
Chapter 2

New Kings and Kingdoms

❖ The emergence of new dynasties

- New dynasties emerged in various parts of the subcontinent from the seventh to the twelfth centuries. Big landlords and warrior chiefs called *samantas* existed in different regions of the subcontinent.
- Gradually, the *samantas* began to assert their independence by affixing titles like *maha-samanta* or *maha-mandaleshwara*.
- The Rashtrakutas in the Deccan were subordinates to the Chalukyas of Karnataka. During the mid-eighth century, a Rashtrakuta chief called Dantidurga overthrew his Chalukya overlord and performed a ritual called *hiranya-garbha* to attain the status of a Kshatriya.
- Gurjara-Pratihara Harichandra and Kadamba Mayurasharma were Brahmanas who gave up their traditional professions and successfully established kingdoms in Karnataka and Rajasthan respectively.

❖ Administration in the kingdoms

- Grand titles like *maharaja-adhiraja* and *tribhuvana-chakravartin* were adopted by new kings. In most cases, they had to share power with their samantas and associations of peasants, traders and Brahmanas.
- Revenue in the form of land rent was collected from peasants, cattle-keepers and artisans. Traders also had to pay revenue to the king.
- The revenue was used to strengthen the king's establishment, construct temples and forts.
- Wars were fought to acquire wealth in the form of plunder and access to land and trade routes.
- Close relatives and associates of the king collected revenue and the positions of the officers became hereditary.

❖ Prashastis and land grants

- *Prashastis* depicted the image that the kings wished to project about themselves. The Brahmanas who composed these were rewarded by grants of land, recorded on copper plates.
- The work of Kalhana, on the kings of Kashmir, was an exception as he criticized the rulers and their policies.

❖ Warfare for wealth

- The ruling dynasties, which were regional in nature, made attempts to control other regions. Kanauj, an important city of the time, was the focus

of such a tripartite struggle between Gurjara-Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas and Palas.

- Temples, which were built by rulers to project their wealth, grew very rich. Hence, they inevitably were the target of attacks by rival kings. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni from Afghanistan raided the subcontinent almost every year and targeted wealthy temples, including Somnath in Gujarat.
- A product of Sultan Mahmud's invasion was the *Kitab al-Hind*, written by al-Biruni. It was an account of the subcontinent and is an important source of information for historians.
- The Chahamanas or the Chauhans, who ruled around Delhi and Ajmer, made attempts to extend their control over the west and the east, where the main rivals were the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Gahadavalas of western Uttar Pradesh.

❖ The rise of Cholas

- Cholas were subordinates of the Pallava kings of Kanchipuram. Vijayalaya, of the Chola family from Uraiyur, captured the Kaveri delta from Muttaraiyar in the middle of the ninth century and built the town of Thanjavur.
- The successors of Vijayalaya conquered neighbouring regions, among them were Pandyan and Pallava territories.
- The most powerful Chola ruler was Rajaraja I. He became king in 985 AD and expanded his control. He also reorganized the administration.
- Rajaraja's son, Rajendra I raided the Ganga valley, Sri Lanka and countries of South East Asia, raising a navy for these campaigns.

❖ Temples and bronze sculpture

- Temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikonda-cholapuram, built by Rajaraja and Rajendra, are sculptural and architectural marvels.
- Temples were granted land by rulers. Besides being places of worship, temples were the focus of settlements, craft production and the hub of economic, social and cultural activities.
- The bronze images of Chola temples were their most distinguishing feature. These images are amongst the finest in the world.

❖ Agriculture and irrigation

- Agriculture and irrigation played an important role in the success of Cholas.
- Forests were cleared and land was levelled for agriculture in many areas.
- Embankments and canals were constructed to prevent flooding and carry water to the fields.
- Wells and tanks were among the various methods used for irrigation.

❖ The Administration of the Chola empire

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- Settlements of peasants, called *ur*, prospered with the success of irrigation agriculture.
 - Groups of these settlements formed a unit called the *nadu*, which performed administrative tasks like tax collection and dispensation of justice.
 - Rich landowners received titles like *muvedavelan* and *araiyar*, and handled important offices of the state at the centre.
 - Grants of land to Brahmanas, called *brahmadeya*, were looked after by an assembly or *sabha* of prominent Brahmana landholders. The *sabha* had committees to oversee irrigation works, gardens, temples, etc. The decisions of the *sabha* were recorded in stone inscriptions on the walls of the temples.
 - *Nagarams* or associations of traders were also engaged in the administrative works in towns.