

2 ■■■ New Kings and Kingdoms

Lesson at a Glance

- During the period of seventh and twelfth centuries many new dynasties emerged in different parts of the subcontinent.
- The new rulers were previously the big landlords or warriors working under the existing kings as subordinates or **samantas**. They gradually gained power and wealth and thereafter declared themselves to be **maha-samanta**, **maha-mandleshwar** (the great lord of the circle or region). They were now independent lords.
- **Dantidurga**, a Rashtrakuta chief, overthrew his **Chalukya** overlord and performed a ritual known as **hiranya-garbha** (literally, the golden womb). It was done in order to transform one's identity as kshatriya, even if one was not one by birth.
- Some other lords like **Kadamba Mayurashrman** and **Gurjara-Pratihara Harichandra**, brahmanas by birth, used their military skills to establish their kingdoms in Karnataka and Rajasthan.
- Many of these new kings adopted high-sounding titles like **maharaja-adhiraja** (great king, overlord of kings), **tribhuvana-chakravartin** (lord of the three worlds), though they shared power with their samantas as well as with associations of peasants, traders and brahmanas.
- The **producers**—the peasants, cattle-keepers, artisans—were the main feeders to these states. The land was owned by the lords and so the producers were compelled to pay **rent** to the owners whereas traders were to pay **revenue** to the lords.
- These resources were used to finance the establishment of the king, construction of temples and forts, and also for fighting wars which were also done to expand resources through plundering, acquiring land and finding trade routes.
- The **revenue functionaries** were recruited from influential families, and positions were often hereditary. The similar was the case with army positions. In most cases such posts were held by the close relatives of the king.
- **Prashastis** were composed by learned Brahmanas in praise of the rulers. It used to depict the rulers as valiant, victorious warriors.
- Brahmanas were also rewarded by grants of land.

- **Kalhana's** long poem in Sanskrit recorded the history of kings who ruled over Kashmir. He usually used a variety of sources, including, inscriptions, documents, eyewitness accounts, and earlier histories, in order to present his accounts.
- Ruling Dynasties were based in a particular region.
- **Kanauj** was a prized area in the Ganga valley. There was a **tripartite struggle** among Gurjara-Pratihara, Rashtrakuta and Pala dynasties over Kanauj.
- Rulers used to build large temples in order to demonstrate their power and resources. So temples were the first target of when one ruler attacked over the other. One prominent reason for this was that the temples were often very rich.
- **Sultan Mahmud Ghazni** of Afghanistan (997—1030) extended his control over parts of Central Asia, Iran and the north-western part of the subcontinent. During his attacks he targeted wealthy temples, of which the temple of **Somnath** in Gujarat was the most prominent.
- **al-Baruni's** *Kitab al-Hind*, an Arabic work written on the request of Sultan, is an important source for historians. al-Baruni also consulted the Sanskrit scholars while preparing this book.
- Some other notable kings engaged in war were Chahamanas, later known as **Chauhans**, ruled over the region around Delhi and Ajmer and made efforts to expand their control to the west and the east. They were opposed by the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Gahadavalas of Uttar Pradesh.
- **Prithviraja III** (1168-1192), who defeated an Afghan ruler **Sultan Muhammad Ghori** in 1191, but lost to him the very next year, in 1192, was the most popular of the Chahamanas.
- Muttaraiyar, the subordinates to the Pallava kings of Kanchipuram, held power in the Kaveri delta.
- Vijayalaya, a member of the ancient chiefly family of the Cholas from Uraiyur, captured the delta from the Muttaraiyar in the middle of the ninth century. The town of Thanjavur and a temple for goddess Nishumbhasudini there were some of his major creations.
- Vijayalaya's successors expanded their kingdom in size and power adding the Pandyan and the Pallava territories to the south and north to their kingdom.
- **Rajraja I** was the most famous and powerful **Chola** ruler who became king in 985 and thereafter expanded control over most of these areas. He was known also for his reorganization of

administration of his empire. His son Rajendra I also added to the glory of his father.

- The big temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikonda-cholapuram, built by Rajaraja and Rajendra, are architectural marvels.
- The temples of Cholas were the nuclei of settlements that grew around them. They were also centres of craft production and were also endowed with land by rulers as well as others.
- The produce of the land were spared to maintain the specialists working at the temple and usually lived near it. They were the priests, garland makers, cooks, sweepers, musicians, dancers etc.
- Temples were not only the place of worship but they were the hub of economic, social and cultural life as well.
- The making of bronze images of the deities was the most distinctive of the crafts associated with the temples. Chola bronze images are still considered the best in the world.
- The development of agriculture contributed much to the achievements of the Cholas.
- Although 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 areas while land had to be levelled in some other regions.
- Embankments were built to prevent flood and canals were constructed to carry water to the fields. In many areas two crops were grown in a year.
- A variety of methods like digging of wells, placing huge tanks were used for irrigation.
- Most of the new rulers, as well as people living in villages, were actively involved in these activities.
- The administration of the empires was also well organized. **Ur**, the settlement of peasants grew prosperous with the spread of irrigation agriculture. Groups of such villages formed larger units called **nadu** performed several administrative functions including dispensing justice and collecting taxes.
- Rich peasants of the Vellala caste controlled over the affairs of the **nadu** under the supervision of the central Chola government. Some rich landowners were honoured with the titles like **Vendavelan** (a *velan* or peasant serving three kings) **Araiyyar** (chief) etc. and they were also entrusted with important offices of the state at the centre.

- As Brahmanas often received land grants or **brahmadeya**, 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 which worked efficiently. Their decisions were recorded in detail in inscriptions on the stone of walls of temples.
- Associations of traders known as **nagarams** also occasionally performed administrative functions in towns.
- Inscriptions from Uttaramerur in Chingleput district, Tamil Nadu, tell us the way in which the **sabha** was organised. There were separate committees to look after different works like that of irrigation, temples, etc. The allocation of work was decided through a lottery system.

■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

Let's Recall

Q. 1. Match the following:

Gurjara-Pratiharas
Rashtrakutas
Palas
Cholas

Western Deccan
Bengal
Gujarat and Rajasthan
Tamil Nadu

Ans. Gurjara-Pratiharas
Rashtrakutas
Palas
Cholas

Gujarat and Rajasthan
Western Deccan
Bengal
Tamil Nadu

Q. 2. Who were the parties involved in the 'tripartite struggle'?

Ans. The parties involved in the tripartite struggle were Gurjar-Pratihara, Rashtrakuta and Pala dynasties.

Q. 3. What were the qualifications necessary to become a member of a committee of the sabha in the Chola Empire?

Ans. The members of the sabha were the prominent landlords. However there were separate committees to supervise different fields like gardens, temples etc. Names of the eligible persons to be members of the different committees were written on small tickets of palm leaf. The tickets were put into an earthen pot and a young boy was asked to take out the tickets one by one for each committee. The person selected through this process was declared to be the member of that committee.

Q. 4. *What were the two major cities under the control of the Chahamanas?*

Ans. Delhi and Ajmer were the two cities under control of the Chahamanas.

Let's Understand

Q. 5. *How did the Rashtrakutas become powerful?*

Ans. It was during the seventh century that the kings acknowledged the big landlords as their subordinates or samantas. The samantas were expected to bring gifts and provide military support to their kings. In due course they gained power and wealth. They declared themselves to be maha-samantas, maha-mandaleshvar (the great lord of a circle or region) and so on. Rashtrakutas were one of them who were initially the subordinates of the Chalukyas in Deccan. In the mid-eighth century, Dantidurga, a Rashtrakuta chief, performed a ritual hiranya-garbha and overthrew the Chalukya overlord. After the ritual was over he was reborn as Kshatriya, even if he was not by birth.

Q. 6. *What did the new dynasties do to gain acceptance?*

Ans. The new dynasties gained power and wealth. Thereafter they declared themselves to be maha-samantas or mahamandaleshwara. Many of such kings adopted high sounding titles like maharaja-adhiraja or tribhuvana-chakravartin. They also deputed learned brahmanas to depict them as valiant, victorious warriors. Their activities were recorded in Prashastis. They tried to demonstrate their power and resources by building large temples.

Q. 7. *What kind of irrigation works were developed in the Tamil Nadu?*

Ans. During fifth or sixth century the area of Tamil Nadu was opened up for large scale cultivation. For irrigation a variety of new methods were discovered. In many areas wells were dug. High tanks were constructed for rainwater storage.

Q. 8. *What were the activities associated with Chola temples?*

Ans. The Chola temples were the nuclei of settlements growing around them which included centres of craft production. Temples were also endowed with land by rulers as well

as by others. The produce of the land was used for the maintenance of the priests, garland makers, cooks, sweepers, musicians, dancers etc who were associated with the temples and used to work for them. Hence temples were not simply the place of worship. They were also the hub of economic, social and cultural life as well.

Let's Discuss

Q. 9. *Look at Map 1 once more and find out whether there were any kingdoms in the state in which you live.*

Ans. The answer may vary as per the students' state where they live. So the students should answer this question on the basis of their individual study of the Map.

Q. 10. *Contrast the 'elections' in Uttaramerur with present day panchayat election?*

Ans. The system of election in Uttaramerur was quite different from that of the present day panchayat elections. In Uttaramerur election the names of the persons eligible to be members of the committees were written on small tickets of palm leaves. The tickets were put into an earthenware pot. Thereafter a young boy was asked to take out the tickets, one by one for each committee. But the present day panchayat members are elected through a general election. The names of the total members are printed with a symbol allotted to them on a paper called ballot paper. The voter put a stamp over their choice and drops it in a ballot box. Votes are counted and the winners' name is declared by the Returning Officer. Every procedure is organized by a statutory body.

Let's Do

Q. 11. *Compare the temple shown in this chapter with any present-day temple in your neighbourhood, highlighting any similarities and differences that you notice.*

Ans. Attempt yourself.

Q. 12. *Find out more about taxes that are collected at present. Are these in cash, kind, or labour services?*

Ans. Today we pay a number of taxes like property tax, road tax, service tax, entertainment tax, water tax, etc. These taxes are in cash not in kind, nor in labour services.