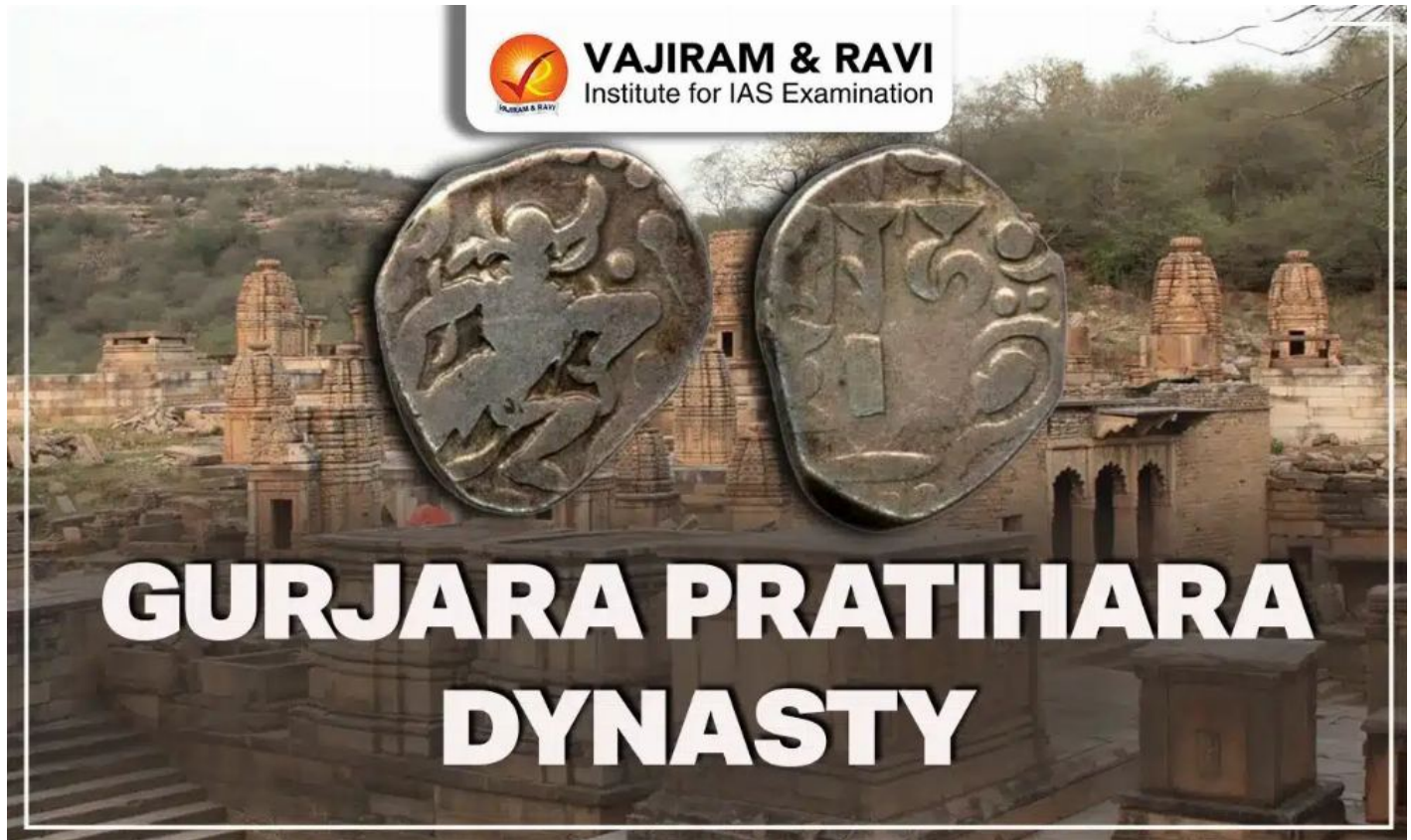


Gurjara Pratihara Dynasty - Founder, Kings, Architecture, Decline

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The early history of Gurjara Pratiharas is **shrouded in mystery**. Some historians believe that they came to India from the **Central Asian region** after the Gupta period and settled in Rajasthan.

- **Traditions:** The **bardic tradition** of Rajasthan claims that the Gurjara Pratiharas were born out of a yajna done at Mount Abu. Others born out of this yajna were Chalukyas, Parmaras and Chahmanas.
 - For this reason, these four dynasties are also known as **agnikulas** (fire clans).
 - It is further said that these four dynasties of Rajputs were created for the protection of the country from external aggressions.
- **Own claim:** The Pratiharas claim that they were called **Pratihara** (literary means doorkeeper) because their ancestor Lakshmana served as a doorkeeper to his brother Rama.
- **Geographical name:** The geographical name of Gujarat is derived from **Gurjara**.

What is the Political History of Gurjara-Pratiharas?

Some of the important rulers of the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty and their significance:

Gurjara-Pratiharas	
Period: 730 - 1036 CE	Capital: Kannauj
King	Significance
Nagabhata I 730-756 AD	• He was the real founder of the dynasty. • He defeated the Muslim forces from the Arab region.
Vatsaraja 775-800 AD	• Expansion of the empire: He followed an aggressive imperial policy which brought him into conflicts with the Pala kings of Bengal. ◦ He defeated Pala king Dharmapala
Nagabhata II (800-833 AD)	• Expansion of the empire: He allied with several other states, particularly with Andhra, Vidharbha and Kalinga. ◦ He defeated Chakrayudha and captured Kanauj. ◦ He defeated Dharmapala and fought Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III.
Bhoja I (836-885 AD)	• Expansion of the empire: He succeeded in restoring the falling fortunes of his dynasty. ◦ He defeated Krishna II and captured the region of Malwa and Gujarat. ◦ The name of Bhoja is famous in many legends. • Faith: He was a devotee of Vishnu. • Title: He adopted the title of Adivaraha, which has been inscribed on some of his coins. ◦ He is also known by other names as 'Mihir' and 'Prabhasa' • An assessment of Bhoja is given by the Arab historian Sulaiman.
Contribution to Architecture	

Teli-ka-Mandir, Gwalior	• Also known as Telika Temple, is a Hindu temple located within the Gwalior Fort in Madhya Pradesh. • Faith: The temple is dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Matrikas • Architecture: It has a rectangular sanctum instead of the typical square one. ◦ It integrates the architectural elements of the Nagara style and the Valabhi Prasada. ◦ The temple is based on Gurjara Pratihara-Gopagiri style North Indian architecture. ◦ The temple is a classic example of a design based on "musical harmonics" in architecture.
Mahendrapala I (885-910 AD)	• Expansion of the empire: He kept the vast empire intact and extended his boundaries. • Title: He was also known as 'Mahendrayudha' and 'Nirbhayanarendra'. • Literature: He was a liberal patron of learned men. ◦ His guru Rajashekhara, occupies a distinguished place in Indian literature.

Contribution of Gurjara-Pratiharas to Art and Architecture (Mahu-Gujjara style)

Mahavira Jain Temple, Osican, Rajasthan	• The Mahavira Jain temple is built in Osian of Jodhpur District, Rajasthan. • The temple is an important pilgrimage of the Oswal Jain community. • This temple is the oldest surviving Jain temple in Western India.
Bateswar Hindu Temples, Madhya Pradesh	• A group of nearly 200 sandstone Hindu temples and their ruins in north Madhya Pradesh. • Style: They were built in the early Gurjara-Pratihara style of North Indian temple architecture. • Faith: They are dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti - representing the three major traditions within Hinduism.
Baroli Temples, Rajasthan	• Located in Baroli village in Rawatbhata City in the Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan. • Style: The complex of eight temples is situated within a walled enclosure. ◦ They are built in the Gurjara Pratihara style of temple architecture dated to the tenth century CE. • Were destroyed by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb during his Rajasthan quest.
Coins	• Mihira Bhoja issued several coins in which the images became famous. • Boar, an incarnation of Vishnu, and the solar symbol are depicted in the coins of Bhoja.

Contribution of Gurjara-Pratiharas to Literature

Rajashekhara	• His works includes Karpuramanjari, Bala-Ramayana, Bala Bharata, Kavyamimansa, Bhuvana Kosha and Haravilasa.
Sulaiman	• He mentioned in his writings that Bhoja maintained numerous forces, and no other Indian king had such fine cavalry. • Additional contents of the book about Bhoja were: ◦ He has got riches, and his camels and horses are numerous. ◦ Exchanges are carried on in his states with silver and gold. ◦ There is no other country in India more safe from robbers.

What was the Tripartite Struggle for Kannauj?

The metropolis of Kannauj had suffered a **power vacuum** following the **death of Harsha** without an heir, which resulted in the disintegration of the Empire of Harsha.

- **Yashovarman:** This space was eventually filled by Yashovarman around a century later, but his position was dependent upon an alliance with Lalitaditya Muktapida.
 - **Tripartite struggle:** When Muktapida undermined **Yashovarman**, a tri-partite struggle for control of the city developed involving the **Pratiharas**, the **Palas** of Bengal in the east and the Rashtrakutas, whose base lay at the south in the Deccan.
 - **Victory of Pratiharas:** Victory of King **Vatsaraja** of the Pratihara dynasty successfully challenged and defeated the Pala ruler Dharmapala and Dantidurga, the Rashtrakuta king, for control of Kannauj.
- **Attempt by Rashtrakutas:** Around 786, the Rashtrakuta ruler **Dhruva** crossed the Narmada River into Malwa and tried to capture Kannauj from there.
 - **Victories over Vatsaraja:** Vatsaraja was defeated by the **Dhruva Dharavarsha** of the Rashtrakuta dynasty around 800 AD.
- **Nagabhata II:** Vatsaraja was succeeded by Nagabhata II, who was initially defeated by the Rashtrakuta ruler Govinda III.
 - **Reclaimed Kannauj:** He later recovered **Malwa** from the Rashtrakutas, conquered **Kannauj** and the Indo-Gangetic Plain as far as Bihar from the Palas, and again checked the Muslims in the west.
 - **Kannauj as the centre of the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom:** Kannauj became the centre of the **Gurjara-Pratihara state**, which covered much of northern India during the peak of their power.

How did the Gurjara-Pratihara Dynasty decline?

- **Feudatories:** Several feudatories of the empire took advantage of the temporary weakness of the Gurjara-Pratiharas to declare their independence.
 - Various feudatories who carved independent states included the **Paramaras** of Malwa, the **Chandelas** of Bundelkhand, the **Kalachuris** of Mahakoshal, the **Tomaras** of Haryana, and the **Chahamanas** of Shakambhari.
- **Attack by Rashtrakutas:** Emperor **Indra III** of the Rashtrakuta dynasty briefly captured Kannauj in 916, and although the Pratiharas regained the city, their position continued to weaken.
- **Attack by Chandelas:** The Gurjara-Pratiharas lost control of Rajasthan to their feudatories, and the Chandelas captured the strategic **fortress of Gwalior** in central India around 950.
- **Ghaznavid invasion:** **Mahmud of Ghazni** captured Kannauj in 1018, and the Pratihara ruler Rajapala fled. The Imperial Pratihara dynasty broke into several small states after the Ghaznavid invasions.
 - These branches fought each other for territory, and one of the branches ruled Mandore till the 14th century.
 - This Pratihara branch had marital ties with **Rao Chunda** of the Rathore clan and gave Mandore in dowry to Chunda.

Fudatory	Capital	Region	Remark
Chahamanas (6-12th CAD)	Shakambari (Sambar Lake town of Rajasthan)	Saptadalaksha region of present Rajasthan	Also Known as Chauhans of Ajmer
Chandelas (9-12th CAD)	Jejaka Bhukti	Bundelkhand region	Belonged to Chandel clan of Rajputs
Guhilas (8-9th CAD)	Nagahrada (Nagda) and Aghata (Ahar)	Mewar region	Also known as Guhilas of Mewar
Tomars(14-16th CAD)	Delhi	Parts of Delhi and Haryana	Belonged to Tomar clan of Rajputs

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