



Chera Dynasty



For all Tamil Nadu Exams

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Chera Dynasty

The Cheras ruled over the central and northern parts of Kerala and the Kongu region of Tamil Nadu. They controlled the ports of the west coast, Musiri and Tondi. Vanji was their capital. Vanji (Present day Karur or Tiruvanchaikalam in Kerala. Most Scholars now accept that there were two main branches of the Chera family and the Poraiya branch ruled from Karur of present-day Tamil Nadu.

- The emblem of Cheras was “**bow and arrow**”.
- The Pugalur inscription of the 1st century AD has reference to three generations of Chera rulers.
- The Cheras owed its importance to trade with the Romans. They also built a temple of Augustus there.

The most well-known ruler of Cheras was **Senguttuvan, the Red Chera** or the Good Chera in the 2nd century A.D.

- His military achievements have been chronicled in epic Silapathikaram, with details about his expedition to the Himalayas where he defeated many north Indian rulers.
- Senguttuvan introduced the Pattini cult or the **worship of Kannagi** as the ideal wife in Tamil Nadu.
- He was the first to send an embassy to China from South India.

The Chera Kingdom – Social, Administration & Political Aspects

- Most information known about the Cheras is through the texts of Sangam Literature. The most common sources include the *Pathitrapattu*, the *Akananuru*, and the *Purananuru*
- The Cheras introduced copper and lead coins, which were inspired by Roman coins. The majority of these coins were discovered in the Amaravati riverbed and are the most important source of Chera historiography.
- The Cheras's emblem, a **bow and arrow**, was engraved on most of the coins.
- The Pugalur Tamil Brahmi inscription, which mentions three generations of Chera rulers, including Ko Athan Chel Irumporai, his son Perunkkadungo, and his son Elangkadungo, is one of the inscriptions discovered that depict the existence of the Chera dynasty.
- The Shilappadikaram (also known as Silappatikram or Silappathikaram) makes some mention of the ‘king’s council’ and the other ‘five assemblies’ which were most likely territorially organised.

After the 4th century CE, the Sangam age came to an end and information of their rule till around 8th century remains unknown.

- The Cheras (Now the Perumals) reestablished themselves in the eighth and ninth centuries CE with their capital based in Mahodayapuram, or the present-day Kodungallur region of Kerala.
- Kulashekhara Azhavar, one of the 12 Azhvars or Vaishnava saints, and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar or Rajashekhara Varma, one of the 63 Nayanmars or Shaivite saints, were among the kings of the second Chera kingdom.

Religion in Chera Dynasty

Chera kings were followers of Vedic culture. Sangam age text named Pathitru pathu poem 21 (a work praising Sangam age Chera kings) explicitly mentions that the Chera kings performed Vedic Yajnas by offering oblations into the sacred fire.

Hindu temples played a great role in the culture during the era of Chera Perumals (Second Chera kingdom). The great sage Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada also lived during the period of Perumals.

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