

Chola Administration:

- The Cholas had hereditary monarchy as the form of government.
- The emperor or king was the head of the administration.
- He also had a Council of Ministers to aid and assist him.
- The Chola empire was divided into 'Mandalam' and each mandalam into 'Valnadus' and 'Nadus'.
- In each Nadu there were number of autonomous villages.
- The Royal prince or officers were in charge of Mandalams.
- The Valnadu was under 'Periyanattar' and Nadu under 'Nattar'.
- The town was known as Nagaram and it was under the administration of a council called 'Nagarattar'.
- There was an elaborate administrative machinery comprising of higher officials called 'Perundanam' and lower officials called 'Sirudanam'.
- There was a well-organized land revenue department 'Puravubarithinaikkalam'.
- All lands were carefully surveyed and classified for assessment of revenue.
- Land revenue, which was generally assessed at 1/3 of the produce, was collected in cash or kind.
- The residential portion of the village called 'Urnattam' and other lands such as the lands belonging to the temples were exempted from the tax.
- There were also tolls, customs, professional taxes etc. besides land revenue.
- The Cholas maintained a regular standing army consisting of elephants, cavalry, infantry and navy.
- The royal troops were called 'Kaikkolaperumpadal' and a personal troop to defend the king known as 'Velaikkarar' formed a part of it.
- The Cholas paid special attention to their navy.

- The naval achievements of the Tamils reached the climax under Cholas.
- They controlled the Malabar and Coromandal Coasts and the Bay of Bengal became a 'Chola Lake' for sometime.

Village Assemblies:

- The Cholas are known for their self-government at the village level.
- The villages were divided into thirty wards (kudumbus) and each was to nominate its members to the village council.
- There were various conditions of qualifications and disqualifications to become a ward member.
- Amongst the nominated members, one was to be chosen for each ward by 'Kudavolai' system (pot-ticket) for a year.
- The names of eligible persons were written on palm leaves and put into a pot. A young girl or boy would take out thirty names each for one ward.
- They were divided into six 'Variyams' such as 'samvatsaravariyam', 'erivariyam', 'thotta variyam', 'pancha variyam', 'pon variyam' and 'puravuvu variyam' to take up six different functions of the village administration.
- The committee members were called 'variapperumakkal' who usually met in the temple or under a tree and passed resolutions.
- The number of committees and ward members varied from village to village.

Society and Economy:

- Caste system was widely present during the Chola period and Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed special privileges.
- The inscriptions of the later period of the Chola ruler mention two major divisions among the castes- 'Valangai' (right hand castes) and 'Idangai' (left hand castes) castes.
- The position of women did not improve from earlier times.
- The 'practice of Sati' was prevalent among the royal families.

- The devadasi system or dancing girls attached to temples emerged during this period.
- Both Shaivism and Vaishnavism continued to flourish during the Chola period.
- The temples remained centres of economic activity during this period.
- Both agriculture and industry flourished.
- Reclamation of forest lands and construction and maintenance of irrigation tanks led to agricultural prosperity.
- Cattle rearing was a subsidiary occupation.
- The weaving industry, particularly the silk weaving at Kanchi flourished.
- Owing to the great demand of images for temples and utensils, metal work also developed.
- There was extensive commerce and trade with trunk roads and merchant guilds.
- Gold, silver and copper coins were issued in plenty in various denominations.
- Commercial context between Chola empire and China, Sumatra, Java and Arab were extremely prevalent.
- Arabian horses were imported in large numbers to strengthen the cavalry.

Art and Architecture:

- The Dravidian style of art and architecture reached its perfection under the Cholas.
- The chief feature of the Chola temples is Vimana.
- The Brihadeshwara temple at Tanjore built by Rajaraja I is a masterpiece of south Indian art and architecture.
- The shiva temple at Gangaikondacholapuram built by Rajendra I is another contribution of the Cholas.
- The Airavathesvara temple at Darasuram in Tanjore district and the Kampahareswara temple at Tribhuvanam are examples of later Chola temples.

- In the art of sculpture, the walls of the Chola temples such as Tanjore and Gangaikondacholapuram temples contained numerous icons of large size and fine execution.
- The bronze statue of Nataraja or dancing Shiva are masterpieces.
- The Chola Paintings were found on the walls of Narthamalai and Tanjore temples.

Tamil Literature under Cholas:

- ‘Sivakasintamani’ was written by Thiruthakkadevar (Jain) and ‘Kundalkesi’ was written by Nathakutthanar (Buddhist).
- The ‘ramayana’ was composed by Kambar and ‘Periyapuram’ or ‘Tiruttondapuram’ was written by Sekkilar.
- The ‘Nalavenba’ was written by Pugalandi.
- Jayakondar’s ‘Kalingattupparani’ describes the Kalinga war fought by Kulottunga I.
- The ‘Moovarula’ written by Ottakuthar depicts the life of three Chola kings.
- Works on Tamil grammar were ‘kalladam’ by Kalladanar, ‘Yapperungalam’ by Amrithasagar (a Jain), ‘Nannul’ by Pavanandhi (a Jain) and ‘Virasoliyam’ by Buddhimitra.