Majapahit Empire
The Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit Empire ruled from the 13th to the 16th centuries. At its height, the empire contained much of modern-day Indonesia, as well as some territory on the Southeast Asian mainland.
Information on the Majapahit Empire is scarce and comes primarily from inscriptions on Javanese buildings and Chinese records. The first Majapahit king, Vijaya, took the throne in 1292, ruling from the capital, also named Majapahit, on the Brantas River on the island of East Java. For the next 200 years, the same family maintained control of the empire.
The Majapahit Empire had a period of rapid expansion in the 14th century, conquering Bali in 1343 and maintaining vassal states in Sumatra, Kalimantan, and the Malay Peninsula. However, during the 15th century, a series of rebellions, civil wars, and intrafamily rivalries weakened the ruling family's power. As a result, Majapahit influence declined sharply, and the region became dominated under the sultanate of Malacca, which divided Indonesia and Malaysia.
The culture of the Majapahit Empire was strongly influenced by a Hindu-Buddhist religious tradition. The Majapahits worshipped the Hindu gods Shiva and Vishnu but were also influenced by Buddhism, so they fused the two belief systems in the name they called their king: Shiva-Buddha. Religious art was fostered under the Majapahits, including elaborate temples and religious statuary. Other art forms of the period included painting and wood carving.
The Majapahit culture reached its height—considered the golden age of the Majapahit—during the reign of King Hayam Wuruk, also known as King Rajasanagana, who ruled from 1350 to 1389. The Desawarnana, a history of the Majapahit Empire up through the late 14th century, was written during Hayam Wuruk's rule.
The Majapahit Empire finally fell to the Muslims in the early 16th century. Although it is clear that the Muslims had control of the empire by 1527, some Majapahit records indicate that Muslim conquerors from the state of Demak in coastal Java had taken control as early as 1478.
Jessica Sedgewick

Srivijaya Empire
A Buddhist maritime kingdom that was situated in the Malay Archipelago, the Srivijaya Empire existed from the seventh through the 13th centuries CE. It controlled the Strait of Malacca, which made it an international trade power.
The Srivijaya Empire, also called the Sumatran kingdom, was located on the island of Sumatra in present-day Indonesia, and its capital was probably in Palembang at the southern end of the island. At its height, the Srivijaya Empire extended its domain to the eastern island of Java and north across the Strait of Malacca to the Malay Peninsula.
The Strait of Malacca connects the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea; at the time, it was the shortest route between China and India. Because water was the fastest way to travel, control of that strait gave the Srivijaya Empire complete power over the international sea trade in Southeast Asia. Although the Srivijaya Empire had strong trade relations with China and India, the empire was also known to the Chinese as being the center of Mahayana Buddhism. Chinese pilgrims, on their way to India, had been taught Buddhism there during the seventh century. The Srivijaya kings founded many Buddhist monasteries, many of which were built in Negapatam. Additionally, the island had early contact with Hindu civilizations in India.
In 1025, the Cola dynasty from southern India sacked the Srivijaya Empire. Due to its focus on the defense of its territory and the intense reconstruction activities that resulted from the Cola invasion, the Srivijaya Empire gradually lost its power over the Strait of Malacca to neighboring Malayu. In 1280, the Singhasari Empire from Java conquered the Srivijaya Empire. Later, from the 14th to 16th centuries, the Majapahit Empire ruled the island of Sumatra. After that time, such European countries as Portugal, England, and the Netherlands arrived to build forts in the region.
Kim Draggoo
Khmer Empire

At its height in the 11th and 12th centuries, Cambodia's Khmer Empire encompassed large areas of the Indochinese Peninsula, including most of modern Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Chenla's Consolidation of Power

The kingdom of Funan was established in the Cambodian area of Southeast Asia in the first century CE and thrived until the sixth century, when it was conquered by the neighboring state of Chenla. Chenla is regarded as the original kingdom of the Khmer people, the inheritors of the land and power of Funan. Ishanavarman, the grandson of the sixth-century Chenla leader Bhavavarman, completed the occupation of Funan to roughly the borders of present-day Cambodia in the early seventh century. He established his capital at Ishanapura and pursued a policy of friendship toward their nearest neighbors, the Champa. Consolidation of Khmer power throughout the region continued through the reign of Jayavarman I, who ruled during 657–681. His death without an heir caused a time of discord and a split in the country; Chinese records speak of a "Land Chenla" and a "Water Chenla," corresponding to inland and coastal principalities. The one continuing factor in that time period was the widespread practice of Hinduism, for the Khmers brought the formerly popular practice of Buddhism to an end.

Outside Pressure and the Khmer Empire

The period of discord brought on outside pressure, notably from the Malay Peninsula and Java. Aggressively pursuing commercial dominance of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, Java seems to have established dominance in the two Chenlas by the late eighth century. The reunification of Chenla came about when Jayavarman II ousted the Javanese and established the Khmer Empire in 802. His rise to power was confirmed by a religious ceremony naming him "universal monarch." During the ceremony, Jayavarman worshipped the Hindu god Shiva and became revered as a god-king. By co-opting the Indian concept of divine kingship, Jayavarman paved the way for the development of the Angkor civilization. During his rule, he built a number of cities and established a capital at whose site Angkor was to be built.

Jayavarman's grandson Indravarman I went conquering during his reign, which lasted from 877 to ca. 890, returning the Korat Plateau to the northwest to Khmer control. He sponsored irrigation projects and built a huge reservoir. Canal and reservoir construction for irrigation, as well as the building of temples and monasteries, remained royal projects for generations. The next several monarchs devoted themselves to public and religious works; not until the reign of Suryavarman I from about 1010 to 1050 did more expansion take place. During his reign, Khmer power extended into the Menam Valley and to the west of the Great Lake, hitherto a wasteland. Also during that time, a resurgence in Buddhism took place. His sons struggled against internal revolts and attacks from the Cham tribe and also joined the Chinese in an unsuccessful campaign against the Dai Viet dynasty in Vietnam.

Expansion

A new dynasty was established in 1080 by a Brahmin who took the throne name of Jayavarman VI. His grandnephew, Suryavarman II, took the Khmer Empire to its heights. He launched invasions of Dai Viet in 1128, 1138, and 1150, conquering as far as the Red River delta. He conquered the Indochinese kingdom of Champa, holding it for four years, and briefly occupied the land of the Mon kingdom. Contemporary Chinese sources state that the Khmer Empire stretched from Burma to the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. Suryavarman II also constructed Southeast Asia's most notable structures at Angkor Wat, which became his mausoleum, overseen by the Hindu god Vishnu. Rebellions broke out after Suryavarman II's death sometime after 1150, but stability returned to the Khmer Empire in 1181 when Jayavarman VII was crowned king. Jayavarman VII proved to be one of the most accomplished Khmer rulers, expanding the empire's territory and embarking on a massive construction program that included rebuilding the city of Angkor. His reign also witnessed the construction of numerous temples and hospitals as well as a greatly enlarged system of roads in the empire.
Fall of the Khmer Empire
After Jayavarman VII's death ca. 1219, the huge demand that his building projects placed on the resources and manpower in his kingdom contributed to the demise of the Khmer Empire. Later in the 13th century, a Mongol force entered the area, and records indicate that the Khmers paid tribute to the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan. By the end of the 13th century, Chinese accounts describe a fading civilization. After a series of conflicts with the rising power of Siam during the Thai Wars, the Cambodian capital of Angkor fell to Thai forces in 1431.
Paul K. Davis

Sukhotai
Sukhotai (Sukhothai) was a kingdom of the Tai (Siamese) located in the upper sector of the Chao Phraya plain in present-day Thailand. It was founded in the first half of the 13th century CE as a small, local kingdom before it became the political center of the Tai in the last two decades of that century. Sukhotai eventually lost its power and was absorbed by the kingdom of Ayutthaya in the 15th century. It is known in Tai history as the kingdom that originated Tai art and culture.

Decline of Khmer and Founding of Sukhotai
Before the kingdom of Sukhotai was founded, the Tai had already settled themselves in the northern region and the Chao Phraya plains. However, they were not able to form their own independent kingdoms, and most Tai principalities in the Chao Phraya delta were semivassal or vassal states of the powerful Angkorian empire. Sukhotai was one of the Khmer Angkorian outposts. However, after the death of King Jayavarman VII of Angkor in the 1220s, the political and military power of the Khmer kingdom was in drastic decline. This created an opportunity for local Tai leaders in the Chao Phraya delta to form their own independent states.

Sukhotai was also founded during this period. In the 1240s, Pha Muang, who ruled the principality of Rat as an Angkorian fringe area, joined forces with his ally Bang Klanghao of Bang Yang, near Sukhotai, to attack the Khmer outpost at Sukhotai and defeat the Khmer. However, Pha Muang did not want to become the ruler of the newly independent kingdom of Sukhotai and thus passed on his royal title of Sri Indraditya and the power to rule Sukhotai to Bang Klanghao.

The Reign of Rama Khamhaeng
During the reigns of Sri Indraditya and his son Ban Muang from the 1240s to 1270s, Sukhotai did not have expansive territories. However, during the reign of Rama Khamhaeng (1279–1298), the younger son of Sri Indraditya, Sukhotai increased its political power and rose to be the political and cultural center of the Tai in the Chao Phraya delta. Its success was closely associated with the charisma and diplomacy of Rama Khamhaeng. He demonstrated his military prowess from the age of 19, when he successfully helped his father fight against the troops of Sot (in modern Tak province) who attacked Sukhotai. When he eventually ruled Sukhotai, Rama Khamhaeng tried to extend his rule over a vast territory. In 1287 he concluded a triple alliance with Mangrai of Lanna and Pha Muang of Phayao, two equally powerful neighboring kingdoms. This mutual alliance kept the northern flank of Sukhotai safe from invasions, while allowing Mangrai to concentrate on defending his kingdom from the Mongols. Via his Buddhist connections, Rama Khamhaeng established peaceful relationships with Nakhon Sithammarat, a thriving port city in the south. This gave Sukhotai access to maritime trade routes. The Mon kingdom was also a tributary state of Sukhotai via a marriage link of the Mon king with Rama Khamhaeng's daughter. Rama Khamhaeng brought the immediately surrounding areas of Sukhotai in the Chao Phraya delta under his rule by military power. It is likely that Sukhotai controlled the more far-flung regions only nominally. Sukhotai's relations with the fringe areas hinged on the personal relations between Rama Khamhaeng and his vassal rulers. As a result, when Rama Khamhaeng died in 1298, Sukhotai's power over the fringe areas disappeared.

Buddhism
Sukhothai was a Buddhist state. It accepted Singhalese Buddhism from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) via Nakhon Sithammarat. At the early stage, Hinduism probably played a vital role in the kingdom. Temples built in the earlier period clearly demonstrate Hindu influences. However, from the reign of Rama Khamhaeng, Buddhism became the state religion under royal patronage. The tradition of having important temples built adjacent to palaces originated from the reign of Rama Khamhaeng. Moreover, the king shared his throne with revered monks who sat on the throne on Buddhist holy days to preach Dharma (Buddhist precepts) to Sukhothai's inhabitants. Under Rama Khamhaeng, Sukhothai experienced cultural change with the development of the Tai script.

Trade and Paternalism under Rama Khamhaeng

Sukhothai was not a fertile state in comparison with other kingdoms or principalities in the northern plain or the Chao Phraya delta. It had a limited amount of low land, while its larger part was hilly or mountainous. Thus rice, its main staple, was produced only in sufficient quantities for local consumption. This explains why Rama Khamhaeng adopted a free trade policy: to attract more people to settle in Sukhothai. He portrayed his kingdom as a land of freedom in which its inhabitants enjoyed the right to undertake economic activities freely. Whoever wanted to trade did so without being required to pay taxes. Interstate commerce also became an important economy of Sukhothai.

In his stone inscription of 1292, Rama Khamhaeng describes himself as a king who ruled his subjects as a father rules his children. A bell was hung at the palace gate; people who wished to seek an audience with the king and obtain his assistance would ring this bell, and the king would readily come to meet them, listen to their complaints, and try to solve their problems. The inscription also suggests how close the ruler and the ruled of Sukhothai were, in contrast to the very strict and hierarchical nature of Khmer rule. This paternalistic rule was an attempt to attract more people to Sukhothai to provide much-needed manpower for the newly established state. It also portrays how idyllic Sukhothai was in comparison with the Angkorian empire, whose subjects had to pay onerous taxes.

The Decline of Sukhothai

After the death of Rama Khamhaeng in 1298, his successors were not capable of maintaining the political power of the extensive kingdom. The king of Mon no longer accepted the sovereignty of Sukhothai. Suphanburi and Phetburi in the Chao Phraya delta also broke away from Sukhothai rule. Sukhothai became a small kingdom that had the power to rule only its immediate vicinity. However, Sukhothai was still a strong Buddhist state. During the reign of Lo Tai (1298–1346) and especially the reign of Lu Tai (1346–1374), the kings extended their patronage and strong support of Buddhism. New city and forest temples were built as centers of Buddhist learning. Tai art and culture flourished. The unique architectural form of Buddhist buildings known as the lotus bud spire (Phum Khao Bin) on top of a Chedi (a cone-shaped building in which Buddha's relics are believed to be kept) originated in Sukhothai.

When the kingdom of Ayutthaya was founded in 1351 in the lower Chao Phraya delta, Ayutthaya kings considered Sukhothai their archrival. Starting from the reign of Boromracha I (1370–1388), the Ayutthaya launched repeated military campaigns against Sukhothai. In 1378, King Mahathammaracha II of Sukhothai was forced to accept Ayutthaya's sovereignty and to swear allegiance to it. In 1396, Ayutthaya imposed its legal system upon Sukhothai and in 1412 appointed one of its officials to be the resident of Sukhothai; this reduced its status to that of a vassal state. Eventually, it was completely absorbed into Ayutthaya and its status reduced to that of a provincial town. The Sukhothai region became a buffer zone that Ayutthaya used as a base from which to launch military campaigns against the kingdom of Lanna in the north.

For almost 200 years, Sukhothai was the major political and cultural center of the Tai in the northern sector of Chao Phraya delta. Its strong belief in Buddhism and its artistic and cultural creativity laid solid foundations for the Tai kingdoms that followed. Sud Chonchirdsin
Rajputs

The Rajputs were warriors of mixed ethnic and historical background. They rose to prominence during the 9th to 11th centuries and ruled many northern and central Indian kingdoms and princely states in a vast region known as Rajputana (Land of the Rajputs) until the 19th century. The Rajputs considered death on the battlefield the highest possible achievement. Memorial stones for fallen warriors and their horses contributed to the deification of historical heroes, and poets gave further voice to this warrior ethos. The warrior enhanced his reputation and that of his clan by gaining epic fame or even divine status after his self-sacrifice in battle.

The Rajputs generally combined agricultural settled life and cattle herding with military service. Little consensus exists on early Rajput history, as available historical data consist mainly of semi-historical, often legendary collections of facts and figures, names, and different versions of stories. What is evident, however, is that the earliest Rajput kingdoms were founded by small war bands, groups of armed men in search of plunder and land who managed to occupy a modest territory. They defended and protected their newly won territory and especially the cattle won in battle or robbed during the many cattle raids.

During the 12th to 14th centuries, these territories grew larger and gradually developed into kingdoms. Typically the founders of Rajput realms were ascribed a glorious past, including a heroic death. Whereas the early Rajput warriors came from different social and ethnic backgrounds, later Rajput rulers claimed a "pure-blooded" aristocratic status. Rajput territories were repeatedly invaded by Afghans, Mongols, and Turks beginning in the early 11th century. For political reasons, several Rajput rulers agreed upon military and marriage bonds with the Islamic invaders but only a few converted to Islam, contrary to what most Mughal and colonial sources maintain. Except for rulers and high-ranking military officials, the majority of Rajput came into contact with Mughals on intermittently.

Of these invasions, the fall of Chittor in 1303 is especially remembered in legends and stories. Ala-ud-din Khilji, sultan of Delhi, supposedly attacked the fort after having heard of the beauty of its queen. When defeat was unavoidable, the men of the city sallied toward the besieging army in saffron-colored mourning garments for one final heroic fight to certain death, while the queen led the women of the citadel, dressed in wedding dresses, into death by fire. This self-immolation, known as Jauhar, and suicidal fighting, known as Saka, were a regular practice among Rajput when defeated, whether by Mughals or by rival Rajputs.

Three major lineages (vamshas) are recognized in official Rajput myths and 36 major clans (kulas). There is evidence that in their early period of development Rajputs married outside their clans. As they developed a self-consciousness as a people apart from others, however, Rajputs were expected to marry only within their own clan and lineage. Within the Hindu social system, Rajputs traditionally reckoned themselves to be of the Kshatriya caste, the social order of warriors and rulers. However, this mythical link is thought to have gradually lost its meaning from the 10th century onward, when part of the emerging Rajput aristocracy no longer felt the need to legitimate its ambitions by claiming Kshatriya status but instead defined their role solely in terms of being Rajputs.

Alexandra van der Geer

Ceylon – Sinhalese Dynasties

The ancient and medieval history of Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) was mired in power struggles between two major ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, as well as incursions by its neighbor to the north, India. Named Ceylon by European geographers, the island was known as Taprobane by the ancient Greeks, while Arabia referred to the region as Serendib.

Evidence suggests the earliest civilization in Ceylon was the Balangoda culture, which flourished on the island from approximately 10,000 to 600 BCE, when settlers from India arrived and colonized the area. According to Ceylonese tradition recorded in the Mahavamsa, the area was colonized by an Indian prince named Vijaya, the son of a king from the Indian region of Sinhapura; however, nothing
in Ceylon’s historical record supports that legend. Evidence does exist that there were Indian colonists, known as the Sinhalese, and that most came from northern and northeastern India. It was also probable that colonists came from Bengal and Orissa to the east.

Early Sinhalese settlements were concentrated in the dry northern areas of Ceylon, while the damp south was largely uninhabited or inhabited only by scattered bands of Vedda, the aboriginal descendants of the Balangoda people. The Sinhalese became the most powerful group in Ceylon during the late period of the first millennium BCE. However, invasions by the Tamils, settlers from the southern tip of India, were common. The Tamils assumed power for brief periods in 177 and again in 145 BCE. The Sinhalese finally unified Ceylon in the late second century BCE under King Dutthagamani.

Buddhism came to Ceylon in approximately 250 BCE, the result of a missionary effort that had its first convert in King Devarampiya Tissa. By the first century CE, it had become the established religion of the island, and several Buddhist shrines had been built. Chief among those was a tree in the capital of Anuradhapura, which was supposedly grown from a cutting of the Bodhi Tree. Many Ceylonese kings used Buddhism to maintain control over their subjects, and they often claimed to be related to Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha.

In the middle of the first millennium CE, Sinhalese Ceylon was full of political conflict and changing dynasties. Ten kings were crowned between 508 and 518 and seven between 614 and 650. However, that era was also one of great agricultural advancement, as Sinhalese kings funded and constructed irrigation canals to improve crop production.

During the seventh century, the Sinhalese began to form alliances with the kingdoms of southern India and incorporated such social conventions as the caste system. However, caste was a weaker influence on social standing than in India. Ceylonese civilization was also influenced by trade with the Roman Empire, China, and, beginning in the 10th century, with Arab traders. Some Arabs settled in the region, which formed the basis for the nation’s Muslim population and the growth of Islam there. In 993, the northern portion of Ceylon was captured by the Cola dynasty, invaders from southern India. The Cola made Ceylon a province of their empire and neglected Buddhist shrines in favor of Hindu worship. The Cola were driven from Ceylon in 1070, and the Sinhalese regained power.

The Sinhalese Empire had begun to decline by the 13th century, and frequent dynastic changes weakened it further. By the mid-1200s, the northern part of Ceylon was firmly under Tamil control; it would remain so, although with shifting borders, until the Portuguese began colonization during the 16th century. Malays and Chinese also invaded the island. The political instability led to cultural and economic decline as well, as the temples and irrigation systems built in the first millennium fell into disrepair.

Under Tamil rule, northern Ceylon became a center for trade. The Tamils also encouraged Hinduism, which began to replace Buddhism in those areas. The Tamil Empire was firmly established by the 14th century, although Sinhalese forces had a brief resurgence in the north during the 15th century, shortly before Portuguese colonists began their conquest of Ceylon in 1505.

Jessica Sedgewick
Located in the present-day state of Karnataka in India, Vijayanagar (also called Hampi) was the capital city of the Vijayanagar Empire. Famed for its magnificent architecture and sculpture, Vijayanagar ("City of Victory" in Sanskrit) flourished during much of the 14th through 16th centuries until Muslim forces plundered it in 1565. The British antiquarian Colin Mackenzie described the site and made the first map of Vijayanagar in 1799. The Archaeological Survey of India later gained control of the site and began investigation of its ruins, but most excavation work at Vijayanagar has occurred since 1970. Though Vijayanagar's monuments (under the name Hampi) were added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) World Heritage list in 1986, increasing development and tourism pose significant threats to the ruins.

Vijayanagar is sited beside the Tungabhadra River on the Deccan Plateau in southern India; the surrounding hills bear rocky outcrops in fantastic shapes that contribute to the site's dramatic appearance. Early traces of settlement in the area include burials and rock paintings. It is likely that the cult of two deities, the Hindu goddess Pampa (who was associated with the Tungabhadra River) and her consort, Virupaksha (a form of the god Shiva), has been observed at or near Vijayanagar's site since at least the eighth or ninth centuries CE.

The city of Vijayanagar was founded in 1336 by five brothers; two of them, Harihara and Bukka, were the first rulers of Vijayanagar's Sangama dynasty. According to tradition, the brothers had converted to Islam from Hinduism to gain political influence under India's Muslim sultanates, but when they obtained territory for their own kingdom, they reverted to Hinduism. The Vijayanagar Empire developed into a great Hindu kingdom at a time when most of the region had been conquered by Muslims, and the empire's capital at Vijayanagar became a haven of Hindu culture and religion. The Sangama rulers were overthrown by Narasimha, the founder of the Saluva dynasty, about 1485. The succeeding Tuluva dynasty produced Vijayanagar's greatest king, Krsna (Krishna) Deva Raya, who ruled from 1509 to 1529. Among Krsna Deva's accomplishments were military victories against the sultan of Bijapur, the capture of several towns, and the addition of territory called the Raichur doab to the Vijayanagar Empire.

At its height, Vijayanagar covered about 11 square miles. It was also a very populous center: by around 1400, Vijayanagar was one of the largest cities in the world with about 350,000 inhabitants. The capital became a center of opulence, architectural splendor, and artistic and literary achievement that amazed European and Persian visitors, including the 15th-century Venetian merchant Niccolo dei Conti, the 15th-century envoy Abdul Razzaq, and the 16th-century Portuguese travelers Fern?Nuniz and Domingo Paes. Those visitors wrote detailed accounts of the city's marvels, including descriptions of the nine-day Mahanavami festival, the king's enormous retinue, and the precious gems and other luxury items offered in the city's marketplaces. Paes, who was particularly impressed by the rich ivory surfaces of a palace room, likened Vijayanagar's magnificence to that of the city of Rome. Razzaq recorded that seven walls (more than 30 feet high at some places) enclosed Vijayanagar, with the outer three surrounding farmland and the inner four defending the urban sections. The city's private residences have not survived because they were built largely of such materials as wood and thatch; most of the structures that remain are granite temple or palace complexes in the architectural tradition of southern India. The domes and arches of some structures
(such as the cusped arches of the small Lotus Palace) also reveal the influence of Islamic architectural forms on Vijayanagar’s builders. Among the major religious compounds were the Temple of Acyutaraya, the Temple of Vitthalasvami, the Temple of Hazara Rama (likely reserved for the king’s religious activities), and the Temple of Virupaksha, which is still the site of pilgrimage and religious observance. The Temple of Virupaksha was the starting point of a wide avenue used for processions during religious festivals. Most of Vijayanagar’s temples were walled sanctuary complexes with entrance gateways, or gopuras, topped with elaborately sculpted towers. Columns throughout some of the temple complexes, notably the Temple of Acyutaraya, were carved with ornate, whimsical figures of hybrid creatures (vyala or yali) with human riders on their backs; other sculptures depict various Hindu gods, including Ganesha, Lakshmi, and Vishnu, as well as scenes from the Hindu epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. One of the city’s most famous temples, the Temple of Vitthalasvami, was built during the reign of the king Krsna Deva Raya, a great patron of temple construction. That temple, dedicated to a form of the god Vishnu, is remarkable for columns that make musical notes when they are struck as well as for a large sculpted replica of the type of carts used in Vijayanagar’s processions; according to some sources, the cart’s stone wheels were made with such skill that they are able to move. One of Vijayanagar’s more enigmatic structures, known as the Elephant Stables, is a building with several domes and enormous rooms whose function remains unknown.

The Vijayanagar Empire's end came in 1565. At the Battle of Talikota (or Rakasa-Tangadi), the Muslim sultans of the Deccan states of Ahmadnagar, Bidar, Bijapur, and Golconda defeated Vijayanagar’s forces commanded by Rama Raya; hundreds of thousands of soldiers as well as companies of battle elephants took part in that battle. It is thought that the Muslim armies' use of firearms may have decided the battle in their favor. The city of Vijayanagar was afterward destroyed over a period of several months, but the Vijayanagar Empire persisted until about 1614 with its capital at Penukonda.

Jennifer Hutchinson