

11th History Lesson 6 Notes in English

6. Later Cholas and Pandyas

Introduction

- The Cholas belonged to one of the three mighty dynasties that ruled the Tamizh country in the early historical period.
- Described as the **Muvendhar in the Sangam literature**, they were known for the valour and for their patronage of the Tamil language. Many songs were composed in high praise of their glories.
- However, after the Sangam period until about the ninth century CE, there are no records about them. Changes that overtook Tamizhagam in the intervening period brought about a major transformation of the region and enabled the emergence of big, long-lasting monarchical states.
- The Cholas were one among them. The river valleys facilitated the expansion of agriculture leading to the emergence of powerful kingdoms.
- The agricultural boom resulted in the production of considerable surplus of predominantly food grains. But this surplus in production resulted in unequal distribution of wealth.
- Society gradually became highly differentiated unlike in the earlier period. Institutions and ideas from the north of India, such as the temple and the religion it represented, emerged as a new force.
- **The Bhakti movement led by the Nayanmars and Azhwars popularised** the ideology and the faith they represented. Similarly, political ideas and institutions that originated in northern India soon found their way to the south as well.
- The cumulative result of all the new developments was the formation of a state, which in this case was a monarchy presided over by the descendants of the old Chola lineage.
- After the eclipse of the Chola kingdom, Pandyas, who began their rule in the **Vaigai river basin at Madurai**, wielded tremendous power during the 14th century. Like the Cholas, the Pandyas also realised substantial revenue from agriculture as well as from trade.
- Trade expansion overseas continued in the Pandya rule. Tirunelveli region, which was part of the Pandyan kingdom, exported grain, cotton, cotton cloth and bullocks to the Malabar coast and had trade contacts with West and Southeast Asia.
- Pandya kings produced a cultural heritage by synthesising the religious, cultural and political elements, and it differed totally with the assumed homogeneity of classical age of Guptas.

CHOLAS

Origin of the Dynasty

- Records available to us after the Sangam Age show that the Cholas remained as subordinates to the Pallavas in the Kaveri region.
- The re-emergence of Cholas began with **Vijayalaya (850–871 CE) conquering the Kaveri delta from Muttaraiyar**. He built the city of Thanjavur and established the **Chola kingdom in 850**.
- Historians, therefore, refer to them as the Later Cholas or Imperial Cholas. In the copper plate documents of his successors that are available, the Cholas trace their ancestry to the Karikala, the most well-known of the Cholas of the Sangam age.
- In their genealogy an eponymous king 'Chola' is mentioned as the progenitor. The names of Killi, **Koc-cengannan and Karikalan** are mentioned as members of the line in these copper plates.
- Vijayalaya's illustrious successors starting from **Parantaka I (907–955) to Kulothunga III (1163–1216)** brought glory and fame to the Cholas.
- Parantaka Chola set the tone for expansion of the territory and broadened the base of its governance, and **Rajaraja I (985–1014)**, the builder of the most beautiful **Brihadishvarar temple at Thanjavur, and his son Rajendra I (1012–1044)**, 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.

Sources

- More than **10,000 inscriptions** engraved on copper and stone form the primary sources for the study of Chola history.
- The inscriptions mainly record the endowments and donations to temples made by rulers and other individuals. Land transactions and taxes (both collections and exemptions) form an important part of their content.
- Later-day inscriptions make a mention of the differentiation in society, giving an account of the castes and subcastes and thus providing us information on the social structure. Besides stone inscriptions, copper plates contain the royal orders.
- They also contain details of genealogy, wars, conquests, administrative divisions, local governance, land rights and various taxes levied.
- Literature also flourished under the Cholas. The important religious works in Tamil include codification of the Saivite and Vaishnavite canons.
- The quasi-historical literary works **Kalingattupparani and Kulotungancholan Pillai Tamizh** were composed during their reign.
- **Muvarula, and Kamba Ramayanam**, the great epic, belong to this period. **Neminatam, Viracholiyam and Nannul** are noted **grammatical works**. **Pandikkovai and Takkayagapparani** are other important literary works composed during this period.

Territory

- Traditionally, the area under the Chola dynasty in the Tamizh country is known as Chonadu or Cholanadu.
- Their core kingdom was concentrated in the Kaveri-fed delta called Cholanmandalam. This term came to be corrupted as "**Coromandel**" in the European languages, which often referred to the entire eastern coast of South India.
- The Chola kingdom expanded through military conquests to include present-day **Pudukkottai– Ramanathapuram** districts and the Kongu country of the present-day western Tamil Nadu.
- By the 11th century, through invasions, Cholas extended their territory to Tondainadu or the northern portion of the Tamizh country, Pandinadu or the southern portions of the Tamizh country, **Gangaivadi or portions of southern Karnataka and Malaimandalam, the Kerala territory.**
- The Cholas ventured overseas conquering the north-eastern parts of Sri Lanka, bringing it under their control and they called it Mummudi-Cholanmandalam.

Empire Building

- Rajaraja I is the most celebrated of the Chola kings. He engaged in naval expeditions and emerged victorious in the West Coast, Sri Lanka and conquered the Maldives in the Indian Ocean.
- The military victory of **Raja Raja I over Sri Lanka** led to its northern and eastern portions coming under the direct control of the Chola authority. Rajaraja I appointed a Tamil chief to govern the annexed regions and ordered a temple to be built. It is locally called **Siva Devale (shrine of Siva).**
- The Chola official appointed in Sri Lanka built a temple in a place called Mahatitta. The temple is called Rajarajesvara.
- Even as he was alive, Rajaraja I appointed his son, Rajendra I, as his heir apparent. For two years, they jointly ruled the Chola kingdom.
- Rajendra I took part in the military campaigns of his father, attacking the Western Chalukyas. Consequently, the boundary of the Chola Empire extended up to Tungabhadra river.
- When Rajaraja I attacked Madurai, the Pandyas escaped with their crown and royal jewels and took shelter in Sri Lanka.
- There upon, Rajendra I conquered Sri Lanka and confiscated the Pandya crown and other royal belongings. Rajendra I conducted the most striking military exploit after his accession in **1023** by his expedition to northern India.
- He led the expedition up to the Godavari river and asked his general to continue beyond that place. The Gangaikonda Chozhapuram temple was built to commemorate his victories in North India.

- During the Chola reign, the naval achievements of the Tamils reached its peak. The Cholas controlled both the Coromandel and Malabar coasts. The Chola navy often ventured into Bay of Bengal for some decades.
- Rajendra's naval operation was directed against Sri Vijaya. Sri Vijaya kingdom (southern Sumatra) was one of the prominent maritime and commercial states that flourished from c. 700 to c. 1300 in South-east Asia.
- Similarly, **Kheda (Kadaram)**, feudatory kingdom under Sri Vijaya, was also conquered by Rajendra.
- The Chola invasions of Western Chalukya Empire, undertaken in 1003 by Rajaraja I and 1009 by Rajendra I, were also successful. Rajendra sent his son to ransack and ravage its capital Kalayani.
- The dwarapala (door keeper) image he brought from Kalayani was installed at the Darasuram temple near Kumbhakonam, which can be seen even today.
- Rajendra I assumed the titles such as **Mudikonda Cholan (the crowned Chola)**, **Gangaikondan (conqueror of the Ganges)**, **Kadaramkondan (conqueror of Kadaram)** and **Pandita Cholan (scholarly Cholan)**.

Chola Administration

- King Historians have debated the nature of the Chola state. Clearly, it was presided over by a hereditary monarchy. The king is presented in glowing terms in the literature and inscriptions of the period.
- Venerated on par with god. The kings were invariably addressed as **peruman or perumagan (big man)**, **ulagudaiyaperumal (the lord of the world)** and **ulagudaiyanayanar (the lord of the world)**.
- Later, they adopted the titles such as Chakkaravarti (emperor) and Tiribhuvana Chakkaravarti (emperor of three worlds).
- At the time of coronation, it was a practice to add the suffix deva to the name of the crowned kings. The kings drew legitimacy by claiming that they were a comrade of god (**thambiran thozhar**).
- Chola rulers appointed Brahmins as spiritual **preceptors or rajagurus (the kingdom's guide)**.
- Rajaraja I and Rajendra I mention the names of rajagurus and Sarva-sivas in their inscriptions.
- Patronising Brahmins was seen to enhance their prestige and legitimacy. Chola kings therefore granted huge estates of land to Brahmins as **brahmadeyams** and **caturvedimangalams (pronounced chatur-vedi-mangalam)**.

Provinces

- As mentioned earlier, the territories of the Chola state had been expanding steadily even from the time of Vijayalaya.

- At the time of conquest, these areas were under the control of minor chiefs described by historians as **"feudatories"**.
- Rajaraja I integrated these territories and appointed **"viceroys"** in these regions: **Chola-Pandya in Pandinadu, Chola-Lankeswara in Sri Lanka, which was renamed as Mummudicholamandalam, and Chola-Ganga in the Gangavadi region of southern Karnataka.**
- In other less prominent regions, the territories of chiefs such as the Irukkuvels, Ilangovels or Mazhavas or Banas were made part of the Chola state and their chiefs were inducted into the state system as its functionaries.

Army

- Cholas maintained a well-organised army. The army consisted of three conventional divisions: **infantry, cavalry (kudirai sevagar) and the elephant corps (anaiyatkal).**
- **There were also bowmen (villaligal), sword-bearers (valilar) and spearmen (konduvar).** Two type of ranks in the army are also mentioned: the upper and the lower (**perundanam and cirudanam**).
- According to a Chinese geographer of the 13th century, the Chola army owned **"sixty thousand war elephants that, when fighting, carried on their backs houses, and these houses are full of soldiers who shoot arrows at long range, and fight with spears at close quarters"**.
- The overseas exploits of the Cholas are well known and it led historians to refer to their navy **"with numberless ships"**.
- Generally, soldiers enjoyed padaipparru (military holding) rights. Cantonments, which were established in the capital city, were known as padaividu.
- Military outposts in the conquered territory were called nilaipadai.
- The captain of a regiment was known as nayagam and later he assumed the title of padaimudali. The commander-in-chief was senapati and dandanayagam.

Local Organisation

Various locality groups functioned actively in the Chola period.

- These were bodies such as **Urar, Sabhaiyar, Nagarattar and Nattar.** They were relatively autonomous organisations of the respective groups.
- They are considered the building blocks using which the edifice of the Chola state was built.

Urar

- With the expansion of agriculture, numerous peasant settlements came up in the countryside. They were known as ur.

- The urar, who were landholders in the village, acted as spokesmen in the ur. The urar were entrusted with the upkeep of temples, maintenance of the tanks and managing the water stored in them.
- They also discharged administrative functions of the state such as collection of revenue, maintenance of law and order, and obeying the king's orders.

Sabhaiyaar

- If the ur was a settlement of land holders, largely consisting of **peasants of vellanvagai, the brahmadeya was a Brahmin settlement**.
- The Sabha looked after the affairs of the settlement, including those of the temples at the core of brahmadeya and its assets.
- It was also responsible for maintaining irrigation tanks attached to the temple lands. Like the ur, the Sabha also functioned as the agents of the state in carrying out administrative, fiscal and judicial functions.

Nagarattaar

- Nagaram was a settlement of traders. However, skilled artisans engaged in **masonry, ironsmithing, goldsmithing, weaving and pottery** also occupied the settlement.
- It was represented by the Nagarattaar, who regulated their association with temples, which needed their financial assistance. In the reign of Rajaraja I, Mamallapuram was administrated by a body called Maanagaram.
- Local goods were exchanged in nagarams. These goods included silk, porcelain, camphor, cloves, sandalwood and cardamom according to Chinese accounts.
- In order to promote trade, inland and sea way, Kulotunga revoked the collection of toll fee (sungam). Hence he was conferred the title **Sungam Thavirtha Chozhan**.

Nattar

- Nadu was a grouping of several urs, excluding brahmadeyas formed around irrigation sources such as canals and tanks. **Nattar (literally those belonging to the nadu) were the assembly of landholders of vellanvagai villages (urs) in nadu**. Nattar functioned as pillars of the state structure under the Cholas.
- They discharged many of the administrative, fiscal and judicial responsibilities of the state. They held hereditary land rights and were responsible for remitting the tax from the respective nadu to the state.
- Landholders of the nadu held the honorific titles such as asudaiyan (**possessor of land**), **araiyan (leader) and kilavan (headman)**. There were functionaries such as the naattukanakku and nattuviyavan, recording the proceedings of the Nattar.

Economy

Agriculture

- One of the major developments in this period was the expansion of agriculture.
- People settled in fertile river valleys, and even in areas where there were no rivers, and arrangements were made for irrigation by digging tanks, wells and canals. This led to the production of food grain surplus. Society got differentiated in a big way.
- The Chola state collected land tax out of the agrarian surplus for its revenue. There was an elaborate **"department of land revenue" known as puravuvvari-tinaikkalam, with its chief called puravuvvari-tinaikkalanayagam.**

Land Revenue and Survey

- For the purposes of assessing tax, the Cholas undertook extensive land surveys and revenue settlements. **Rajaraja I (1001), Kulotunga I (1086) and Kulotunga III (1226)** appointed people for land survey so that the land could be classified and assessed for the purposes of taxation.
- Like other functionaries of the state, the surveyors of the land called naduvagaiseykira too hailed from the landholding communities.
- Various units of the land measurement such as **kuli, ma, veli, patti, padagam, etc.** are known, with local variations.
- Generally, taxes were collected in different forms. The taxes collected included **irai, kanikadan, iraikattina-kanikadan and kadami.**
- An important category of tax was kudimai. Kudimai was paid by the cultivating tenants to the government and to the landlords, the bearers of honorific titles such as udaiyan, araiyan and kilavar.
- The tax rates were fixed depending on the fertility of the soil and the status of the landholder.
- Opati were levied and collected by the king and local chiefs. Temples and Brahmins were exempted from paying the taxes.
- The tax paid in kind was referred to as iraikattina-nellu. All these were mostly realised from the Kavery delta but not widely in the outskirts of the kingdom.
- At the **ur (village) level, urar (village assembly)** were responsible for collecting the taxes and remitting them to the government. At the nadu level, the nattar were responsible for remitting taxes.

Irrigation

- Cholas undertook measures to improve the irrigation system that was in practice. As the state was drawing most of its revenue from agriculture, the Cholas focused their efforts on managing water resources.
- Vativaykkal, a criss-cross channel, is a traditional way of harnessing rain water in the Kavery delta. Vati runs in the north-south direction while vaykkal runs in the east-west direction.

- Technically, vati is a drainage channel and a vaykkal is a supply channel. The water running through vaykkal to the field was to be drained out to vati and to another vaykkal. Rain water would flow from where the natural canal started.
- Many irrigation canals are modifications of such natural canals. The harnessed water was utilised alternately through vati and vaykkal.
- Here the mechanism designed was such that water was distributed to the parcelled out lands in sequel.
- Many canals were named after the kings, queens and gods. Some examples of the names are **Uttamacholavaykkal**, **Panca-vanamadevi-vaykkal** and **Ganavathy-vaykkal**. **Ur-vaykkal** was owned jointly by the landowners. The nadu level vaykkal was referred to as nattu-vaykkal.
- The turn system was practiced for distributing the water. Chola inscriptions list some bigsize irrigation tanks such as **Cholavaridhi**, **Kaliyaneri**, **Vairamegatataka** created by the Pallavas, Bahur big tank and Rajendra Cholaperiyaeri.
- For the periodical or seasonal maintenance and repair of irrigation works, conscripted labour was used.

Water Management

- Different kinds of water rights were assigned. These rights regulated the share of water from the tanks and wells; it also entailed the right of deepening and broadening the channels and repairing the irrigation system.
- The allotment of water is described as nirkkiintavaru (share of water as allotted). The water was released through **kumizh (sluice)** or **talaivay (head-channel)**.
- Royal orders warned the people against the violation of water rights and encroachment of water resources gifted to the brahmadeya settlements. Commonly owned village tank was called **enkalkulam (our tank)**.
- Land transaction in the form of donation and endowment were accompanied by water rights as well. For the periodical and seasonal maintenance and repair of the irrigation tanks, rendering free labour was in practice.
- **Vetti** and **amanji** were the forms of free labour related to public works at the village level. Village assemblies under the Cholas collected a tax called eriyam, which was utilised for repairing irrigation tanks.
- Sometimes local leaders like araiyan repaired and renovated irrigation tanks destroyed in a storm. There were instances of the water from a tank shared by villagers and the temples.
- Special groups known as **talaivayar**, **talaivay-chanrar** and **eri-araiyarkal** were in charge of releasing the water through the head channel and sluice from the rivers or tanks.
- A group of people who were in charge of kulam was called **kulattar**. In later period, temples were entrusted with the upkeep of the irrigation sources.

Society and its Structure

- In the predominantly agrarian society prevailing during the Chola period, landholding was the prime determinant of social status and hierarchy.
- The Brahmin landholders called brahmadeya-kilavars at the top brahmadeya settlements with tax exemption were created, displacing (**kudi neekki**) the local peasants.
- Temples were gifted land known as devadana, which were exempted from tax, as in brahmadeyams. The temples became the hub of several activities during this period. The landholders of vellanvagai villages were placed next in the social hierarchy.
- **Ulukudi (tenants)** could not own land but had to cultivate the lands of Brahmins and holders of vellanvagai villages.
- While landholders retained **melvaram (major share in harvest)**, the **ulukudi got kizh varam (lower share)**. Labourers (**paniceymakkal**) and slaves (**adimaigal**) stayed at the bottom of social hierarchy.
- Outside the world of agrarian society were the armed men, artisans and traders. There are documents that make mention of cattle-keepers who apparently constituted a considerable section of the population.
- There certainly were tribals and forest-dwellers, about whom our knowledge is scanty.

Religion

- Puranic Hinduism, represented by the worship of Siva, Vishnu and associated deities, had become popular by the time of the Cholas.
- A large number of temples dedicated to these deities were built. The temples were provided vast areas of land and a considerable section of population came under their influence. Chola rulers were ardent Saivites.
- **Parantaka I and Uttama Chola (907–970)** made provisions and gifted the lands to promote religion. In a fresco painting in which Rajaraja I is portrayed with his wives worshipping Lord Siva in Thanjavur Brihadishvarar temple.
- One of the titles of **Rajaraja I is Siva Pada Sekaran**, i.e. one who clutches the foot of Lord Siva. Siva was the preeminent god for the Cholas and he was represented in two forms.
- The iconic form of Siva was Lingodhbhava, and the Nataraja idol was the human form. A trace of the locations of temple centres in Kavery delta could provide us the map of an agrarian-political geography spatially and temporally.
- The repeated representation of Tripurantaka (the destroyer of three mythical cities of asura) form of Siva in sculpture and painting gave him a warrior aspect and helped in gaining legitimacy for the ruler. The representation of **Nataraja or Adal Vallan (king of dance)** in the form of idol was the motif of Tamil music, dance and drama with hymns composed by Nayanmars, the Saiva saints.
- These hymns sang the praise of Siva and extolled the deeds of god. They held great appeal to the devotees from different social sections. The Saiva canon, the Thirumurai, was codified after it was recovered by Nambi Andar Nambi.

- **Oduvars and Padikam Paduvars** were appointed to sing in the temples to recite Thirumurai daily in the temple premises. The singers of hymns were known as **vinnappamseivar**. The players of percussion instruments also were appointed. Girls were dedicated for the service of god.
- Musicians and dance masters also were appointed to train them. A highly evolved philosophical system called **Saiva Siddhanta** was founded during this period. The foundational text of this philosophy, **Sivagnana Bodham**, was composed by **Meikandar**.
- Fourteen texts, collectively called **Saiva Siddhantha Sastram**, form the core of this philosophy.
- In later times, many **Saiva** monasteries emerged and expounded this philosophy. The devotion of Chola rulers to **Saivism** became a strong passion in due course of time.
- **Kulothunga II**, for instance, exhibited such a trait. The theological tussle was fierce between state religion, **Saivism**, and **Vaishnavism** so much so that **Vaishnavism** was sidelined to the extent of its apostle **Sri Ramanujar** leaving the Chola country for **Melkote** in **Karnataka**.

Builders of Temples

- The Cholas built and patronised innumerable temples. The royal temples in **Thanjavur**, **Gangaikonda Chozhapuram** and **Darasuram** are the repositories of architecture, sculpture, paintings and iconography of the Chola arts.
- The temples became the hub of social, economic, cultural and political activities. The paraphernalia of the temples including temple officials, dancers, musicians, singers, players of musical instruments and their masers headed by the priests worshipping the gods reflect the royal court.
- In the initial stages, architecturally, the Chola temples are simple and modest. Sepulchral temples (**pallip-padai**) also were built where the kings were buried.

Temple as a Social Institution

- Chola temples became the arena of social celebrations and functioned as social institutions. They became the hub of societal space in organising social, political, economic and cultural activities.
- The prime temple officials were **koyirramar**, **koyilkanakku** (temple accountant), **devakanmi** (agent of god), **srivaisnavar**, **cantesar** (temple manager) and others. They promoted the development of learning, dance, music, painting and drama.
- A play called **Rajarajanatakam**, based on the life of **Rajaraja I**, was performed in the **Thanjavur** temple. The festivals of **Chithirai Tiruvizha**, **Kartigai** and **Aippasivizha** were celebrated.
- It is said that singing hymns in temple premises promoted oral literacy. Traditional dance items like **kudak-kuthu** and **sakkaik-kuthu** were portrayed in the form of sculptures and

paintings in the temples in **Kilapalivur, Tiruvorriyur**. Nirutya and karna poses are shown in sculptural forms in the Thanjavur big temple.

- Traditional Tamil musical instruments also were portrayed in this way. The pastoral group, as a mark of devotion, donated livestock of specified number to the temples so as to maintain the perpetual lamp to be lit in the temple.
- To record their gift, their names were engraved in the inscriptions of royal temple. Thus, they earned royal affinity.
- The oil pressers called **Sankarapadiyar** supplied oil to the temple and became part of the functionaries of the temples. In times of famine, some of them sold themselves to the temple as servants.
- Temples functioned as banks by advancing loans and by purchasing and receiving endowments and donations.
- They also became educational centres as training was imparted in Vedas, music and the arts.
- Sculpture and metal work too were promoted. Temple accounts were audited and the auditor was called **koyilkanakku**.

Gangaikonda Chozhapuram

- In commemoration of his victory in North India, **Rajendra I** built **Gangaikonda Chozhapuram on the model of Brihadisvarar temple in Thanjavur**.
- He built an irrigation tank called Cholagangam near the capital called **Jala-stambha (water-pillar)**.
- It became the coronation centre, which was a Chola landmarks. The sculptures of **Ardhanariswarar, Durga, Vishnu, Surya, Cantesa Anugrahamurty** are the best pieces of the idols of gods placed in the niches of the outer wall of sanctum

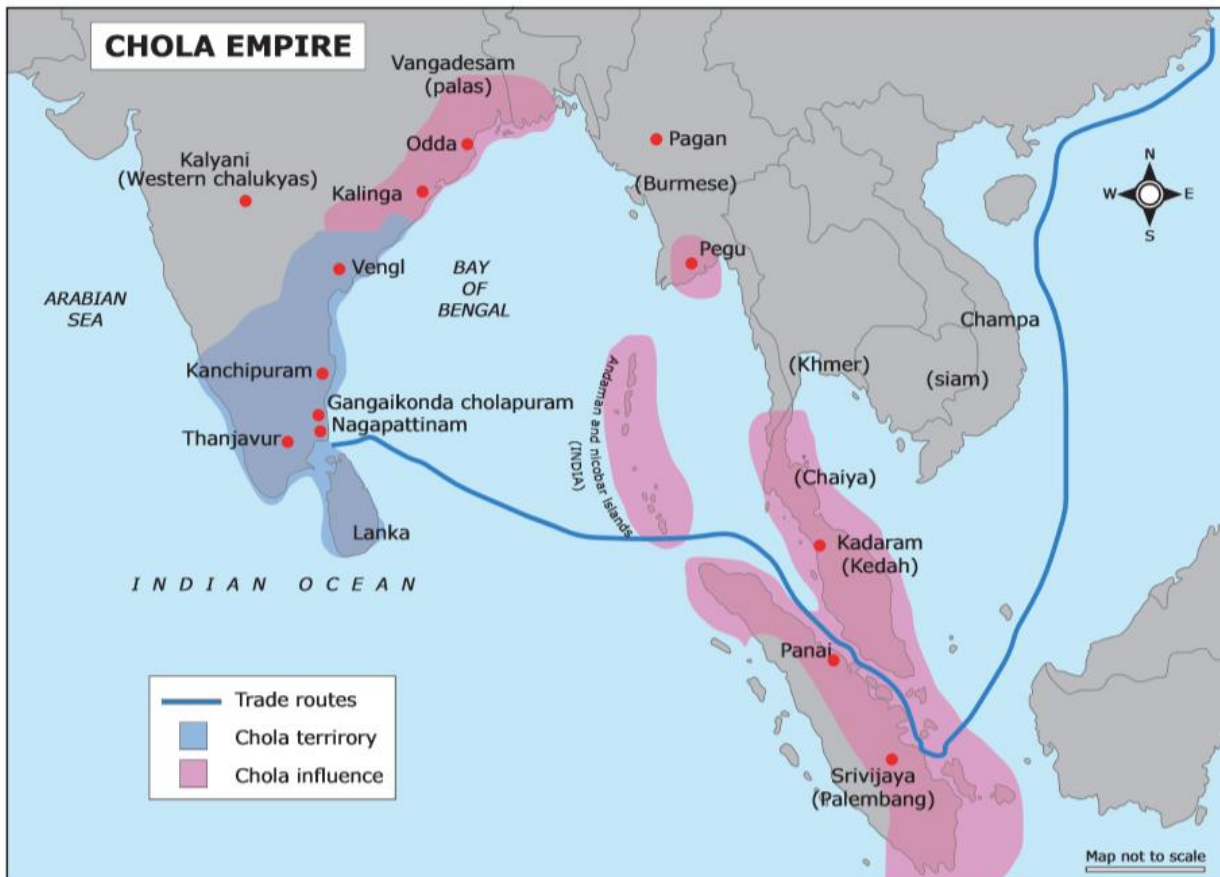
Darasuram Temple

Darasuram Temple, built by **Rajaraja II (1146–1172)**, is yet another important contribution of the Cholas to temple architecture. Incidents from the Periyapuram, in the form of miniatures, are depicted on the base of the **garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) wall of the temple**.

Trade

- Increased production in agriculture as well as artisanal activities led to trade and growing exchange of goods for goods. This trade activity involved the notions of price, profit and market, which were not known in South India in the earlier period.
- Two guildlike groups are known: **anjuvannattar and manigramattar**. Anjuvannattar comprised West Asians, including Jews, Christians and Muslims.
- They were maritime traders and were settled all along the port towns of the west coast. It is said that manigramattar were busy with trade in the hinterland.

- They settled in interior towns like **Kodumbalur, Uraiyur, Kovilpatti, Piranmalai** and others. In due course, both groups merged and got incorporated under the banner of ainutruvar, disai-ayirattu-ainutruvar and valanciya functioning through the head guild in Ayyavole in Karnataka.
- This ainutruvar guild controlled the maritime trade covering South-east Asian countries. **Munai-santai (Pudukkottai), Mylapore and Tiruvotriyur (Chennai), Nagapattinam, Vishakapattinam and Krishnapattinam (south Nellore)** became the centres of the maritime trade groups.
- In the interior, goods were carried on pack animals and boat. The items exported from the Chola land were sandalwood, ebony, condiments, precious gems, pepper, oil, paddy, grains and salt. Imports included camphor, copper, tin, mercury and etc.
- Traders also took interest in irrigation affairs. Valanciya, a group of traders, once dug an irrigation tank called ainutruvapperari in Pudukkottai.



Cholas as Patrons of Learning

- Chola kings were great patrons of learning who lavished support on Sanskrit education by instituting charities.

- From the inscriptions, we see that literacy skills were widespread. The great literary works **Kamba Ramayanam and Periyapuranam** belong to this period. Rajendra I established a Vedic college at **Ennayiram (South Arcot district)**.
- There were 340 students in this Vaishnava centre, learning the Vedas, Grammar and Vedanta under 14 teachers.
- This example was later followed by his successors and, as a result, two more such colleges were founded, at Tribuvani near **Pondicherry in 1048** and the other at **Tirumukudal, Chengalpattu district, in 1067**.
- In Sanskrit centres, subjects like Vedas, Sanskrit grammar, religion and philosophies were taught. Remuneration was given to teachers in land as service tenure.

The End of Chola Rule

The Chola dynasty was paramount in South India from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. By the end of the twelfth century, local chiefs began to grow in prominence, which weakened the centre. With frequent invasions of Pandyas, the once mighty empire, was reduced to the status of a dependent on the far stronger Hoysalas. In **1264, the Pandyan ruler, Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan I, sacked the Chola's capital of Gangaikonda Chozhapuram**. With Kanchipuram lost earlier to the Telugu Cholas, the remaining Chola territories passed into the hands of the Pandyan king. **1279** marks the end of Chola dynasty when King Maravarman Kulasekara Pandyan I defeated the last king Rajendra Chola III and established the rule by Pandyas.

PANDYAS

- Pandyas were one of the muvendars that ruled the southern part of India, though intermittently, until the pre-modern times. **Ashoka, in his inscriptions, refers to Cholas, Cheras, Pandyas and Satyaputras as peoples of South India.**
- Korkai, a town historically associated with pearl fisheries, is believed to have been their early capital and port. They moved to Madurai later. Many early Tamil inscriptions of Pandyas have been found in Madurai and its surroundings.
- Madurai is mentioned as Matirai in these Tamil inscriptions, whereas Tamil classics refer to the city as Kudal, which means assemblage.
- In one of the recently discovered Tamil inscriptions from Puliman Kompai, a village in Pandya territory, Kudal is mentioned. In **Pattinappalai and Maduraikkanchi**, **Koodal** is mentioned as the capital city of Pandyas.
- It finds mention in **Ettuthogai (Eight Anthologies)** also. So, historically Madurai and Kudal have been concurrently used.

Sources

- The history of the Pandyas of the Sangam period, circa third century BCE to third century CE, has been reconstructed from various sources such as megalithic burials, inscriptions in Tamil brahmi, and the Tamil poems of the Sangam literature.
- The Pandyas established their supremacy in South Tamil Nadu by the end of the sixth century CE. A few copper plates form the source of our definite knowledge of the Pandyas from the seventh to the ninth century.
- The **Velvikkudi grant of Nedunjadayan** is the most important among them. Copper plates inform the essence of royal orders, genealogical list of the kings, their victory over the enemies, endowments and donations they made to the temples and the Brahmins.
- Rock inscriptions give information about the authors of rock-cut cave temples, irrigation tanks and canals.
- Accounts of travellers such as **Marco Polo, Wassaff and Ibn-Batuta** are useful to know about political and socio-cultural developments of this period.
- **Madurai Tala Varalaru, Pandik Kovai and Madurai Tiruppanimalai** provide information about the Pandyas of Madurai of later period.
- Though pre-Pallavan literary works do not speak of Sangam as an academy, the term Sangam occurs in Iraiyanar Akapporul of late seventh or eighth century CE.
- The term Sangam, which means an academy, is used in late medieval literary works like **Periya Puranam and Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam**.

Territory

- The territory of Pandyas is called **Pandymandalam, Thenmandalam or Pandynadu**, which lay in the rocky, hilly regions and mountain ranges except the areas fed by the rivers Vaigai and Tamiraparni.
- River Vellar running across Pudukkottai region had been demarcated as the northern border of the Pandya country, while Indian Ocean was its southern border.
- The Western Ghats remained the border of the west while the Bay of Bengal formed the eastern border.

Pandya Revival (600–920)

- The revival of the Pandyas seems to have taken place after the disappearance of the Kalabhras.
- Once hill tribes, the Kalabhras had soon taken to a settled life, extending their patronage to Buddhists and Jains.
- Kadunkon, who recovered Pandya territory from the Kalabhras according to copper plates, was succeeded by two others. Of them, Sendan possessed warlike qualities and his title Vanavan is suggestive of his conquest of Cheras.

- The next one, **Arikesari Maravarman (624–674)**, an illustrious early Pandya, ascended the throne in 642, according to a Vaigai river bed inscription. He was a contemporary of **Mahendravarman I and Narsimhavarman I**.
- Inscriptions and copper plates praise his victory over his counterparts such as Cheras, Cholas, Pallavas and Sinhalese.
- Arikesari is identified with Kun Pandian, the persecutor of Jains. After his two successors, **Kochadayan Ranadhira (700–730) and Maravarman Rajasimha I (730–765)**, came **Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadayn (Varaguna I) (756–815)**, the donor of the **Velvikkudi plates**.
- He was also known as the greatest of his dynasty and successfully handled the Pallavas and the Cheras.
- He expanded the Pandya territory into Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, Salem and Coimbatore districts. He is also credited with building several Siva and Vishnu temples.
- The next king **Srimara Srivallabha (815–862)** invaded Ceylon and maintained his authority. However, he was subsequently defeated by **Pallava Nandivarman III (846–869)**.
- He was followed by Varaguna II who was defeated by **Aparajita Pallava (885–903) at Sripurmbiyam**.
- successors, Parantaka Viranarayana and Rajasimha II, could not stand up to the rising Chola dynasty under Parantaka I. Parantaka I defeated the Pandya king Rajasimha II who fled the country in 920CE.

Rise of Pandyas Again (1190–1310)

- In the wake of the vacuum in Chola state in the last quarter of 12th century after the demise of Adhi Rajendra, Chola viceroyalty became weak in the Pandya country.
- Taking advantage of this development, Pandya chieftains tried to assert and rule independently. Sri Vallaba Pandyan fought Rajaraja II and lost his son in the battle. Using this situation, **the five Pandyas waged a war against Kulotunga I (1070–1120) and were defeated**.
- In 1190, Sadayavarman Srivallabhan, at the behest of Kulotunga I, started ruling the Pandya territory.
- He was anointed in Madurai with sceptre and throne. To commemorate his coronation, he converted a peasant settlement **Sundaracholapuram as Sundarachola Chaturvedimangalam**, a taxexempted village for Brahmins.
- After the decline of the Cholas, Pandya kingdom became the leading Tamil dynasty in the thirteenth century.
- Madurai was their capital. Kayal was their great port. Marco Polo, the famous traveller from Venice, visited **Kayal twice, in 1288 and in 1293**.
- He tells us that this port town was full of ships from Arabia and China and bustling with business activities

Sadaiyavarman Sundarapandyan

- The illustrious ruler of the second Pandya kingdom was **Sadaiyavarman (Jatavarman) Sundarapandyan (1251– 1268)**, who not only brought the entire Tamil Nadu under his rule, but also exercised his authority up to Nellore in Andhra.
- Under his reign, the Pandya state reached its zenith, keeping the Hoysalas in check. Under many of his inscriptions, he is eulogized. Sundarapandyan conquered the Chera ruler, the chief of Malanadu, and extracted a tribute from him.
- The decline of the Chola state emboldened the Boja king of Malwa region Vira Someshwara to challenge Sundarapandyan, who in a war at Kannanur defeated him. Sundarapandian plundered his territory.
- He put **Sendamangalam** under siege. After defeating the Kadava chief, who ruled from Cuddalore and wielded power in northern Tamil Nadu, Sundarapandyan demanded tribute.
- He captured the western region and the area that lay between present day **Arcot and Salem**. After killing the king of Kanchipuram in a battle, Pandyas took his territory. But, by submitting to the Pandyas, the brother of the slain king got back Kanchipuram and agreed to pay tribute.
- Along with him, there were two or three co-regents who ruled simultaneously: Vikrama Pandyan and Vira Pandyan.
- A record of **Vira Pandyan (1253–1256)** states that he took **Eelam (Ceylon), Kongu and the Chola mandalam (Chola country)**.

Maravarman Kulasekharan

- After **Sundarapandyan**, **Maravarman Kulasekharan ruled successfully for a period of 40 years**, giving the country peace and prosperity. We have authentic records about the last phase of his reign.
- He ascended the throne in **1268 and ruled till 1312**. He had two sons, and in 1302, the accession of the elder son, Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan III, as co-regent took place.
- The king's appointment of Sundarapandyan as a co-regent provoked the other son Vira Pandyan and so he killed his father Maravarman Kulasekharan.
- In the civil war that ensued, Vira Pandyan won and became firmly established in his kingdom. The other son, **Sundara Pandyan**, fled to Delhi and took refuge under the protection of **Alauddin Khalji**.
- This turn of events provided an opening for the invasion of Malik Kafur.

Invasion of Malik Kafur

- When **Malik Kafur arrived in Madurai in 1311**, he found the city empty and Vira Pandyan had already fled.
- In Amir Khusru's estimate, **512 elephants, 5,000 horses along with 500 mounds of jewel of diamonds, pearls, emeralds and rubies** are said to have been taken by Malik Kafur.

- The Madurai temple was desecrated and an enormous amount of wealth was looted. The wealth he carried was later used in Delhi by Alauddin Khalji, who had then taken over the throne, to wean away the notables in the court to his side against other claimants.
- After Malik Kafur's invasion, the Pandyan kingdom came to be divided among a number of the main rulers in the Pandya's family.
- In Madurai, a Muslim state subordinate to the Delhi Sultan came to be established and continued until 1335 CE when the **Muslim Governor of Madurai Jalaluddin Asan Shah** threw off his allegiance and declared himself independent.

State

- Pandya kings preferred Madurai as their capital. Madurai has been popularly venerated as Kudal and Tamil Kelukudal. The kings are traditionally revered as Kudalkon, Kudal Nagar Kavalan, Madurapura Paramesvaran.
- The titles of the early Pandyas are: **Pandiyatirasana, Pandiya Maharasan, Mannar Mannan, Avaniba Sekaran, Eka Viran, Sakalapuvana Chakkaravarti and others**. Titles of the later Pandyas in Sanskrit include Kodanda Raman, Kolakalan, Puvanekaviran, and Kaliyuga Raman.
- Titles in chaste Tamil are Sembian, Vanavan, Thennavan and others.
- The Pandyas derived military advantage over their neighbours by means of their horses, which they imported through their connection to a wider Arab commercial and cultural world.

Palace and Couch

- Royal palaces were called **Tirumaligai and Manaparanan Tirumaligai**. Kings, seated on a royal couch, exercised the power.
- The naming of couches after the local chiefs attests to the legitimacy of overlordship of the kings. The prominent names of such couches are **Munaiya Daraiyan, Pandiya Daraiyan and Kalinkat Traiyan**.
- The king issued royal order orally while majestically seated on the couches. It was documented by royal scribe called Tirumantira Olai.

Royal officials

- A band of officials executed the royal orders. The prime minister was called uttaramantri.
- The historical personalities like **Manickavasagar, Kulaciraiyar and Marankari** worked as ministers.
- The royal secretariat was known as Eluttu Mandapam. Akapparivara Mudalikal were the personal attendants of the kings.

- The most respected officials were **Maran Eyinan, Sattan Ganapathy, Enathi Sattan, Tira Tiran, Murthi Eyinan and others**. The titles of military commanders were **Palli Velan, Parantakan Pallivelan, Maran Adittan and Tennavan Tamizhavel**.

Political Divisions

- Pandya Mandalam or Pandya Nadu consisted of many valanadus, which, in turn, were divided into many nadus and kurrams.
- The administrative authorities of **nadus were the nattars**. Nadu and kurram contained settlements, viz., mangalam, nagaram, ur and kudi, which were inhabited by different social groups.
- A unique political division in **Pandya Mandalam is Kulakkil**, i.e. area under irrigation tank. For instance, Madurai is described in an inscription as Madakkulakkil Madurai.
- The duty of the nattar was to assess the qualities of land under cultivation and levy taxes. In surveying the lands, the officials used rods of **14 and 24 feet**.
- After the measurement, the authorities donated the lands. Salabogam land was assigned to Brahmins.
- The land assigned to ironsmiths was called tattarkani; for carpenters, it was known as taccu-maniyam. Bhattavriutti is the land donated for Brahmin group for imparting education.

Administration and Religion: Seventh to Ninth Centuries

- An inscription from **Manur (Tirunelveli district)**, dating to 800, provides an account of village administration. It looks similar to Chola's local governance, which included village assemblies and committees.
- Both civil and military powers were vested in the same person. The Pandya kings of the period supported and promoted Tamil and Sanskrit.
- The **great Saiva and Vaishnava saints** contributed to the growth of Tamil literature. The period was marked by intense religious tussles. The rise of the Bhakti movement invited heterodox scholars for debate.
- Many instances of the defeat of Buddhism and Jainism in such debates are mentioned in Bhakti literature.

Economy

Society

Kings and local chiefs created Brahmin settlements called **Mangalam or Chaturvedimangalam** with irrigation facilities. These settlements were given royal names and names of the deities. Influential Brahmins had honorific titles such as **Brahmmadhi Rajan and Brahmmaraiyan**.

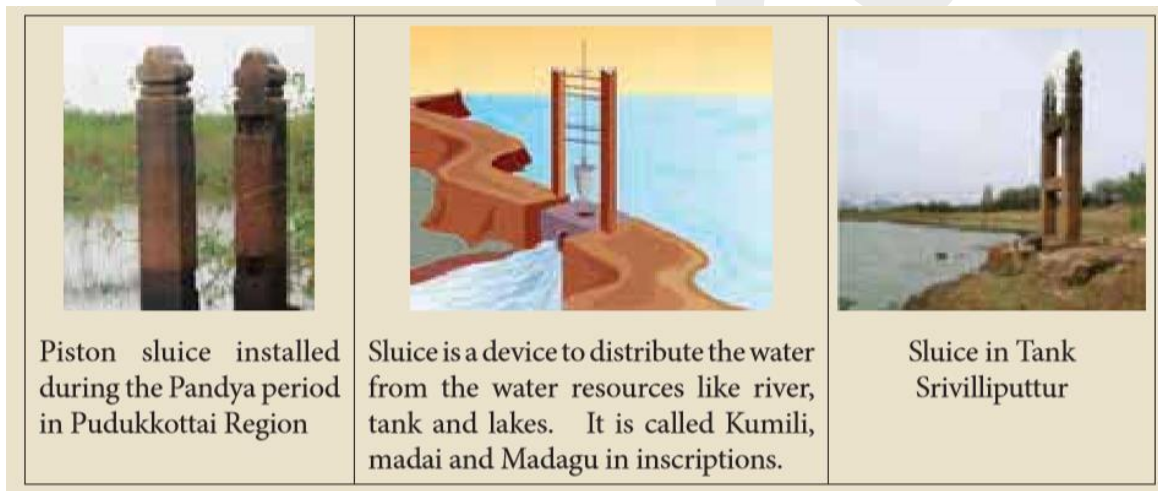
Trade

- It was not the Khalji's invasion from the north that brought the Muslims into Tamil country for the first time.
- Arab settlements on the west coast of southern India, from the seventh century, led to the expansion of their trade connection to the east coast of Tamizh country.
- This was because the governments of the east coast pursued a more liberal and enlightened policy towards the overseas traders. Their charters exempted traders from various kinds of port dues and tolls.
- In Kayal, there was an agency established by an Arab chieftain by name Maliku-l-Islam Jamaluddin.
- This agency facilitated the availability of horses to Pandya kings. In the inscriptions, the traders are referred to as **nikamattor, nanadesi, ticai-ayiratu-ainutruvar, ainutruvar, manikiramattar and patinen-vishyattar**.
- They founded the trade guilds in Kodumpalur and Periyakulam.
- The goods traded were spices, pearls, precious stones, horses, elephants and birds. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, horse trade was brisk.
- Marco Polo and Wassaff state that the kings invested in horses as there was a need of horses for ceremonial purposes and for fighting wars. Those who were trading in horses were called kudirai-chetti.
- They were active in maritime trade also. The busiest port town under the Pandyas was **Kayalpattinam (now in Thoothukudi district)** on the east coast.
- Gold coins were in circulation as the trade was carried through the medium of gold. It was variously called **kasu, palankasu, anradunarpalankasu, kanam, kalancu and pon**.
- The titular gods of the traders are Ayirattu Aynurruvaar Udaiyar and Sokka Nayaki Amman.
- The periodically held fairs were called Tavalamin settlements called teru where the traders lived.

Irrigation

- The Pandya rulers created a number of irrigation sources and they were named after the members of the royal family. Some of them were **Vasudeva Peraru, Virapandya Peraru, Srivallaba Peraru and Parakirama Pandya Peraru**.
- The tanks were named Tirumaleri, Maraneri, Kaliyaneri and Kadaneri. On either side of the rivers Vaigai and Tamiraparni, canals leading to the tanks for irrigation were built.
- The Sendan Maran inscription of Vaigai river bed speaks of a sluice installed by him to distribute the water from the river. Sri Maran Srivallabhan created a big tank, which is till now in use.
- Like Pallavas in northern districts, Pandyas introduced the irrigation technology in the southern districts of Tamil country.

- In building the banks of the tanks, the ancient architect used the thread to maintain the level. Revetment of the inner side of the banks with stone slabs is one of the features of irrigation technique in Pandya country.
- In the time of the later **Pandyas (around 1212)**, an official constructed a canal leading from river Pennai to the lands of Tiruvannamalai temple. In dry-zone Ramanathapuram also, tanks were created.
- In these areas, such irrigation works were done by local administrative bodies, local chiefs and officials. Repairs were mostly undertaken by local bodies. Sometimes, traders also dug out tanks for irrigation.
- **Irappaikkuti-kilavan**, a local chief, built many tanks and repaired the tanks in disrepair. The actual landowning groups are described as the Pumipittirar.
- Historically they were locals and hence they were referred to as nattumakkal. The communal assembly of this group is **Cittiramel-periyanattar**.



Literacy

- The mission of promoting literacy was carried on through many ways. Appointment of singers to recite the Bhakti hymns in temple has been seen as the attempt of promoting literacy.
- In theatres, plays were staged for a similar purpose. Bhattavirutti and salabogam were endowments provided for promoting Sanskrit education. Brahmins studied the Sanskrit treatises in educational centres **kadigai, salai and vidyastanam**.
- From 12th century, monasteries came up and they were attached to the temples to promote education with religious thrust.
- A copper inscription says that an academy was set up to promote Tamil and to translate Mahabharatam.
- The important Tamil literary texts composed in the reign of the **Pandyas** were **Tiruppavai, Tirvempavai, Tiruvasagam, Tirukkuvai and Tirumantiram**.

Religion

- It is said that Pandyas were Jains initially and later adopted Saivism. Inscriptions and the sculptures in the temples attest to this belief. The early rock-cut cave temples were the outcrop of transitional stage in religion and architecture.
- Medieval Pandyas and later Pandyas repaired many temples and endowed them with gold and land. The vimanam over the sanctum of Srirangam and Chidambaram temples were covered with golden leaves.
- Sadaiyavarman Sundarapandyan was anointed in Srirangam temple, and to commemorate it, he donated an idol of Vishnu to the temple. The inner walls of this temple and three other gopurams were plated with gold.
- Pandyas extended patronage to Vedic practices. **Palyagasalai Mudukudumi Peruvaluthi**, who performed many Vedic rituals, is identified with Pandyas of the Sangam period.
- Velvikkudi copper plates as well as inscriptional sources mention the rituals like **Ashvamedayaga, Hiranyagarbha and Vajapeya yagna**, conducted by every great Pandya king.
- The impartiality of rulers towards both Saivism and Vaishnavism is also made known in the invocatory portions of the inscriptions. Some kings were ardent Saivite; some were ardent Vaishnavites.
- Temples of both sects were patronised through land grant, tax exemption, renovation and addition of gopuras and spacious mandapas.

Temples

- Pandyas built different models of temples. They are sepulchral temple (e.g **sundarapandisvaram**), rock-cut cave temples and structural temples.
- Medieval Pandyas and later Pandyas did not build any new temples but maintained the existing temples, enlarging them with the addition of **gopuras, mandapas and circumbulations**.
- The monolithic mega-sized ornamented pillars are the unique feature of the medieval Pandya style. The early Pandya temples are modest and simple. In these temples of the Pandya country, the sculptures of **Siva, Vishnu, Kotravai, Ganesa, Subramanya, Surya and Brahma** are best specimens.
- Pandyas specially patronised Meenakshi temple and kept expanding its premises by adding gopuras and mandapas.
- The prominent rock-cut cave temples created by the early Pandyas are found in **Pillayarapatti, Tirumeyyam, Kuntrakkudi, Tiruchendur, Kalugumalai, Kanyakumari and Sittannavasal**.
- Paintings are found in the temples in **Sittannavasal, Arittaapatti, Tirumalaipuram and Tirunedunkarai**. A 9th century inscription from Sittannavasal cave temple informs that the cave was authored by Ilam Kautamar.

- Another inscription of the same period tells us that Sri Maran Srivallaban renovated this temple.
- The fresco paintings on the walls, ceilings and pillars are great works of art. These paintings portray the figures of dancing girls, the king and the queen.
- The painting of water pool depicts some aquatic creatures, flowers and birds and some mammals.
- The maritime history of India would be incomplete if the history of the Pandyas of Tamil country is skipped. The busiest port-towns were located all along the east coast of the Tamizh country.
- By establishing matrimonial link with Southeast Asian dynasties, Pandyas left an imprint in maritime trade activities.

More to Know:

1. Cintamani, Mylapore, Tiruvotriyur, Tiruvadanai and Mahabalipuram are busy coastal trading centres recorded in inscriptions.
2. Horse trade of that time has been recorded by **Wassaff**. He writes: "...as many as 10,000 horses were imported into Kayal and other ports of India of which 1,400 were to be of Jamaluddin's own breed. The average cost of each horse was 220 dinars of 'red gold'."
3. **Marco Polo, a Venetian (Italy)** traveller who visited Pandya country lauded the king for fair administration and generous hospitality for foreign merchants. In his travel account, he also records the incidents of sati and the polygamy practiced by the kings.
4. Saivite saint Thirugnanasambandar converted Arikesari from Jainism to Saivism.
5. Seethalai Saththanar, the author of epic Manimekalai, hailed from Madurai.

6. Sambuvarayars

- Sambuvarayars were chieftains in the North Arcot and Chengalpattu regions during the reign of Chola kings, Rajathiraja and Kulothunga III.
- Though they were feudatories, they were found fighting sometimes on the side of their overlords and occasionally against them also.
- From the late 13th century to the end of Pandya ascendancy, they wielded power along the Palar river region. The kingdom was called Raja Ghambira Rajyam and the capital was in Padaividu.
- Inscriptions of **Vira Chola Sambavarayan (1314–1315CE)** have been found. **Sambuvarayars assumed high titles such as Sakalaloka Chakravartin Venru Mankonda Sambuvarayan (1322–1323 CE) and Sakalaloka Chakravartin Rajanarayan Sambuvarayan (1337–1338 CE).**

- The latter who ruled for 20 years was overthrown by Kumarakampana of Vijayanagar. It is after this campaign that Kumarakampana went further south, as far as Madurai, where he vanquished the Sultan of Madurai in a battle

7. Brihadishvarar Temple

- The Grand Temple of Thanjavur, known as **Rajarajisvaram and Brihadishvarar Temple**, stands as an outstanding example of Chola architecture, painting, sculpture and iconography. This temple greatly legitimised Rajaraja's polity.
- The sanctum with a vimana of 190 feet is capped with a stone weighing 80 tons. The figures of **Lakshmi, Vishnu, Ardhanarisvara and Bikshadana**, a mendicant form of Siva, on the outer walls of the sanctum are some unique features.
- The fresco paintings and the miniature sculptures of the scenes from puranas and epics in the temple walls reveal the religious ideology of the Chola rulers.
- Dancing girls, musicians and music masters were selected from different settlements cutting across the nadu divisions and were attached to this temple.
- Singers had been appointed to recite the bhakti hymns in the temple premises.

8. Paddy as tax was collected by a unit called **kalam (28 kg)**. Rajaraja I standardised the collection of tax. He collected 100 kalam from the land of one **veli (about 6.5 acres)**, the standard veli being variable according to fertility of the soil and the number of crops raised.

9. The irrigation work done by **Rajendra Chola I at Gangaikonda Chozhapuram** was an embankment of solid masonry 16 miles long. Rajendra described it as his jalamayam jayasthambham, meaning "**pillar of victory in water**". The Arab traveller Alberuni visited the place a hundred years later. On seeing them he was wonder-struck and said: "Our people, when they see them, wonder at them, and are unable to describe them, much less construct anything like them", records Jawaharlal Nehru in The Glimpses of World History.

10. Local Elections and Uttaramerur Inscriptions

- **Two inscriptions (919 and 921) from a Brahmadeya (tax-free land gifted to Brahmins) called Uttaramerur (historically called Uttaramallur Caturvedimangalam)** give details of the process of electing members to various committees that administered the affairs of a Brahmin settlement. This village was divided into 30 wards.
- One member was to be elected from each ward. These members would become members of different committees: **public works committee, tank committee, garden committee, famine committee and gold committee**.
- The prescribed qualifications for becoming a ward member were clearly spelt out. **A male, above 35 but below 75, having a share of property and a house of his own, with knowledge of Vedas and bhasyas** was considered eligible.

- The names of qualified candidates from each ward were written on the palm-leaf slips and put into a pot (kudavolai). The eldest of the assembly engaged a boy to pull out one slip and would read the name of the person selected.