THE CŌḺA STATE: POWER AND LEGITIMACY

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This course on the Cōḻa state is intended to introduce the student to the study of state formation and state structures in early medieval India, with special reference to peninsular India. It views the four centuries of Cōḻa rule (9ᵗʰ to 13ᵗʰ centuries CE) as representing the historical processes, which led to the emergence of a regional state of a magnitude rarely achieved in ancient and early medieval India and hence, as providing a significant model for the study of state structures in pre-colonial India.

- The first theme focuses on historiographical issues related to state formation, with particular emphasis on methodologies and analyses that have had a bearing upon the study of the state.
- We introduce in the second theme the dynastic history of the Cōḻas, discussions on genealogies, military achievements and extra-political strategies that helped sustain this lineage group for over four hundred years.
- The third theme relates to economic structural arrangements initiated by the Cōḻas, and its implications for the social formation that was in the making. We will discuss in detail the importance of the land grants, initiated a few centuries earlier in this region, the nature of land rights and control that were developing, and the state's initiative and/ or interest in supporting such structural changes.
- Theme four is concerned with social transactions necessitating accommodation of rival and newer claimants to power and social status given the developing economic contexts. The increasing visibility of certain specialized occupational groups in urban settlements, and the public space created by the temple for attracting service personnel will be two major foci of this study.
- Finally, the importance of ideological mechanisms in creating and/ or sustaining political structures will be discussed. We will focus in particular on the *bhakti* tradition and on temples as disseminators of brahmanical ideology, and its ramifications for political processes, in this regard.
- Our concluding theme focuses on questions of time and space that are taken as givens in historical writings, and the need to interrogate these critically particularly in the context of regional formations.

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