

CHAPTER TWO - KINGDOMS OF THE SOUTH (A.D. 800-1200)

In the medieval period, the Vindhya's and Deccan acted as a bridge between north and south.

- Firstly, the kingdoms of the northern Deccan tried to spread their control as far as the Ganga valley.
- Secondly, the religious movements of the south soon became popular in the north as well.
- Thirdly, many brahmins from the north were invited to settle in the Deccan and the south and were granted lands.

KINGDOMS OF THE PENINSULA

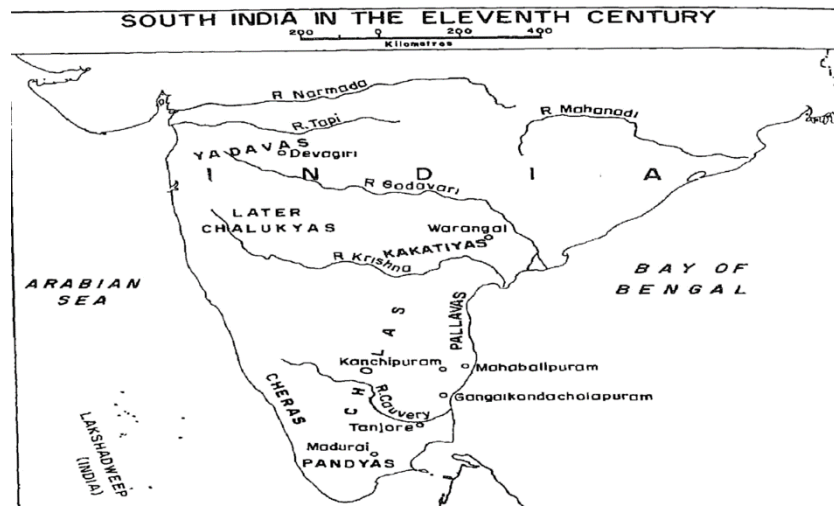
- **Rashtrakutas, Pratiharas and the Palas** were three powerful kingdoms for the control of Kannauj and the area around it.
- The **Chola** kings began as the rulers of Tamilnadu, the region around modern Tanjore. They gradually built their power by defeating the **Pallava** kings and other local rulers. By the eleventh century A.D., theirs was the most important kingdom in the south.
- The kingdom of the **Pandys** was to the south of the Cholas, the region around modern Madurai.

On the west coast, was the kingdom of the **Cheras** (modern Kerala).

By the twelfth century, some of these kingdoms had declined and new kingdoms had arisen.

- The **Rashtrakutas** had been succeeded by a dynasty related to the **Chalukyas** of the seventh century, and therefore, were called by historians, the later Chalukyas. They were in turn overthrown by the **Yadavas** who ruled from Devagiri (modern Daulatabad in Maharashtra). The Kakatiyas ruled in Warangal, in modern Andhra Pradesh.
- The **Hoysalas** ruled in Warangal, in modern Andhra Pradesh. The Hoysalas ruled at Dvarasamudra, near the city of Mysore.
- The Cholas had to fight all these kingdoms to maintain their power which they did until the thirteenth century.





CHOLA KINGDOM

- **Parantaka I (907-955)**. He conquered the land of the Pandyas and took the title of Maduraikonda, the conqueror. However, Parantaka was also defeated by one of the **Rashtrakuta kings, Krishna I**. He encouraged agriculture to have a strong kingdom.
- Parantaka Chola set the tone for the expansion of the territory and broadened the base of its governance. **Rajaraja I (985–1014)**, the builder of the most beautiful Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur, and his son **Rajendra I (1014–1044)**, whose naval operation extended as far as Sri Vijaya, consolidated the advances made by their predecessors and went on to establish Chola hegemony in peninsular India.
- **Rajaraja I (985–1014):**
 - ✓ He attacked the kingdom of the Pandyas and of the Cheras as well as parts of Mysore. He also campaigned northwards in the Deccan and the region of Vengi (in modern Andhra Pradesh). He fought these campaigns to prove the strength of Chola power.
 - ✓ He took out a naval expedition and attacked Ceylon.
- **Rajendra:**
 - ✓ He had a long reign, ruling until 1044. He continued his father's policy and fought many campaigns in the peninsula.
 - ✓ One was when his armies marched up the east coast of India, through Orissa, and up to the Ganga River. He threatened the Pala king ruling in Bengal before returning to the south.
 - ✓ The second was Rajendra's daring naval campaign which took place in South-East Asia. The Indian ships had to pass through the Straits of Molucca then held by the kingdom of Shrivijaya (which included the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra). The merchants of Shrivijaya naturally felt that if they could take over this trade, they would get the profits. So, they began to create difficulties for the Indian ships. Rajendra sent out a huge navy. The forces of Shrivijaya were defeated and agreed to let Indian ships travel safely through the Straits.

DECLINE

The successors of Rajendra I spent much time and effort and money on fighting wars with the other kingdoms of the peninsula. Some of these wars were not successful. Gradually, the

Chola kingdom became weaker, and the others became stronger. By the end of the thirteenth century, the Chola kingdom was no more.

CHOLA GOVERNMENT

▪ **King**

The king is presented in glowing terms in the literature and inscriptions of the period. The Chola king was the most powerful person in the kingdom.

▪ **Council of Ministers**

Despite this, he was expected to take the advice of, either his Council of Ministers or of his purohita. He also had special officers in charge of various branches of administration.

▪ **Provinces**

✓ The kingdom was divided into **mandalams**. Each **mandalam** was divided into a number of **valanadus**. Each valanadu had a certain number of **villages**.

✓ The capital of the Chola kingdom was at Tanjore to begin with; later it was moved to Kanchipuram (near modern Madras). For some time, the capital was also located at Gangaikondacholapuram, 'the city of the conquerors of the Ganga', a new city built near Tanjore.

▪ **Local organisation**

✓ In many of the villages, the administration was carried out, not by the government officials but by the villagers themselves. These villagers had a village assembly or council known as the ur or sabha.

✓ Villagers who owned land or belonged to the upper castes were chosen by lot to the council. The life and the work of the village were discussed in these councils.

▪ The council was often divided into several small committees and each committee would look after one aspect of village administration.

▪ **Revenue**

The revenue of the Chola kingdom came from two sources—taxes on land and the produce of the land, and taxes on trade. Part of the revenue was kept for the king. The rest was used on public works, such as the building of roads and tanks, on salaries of officials, on paying for the upkeep of the army and navy, and on the building of temples. The taxes on land were usually collected from the village councils. Wealthy landowners paid their taxes to the officers.

SOCIETY

▪ In the predominantly agrarian society prevailing during the Chola period, landholding was the prime determinant of social status and hierarchy.

▪ The **Brahmin landholders** were called brahmadeya; their lands were tax free and inheritable.

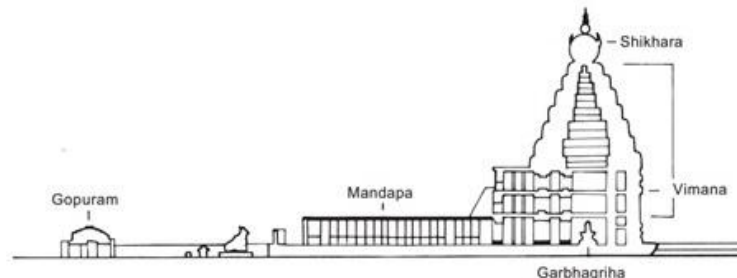
▪ **Merchants** prospered in the Chola kingdom. There was trade with China, South-East Asia, and western Asia. Some of the merchants joined together in a body called the merchant-guild, such as the manigramam. Each merchant-guild pooled their money like a bank, had its own caravans for transporting goods. Some of them even had their own armed guards

▪ The labourers in towns and the peasants in the villages were particularly very poor.

- Shudras had a difficult life. The lowest castes were not even allowed to enter and worship in the temple.

TEMPLE BUILDING

- The Cholas built and patronised innumerable temples. The royal temples in Thanjavur,



Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram are the repositories of architecture, sculpture, paintings and iconography of the Chola art. The walls were covered with sculpture and with scenes depicting both gods and men. There were court scenes, battle scenes, scenes of worship and of music and dancing. The images in stone and bronze were made with great care and devotion. The temple in the Chola kingdom became the centre of social activity.

EDUCATION

- Temple was both a place of worship and a meeting place. It was here that the village assembly would hold its meetings and the business discussed was sometimes recorded on the walls of the temple.
- The priests of the temple were also the local teachers as there was no separate school. The school was held in the temple courtyard.
- Much of the religious teaching was in Sanskrit to study texts, such as the Vedas. The students also learnt Tamil, the language which was widely spoken in the Chola kingdom.
- Many literary and religious works in Sanskrit became popular when they were rewritten in Tamil, such as the famous Ramayana of Kamban.
- Many of the inscriptions of the Chola kings are written in both Sanskrit and Tamil. Poems and plays were also written in Tamil at this time by the leading poets and dramatists.
- **Nannayya** is remembered for his excellent adaptation of parts of the Mahabharata.
- Kannada was a language widely spoken in the region around modern Mysore. Pampa, Ponna and Ranna are called three jewels of Kannada literature. Kannada also became popular because a group of religious teachers, called the **lingayatas**, preached in Kannada and not in Sanskrit.

RELIGION

- There are many popular religious movements during this time: *Alvars and Nayyanars*, *Lingayatas* (founded by Bavasana)

- Philosophy movements: The best known of philosophy teachers were Shankara and Ramanuja. **Shankara** who had lived in the eighth century came from Kerala. His philosophy is known as the system of Advaita (the unique which has no second). He taught that it was only by knowledge that one could worship God. **Ramanuja** was born in the eleventh century. He preached that one should devote oneself entirely to the worship of God through bhakti. Another religious teacher who had a large following was **Madhava**.

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