

DSE: PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH INDIAN PAST I: THE CHOLAS

Credit Distribution, Eligibility and Pre-requisites of the Course

Course Title & Code	Credits	Credit Distribution of the Course			Eligibility Criteria	Prerequisite of the Course
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical/ Practice		
PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH INDIAN PAST I: THE CHOLAS	04	3	1	0	Nil	Nil

Course Objectives:

The course tends to explore the Chola dynasty which had the longest lived imperial lineages in the history of South India. The course begins with analyzing the various historiographical issues in structural development of the Chola state. It is also intended to overview the legitimization structures and their impact on understanding the structures of state along with the expansionist policy of the Cholas in the Oceanic world. Highlighting the establishment and consolidation of Chola power the template is set to study temporal development of Chola state and the diverse sources of powers within it including monarchs, elites, temples, agrarian peasants, merchants and women.

Apart from discussing the expansion of agrarian economy and its impact on society, the centrality of temples in linking rural and urban settlements will also be explored. Another aspect covered is the systematic attempts made by Chola monarchs to establish maritime dominance and highlight the significant role of international maritime trade. Another rubric highlights how royal temples and their corresponding iconographic programme create a royal imagery thereby becoming a very powerful visual text and role of women in the Chola empire is also established.

Course Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the course, students would:

- Understand the role of political, economic, social and cultural institutions and their different modes of integration in Chola state formation.

- Trace the trajectory of the enormous changes sweeping South Indian history during the four hundred years of Cholas
- Understand the processes of Chola kingship and state formation.
- Analyze the role of temples, genealogies, and rituals in royal legitimation.
- Understand how the Cholas expanded agriculture by bringing new land under cultivation and building irrigation systems.
- They will learn about the rural social divisions such as landholders, cultivators, and slaves, and the role of local assemblies in village governance.
- Analyze the role of temples in economy and society, and how they contributed to urban growth and formation of towns.
- Students will explore the rise of trade, use of coins, development of market centers, and the importance of merchant guilds in inland and overseas trade.

Course Structure:

Unit 1: ((4 Weeks)):The Imperial Cholas

- a) Kingship and state Formation
- b) Forms of legitimation: Royal temple policy and role of genealogies
- c) Hegemonic expansion: Sri Lanka and South East Asia

Unit 2: (4 Weeks)–Economic Structures and Social Transformations

- a) Agrarian Economy and Society,
- b) Trade, Urbanization and Monetization

Unit 3: (4 Weeks)): Visual Culture and Gender Role

- a) Women and Their Role in the Chola Empire
- b) Religious and Political symbolism

Unit 4: (4 Weeks) Warfare and Cross-Cultural Interface

- a) Diplomatic and warfare strategies
- b) Cross-cultural Interface.

Essential Readings:

UNIT I : This unit equips students to critically engage with the processes of kingship and state formation under the Cholas. Drawing from key theoretical and historical readings, students will understand how royal authority was legitimized through temple construction, genealogies, and ritual symbolism. The unit also enables students to analyze the Chola state's hegemonic expansion into Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, and to evaluate various models in explaining Chola polity. Overall, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of how political power, religion, and military ambition shaped the rise and consolidation of the Chola Empire.

- Ogura, Yasuri, "The Changing Concept of Kingship in the Chola Period Royal Temple Constructions, c. A.D. 850-1299" in Noboru Karashima (ed.), *Kingship in Indian History*, Manohar, Delhi, 1999.
- Stein, Burton. 'The Segmentary State in South Indian History'. In *Realm and Region in Traditional India* edited by Richard Fox. New Delhi: Vikas 1977. , pp. 3-51. Stein's views might also be accessed in another article by him, more easily accessible: Stein, Burton. 'The Segmentary State: Interim Reflections'. In Hermann Kulke. (ed). 1995. *The State in India, 1000-1700*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press (1995), pp. 134-61.
- Heitzman, James. 'State Formation in South India, 850-1280', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 24 (1), pp. 35-61. Also reproduced in Hermann Kulke. (ed). 1995. *The State in India, 1000-1700*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press 1987., pp. 162-94.
- Kulke, Hermann. 'Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms'. In *Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and Southeast Asia*. Delhi: Manohar 2001. pp. 1-16.
- Kulke, Hermann. "The Naval expedition of Cholas in the context of Asian History" In *Nagapattinam to Su-varnadvipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia* edited by Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009.
- Subbarayalu, Y. *South India under the Cholas*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2011. 'Introduction', 'The Chola State' and 'Characterizing the Chola State'.
- Veluthat, K., "Temple and the State: Religion and Politics in Early Medieval South India" in *State and Society in Pre-Modern South India* edited by R. Champakalakshmi, Kesavan Veluthat, T.R. Venugopalan, Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2002.
- Spencer, George W., "The Politics of Plunder, the Cholas in Eleventh Century Ceylon", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, 1976.

UNIT II: This unit outlines the shaping of Chola agrarian bases which entails agrarian expansion bringing new land under cultivation, better use and creation of irrigation facilities and increase in the number of rural settlements. This also brought about internal stratification in the rural world and hence it experienced greater differentiation. There were also trends towards urbanization, monetized economy, intensification of trade activities, development of specialized market centres (nagarams) and the important role played by guilds. Temples represented the nucleus of urbanization and they were the focus of royal patronage.

- Subbarayalu, Y. 2012. *South India under the Cholas*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 10 on Uru, Nattar and Periyannattar pp. 124-135, Chapter 12 on Landholders, Cultivators and Slaves)
- Karashima, Noboru. 2001. *History and Society in South India : The Cholas To Vijayanagara*, University Press. (Chapter 2 Integration of Society in Chola Times.)

- Veluthat, Kesavan. 2000. 'The Role of Nadu in the Socio-Political Structure of South India (c. AD 600-1200)'. In D.N. Jha (ed). *The Feudal Order: State, Society and Ideology in Early Medieval India*. Delhi: Manohar, pp. 179-96.
- Heitzman, James 1991 "Ritual Policy and Economy: The Transactional Network of an Imperial Temple in Medieval South India", *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 24.
- Hall, Kenneth R, "Urban Process in Early Medieval Tamil Nadu" in InduBanga (ed.), *City in Indian History*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1991.
- Hall, Kenneth R, Merchants, Rulers and Priests in an Early South Indian Sacred centre : Chidambaram in the Age of Cholas, in Kenneth R, Hall (ed.) *Structure and Society in Early South India - Essay in Honour of Norobu Karashima*, New York , Oxford University Press ,2001.
- Champakalakshmi, R 1996, *Tarde , Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300BC to AD 1300*, Delhi Oxford University Press.
- Hall, Kenneth R, 2014. *Networks of Trade, Polity and Societal Integration in Chola- Era South India C. 875-1279.*, New Delhi, Primus. (Chapter 4 Coinage , Trade and Economy in Early South India and its Bay of Bengal neighbours)

UNIT III: This unit enables students to understand how visual culture and gender intersected in the Chola Empire. Through inscriptions, temple patronage, and iconography, students will explore the roles and agency of royal women within political and religious frameworks. The unit also examines how Chola temples and bronzes conveyed symbolic power, shaping both gendered identities and political authority in early medieval South India.

a) Women and Their Role in the Chola Empire

- Ali, Daud, 'War, servitude and the imperial household: a study of palace women in the Chola empire.' In *Slavery and South Asian History* edited by Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton. Indiana University Press, 2006, pp 44-62.
- Leslie, Orr C. 'Chiefly Queens: Local Royal Women as Temple Patrons in the Late Cola Period'. In *The Archaeology of Bhakti: Royal Bhakti, Local Bhakti*, edited by Emmanuel Francis & Charlotte Schmid, 2016, pp 385-422.
- Cane, Nicolas. 'Temples, Inscriptions and Historical (Re)construction: "The Epigraphical Persona" of the Cōla Queen Cempiyan Mahādevī (Tenth Century)'. *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient. Tome 105*, 2019. pp. 27-60.
- Mahalakshmi, R. *Art and History: Texts, Contexts and Visual Representations in Ancient and Early Medieval India*, Bloomsbury Publishing India Pvt. Ltd 2019.

b) Religious and Political Symbolism in Chola Empire

- Champakalakshmi, R, *Religion, Tradition and Ideology: Pre- Colonial South India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2011. Chapter 16 'Tanjavur, the Ceremonial city of the Cholas' pp 552-

565. Chapter 14 'Iconographic Programme and Political Imagery in Early Medieval Tamilakam', pp 495-514.

- Dehejia, Vidya. *Chola : Sacred bronzes of Southern India*, Royal Academy of Arts, 2006.
- Padma, Kamal, 'Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon.' *Art Bulletin* 81,no. 3 (1999) pp.390-419

Unit IV This unit enables students to critically understand the Chola Empire's role in the Indian Ocean world as a maritime power that extended its influence through naval expeditions, diplomacy, and trade. By examining historical and material sources, students will grasp how the Cholas established transregional networks, engaged in cross-cultural interactions, and used warfare and religious art to assert political and cultural presence across Southeast and East Asia.

c) Diplomatic and warfare strategies

- Kulke, Hermann. Kahuja, Kesavapany and Sakhuja, Vijay. *Nagapattinam to Su-varnavdipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. 2009.

Chapters

- ❖ Sakhuja, Vijay and Sakhuja, Sangeeta. 'RajendraChola I's Naval Expedition to Southeast Asia:A Nautical Perspective'. In *Nagapattinam to Su-varnavdipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, edited by Hermann Kulke, K Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja, PP 76-90.
- ❖ Subbarayalu, Y. 'A Note on the Navy of the Chola State'. In *Nagapattinam to Su-varnavdipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, edited by Hermann Kulke, K Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja, PP 76-90. bypp 91-95.
- ❖ Meenakshisundararajan, A. 'RajendraChola's Naval Expedition and the Chola Trade with Southeast and East Asia'. In *Nagapattinam to Su-varnavdipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, edited by Hermann Kulke, K Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja, pp 168-177

B) Cross- cultural Interface

- Hermann, K. Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja (eds). 2009. *Nagapattinam to Su-varnavdipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian. Chapter Cultural Implications of the Chola Maritime Fabric Trade with Southeast Asia by HemaDevare
- Hall, Kenneth R, 2014. *Networks of Trade, Polity and Societal Integration in Chola- Era South India C. 875-1279.*, New Delhi, Primus. Chapter 10 'Ports of Trade, Maritime Diasporas, Networks of Trade and Cultural Integration in the Bay of Bengal Region of the Indian Ocean : C 1000-1500'. pp 211-239

- Dehejia, Vidya. *The Thief who Stole My Heart: The Material Life of Bronzes from Chola India ,855-1280*. Chapter 6 Chola Obsession with Sri Lanka and Hindu Bronzes from the Island : Eleventh Century pp165-192.

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Veluthat ,Kesavan. *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, Hyderabad Orient Longman 1993.
- Heitzman, James. "Temple Urbanism in Medieval South India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1987
- Hall, Kenneth R. *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of Cholas*, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1980.
- Cox, Whitney. *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India : Moonset on Sunrise Mountain*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Heitzman, James. "Ritual Policy and Economy: The Transactional Network of an Imperial Temple in Medieval South India." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 34, no. 1 (1991): 23–54.
- Shastri, K.A. Nilakanta, *A history of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall Vijaynagar*. Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Chakrabarti, Ranvir. ' The Pull Towards the Coast: Politics and Polity in India (C. 600-1300 CE)'. *Presidential Address Indian History Congress*, 2011, 1-48.
- Karashima, Noboru. *Ancient to Medieval: South Indian Society in Transition* . New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2009. (Introduction. Pp.1-23)
- Spencer, George W., "Heirs Apparent: Fiction and Function in Chola Mythical Genealogies" *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 21, No.4 (Dec .1984) 415-32.
- Heitzman, James. *Gifts of Power. Lordship in an Early Indian State*. New Delhi. 1997.
- Ramaswamy, Vijaya. *Women and Work in Precolonial India*, Sage, New Delhi, 2016.

Additional reading material may be provided by the Department.

Assessments:

Examination scheme and mode shall be as prescribed by the Examination Branch, University of Delhi, from time to time.