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## UNIT 23 ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES IN PENINSULAR INDIA

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### 23.1 INTRODUCTION

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The task of the reconstruction of the history of Peninsular India was initiated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by western scholars especially Colonel Mackenzie who prepared a compendium of manuscripts which included works on tradition. The epigraphists like G. Buhler, Robert Sewell, F. Keilhorn, Jas Burgess studied the copper and stone inscriptions found in South India. The discovery of the Sangam literature and other ancient Tamil literary texts further contributed to the knowledge of South Indian history. The *Bhakti* literature has also been analysed by historians to understand the dynamics of South Indian history. M. Jovean Dubrueil, S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, R. Gopalan published several works on South Indian history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri's works provided a definite historical methodology for the treatment of South Indian history. His approach which was based on the glorification of the past and the centralised state model was adopted by many other historians such as C. Minakshi, T.V. Mahalingam etc. The first attempt to demolish this conventional approach was made by Burton Stein in his work *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India* who put forward the segmentary state model (model of decentralised polity characterised by ritual-sovereignty). His view has been challenged by historians like N. Karashima, D. N. Jha, etc. who subscribe to the feudal model. The theoretical debate enables us to analyse the nature of political formation in Peninsular India.

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### 23.2 THE SANGAM POLITY

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The Sangam polity was one of the earliest political formations of peninsular India. The Sangam literature (Tamil literature comprising of anthologies dated to early centuries of Christian era) together with the testimony of archaeology, numismatics and the Graeco-Roman travellers' accounts help us in reconstructing the history of this period. The literature of the Sangam age describes micro peasant communities forming settlements in the geographical area comprising of the plains (especially Kaveri valley). It appears that the tribal subsistence economy which was characterised by hunting and pastoralism was on the verge of getting metamorphosed. The clans led by chiefs (heroes) were

engaged in warfare for acquiring cattle. These incursions resulted in the accumulation of wealth in the form of war booty. The wealth was brought before the gathering of the community from where it was redistributed (*undattu*) a process in which the warrior chief played a pivotal role. Through this process the 'chief' acquired a central place in the society. The bards who composed poems eulogising the chiefs played an important role in legitimising the chiefs position in society and polity. The bardic poetry is an important constituent of the Sangam literature. Vedic sacrifices were also a means for providing legitimacy to the chief as the political leader. They are also mentioned in the Sangam literature.

Three important chiefdoms developed in the ecological zone referred to as the marutam in the Sangam poems. This area comprised of the fertile river valleys on the plains. The peasant groups which settled here brought about the transition from hunting and pastoralism to agriculture based economy. The emergence of trading activities inter-regional and long distance led to the establishment of urban centres in the interior as well as the coastal areas. The chiefdoms of this period were able to exercise control over the surplus derived from the trading and agricultural activities in the region. This resource mobilisation through trade and agriculture helped the Muventar (the three crowned kings) viz. the Cheras of Vanji, the Pandyas of Madurai and the Cholas of Uraiyur in consolidating their power. Their seats of power were located in the trad centres.

An important source for studying the polity of Sangam period is *Kural* (a post-sangam work) by Tiruvalluvar. Tiruvalluvar refers to the *Nadu* (rastra) as the foundation of the polity. He points out that the king's treasury should be stocked through various sources of income viz. land revenue, transit duties, custom and also through annexation. *Ahananuru* (anthology, part of Sangam literature) refers to the treasury of the Cholas. The *Silappadikaram* (Tamil epic) and *Manimekalai* (Tamil classic) refer to *Aimperungulu* and *Enperayam* which have been interpreted as royal associates. The *Kural* refers to *Avai* which probably indicates the king's *Sabha*. In other works *Manram* (hall) is also mentioned. Evidence is available regarding judicial system in Uraiyur *Sabha* and *Manram* were the assemblies which performed judicial and other miscellaneous functions. The units of measurement of land were *ma* and *veli*. The importance of peasants and traders is reflected in the sources such as *Kural* and *Pattinappalai* (gives an account of the Chola capital). The latter refers to customs officials which bears testimony to the thriving foreign trade. The mention of prisons indicates that the legal system was well established and punishment was given to those who deviated from the lawful path. The heads of the army were bestowed with the title of *Enadi* (commander) by the chief. The *Vellalar* (agriculturists) were categorised into those who themselves cultivated the land and those who employed others to cultivate the land. The latter also occupied official positions (civil and military) and were endowed with the titles *Vel* and *Arasu* under the Cholas and *Kavidi* under the Pandyas.

The Sangam period was followed by rule of the Kalabharas which is referred to as a 'dark period' till the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE when the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai rose to power. However, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE the Chalukyas were replaced by the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed.

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### 23.3 THE PALLAVAS

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The Pallavas emerged powerful in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The agricultural tracts in the river valleys of Pennar and Palar were the focal points which sustained the Pallava authority.

In this process of agrarian expansion the category of intermediaries who were not peasants acquired superior rights over land as the representatives of the king. The epigraphical evidence (copper plate grants and stone inscriptions) provides information regarding the establishment of *Brahmadeyans* in settled and unsettled regions. This was made possible by the subjugation of the cultivators of the settled areas or by creating new peasant settlements. Brahmans played an important role in the expansion and consolidation of the Pallava rule. Thus the agrarian system was predominantly *Brahmadeya-temple* centric and proved advantageous to the Brahmans and royal power. The Brahmans were able to secure important positions in the administrative system and the close cooperation between the kings and the Brahmans determined the nature of the state. The kings sought legitimacy from the Brahmans (since they were the guardians and interpreters of moral and religious system) and in return endowed them with official positions and land grants. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar considers the Pallavas as the feudatories of the Satavahanas in south eastern India who established their rule after the decline of the Satavahana power. The inscriptions of the Pallava period can be grouped into three categories: Prakrit copper plate (3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century A.O.), Sanskrit copper plates (4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.O.) and stone and copper plate inscriptions (7<sup>th</sup> century A.O. onwards).

### Pallava Kingship

There are several mythical traditions regarding the origin of the Pallavas. The *Prasastis* of the Pallavas are similar to the *Itihas-Purana* traditions of North India. They comprise of genealogies and try to correlate the mythical traditions regarding their pedigree to the historical facts of the ruling family. The Pallavas claim to be *Chandravamsis* as is evident from a literary work titled *Nandikkalambagam* (Tamil work). The Sanskrit copper plates refer to them as belonging to the *Bharadavaja gotra*. The Pallavas ascribe to themselves *Brahmakshatra* status. This was a means to legitimise their power by tracing their lineage to Brahmans who possessed the attributes of kshatriyas. They also trace their connection to the Naga chief. The Pallava *Prasastis* (copper plate inscriptions) throw light on the dynastic traditions which eulogise the Pallavas as the custodians of *varnashramadharm*a, who conducted sacrifices etc. Genealogies mentioned in copper plate grants describe the accomplishments of the king, depict him as a hero of victories attained in wars against adversaries and portray him of pure descent.

The Pallava kings made use of *danda* (force) for maintaining social order and in return exacted *raksabhoga*. The Pallava kings reigned supreme over the earth as mentioned in the records and they adopted several high sounding titles viz. *Dharmamaharajadhiroja*, *Maharajadhiraja*, *Dharmamaharaja* and *Maharaja*. We come to know about these from the evidence of Sanskrit, Prakrit and other charters. The Hirahadagalli plates inform us that the Pallava king Sivaskandavarman is referred to as '*Agnisttomavjapeyasvamedhayaji*' (one who conducted the *Agnistoma*, *Vajopeya* and *Asvamedha* sacrifices). The coronation ceremony was marked by *Abhisekanama* i.e. the bestowment of a new name to the king. The *Birudas* (eulogistic titles) were adopted by the Pallava kings and these were engraved on the cave temples. The various *Birudas* adopted by kings were *Chilrakarappuli* (Tiger among artists) and *Vichitrachitta* by Mahendravarman I, *Mahamalla* (great wrestler) and *Kaviprabodha* (reviver of poetry) by Narasirnhavarman I, *Tribhuvana Dipa*, *Abhayankara* and *Jnanasagara* by Rajasimha. The intellectual attainments of Pallava kings are attested by the information contained in the inscription on temples and copper

plates. Mallendravannan I wrote Sanskrit plays, was a musician and also had interest in painting. Though the Pallava kings were patrons of Saiva sect of Hinduism but they were generally liberal towards other religions and sects.

Practice of election of the kings was also prevalent under the Pallavas. The Pallava kings were bestowed with characteristics of divinity. The Pallava king Paramesvaravarman is compared to Siva and Narasimha is considered Vishnu in human form.

The Pallava kings are known to have conducted the ceremonies called *Hiranyagarbha*, *Tulabhara* and *Gosahasra*. These were performed to legitimise their political power. These have been termed as *mahadanas* in the *Dharmasastric* and *Puranic* traditions. The Queen of Pallava king Nripatungavarman (670-710) had conducted the *hiranyagarbha* and *tulabhara* mahadanas. *Tulabhara* ritual was marked by the bestowment of gold equivalent to the weight of the grantor. *Gosahasra* gift giving (*dana*) meant endowment of a thousand cows. *Hiranyagarbha* was the most important of these customs. The other two ceremonies were performed prior to *hiranyagarbha* (golden womb). This ritual was a means used by the ruler to ascribe *kshatriya* position to himself. The ceremony involved conducting sacraments laid down for the twice born castes.

During the coronation ceremony Nandivannan I was provided the royal umbrella (*chatra*) (*karivai*), the *Samudraghosa* and *Katumukhavadi* (flag which had the *khatavanga* (Siva's weapon) as the insignia) and *vrsabhalanche* (bull-seal). These collectively comprised of the royal insignia. The consecration was held in the presence of *mantri mandala*, *mahasamantas*, *ganattar* and *ghatakaiyar*. The king was bestowed with new titles and the power to promulgate royal orders. Royal orders were originally written on palm leaves. The inscriptional evidence of Kailasnatha temple (at Kanchi) refers to Pallava king Rajasimha as *Sri Vrsabha darpah* (he who boasts of bull). The bull was also embossed on the clay seals.

### Ministers, Officials and Service Groups

There is evidence regarding *Amatyas* in the Hirahadagalli plates as well as in the literary work titled *Periyapuranam*. The testimony of the Hirahadagalli plates tells us that the *Amatyas* were the officials who were notified of the *Brahmadeya* grant which was bestowed by the Pallava king. The *Vaikunthperumal* temple (at Kanchi) inscription refers to *Matras*, *Ghatikaiyar* and *Mulaprakrti*. The *Matras* are regarded as ministers. The Kasakkudi plates of Nandivannan refer to the prime minister as *Brahmasriraja*. The attributes of the prime minister are narrated in the following passage "Brahmasriraja who was a friend of the world, who was filled with all virtues as the ocean with a heap of gems, who was famous, modest, handsome and long lived; whose speech was never rough, who was distinguished among men, who just like Brahaspati, the chief minister of the Lord of Heavens, was the chief Minister of the Pallava king Nandivannan, the lord of the earth and the delighter of the people's eyes and hearts; who was refined by nature and through education, who was foremost among the learned firm and brave, who possessed the full and unshakable splendour of the Brahman and kshatriya castes, and a loyalty to the glorious Nandipotaraja lasting as long as the moon and the stars endure, who was the mainstay of his family, who was the eldest son, who in his disposition was like Siva incarnate, who excelled in all virtues and who was the eldest priest." (C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*). The ministers of the Pallavas possessed several titles such as *Brahmasriraj*,

*Brahmayuvaraja Uttamasila*, and were even compared to Brihaspati. They were probably assigned revenues as remuneration for their services. The duty of *Ajnaptis* (those who implemented the king's directives regarding the grants) was performed by them. The inscriptional evidence reveals that they carried out the task of administration and acted as advisors and loyal supporters to the king.

The wide range of administrative functions attributed to the ministers were: commander in chief of the army, *Purohit* etc. Sometimes the *Purohit* performed several functions such as priest, duties of chief minister and *Yuvaraj*. The ministers and feudatories played an important role in the coronation and election process. Hirahadagalli plates refer to *Rahasyadhikrta* who has been interpreted as private secretary of the king. This Brahman officer performed the role of *likhita* (writing a record on copper plates) and was remunerated through assignment of revenues of villages. *Vayilkelpar* were officers who implemented the royal orders and also carried out survey of lands. The Tandantottam grant refers to *Kosa-adhyaksa* who was also the *Ajnapti*. The Ulatur stone inscription mentions *Manikkappandaram-kappan* (an official who was custodian of treasury) and *Kodukkappillai* (was the official who performed the task of custodian of gifts). *Mattavilarsa Prahasana* (written by Mahendravarman the Pallava ruler) tells us that the court of justice at Kanchi was called *Adhikarana*. Probably there existed lower courts also. The Kasakudi plates refer to *Adhikaranadandan* and *Karandandan* (fines) which were to be paid by those who had committed the offence. These fines were levied by the officers at the directive of the court and were given as *parihara* (privilege) to those grantees on whose lands they were imposed on the offenders. The Pallava records mention *Dharmasana* (a judicial organisation) which dealt with cases concerning village assemblies.

The Sanskrit and Prakrit records of the Pallavas mention the plough and *nivartana* or *pattika* (units in which land was measured). Land grants were made to the Brahmans (*Brahmadeya*) to the Hindu temples (*Devadana*) and to votaries of other beliefs (*Palliccandan*). It seems that under the Pallavas land was measured and various categories of land rights prevailed which can be gleaned from the records of the period. The kings made tax free endowments upon the Brahmans and temples. The royal directive regarding land grants (tax-free) was to be implemented by the village or district headman or the assembly of *nattar* (spokesmen of nadu). The Kasakudi plates mention *Nilakkalattar*, *Adhikarar* and *Vayilkelpar*. These officers were probably associated with the work of measurement and survey (assessment) of land. It seems that there existed a department for looking after administration of land. The Pallava rulers utilised the services of goldsmiths and *kasthahari* (carpenter) for inscribing the contents on the copper plates. The *Prasastis* of the Pallava copper plates were written by several poets patronised by the Pallava rulers viz. Paramesvara Kavi (of Medhavikula) who composed the *Prasastis* of Udayendiran plates of Nandivarman II, Paramesvara (Uttarakamika) who composed the *Prasastis* of Tandantottam plates of Nandivarman II, etc. The Kuram grant of Paramesavaravarman I mentions *Uttarakaranika-Mahasendatta* as the *Ajnapti*. It has been suggested that the term *Karanika* probably indicated an official category. It appears that the official category *Karanam* (village accountant) was derived from *Karanika*.

### Army Organisation

The army organisation of the Pallavas in theory comprised of four *parts*: *Ratha*, *Gaja*, *Juraka*, *Patali* (chariots, elephants, horses, foot soldiers). It seems that the Pallava rulers made use of elephants extensively as is evident from the sculptures and the

expertise of the Pallava rulers in knowledge regarding elephants. Rajasimha is called *Varanabhadatta* which shows that his knowledge regarding elephants was equivalent to the expert Bhagadatta. War chariots are mentioned in the Tamil work *Nandikkalambagam* but, their use was restricted. The Kuram plates of Paramesvaravarnam narrate the conflict between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas and describe the army and the weaponry. The sculptures on cave temples and Vaikunthaperumal temple give us information about the weapons used by the soldiers. Hirahadagalli copper plates refer to *senapatis* or generals. *Periyapuranan* (Tamil work of 12<sup>th</sup> century CE) refers to the occupation of the Chalukya capital Vatapi by Narimhavarman I. The *Mahavamsa* as well as the Kasakudi plates mention the incursions of the Pallavas into Sri Lanka in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The Tamil devotional hymns (*Periyatirumoli* by Alvar saint) mention several conflicts between the Pallavas and the Pandyas. *Nandikkalambagan* gives information regarding the wars won by the Pallavas. It is therefore clear that the Pallavas did possess a strong force to counter their rivals.

### Provincial and Local Administration

The provincial government was headed by the Yuvamaharaja. The district officers were known as: *Desatikas*, *Bhojakas*, *Vallabhas*, *Govallabhas*, *Sumikas*, *Sancharantas*, *Ayuktakas* and *Adhyaksas*. In the northern area of the Pallava territory a number of officers were responsible for administration. This is evident from the Prakrit and Sanskrit land charters which record land grants in the presence of various officers viz. *Raj Kumaras*, *Senapati* (commander), *Rastrika* (governor), *Madabikas* (custom officials), *Desadhikritas* (officers responsible for the administration of the district), *Vallabhas*, *Govallabhas* (supervised the horses, cows and cattle), *Arakhadikata* (guards), *Gumikas* (captains), *Tutikas*, *Nayikas* (commander), *Sancharantakas* (responsible for espionage) and *Badamanusa* (army officers). Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar points out that “while undoubtedly local administration is seen at its best under Chola rule we seem to find it in as fully developed a condition almost, under these later Pallavas.” The inscriptional evidence of the Pallavas regarding local assemblies such as village Sabhas is dated to around 8<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards. The administrative system at the lowest level comprised of villages. The Sabha was the village assembly. The *Nadu* was larger than a village and the assembly of the *Nadu* was known as *Nattar*, *Urar* and *Alvar*. The unit bigger than *Nadu* was *Kottam*. There are several epigraphical records of the Pallava viz. the copper plate charters of Nandivarman Pallavamalla (731-96 CE) which mention the *Konolai* (royal order) issued to the *Nattar*. The charters generally relate to endowments of land to Brahmans. These charters also help us in gaining insight into the administrative measures of the state i.e. land grants issued by the king in the name of the *Nattar*. The function of the *Nattar* was to prepare an *Araiolai* (document) giving information regarding the measure (veils) of land given to the grantee. Thus we get information regarding land endowments made by the kings. In the Pallava records, we find mention of the *Urar* i.e. the assembly of the *Ur* (village people) which functioned without adhering rigidly to rules.

The representatives of the *Sabha* were called *Perumakkal* (great men). The epigraphical evidence of the Pallava period relates to *Sabhas* of Uttaramerur, Perungulin Kuran, Perumbuliyur etc. The *Sabha* carried out various tasks at the village level such as looking after irrigation facilities such as tanks, monitoring temple grants and providing justice. These administrative functions were delegated to committees called *Variyams*. The inscriptions of the Pallava period viz. at Ukkal, Uttaramerur, Adambakkam etc.

are testimony to the existence of *Variyams* and *Ganas* who performed various administrative tasks. It appears that the gifts bestowed upon Gods were placed in the control of the *Sabha* and the committee carried out the implementation of the terms of the grant.

The evidence of the following inscriptions gives us some idea of the working of the *Gana* and the *Sabha*. “An inscription dated in the 37<sup>th</sup> year of Nandivarman II records an agreement made by the *Gana* of Payinur (Chingleput taluk) to remove the silt from the village tank annually and 6400 *kadi* of paddy was received by them from Nagan a merchant residing at Mamallapura. Settanandi, presumably a member of the *Gana* signed the document.” (C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas*). “Dated in the 25<sup>th</sup> year of Nripatungavarman the *Sabha* Avaniaraya Caturvedimangalam undertook an agreement to supply one ulakku of oil every day to a matha to the Sattaperumakkal, presumably members of the governing body of the matha” (C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*). The term *Gana* in the inscription indicates members of *alunganattar* or committee which performed certain administrative tasks. There is mention of *Ganapperumakkal* of Sailesvara temple in a stone inscription dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> year of Pallava ruler Nripatungavarman. It seems that the *Ganapperumakkal* was responsible for supervising the cultivation of lands, temples, levying and remittance of taxes and were also custodians of offerings and gifts (*dana*). The term *Amrtaganattar* is mentioned in the stone inscription of Aparajitavarman in Tiruvorriyur. The stone inscription of Aparajita (dated to 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> year) also refers to *Amrtagana* which acted as the custodian of the gold which was bestowed upon the temple through the *Sabha*. The inference that can be drawn from the above examples is that the committees were placed under the *Sabha* which was the supreme body of the village. Land was the primary resource and its produce was taxed. Puravupon of the Pallava records was tax realised in cash and was imposed on cultivable lands.

### Land System: Grants, Land Categories and Rights

There are epigraphical records (Pallava charters) of the endowments of lands made to Brahmins and temples by the king which were tax-free together with certain other perquisites. The early Pallava land grants were bestowed by the king or queen directly. In the case of later Pallava grants the *Vijnapti* acted as an intermediary in the transaction. He sought the royal approval in the case of land grants. Kasakudi, Tandantottam, Pattattalmangalam charters of Pallava king Nandivarman Pallavamalla contain mention of *Vijnaptis*. The land grants to Brahmins and temples did not entitle the grantee the right to sale. *Svadattam* and *Paradattam* terms are found in the land grants, which indicate bestowment made by self and others respectively. In case of *Paradatti* the *Vijnapti* or requester and *Ajnapti* (executing officer) are involved. It seems that the initial land grants of the Pallavas are the Mayidavolu and Hirehadagalli plates (*prakrit*) (3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century CE) bestowed upon Brahmins. The land grants of the later (in Sanskrit) period were also issued to Brahmins. All these grants were made in the Andhra region. From the period of Simhavarman the charters were in Tamil and Sanskrit and refer to grants to Brahmins. However there is reference to a grant which was made to a Jain teacher.

By the 7<sup>th</sup> century and 8<sup>th</sup> century CE Brahmins were being granted land to settle in various areas and large and numerous *Brahmadeya* settlements emerged. The land bestowed upon Brahmins and temples by individuals was purchased by them after payment in gold to the village assembly. However the donees did not have the right to

dispose off the lands through sale. There are instances of purchase of land by individuals from the *Sabha* to bestow and gift it to temple by offering gold to the *Sabha* to ensure it was made tax-free. Land grants to Jain temples were called *Palliccandam*. Land grants were also made for maintaining village tanks (*Eripatti* or *Erichcheruvu*). The committee of village *Sabha* namely *Erivariyaperumakkal* (comprising of greatman of tank committee) supervised these lands (endowed by individuals or village) meant for tank maintenance. Village *Sabha* had the authority to bring uncultivated land under cultivation from its funds (tank maintenance etc.) and also to acquire the lands of those who were defaulters in payment of taxes.

The various land categories and rights were: *Payalnilam* lands: Agricultural produce was divided equally amongst landholders and tenant cultivators.

*Payaleruvaram* : share of agricultural produce which went to the tenant cultivators

*Adai* : king's portion of the produce

*Adainilam* : lands from which king's share of produce is obtained

*Karainilam* : lands reallocated amongst tenant cultivators at intervals.

From an inscription we come to know that tank-duty (*erikkadi*) was imposed on villages in the form of 1 *kadi* of paddy on a patti of cultivated land (*vilainilam*). The *kasakudi* plates refer to land grants (*paradatti*) executed by *Nilaiikalattar*, *Adhikarar* and *Vayilkelpar* (officials). The grantees of land were called *Bhojakas* (Hirahadagalli plates), *Vidyabhoga* (Bahur plates) and *Arcanabhogas* of temple lands (as mentioned in the inscriptions related to temple lands).

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## 23.4 THE PANDYAS

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The Pandyas rose to power in the valleys of River Vagai and Tambraparni. The expansion and growth of agrarian economy due to development of irrigation works provided the resources for sustenance of the state system. Brahman settlements were an important feature of this period and the role of Brahmans in legitimising state power is evident from the epigraphical records.

### Nature of Kingship

Pandyas ascribe *Chandravamsa* origin to themselves. The Dalavaypuram plates of Parantaka Vuariarayana describe the Pandyas as having their genesis from the Lotus in Vishnu's navel and from Brahma, Atri and the Moon. The Sivakasi plates of Vir Pandya suggest that the Pandya ruler who laid the foundation of Pandya rule originated from the moon. The Pandya *Prasastis* (on copper plates) connect them with the Mahabharata, with the establishment of Tamil Sangam and depict them as co-occupants of Indra's throne. Thus the Pandyas tried to justify their position as rulers by tracing their lineage to local and Sankritic traditions. The copper plate records of the Pandyas contain inscriptions in Tamil and Sanskrit. Genealogy is found in both Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions. However, the Tamil inscriptions of the Pandyas contain comprehensive genealogies which suggest that the Pandyas had local moorings. These Tamil inscriptions draw upon the Sanskrit counterparts in relation to concept and pattern. The Sivakasi plates of Vir Pandya point out that the grantee wrote a *prasasti* eulogizing the grantor. The Pandya *Prasastis* describe the king as the husband of the earth and prosperity. Arikesari Maravarman (670-710) (one who defeated enemy kings and Rajasimha:



(740-765) had conducted the hiranyagarbha and tulabhara ceremonies. The Pandya kings were regarded as possessing divine characteristics. The Velvikudi plates refer to Jatilavarman as the son of Siva. They also mention Manavarman and the dilemma whether he was a human, a demon, Siva, the Supreme Being (Para-Purusa-Visnu) or Indra.

### Various Aspects of Administration

The records of the Pandyas do not refer to a council of ministers or a court but they refer to *mantrins* and *uttaramantrins*. The Sivakasi plates mention the Uttaramantrin as those who performed the task of *Sandhivigraha*. The *Uttaramantrin* is referred to as *Tamilpperaraiyan* in Tamil who was in charge of *Mandira-olai-nayagam* office which verified the written order regarding the grant. The *Tennavan apattudavigal* according to Mahalingam and Sastri were the king's barons who had great authority in the kingdom and are regarded by M.G.S. Narayanan as the companions of honour or the king's bodyguards. In an inscription *Samantan Ganapti* is referred to as *Mahasamanta* of the king. The reference to Ranakirtti as *Ulvittusevaka* in an inscription has been interpreted as companion of honour.

During the period of Jatila Parantaka there is mention of *Uttaramantrins* and *Mahasamantas*. *Matangajadhyaksha* or the officer who supervised the elephants was an important officer of the army organisation. Tmunalai Virar and Parantaka Virar, mentioned in the inscription of the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of Maranjdayan, were probably associated with military organisation. It seems that there was no clear cut division between civil and military functions. The army comprised of soldiers who served under a commander but sometimes the king himself provided the leadership to the contingents of soldiers. The Kalugwnalai record refers to an *Enadi* (army commander) who established a memorial for the soldiers in his service who were killed in action. King Maranjdayan erected commemorative stone for soldiers in his service who were killed during battle. Historians regard these soldiers as the king's 'companions of honour'.

The royal grants (inscriptional evidence) are mentioned in the copper plates which also contain *Prasastis*. In these inscriptions there is evidence of local administrative divisions; *Nadu*, *Kurram* and *Rastra* (mentioned in the Sinnamanur grant); The basic constituent of local administration was the *gramam*. Their names have the suffix *Mangalam*, *Kudi*, *Ur* or *Vayal*. *Nadu* was the larger unit of local administration. The land grants bestowed by the kings are regarded as *Danam* which were of religious nature. Madras Museum grant and the Sinnamanur grant indicate the area bestowed as land grant. The information regarding endowment was inscribed on the copper plates in written form and the royal directive (*anatti*) was prepared by the scribe (*Perum banaikkarans*). Land grants were given to temples and Brahmans (*Brahmadeyas*). The grants bestowed comprised of various rights such as *Karanmai* (cultivation) and *Miyatci* (administrative rights). The Pulan- Kurichi inscription (5<sup>th</sup> century CE) refers to creation of *Brahmadeya*. This is one of the earliest record of *Brahmadeya*. The endowments meant the surrender of rights by the grantor i.e. *Sarvapariharamaka*. Temples were also endowed with gold *kasus* by the kings for conducting prayers and other services in the temple. These were entrusted to the assembly (committee of assembly or *variyaam*) but interest had to be paid on this amount at a fixed rate. Sometimes grants of gold bestowed upon temples were placed in the custody of *Nagarattar* (corporation of merchants). Inscriptions give us information about village assemblies especially the way they functioned by delegating work to the committees. Membership in these assemblies was based on property and learning criteria as is clear from the inscription

from *Uttiramallur* (Chingleput) of early 10<sup>th</sup> century CE. These assemblies were not elected bodies. It is not clear how the *Variyams* (executive bodies) of assembly were constituted. The administrative personnel of the Pandyas as the evidence from the records reveals comprised of *evi mudal* (keeper of original orders), *vaykketri*, *pamarappottakam* (keeper of royal register) and *adhikari*. *Puravu vari Kanattar* . was probably the land revenue department.

The stone and copper plate records were probably not original evidence (since the original inscriptions were inscribed on palm leaves). Land grant records are related to the tax-free grants of land made by the king to the Brahmans and the temples. A procedure was followed in making land grants. The king verbally gave approval. This was obtained by a high official. Then the directive of the king was executed regarding the listing of the grants in the revenue records. The oral approval was termed as *Kelvi* or *Tirumugam*. *Olai* was an executive order to the officials regarding implementation of the king's order. The *Ulvari* was the title-deed which was approved by the revenue officers ( *Variyilar* or *Varikkuruseyvar* ). It appears that records regarding sanction of land grants and other orders were kept in the capital and the officers in the localities were directed to implement the king's orders.

The cultivated lands were subjected to taxation. Some of the taxes on the basis of the evidence of inscriptions were: *Kadamai* (on temples lands), *Antarayan*, *Viniyogam* (land tax), *Ponvari*, *Accu-vari*, *Kariyavaracci*, etc. It appears that these were mostly exacted in kind though some might have been cash payments. Taxes were also imposed on loom (of *Kaikkolar* and *Saliyar*) and shop-keepers. The testimony of the inscriptions also indicates that at times villagers had to suffer due to harassment by the officials or the incursions of the petty chiefs. There are also indications that due to high taxation sometimes the peasants fled the villages.

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## 23.5 THE CHOLAS

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The Cholas as a ruling power rose to eminence in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century CE when Vijayalaya seized Tanjavur from a feudatory chief of the Pallavas called Muttarayas. Henceforth the Cholas were able to establish control over Pallava territories and subdued the Pandya power. The Chola state stood on a firm footing deriving sustenance from the resource-pocket located in the fertile and rich area of the Kaveri valley. In the period of Rajaraja I and subsequent period various feudatory chiefs were subjugated and the earlier category of *Nadu* was regrouped into *Valanadu* and was placed under the subdued chiefs. The landed magnates were also incorporated into the state system and were provided prestigious titles and were assigned administrative and military duties, which included collection and assessment of land revenue.

### Chola Kingship

The Cholas traced their origin to the *Suryavamsa*. Mythical traditions are mentioned in the inscriptions especially in the *prasastis* containing the genealogies (Trruvalangad Copper plates, the larger Leiden Plates and the Anbil Plates, KanyaKumari inscription of Vira Rajendra) and these are interspersed with information about historical personages. It appears that these served the purpose of legitimisation of the rule of the Cholas. The *prasastis* of the Cholas were based on the *ltihasa-Purana* tradition. The dominance of the Sanskritic' and the Brahmanical traditions is well attested. The Cholas also ascribe to the legacy of the Sangam period. The genealogies of the Cholas attribute

eminent and prestigious lineage to the king to legitimise his position as king. The period from the eighth year of Rajaraja and onwards is marked by absence of genealogical record in the Tamil *Meykkirttis*. These compositions narrate the military exploits of the kings and are inscribed on stone and address the Tamil landed magnates. The Cholas ascribe Kshatriya origin to themselves as is attested by the title Kshatriyasikhamani of the king Rajaraja. The Yarm suffix (sanskritic) added to the names of the kings was also a part of the process of claiming kshatriya status e.g. Adityavannan (871-906) and Parantaka Vannan (707-755). The practice of assuming names during coronation also existed under the Cholas e.g.: Prakesarivarman and Rajakesarivannan and Arumolivarman (Tamil name with a Sanskrit suffix). The charters of the Cholas consist of the *prasastis* and genealogies in Sanskrit and the details regarding the grant in Tamil. *Hiranyagarbha* and *Tulabhara* ceremonies were conducted by the Chola kings. The anointment ceremony was also a means to claim *Kshatriya* position. A grant of Vira tli.ola points out that the king was advised by a Brahman moral preacher (dhannopadesta) that bestowment of land to Brahmans would lead his forefathers to heaven. However actual motive for making the grants was redistribution of resources in the form of land, gold, cattle etc. The gifts were bestowed for meritorious service provided by the Brahmans and also to seek legitimacy from them in political sphere. We have proper records of land grants but the grants of gold, cattle etc. were merely stated in *prasastis*. Through the land grants the kings tried to convert unsettled areas into agrarian settlements. These grants did not simply serve a charitable purpose Rajaraja is regarded as *Ulakalanda Perumel* (the great one who measured the earth like *Trivikrama*) and as Siva who established control over the land of Bhargava Rama.

### Local Administration

#### Ur and Nadu

The Chola copper plate evidence refers to the following while executing the land grant:

- 1) *Nattar*
- 2) *Brahmadeyakkilavar*
- 3) a) *Devadana*  
b) *Palliccanda*  
c) *Kanimurruttu*  
d) *Vettapperu-Urkalilar*
- 4) *Nagarattar*

*Nattar* were the representatives of *Nadu* (locality). The *Brahmadeyakkilavar* were the Brahman donees of *Brahmadeya* (lands given to Brahmans). *Nagarattar* comprised of the trading community and belonged to the nagaram or settlement of group of traders. *Devadana*, *Palliccanda*, *Kavimurruttu* and *Vettaperu* have been identified as the free villages. Y. Subbrayalu has pointed out that *nattar* were analogous to the *Vellanvagai Urar* (peasant village) since a number of *Ur* constituted a *Nadu*. Subbrayalu considers the village or *Ur* as a small component (fractional) of the *Nadu*. As a constituent of administrative structure, the *Nadu* was important but it incorporated and represented the *Ur* (vellanvagai villages). Thus in the territorial sphere *Nadu* comprised of *Vellanvagai* villages. *Nattar* were the important members (land holders)

of the *Nadu* (locality). There are very few inscriptions related to the *vellanvagai* villages. It seems that the *Ur* being the common populace represented the section which was not literate. However the inscriptional evidence related to *Ur* which is found in the temples is attributed to literate groups.

N. Karashima has analysed the two Tanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja I and Gangaikkondacolapuram inscription of Vivarajendra. According to him the *vellanvagai* villages comprised of agricultural lands, lands used by pastoralists, irrigation devices, funeral place, dwelling place, etc. The dwelling area comprised of: 1) habitation sites of landholders/cultivators (*ur-nattamlur-irukkai*), 2) of the artisans (*kammanacceri*), 3) agricultural labour (*paraicceri*). Karashima is of the opinion that in the *Vellanvagai* villages differentiation is not noticed. Subbrayalu however refutes this argument and suggests the existence of a hierarchical structure in these villages comprising of cultivators (*kaniyudaiyar*), tenant cultivators (*ulukudi*), artisans and the agricultural labourers. The cultivators were generally referred to as *vellals*. The functions of the *Ur* included: supervision of village lands viz. activities related to sale, purchase and gift. An important prerequisite for becoming a member of the *Ur* was to be a holder of land. From the inscriptional evidence, we come to know that the members of the *Ur* also possessed the titles like *Udaiyan*, *Kilan (kilpvan)*, *Velan*, *Peraraiyan*. All these titles point to landholding. Thus the epigraphical testimony enables us to infer that *Ur* was the group/assembly of non- brahman land holders of a village.

N. Karashima has argued that the land was held in common in the *Ur* villages. Karashima in some other instances refers to sale of land by members of *Ur* as individuals. Subbrayalu also refers, to the tendency towards 'individual holdings' in this period. *Nadus* were named after a village, which formed a part of a *Nadu*. Inscriptional evidence indicates that in several *Nadus* the main village was *Brahmadeya* (land given to Brahmans). However, several *nadus* did not have *Brahmadeya*. Subbrayalu refers to increase in *Nadus* from the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. Initially *Nadus* emerged in fertile areas, which had more villages and later spread to periphery (less fertile areas) where the number of villages was comparatively less. Nilakanta. Sastri points out that the *Nadu* comprised of many villages which were the smallest component of administration. Mahalingam suggests that *Nadu* was an administrative unit and it was sub-divided into villages. There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars regarding whether *Nadu* comprised of only *Vellanvagai* or also consisted of *Brahmadeya*, *Devadana* etc. Y. Subbrayalu points out that *Nadu* and *Ur* represented a locality comprising of *Vellanvagai* villages and its representatives participated in the assembly of *Nadu*. It is difficult to delineate the exact area over which the *Nadus* were spread. *Nadus* differed in size and they did not have any natural divisions (e.g. rivers). Therefore they could not possibly have been artificially created units or divisions. Sometimes *Nadus* covered the area beyond a river. In conventional historiography *Nattar* was regarded as a territorial assembly of a territorial unit *Nadu* which comprised of eminent members of every village. Other assemblies such as of *Brahmedeya*, *Pallicandam* were also considered subordinate to *Nadu* in the administrative machinery. Recently historians have argued that *Nadu* was not an administrative unit created by the Chola state but it was a natural collection of peasant settlements which was incorporated into the state system of the Cholas as a legacy from the previous period. This is proved by the fact that these *Nadus* were not of same size and were nucleated. The *Valanadus* which came into existence in the period of Rajaraja I were artificially created as administrative

divisions. *Nadus* initially emerged in fertile areas and later spread to comparatively less fertile zones. This is how the agrarian economy expanded. *Nadus* located in the fertile tracts were more populated than those in other areas.

There are several inscriptions which give us information about *Nadus*. *Kiranur* inscription of 1310 refers to the 'urom of villages Nanjil, Peruncevur, Viraikkudi ..... as qualified for the *Nadu* or Vada-chiruvayil-nadu.' (K. Veluthat, p. 184). It is clear from the evidence of the records that the *Nattar* were the *Vellals* and the functions of *Nattar (Nadu)* were performed by the *Vellala* who held the title of *Velan*. The main occupation of *Nattar* was agriculture since *Nadu* was a collection of agricultural settlements. The copper plates which basically deal with land grants address the *Nattar* and the execution of the grant made by the king was entrusted to them (deciding the limits of the lands granted by the establishment of superior rights of new grantees etc.) *Nattar* was subservient to the will of the ruler. *Nattar* also supervised irrigations works. They bestowed land on temples. They also served as stockists of donations made to temples. They also supervised the grants made by individuals and exempted the lands donated thus from tax and in return took a certain sum of money as a deposit. *Nadu* also bestowed land on temples which was tax-free (*nartiraiyili*). The tax payments exempted on lands donated to the temple were now the responsibility of *Nadu* towards the state. *Nadu* seems to have levied a cess for meeting these expenses. These levies or imposts were: *Nadatci*; *Nattu-viniyogan*, or *Natru-vyavasthai*. The temple lands were sold and leased out, a process in which *nattar* played an important role. *Nadu* seems to have been engaged in tax collection and assessment. Sometimes the *Nattar* performed the revenue collection task on behalf of the state and sometimes king's personnel (*komarravar*) were responsible for this work. *Mudaligal* and *Dandanayakam* were functionaries deputed in *nadu* and as royal officials they were entrusted with administrative responsibility. Thus the land holders in a locality were absorbed into the state system by the Cholas. These constituted the local landed magnates and worked on behalf of the king who exercised authority over them.

*Nadu* was the smallest unit for revenue administration. *Nattup-puravu*, *Nattu-vari* (land revenue) and *Nattukkanakku* all refer to revenue of *Nadu*. *Nattuk-kanakku* were the personnel responsible for revenue administration of *Nadu*. The collection and fixation of the revenue of a village was carried out within the context of *Nadu* where the village was located. When *Ur* exempted taxes this got reflected in *Nadu* accounts.

The king's decision to transfer the funds of temple for a specific purpose in the temple was reflected in the *Variyilarkanakku* (revenue register of royal authority) and the *Nattuk-kantlkku* (revenue register of *nadu*). This testifies to the relevance of *Nadu* as an important part of administrative system of the Cholas inspite of its locally independent character. *Nadu-vagai-ceyvar*, *Nadu-kurk-ceyvar* and *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* and *Nadu-kankatci* were the personnel who represented royal power in *Nadu*. *Nadu Kuru* is mentioned in an inscription of *Kulottunga I* (AD 1116) who managed the functioning of new *Devadana*. These personnel were given the role of maintaining the accounts of temples in localities. *Nadu vagai* is mentioned as participating in the assembly of *Brahmadeya* (sabha). In an inscription *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* is placed below *Senapati*. These posts of *Nadu* officers were transferable. Some officers were entrusted with the administrative responsibility in more than one *Nadu*. Thus they worked aspart of royal administrative machinery.

## Brahmadeya and Nagaram

*Brahmadeyas* constituted the category of Brahmans who were landholders in the agricultural tracts and who had been endowed with land (tax free) and had organised themselves into a distinct group. *Nagaram* comprised of traders who carried out trading and exchange activities in the pockets which had developed into commercial centres on account of the spurt in craft production and other activities carried out by artisans.

When the Cholas emerged as an important ruling power in the middle of 9<sup>th</sup> century CE in Thanjavur there already existed many *Brahmadeyas* which were densely populated and rich tracts in the Kaveri region. The Karantai plates of Rajendra I refer to 1080 Brahmans who inhabited Tribhuvanamahadevi Caturvedimangalam. The assembly of these Brahmans which inhabited agricultural tracts was called *Sabha* or *Mahasabha*. Most of the *Brahmadeyas* or Brahman settlements were centred round the temple. Through the temple and the ideological focus based on the *Puranas* and *Itihasas*, *Bhakti* and *varnashramadharm*a the differentiated society and monarchical polity were legitimised. Therefore the kings endowed lands to Brahmans and created *Brahmadeyas* as a means to legitimize their power.

The inscriptions inform us that many of the *Brahmadeyas* in the Chola period were *Taniyur* (separate village) in a *Nadu*. They had a separate administrative system (revenue and justice). Many of the agricultural villages were clubbed together with a *Taniyur*. Sometimes a *Taniyur* was placed subordinate to a temple. Here the *Mulparusai* was the body which looked after the work of administration.

The inscriptions give the important prerequisites like age, landholding, knowledge, good behaviour for membership to an executive committee of *Sabha*. The Karantai plates (1080 Brahmans) refer to *Brahmadeyas* but do not inform us how the *Sabha* and other committees were formed. They were not established by royal authority. Their origin may be attributed to *Dharamasastric* norms. The *Sabha* and its committees supervised the temple lands, cattle and other resources. They assigned lands to tenants and levied rent. They kept a record of revenue collected and expenses incurred. They supervised the temple functionaries from priest to cleaner and organised the daily services of temples. *Sabha* acted as a group and the decisions taken were for the benefit of the organisation and not individuals.

The *Brahmadeya* settlements where the temple played a pivotal role lost importance in the later phase of the Chola period. After mid 11<sup>th</sup> century CE we find fewer *Brahmadeya* tracts and more temples were constructed and the older ones were improved upon. Sometimes the *Mahasabha* unable to pay the amount taken from a temple due to shortage of funds was forced to fall back upon its income from the neighbouring village.

*Nagaram* settlement was a tract where traders and others (including artisans) lived. “An inscription of I 036 CE from Chidambaram distinguishes between non-brahman inhabitants of superior status (*kudigal*) and those of inferior status (*kil kalanai*). *Kudigal* included two merchant groups *Sankarappadiyar* (lower group) and *Vyaparin* (higher group) plus three other groups — *Vellals* (cultivators), *Saliyar* (cloth merchants) and *Pattinavar* (fishermen). The subordinate workmen (*kil kalanai*) were *Taccar* (carpenters), *Kollar* (blacksmiths), *Tattar* (goldsmiths) and *Koliyar* (weavers)” (B. Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*).

*Nagarattar* was the representative body of traders. *Nagaram* settlement was a separate area. Committee of *Nagarattar* was referred to as *Nagaravariyam*. *Nagaram* also held land in common called *Nagarakkani*. This they acquired through purchase but they also leased out land and performed the task of levying taxes and rendering services to the local groups. They maintained their records regarding income and expenditure. They also paid royal levies in the form of gold and paddy. They also allocated taxes to the local temples viz. *Kadamai* (tax on land), *Nagaraviniyogam* (a tax for sustenance of *Nagaram*) etc. In some cases *Nagaram* were independent of *Nadu* (*taniyur*).

### King, Officials and Chiefs

A number of officers were responsible for administration in the Chola kingdom although there is no clear evidence of a council of minister but *Uddan-kottam* seems to have served this purpose. Upward and downward mobility is noticed in the administrative hierarchy. According to conventional historiography *Perundanan* and *Sirutaram* were higher and lower category officials respectively. *Senapatis* (commander of troops) had the middle position referred to as *Sirudanattup Perundaram*. *Nyayattar* (judges) were of both category. Recently historians have pointed out that these divisions are not conclusively borne out by evidence. Officials were paid by allotting land rights. Tax on land was levied in cash and kind both. Officials were referred to as holders (*udaiyan, kilan*) of lands. They could further sub-assign hold or even sell it. Communal ownership was prevalent and customary rights of villagers were recognised. The lowest unit of administration was the village. They combined to form a *Nadu*. A *Valanadu* comprised of a few *Nadus*. *Taniyur* was a separate village or settlement site. Above *Valanadu* there was *Mandalam* which was equivalent to a province: *Karumigal* and *Panimpkkal* meant officers and servants. *Anbil* plates refer to a *Brahman Manya Saciva*. He was granted land by the king. The king conveyed his orders orally (*trivayakkelvi*) especially with regard to gift to temples. The directive was conveyed through a letter (*sri-mukham*) issued by *Anatti* (executive officer) appointed by the king. The local bodies were apprised and when the process was completed a record was prepared in the presence of the local magnates called *Nattukkon, Nadukilavan, Urudaiyan*.

Officers associated with the process of bestowment and registration of land grants were many and some are also referred to as *Uttaramantri*. *Puravu-vari-tinaikkalam* was the department of land revenue. *Varipottagam* was the record of land rights and *Vari-pottagak-kanakku* was the register of revenue department. Officers associated with the task of maintaining records and registers of land rights and land revenue department were *Varipottagam* and *Variyiledu*. *Kankanis* or supervisors were the audit officers. Entry in a record was called *Variyilidu*. *Mugavetti* (wrote royal letters) and *Pattolai* were junior functionaries of land revenue department. Officers of *Nadu* (of the status of *adhikari*) were *Nadu kuru* (revenue assessment and settlement officer), *Nadu vagai* (revenue official). *Mandira olai* was the officer who wrote the *Tirumugam* (letter containing the royal order). The tenn *Naduvirukkai* was used for *Vzjnapti* (*vaykkelvi*) or petitioner and *Anatti* (executive officer) who served as a link between monarch and the persons who wished to approach the king. The king made oral orders (*trivayakkelvi*) regarding the issues brought to him by the officers. These requests transformed into orders were sent to local administration and central administration for implementation. The *Olai nayagam* were the officers who verified the letter written by *Mandira-olai*. The oral order of the king was put to writing (*eluttu*) and compared

(*oppu*) and then entered (*pugunda*). *Vzdaiyil adigari* got the order listed in the record. The document was called *Tittu* and the charity deed (*aravolai*).

Justice was carried out by the village assemblies through the committees comprising of *Nyayattar*. The central court of justice was the *Dharmasana* which conducted its affairs through *Dharmasana bhattas* (Brahmans proficient in law). It appears that civil and criminal offences were not dealt separately. The penalty for crime committed by a person affecting the king or ruling dynasty was decided by the king himself. Several methods of punishment prevailed viz. imposition of fines, capital punishment etc.

*Adhikaris* were the king's officers. They possessed the titles *Udaiyan, Kilan/ Kilavan, Velan, Muvendavelan, Brahma, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan* and other chiefly nomenclature. Sometimes more than one nomenclature was adopted. At times the name of the Chola ruler or his epithet was used as a prefix by the *Adhikaris*. *Naduvirukkai* were mostly Brahman (held titles like *Bhatta, Barhmadhirajan*) officers and acted as a link between the royal authority and the bureaucracy and they are always referred to in connection with the *adhikaris*.

Personnel in charge of temples were *Srikaryam* but they did not look after the ritual related aspects like worship etc. In some cases we have the evidence of *Adhikaris* holding the *Srikaryam* office. Generally they had a distinctive position in the administrative system. The titles held by them were *Kilan/Kilavan, Velan, Muvendvelan, Brahma, Bhatia, Kon, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan, Nadu* title, *Kings title. Senapati* was in charge of military affairs. They bear the king's title/ name, and other titles such as *Udaiyan, Brahma, Araiyan, Kilans*. The office of *Dandanayakam* was probably akin to the *Senapati* (military office). The title mentioned for this office is *Pallavaaraiyans*. The titles held by *Senapaties* were: *udaiyan, brahma, araiyan* etc. The office of *Tiru-mandria olai nayakam* was an important office associated with preparation of land grant documents. The titles of these officers were *Muvendavelan, Brahma* etc.

Officers deputed at *Nadu* who discharged their duties at the behest of the king were *Nadu Vagai* who were revenue assessment officers. *Kottam-vagai* were deputed in *Tondaimandalam* area and performed the same function as *Nadu vagai*. *Nadukankaninayakam* had control over more than one *Nadu* and had a higher position than *Nadu vagai*. The titles which occur with the office of *Nadu vagai* were: *Araiyan* and *Udaiyan*. *Muvendavelan* was borne by *Nadu kuru* (officer of *nadu*) who was an officer of the rank of *Adhikari*.

Rajaraja I (1001 AD.) adopted an elaborate land revenue fixation and assessment mechanism and thus *Valanadus* were created and this practice was also adopted by other rulers. The land revenue department was called *Puravuvari tinaikkalam*. This department was an administrative division of the king's government and had the following personnel: *Puravu vari, Vari pottagan, Mugavetti, Vari pottaga, Kanakku, Variyil. idu* and *Pattolai* etc. In the time of Rajendra II the administrative personnel had more elaborate designations: *Puravu-vari-tinaikkala-kanakkar*, etc. The period of Kulottunga I witnesses few officers: *Puravu-vari-Srikarana, Nayagam* and *Mugavetti*. Later the term *Variyilar* refers to personnel of revenue department as a general terminology. These officers had the epithet: *Udaiyan; Muvendavelan, etc.*



The titles held by the king's personnel such as *Udaiyan*, *Kilan* and *Kilavan* refer to possession. Other titles were *Velan* and *Muvendavelan*. The latter is a typical Chola title and occurs from the time of Parantaka. These titles suggest that those who bore them were land holders or associated with land. The title *Muvendavelan* was bestowed by the Chola King and K. Veluthat points out ".... the strong association of those who bore this high title with offices of some importance is .... borne in mind, demonstrating that the major *Vellal* landed magnates were enlisted in the service of the king by which process they became an integral part of the state system." It appears that the title used by chiefs and their families viz. *Araiyan* was used by other eminent people as well. In the period of Rajaraja I the chiefly rule suffered a setback but the number of *Araiyan* title holders was on the rise. This title was more prestigious than *Muvendavelan*. It is conjectured that the chiefs were subdued to the position of landed magnates or cultivators from the period of Rajaraja and his successors although they still held the title.

The cattle herders (*manradl*) supervised the grants for lighting lamps in the temples. Merchants held the titles of *Cetti*, *Mayilatti* and *Palan*. They even occupied the important offices like *Senapati* and accountant. *Peruntaccan* and *Perunkollan* were titles used by artisan category but at the most their important positions were confined to royal palace and the temple connected with it.

We do not get clear evidence of a council of ministers but there existed officers like: *Purohita* (*dharmopadesta*), *Rajagurus*, *nrumandira olai*, *Adhikari*, *Vayilketpar* (officer who noted the king's directives) etc. M.G.S Narayanan points out that *Udan kuttam* was like king's companion of honour. They might have had a head because we have mention of *Adhikari* of *Udan kuttam*. There are references to the court in literature (*Periyapuranam* etc.). The king's court comprised of: Brahman advisors, Priests, *Rajaguru*, *Adhikaris*, *Tirumandira olai nayagams*, *Vayi/ketpar*, head of the king's bodyguards and *Samantas* (feudatory chiefs). The various levies of this period were: *Antarayam*, *Eccoru*, *Kadamai* (produce-rent), *Kudimai*, *Muttaiy-al*, *Vetti* (labour-rent) and *Tattar-pattan* (cash payment). Most of the imposts were exacted in kind viz. paddy.

The Cholas undertook military expedition to Sri Lanka (during the time of Rajaraja I) and Sri Vijaya (during the time of Rajendra I). This shows the military strength of the Chola state. It seems that the cavalrymen (*kudiraiccevarar*), *Anaiyatkal* (those who fought on elephant), *Archers* (*villigal*, *anukkar*) were name of the categories constituting the military force. *Valangai* (right hand) *Velaikkarar* were the soldiers recruited from among the peasants. Soldiers were also recruited from the artisans group (*idangai* -left hand). These were basically mercenary soldiers.. Chola *Meykkirttis* refer to Kantalur *Salai* which has been interpreted as an educational institution in the Chera kingdom which imparted military education and training to the Brahmans which as mentioned in *Meykkirttis* was the place where Chera fleet was destroyed by the Chola king. This proves that Chola military prowess was insurmountable.

The chiefs held an important position in the state system. In the Pandya kingdom the only category of chiefs was *Ays*. In the Sangam therarutre there is reference to many chiefs viz. *Ays*, *Vels*, *Muvas*, *Kodumbalur* and *Adigamans*. The records of the Pallavas refer to chiefs such as *Gangas* and *Adigamans*. The various other chiefs who accepted the suzerainty of Pallavas were *Banas*, *Vettuva-adiaraiyan*, *Muttaraiyar* etc. The

chiefs of the Chola period were: *Paluvettaraiyar, Vels, Malavas, Gangas, Banas*, etc. It appears that the chiefs were assigned land and collected dues from it in return for *padi kaval* or protection of territory. In the post- Kulottunga period there is reference to *Niiamaittittu* or diplomatic agreement between two or more chiefs. These chiefs also had their soldiers and retainers. Their services were utilised by the Chola kings.

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## 23.6 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN THE DECCAN

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### Satavahana

The earliest state formation in the Deccan was the Satavahana state. Major part of the kingdom was under the control of royal officers but some portion was controlled by feudatories. The administrative divisions comprised of *Aharas* or *Rashtras* which contained town (*nigama*) and villages (*grama*). Amatyas were governors of *Ahara*. The king was assisted in the task of administration by *rajamatyas* (advisers). Other officers were: *Mahamatra, Bhandagarika* (supervisor of stores), *Heranika* (treasurer), *Mahasenapati* (commander of forces). The *Lekhaka* was in charge of preparing documents and *Nibandhakaras* were also documentation officers. *Maharathis* and *Mahbhojas* were the feudatories. They could make grants without the sanction of the king. *Gramini* was in charge of villages. *Nigama Sabha* was the assembly of citizens of the town. *Srenis* or guilds of professions also existed (potters, oil millers etc.)

### Chalukyas of Badami

The titles of Chalukya kings were as follows: *Satyasraya, Sri-Prithvi-Vallabha Maharaja, Pramesvara* and *Maharajadhiraja*. It was not a centralized kingdom. We do not find reference to council of ministers but it seems that the royal family was placed in charge of official positions. Later the Eastern Chalukya kingdom and other kingdoms developed clue to this policy. They emerged as offshoots of the original Chalukyas of Badami. Inscriptions give us information about the administrative system. *Rajasravitam* were the royal orders. The *Vijnaptis* (petitioners) and writers of the king's orders related to grants on stone or copper plates were important administrative personnel. They held the position of *Mahasandhivigrahika* (officer in charge of peace and war). The division mentioned in the epigraphical records are *Rashtra, Vishaya* and *Nadu*. The copper plate grants bestowed by the Chalukya kings refers to *Vishyapatis, Samantas, Gramabhogikas, Maharattaras* etc. Thus the administrative system was not centralised. However, *Vishayapatis* were royal personnel. Village was the smallest part of the administrative system. The *Gamunda* was the royal representative at the village level. He was the connecting link between king and village people. The *Karanas* were the village accountants. *Mahajans* constituted the village elders. The Lakshunesvar inscription gives us details regarding the links between the royal machinery and local administration. An *Achara vyasthe* (charter of rights and duties) was bestowed upon the *Mahajans, Nagara* (commercial interests) and eighteen *Prakritis* (classes). It refers to royal personnel, *Mahajans, Desadhipatis* (officers who collected truces), *Sreni* (guild) of oil mongers etc. Various taxes are mentioned in the inscription which were to be paid to the king's officials: for great festivals; salt, tribute and gold. The Hyderabad grant of Pulkesin II refers to the village being granted together with the *Nidhi* (treasure), *Upanidhi, Klipta* and *Uparikara* (dues). Members

of the royal family and trade associations also made gifts to the temples in kind (millet, betel leaves).

### Rashtrakutas

Under the Rashtrakutas also the administrative system was not centralised. The kingdom was placed in charge of royal officials as well as feudatories. The feudatories had to give regular tribute to the suzerain and had to render military service whenever required. The territory which was placed under the direct control of the central government was categorised into *Rashtras* and *Vishayas*. The *Vishayas* comprised of a number of *Bhuktis* which were further divided into villages. Thus the smallest component of the administrative hierarchy was the village. The officer in charge of *Rashtra* was the *Rastrapati*. He combined both military and civil functions. He was entrusted with the task of appropriation of land revenue. The maintenance of law and order was another responsibility assigned to him. The *Vishayapatis* and *Bhogapatis* exercised control over a smaller area as compared to the *Rashtrapati*. The former were in charge of revenue administration together with the *Nalgavundas* or *Desagramakutas* (hereditary revenue officers). The officials responsible for the administration at the village level were headman and accountant. The functions of the village headman included maintenance of the law and order as well as collection of taxes. The village council which was represented by the elders of the village (*gramamahajanas* or *gramamahattaras*) constituted subcommittees for carrying out the public welfare activities like management of tanks, temples, roads and schools. The records of the period indicate that the provincial and local administration was carried out by the assemblies which comprised of elders of the district (*Vishaya mahattaras*), province (*Rashtra mahattaras*) or villages. These representative bodies were an important feature of the administrative system at the local level.

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## 23.7 SUMMARY

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This Unit deals with the administrative and institutional structures in Peninsular India from the earliest times to the early medieval period. The earliest political formation in South India referred to as “Sangam” polity, dated to early centuries of Christian era, was characterised by chiefdoms. The period from 6<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards witnessed the rise of monarchical polities such as the Pallavas of Kanchi, Chalukyas of Badami, Pandyas of Madura and Cholas of Tanjavur. The political structure which emerged under the Cholas, Pallavas and Pandyas was quite similar in nature. The political formation of this period emerged in the river valleys which served as the economic resource base. The agrarian expansion of this period coincided with the establishment of *Brahmadeya* and *Devadana* settlements. The royal power sought legitimacy by several means viz. land grants to *Brahmans* and temples, claiming high descent and performance of rituals etc. The king had a bureaucratic machinery to assist him in administration but it was not a centralised system. In the above mentioned kingdoms feudatories played an important role in the administrative system. The most important feature of the polity of this period was the evolution of *Nadu* as an administrative unit which was a natural collection of agricultural settlements. The *Ur* (assembly of *non-Brahmans*) and *Sabha* (assembly of *Brahmans*) and *Nagaram* (assembly of traders) also played an important role in the administrative system.

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## 23.8 EXERCISES

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- 1) Analyse the local administration under the Cholas.
- 2) Give a brief account of the nature of Pallava kingship.



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