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### THE SOUTHERN DYNASTIES

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When Gupta disintegration was complete, the classical patterns of civilization continued to thrive not only in the middle Ganga valley and the kingdoms that emerged on the heels of Gupta demise but also in the Deccan and in South India, which acquired a more prominent place in history. In fact, from the mid-seventh to mid-thirteenth centuries, regionalism was the dominant theme of the political or dynastic history of South Asia. Three features commonly characterised the socio-political realities of this period. First, the spread of Brahmanical religions was a two-way process in looking the Sanskritisation of local cults and localisation of the Brahmanical social order. Second, the ascendancy of the Brahmin priestly and land owning groups that later dominated regional institutions and political developments. Third, because of the see-sawing of numerous dynasties that had a remarkable ability to survive perennial military attacks, regional kingdoms faced frequent defeats but seldom total annihilation.

Peninsular India was involved in an eighth Century tripartite power struggle among the Pallavas (AD 300-888) of Kunchipuram, the Chalukyas (AD 550-642) of Vatapi and the Pandyas (seventh through tenth centuries) of Madurai. The Chalukya rulers were overthrown by their subordinates, the Rashtrakutas, who ruled from AD 757 to 973.

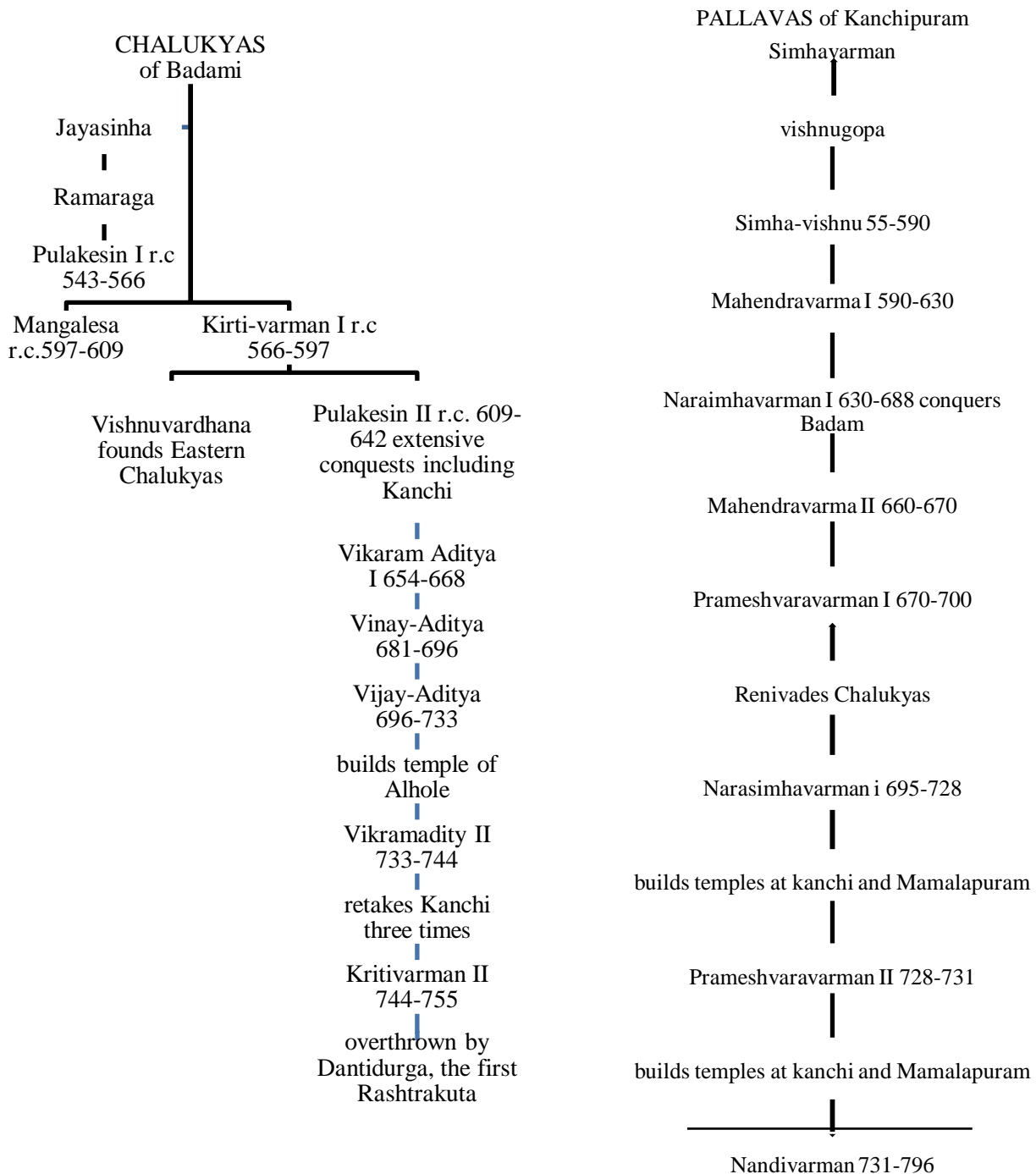
### THE SHATHAVAHANAS

(230 BC TO AD 225) The Shatavahans (also known as the Andhras) are considered to be among the earliest rulers of the Deccan. They gained independence after the death of Ashoka in 232 BC; they consolidated their empire and made Pruthistana their capital. Simukha was their founder and was a subordinate of the Mauryan Empire. After the downfall of the Mauryans, there was anarchy and the Shatavahans established a stable government and united the country into a single empire. They repulsed all foreign invasions and made the economy sound. Many historians believe that it was the Shatavahans who laid the foundation for the future attainment of a 'Greater India' under the Guptas and Cholas. The important rulers of this dynasty were **Simukha**—founder, also called Shatavahana in Jain texts; **Krishna**—contemporary of King Ashoka; **Satakarni I**—ruled from 184 to 130 BC and was given the title of 'Lord of the South' in many Jain texts; **Hala**—seventeenth king of this dynasty who invaded Ceylon and married the princess I—of Ceylon. Leelavati, a matchless beauty; **Pulumayi I**—son of Hala and **Leelavati** who ascended the throne and further established the kingdom; **Satakarni II**—son of queen Gautami Balashree, therefore, also called Gautamiputra Sankari, ruled from AD 70 to 95. His conquest of the Vindhyas in the south gave his kingdom a safety from invasions as it was now covered by sea on the three sides. He earned the title Trisamudratyapithavahana. (meaning who rules from the horse which has bathed in the three seas); **Pulumayi II**—succeeded Gautamiputra and the last powerful Andhra empire; Pulumayi powerful Andhra king, ruled from AD 166 to 175; **Yajnashatakarni**—was the last king who ruled from AD 175 to 225. Mention of the Shatavahana Dynasty was lost in obscurity with the rise of powers such as the Pallavas in the south, the Kadambas and Gangas in Karnataka and the Abhiharas in Maharashtra.

### THE PALLAVAS (AD 330-796)

With the decline of the Shatavahans, **Shivaskandavarman** emerged in the South Indian political scenario. He is supposed to be the founder of the Pallavas. He made Kanchi his capital and extended his kingdom from the Krishna River to the north of the Arabian Sea in the west. However, some Prakrit edicts suggest that **Simhavarman** preceded Shivaskandavarman. The Pallavas are mentioned in Sumudragupta's pillar, where he is said to have defeated a Pallava king Vishnugopa. The chronology of the Pallava kings is sketchy, but texts suggest that they were powerful between AD 330 and 550 and the noteworthy rulers during this period were **Simhavarman I**, **Sikandavarman**

**I, Veerakurcha, Skandavarma II, Kumaravishnu I, Sinihavarma III and Vishnugopa.** After Vishnugopa's defeat to Samudragupta, the Pallavas became weaker and the Cholas and the Kalabhras repeatedly attacked the Pallava kingdom and robbed it of wealth and territories. It was **Simhavishnu**, son of Simhavarma II, who eventually crushed the Kalabhra dominance in AD 575 and re-established his kingdom. Although both the Pallava and Pandya kingdom were enemies, the real struggle for political domination was between the Pallava and Chalukya realms. The Pallava history between AD 600 and 900 is full of accounts of wars between the Pallava and the Chalukya rulers.



#### FIG. 1.5 The chakukya and pallava Dynasties

##### Some of the important

Some of the important rulers and their wars with the contemporary Chalukya rulers are: **King Mahendravarma** (ruled from AD 600-630)—fought the first battle between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas and was defeated by **Pulakesin II. Narasimhavarma Mamalla**—son of Mahendravarma, ruled from AD 630 to 668, remembered as one of the most powerful kings of the Pallava Dynasty, he waged many wars against the Chalukyas and defeated them at Pollahur, Periyala and Surmara. The scene of the battle between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas has been carved on the rocks near the Mallikarjuna Swamy temple near Badami. Later, he was defeated by the Chalukyan king Vikramaditya I (son of Pulakesin II). He was succeeded by Mahendravarma II who was killed in a battle against Vikramaditya I.

In AD 670, **Prameshwaravarma I** came to the throne and restricted the advance of Vikramaditya I. However, the Chalukyas joined hands with the Pandya king Arikesari Maravarma, another prominent enemy of the Pallavas, and defeated Prameshwaravarma I. Prameshwar I died in AD 695 and was succeeded by **Narasimhavarma II**, a Peace loving ruler. During his reign the clashes between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas were few. He is also remembered for building the famous **Kailashanatha temple** at Kanchi. He died grieving his elder son's accidental death in AD 722. His youngest son, **Parameshwaravarma II**, came to power in AD 722. He was a patron of arts, but had little interest in fighting. He proved a very soft opponent to his contemporary Chalukya king, **Vikramaditya II**, who had the support of the Ganga king, Yereyappa. He died in AD 730 with no heirs to the throne, which left the Pallava kingdom in a state of disarray.

**Nandivarma II** came to power after some infighting for the throne among relatives and officials of the kingdom. He waged war against the Pandyas and crushed them as they got no support from the Chalukyas during this war. Instead, the Chalukya king Keertivarma (son of Vikramaditya II) waited for the defeat of the Pandyas at the hands of Pallavas, and immediately after waged war against the war-torn Pallava army and defeated it. However, Nandivarma

married the Rashtrakuta princess Reetadevi and reestablished the Pallava kingdom. He was succeeded by **Dantiverma** (AD 796-846) who ruled for 54 long years. Dantiverma was defeated by the Rastravita king, **Dantidurga** and subsequently by the Pandyas. He was succeeded by **Nandivarma III** in AD 846. Accounts in the Tamil book Nandikkalubalakam say that the Pallava kings who followed were powerful. Nandivarma III was succeeded by **Nrupatungavarma**, who had two brothers, Aparajitavarma and Kampavarma. The Chola king provoked Aprajitananda and supported him to wage a civil war in the Pallava kingdom. With the help of the Cholas, **Aprajitananda** captured the throne but had to pay heavy costs to the Cholas for their help. Later, incompetent kings and political instability reduced the Pallavas to a petty kingdom. This brought the Cholas to a formidable position in the South Indian political stage.



#### Rise of Pulakesin II

**Mangalesha** (ruled 597-610) conquered the Kalachuris and Revatidvipa, but he lost his life in a civil war over the succession with his nephew **Pulakesin II** (ruled 610-642). Starting in darkness enveloped by enemies, this king made Govinda an ally and regained the Chalukya Empire by reducing the Kadamba capital: Vanavasi the Gangas and the Mouryas, marrying a Ganga princess. In the north, Pulakesin II subdued the Latas, Molavas and Gurjarat he even defeated the mighty Harsha of Kanauj at Narmada and won the three kingdoms of Maharashtra, Konkana and Karnata. After conquering the Kosalas and the Kalingas, an eastern Chalukya Dynasty was inaugurated by his brother Kubja Vishnuvardhana and absorbed the Andhra: country when Vishnukundin king Vikramaditya III was defeated, Moving south, he allied himself with the Cholas, Keralas and Pandyas invade the powerful Pallavas. By 631, the Chalukya empire extended from sea to sea. **Xuan Zang** described Chalukya people as stern and vindictive towards enemies. enough they would not kill those who submitted. They and their elephants fought white inebriated, and Chalukya

laws did not **binish** soldiers who killed. However, Pulakesin it was defeated, **and** probably killed in AD 642, when the Pallavas in retaliation for an attack on their capital captured the Chalukya capital at Badami. )

### THE CHALUKYAS (AD 536-1190)

The history of Chalukyas, the Karnataka rulers can be classified into three eras: (i) Early Western Era (sixth to eighth century AD) known as the Chalukyas of **Badami**; (ii) Later Western Era (seventh to twelfth century AD) the Chalukyas of **Kalyani**; (iii) Eastern Chalukya era seventh to twelfth century AD), the Chalukyas of Vengi. The Chinese traveller, Hieun Tsang, gives an elaborate account of Karnataka's Chalukyas in his travelogue. The famous rulers of this dynasty were **Pulkeshin I** (AD 543- 567), who was the first independent ruler of Badami with Vatapi in Bijapur as his capital. **Kirthivarma I** (AD 566- 596) succeeded him at the throne. When he died, the heir to the throne Prince **Pulakesin II** was just a baby and so the king's brother Mangalesha (AD 597-610) was crowned as the caretaker ruler. Over the year's, he made many attempts to kill the prince, but was ultimately killed by the prince and his friends. Pulakesin II (AD 610-642), the grandson of Pulakesin I, was a Contemporary of Harshavardhana and the most famous of the Chalukyan kings. He increased his kingdom by annexing the entire Andhra kingdom. His reign is remembered as the greatest period of the history of Karnataka. He defeated Harshavardhana on the banks of the Narmada. However, later the Pallava king Narsimhavarrpan attacked Pulakesin II in AD 642 and captured his.papital city Vatapi. Later, the Chalukya rulers succumbed to attacks by the neighbouring kingdoms. The kingdom rose to power again under the leadership of **Vikramaditya I** (AD 655-681), who defeated his contemporary Pandya, Pallava, Chola and Kerala kings to establish the supremacy of the Chalukyan Empire in the region. He was succeeded by his son Vinayaditya (AD 681-696) who was an able administrator. He had many victories to his account, prominent among them were those against Yashovarma king of Kanauj). He was succeeded by his son Vijayaditya (AD 696-733), who was in time succeeded by his son Vikramaditya II (AD

733-745) who came to the throne and defeated the Pallava king NandivarmaII to capture a major portion of the Pallava kingdom.however Vikramaditya II's son Kirtivarma II (AD 745) was disposed by the Rastrakuta ruler, Danti durga, to established the Rashtrakuta Dynasty as a force to reckon within Karnataka's political scenario. About 200 years later, the Chalukya Dynasty was revived in 973. During this period Vikramaditya VI (AD 1076-1189) arose as the greatest king. Bhilhana and Vijnaneswara were important writers during his period.

### Pandya rulers ★

Pandya rulers exercised a clonrule under several lineages, each bearing Tamil names ending with suffixes such as Valuti and Chaliyan. The Pandyas acquired their resources in inter tribal conflicts with the Cherns and Cholas, and luxury goods from their maritime trade with countries father west. The Pandya founded a Tamil literary academy called the Sangom, at Madurai. They adopted the Vedic religian of sacrifice and patronised the Brahmin priests. Their power declined with the invasion of a tribe-called the Kalabhras. The Pandyas re-emerged a teritorial monarchy in the late sixth century AD. Theyadopted Brdththincial socio-political institutions based on Sanskrit cultural norms, and built up an agrarian base through, land grants to Brahmins and temples of Shiva and Vishnu. They vied, with the Pallava Dynasty of Kanchipurarn for dominance over the Cauvery delta. After military defeats, they declined with the rise of the Chalas in the late ninth century, the Pandyas re-established their power by defeating the Cholas in the early thirteenth century, and a Pandya lineage has occupied the Kongu region by the end of that century. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, visited the Pandya region in the late thirteenth century. The later Pandya rulers continued to promote Brahminical traditions, and adopted Sanskritic titles such as Maravarman and Jatavarman. Throughout their history, the Pandyas had close interaction with the rulers of Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

### THE PANDYAS OF MADURAI (AD 590-1323)

The Pandyas were one of the most ancient dynasties to rule South India and are mentioned in Kautilya's Arthashastra and Megasthenes Indica. The Sangam age started from a Pandya king and as per Sangam literature there were at least 20 kings in this dynasty. The most prominent among these was, **Nedunzalian**, who made Madurai his capital. Other figures who find some mention in history are **King Bhootapandya** and his queen Kopendu. **King Ugraperavaluta** and poet **Rudrasharman**. The early Pandya rulers made a significant contribution to Tamil literature. After the Sangam Age, this dynasty lost its significance for more than a century, only to rise again at the end of the sixth century. Their first significant ruler was Kundungan (AD 590-620) who defeated the Kalabras and brought the Pandyas back to the path of glory. The significant later Pandya kings were **Varaguna I** (AD 765-815); **Srimara Sri-vallabha** (AD 815-862); **Varaguna Varmann** (AD 862-880); **Prantaka Veeranarayanan** (AD 880-900).

Rajasimha Maravarma (AD 900 -920); Maravarma Sundra Pandya (AD 1226-1238); Jatavarma Sundra Pandya (1251 to 1268 AD) and Kulasekhra (AD 1281-1311). The last known Pandya king, parakramadeva, was defeated by Usuf Khan (a Victory of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq) when the Tughlaq Dynasty was in the process of extending their kingdom upto Kanyakumari.



MAP 1. 10 Various Kingdoms Ruling south India

### THE CHOLA DYNASTY (AD 850-1310)

This Tamil Dynasty ruled over TamilNadu and parts of Karnataka with Tanjore as their capital. The

early Chola rulers were Karikala Cholas who ruled in the second century An. But after them, the Chola Dynasty remained in the dark corners of the South Indian political scene for centuries before surfacing again when, in ad 850, Vijayalaya captured Tanjore during the Pandya-Pallava wars. To commemorate his accession, he built a temple at Tanjore. The King was the central head who was helped by a council of ministers, but the administration was democratic. Land revenue and trade tax were the main source of income. The society was divided into Brahmins and non-Brahmins. The temple was the cultural and social centre, where art and literature flourished. The Brihadeswara (Shiva) temple at Tanjore was built by Rajaraja I. The giant statue of Gomateswara at Shravanabelagola was built during this period. His son Aditya I (AD 871-901) succeeded him to the throne. Aditya died in ad 907 leaving the throne to his son Parantaka I (AD 907-955) who was the king for the next 48 years. But it was Rajaraja I (AD 985-1014) who was the founder of the newly organised Chola kingdom. He snatched back the lost territories from the Rashtrakutas to become the most powerful of the Chola rulers. Rajendra Chola (AD 1012-1044, son of Rajaraja I), was an important ruler of this dynasty who conquered Irtiss, Bengal, Burma, Ceylon, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Chola Dynasty was at its zenith during his reign. Other important rulers of this dynasty were Rajadhi Raja I (AD 1044-1052); Rajendra II (AD 1052-1064); Veera Rajendra (AD 1064-1069); Kulottunga I (AD 1069-1120); Vikramachola (AD 1118-1135); Kullottunga II (AD 1133-1150); Raja Raja II (AD 1146-1173); Rajadhiraja II (AD 1173-1178); Kulottunga III (AD 1178-1216) and Raja Raja III (AD 1216-1246). The last ruler of the Cholla Dynasty was Rajendra III (AD 1246-1279). He was a weak ruler who surrendered to the Pandyas. Later, Malik Kafur invaded this Tamil state in AD 1310 and extinguished the Chola Empire.



MAP 1.11 The Expansion of Cholas

### RASHTRAKUTAS (AD 753-973)

The Rashtrakutas were descendants of the nobles governed under the Andhras. They were followers of Jainism. It is assumed that no other dynasty of Karnataka before or after, ruled over such a vast empire such as the Rashtrakutas. **Dantidurga** (AD 735-756) established this kingdom. His ancestors were subordinates of the Chalukyas. They overthrew the Chalukyas and ruled up to AD 973. Dantidurga was succeeded by his son **Krishna I** (AD 756-774). Krishna I is credited to have built the Kailasa temple at Ellora. He is also said to have totally eclipsed the contemporary Chalukya rulers. Other kings of this dynasty were **Govinda II** (AD 774-780), **Dhruva** (AD 780-790), **Govinda III** (AD 793-814) and **Amoghavarsha Nrupatunga I** (AD 814-887). The extent of the Amoghavarsha's Empire can be calculated from the account of the Arabian traveller, Sulaiman, who visited his court in AD 851 and wrote in his book 'His kingdom was one of the four great empires of the world at that time'. (The other empires he mentioned were the Roman Empire, the Chinese Empire and the Empire of the Khalif of Baghdad). Later Rashtrakuta rulers included Krishna II (AD 880-914); Indra III (AD 914-929); Amoghavarsha II (AD 929-930); Govinda VI (AD 930-935); Krishna III (AD 939-967) and Khottiga (AD 967-972). The later Rashtrakutas could not keep pace with the rising Chalukyas of Vatapi. The Chalukyas under Tailapa II overthrew the last Rashtrakuta king Karka II in AD 973 and laid the foundations of the Chalukyas of Kalyani.

### VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE

Vijayanagara Empire, in the Deccan Plateau region, was established by Harihara I and his brother Bukka Raya I of the Sangama Dynasty in 1336 CE. This empire (1336-1646 CE) suffered a major military defeat in 1565 by the Deccan sultanates. After this, its power started declining. This empire had seen the golden period of its time. The capital city of this empire was Vijayanagara. At present, the ruins of the Vijayanagara Empire can be found at Hampi which is a world heritage site in Karnataka (India). The history of the empire can be traced from the local literature as well as from the writings of the European travellers like Domingo Paes, Niccolò Da Conti etc. This empire's power and wealth can also be seen from the archaeological excavations at Vijayanagara. Another name which is used in many other inscriptions was the Karnata Empire. Sangama Dynasty (1336-1485), Saluva Dynasty (1485-1491), Tuluva Dynasty (1491-1542) and Aravidu Dynasty (1542-1646) ruled over the Vijayanagara Empire.

The empire reached its peak during the rule of Krishna Deva Raya when Vijayanagara armies were consistently victorious. During his period, the empire dominated all of southern India and fought off invasions from the five established Deccan Sultanates. The empire annexed areas formerly under the Sultanates in the northern Deccan and the territories in eastern Deccan including Kalinga, while simultaneously maintaining control over all its subordinates in the South. The empire went into a slow decline regionally, although trade with the Portuguese continued and the British were given a land grant for the establishment of Chennai.

The Empire was finally conquered by the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda. The largest feudatories of the Vijayanagara Empire—the Mysore Kingdom, Keladi Nayaka, Nayakas of Madurai, Nayaks of Tanjore, Nayaks of Chitradurga declared independence and went on to have an important impact on the history of South India in the coming centuries.

**OTHER FEATURES OF SOUTHERN DYNASTIES****Social**

Despite inter-regional conflicts, local autonomy was preserved to a far greater degree in the south where it has prevailed for centuries. The absence of a highly centralised government was associated with the corresponding local autonomy in the administration of villages and districts. Extensive and well documented overland and maritime trade flourished with the Arabs on the west coast and with south-east Asia. Trade facilitated cultural diffusion in south-east Asia, where the local elite selectively but willingly adopted Indian art, architecture, literature and social customs.

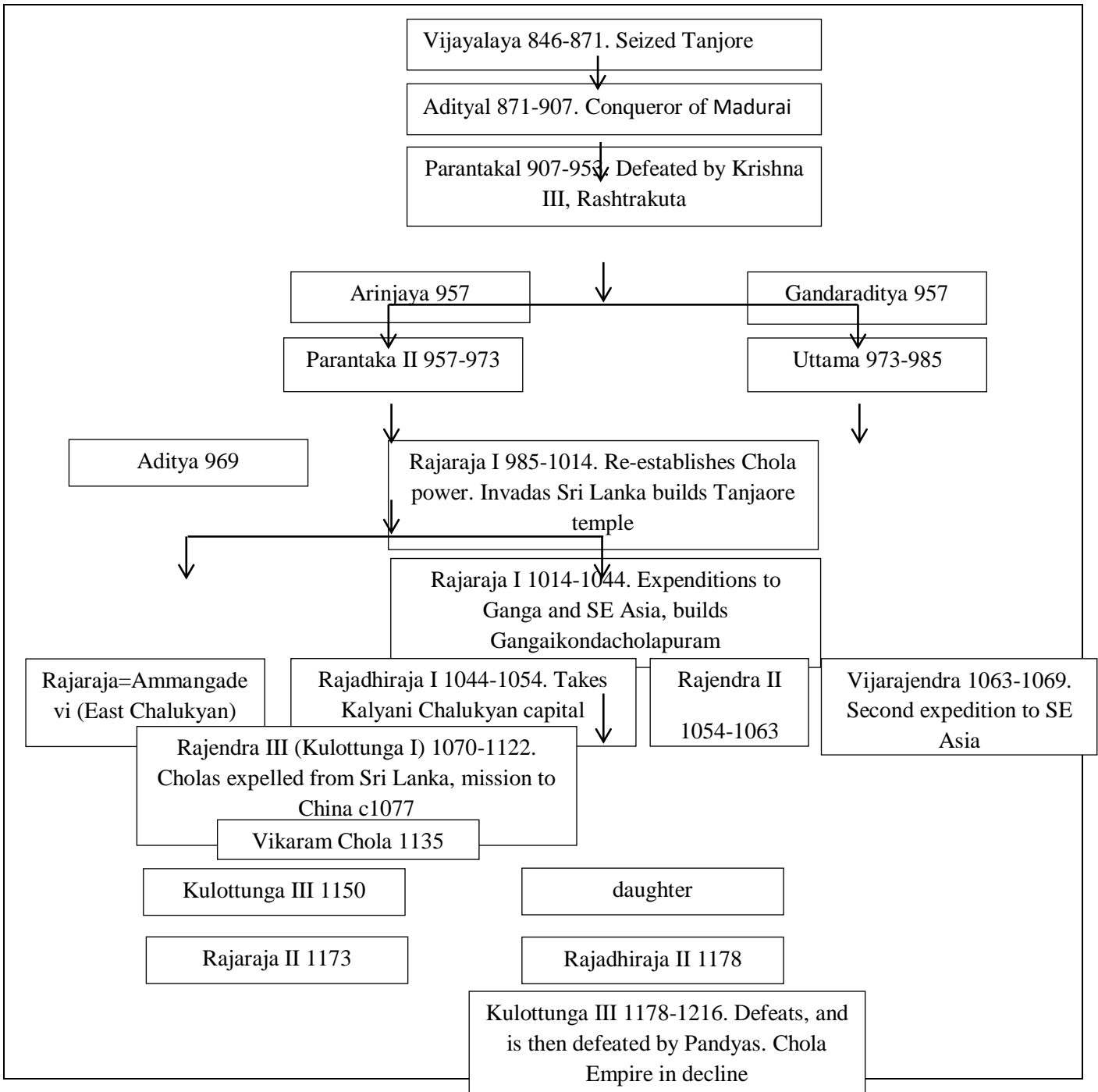
**Religion**

The inter-dynastic rivalry and seasonal raids into each other's territory notwithstanding, the rulers in the Deccan and South India patronised all three religions-Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. The religions vied with each other for royal favour, expressed in land grants but more importantly in the creation of monumental temples, which remain

architectural wonders even today. The cave temples of Elephanta Island (near Mumbai), Ajanta and Ellora (in Maharashtra) and structural temples of Kanchipuram (in Tamil Nadu) are enduring legacies of the otherwise warring regional rulers. By the mid-seventh century Buddhism and Jainism began to decline as sectarian Hindu devotional cults of Shiva and Vishnu vigorously competed for popular support.

**Art and Literature**

Although Sanskrit was the language of learning and theology in South India, as it was in the north, the growth of the bhakti (devotional) movements enhanced the crystallization of vernacular literature in all four major Dravidian languages: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada; they often borrowed them and vocabulary from Sanskrit but preserved much of the local cultural lore. Examples of Tamil literature include the major poems, Cliappatikaram (Jewelled Anklet) and Manimekalai (Jewelled Belt); the body of Shaivite and Vaishnavite- Hindu devotional movements- devotional literature and the reworking of the Ramayana by Kamban in the twelfth century.



**FIG. 1.6. The Chola Dynasty**

**The Cheras**

Cheras were one of the historic Tamil chiefdoms of southern India, which controlled the middle Cauvery River valley. It first rose some time after the third century BC, with Karuvur-Vanchi as its inland political centre and Muchiri (Cranganore) on the Kerala coast as its port of trade, where merchants

exchanged pepper for gold and wine from the Roman empire, the Cheras exercised a clan rule under different lineages. Its rulers apparently fought intertribal conflicts with the Cholas and Pandyas and subjugated minor chiefs of the Veir clan. The Chera kingdom of Makotai was established in the ninth century AD in the Periyar valley of Kerala, with Maktaipuram (Kodungallur) and Quilon as its first



and second capital. The kingdom acquired an agrarian base through land grants to Brahmins and to Brahmin institutions), such as the temples of Shiva and Vishnu. Trading ventures with Arab and Jewish lands provided commercial resources. Contemporary texts give an account of the ruling dynasty's legendary origins and history. Makotai was supposedly hostile to the Panayas but friendly with the Mushakas of Kerala. Despite a series of defensive wars, constant invasions by the Cholas of Tanjavur led to the disintegration of the Makotai kingdom by the early twelfth century AD.

ft). long, 37 m (123 ft) wide: and 5 m (18 ft) high. Its ceiling, supported by rows of pillars, was originally decorated with frescoes and on its walls is a series of panels representing the many aspects of Shiva: as Nataraja, lord of the Cosmic Dance; as Yageshvara, Lord of the Yogis; slaying the demon; Andnaka; marrying Parvati and restraining the waters, of the Ganga. The focal point of the temple is- the Maheshmurti [or Trimurti), a three-headed bust representing Brahma as the creator, Vishnu as the preserver and Shiva as the destroyer.

### Elephanta Caves

These are a complex of six rock-cut temples on the Island of Elephanta, or Gharapuri, on the Mumbai harbour. They were begun in the middle of the sixth century, by either the Traikutaka or Kalachuri dynasties of Maharashtra, and more were added between the eighth and tenth centuries by the Rashtrakuta Dynasty. Rather than being constructed from separate parts, they are, like the temples at Ellora, sculpted out of solid rock. The centrepiece of the group is a large temple of Shiva, some 40 m (130

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