



- 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.

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.
- As 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.

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.
- 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
- Lekhapaddhati (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.
- A rajputra term applies to a ranaka (feudal chief representing the state) for a fief and when he is granted a village he is required to maintain law & order within it and collect revenues — also to furnish 100 foot-soldiers and 20 cavalrymen for the service of his ranaka overlord at his headquarter.
- 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 subinfeudation to others.
- Sometimes, the rajputras were also provided cash endowment for the supply of military soldiers in the service of the overlord.
- 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.

RAJPUTRA :- SON OF THE KING & OFFICIAL

- The position of the rajaputras was distinct under the Gahadavalas 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 Gahadavalas, they were using their own seals with the separate insignia, differentiating them from the Gahadavala 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, rajputras & 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 state 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, they had 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

THIRTY SIX RAJPUT CLANS

- Almost all the contemporary texts provided, the number of the Rajput clans is 36.
- The whole list is provided by Prithviraj Raso, Kumarpal Charitra, Varna Ratnakar 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.
- Tod had also included the tribal groups of foreign origin and even those Rajput clans which had originated quite later as sub-clans.

DEBATE ON THE ORIGIN OF RAJPUTS

AGNIKULA ORIGIN OF RAJPUT : – A MYTH

- Chand Bardai in his Prithvirajraso (12 th century) refers that the Chalukyas, Pratiharas, Paramaras and Chahamanas have their origin from the fire pit of Vashistha.
- According to Raso, Vishvamisra, 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 warrior, 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).
- 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 & 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.

OTHER VIEWS :- B.N.S. YADAV

- He traced the emergence of the early Rajput clans in Rajasthan & Gujarat during the period of political & social confusion – characterised by a declining economy following the invasions & settlements of the foreigners & collapse of the Gupta empire.
- According to him, the rising feudal tendencies, created favourable circumstances for the emergence of ruling landed aristocracy.
- 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.

OTHER VIEWS :- D.C. SIRCAR

- 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

RECENT VIEWS :- 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 & inscriptions, represented a mixed caste constituting a fairly large section of petty land holding chiefs.
- The status of the clan was considered significant, which was known for hereditary offices and a stereotype system of administration.
- The status of the clan was , thus, the criterion for the inclusion in the Rajput clans mentioned in Rajatarangini, Kumarapalcharita and Varnaratnakara (Jyotirisvara 14th century)
- 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, has traced the following developments which were directly linked to the process of the emergence of Rajputs

AGRARIAN & TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENTS

- The colonization of new areas resulted in the expansion of a number of settlements & also of agrarian economy.
- The inscriptions of the western & central India also refer to the territorial expansion of the Rajput power by suppressing the tribal settlements of the Bhils, Pulindas & 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 Chahamanas – also came out of the colonization, which was earlier a forest land (janggaladesha)
- According to Chattopadhyaya the present region of Rajasthan, 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-kshatra 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 ruling families of a clan had a general tendency to frame the genealogies with respectable ancestry.
- It seems that a definite correlation did exist between the political eminence & 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 Kishkindha 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.

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 & territorial system.
- One feature of land distribution, with higher trend in Rajasthan, was the distribution of land among royal kinsmen.
- This practice was common among the Pratihara, Chahamanas, and Guhila clans.
- Such land assignments were also hereditary in nature.
- 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.

FORTIFICATION

- 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 MARRIAGES

- 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 & their participations at various levels of polity.

TRIPARTITE STRUGGLE – GURJARA -PRATIHARA EMERGENCE

- 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.
- The states in 'tripartite struggle' – were the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas and the Rashtrakutas.
- The results of this struggle were not decisive.
- Temporarily, the Pratihara king Nagabhatta boldly annexed Kannauj in the 8th century CE. – Pratiharas, thus, gained the supreme power in the north
- The circumstances, which led the Pratihara king to such a usurpation of power, were the domestic seditions in the Rashtrakuta family.

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MAJOR RAJPUT STATES AFTER GURJARA-PRATIHARA

THE GAHADAVALAS

- The Gahadavalas occupied Kannauj in the 11th century.
- From Kannauj they ruled over the major portions of the Gangetic doab during 1090-1193.
- The Gahadavala 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 Gahadavalas 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 the feudatories of Pratiharas of Avanti & Kannauj.
- 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 Ajaymeru (modern Ajmer) founded by king Ajayaraja was their political centre and seat of power.
- The Chahamanas 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, Prithviraj III.
- Besides the Gahadavalas, the bitterest enemies of the Chahamanas were their contemporaries: the Chalukyas and the Chandellas

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 (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

- 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 & 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 Anhilwara, modern Patan

THE VAGHELAS

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

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 (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 Gahadavalas 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 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 Rajputana and Gwalior residency was overruled by three independent branches of Kachhapagatas.
- The Kachhawahas of Dubkund were subordinates to the Chandellas, as there are no imperial titles for the rulers of this line.

LATER RAJPUT STATES OF WEST & NORTHEASTERN INDIA

- Being defeated by the Turkish 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, Bhadravan, 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, DEORA CHAUHAN & KACHHAPAGATAS

- The north-eastern Rajasthan was ruled by the Rajput tribe of Bhattis.
- During the 12th century the main centre of their activities was Jaisalmer.
- Like the Bhattis, the region of Sirohi was ruled by the Deora branch of Chauhan clan.
- One branch of the Kachhapagatas established their estate at Dhundhar (Amber and later on Jaipur or Sawai Jaipur including Shekhawati), ousting the Minas from that area.

PROLIFERATION OF RAJPUT CLANS

- The literary & inscriptional evidence of early medieval period, mention certain members belonging to a Rajput clan – implies that the structure of Rajput polity may be defined in terms of proliferation

- 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.

POLITICAL & MILITARY SYSTEMS

- 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
- 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.
- 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 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 personal grievances of the feudal lords created consternation in the whole administrative set up.
- 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.

- 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 munjaniqs 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.

RAJPUT FORTS

- Forts attained an inevitable importance under the Rajputs rulers.
- The magnanimity & impregnability of these forts attracted the Turks to besiege them.
- These forts served as a great means of the defence of the Rajputs, as they fought with their Turkish 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 Someshwara, the father of Prithviraj-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.



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