

The Western *Kshatrapas*

- The Western *Kshatrapas* were rulers of Śaka origin, who held sway over the western parts of India, particularly in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Malwa, and most of them assumed the title of *kshatrapa* or *mahākshatrapa*.
- Three branches of these Western *Kshatrapas*—Kshaharāta dynasty, Kārddamaka dynasty, and the *Kshatrapas* of Vidarbha, are known so far.
- These Western *Kshatrapas* ruled for over 300 years.

The *Kshatrapas* of Vidarbha

- The Vidarbha branch of the Western *Kshatrapas* is represented only by *Mahākshatrapa Kumāra* Rupiāmma, known from an inscription.
- On palaeographical grounds, he appears to have ruled sometime in the first century AD.
- There is a suggestion that the rule of the Vidarbha branch of the Western *Kshatrapas* might have been brought to an end by Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi, some time in the first quarter of the second century AD.

The Kshaharāta *Kshatrapas*

- The Kshaharātas seem to have started their career as the provincial governors of the Kushāṇas in the southwestern parts of the empire.
- This is shown by the use of the title of *kshatrapa* by Ābhīraka and Bhūmaka on their coins, and the titles of *kshatrapa* and *mahākshatrapa* by Nahapāna in his inscriptions.
- However, doubts have recently been expressed, from certain quarters, regarding the subordinate status of the Kshaharāta *Kshatrapas*.
- Nahapāna, on his coins, uses the title of *rājan*, which shows an increase in the power and prestige of the dynasty during his reign.
- **Ābhīraka** seems to be the earliest known Kshaharāta *Kshatrapa*.
- His copper coins have been found from the Kachchh and Junagarh regions of Gujarat.
- The use of Nike as a coin device by him seems to place him before Bhūmaka.
- This is supported by the find of a coin of Ābhīraka, which was counterstruck by Bhūmaka.
- **Bhūmaka** is one of the earliest known *kshatrapas*.
- The find of his coins from the coastal regions of Gujarat, parts of Malwa, and the Ajmer region of Rajasthan, give us an idea of the territories under his rule.
- The use of both Brāhmī and Kharoshthī scripts on his coins shows that he also ruled over the western Rajasthan and Sind regions, where Kharoshthī was prevalent.
- **Nahapāna** seems to have succeeded Bhūmaka as the *kshatrapa* of the Kushāṇas, but the relation between these two Kshaharāta rulers is not known for certain.
- No inscription issued by Nahapāna himself is known so far, but several inscriptions, issued in his time by his son-in-law, Ushavadāta (a great donor and the governor of the southern province of the Kshaharāta kingdom), daughter Dakshamitrā, and *Amātya* Aryaman, are known from the Nasik, Karle, and Junnar regions of Maharashtra.
- These inscriptions bear dates, ranging from year 41 to 46.
- If they are indeed dated in the Śaka era, as has been suggested by a number of scholars, he ruled in the first half of the second century AD.
- However, scholars like A S Altekar and A M Shastri regard these dates to refer to the regnal years of Nahapāna.
- The external and internal evidence of these inscriptions, as also the findspots of his coins, shows that his rule extended from Ajmer in the north to Nasik-Pune in the south, and from Gujarat and northern Konkan in the west to Malwa in the east.
- The use of the title *rājan* on his coins, instead of the mere *kshatrapa* met with on the coins of Bhūmaka, shows that he enjoyed a position, superior to that of his predecessor.

- But Nahapāna ultimately had to suffer defeat at the hands of the Sātavāhana ruler, Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi, as attested by epigraphic, numismatic, and perhaps, also literary, sources.
- A Sātavāhana epigraph claims that Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi totally uprooted the Kshaharāta dynasty.

The Kārddamaka *Kshatrapas*

- The royal house of the Kārddamaka *Kshatrapas* was established by Chasṭana, who was the son of Ysā(Ghsā)motika, and, perhaps, the first known ruler of his family.
- However, with the discovery of Dāmagsada I as another son of Ghsāmotika, this can, by no means, be regarded as certain.
- He is believed to have started his career as a governor of the southwestern provinces of the Kushāṇa empire.
- But, recently, doubts have been expressed as to his ever occupying a subordinate position under any political power.
- On his early coins, he uses the title of *kshatrapa*, but on later coins, he calls himself *mahākshatrapa*.
- But the use of the Kharoshṭhī script on his coins shows his hold over some Kharoshṭhī areas, like western Rajasthan and Sind, also.
- On epigraphical grounds, he is assigned the dates 84-130 AD.
- Chasṭana seems to have appointed his son, Jayadāman, as *kshatrapa*, on his own elevation to the position of *mahākshatrapa*.
- But Jayadāman predeceased Chasṭana, and the former's son, Rudradāman I, was appointed as heir-apparent.
- This seems to be indicated by the Andhau inscription of year 52, which refers to both Chasṭana and Rudradāman I as *rājan*.
- Some time after the date of the Andhau inscription of Śaka year 52 (130 AD), Rudradāman I succeeded his grandfather, or Dāmagsada I, as *mahākshatrapa*.
- According to the Junagarh rock inscription of Śaka year 72 (150 AD), a very important source of information about the reign of this ruler, Rudradāman I himself attained the designation of *mahākshatrapa*, and men of all the *varṇas* chose him as protector.
- From this, it has been inferred that, probably, 'the power of his house had been shaken by some enemy, and he had to restore the supreme satrapal dignity by his own prowess'.
- The enemy, in this context, might have been the Sātavāhanas.
- The Junagarh inscription gives a list of the regions, over which Rudradāman I exercised authority.
- These included :
 - ✓ Pūrvvāparākāravanti (eastern and western Malwa),
 - ✓ Anūpa-nivṛit (the Māhishmatī region),
 - ✓ Ānartta (territory around Dvārakā, in northern Kathiawar),
 - ✓ Śurāshṭra (territory around Girinagara, in southern Kathiawar),
 - ✓ Śvabhra on the river Sabarmati,
 - ✓ Maru (in the Rajasthan desert of Marwar),
 - ✓ Kachchha,
 - ✓ Sindhu (western parts of the lower Indus valley),
 - ✓ Sauvīra (eastern parts of the lower Indus valley),
 - ✓ Kukura (near Ānartta, in northern Kathiawar),
 - ✓ Aparānta (northern Konkan), and
 - ✓ Nishāda (western Vindhya and Aravali).
- Thus, he seems to have ruled over all the territories, extending from Multan in the north to Nasik and Sopara in the south.

- Of these territories, Ākarāvanti, Anūpa, Surāshṭra, Kukura, and Aparānta formed part of the empire ruled by Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi, as per the testimony of the Nasik cave inscription of year 19 of Vāsishṭhīputra Puḷumāvi.
- These territories must have been acquired by Rudradāman I from some Sātavāhana ruler.
- The Junagarh inscription informs us that Rudradāman I twice defeated a Sātavāhana ruler, lord of the *dakṣhiṇāpatha*, and recovered most of the territories the Kshaharāta Kshatrapas had lost to the Sātavāhanas.
- But he did not destroy that ruler because of 'not distant' relationship.
- The defeated Sātavāhana ruler is identified variously as Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi, Vāsishṭhīputra Puḷumāvi, Yajña Sātakarṇi, etc.

- In the Junagarh inscription, Rudradāman I also claims to have defeated the Yaudheyas, who were famous among the kshatriyas for their valour.
- They seem to have inhabited southern Punjab and its adjoining areas.

- The Suivihar inscription of Kanishka I shows his hold over the lower Indus region.
- In his Junagarh inscription, Rudradāman I mentions the Sindhu-Sauvīra region as a forming part of his dominions.
- He would have wrested these territories from some successor of Kanishka I.

- Rudradāman I was a great conqueror, an able administrator, a person well-versed in grammar, polity, music, and logic, and an accomplished composer of Sanskrit verse and prose.
- He was handsome to behold, and won the hands of a number of princesses in several *svayamīvaras*.
- He worked tirelessly for the welfare of his subjects.
- The Junagarh inscription records that, when the Sudarśana embankment developed a breach, he got it rebuilt, and the lake reconstructed, by 'expending a great amount of money from his own treasury.
- He did this, without oppressing the people of the town and the province by exacting taxes (*kara*), forced labour (*viṣṭi*), benevolences (*praṇaya*), and the like'.

- Rudradāman I was succeeded on his son, Dāmajadaśrī I.
- After the end of his reign, there seems to have taken place a struggle for succession between his son, Jīvadāman, and younger brother, Rudrasimha I.
- It is suggested that the Sātavāhanas seem to have taken advantage of the internal feud, and occupied some of the southern territories of the Kārdamaka Kshatrapas, towards the end of the second century AD.
- Rudrasena I, the son of Rudrasimha I, apparently served as a *kshatrapa* under Jīvadāman.
- Rudrasena I was succeeded by Saṅghadāman, Dāmasena, Yaśodāman I, Vijayasena, Dāmajadaśrī III, Rudrasena II, Viśvasimha, and Bharṭṛidāman.
- There were also some members of this family, who served only as *kshatrapa*, and could never attain the position of a *mahākshatrapa*, like Jayadāman, Satyadāman, Prīthvīsenā, Damajadaśrī II, Vīradāman, and Viśvasena.
- The last-mentioned ruler seems to have been supplanted by Rudrasimha II, who appears to be closely connected with the family of Chasṭana, but whose father, Jīvadāman, is not given any royal title in the legend of the coins of Rudrasimha II.
- Next came Yaśodāman II, Viśvasena, Rudrasimha II, Yaśodāman II, and Rudrasena III.
- Rudrasena III was succeeded by his sister's son, Simhasena, and the latter, by Rudrasena IV and Satyasimha, respectively.
- Apparently, the last-known Kārdamaka ruler was Rudrasimha III, who was, perhaps, defeated by Chandragupta II, towards the close of the fourth century AD, or the beginning of the fifth century AD.