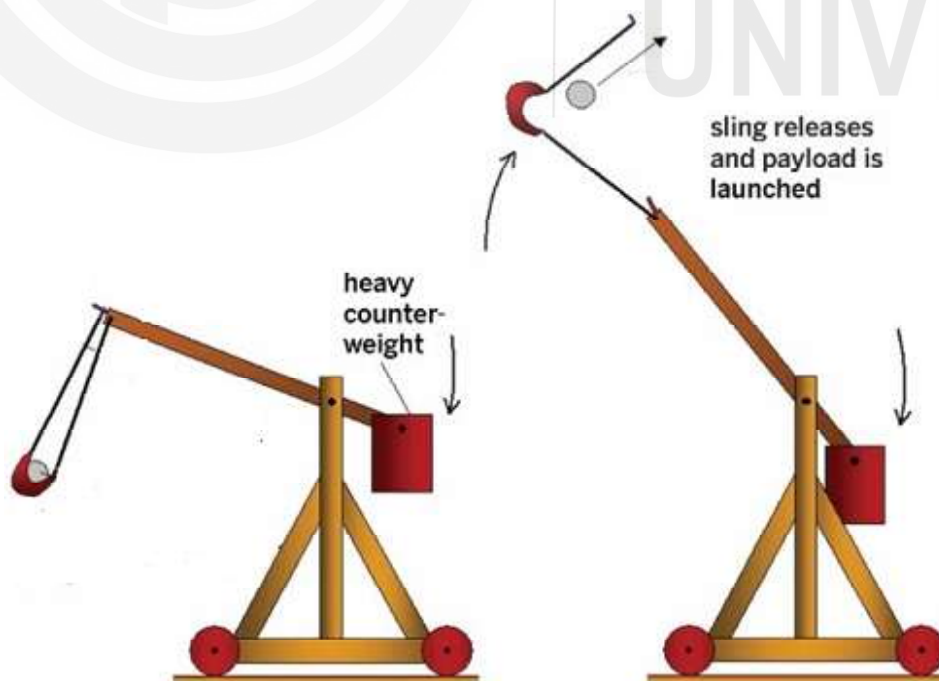
- i) *Sapadalaksha* was the territory of the Chahamanas. ()
- ii) Bhattis ruled over the area of Jaisalmer. ()
- iii) The sub-clans of the Rajputs came into existence through proliferation. ()
- iv) The principal area of influence of the Parmaras was the region of Gujarat. ()

9.8 POLITICAL AND MILITARY SYSTEM OF THE RAJPUTS

Inter-state rivalries are represented by the struggle for supremacy. The king was the supreme head of the state and the conductor of the overall executive, judicial and military administration. To some extent, he was assisted in administrative matters by the queens, a number of whom figure in the records of different dynasties of our period. However, none of them is possibly found entrusted with any administrative post. Their involvement in administration is borne out indirectly in some of the land-grants. They are sometimes found granting land-grants with the formal permission of the King. The ministerial council acted as a consultative body on all the important matters of polity. The office of the ministers was generally hereditary. The officials often adopted the feudal titles like *rajaputra*, *ranaka*, *thakkura*, *samanta*, *mahasamanta*, *raut* etc. in addition to the administrative posts like *mahasandhivigrahika dutaka*, *maha-akshapatalika* and others. The combining hereditary position and feudal ranks made these officials more powerful. The territorial administration consisted of the *vishayas*, *bhuktis* and other sub-divisions was usually fully governed by a class of power feudatories entitled usually as *mandaleshvarars*, *mandalikas*, *samantas*, *thakkuras*, *ranakas*, *rajaputras* etc. The administrative heads in villages apart from the village headman were the *panchkulas* (a body of five members in a village like *panchayat*), *mahajanas* and *mahattaras* (village elders). The official posts and designations of administrative officials at various levels were different under various Rajput clans.

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

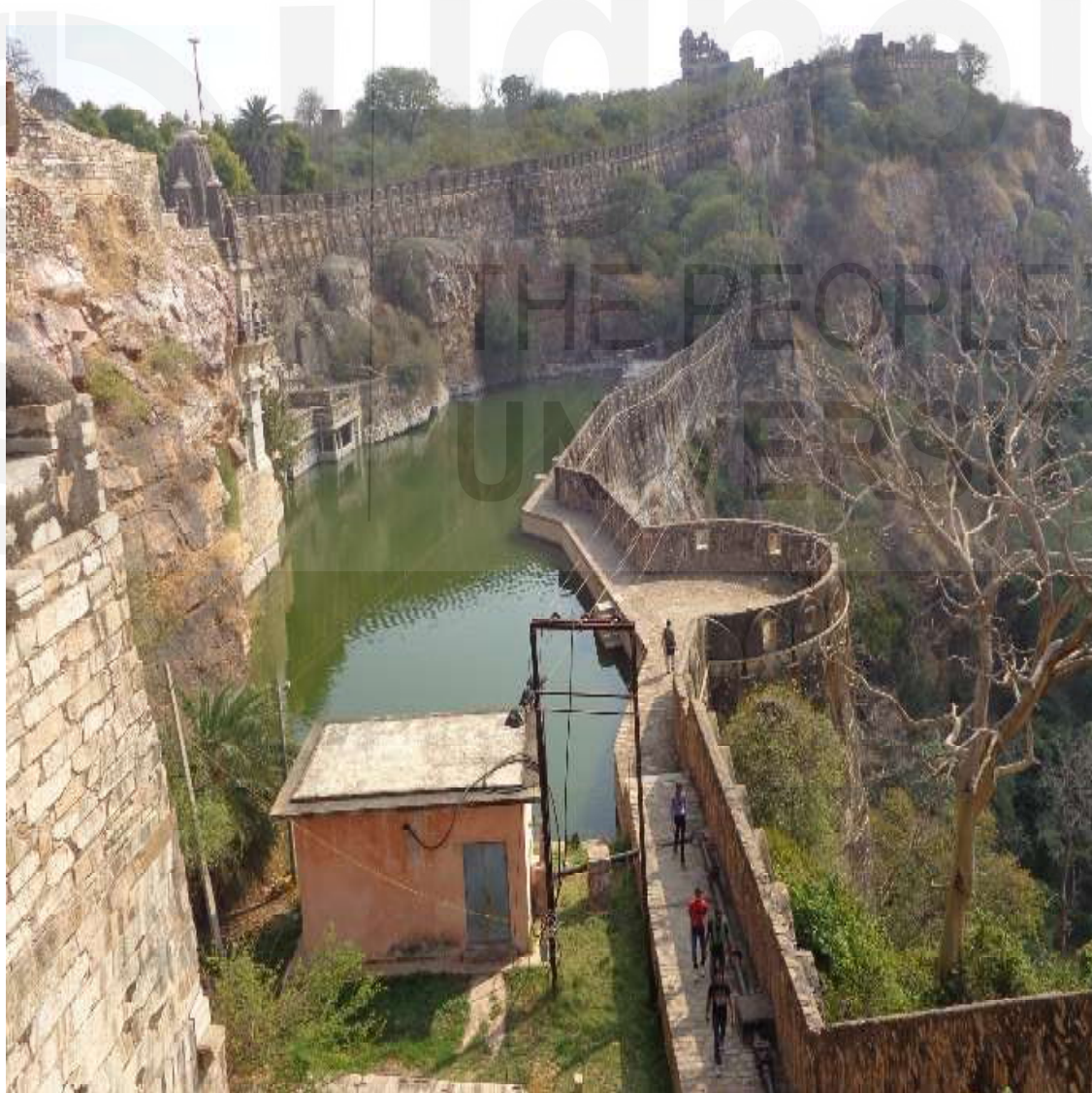
The political system of the Rajputs is to be defined as bureaucratic-cum-feudal in character. There was an absence of uniformity in adoption of strategy and the organization of troops in general. Different dynastic clans probably had the tendency to organize the various components of their army in war,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



Mangonel: A Greek Variant of Stone-throwing Machines used by the Rajputs and Muslims including Arabs and Turks.

9.9 RAJPUT FORTS/STRONGHOLDS

Forts attained an inevitable importance under the Rajputs rulers. The magnanimity and impregnability of these forts attracted the Muslims to besiege them. These forts served as a great means of the defence of the Rajputs, as they fought with their Muslim adversaries from the walls of these forts. Realising the strategic and militaristic importance of forts, the Rajput rulers paid special attention to possess them and erect several new ones in order to strengthen their military power. The fort of Mandor is regarded to have originally constructed by the Pratiharas around the 7th century CE. Among the Rajputs, the Chandellas were the great builders of a number of strong forts and fortresses. The Chauhans and Paramaras, both, were outstanding builders of forts in Rajasthan. Almost all the big forts had either been constructed or renovated by them. The fort of Mandalgarh is believed to have been built by Chauhan king of Ajmer probably around the 13th century CE. The fort of Nagaur situated in the north-east of Jodhpur is supposed to be built by one of the feudatories of the Chauhan king Someshvara, the father of Prithviraja-III. The forts constructed by the Paramaras were large in number. Similarly, the fort of Achalgarh is believed to be erected by the Paramara chiefs in 900 CE and rebuilt by Maharana Kumbha in 1442 CE.



An Outer view of Chittorgarh Fort – Its Moat as a Security Wall. Credit: Dr. Rashmi Upadhyaya.



Ranthambhor Fort. Credit: Amitjls. Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1f/Naulakha_gate%2Cranthambor_fort.jpg).

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss significant features of the political and military system of the Rajputs.

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- 2) Discuss various views regarding the emergence of the Rajputs. Was the emergence of the Rajputs result of a process?

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- 3) Which of the following statements are right or wrong?

- i) The emergence of the Rajputs in different areas was through a common process. ()
- ii) The political system of the Rajputs was bureaucratic and feudal. ()
- iii) The Rajputs originated from one single caste (*varna*). ()
- iv) The Meds reached to Rajput status from a tribal background. ()

9.10 SUMMARY

The 7th-12th century Rajput polity presents a picture of disunited India after the death of Harsha. The first Rajput clan of Gurjara-Pratiharas, who were earlier the feudatory chiefs of Harsha in Ujjain, emerged as an independent political and military power to rule over Kannauj and the neighbouring regions of Northern India. The political and military strength was, thus, to be regarded as a major pointer at this stage in the emergence of the Rajputs. At the second stage the emergence of the feudatories of Gurjara-Pratiharas in different areas of central and western India as independent clan holders was also a ramification of the same trend of the possession of supreme military strength, which led to the independence or dominance of politically and militarily superior clans over the less powerful ones. The allotment or distribution of land among royal kinsmen and to different grades of the feudatories and officials was necessarily a step in the creation of the different grades of feudatories, many of whom later on emerged as clans or sub-clans.

The consolidation of the Rajput clans in different parts of central and western provinces of India has also been reflected by the presence of innumerable impregnable forts, which obviously represented the military strength of the clans. The social relations maintained by the marriage alliances among the members of the different clans provided a legitimate position.

The emergence of the Rajputs has, thus, to be understood in reality not in terms of the mythological traditions of the *Agnikula* and solar and lunar dynastic origins. It should be regarded as a process in terms of the political, social and economic developments in the history of early medieval northern India. B. D. Chattopadhyaya's contention of the origin of the Rajput seems juxtaposed in the light of the evidence of the contemporary epigraphs. The origin of the Rajputs has to be traced from different strata of indigenous population including the *Kshatriyas*, *Brahmanas* and some tribes including the aboriginal ones.

9.11 KEY WORDS

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

9.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 9.3 and 9.4
- 2) See Section 9.6
- 3) i) (×) ii) (√) iii) (√) iv) (√)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 9.7
- 2) See Section 9.9
- 3) i) √ ii) √ iii) √ iv) √

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Section 9.10
- 2) See Section 12
- 3) i) × ii) √ iii) × iv) √

9.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

Bhatia, Pratipal (1970). *The Paramaras*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manharlal.

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Tod, James (1920). *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, edited by William Gooke. Vol. I. London: OUP.