

## Regional Kingdoms

### **Ahom's Assam**

The Ahom Kingdom was a late medieval kingdom established in 1228 in the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam.

It is famous for its multi-ethnic makeup and for retaining its sovereignty for 600 years fighting at one point fighting the Mughal Empire to successfully preserve its independence.

### **History of the Ahom Kingdom**

The foundations of the Ahom Kingdom were laid when the first Ahom king, Chaolung Sukaphaa came from Mong Mao, a kingdom located on the easternmost reach of the Indian subcontinent.

He entered the Brahmaputra valley by crossing the Patkai mountain range. Along with him came his three queens, two sons and a retinue of nobles and officials and soldiers. He reached modern-day Namrup on 2 December 1228 and settled in the area on the south bank of the Burhidihing river, the Dikhaureiver in the south and Patkaimountains in the east.

Making his capital at Charaideo, he befriended the local tribes consisting of the Barahi and the Marans peoples. The technology Sukaphaa and his people had brought with them was shared with the local people of the region. This technology was the wet rice cultivation with an increased agricultural output of the region. Gradually, the Ahom way of life and polity absorbed other people of the region such as the Barahi, increasing the Ahom numbers significantly. For his position Assamese history, the honorific Chaolung is associated with him. (*Chao* means great, while *Lung* means great). Sukaphaa would pass away in 1268 having laid the groundwork of a strong sovereign kingdom.

The process of assimilation continued until the 16th century when the Ahom kingdom expanded enough to bring other ethnicities into its fold which made the kingdom multi-ethnic and inclusive in its outlook. The Ahom Kingdom came under regular attacks from the Turkic and Afghan rulers of Bengal but it successfully resisted its advances and even expanded westwards to include territory around the Karatoyariver.

The Ahom Kingdom would see its first major engagement against an imperial power in the form of the Mughal Empire in 1615. The Ahom capital of Garhgaon was occupied by the Mughals in 1662, but they were dislodged in subsequent engagements. Finally, during the battle of Saraighat in 1671 the Ahoms under LachitBorphukan managed to repel a major Mughal invasion and in the process extended their boundaries westward up to the Manas River. Mughal presence in the region would be permanently ended by 1682.

## The economy of the Ahom Kingdom

The economy of the Ahom Kingdom was based around the Paik system. In this system, able-bodied adult males referred to as paiks, were obligated to provide service to the state and form its militia in return for land.

Coinage was first introduced in the 16th century by Suklenmung although the Paik system was still in effect. During Ahom expansion into Mughal areas, the revenue systems it came across were adapted into its fold accordingly.

## Administration of the Ahom Kingdom

The administrative makeup of the Ahom Kingdoms consisted of the following:

- Swargadeo: The kingdom was ruled by a king called *Swargadeo* who had to be from the same lineage as that of the first king Sukaphaa. Succession was generally primogeniture in nature but another descendant of Sukaphaa could be elected to the throne great *Gohains* should the situation called for it.
- Royal officers: Two royal offices were added under the reign of PratapaSingha, the Borbaru and Borphukan. The Borbaru was a military and judicial head while the Borphukan was a military commander who acted as a Viceroy of sorts to the Swargadeo's territories in the west. The most famous of the latter was LachitBorphukan
- PatraMantris: Five positions of importance constituted the Council of Ministers otherwise known as PatraMantris. They advised the king on important matters of the state.
- Paik Officials: Every common subject was a paik, and four paiks formed a got. At any time of the year, one of the paiks in the got rendered direct service to the king, as the others in his got tended to his fields.

## Gonds

### Gond tribe

- They are the tribal community mostly found in the Gond forests of the central India.
- They are widely spread in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.
- The name by which the Gonds call themselves is Koi or Koitur which means unclear.
- Gonds are one of the largest tribal groups in the world.

### History

- They settled in the Gondwana region from ninth to thirteenth century AD.
- In the fourteen century, they ruled several parts of the central India.

- They had built number of forts, palaces, temples, tanks and lakes during the rule of the Gonds dynasty.
- Gonds have been the warriors since the British period.
- During the British regime in India, Gonds challenged the Britishers in several battles.

### **Language**

- They speak Gondi and Indo-Aryan languages
- The Gondi language belongs to the Dravidian family of languages and is related to Tamil and Kannada.

### **Religion**

- They have been largely influenced by the Hindus.
- For the long time they have been practicing the Hindu culture and traditions.

### **Festivals**

- Their fairs and festivals are influenced from the Hindu traditions.
- KeslapurJathra is an important festival of the Gonds.
- Madai is another major festival celebrated among the Gonds.
- They also celebrate Hindu festival called Dusshera.

### **Dance**

- Gusadi dance is the most famous dance performed by them.
- It is performed by wearing head gears decorated with the peacock feathers.
- They wear cotton cloth around their waist.
- They smear ash all over their body and the beards made of animal hair is also an important part of the dance costumes.

## **Orissa/Odisha**

During medieval times, the Hindu Gajapati rulers (c. 1435 – 1541 CE) ruled over Kalinga (Odisha), large parts of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, and the eastern and central parts of Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. Gajapati means “king with an army of elephants”. In c. 1435 CE, Kapilendra Deva founded the Gajapati dynasty after the decline of the last eastern Ganga king, Bhanu Deva IV. The Gajapati dynasty is also known as the “Suryavamsi dynasty”. The Gajapati rule marks a brilliant phase in Orissa. The rulers were great builders and warriors. They extended their rule in the south towards Karnataka which brought them into conflict with Vijayanagara, the Reddis and the Bahmani sultans. However, by the early 16th century, the Gajapati rulers lost significant portions of the southern dominion to Vijayanagara and Golconda and the Gajapatis were even ousted by the Bhoi dynasty.

## **Gajapati Dynasty**

### **Kapilendra Deva (c. 1435 – 1466 CE)**

- He was the founder of the Gajapati dynasty. His empire extended from Ganga in the north to Bidar in the south.
- Around c. 1450 CE, he appointed his son Hamvira Deva as the governor of Kondavidu and Rajahmundry. Hamvira Deva conquered Hampi, the Vijayanagara capital and made its ruler, Mallikarjuna Raya, pay taxes. In c. 1460 CE, Tamavupala (commander of Hamvira Deva) conquered the southern states of Udayagiri (Nellore district) and Chandragiri. The rock edicts of Srirangam temple (near Trichinapalli) indicate that Hamvira Deva captured Trichinapalli, Tanjore and Arcot in the south. In c. 1464 CE, he adopted the title of DakshinaKapilesvara.
- During his reign, the Odia language was officially used as an administrative language. Sarla Das, the famous Odia poet wrote the "Odia Mahabharata".

### **Purushottama Deva (c. 1466 – 1497 CE)**

- After the death of Kapilendra Deva, his son Purushottama Deva ascended the throne in c. 1484 CE by defeating Hamvira Deva. During this period, significant southern parts of the empire were lost to the Vijayanagara Kingdom. However, he was able to regain some of the territories by the time of his death.

### **Prataparudra Deva (c. 1497 – 1540 CE)**

- Son of Purushottama Deva. During his reign, Alauddin Hussain Shah of Bengal raided twice. In the latter campaign (c. 1508 CE), the Bengal army marched up to Puri.
- In c. 1512 CE, Kalinga was invaded by Krishna Deva Raya of the Vijayanagara kingdom and the army of the Gajapati kingdom suffered defeat. In c. 1522 CE, Quli Qutb Shah of Golconda ousted the Odia army from the Krishna-Godavari tract.
- During his reign, the Bhakti movement gained momentum under the influence of Sri Chaitanya. Prataparudra Deva was greatly influenced by the works of Chaitanya and led an ascetic life after retiring himself.

In c. 1541 CE, Govinda Vidyadhara, minister of Prataparudra Deva, rebelled against the weak rulers and murdered the two sons of Prataparudra Deva. He established the Bhoi dynasty which only ruled for a short period of time and came into conflict with neighbouring kingdoms. In c. 1559 CE, history repeated itself as Makunda Deva, a minister of the Bhoi dynasty assassinated the last two Bhoi rulers and ascended the throne. He is considered the last independent ruler of Odisha as the region witnessed a steady fall afterwards. In c. 1568 CE, Odisha came under the control of Sulaiman Khan Karrani of the Karrani dynasty, who was the ruler of the Bengal Sultanate. The year c. 1568 CE is important in the history of Odisha, as Odisha never emerged as an independent kingdom again.

## **Mewar**

The rise of Mewar during the 15th century was an important factor in the political life of north India. With the conquest of Ranthambore by AlauddinKhalji, the power of Chauhans in Rajputana came to an end. After being overrun by the forces of AlauddinKhalji, Mewar had become relatively insignificant. Later in c. 1335 CE, RanaHammira (c. 1314 – 1378 CE) established the second Guhila dynasty of Chittor and also became the progenitor of the Sisodia clan, a branch of the Guhilot clan, to which every succeeding Maharana of Mewar belonged. He was the first ruler who started the use of the title “Rana” and also built the Annapoorna Mata temple in Chittorgarh fort in Rajasthan. After the assassination of RanaHamirra’s grandson, MaharanaMokal, his son RanaKumbha ascended the throne of Mewar. Mewar (Udaipur) kingdom was originally called Medhpaat.

### **RanaKumbha (c. 1433 – 1468 CE)**

- RanaKumbha raised the kingdom of Mewar to the status of a power to be reckoned with. After consolidating his position with great diplomacy and defeating his internal rivals, Kumbha conquered states like Bundi, Kotah, Dungerpur, etc.
- The conflicts with Gujarat and Malwa occupied Kumbha throughout his reign. RanaKumbha had given shelter to a rival of Mahmud Khalji of Malwa and even attempted to install him on the throne. In retaliation, Mahmud Khalji had given shelter and encouragement to some of the rivals of Kumbha such as his brother Mokal. Mahmud Khalji of Malwa fought with RanaKumbha and both claimed victory.
- Although sorely pressed from all sides, RanaKumbha was largely able to maintain his position in Mewar. Kumbhalgarh was besieged several times by the Gujarat army, while Mahmud Khalji raided Ajmer. However, Kumbha was able to resist these attacks and retain possession of most of his conquests except some outlying areas like Ranthambore.
- Kumbhapatronised art and literature. He himself composed a number of books. He was a great veena player. He patronised scholars like Atri and Mahesh who composed the inscriptions of the Victory Tower (KirtiStambha) at Chittor.
- To protect his kingdom he built five forts – Achalgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Kolana, Vairat and Maddan. Some of the temples built during this period show that the art of stone cutting, sculpture were at a high level.
- He was murdered by his own son, Udai in order to gain the throne. He was, however, ousted by MaharanaRaimal, the younger son of RanaKumbha. Later, after another unfortunate, long fratricidal conflict with his brothers, RanaSanga (son of Raimal) became the ruler of Mewar.

### **RanaSanga (c. 1508 – 1528 CE)**

- He was the grandson of RanaKumbha. With his bravery, he established his supremacy over almost all Rajput states in Rajasthan.
- Apart from being a great warrior, he was also a visionary. Under his leadership, he was able to unite various factions of Rajputs who had broken up after the fall of the Gurjara-

Pratihara kingdom. Read more on the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom in Early Medieval Northern India.

- After consolidating his position at Mewar, RanaSanga moved his forces against the internally troubled neighbouring kingdom of Malwa (as Malwa was disintegrating during this period).
- The ruler of Malwa, Mahmud II was wary of his rival Rajput wazirMediniRai's power, so he asked for help from Bahadur Shah of Gujarat and also from sultan Ibrahim Lodhi of Delhi. RanaSanga came to the aid of MediniRai. Sanga's army along with the Rajput rebels from within Malwa not only defeated Malwa's army but also their supporting forces from Delhi. Thus, Malwa fell under Rana's military might. However, RanaSanga treated Mahmud II with generosity and restored his kingdom even when he was defeated and taken as a prisoner by RanaSanga.
- In c. 1518 CE, the Lodhi ruler Ibrahim Lodhi invaded Mewar but suffered defeat at the hands of RanaSanga at Ghatoli (near Gwalior). Lodhi was again defeated at Dholpur in c. 1519 CE.
- According to some legends, RanaSanga invited Babur to invade India in c. 1526 CE. But in c. 1527 CE, Rana fought against Babur in the famous Battle of Khanwa (near FatehpurSikri). He was supported by the contingents of Hasan Khan Mewati, Raja MediniRai of Alwar and the Afghan Mahmud Lodhi. RanaSanga was wounded, fell unconscious from his horse and the Rajput army thought their leader was dead and fled in disorder, thus allowing the Mughals to win.
- In c. 1528 CE, he again fought Babur at the Battle of Chanderi to help MediniRai who was attacked by Babur. But he fell sick and died in the camp.

## Kashmir

Kalhana was a 12th-century poet and historian who wrote the **Rajatarangini** during c.1148 – 1150 CE. It provides the earliest source on Kashmir that can be labelled as a reliable historical text on this region. According to Hindu mythology, Kashmir was once a lake that was drained out by a rishi named Kashyapa, who then asked people to settle in the valley. According to Al-Beruni, entry into the beautiful kingdom of Kashmir was not allowed even to the Hindus, who were not known personally to the local nobles. In the 11th century, Shaivism was the central religion in Kashmir. However, the situation changed with the ending of Hindu rule around the middle of the 14th century.

During the reign of Sahdev (c. 1301 – 1320 CE), Kashmir was invaded by a Turkic-Mongol chief, Dalucha (Zulju) and Sahdev fled from Kashmir. Dalucha ordered the widespread massacre of men while women and children were enslaved and sold to the merchants of Central Asia. The hapless Kashmir government could not resist, thereby losing all credibility and public support.

In c. 1339 CE, Shamsuddin Shah became the ruler of Kashmir and from this period, the religion Islam was being established in Kashmir.

### **Shamsuddin Shah Mir (c. 1339 – 1342 CE)**

- He was the founder of the Shah Mir dynasty and was titled Sultan Shamsuddin.

### **Sultan Shihab-ud-din (c. 1354 – 1373 CE)**

- He was a great ruler who led many campaigns and conquered many regions like Sindh, Kabul, Ghazni, Dardistan, Gilgit, Balochistan and Ladakh. He faced an invasion by the ruler of Kashgar (Central Asia) who later claimed Ladakh and Baltistan. He founded a new town Shihab-ud-din Pora (now Shadipora). Due to his good administration, he is known as 'Lalitaditya of Medieval Kashmir'.

### **Sikander Shah (c. 1389 – 1413 CE)**

- He was intolerant towards other religions. He levied taxes on non-Muslims, forced people to convert to Islam and earned the title of "But-Shikan" for destroying idols. The sultan ordered that all Hindus especially Brahmans should embrace Islam or leave his kingdom. It is said that these orders were issued at the behest of the king's minister, SuhaBhat who had converted to Islam and was bent on harassing his former co-religionists.
- After his death, his son Ali Shah (c. 1413- 1419 CE) ascended the throne. After a few years, his brother Shah Khan ascended the throne under the title of "ZainulAbidin".

### **Zain-ul-Abideen (c. 1420 – 1470 CE)**

- He is called Bud Shah (The Great Sultan) by Kashmiris.
- He was a benevolent, liberal and enlightened ruler. He brought back all the non-Muslims who had fled and gave freedom to revert to Hinduism to all those who were forcibly converted. He even restored the libraries and the land grants which the Hindus had enjoyed. He abolished jizya, cow slaughter and also withdrew the ban on sati, to respect the wishes of the Hindus. The Hindus occupied high offices in his government, for instance, Sriya Bhatt was minister of justice and court physician. As noted by AbulFazl more than one hundred years later, Kashmir had 150 majestic temples and it is most likely that they must have been restored under Zain-ul-Abideen.
- The sultan was a learned man and composed poetry. He was well versed in Persian, Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Tibetan languages. He also patronised Sanskrit and Persian scholars and under his patronage, the Mahabharata and Kalhana's Rajatarangini were translated into Persian.
- Though he was not a great warrior, he defeated the Mongol invasion of Ladakh, conquered the Baltistan region (called Tibbat-i-Buzarg) and kept control over Jammu, Rajouri, etc. He thus unified the Kashmir kingdom.
- The fame of Zain-ul-Abideen had spread far and wide. He was in touch with the leading rulers in other parts of India and also with the leaders of Asia.
- He paid great attention towards the economic development of Kashmir. He sent two persons to Samargand to learn the art of paper-mache and bookbinding. He encouraged

the art of shawl making for which Kashmir is world-famous. Under his rule, the art of wood carving, stone cutting and polishing, gold beating, bottle making, musket making and carpet weaving prospered. The sultan developed agriculture by making large numbers of dams, canals and bridges. He also introduced reforms in the currency, market control and fixed prices of commodities.

- He built an artificial island, Zaina Lank, in the Wularlake on which he built his palace and a mosque. He also founded the towns of Zainapur, Zainakut and Zainagir. He also built the first wooden bridge at Srinagar, ZainaKadal.

### **The SharaquiOf Jaunpuri**

With the death of the Sultan in c. 1470 CE, the Shah Mir dynasty also started to decline due to its weak rulers. The last ruler of this dynasty was Habib Shah (c. 1555 CE). He was dethroned by his commander Ghazi Chak who was a Military General.

With the growing weakness of the Delhi Sultanate and the invasion of Timur in Delhi (c. 1398 CE), Malik Sarwar (SultanuSharq) – governor of Jaunpur took advantage of the situation and declared independence. He extended his authority over Awadh and a large part of the Ganga Yamuna doab such as Kannauj, Dalmau, Kara, Sandeela, Bihar and Tirhut. He laid the foundation of the Sharqi dynasty. A distinctive architecture evolved during this period known as the **Sharqi style of architecture**. Jaunpur was called the Sheraz of India. The Atala Masjid, Jama Masjid and the LalDarwaja Masjid are some of the examples of the Sharqi style of architecture.

#### **Malik Sarwar (c.1394 – 1399 CE)**

- He founded the Sharqi dynasty.
- The Rai of Jajnagar and the ruler of Lakhnautirecognised his suzerainty.
- After his death, his adopted son Malik Qaranfal ascended the throne and took the title of Mubarak Shah.

#### **Mubarak Shah (c. 1399 – 1402 CE)**

- During his rule, Mallulqbal (the powerful minister of the Delhi Sultanate) tried to recover Jaunpur but failed.

#### **Ibrahim Shah (c. 1402 – 1440 CE)**

- Ibrahim was the younger brother of Mubarak Shah. During his reign, Jaunpur became an excellent centre of learning.
- His kingdom extended to Bihar in the east and to Kannauj in the west. He led an expedition to Delhi but failed.
- He patronised Islamic learning and established a number of colleges for this purpose. The Hashiah-i-Hind, the Bahar-ul-Mawwaj and the Fatwa-i-Ibrahim Shahi are some of the scholarly works on Islamic theology and law that were produced during his reign.



- The famous Atala Masjid, the foundation of which was laid by Firoz Shah Tughlaq (in c.1376 CE) was completed during the reign of Ibrahim Shah. The Jhanjhiri Masjid was also constructed by Ibrahim Shah in c.1430 CE.

#### **Mahmud Shah (c.1440 – 1457 CE)**

- He was the elder son of Ibrahim Shah who conquered the fort of Chunar but failed to capture Kalpi.
- He invaded Delhi in c.1452 CE but was defeated by BahlolLodhi. Later, he made another attempt to conquer Delhi and marched into Etawah. Finally, he agreed to a treaty that accepted the right of BahlolLodhi over Shamsabad. But when BahlolLodhi tried to take possession of Shamsabad, he was opposed by the forces of Jaunpur. Around this time, Mahmud Shah died and was succeeded by his son Bhikhan who took the title of Muhammad Shah.
- During his reign, the LalDarwaja Masjid was constructed in c.1450 CE.

#### **Muhammad Shah (c.1457 – 1458 CE)**

- He made peace with BahlolLodhi and recognised his right over Shamsabad.
- He was killed by his brother Hussain Shah who then declared himself the Sultan of Jaunpur.

#### **Hussain Shah Sharqi (c. 1458 – 1505 CE)**

- He assumed the title of Gandharva and contributed significantly to the development of Khyal – a genre of Hindustani classical music. He also composed several ragas (melodies) like Malhar-syama, Bhopal syama, Gaur-syama, Hussaini or Jaunpuri-asavari (presently known as Jaunpuri) and Jaunpuri basant.
- During his rule, Jama Masjid was built in c.1470 CE.

Finally, SikanderLodhi who succeeded BahlolLodhi annexed Jaunpur, Hussain Shah died and the Sharqi dynasty came to an end.