

New Kings and Kingdoms



The Early Medieval Period saw the rise of many kingdoms. In the north were the Palas, the Gurjara Pratiharas, and various clans of the Rajputs. In the south were the Rashtrakutas, Pallavas, Pandyas and Cholas.

Emergence of New Dynasties

By the 7th century there were big landlords or warrior chiefs called **Samantas** in various regions of the subcontinent. They were expected to bring gifts for their kings or overlords, be present at their courts and provide them military support. Gradually, the Samantas gained power and wealth and assumed titles of **Maha-Samanta** and **Maha-Mandaleshvara** (great lord of the region). Eventually many of them became powerful enough to dethrone kings and establish their own rules. Thus, in mid-eighth century, **Dantidurga**, a Rashtrakuta chief, overthrew his Chalukya overlord and established the Rashtrakuta dynasty. He performed a ritual called **hiranya-garbha** to be 'reborn' as a Kshatriya. Sometimes, military skills were used to carve out kingdoms. Mayurasharma and Harichandra, both Bahmanas, founded Kadamba and Pratihara dynasties respectively by military skills.

THE PALAS

The **Palas** ruled in Bengal and Bihar from the eighth to the twelfth century. The founder of the dynasty was **Gopala**. He was succeeded by **Dharmapala** who expanded and strengthened the kingdom. The Palas were involved in a tripartite struggle with the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas for the control of Kannauj. The Palas were followers of Buddhism. They supported the Buddhist universities of Nalanda and Vikramshila.

The Pala rulers had trade relations with south-east Asia which added to their prosperity. Ramapala (CE 1082-1124) was the last known king of the Pala dynasty. The Khalaji invasions eventually led to the decline of the Pala dynasty.

THE GURJARA PRATI HARAS

The **Gurjara Pratiharas** ruled in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Their most powerful ruler was **King Bhoja**. He also conquered Kannauj and made it his capital. King Bhoja was succeeded by his son **Mahendrapala**. He expanded the empire further. In CE 1018, **Mahmud Ghazni** defeated the Pratihara ruler and the dynasty came to an end.

Foreign traveller Al Masudi, has written about

the power and prestige of Gurjara Pratihara rulers.

THE RAJPUTS

The Rajputs were descendants of the central Asian tribes that had settled in India after the invasion of the Huns. Some are of the view that the Rajputs were descendants of local Kshatriya families. Others insist that they belonged to the Surya-vamsha and the Chandra-vamsha families. The Tomars, Chauhans, Solankis, Paramaras and Chandelas were the main Rajput clans of this period.

The Tomars

The Tomars built the city of Delhi in the eighth century. It was annexed by the Chauhans subsequently.

The Chauhans

The **Chauhans** were also called Chahamanas. The most powerful ruler was **Prithviraj Chauhan**. He fought against Muhammad Ghori and defeated him in the First Battle of Tarain in CE 1191. He died fighting in the Second Battle of Tarain in CE 1192.

The Solankis

The Solankis ruled in the region of Kathiawar. The most powerful ruler was Siddharaja. The rulers of the Solanki dynasty built the Dilwara Temple of Mount Abu and the Sun Temple at Modhera.

The Paramaras

Dhar was the capital of the Paramara kings. Their most important ruler was Bhoja Paramara.

The Chandelas

The most powerful king of the Chandela dynasty was Kirtivarman. Their capital was Khajuraho. The Chandela rulers built many



Map of India, AD 800-1200

temples at Khajuroh. A fine example is the Kandariya Mahadev Temple.

The Rajputs remained a major power in the eighth and the ninth centuries. The Rajputs are still known for their loyalty, honesty and bravery.

FOREIGN INVASIONS

Mahmud of Ghazni

Mahmud was the ruler of Ghazni (CE 998–1030CE). He was ambitious and wanted to make Ghazni a very powerful kingdom. He needed a large army but he did not have enough money to maintain it. He



Mahmud of Ghazni

was fascinated by the fabulous wealth found in temples of India. He invaded India seventeen times between CE 1000 – CE 1025. He attacked places like Punjab, Peshawar, Multan, Mathura, Kannauj, Thaneswar and Somnath.



Somnath Temple

The most daring raids were against Mathura and Kannauj in CE 1018 and against Somnath in CE 1025. The Somnath temple in Gujarat was plundered and all its wealth was taken away to Ghazni. Even the precious stones embedded in the temple walls were taken out.

Mahmud died in CE 1030. His successors were weak and his empire declined rapidly.

Muhammad Ghori

Like Mahmud of Ghazni, **Muhammad Ghori** was also an ambitious ruler. He ascended the throne of Ghazni in CE 1173. He too wanted to expand his empire. He had heard about Mahmud's invasions of India. His main motive was not to plunder India but to set up an empire in India.



Kailash temple at Ellora

Muhammad Ghori invaded India in CE 1175. He conquered Multan. Soon he realised that Punjab was a good base for further conquests. In CE 1190, he conquered Punjab. The boundaries of conquests of Muhammad Ghori now touched the kingdoms of Prithviraj Chauhan.

Both fought wars for the control of the Punjab and the Ganga valley. The conflict led them to fight two battles at Tarain near Bhatinda - one in CE 1191 and the second in CE 1192. In the first battle, Prithviraj Chauhan inflicted a crushing defeat on Muhammad Ghori. In the second battle, he died fighting at Tarain in CE 1192.

With this victory, Muhammad Ghori became the master of the Delhi area and eastern Rajasthan. His rule extended over the Ganga–Yamuna doab, Bihar and Bengal. He also defeated Jaichand of Kannauj in CE 1194.

THE SOUTH

The Rashtrakutas

The Rashtrakutas rose to power in the eighth century. The dynasty was founded by **Dantidurga**. He and his successor, Krishna I, consolidated their empire in the region of modern Maharashtra. Their capital was Malkhed. The Rashtrakutas got involved in conflicts against the Pratiharas and the Palas in the north. In the south, they waged wars against the Pallavas, the Pandyas and the Cholas. The Rashtrakuta rulers patronised Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Jainism. The Kailash temple at Ellora and the rock-cut Elephanta caves were built by the Rashtrakutas.



Rock cut Elephanta caves built by the Rashtrakutas

Yadavas of Devagiri

It was established by Bhilana in the twelfth century. They ruled the region between Narmada and Godavari rivers and had a flourishing trade which made them rich and prosperous. Alauddin Khalji defeated them and annexed their kingdom in the 14th Century.

Chalukyas of Kalyani

They were known as the later Chalukyas also. Their kings like Vikramanka, were famous for building many temples at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal.

Kakatiyas of Warangal

They ruled over the territories that lay between Godavari and Krishna rivers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Marco Polo visited the kingdom. They were followers of Shiva and patronised Sanskrit and Telugu. The Sultans of Delhi conquered them in the early 14th century.

Hoysalas of Dvarasamudra

They ruled the region now called Karnataka. Vishnuvardhan was their most powerful king. Their kingdom was also annexed by the Delhi sultanate.

The Pallavas

The two great Pallava rulers were Mahendrarman I and Narasimhavarman I. Their capital was Kanchipuram. The Pallava kings were patrons of art and architecture. The Ratha Temple at Mahabalipuram and the Kailasanath temple at Kanchi are fine examples of Pallava temple architecture.



Ratha temples at Mahabalipuram



Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram

The Pandyas

The kingdom of the Pandyas was in the region around Madurai. Madurai was an important centre of learning. The kingdom declined in the fourteenth century.

The Cholas

The Cholas built the strongest empire in India between CE 800 – CE 1200. Their capital was Tanjore. The **Chola dynasty** was founded by **Vijayalaya**. He built the town of Thanjavur and made it his capital. --He ruled over the region to the north of River Kaveri. He was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king, **Krishna III**, at the **battle of Takkolam** in CE 949.

It was **Rajaraja Chola** and **Rajendra Chola** who revived the empire and made the Cholas the greatest power in South India. Rajaraja defeated the Cheras at Thiruvananthapuram which gave him control over trade with the Arabs on the western coast. Once he had control over Malabar coast, he defeated the Pandyas and took control of the Cholamandalam coast.

After the death of Rajaraja, his son Rajendra Chola succeeded him. He defeated the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Pala ruler of Bengal. He was hailed as Gangaikonda or the conqueror of the Ganges. Rajendra Chola's most daring campaign was in South-east Asia. For centuries Indian merchants had been trading with South-east Asia and southern China. Indian ships had to pass through the straits of Molucca which was under the kingdom of Sri Vijaya. The merchants of Sri Vijaya found ways to keep the Indian merchants out of this trade. These merchants were from the Chola kingdom. They appealed to Rajendra Chola for help. Rajendra Chola sent a huge army and

defeated the king, Sri Vijaya. Thereby, trade with South-east Asia was resumed, greatly enriching the Chola kingdom.

ADMINISTRATION IN THE KINGDOMS

Many kings took up titles of Maharajadhiraja (King of Kings) and Tribhuvana Chakravartin (Lord of the Three Worlds). However, they still shared power with their samantas as well. Revenue was collected from peasants, cattle keepers and artisans. These revenues were used to maintain the king's army, as well as for construction of temples and forts. The people appointed for collecting revenue were from influential families. Even close relatives of the king held these positions.

INFOBITS

- ▶ Chakravati is a Sanskrit term used to denote a ruler who rules ethically and benevolently over the entire world. Such a ruler's reign is called Sarvabhuma.
- ▶ A Prashasti written in Sanskrit describing the exploits of Nagabhata, the Pratihara king has been found in Gwalior.
- ▶ Rajendra Chola I assumed the title of Gangaikonda which means one who has conquered places up to River Ganga.
- ▶ Brihadeeshwar temple of Tanjore was built by Rajaraja I the Chola ruler. The temple is made mostly out of granite.
- ▶ The eighth century Tripartite Struggle was among the Chalukyas, Pallavas and Pandayas.

PRASHASTIS AND LAND GRANTS

Prashastis contain details about rulers who wanted to depict themselves as valiant and victorious warriors. These prashastis were composed by learned Brahmanas. The Brahmanas

were often rewarded by kings by grants of land. These grants were recorded on copper plates which were given to those who received the land. One famous Prashasti, written in Sanskrit, and found in Gwalior (M.P.) describes the exploits of Nagabhata, a Pratihara king, in glowing terms.

UTTARAMERUR INSCRIPTION

The Uttaramerur inscription of the Cholas, in Tamil Nadu, laid down certain rules as to who could become a member of a Sabha.

"All those who wish to become members of the Sabha should be owners of land from which land revenue is collected. They should have their own homes. They should be between 35 and 70 years of age. They should have knowledge of the Vedas. They should be well-versed in administrative matters and honest. If anyone has been a member of any committee in the last three years, he cannot become a member of another committee. One who has not submitted his accounts, and those of his relative cannot contest the elections."

The laws were very clear and there was very little possibility of a fraud. Those found guilty were severely punished.

Types of Land and taxes

Chola inscriptions mention various categories of land :

- **Vellanvagai:** land of non-Brahmanas.
- **Brahmadeya:** land gifted to Brahmanas.
- **Shalabhoga:** land for maintenance of a school.
- **Devadana, Tirunamattukkani:** land gifted to temples.
- **Pallichchandam:** land donated to Jain institutions.
- **Vetti:** a tax taken in the form of forced labour.
- **Kadamai:** land revenue.

CASE STUDY

The Cholas

The territory south of rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra is known as South India. South India was divided into three kingdoms. ● The Cholas ● The Cheras and ● The Pandyas

The Cholas were the earliest and the most ancient of the South Indian kingdoms based in Uraiyur. Till the eighth century, the Chola kingdom was very small. But it gained importance from the ninth century onwards. In CE 850, their ruler Vijayalaya defeated the Pallavas and snatched Tanjore from them. Soon Tanjore became the capital of the Chola Kingdom.

Rajaraja I (CE 985 – CE 1014)

The most powerful ruler of the Chola dynasty was Rajaraja I. He was one of the greatest kings of South India. He was known as "Rajaraja the Great". Rajaraja I defeated the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, the Pandyas of Madurai and the Gangas of Mysore. He conquered northern Sri Lanka, the Maldiv Islands and Sumatra and other places in Malay peninsula.



Rajaraja Chola –
The Great Chola King

He was not only an able administrator but also a great builder. He built a magnificent temple at Tanjore. This temple was named as Rajarajeshwar after his name.

Rajendra Chola (CE 1014 – CE 1044)

Rajendra Chola was also an able ruler like his father. He even went upto Bengal. He took over the title of 'Gangaikonda' (the conqueror of the Gangas). On his way, he built a new capital called Gangaikondacholapuram. His greatest achievement was the conquest of Sailendra empire. During his reign the kingdom was called 'The Golden Age of Cholas'. After his death the Chola kingdom began to decline. His successors were weak and the kingdom started disintegrating.

Administration

The empire was divided into mandalams or provinces. The mandalams were looked after by the governors. The mandalams were further divided into valanadus. Each valanadu consisted of a number of villages. The village or nadu was the smallest unit. Each village had two assemblies. They were known as the ur and the sabha. The 'ur' was a general assembly. The 'sabha' was a gathering of adult males in a Brahmana villages.

We have seen that each brahmadeya was looked after by an assembly or sabha of prominent Brahmana landlords. The assemblies worked very efficiently. Associations of traders known as *nagarams* also performed administrative functions in towns. Inscriptions from Uttaramerur provide details regarding organisation of the sabha. The sabha had several committees to look after irrigation, gardens, temples, etc. Names of those eligible to be members of committees were written on small tickets of palm leaf. These tickets were put into an earthenware pot, from which a young boy was asked to take out the tickets, one by one for each committee. Land and trade were the chief sources of revenue for the Cholas. Kaveripattinam was the main port of the Cholas. The Indian merchants carried glassware, cotton goods, brocades, ivory, sandalwood, perfumes and precious stones.

Art

The Cholas also built many temples. Most of the temples were built in the Dravidian style. The Brihadeshwara Temple or Rajarajeshwar Temple built at Thanjavur (Tanjore) by Rajaraja I and the temple of Gangaikondacholapuram built by Rajendra are architectural and sculptural marvels. Chola bronze images are considered amongst the finest in the world.



Brihadeshwara Temple at Thanjavur



Gangaikondacholapuram Temple

These include the bronze image of Nataraja. This image portrays the divine dancer Shiva dancing the dance of death and destruction.

Chola temples often became the nuclei of settlements which grew around them. Temples were not only places of worship; they were the hub of economic, social and cultural life as well. The temples were also centres of craft production. Many specialists worked at the temples and lived near it – priests, garland makers, cooks, sweepers, musicians, dancers, etc. They were maintained by temples out of the produce of land assigned to them.

Religion

The most popular religion was Hinduism. Vishnu and Shiva were worshipped. In the twelfth century, Basava founded the 'Lingayata' sect. Ramanuja and Madhava were the other great teachers who lived during this time. These teachers laid stress on Bhakti. They were also against class and caste distinctions.

Agrarian Expansion in the Tamil Region

Agriculture flourished throughout the Tamil region. The temples played an active role in cultivating the barren land. First, the temples had a lot of money. Second, most of the barren land that was cultivated was also controlled by the temples.



A Bronze Statue of Nataraja

Since a majority of the population lived in the villages, agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Fruits, vegetables and spices were grown in abundant quantities. Irrigation was done through rainwater tanks. The Cholas depended mainly on rainwater harvesting.

The Cholas also carried out land surveys. The surveys were done in order to fix the rates for land revenue. The Brahmanas were gifted rent-free lands. These lands were called Brahmadeya. The Brahmanas with the help of landless labourers cleared the jungles. This enabled them to bring more land under cultivation.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- The Early Medieval Period saw the rise of many kingdoms. In the north were the Palas, the Gurjara Pratiharas, and the Rajputs. In the south were the Rashtrakutas, Pallavas, Pandyas and the Cholas.
- Mahmud of Ghazni was a very ambitious ruler. He wanted to make Ghazni a very powerful empire.
- Muhammad Ghori's main motive was not to plunder India but to build an empire in India.
- The two great Pallava rulers were Mahendravarman I and Narasimhavarman I.
- The most powerful ruler of the Chola Kingdom was Rajaraja I. It was under him that the empire revived and became one of the strongest empires of South India.

GLOSSARY

- INVASION** : Conquest, plunder.
DESCENDANTS : Those who descended from a common stock.
FABULOUS : Astonishing
ANNEXED : To incorporate (a country or territory)
RAID : A surprise attack by a small force

TIME TO LEARN

A. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

1. Which one of the following titles was not assumed by the Samantas?
(a) Maha-Samanta (b) Maha-Mandaleshwar (c) Hiranya-garbha (d) None of these
2. The Rashtrakuta dynasty was founded by
(a) Mayursharman (b) Harichandra (c) Dantidurga (d) Vijayalaya
3. What was 'hiranya-garbha'?
(a) A feudal lord (b) A ritual (c) A tax (d) Hunting deer
4. Which of the following was not a ruling clan of Rajputs in the Early Medieval Period?
(a) Tomars (b) Chauhans (c) Chandelas (d) Cholas
5. Main aim of the invasions of Mahamud of Ghazni was
(a) to establish an empire in India (b) to plunder wealth
(c) to see Indian temples (d) all of these

B. Match the following

1. Devadana (a) Land gifted to Brahmins
2. Dantidurga (b) Land gifted to temples
3. Pallichhandam (c) Rashtrakuta
4. Shalabhoga (d) Land donated to Jain institutions
5. Brahmadeya (e) Land for maintaining a school

C. State whether the following statements are True or False

1. The founder of the Pala dynasty was Gopala.
2. Prithviraj Chauhan was killed in the first Battle of Tarain.
3. Rajaraja I defeated the Cheras at Thiruvananthapuram.
4. The Solankis ruled in Khajuraho.
5. Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India fifteen times.



D. Fill in the blanks with the words given below

Brahmanas Mathura Kirtivarman Nataraja Lingayata

1. The most powerful king of the Chandela dynasty was _____ .
2. Mahmud of Ghazni raided _____ and Kannauj in 1018.
3. The bronze image of _____ portrays the divine dancer, Shiva.
4. The _____ were given rent free lands.
5. Basava founded the _____ sect.

E. Short answer type questions

1. Name the various categories of land mentioned by Chola inscriptions.
2. Who could become a member of the Sabha?
3. What were vetti and 'kadamai'?
4. Briefly describe the achievements of Rajaraja I.
5. How were the members of various committees of the sabha elected?

[HOTS]

F. Long answer type questions

1. Differentiate among sabha, ur and nagaram.
2. Describe the administration of the Cholas.
3. What role was played by temples in the life of the people?
4. Why were the battles of Tarain fought? What was the final outcome of the second battle?

[Value Based Question]

G. Project

Write a project on the village administration of the Cholas.

H. MAP WORK

Make and label the following empires on a map of India : Palas, Gurjara Pratiharas, Chauhans, Paramaras, Chandelas, Pallavas and Cholas. Also mark their capitals.

I. Source Based Analysis

This is part of the Tamil section of a land grant given by the Cholas :

We have demarcated the boundaries of the land by making earthen embankments as well as by planting thorny bushes. This is what the land contains: fruit-bearing trees, water, land, gardens and orchards, trees, wells, open spaces, pasture-land, a village, anthills, platforms, canals, ditches, rivers, silt-laden, tanks, granaries, fish ponds, bee hives, and deep lakes.

He who receives the land can collect taxes from it. He can collect the taxes imposed by judicial officers as fines, the tax on betel-leaves, that on woven cloth, as well as on vehicles. He can build large rooms, with upper stories made of baked bricks, he can get large and small wells dug, he can plant trees and thorny bushes, if necessary, he can get canals constructed for irrigation. He should ensure that water is not wasted, and that embankments are built.

1. Name the typical features of land.
2. What are the various types of taxes mentioned?
3. Name the sources of irrigation given in the inscription.

LIFE SKILLS

During the Chola period temples were the hub of economic, social and cultural life of the people. Compare the significance and importance of temples then and now. Why do you think temples have been an important aspect of our life since ancient times?



MIND MAP

