

Pallavas

Rulers of the Pallava dynasty

- The Pallava rulers made significant contributions to the fields of art, architecture, and literature.
- **Simhavarman I (c. 275 – 300 CE):**
 - Simhavarman I is considered one of the earliest known Pallava rulers.
 - He is credited with laying the foundation for the dynasty's rule in the region.
- **Mahendravarman I (c. 600 – 630 CE):**
 - Mahendravarman I was a notable Pallava king known for his patronage of the arts and literature.
 - He was a prolific poet himself and is believed to have authored the Sanskrit play "Mattavilasa Prahasana."
 - He was a follower of Jainism but later embraced Shaivism.
- **Narasimhavarman I (c. 630 – 668 CE):**
 - Also known as Mamalla, Narasimhavarman I was one of the most famous Pallava rulers.
 - He is best known for his military campaigns and his patronage of art and architecture.
 - He is credited with the construction of the famous Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- **Nandivarman II (c. 731 – 796 CE):**
 - Nandivarman II was another Pallava king who made significant contributions to art and architecture.
 - He is known for his patronage of rock-cut temples, including the Mandagapattu and Trichinopoly rock-cut temples.
- **Dantivarman (c. 796 – 847 CE):**
 - Dantivarman was one of the last known Pallava rulers.
 - His reign marked a period of decline for the dynasty as it faced pressure from the rising Chola dynasty.

• **Nandivarman III (c. 850 – 869 CE):**

- Nandivarman III was one of the later Pallava rulers.
- His reign also witnessed the continuing decline of the Pallava dynasty as the Cholas expanded their influence in the region.

Administration

- The Pallava dynasty, like many other Indian dynasties, was primarily a monarchy with hereditary succession.
- The ruling king held the highest authority in both administrative and military matters.
- The Pallava Empire was divided into provinces, each of which was governed by a provincial governor or viceroy known as a “Maharaja.”
- These governors were responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, and administering justice within their respective regions.
- The Pallavas had different capital cities during its rule.
- Initially, their capital was Kanchipuram, but it later shifted to Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) and even to other locations like Kumbakonam and Thanjavur during different periods.
- The revenue collection system was crucial for the administration.
- Land revenue, known as “Bali,” was collected from agricultural lands.
- Taxes were also levied on trade and commerce, and these revenues were used to support the administration and various public projects.
- The Pallavas maintained a standing army to protect its territory and interests.
- The king was the supreme commander of the armed forces, and military governors were appointed to oversee various regions.
- The navy also played a crucial role due to the Pallavas’ maritime activities and trade connections.
- The Pallavas were known for their religious tolerance.
- They were staunch Hindus but also supported Buddhism and Jainism.
- The monuments and inscriptions from their period reflect their religious diversity.

- The Pallavas had diplomatic relations with other South Indian kingdoms and with foreign powers, including the Chalukyas in the Deccan and the Chinese.
- They also engaged in maritime trade with Southeast Asian countries, contributing to the spread of Indian culture.

Art and Architecture

- The Pallavas are renowned for their contributions to Indian art and architecture.
- Their style is characterized by rock-cut cave temples, monolithic rathas (chariots), and intricately carved sculptures.
- The Pallavas are credited with the development and popularization of Dravidian architectural styles.
- Dravidian architecture is characterized by its distinctive pyramid-shaped temples with intricate carvings and sculptures.
- **Monolithic Rock-Cut Temples:**
 - One of the most remarkable features of Pallava architecture is the creation of monolithic rock-cut temples.
 - These temples were carved from a single piece of rock, showcasing the Pallavas' remarkable architectural skills.
 - **Examples** include the Shore Temple in Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) and the Pancha Rathas (Five Rathas).
- **Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram):**
 - This coastal town in Tamil Nadu is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a major center of Pallava art and architecture.
 - The town is known for its rock-cut monuments, including the Shore Temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva and features intricate carvings of various deities and mythological scenes.
 - The Arjuna's Penance Relief, a massive open-air sculpture, is another notable attraction.
- **Ratha Temples:**
 - The Pancha Rathas (Five Rathas) in Mamallapuram are monolithic temples carved in the shape of chariots (rathas).

- Each ratha is dedicated to a different deity and showcases unique architectural elements.
- These rathas provide insight into the development of temple architecture during the Pallava period.
- **Cave Temples:**
 - The Pallavas also constructed several rock-cut cave temples.
 - These temples feature elaborately carved pillars, sculpted panels, and shrines dedicated to various deities.
 - The Mahishasuramardini Cave Temple and the Varaha Cave Temple in Mamallapuram are notable examples.
- **Mandapas:**
 - Pallava temples often include pillared halls or mandapas, which were used for various rituals and ceremonies.
 - These halls were adorned with intricate sculptures and provided space for gatherings and cultural events.
- **Nandi Mandapas:**
 - Nandi mandapas, dedicated to the bull Nandi (the vehicle of Lord Shiva), was an integral part of Pallava temples.
 - The Kailasanathar Temple in Kanchipuram, built by King Rajasimha, features a beautifully carved Nandi mandapa.
- **Temple Towers (Gopurams):**
 - While the towering gateway structures, known as gopurams, are more commonly associated with later South Indian temple architecture, the Pallavas laid the foundation for these structures.
 - Gopurams became a prominent feature in temples during subsequent Chola and Vijayanagara dynasties.

Decline of the Pallava dynasty

- The Pallava dynasty's power began to wane in the 8th century as the Cholas and the Pandyas gained ascendancy in the region.
- The last Pallava ruler, Aparajita, was defeated by the Chola king Aditya I, marking the end of the Pallava dynasty's rule.

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- Despite their eventual decline, the Pallavas left a lasting legacy in southern India, particularly in the fields of art and architecture.
- The intricate carvings and architectural marvels they created continue to be admired and studied by historians, archaeologists, and art enthusiasts today.
- The Pallava dynasty's contributions to Indian culture and its distinctive architectural style make it an important chapter in the history of South India.

