

## 7<sup>th</sup> – New Kings & Kingdoms

Several major ruling dynasties emerged in different parts of the subcontinent between the seventh and twelfth centuries.

**The Emergence of New Dynasties:** By the 7<sup>th</sup> century there were big landlords or warrior chiefs in different regions of the subcontinent. Existing kings often acknowledged them as their subordinates or samantas. They were expected to bring gifts for their kings or overlords, be present at their courts and provide them with military support. As samantas gained power and wealth, they declared themselves to be maha-samanta, mahamandaleshvara (the great lord of circle or region).

One such instance was that of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan. Initially they were subordinate to the Chalukyas of Karnataka. In the mid-eighth century, Dantidurga, a Rashtrakuta chief, overthrew his Chalukya overlord and performed a ritual called hiranyagarbha. When this ritual was performed with the help of Brahmanas, it was thought to lead to the “rebirth” of the sacrificer as a Kshatriya even if he was not one by birth.

In other cases, men from enterprising families used their military skills to carve out kingdoms. For instance, the Kadamba Mayurasharma and the Gurjara-Pratihara Harichandra were Brahmanas who gave up their traditional professions and took to arms, successfully establishing kingdoms in Karnataka and Rajasthan.

**Administration in the Kingdom:** Many of these new kings adopted high-sounding titles such as maharaja-adhiraja (great king overlord of kings), tribhuvana-chakravartin (lord of the three worlds). The kings often shared power with their samantas as well as with association of peasants, traders and Brahmanas. Resources were obtained from the producers—that is peasants, cattle-keepers, artisans—who were often persuaded or compelled to surrender part of what they produced.

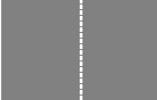
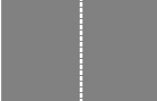
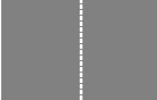
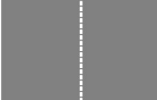
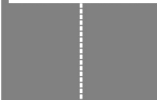
These resources were used to finance the king establishment as well as for the construction of temples and forts. They were also used to fight wars which were in turn expected to lead to the acquisition of wealth in the form of plunder and access to land as well as trade routes. The functionaries for collecting revenue were generally recruited from influential families.

**Prashastis and Land Grants:** Prashastis tell us how rulers wanted to depict themselves as valiant, victorious warriors, for example. These were composed by learned Brahmanas, who occasionally helped in the administration. Kings often rewarded Brahmanas by grants of land. These were recorded on copper plates, which were given to those who received the land. Unusual for the twelfth century was a long Sanskrit poem containing the history of kings who ruled over Kashmir. It was composed by an author named Kalhana. He used a variety of sources, including inscriptions, documents, eyewitness accounts and earlier histories, to write his account.

**Warfare for wealth:** These ruling dynasties were based in a specific region. At the same time, they tried to control other areas. For centuries, rulers belonging to the Gurjara-Pratihara, Rashtrakuta and Pala dynasties fought for control over Kanauj. Because there were three “parties” in this long drawn conflict, historians often describe it as the “tripartite struggle”. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, Afghanistan. He ruled from 997 to 1030, and extended control over parts of Central Asia, Iran and the north-western part of the subcontinent. He raided the subcontinent almost every year his targets were wealthy temples, including that of Somnath, Gujarat. Sultan Mahmud was also interested in finding out more about the people he conquered, and entrusted a scholar named al-Biruni to write account of the subcontinent. This Arabic work, known as the Kitab al-Hind.

Other kings who engaged in warfare were Chauhans, who ruled over the region around Delhi and Ajmer. They attempted to expand their control to the west and the east, where they were opposed by the Chalukyas of Gujrat and the Gahadavalas of western ruler was Prithviraja III (1168-1192), who defeated an Afghan ruler named Sultan Muhammad Ghori in 1191, but lost to him the very next year, in 1192.

**From Uraiyur to Thanjavur:** A minor chiefly family known as the Muttaraiyar held power in the Kaveri delta. They were subordinate to the Pallava kings of Kanchipuram.





Vijayalaya, who belonged to the ancient chiefly family of the Cholas from Uraiyur, captured the delta from the Muttaraiyar in the middle of the ninth century. He built the town of Thanjavur and a temple for goddess Nishumbhasudini there.

The successors of Vijayalaya conquered neighbouring regions and the kingdom grew in size and power. The Pandyan and the Pallava territories to the south and north were made part of this kingdom. Rajaraja I, Considered the most powerful chola ruler, and expanded control over most of these areas. He also reorganized the administration of the empire. Rajaraja's son Rajendra I continued his policies and even raided the Ganga valley, Sri Lanka and countries of Southeast Asia, developing a navy for these expeditions.

**Splendid Temples and Bronze Sculpture:** Cholas were big temple builders. Two famous temples were in Thanjavur and Gangaikonda cholapuram, built by Rajaraja and Rajendra. Chola temples often became the nuclei of settlements which grew around them. These were centres of craft production. Temples were also endowed with land by rulers as well as by others. Temples were not only places of worship; they were the hub of economic, social and cultural life as well. Most images were of deities, sometimes images were made of devotees as well.

**Agriculture and Irrigation:** Many of the achievements of the Cholas were made possible through new developments in agriculture. The river Kaveri branches off into several small channels before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. These channels overflow frequently, depositing fertile soil on their banks. Water from the channels also provides the necessary moisture for agriculture, particularly the cultivation of rice. Agriculture had developed earlier in other parts of Tamil Nadu, it was only from the fifth or sixth century that this area was opened up for large - scale cultivation. Forests had to be cleared in some region; land had to be levelled in other areas. In the delta region embankments had to be built to prevent flooding and canals had to be constructed to carry water to the fields. In many areas two crops were grown in a year. In many cases it was necessary to water crops artificially. A variety of methods were used for irrigation. In some areas wells were dug. In other places huge tanks were constructed to collect rainwater. Irrigation works require planning - organising labour and resources, maintaining these works and deciding on how water is to be shared. Most of the new rulers, as well as people living in villages, took an active interest in these activities.

**The Administration of the Empire:** The administration organized through the Settlements of peasants, known as Ur, became prosperous with the spread of irrigation agriculture. Groups of such villages formed larger units called nadu. The village council and the nadu performed several administrative functions including dispensing justice and collecting taxes. Rich peasants of the Vellala caste exercised considerable control over the affairs of the nadu under the supervision of the central Chola government. The Chola kings gave some rich landowners titles like Muvendavelan, Araiyar, etc. as markers of respect, and entrusted them with important offices of the state at the centre. Brahmanas often received land grants or Brahmadeya. As a result, a large number of Brahmana settlements emerged in the Kaveri valley as in other parts of south India.

Each Brahmadeya was looked after by an assembly or sabha of prominent brahmana landholders. These assemblies worked very efficiently. Their decisions were recorded in detail in inscriptions, often on the stone walls of temples. Association of traders known as nagarams also occasionally performed administrative functions in towns.

Inscriptions from Uttaramerur in Chingleput district, Tamil nadu, provide details of the way in which the sabha was organised. The Sabha had separate committees to look after irrigation works, gardens, temples etc. Names of those eligible to be members of these 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.