



Socio-economic condition of Thiruvathavur region: As gleaned from Thiru Marai Nayanar Swami Temple inscription (C.E.1170-1578)

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Abstract

The main objectives of this paper are to describe the socio-economic life of the people in Thiruvathavur region. Belongs to major dynasties namely Cholas, early Pandyas, lader Pandyas and Nayak rulers. Inscriptions backbone of Medieval Tamilnadu History. Thiruvathavur has sixty inscriptions ranging from C.E.1170 TO 1578. Thiruvathavur region is rich in inscriptional evidences. Madurai was glorified as Athens of South India. Thiruvathavur which lies 24 kms distance to the north-east of Madurai and 8 kms south of Melur. It is situated picturesquely on a fine tank across which is a beautiful view of the Alagar hills ². The road runs along the embankment of this village called *Pandyapattanam*. Sangam poet Kapilar and the Saiva saint Manikkavasaka were born in Thiruvathavur.

Thiruvathavur village is a famous religious centre since early Sangam age. This temple inscriptions are found in many parts of this temple there are encraved on rock's boulders, walls of temples, pillars and loose slabs. Two Tamil Brahmi inscriptions datable to 200 B.C.E. are noticed on a natural Jain Cavern. These records belongs to a long span of time starting 12th Century C.E. to 16th Century C.E. This village formed part of Thenparappu Nadu in medieval days. As the temple of the Tamil country were well administrated by the efforts of the monarchs and local authorities during the Pandya period. The temple of Thirumaranayanar were not exempted from search a practice. There was a Brahamana Sabha and other grades of temple official who under took the temple administration of Thiru Marai Nayanar through the ages.

The social stratification was not uniform in Tamilnadu people belonging to different caste and communities such as brahamana, Kudikal, Idaiyar, Kollar, Tacher and Kaikolar lived in Thirumaranayanar brahmadeya settlement. Agriculture is a principal occupation of the people in the Thiruvathavur village. Thiruvathavur Temple, reveals the fact that the socio, economic and political life of the people who lived during the Medieval period in the Thiruvathavur region. There for inscriptions also reveal the relation and interaction between different communities in the area.

Keywords: socio-economic, cholas, early pandyas, lader pandyas, nayak rulers, Thiruvathavur region

Introduction

This paper aims to explain the socio-economic life of the people the in Thiruvathavur region. Belongs to major dynasties namely Cholas, early Pandyas, lader Pandyas and Nayak rulers. Inscriptions backbone of Medieval Tamilnadu History. Thiruvathavur has sixty inscriptions ranging from C.E.1170 TO 1578. Thiruvathavur region is rich in inscriptional evidences. Madurai was glorified as Athens of South India ^[1]. For the last two thousand five hundred years, it has been a great centre of South Indian culture and civilization. Madurai is one of the few cities to have enjoyed continuous history which could be traced back to Prehistoric time.

Melur Taluk has Eighty Six villages hence it is called as *Thaigramam* (Mother of Villages). Tiruvathavur is one among the historical and cultural striking centre of Melur Taluk. Thiruvathavur which lies 24 kms distance to the north-east of Madurai and 8 kms south of Melur. It is situated picturesquely on a fine tank across which is a beautiful view of the Alagar hills ^[2]. The road runs along the embankment of this village called *Pandyapattanam*. Sangam poet Kapilar and the Saiva saint Manikkavasaka were born in Thiruvathavur ^[3]. Which was popular among people as Thevaravaippusthalam. Manikkavasaka is mentioned in four *lilas* of the *Tiruvilaiyadal* purana. He said to have lived in the middle of the 5th century. He rosed to the position of Prime Minister to the Pandya king Atimardan Pandya ^[4].

Thiru Marai Nayanar Swami Temple

Thiruvathavur village is a famous religious centre since early Sangam age. This temple inscriptions are found in many parts of this temple there are encraved on rock's boulders, walls of temples, pillars and loose slabs ^[5]. The temple has a south facing five tired Rajagopuram with two pragaras. Chinthamani Ganapathy, Kaleeswarar, Vishwanathar, Vygrapathar, Pathanjali, Manikkavasakar and Sundarar shrines are present in the temple complex. The Temples contains on architectural freak which is not un common in this district. But is no where within the gateway (the sculpture thoughtout which is unusually good). Two Tamil Brahmi inscriptions datable to 200 B.C.E. are noticed on a natural Jain Cavern. Incription of the village where copied from the walls of Thirumaranayana Swami Temple, village irrigation tank and stones planted in the middle of the village. These records belongs to a long span of time starting 12th Century C.E. to 16th Century C.E. This village formed part of ThenparappuNadu in medieval days ^[6].

Politial Contion of Thirivathavur Region Veerapandya I (C.E. 1170 – 1195)

Veerapandya was crowned in A.D.1170 lands of Rajendra chola Chaturvedimangalam donated as devadana to Thiruvadhavur temple. He defeated by Kulotunga Chola III. Presence of this record in this regions during Chola is very

significant one ^[7].

Jadavarma Kulasekara I (A.D. 1190 – 1218)

Jatavaraman Kulasekara ascended to the Pandya throne in C.E.1190 and ruled whole to the Pandyan empire with his capital at Madurai ^[8].

Kulatunga III defeated him twice in C.E. 1203 ^[9] and in C.E. 1205 ^[10] and took the title of Chola Pandya. In his Thiruvathavur inscription royal order to the temple authorities of request. But this inscription are lost in more detail. Thiruvathavur temple inscription no.32 and 37 are mentioned in his land donation. This Devadana village Mandalikanallur by name was also donated as tax free to the temple ^[11].

Maravarma Sundara Pandya I (C.E.1216-1244)

The son and successor of Kulasekara was Maravarma Sundara Pandya. He ascended the Pandya throne in C.E.1216 ^[12]. He defeated Rajaraja III three times in C.E.1244, C.E.1277 ^[13] and C.E. 1230 ^[14]. Some of the Thiru Marai Nayanar Temple Inscriptions mentioned one Saiva Mutt was established of Thiruvathavur during the region of Maravarma Sundara Pandya I. Another one is Pontiff of this Mutt and for the maintenance of this Ambalathadinallur village was donated as tax free grant. The king in his tenth regnal year construction of the sluice by one kaikola, a resident of Madurai in his name. It may be a renovation work of a sluice made by Cholas ^[15].

Maravarma Sundara Pandya II (C.E. 13th century)

Inscription of Maravarma Sundara Pandya II belongs to (C.E.) informs that an individual Nallaperumal of Rajavallipuram in Kilavembanadu, donated tax free land at Kuladiyappan village as devadana to Thiruvathavur temple. Measuring land units like Sundara Pandya Kol (24 chans), Kalakandadevan, Virapandya are known from the Inscriptions. Acchu, Palam pon, Irrasipanam, ainju menidrama were some of the coins in vogue in this region ^[16].

Maravarma Vikrama Pandya I (C.E.1218 – 1232)

He was a Co-ruler to Sundara Pandya and ascended the throne C.E.1218 ^[17]. He was believed to be the younger brother of Sundara Pandya ^[18]. In his Thiruvathavur Temple Inscription, which give away the message Prasasti portion starts with ‘ Thirumagal Seyamagal ’ of the king Maravarma Vikrama Pandya. This inscription also mention about the land scale system ^[19].

Maravarma Kulasekara Pandya (A.D.1268 – 1218)

In his 11th regional year record (C.E.1279) he claims that he conquered Chera (Malanadu), Cholas, two Kongu countries, Ilam and Thondamandalam ^[20]. The son and Successor of Jatavarma Sundara Pandya I was Maravarma Kulasekara, who ascended the Pandya throne in C.E.1268 and ruled upto C.E.1318 ^[21]. In his dated to 1297 C.E. the royal order to land grand of ‘ Palikurichi Chonadu Konda Perumalnallur ’ to Thiruvathavur Thiru Marai Nayanar Swami Temple. It was exempted from the gold such and tax free land was given as Manya to the warriors. It was administrated by Karnavas (warrior group). Two villages namely Iluppaikudi and Pallikuruchi were administrated by warrior groups named as ‘ Padaikaranavar ’. Whenever the war drums were beaten these warriors readily marched into battle (C.E.1297) ^[22] Another inscription Maravarma Kulasekara Pandya I

dated C.E.1298 reveals the gift of 132 sheep and two perpetual lamps to the Thirumarainathar temple ^[23].

Parakrama Pandya I (C.E.1315 – 1334)

Tiruadavur inscription of Parakrama Pandya I dated to 1315- 1334 reveals the *deva dana* for whom serves the daily worship to Tiruvadavur Tirumarai Nayanar with donation of fragrant flowers and other flowers and extends the following conditional methods like; those who received this bequest, should forfeit amount of two thousand *Mukkuruni* flowers regularly and *Sengaluneer* flower once in a year to the temple ^[24].

Another inscription of Parakrama Pandya I dated to A.D. 1324 sited on the northern wall of Tiruchutru palace disclose an annual expenditure of eighty *palam pon* and eight hundred *Irasi panam* collected from certain villages including *kuttupulia* alias *valangai Mikamanallur*.

Temple Administration

As the temple of the Tamil country were well administrated by the efforts of the monarchs and local authorities during the Pandya period. The temple of Thirumarayanar were not exempted from search a practice. There was a Brahamana Sabha and other grades of temple official who under took the temple administration of Thiru Marai Nayanar through the ages. The temple administration and the village administration were at an infant stage ^[25]. During the same period the temples in the Pandya were managed by the Mahasabhas and Brahmna Sabha. The temple received more and more donation from the individuals, the annual committee was playing role of a single executive body of the temple administration. Brahmna Sabha of this region had good Co-operation with the neighbouring Urars ^[26]. During 13th Century C.E. tax fee land, Devadana village, temple expenditure, etc.. were maintained by the Sabha.

Taxes of pandya kings

A number of taxes were levied on the lands during later Pandya (12th century C.E.) period according to the quality of land and kind of crops. They are collected the following taxes, namely *kadamai* (land tax), *antharayam*(inner tax), *ponvari*(major tax), *kovil viniyokam*(distribution charges), *Ur viniyokam*(distribution charges to village), *tharavukuli*(cultivation tax), *karthigai pachchai*, *pillaiyar nonbu*, *thanda korrilakkai*, *kadaikuttu ilakkai*, *anai salai*, *kuthiraippanthi*, *santhivikraham*, *panchupeeli* ^[27].

They bore the title of *Nadalvan Thenkalavalinadu*, a territorial sub division comprising Thiruvathavur and its surroundings. They acted according to the direction of the Kings, collected taxes, exempted taxes for certain lands and served as a bridge between *urs* and the kings ^[28].

Tax Free Land

The later Pandyas of Thiruvathavur region (C.E.11th to 14th century) lot of tax free land donated by devathana to Thiruvathavur temple the following tax free devadana villages, namely *Vedhanayaka Nallur*, *Valangai Mikama Nallur*, *Pallikuricci* alias *Sonadu Konda Perumal Nallur*, *Thirumarai Nayaka Nallur*, *Velankudi* alias *Devarkal Deva Nallur*, *Senkulam* alias *Narppaththenayira Nallur*, *Kamaramangalam* alias *Sri Maheswara Nallur*, and *Mandaliga Gembira Nallur* are known from the inscriptions of Thiruvathavur ^[29].

Socio and Economic Conditions

Medieval South Indian inscriptions throw light on a peculiar social divisions called valangai, Idangai caste ^[30]. The social stratification was not uniform in Tamilnadu people belonging to different caste and communities such as brahmana, Kudikal, Idaiyar, Kollar, Tacher and Kaikolar lived in Thirumaranayanar brahmadeya settlement. Agriculture is a principal occupation of the people in the Thiruvathavur village. During the Maravarma Sundara Pandya I period (C.E.1225) constructed in a new sluice by one Kaikkola in Thiruvathavur village. It may be a renovation work of a sluice made by Cholas. When the Pandya exercised political sovereignty over this village, they made many irrigational facilities ^[31].

The all Devathana village donated land were irrigated by Thiruvathavur tank, The society performed many types of economic activities all centred around and emigrated from temple. The member of shepherd community was mentioned as idaiyan and idaichi and they could receive sheep from the donars. An inscription issued in the year C.E.1298 records that 132 sheep were donated for the maintenance of two perpetual lamps. Those sheep were received by one Muthali Atkondan, Kaikola of Tiruvathavur. The sheep was entrusted in equal share to three shepherds of the temple who agreed to supply ghee for lamps ^[32]. One thirty two sheep donated to a temple fetched 23/4 Ulakku ghee daily as in interest. These peoples lived in a hamlet of Thiruvathavur Brahmadeya. Another one inscription of Parakkrama Pandya (C.E.1322) mention the Panchalattar. They worked with material and metals like stone, iron, copper, gold and wood respectively preparing of temple jewels ^[33]. These skilled workers rented the services to the temple and society. Inscription of Thiruvathavur temple throw light on these workers. At the same period merchant of Sivalapuram, he was land donation by Thiruvathavur temple. The society during the period had witnessed a steep stratification. The temple and the Brahmanasabha as land owners remained on one side and the landless cultivators remained on the other side. Another category which rented partly free service to the temple shepherds, carpenters, goldsmith, coppersmith, potters they lived under tutelage of the temple ^[34].

Conclusion

The foregoing important of the inscription of Thiruvathavur Temple, reveals the fact that the socio, economic and political life of the people who lived during the Medieval period in the Thiruvathavur region. There for inscriptions also reveal the relation and interaction between different communities in the area.

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