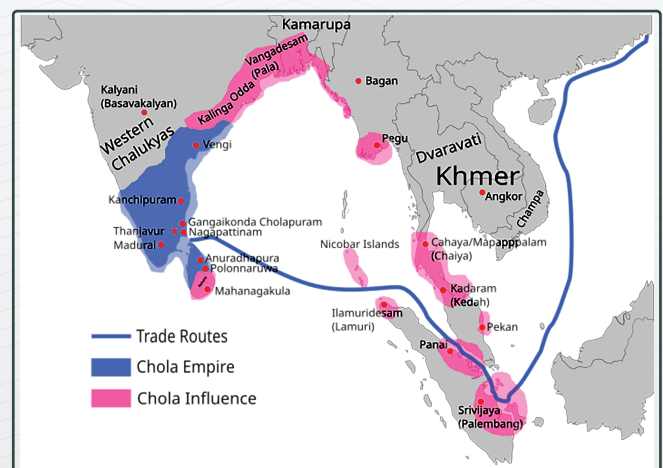




The Imperial Cholas (850 – 1279 AD)

The Cholas, one of the three major Tamil dynasties alongside the Cheras and Pandyas, rose to prominence between the **9th and 13th centuries CE**, expanding from a minor dynasty in **Thanjavur (Tanjore)** into a vast empire.

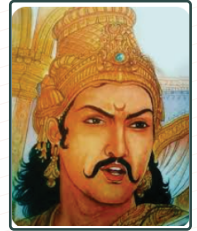
- Referred to as **Muvendhar** in Sangam literature.
- Extended their rule over **South India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia**.



Major Chola Rulers

Vijayalaya Chola (847–871 AD)

- Founder of the Imperial Chola Dynasty.
- Captured **Tanjore** from the **Muttaraiyars** in 815 AD.



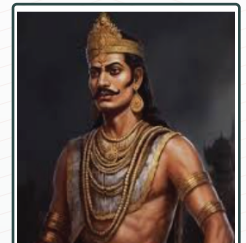
Aditya Chola I (871–907 AD)

- Defeated **Pallava** ruler **Aparajita**, annexing **Tondaimandalam**.



Parantaka Chola I (907–955 AD)

- Assumed the title **Madurai-konda** after capturing **Madurai**.
- Key battles:
 - **Vellore** – Defeated **Pandya** ruler **Rajasimha II** & **Kassapa V** (Ceylon).
 - **Vallala** – Defeated **Rashtrakuta** ruler **Krishna II**.
 - **Takkolam (948 AD)** – Lost to **Rashtrakutas**; son **Rajaditya** was killed
 - Maintained **friendly ties** with the **Cheras**, marrying a **Chera princess**.
- After Parantaka I, the empire faced instability until **Rajaraja I**.



Rajaraja Chola I (985–1014 AD)

- Also known by the name **Ponniyil Selvon**.
- Greatest **Chola** ruler; devout **Shaivite** yet **tolerant** of other religions.
- Titles: **Jayankonda**, **Sivapadasekara** and **Mummudi-Chola**

Military Conquests:

- Defeated **Chera** ruler **Bhaskararavivarman**.
- Defeated **Pandyas** and **Gangavadi (Mysore)** rulers.
- Annexed **northern Sri Lanka**; capital shifted to **Polonnaruwa**.
- Naval **conquest of the Maldives**.



Rajendra Chola I (1012–1044 AD)

- Co-regent under **Rajaraja I**, ascended in **1012 AD**.
- Titles: **Mudikondan, Gangaikondan, KadaramKondan, Pandita Chola**.

Military Conquests:

- Annexed **Sri Lanka** completely.
- Conquered **Kadaram (Srivijaya Kingdom)**.
- Defeated **Mahipala I of Bengal**, extended influence to the **Ganges**.
- To commemorate his victory, founded **Gangaikondacholapuram** as the new capital, where he built the **Rajesvaram Temple**.
- He also excavated the **Cholagangam** irrigation tank on the city's western side.



Kulothunga Chola I (1070–1122 AD)

- Strengthened administration & trade.
- Contemporary of **Ramanujacharya**.
- Abolished taxes, earning the title **Sungam Tavirtta**.

Decline of the Cholas

- Successors of **Kulothunga I** were weak rulers.
- **Rajendra III**, the last Chola king, was defeated by **Pandya King Jatavarman Sundarapandya II** in **1279 AD**, marking the **end of the Chola Dynasty**.



Administration and Governance During the Chola Period

Central Administration

- The Chola Empire was a **hereditary monarchy**, with the king as the supreme authority.
- Kings were regarded as divine and adopted the suffix "**Deva**" after coronation.
- A **Council of Ministers** assisted the king.

Administrative Structure

- Officials were categorized into:
 - **Perundanam** – Higher officials.
 - **Sirudanam** – Lower officials.
- **Temple grants** reinforced royal authority, as seen in inscriptions.



Provincial Administration

- The empire was divided into **Mandalam (provinces)**, governed by **royal princes** or officers.
- Subdivisions:
 - 1. **Valanadu** – Administered by **Periyanattar**.
 - 2. **Nadu** – Administered by **Nattar**.
 - 3. **Villages** – Autonomous units with local councils.

Urban Administration

- Towns (**Nagaram**) were governed by **Nagarattar** (local council).
- Key urban officials:
 - **Naattukanakku** – Recorded administrative proceedings.
 - **Nattuviyavan** – Managed local governance.

Village Administration

- Village self-governance thrived under **Sabhas (village assemblies)**.
- **Uthiramerur inscriptions (Parantaka Chola I)** provide insights into village administration.

Types of Villages

- 1. **Ur** – Mixed-caste village assemblies.
- 2. **Agrahara** – Brahmin settlements, usually tax-exempt.
- Occasionally a very large village would be administered as a single unit and this was called Taniyur.



Election Process: Kudavolai System

- Members were selected by lot (**Kudavolai**) from eligible property-owning, educated candidates.
- The **Sabha** was divided into **six committees (Variyams)** managing various functions.
- Tenure of elected members was **three years**.



Village Administration Powers

- **Mahasabha** had the authority to **settle new lands, levy taxes, and regulate land ownership**.
- Committees managed **land revenue, law enforcement, and irrigation**.
- **Tank Committee** handled **water distribution for agriculture**.

Military Administration

The Cholas maintained a well-organized **standing army** comprising elephants, cavalry, infantry, and a powerful **navy**. Inscriptions mention about **seventy regiments**.

- **Kaikkolaperumpadai** – The royal army.
- **Velaikkarar** – Elite personal guards of the king.
- **Kadagams** – Military cantonments for training.

The **navy** was highly advanced, dominating the **Malabar and Coromandel coasts**. The **Bay of Bengal** was often referred to as a "Chola lake."

The king's retinue included **Padimagalir**, **women bodyguards** who both protected and attended him.



Revenue Administration in the Chola Empire

- **Puravubarithinaikkalam** – Centralized revenue department.
- **Tax-Exempt Lands** – Temple and residential lands were exempt from taxation.

Types of Taxes

- **Irai** – Land tax.
- **Kanikadan** – Tribute paid by peasants.
- **Kudimai** – Tax on tenant cultivators.
- **Opati** – Levy imposed by kings and local chiefs.
- **Eriayam** – Tax for irrigation tank maintenance.



Land Measurement Units

- **Kuli, Ma, Veli, Patti, Padagam** – Standard units for land measurement.
- **Kalam** – Unit for paddy taxation (1 kalam ≈ 28 kg).



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