

Magadh Mahila College

Patna University

Department of History

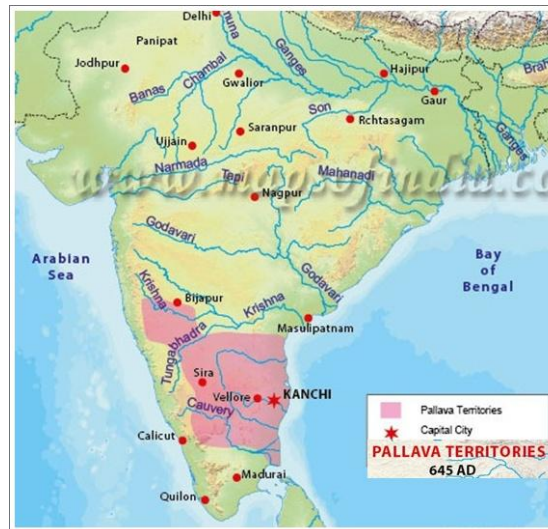
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Paper-III, Unit-II

Political History of Pallavas with special reference to Mahendravarman

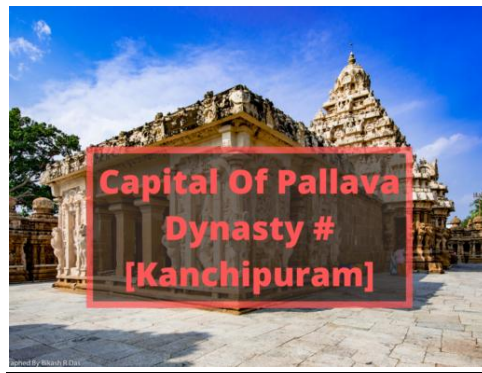


The rise of Pallavas in South India began with the decline of Satvahanas. Initially the Pallavas were the subordinate rulers of the Satvahanas. But like Abhirs, Kadambas, Vakatakas, Pallavas too established themselves as independent rulers and by 6th century they also gained control over a large part of India. The origin of Pallavas is quite controversial. A few of the historians believed that they were Pahlavas or Parthians who settled as Pallavas in the Indus area at Tondaimandalam coast. Few historians also believed that they were related to the Vakatakas. Few

intellectuals believed that they were the Nagas so there is no clear evidence about the authenticity of the origin of Pallavas. Possibly Tondaimandalam is believed to be their place of origin. Pallavas were the feudal lords of Satvahans, with the decline of Satvahanas Pallavas immediately declared themselves as independent.

Singhvishnu is believed to be first historical ruler of the Pallava dynasty. He was a very strong administrator who acquired the title of 'Avnisingha'. He conquered the entire Cholamandalam and expanded his empire till Kaveri river. Thus, he is considered as the real founder of the Pallava dynasty. He was the follower of Vaishnavism. Bharvi resided in his court who was the author of Kiratarjuniyam.

Mahendravarman I(600-630A.D)



Mahendravarman I succeeded his father Singhvishnu. He was an able administrator. He acquired numerous titles such as- Chethkari, Matavilasa, Vichirachita, etc. His titles depicted his versatility. The conflict between pallava-pandya and pallava chalukyas began with the rule of Mahendravarman I. Pulakeshin II was the contemporary Chalukya ruler. They fought for the supremacy over the territory. Mahendravarman I was able to retain his capital Kanchi but lost many of the northern part of his empire to Chalukyas. Later, Pallavas even lost Kanchi. And the Chalukyas made Kanchi as their political centre and the pallavas continued to rule over the Dravida area.

Cultural achievements of Mahendravarman I:

Mahendravarman can be credited as the pioneer of rock cut architecture in India. The ancient Jain temple of Sinhavalasa was built during this time. The fresco paintings of the temple consisted of the paintings of Mahendravarman along with his family. Initially Mahendravarman too was the follower of Jainism but he adopted Shaivism under the influence of saint Appar. He built the temples of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu at Mandaggapattu without using bricks, woods, metals, etc. He also constructed Chitramegha lake and Mahendravani.



He also patronized literature, art and music. He wrote Bhagvatjukkiye and Mattavilasaprahansanam. He was also a skilled painter. He himself painted the paintings of Natraja in the cave of Shiva temple. He was also a great musician. He attained the knowledge of music from a famous musician named Rudracharya. His musical works are inscribed on the walls Puddukottai which is considered as the inscription of music.

Thus, the empire of Mahendravarman I was spread from Krishna river in north to Kaveri river in south but after the conflict with the Chalukyas their empire shrank. But, this condition of the Pallavas changed after 632 A.D with the succession of Narsinghavarman I who attacked over the Vatapi and annexed it. Thus, the 3rd century A.D is recorded as the era of victory of the Pallavas. In the 7th century A.D there was the existence of three powerful dynasties named as the Pallavas of Kanchi, Chalukyas of Badami and Pandyas of Madurai.