

THE CHOLAS (PART-4)

B.A , PART-2, PAPER-3

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RISE OF IMPERIAL CHOLAS

- ***Rajadhiraja I (1044 – 1052 CE)***

Rajadhiraja, when he came to the throne, had to face many troubles. His authority defied by the Pandyas, Cheras, and the king of Ceylon. He successfully crushed them. Presumably, it was to celebrate his victories over these adversaries that Rajadhiraja I performed the Asvamedha sacrifice. The successors of Rajendra I turned their attention to conflicts within the peninsula, primarily with the Chalukyas, reviving the competition to control the province of Vengi. The old pattern of lightning raids into each other territory

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was repeated. The Chola invasion into the heart of the Chalukyan territory saw the sacking of the capital at Kalyani. This was avenged in 1050 CE by the Chalukyan king Someswara I by invading Vengi. At first fortune appears to have favoured the Chola sovereign, but eventually in the famous *battle of Kopparam* on the river Krishna, he lost his life in May 1052 CE. Military conflicts marked the reigns of subsequent Chola kings Rajendra II (1052- 1063 CE), Virarajendra (1063-1070 CE) but the Cholas held their own sway till the time of Kulottunga I.

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- Later Cholas

Kulottunga I (1070 – 1122 CE)

Kulottunga I was the grandson of Rajendra I through his daughter Ammangi, the queen of eastern Chalukyan king Rajarajanarendra. He succeeded the Chola throne and thus united the two kingdoms of the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and the Cholas of Tanjore. During his reign the king of Srilanka Vijayabahu overthrew the Chola authority and became independent. Vengi and the Mysore region were captured by the Western Chalukyas. The old enemies of the far south, the Pandyas, Cheras and Srilanka

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remained hostile, but Srivijaya was peaceful. This permitted a steady improvement in the commerce of south India and better communication with the Chinese.

Kulottunga I sent an embassy of 72 merchants to China in 1077 CE. and also maintained cordial relations with Srivijaya from whose ruler he received an embassy as well. Tradition and epigraphy alike give him the title of "Sungam tavirtta" (he who abolished the tolls), though full details of this reform are not available.

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- Kulottunga I was succeeded by his son Vikrama Chola, surnamed Tyagasamudra, who had held the Viceroyalty of Vengi. He was succeeded by Kulottunga II. Rajaraja II, Rajadhiraja II and Kulottunga III. They were all weak kings under whom the imperial power of the Cholas rapidly declined. The rise of the feudatories like kadavarayas and the emergence of the Pandya power as a challenge to the Chola supremacy contributed to the ultimate downfall of the empire. Their place was taken by the Hoyasalas of Dwarasamudra and Pandyas of Madurai in 13th century (To be continued)