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Subject: **Indian Culture**

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Production of Courseware
- **Content for Post Graduate Courses**

Paper : **Indian Polity**

Module : **The Cholas : Provincial and Local Administration**

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Component-I (B) – Description of module:

Subject Name	Indian Culture
Paper Name	Indian Polity
Module Name/Title	The Cholas : Provincial and Local Administration
Module Id	IC / POLT / 20
Pre requisites	Knowledge of English Basic Knowledge in History and Archaeology
Objectives	• To know about the Medieval Chola polity and State • To know about the Regional and Local Administrative Units of the Cholas • To understand the nature of Local Administration Under the division
Keywords	The Cholas Political History Local Administration of the Cholas Sabhas

E-text (Quadrant-I) :

1. Introduction

The history of the Chola dynasty dates back to the Early Historic or Sangam Age from about ca. 3rd century BCE to ca. 5th century CE. But, they had disappeared in the early medieval period, ca. from ca. 5th century to 9th century CE; perhaps, they existed as a chiefly family, when the Pallavas and Pandiyas, who dominated Tamil Nadu from 6th to 9th century CE, respectively in the northern and southern parts, in the early medieval period. The Medieval Cholas rose to prominence around the middle of the 9th century CE and their dominance continued till the thirteenth century. However, we are not sure if any connection existed between the Cholas of the Medieval period and those of the Early Historic period.

The Cholas ruled from Thanjavur at first and the capital of the Cholas was shifted to Gangaikondacholapuram by Rajendra I, from Thanjavur. Their rule spanned from ca. 850 CE to 1279 CE, for about 400 years in major parts of South India. The Chola Empire had a strong maritime dimension and it had sway over parts of Sri Lanka and it had interfered in the Southeast Asian political affairs, at least for a brief span of time in the eleventh century CE.

The Cholas issued a vast number of epigraphs; stone as well as copper plates. Generally, there is abundance of inscriptions for this period, more than any other period in the history of Tamil Nadu. The Chola history is interesting because of the abundance of inscriptions that offer information on the various aspects of the Chola history. The Cholas are well known for

the all round developments and achievements in the areas of agriculture, administration and art and architecture.

2. Previous Research on the Cholas

The history of the Cholas has attracted the attention of several researchers. The inscriptions of the Cholas were documented and published by the Epigraphical branch of the Archaeological Survey of India (*South Indian Inscriptions Volume*) and are still being documented by many researchers. Their history has been researched on the basis of inscriptions by Venkayya (*South Indian Inscriptions* vol. 2). The noted historian K. A. Nilakanta Sastri extensively used the inscriptions of the Cholas to understand their history and the various aspects of their rule (Sastri 1955).

Extensive research has been undertaken on the Cholas by Noboru Karashima (1984, 2001). Y. Subbarayalu (2012) and Karashima (1984) have worked systematically on the inscriptions of the Cholas using computer techniques and statistical analysis from the 1960s. Y. Subbarayalu's work on the *Political Geography of the Chola* country mapped and traced the historical geography of the Chola country based on the inscriptions (1973). Burton Stein researched on the Chola history and argued that the Chola State was a segmentary in organization (1980, 1984). The idea of segmentary state has been reviewed and rejected by various scholars (Jha 1984; Velthat1993, 2002: 99; Subbarayalu 2001).

S. R. Balasubramanian has published on the temples of the Cholas and numerous documentations have been undertaken on the art and architecture of the Cholas (*Balasubramaniam* 1966, 1978, Champakalakshmi 1996). R. Champakalakshmi has studied the Chola settlements (1996, 2002), religion and iconography, and the development of urbanization process.

Kenneth Hall (1980) has studied the on the statecraft and economy under the Cholas. His work *Trade and Statecraft Under the Cholas* focuses on the development of Nagarams under the Cholas and the urban processes.

P. Shanmugam has researched on the revenue and administrative system of the Cholas (1987, 2017a, 2017b). Scholars including G. W. Spencer (1976, 1983), James Heitzman (1987), Leslie Orr (2007a, 2007b, 2016), Daud Ali (2007), Mahalakshmi (2011) and others have focused on the different aspects of the Medieval South India and the Cholas. The Chola's maritime expeditions have also been researched by Herman Kulke (2009) and Tansen Sen (2003, 2009).

3. Chola Administration

The political administration under the Cholas was much more improved than it was under the early Pandiyas and the Pallavas. New administrative methods and better approach to management are seen in the Chola administration. The inscriptions offer information on the king's duties and performance. The Cholas expanded their territory gradually through military activities. The princes were placed to administer the conquered territories (Shanmugam 2000).

4. Chola Polity and State and Administration: nature of the Chola State

There have been debates on the nature of the Chola state. It was considered to be a well-organised centralised state, with bureaucratic establishment and it was compared to the Byzantine Royalty by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri. He states about "the Byzantine royalty of Rajaraja and his successors with numerous palaces, officials and ceremonials and its majestic display of the concentrated resources of an extensive empire" (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 447).

The idea of strong Chola State was not accepted by Burton Stein. In his books *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India,* based on Southall's model of segmentary state proposed for the East African kingdom (See, Upinder Singh 2008: 588-589). Burton Stein argues that the Chola state was a segmentary state with the dominant role of the peasant bodies. It was not a monolithic unitary entity. He argues that the *nadu* segments were independent units and they were integrated with the state only ritually and the bureaucracy was lacking. The Chola state had limited territorial authority from the core to the periphery. It had no monopoly as a legitimate state authority. It had dual sovereignty: Political authority vs ritual sovereignty. The *nadu* acted as segments under the chiefs with titles such as *udiayar and muvendavelar.* The land-grants and the *prasastis* supported the royal influence and ritual sovereignty. The Chola polity had a pyramidal structure with segments consisting of social formations of cultivators, artisans and herdsmen with a supra-local authority. According the Stein the local segments gave the foundation (1984) for the Chola state which had a pyramidal structure with the monarch on top with sacred and temporal authority. Heitzman's analysis too reveals an attempt to centralise the administration from the tenth century (Heitzman 1997). Kesavan Veluthat (1997) and Nandi (2000) present a feudalism oriented model, which perhaps might suit the later part of the Cholas rule, say from the 12th century CE.

The views of Stein have been critically studied by scholars based on the scrutiny of the inscriptions (Champakalakshmi 1981, Subbarayalu 1982, Jha 1984; Karashima 1984, Kolenda 1985). The formation of certralised state is evidenced in the Chola times according to Karashima (1984). Y. Subbarayalu argues that the Chola state was an early form of state. It was a small kingdom in the early stage and the segmentary concept may apply to this phase, says Subbarayalu. The king was the head of the state and the state took control of the territories gradually. The chiefs who were active during the Parantaka were not present during the time of Rajaraja I. Rajaraja's activities expanded the power of the state and the officialdom was strengthened and the taxation measures (Subbarayalu 2002) were refined, and even the institutions of temples and the Brahmadeyas were monitored. From the time of Rajaraja I, the imperial phase was inaugurated. The centralised structure could not continue in the later period. Agrarian crisis due to the conflicts between the bigger and smaller landlords led to the fall of the state control in the later period (Subbarayalu 2001).

One of the criticisms of Burton Stein's view is that it did not give importance to the urban institutions (Champakalakshmi 1980: 203), but focussed on the peasant society and the agrarian order. P. Shanmugam states that Burton stein took the views of the tax Kadamai from the works of K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and Arjun Appadurai. Stein states that "There is no evidence to support the view that *kadamai* was a payment from localities to the 'Central Government.' The generic revenue terms *Kadamai* and *Kudimai* appear simply to have been

terms for taxes; they imply no reference to the source (i.e. whether from the land or not) nor the recipient (i.e. whether local or extra local)" (Stein 1980: 263). The tax called *kadamai* was paid to the central government is clearly evidenced in the references from the inscriptions, according to Shanmugam (1987: 145-148). Therefore the segmentary state model cannot be applied to the context of the Cholas.

George W. Spencer accepted Stein's proposition and argued that plunder as a means of raising resources for the country (Spencer 1976). The theory of plunder is also criticised by researchers. According to D.N. Jha

"It is, in fact, difficult to imagine a political system exercising its authority in some form of the other over a large number of agrarian settlements without controlling to a significant extent their economic resources and thriving mainly on plunder which could have been at best only one of the channels for the inflow of wealth" (Jha 1985: 135).

The argument of Subbarayalu appears more accurate, and the Chola state was integrated in the middle phase and it perhaps showed somewhat "segmentary nature" in the early and later phases.

5. The Local administration Under the Cholas

The local administration cannot be separated from the central administration. The local and provincial entities were much more powerful in the medieval period than their modern counterparts. The task of the kings was to manage these smaller bodies across the country and to collect tax from them. Burton Stein (1980) argued the units called *nadus* were independent segments. However, the inscriptions point out that these entities were subordinates to the central power. Though they had autonomy the village bodies were regulated by the kings. The procedures for the regulation of the *sabha* at Uttiramerur was authorised by the king Parantaka I. The kings had a definite role in the creation of the Brahmadeyas and the kings were dependent upon the revenue from the land and hence the village and *nadu* segments cannot be considered independent. The main task of the king was to monitor the developments at the village and *nadu* levels and also in the temples.

Chola Regional/Provincial Administration: Mandalam

One of the important measures adopted by the Cholas for the administration of their territories in the middle phase was the creation of *mandalam* as an administrative division. The Cholas appointed the princes for administering these *mandalams.* The Pandyan country was placed under the Chola Pandyas, and parts of Kerala region were ruled by the Chola Keralas. The Mysore region was ruled by Chola Gangas. Sri Lanka was ruled by the Chola Lankeswara. Regional administration was undertaken efficiently under the Cholas. From the time of Kulottunga I, *Mandalamutalis* ruled the Mandalams. *Mandalikars* are mentioned in the work of *Kalingattuparani* of the Chola period. The revenue from these administrative units was perhaps maintained separately according to Shanmugam (1987:115). The Chola country had 12 *mandalams*.

Old Names	*New territorial Divisions*
Chonadu	Chozhamandalam

Tondainadu	Jayankondachola Mandalam
Pandinadu Cholamandalam	Rajaraja Mandalam 1012 CE – Nigarili
Kongunadu	
Tadigaipadi	Vikkiramancholamandalam
Nolampapadi	Nigarilichola padi
Gangapadi	Mudikondachola mandalam
Kudamalai/kodagu	
Rattapadi	
Renadu	
Vengi	
Sri Lanka	Izhamandalam

Chola Regional Administration: Valanadu

The *Valanadus* were divisions of the *mandalams* and it was not clear who were controlling the Valanadus. The *kottams* of Tondaimandalam were equivalent of *Valanadus* of other region. The *kottams* of Tondaimandalam were managed by *Kottavagai*. A collective administration of the revenue of a *valanadu* might have been managed by one functionary (Subbarayalu 1973:69, see also Shanmugam 1987:117). The purpose of creating the *Valanadus* were perhaps to reduced the power of the *nadus*.

Chola Regional Administration: Nadu

The supra-local corporate body of the each *nadu* was called *nattars* (Subbarayalu 2002). *Nattars* are referred to in the Chola inscriptions. It was perhaps a group of non-Brahmin landowners, according to K. A. Nilakanta Sastri (1955). Y. Subbarayalu argues that the *nattars* were a group of village headmen. The land-grants orders from the kings were sent to the *nattar*. The *nattars* also settled land boundaries. They are found in the documents of the 6th to 10th century CE in the context of demarcating the boundaries of the Brahmadeyas. They collected land revenue. They are not seen after 11th century CE, according to Y. Subbarayalu. Very few references are found to *nattars* after this time. In the case of *nattirayili* donations, the *nadu* undertook the responsibility of paying the *irai*. The *nattars* played an important role in determining the revenue officers (Shanmugam 1987: 118).

Settlements and their Types

Urs were the settlements of the peasants. The *nadus* perhaps formed around the early Ur settlements. The lands in the *vellanvagai* settlements were owned communally. There existed the settlement quarters of *kammana*, *Izhava* and Paraiyar quarters around the major settlements (Subbarayalu 2002). In the *nadus*, at least a few settlements of Brahmins and

commercial settlements called *nagarams.* The *paraiyars* were the main labour service providers to the agricultural lands.

6. Local bodies and Village Administration

The villages were the basic units of territories. The basic units of the Chola country included villages of the farming communities, villages of the *Brahmanas* or *Brahmadeyas*, villages of the merchants called *nagarams*. There were certain villages called *taniyur* or independent entities. Temples could also be considered as a local unit, like the villages, as they controlled a lot of territories and were acting as public institutions.

Chola Regional Administration: Communal Corporate Bodies

Caste-based bodies functioned at the village as well as supra-local levels. *Urs, urars*, *sabha* and *nagaram* were the main communal corporate bodies and they had their own assemblies (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 492). *Nattars* functioned at the *nadu* level. The *urs* and *nagarams* might have been simpler entities than the *sabhas*. In large Brahmadeyas, *sabhas* were well organised, influenced by the *Dharmasastra* regulations. Certain *Brahmana* villages had the bodies such as *mulaparudai* and *aalunganam*. *Mulaparudai* took care of temple administration and in some context it looked after the village affairs too (Chidambaram) (Shanmugam 2000).

Chola Local Administration: *Vellanvagai* Villages

The villages of non-Brahmin residents were known as *Ur* and they were also called *Vellanvakai*. The taxes from these villages were mentioned as *Vellanvagai mutal* in the inscriptions. Some villages were also converted to Brahmadeyam to vellanvagai (Shanmugam 1987: 118). These villages were maximum in number. They had *Ur* or *kudi*, as suffixes in their names. The Ur was the simplest type of assemblies (Nilakanta Sastri 1955: 492). Landowners, peasants and servants were part of these villages. Some of them were probably old settlements. They had an assembly called *Urar*. The *ur* assembly consisted of the landowners of the village. They received the government orders and were liasioning with the government. They had accountants and other workers who were hereditary servants.

Chola Local Administration: Brahmadeya villages

Brahmadeya villages were inhabited by the Brahmins. These villages were created by the kings and they had the names as *mangalam* and *Chaturvedimangalam* as suffixes. These villages were created with the titles of the kings and royal families. The Brahmins were mostly landowners. The cultivation was done by the non-Brahmins. They had an assembly called *sabha*. The administration of Sabha is revealed by the inscriptions from *Uttiramerur*, Tiruparkadal and Senganur. Some of the *Brahmdeya* villages were acting as *taniyurs* or independent villages. The Brahmin villages had social stratification with the Brahmins on top and the *Vellalas* occupying the intermediary positions and the service groups occupying the bottom-most position (Subbarayalu 2002: 84).

Chola Local Administration: *Sabha*

Sabha or *Mahasabha* took care of village administration in the Brahmin villages. The *sabha* was known as *Perumkuri sabhai* in Tamil. The *Sabha* managed the lands of the temples and the common properties. Received endowments and managed them. They had prescribed specific qualifications for becoming the members of the *Sabha*. These rules were supervised or regulated by the kings. Most of the shareholders were the members of this *sabha*. The qualification was based knowledge of one *Veda*, property and discipline. Several committees called *variyams* were chosen for the specific activities.

Chola Local Administration: *Samvatsara variyam*

This may be translated as "annual committee". It had a supervisory role and included the senior members of the village. It perhaps took care of the accounts. It supervised the work of other committees.

Chola Local Administration: Garden *variyam*

Tottavariyam is the garden committee. It perhaps took care of the maintenance of the garden lands. Its functions are not clear. It might have looked after all the lands: both dry and wetlands.

Chola Local Administration: Tank *variyam*

The *eri variyam* is the tank committee. It perhaps took care of the maintenance of the tanks. It must have managed the water resources and the distribution canal networks. It could be argued that it was looking after irrigation activities on the whole.

Chola Local Administration: Gold *variyam*

Gold *variyam* perhaps took care of the checking the standard of the gold. The gold committee at *Uttiramerur* had 6 members (P. Shanmugam 2000) or more. They consisted of *Sangarapadiyar* and other merchants too. They worked under the supervision of the *Samvatsara variyam*.

Chola Local Administration: *Panchavara variyam*

The *Panchavariya* committee took care of the administration of the lands. They collected taxes and maintained accounts. *Alunganam* is another local body. This was acting only in the Brahmanical villages.

Chola Local Administration: *Nagaram*

The quarters of the merchants were called *Nagaram*. They had the suffixes *Puram* and *Perunteru* in their names. They were involved in commercial activities. They collected taxes from the villages. The king sent orders to the *nagarams*. They were also involved in temple administration (Certain contexts). Due to the increase in the commercial activities specialization took place in trade activities. Specialized mercantile organizations such as *Saliya nagarattar* who marketed textiles and *Sangarappadi nagarattar,* who marketed oil and ghee existed in certain area s (Champakalakshmi 1996: 117). The *nagarams* contributed the

urbanization processes in the 11th to 13th centuries (Champakalakshmi 1996: 118). The mercantile activities in south India and in the regions of the Indian Ocean studies have been studied by researchers (Hall 1980, Champakalakshmi 1996, Karashima 2002, 2004). The merchant groups were also active in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. The *Ayyavole, Pathinenvishayattar/tisayayirattu Ainurruvar* were active throughout the reign of the later Cholas. The growing influence of the mercantile bodies appeared to have been one of the factors contributing to the decline of the Chola power. The Chola expansion in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia did have a contributing factor to the development of the mercantile activities (Champakalakshmi 1996: 220-221).

According to Champakalakshmi "Long distances were not covered by the farmer/peasant for economic exchanges which the *nagaram* as a marketing centre controlled or supervised. *Nagaram* members and Individual merchants *vyapari* covered longer distances for their merchandise (sale and purchase)" and the *nagaram* network emerged from the 10th century, systematically bringing the agrarian regions closer together into a web of economic activity both through commodity exchange and through the use of money."

Chola Local Administration: Taniyur

Taniyur means independent village in Tamil. They were probably independent villages. Possibly they were not controlled by the *nadus.* They may have functioned directly under the Valanadus or under the control of the kings as autonomous units. According to Champakalakshmi (2002: 77), major Brahmadeyas such as Uttiramerur in Kanchipuram snf Viranarayanachaturvedimangalam in Chidambaram taluk became *tankurus* or *taniyurs*. Such settlements were few, but a few settlements such as Chidambaram, Mannargudi had grouped settlements called Perilamai nadu. Taniyur was a separate revenue unit (Shanmugam 1987: 118). The taniyurs had the assemble of Sabha as many of them except on were Brahmadeyas (Shanmugam 1987:118)

Chola Local Administration: Uttiramerur

The Uttiramerur inscription, issued during the time of Parantaka, I gives the detailed methods of selection of the people for the assembly. The order for the procedure came from the king and it was placed in front of the village assembly. It was decided to select the annual committee (*Samvatsara variyam*), garden committee (*Totta variyam*), and Tank committee (*Eri vaiyam*). The process was supervised by Tattanur Muvendavelan in the first inscription, of 919 CE and by Somasiperuman in the second inscription (921 CE).

The two documents

The Uttiramerur temple has two inscription, the first one was issued in the 12th year of Parantaka I (919 CE), while the second one was issued in the 14th year of Parantaka I (921 CE) (Subrahmaniya Aiyar 1967:277) in the second one issued suggests the issues in running the affairs of the *sabha* in the initial years forced the second order with detailed regulations.

Uttiramerur village was divided into 30 *kudumbus* or units. In these 30 wards, all people who live in each ward shall gather and shall elect anyone possessing the following qualifications through "pot-tickets" known as *kudavolai* method.

Chola Local Administration: Uttiramerur: Qualifications

Those who wanted to be elected to the Sabha committees

- Should be above 35 years of age and below 70 years. (In the first inscription it was 30 and 60) and this was changed perhaps due to the request and discussion among the sabha members.

- Should own land that attracted tax (Must own more than a quarter *veli, more than1.65 acre*). Should own a house built on a legally-owned plot.

- Must have knowledge of *'Mantrabrahmana'* (Mantra Text) as well as experience in teaching the same to others.

- If a person owns only 1/ 8 of a veli of land (about less than 0.83 acre), he must have learned one Veda and one of the four *Bhashyas* and experienced in explaining them to others. Must have the capacity, virtues and skills to perform duties. (This clause was added in the later inscription)

- Must be among those who possess honest earnings and pure mind

Chola Local Administration: Uttiramerur - Disqualifications

Those who are any of the committees for the last three years and have not submitted their accounts and all their kin mentioned in the following. The second inscription lists the persons (kinship detail) who are related to the one who did not finish and provide the account details.

The relatives of the defaulter.

The sons of the younger and elder sisters of defaulter's mother.

The sons of defaulter's paternal aunt and maternal uncle.

The uterine brother of defaulter's mother.

The uterine brother of defaulter's father

The uterine brother of defaulter's father Defaulter's uterine brother.

Defaulter's father-in-law.

The uterine brother of defaulter's wife.

The husband of defaulter's uterine sister.

The sons of defaulter's uterine sister;

The son-in-law who has married defaulter's daughter

Defaulter's father

Defaulter's son

One against whom incest (*agamyagamana*) or the first four of the five great sins are recorded

All defaulter's relations above specified shall not have their names written on the pot-tickets and put into the pot, i.e. for the *kudavolai* system of selection.

Uttiramerur - Method of Selection

The methods of the selection of the members are specified in the Uttiramerur inscription. It says that the names shall be written for pot-tickets in the thirty wards. Each of the wards in these twelve streets of Uttiramerur shall prepare a separate covering ticket for each of the thirty wards bundled separately. These packets shall be put into the *kudavolai* pots.

When the pot-tickets have to be drawn, a full meeting of the Great Assembly, including the young and old members, shall be convened. All the temple priests (Nambimar) who happen to be in the village on that day, shall without any exception whatever, be caused to be seated in the inner hall, where the great assembly meets.

In the midst of the temple priests one of them, who happens to be the eldest shall stand up and lift the pot looking upwards so as to be seen by all people.

One ward, i. e. , the packet representing it, shall be taken out by any young boy standing close,

who does not know what is inside, and shall be transferred to another empty pot and shall be shaken.

From this pot one ticket shall be drawn by the young boy and made over to the arbitrator (*madhyastha*). While taking charge of the ticket thus given to him, the arbitrator shall receive it on the palm of his hand with the five fingers open. He shall read out the name in the ticket, thus received. The ticket read by him shall also be read out by all the priests present in the inner hall. The name thus read out shall be put down (and accepted). Similarly one man shall be chosen for each of the thirty wards

Uttiramerur - Variyam

For appointing the committees, after these have retired, the members of the Committee "for Supervision of Justice" in the twelve streets of Uttiramerur shall convene an assembly *kuri* with the help of the arbitrator. The committees shall be appointed by drawing pot-tickets according to this order of settlement.

For the Pancavara committee and the Gold committee, names shall be written for pot-tickets in the thirty wards. Thirty packets with covering tickets shall be deposited in a pot and thirty pot-tickets shall be drawn as previously described.

Uttiramerur - Variyam

From these thirty tickets chosen, twenty-four shall be for the Gold committee and the

remaining six for the *Pancavara* committee. When drawing pot-tickets for these two committees next year, the wards which have been already represented during the year in question on these committees. shall be excluded and the selection be made from the remaining wards. One who has ridden on an ass and one who has committed forgery shall not have his name written on the pot-ticket to be put into the pot.

Uttiramerur - Variyam

Of the thirty men thus chosen, those who had previously been on the garden committee and on the tank committee, those who are advanced in learning, and those who are advanced in age shall be chosen for the Annual Committee. Of the rest, twelve shall be taken for the Garden committee and the remaining six shall form the Tank committee. The great men of these three committees thus chosen for them shall hold office for full three hundred and sixty days and then retire. When one who is on the committee is found guilty of any offence, he shall be removed at once.

Uttiramerur: Accountant

Any arbitrator who possesses honest earnings shall write the accounts of the village. No accountant shall be appointed to that office again before he submits his accounts for the period. during which he was in office to the great men of the large committee and is declared to have been honest; He shall submit the accounts which he has been writing, by himself and no other accountant shall be chosen to close his accounts.

7. Temples and Temple Administration

Temples were the most important public institutions of the medieval period and the importance of the temple in the medieval economy has been highlighted by several researchers (Narayanan and Veluthat 1981; Veluthat 2002; Nilakanta Sastri 1929; 1955; Stein 1978). The growth of Brhamanical temples were part of the Bhakthi movement, out of 537 Siva shrines mentioned in the Bhakthi hymns, 300 are in the Kaveri basin. Burton stein pointed out the overlap of the shrines with the Brahmadeyas (Stein 1978; Champakalakshmi 2002: 77).

The growth in the economic activities of the temples led to urban growth (Champakalakshmi 1996: 207). They became important institutions with the growth of the Chola power, agrarian expansion and the development Brahmadeyas, and other factors. They became powerful institutions (Champakalakshmi 1996: 208-209).

The temples were administrated by *mulaparudaiyar* and *panmahesawrar.* The temples had many servants including *Pathipatha mulapattutaiyar.* In the affairs of the temples, *Sabha, Urar, Nagaram* and the central governments also participated through their officers. When the temple properties were misappropriated, the accounts are not maintained, and the income from the lands were not paid - the government official also intervened in such cases

Chittiramezhi Periyanattar: Supra-local body

There existed certain supra local body of peasants. They were called Chittiramezhi peryanattar. It covered many areas of the Tondaimandalam. It served as a guild of

agriculturalists dealers in agricultural commodities (Champakalakshmi 1996: 205). It had multiple ethnic groups bound by agricultural practices. It occurs in mid 11th century CE. Creation of *Valanadu* might have contributed to this system. No evidence of *Periyanattar* assembly in the Kaveri delta.

Chittriamezhiperiyanattar which was a body of landowners from various social groups was also involved in the trade activities and their inscriptions mention about various commodities (Champakalakshmi 1996: 220-221).

8. Merchant guilds: Supra-local body

There existed certain supra local body of merchants. The supra-local bodies of merchants *Aiyyavole 500/Tisaiyaayirattu ainurruvar/Pathinen visayattar* became prominent after 11th century. These groups were working in various regions of the Indian Ocean. Their inscriptions do not refer to kings' *meykirthi*. Perhaps they were independent entities. They decided their affairs on their own, but they were clearly under the domain of the kings. However, their power grew in the later part of the Chola rule. Kenneth Hall states that the role of the *Periyanadu* assembly, increasing importance of the merchants and their collusion with the warlords contributed to the decline of the Chola empire (Hall 1980; Champakalakshmi 1996: 204).

Ethnographic Perspectives

The village assemblies were in fact more independent, autonomous than they are now. It appears that they were more active in the medieval period in taking care of the administration and local needs of the villages. However, they were subjected to the administrative pressures as the state was keen on collecting the various taxes. Some of the villages and their nadu formations were much older and the landowners were perhaps incorporated into the administration like the incorporation of the powerful local lords into the modern political parties.

9. Summary

The central administration was taken care by the king directly. The Chola state consisted of many administrative/micro units such as *mandalams*, *valanadus, nadus, brahmadeyas, vellan urs, nagarams and temples*. The *mandalams* were part of the territory and they were part of the central administration. The territory of *nadu* was managed by the *nattar* which was a body of village headmen, perhaps appointed or selected by the kings. There existed different types of villages.

The *vellanvagai* settlements were the peasant villages and they had non-Brahmin/local population. Provincial administration was undertaken by the princes. The Brahmins were given Brahmadeyas and lived in separate quarters. The *Brahmadeyas* had a system of administration called Sabhas. They were well organised. The *sabhas* had different committees called *variyams*. Some of the *Brahmadeyas* had *Mulaparudai/Mulaparishad*. *Alumganattar* were those who took care of temple as well as village affairs. Their activities were well regulated. They selected their members through draw-a-lot (*Kudavolai* or Pot-ticket) method. They had established proper regulations for the elections which can very well serve as a model for present day context.

Nagarams were active only in certain villages and they had independent existence and their own administration. *Nagaram* settlements were important for the development of mercantile activities as well as overseas trade. Nagaram were also involved in the temple affairs. The gold donated to the temples as endowment was sometimes placed with the *Nagarattar* who in turn offered interest for the maintenance of the worship (for lamps and other offerings). The supra-local bodies of merchants became dominant from the 11th century.

The *urs* of the settlements of peasants had their own system of administration and they had a different type of organisation. They had accountants and officers to manage the affairs and documents related to the lands.