

The Ghost King of Vengi

How a 27-Year 'Interregnum'
Concealed a Forgotten Empire

In the official histories of the Eastern Chalukyas,
the period from 973 to 1000 A.D. is described
with a single, haunting phrase:



Vengi anayika abhavat



‘Vengi became without a lord.’

973–1000 A.D.



The End of an Era, The Beginning of a Void

- For the first time in its history, the Eastern Chalukyan dynasty had no king ruling Vengi.
- Following a brief three-year reign, King Danarnava was defeated. His sons were driven into exile, effectively ending the Chalukyan empire for a time.
- The result was a 27-year power vacuum, officially recorded as an “interregnum.”



A King from the Shadows Fills the Void

- **Origin:** A member of an “alien” Telugu Chola family from beyond the traditional frontiers of the Vengi kingdom.
- **Ambition:** In the only surviving record from his reign, Bhima proudly traces his lineage to and compares himself with Gunaga Vijayaditya, a legendary and powerful historical king.
- **Action:** He established himself firmly on the Vengi throne, initiating a 27-year reign that would be systematically erased from history.

973–1000 A.D.
Bhima's Reign

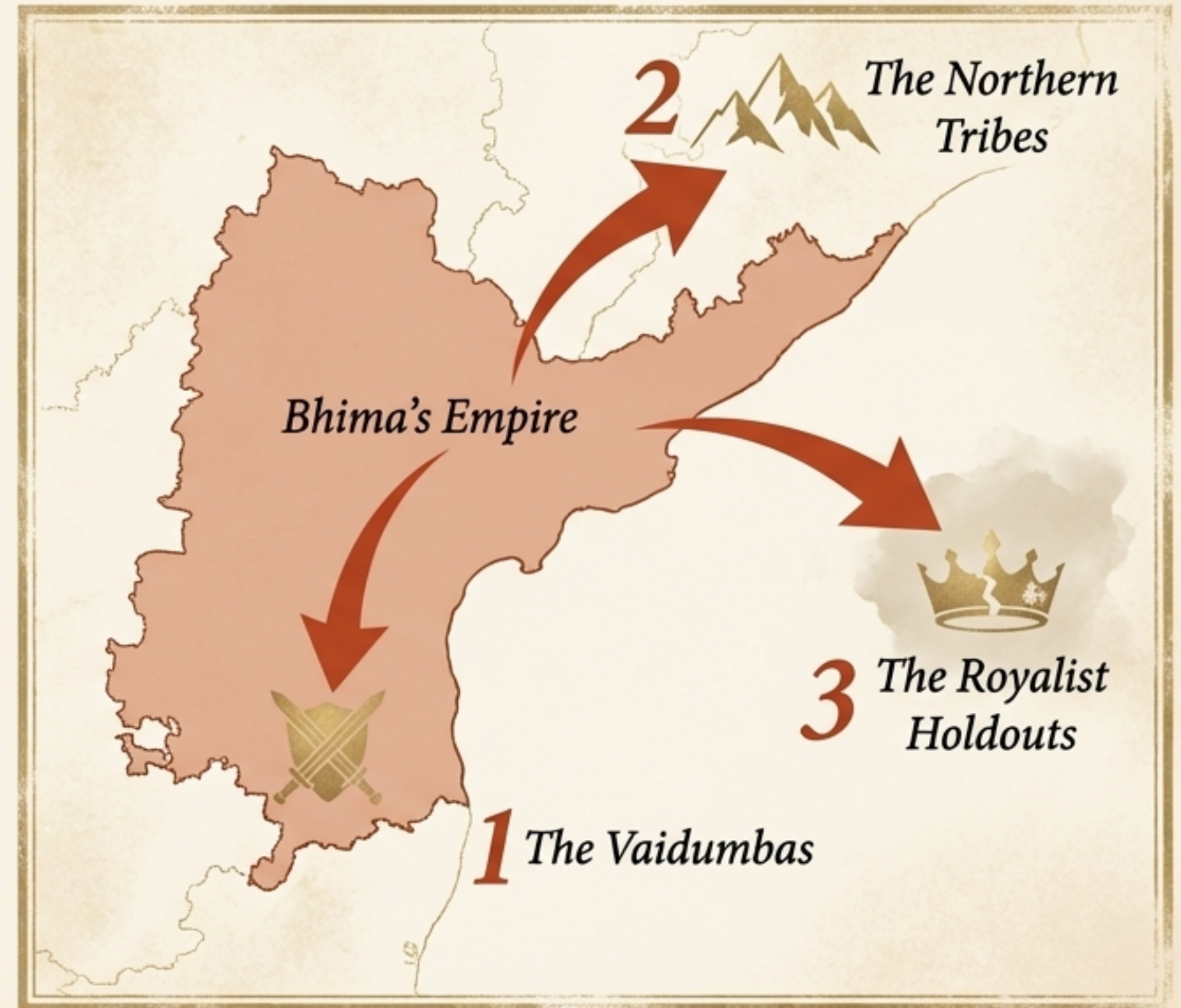


Forging an Empire Through Iron and Will

Bhima's Internal Conquests

Jata Choda Bhima faced immediate rebellion from the former vassals of King Danarnava. He systematically crushed all opposition:

1. **The Vaidumbas:** Defeated the Vaidumba king Ganda Trinetra, a hereditary enemy of the Telugu Cholas, forcing them to accept his supremacy.
2. **The Northern Tribes:** Quelled rebellions from samantas and wild tribes in the Vizag and Srikakulam agency tracts, installing his own nobles to govern.
3. **The Royalist Holdouts:** A branch of the exiled Chalukyan royal family had settled in a remote district and resisted his authority. Bhima "put them down with an iron hand."

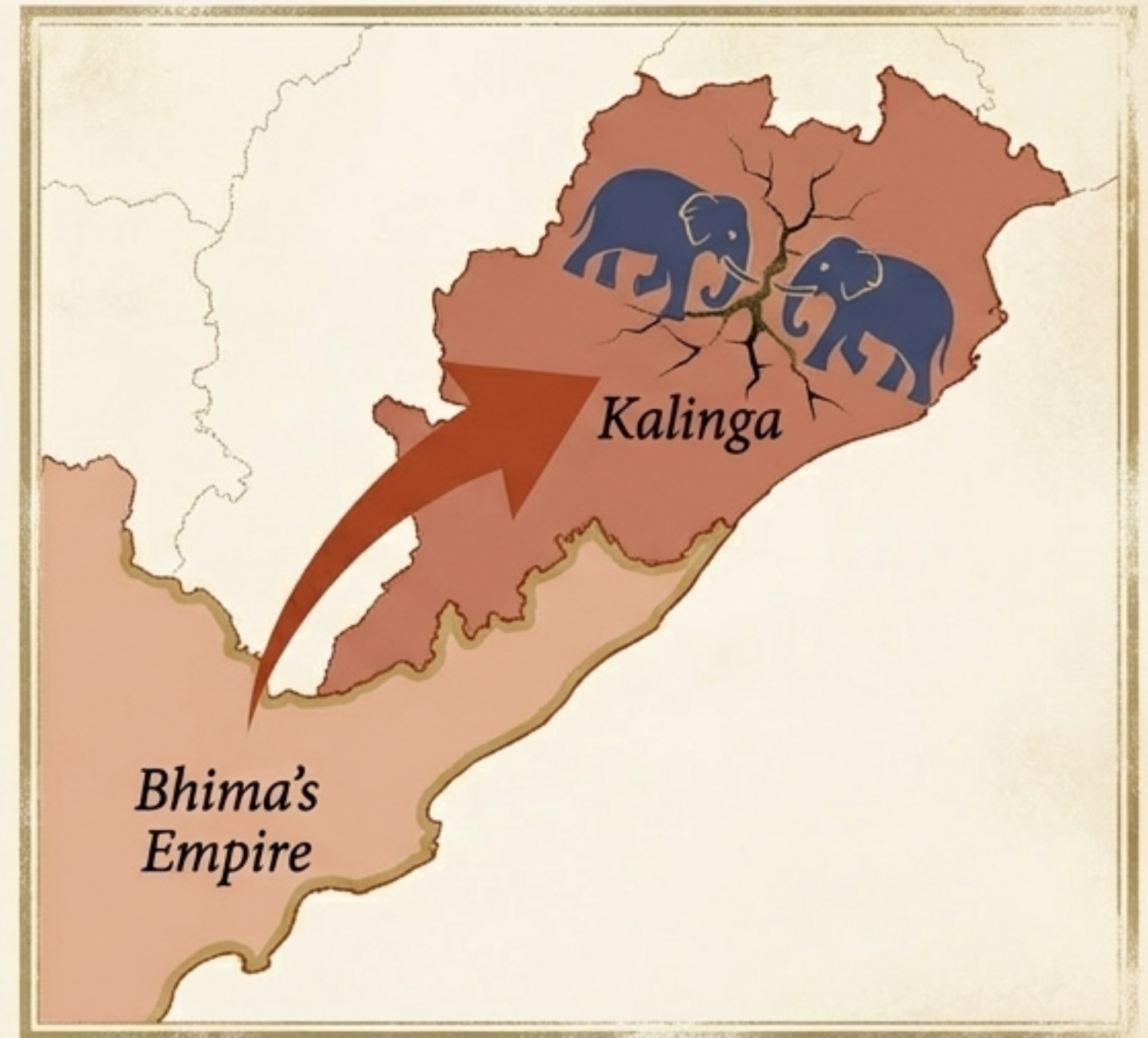


The Conquest of Kalinga

The Eastern Ganga War

- Bhima's campaigns brought him into direct conflict with Kamarnava, the Eastern Ganga king of Kalinga, who was related to the deposed Danarnava.
- Though the Eastern Gangas held out for a time, they ultimately succumbed to Bhima's forces.
- In the decisive battle, both King Kamarnava and his younger brother Vinayaditya were slain.

Outcome: With all enemies destroyed, Jata Choda Bhima became the undisputed master of the kingdoms of Vengi and Kalinga. His authority was not seriously questioned for the remainder of the century.



980–999 AD.

An Empire from the Mountains to the Sea

Mahendragiri

Kalinga

Vengi

Bay of Bengal

Frontiers of
Karnataka

Kanchipuram

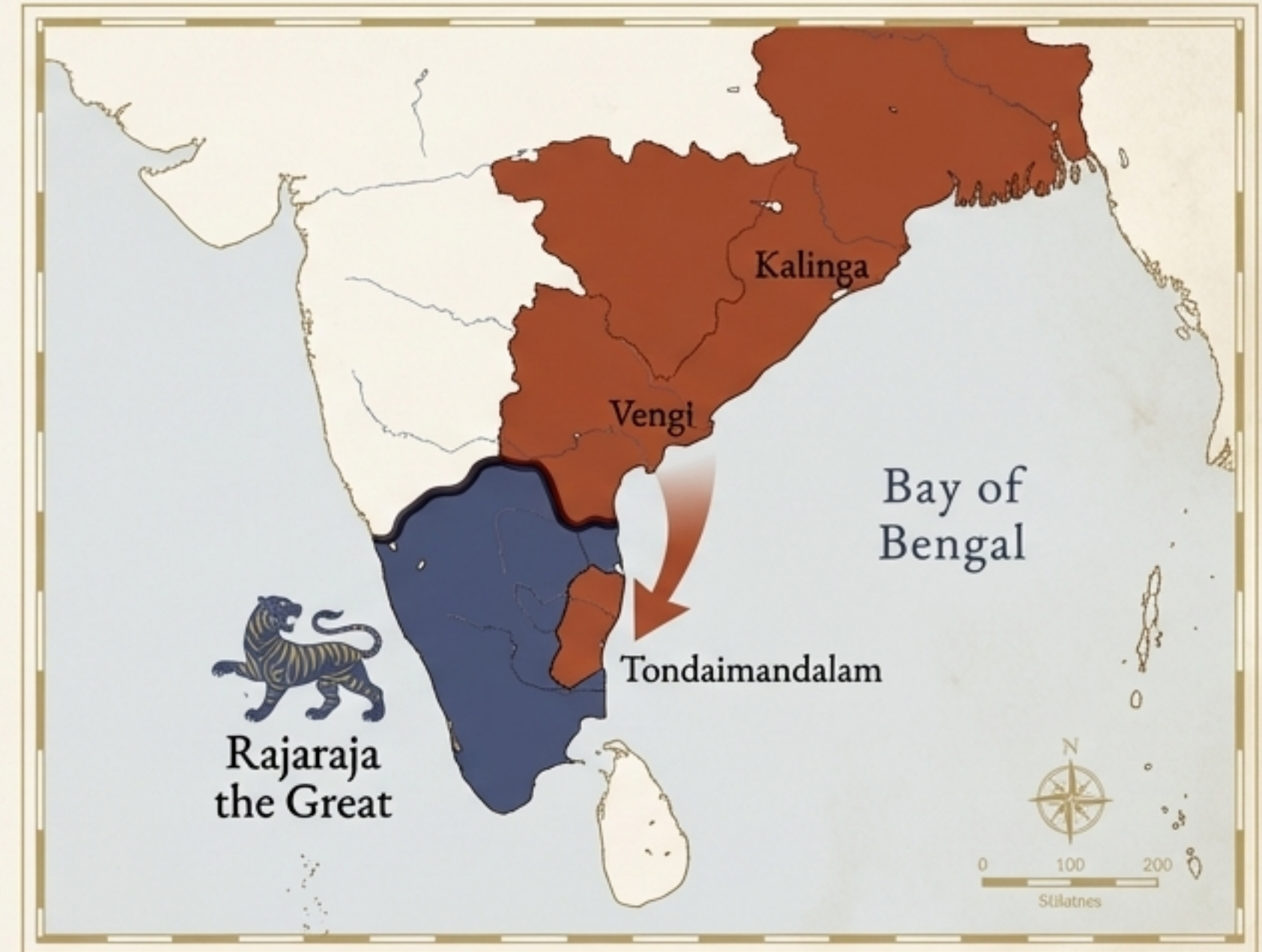
Like his ancestor Gunaga Vijayaditya, Bhima held sway over an extensive territory. At the height of his glory, his authority stretched over the entire coastal region:

- ➔ From the **Mahendragiri** mountains in the north...
- ➔ To the city of **Kanchipuram** in the south.
- ➔ From the **Bay of Bengal** to the frontiers of **Karnataka**.

A Southern Superpower Enters the Fray

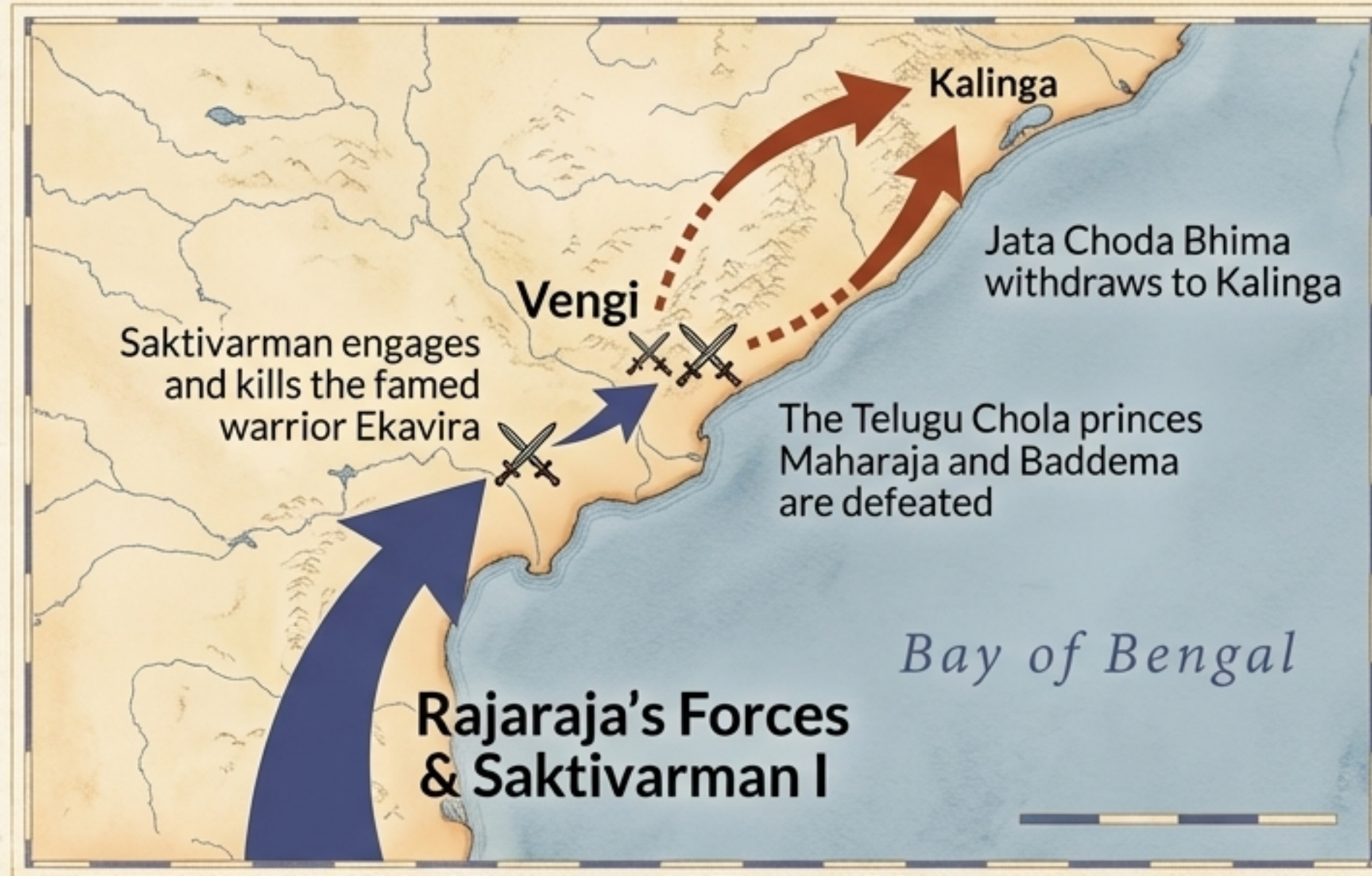
While Bhima consolidated his empire, a new power was rising in the south: the Chola dynasty under Emperor Rajaraja the Great.

- ❖ The exiled Chalukyan princes, sons of Danarnava, had taken refuge in the Chola court.
- ❖ An inevitable clash was brewing, as Bhima's expansionist policy pushed south towards the Chola sphere of influence.
- ❖ In 1001 A.D., Bhima invaded Tondaimandalam, a Chola territory.



1001 AD

The First Chola Invasion



Faced with the combined Chola and Chalukyan forces, Jata Choda Bhima was hemmed in and forced to withdraw to the jungles of Kalinga.

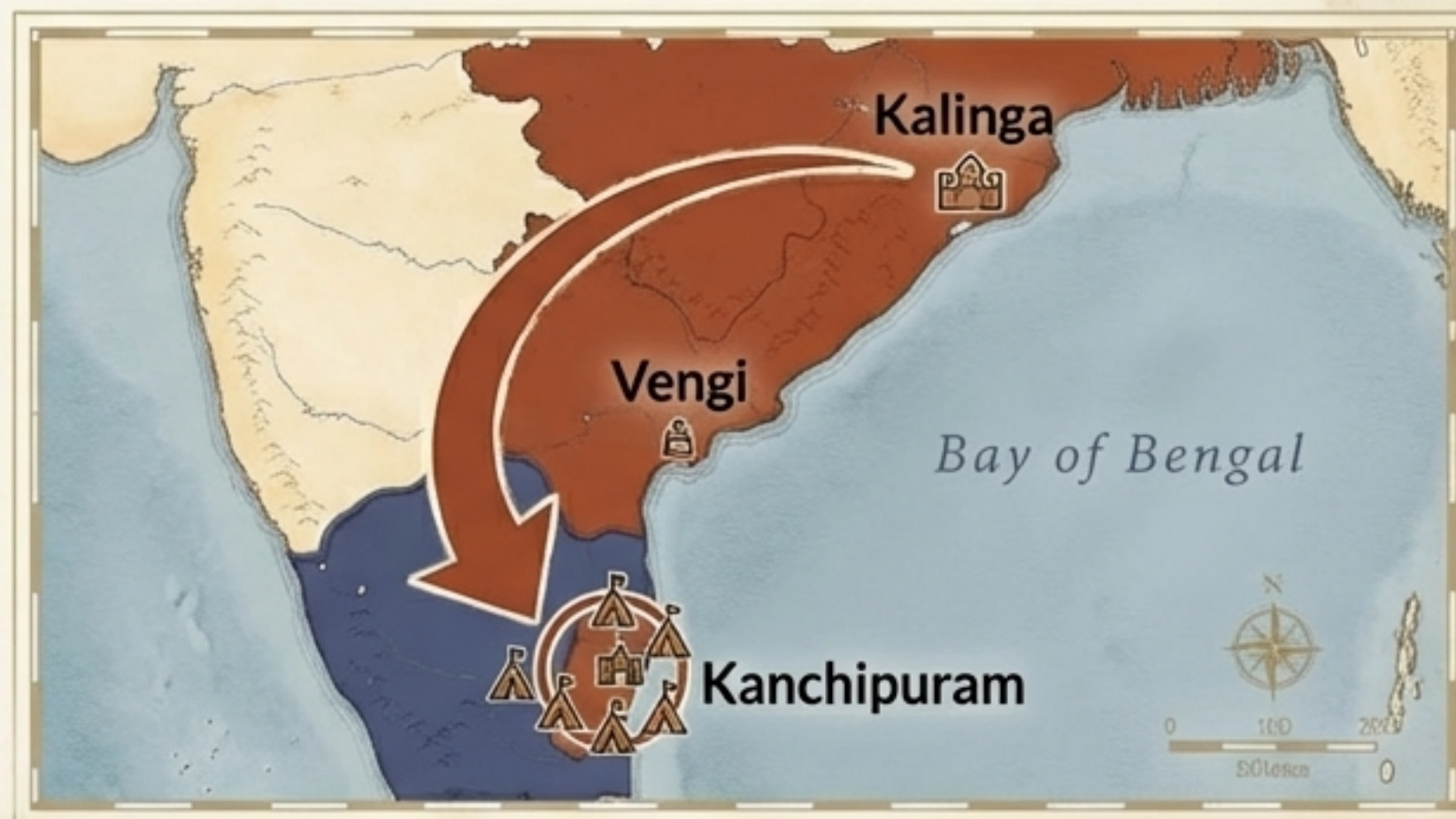
The Unthinkable Counter-Attack

Bhima's Gambit

- ❖ Rather than capitulate, Bhima gathered a fresh army in Kalinga.
- ❖ In a brilliant and daring campaign, he marched triumphantly back through Vengi.
- ❖ He did not stop there. He marched right up to Kanchipuram, the second city of the Chola kingdom.

The Siege of Kanchipuram

From 1001 to 1002 A.D., Jata Choda Bhima besieged one of the most important cities in his enemy's empire, a direct challenge to Rajaraja's power.



The Emperor Strikes Back

The Final Campaign (1002 A.D.)

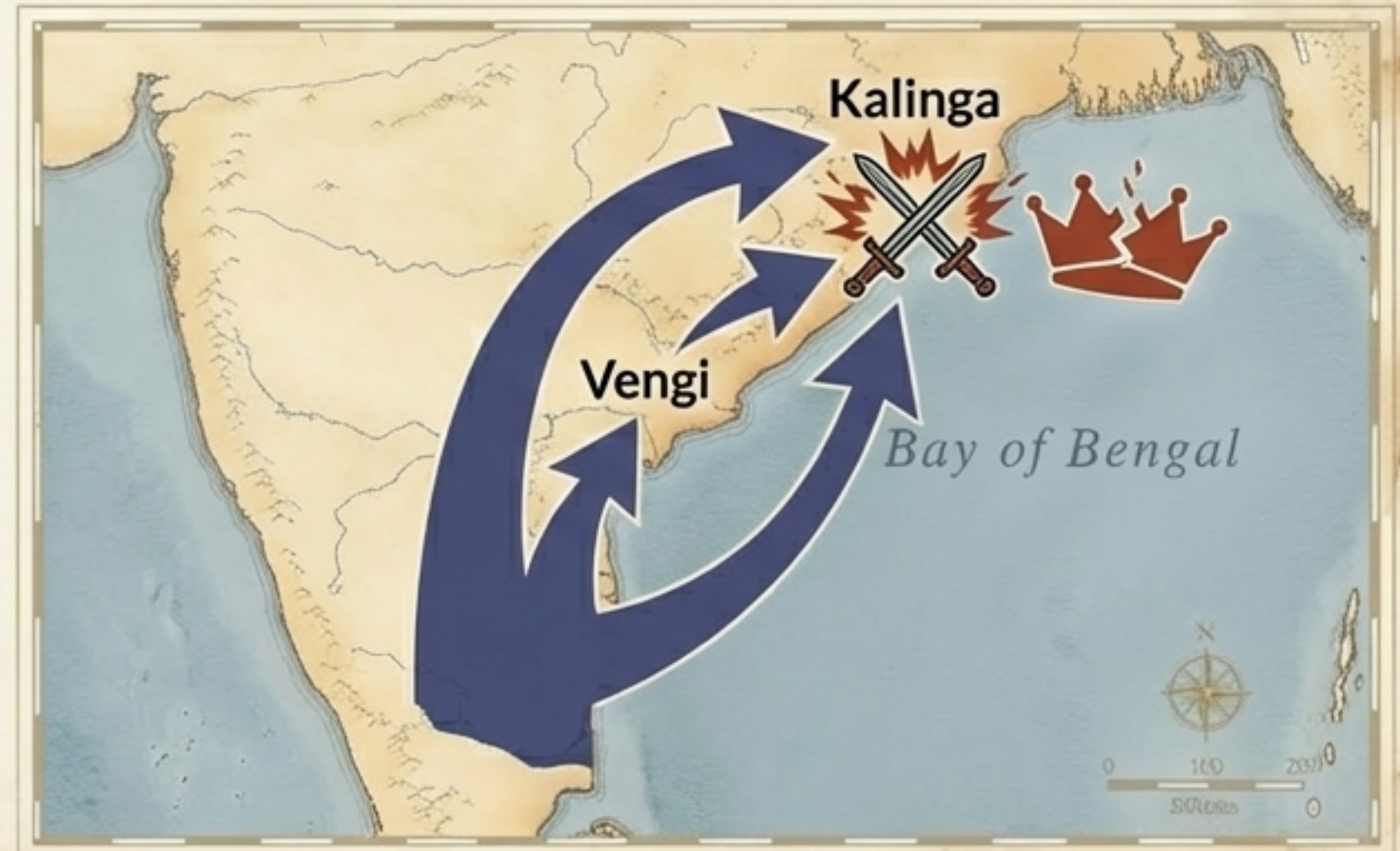
- ❖ Alarmed by the siege of Kanchipuram, Rajaraja recalled his forces for a final, decisive invasion.
- ❖ A massive Chola army invaded the coastal Telugu country again.
- ❖ This time, they advanced far north, all the way into Kalinga, hunting for Bhima himself.

The Aftermath

With Bhima dead, the Cholas established Saktivarman I firmly on the Vengi throne, restoring the Chalukyan line after 27 years.

The Fall of a King

Having pushed his forces to their limit, Jata Choda Bhima was slain in battle by Rajaraja's army.



History is Written by the Victors

The Great Erasure

- ❖ The restored Eastern Chalukyan dynasty, now a subordinate ally of the powerful Cholas, began to author its official history.
- ❖ To legitimize their return and erase the memory of their defeat, they omitted the.
- ❖ To legitimize their return and erase the memory of their defeat, they omitted the 27-year reign of Jata Choda Bhima entirely.
- ❖ His powerful, extensive empire was officially designated an “**interregnum**”—a period when Vengi was ‘without a lord.’

Official Chalukyan Record

Jata Choda Bhima's 27-Year
Reign (973-1000 AD)

Interregnum –
Vengi anayika abhavat

A Faint Echo in the Archives

The Last Trace

- The campaign to erase Bhima from the official narrative was almost completely successful.
- Across the entire corpus of Eastern Chalukyan dynasty grants and inscriptions, only a single record ever specifically refers to his existence.
- The Mallavaram plates of Parantaka are the sole official document that mentions the advent of “Andhra Bhima,” or Jata Choda Bhima, in the affairs of Vengi.



His 27-year empire, forged in conquest and lost in a clash of titans, survives almost entirely through the records of his enemies.