

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OF KUMBAKONAM UNDER CHOLAS – A HISTORICAL STUDY

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Abstract

They also reveal the Agricultural-economic setup that was prevalent during the Chola period. This study mainly concentrates the position of the Agricultural-economic in the imperial Chola dynasty of Kumbakonam. In order to understand the full scope of agricultural production, references need to be drawn from historical texts, archaeological evidence, and linguistic analyses, all of which address agricultural production. The vast majority of this data focuses on southern India, specifically the pre-Chola and Chola periods.

Keywords: Agriculture, Economy, Kumbakonam, Chola, AD

1.Introduction

During the days of Cholas various kinds of taxes were levied on the land and its produce. The land tax was one of the important sources of income to the state. At the time of Pallavas the terms *Irai* and *Puravu* denoted the taxes on land. But during the period of Cholas, taxes like *Kadamai*, *Kudimai* and *Ayam* were levied on the produce of the lands. Apart from this, taxes were levied on the harvests and on the medicinal plants. Special taxes were levied on toddy-drawers. Taxes were collected on the use of irrigation facilities also. During the Chola period, lands were surveyed and assessments were made on the basis of the measurements. There was separate land revenue department, which was in charge of land revenue assessments and it maintained the land records and supervised the land transfers. During the period of Rajaraja I one hundred kalam of paddy was levied on one veil of land and the assessment depended on the fertility and produce of the lands. There are references to oppressive tax collections and the kings and village assemblies settled the problems amicably.



Fig.1 Chola Dynasty from the period 850 AD to 1279 AD



Fig.2 Study area of Kumbakonam

1.1 Irai

During the chola period, terms Irai and Puravu denoted the taxes levied on land by the kings. The term Irai was a general term which covered many taxes on land. The Pudupakkam inscription of Aparajivarman dated A.D. 898 mentions the term irai and refers to the remission of taxes of 6.5 ma of land by the Sabhaiyar of Nallimangalam. The land which was given as tax-free land was known as Irailly. In the Lalgudi inscription of Napatungavarman dated A.D. 892 the land sold to the temple was declared as tax-free land and many taxes were exempted on this land. The exempted taxes included taxes like irai, echchoru vetti and Vedanai. Gold deposits were made to free the lands from taxes and such gold deposits were called Irai-kaval.

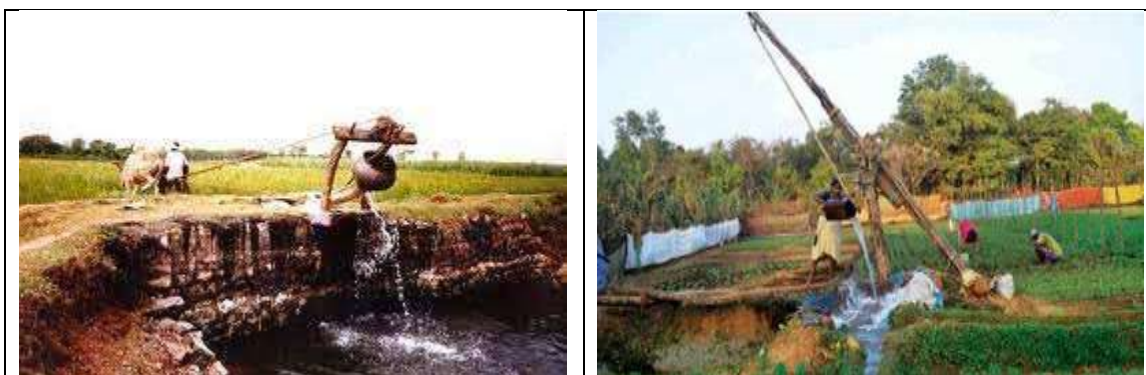




Fig.3 Agriculture and Economy of Kumbakonam in the Chola Period.

The Kavantamandalam inscription of Kampavarman dated A.D. 833 mentions that a person called Manasarppan granted two patti of land to the Vishnu temple in the Chatur-vedimangalam. He deposited gold as Irai-kaval to exempt the Irai taxes on the of Chaturvedimangalam received to exempt the irai taxes on the land. The Sabhaiyar the gold and agreed land.

1.2 Puravu

Puravu was another tax on land. The term puravu was in vogue even during the Sangam period. In the Sangam period the term puravu denoted tax on land and on the yield of the land. In the Purananuru, it was mentioned as a tax on paddy and was called nellamalpuravu. Puravu tax was mentioned as the land tax given by the cultivators and was known as Kudipuravu. The Tamil epic Silappadikaram also refers this tax kudiparavu. The Satyavedi inscription of Aparajitavaraman dated A.D. 899 mentions the Puravu tax. Sometimes it was called puravirai. During the period of Kampavarman, (A.D.869-895) the land granted to the temples were exempted from puravirai tax. The Uttaramallur inscription states that this puravirai included other petty taxes like manaipon, alpirai and sorumattu. When this tax was paid in the form of gold, it was called Puravuppon.

1.3 Taxes on plants

During the chola period taxes were levied on palm trees, medicinal plants, and water-lilies. The toddy yield from trees was called ilam-putchi and the tax levied on toddy-drawers was known as ilam-putchi after the produce itself. This was one of the taxes remitted in the Tandantottam grants of Nandivarman-II. Generally the toddy-drawers were not allowed to enter into the brahmadeya lands. Panabagu was another tax levied on fresh palm juice Kadaiadaikay was a tax levied on the arecanuts. During the Chola period a tax called tattirai was levied on areca-nuts. The Nalur inscription of Aditya I, mentions that the Mahasabha of Nalur brahmadeya, levied the tattirai tax on the produce of the areca-garden. Another tax called Kamugukadamai was levied on areca-gardens.

Cengodi was a medicinal plant and it was used in preparing medicines. The juice of this creeper which was said to be poisonous was used in Ayurvedic medicine. So in order to control the cultivation of this plant, a tax was levied on this plant and the tax was called Cengodikanam. This tax was exempted in the Kasa kudi grant of Nandivarman II. Kannittu kanam was a tax levied on kanni plant, which was also useful in the preparation of medicine. In brahmadeya lands the donees had the privilege to cultivate these plants and the tax on it was also remitted in the brahmadeya grants. Taxes were levied on rearing water plants. Kuvalaikanam was a tax on flowers while kuvalai-naduvari was a tax for planting the water lilies. These taxes were levied on flowers like tamanagam iruveli and sengalunir.

1.4 Kadamai

During the rule of the Cholas, the tax called kadamai became prominent. It was a land tax paid to the king. It included taxes like nila-kadamai, irai-kadamai, and karkadamai. The nila-kadamai refers to the taxes on land while irai-kadamai was the share of the king in the land dues. This tax irai-kadamai included the tax kar-kadamai levied on the harvest done during the month of Karthigai, ner-kadamai tax paid in the form of paddy, the Punsey-kadamai the tax on dry lands and nansey-kadamai, the tax on wet lands.

1.5 Kudimai

Kudimai was a tax levied on cultivators. The term kudi means cultivators. The tax had many varieties. Tiruvasalal-ponta-kudimai was a tax collected at the entrance to the royal palace. When village assembly levied it, it was called irppatu-kudimai. The Vellan-kudimai was the tax levied on the land owners. The dues that belonged to the temple were called Koyil-vasal-ponta-kudimai.

1.6 Ayam

There was a set of levies called Ayams. The levy called Puravu-ayam was a cess on land. The water cess levied on tank was called eri-ayam. The cess levied on oil-press was called cekkatayam. It was also known as Nerkadamai, kind of tax similar to that of irai yet another tax on land Vari was another tax. Puravari was yet another tax on land.

1.7 Tax on harvest

During the time of harvest some contribution in the form of paddy was collected. Thus the payment in the form of paddy during the harvest in the month of Karthigai was called Karthigal-pachchal. If the payment was made in the form of rice it was known as Karthigai-rice. When it was paid in the form of money it was called Karthigai-kasu. Another tax called Kar-kadamai was also levied on the harvest done during the month of Karthigai. Sometimes taxes were levied on the stalks called ari. It was levied at the rate of two marakkal of paddy on every hundred handful of stalk. The taxes levied on the crops grown in the dry lands and in garden lands were called kollai-punney. Maramanjadi was the tax levied on big trees. An inscription from Kilur mentions that, taxes were levied on the trees at the rate of one manjadi of gold per tree.

1.8 Kanikkadan

It was levied on the produce of the land. During the period of Rajaraja the land dues from many villages were allotted to the Tanjavur Big Temple. Hundred kalams of paddy were levied on one veil of land. These land dues were called Irai-Kattina-Kanikkadan. The king granted the kanikkadan dues from Anaimangalam village to the Buddhist vihara at Nagapattinam. During the period of Kulottunga also the Kanikkadan dues were given to the Buddhist vihara. This was also called Kani-kadamai-kattina-nellu was the tax levied on double crop lands. Another tax levied on Vellan-vagai lands was called Vellan-vagai-lraik-kadan. Taxes were levied on big land lords. They had to pay a tax called perumkudikal-perkadama. It was levied as estate tax on their lands. The agricultural labourers were called Purakkalana. The tax levied on them was known as Purakkalanai-kadamai. Apart from this the agricultural labourers had to pay another tax called alvari.

1.9 Taxes on Irrigation

The Pallavas and Cholas understood the necessity of the proper maintenance of irrigational reservoirs. In order to maintain these irrigational works some taxes were collected from the cultivators. The tax called nirvllai was levied on those who used water from tanks and channels. It was also called nir-vilai-kasu. Another tax called nirkuli was also collected for cutting branch channels from the main channels. But these taxes were exempted in the brahmadeya and devadana grants. The water-cess called nir-kirai was collected from the cultivators. Special taxes were levied on the use of tanks. The tax called Eri-ayam was levied on lands irrigated by tanks. The lands, which were irrigated by the Madhurantaka pereri, were levied eri-ayam at the rate of one kalam of paddy on every ma of land. One padakku of paddy on every ma of land was levied on the lands which were irrigated by the Bahur Eri. The tax levied for fishing in the tanks was called Eri-min-pattam. When it was paid in coins it was called eri-min-kasu. It also included the tax called Pacip-pattam. The income from these taxes was utilized for removing silt from the tanks and for the proper maintenance of the tanks and channels. Taxes known as Ettak-kadamai were levied on water-lifts. The lands situated near the river Kaveri were frequently affected by the floods of the river. So the banks of the river had to be strengthened and repaired periodically to prevent the floods damaging the lands. So a special cess was levied on the lands situated in the Kaveri basin for the maintenance of the river banks. It was called Kaverikarai Viniyogam.

1.10 Attukkirai

Apart from the taxes levied on the crops and plants, the village assemblies and landlords had to supply cattle to the royal officials at free of cost. Both the Kasakudi plates of Nandivarman-II dated A.D.753 and Tiruvalangadu plates of Rajendra-I, dated A.D.1018 mention the supply of good cows, good buffaloes and good sheep to the officials. But the donees of these grants were exempted from supplying these cattle. Taxes were levied on sheep. The shepherds had to pay a tax called attukirai. In the Larger Leiden grants Rajaraja-I exempted this tax in the Pallichchanda grant.

1.11 Panchavara-Nellu

The share of the produce given to the king as land revenue was also called Panchavaram. Generally it was paid in the form of paddy called Panchavaranellu. Whenever the kings made land grants to temples they allowed the temples to enjoy the panchavaram dues, which belonged to the king. Sometimes panchavaram dues were exempted in the devadana lands. The Kandiyur inscriptions of Napatungavarman dated A.D.890 mention the land donated to the temple as archanabogha and these lands were exempted from the payment of land dues like panchavaram and nellayam. The Velurpalayam plates of Nandivarman-III dated A.D.852, record that the village of Tirukattupalli was given as devadana to the temple of Yajnesvaramahadeva and the king granted the panchavaram dues from this land to the temple. During the period of Parantaka-I a piece of land was sold for 233 Kalanju of gold. The inscription of Parakesarvarman from Konerirajapuram dated A.D.977 mentions that the king granted the panchavaram dues of 800 kalams of paddy to the temple. Thus the panchavaram dues given to the king were made over to temples. In this inscription 800 kalams of paddy was fixed as panchavaram-nellu on sixteen velis of land, at the rate of fifty kalams per veli. The panchavaram dues belonged to the group of Peruvvari taxes.

1.12 Gradual Assessment

During the Chola period, the method of gradual assessment was followed regarding the reclaimed lands. In order to give time for the development of such lands and to give incentive for reclamation work, a minimum amount of tax was assessed and levied in the first year and it was increased every succeeding year and only after four years, the full rate of kadamai dues were collected from the cultivators of these lands. This system of gradual taxation of land encouraged the farmers to reclaim land as they could largely enjoy the produce of land for the first four years. A few instances may be cited here.

During the period of Kulottunga-II the lands which were damaged by the floods of Kaven were reclaimed. Flower gardens and areca-gardens were cultivated in the reclaimed lands. On these lands 400 areca-nuts per tree was fixed as kadamai dues. But, the kadamai dues were collected gradually and only in the fourth year full quantity of kadama dues were collected from the cultivators. In the first year 100 areca-nuts per tree was levied and during the second year, the dues were increased to 200 nuts, in the third year 300 nuts and finally in the fourth year, the full quantity of 400 areca-nuts were collected from these reclaimed garden lands. The same reclamation work continued during the period of Kulottunga-III (A.D.1178-1218) also. Some flooded lands were reclaimed into two crop lands. On these, lands, hundred kalams of paddy per veil was fixed as Kadamai dues. But it was stipulated that in the first year the kadamai dues from these lands was only a quarter in the first year, half in the second year, three-fourth in the third year and the whole of it in the fourth year.

1.13 Remission of Taxes

Tax remission was given on some lands. The tax remission was called Iraiyl. Generally, the devadana lands donated to temples were given tax remissions. The Uttaramallur inscription of Kampavarman dated A.D.877 mentions the endowment of 1200 kuli of land, as archanabogha by the Sabhalyar of Uttaramerur Chaturvetimangalam. The land was given as tax free (iraiyili) land. During the period of Uttamachola, a devadana land was declared as Iraiyl+land and tax remissions were ordered by the king. The village assemblies also made tax remission. It was called Ur-kil-iraiyili. The Tiruvaigavur inscription of Nandivarman-III dated A.D.868 records that a person called Sandippellyar donated a land to the temple for burning a perpetual oil lamp in the temple. The village assembly remitted the taxes on this land.

1.14 Tax collection through confiscation of lands and auction-sale

In order to collect the arrears in the payment of land taxes, lands were confiscated and were sold by auction. The auction sale was called Peruvilai or vilai. In the Annjigai Chaturvedimangalam three brahmanas failed to pay the usual land dues for 15 years and they migrated to other places. So in order to realise the arrears the assembly of Arinjigai Chaturvedimangalam confiscated the lands and sold them in auction. The auction-sale was called Rajendra-Peruvilai. The auction-sale was named after the ruling kings like Rajarajan - Peruvilai and Kulottunga-Peruvilai. In another place, the sabha of Pillaipakkam confiscated the lands from the tenants for the non-payment of the land dues. When the tenants failed to pay their land dues, their lands were sold to temples. This happened in Vanamadevi Chaturvedimangalam. In this village some brahmin tenants did not pay the taxes and abandoned the lands. The Sabha confiscated the land and sold it to the temple.

2. Conclusion

This research also highlighted a few problems. In both case studies, there is a lack of research dedicated specifically to agricultural production, outside of the irrigation methods and rice production. To complete the analysis it is clear that a larger timeframe needs to be considered, a timeframe that can explore the agricultural strategy before and after the Chola Empire. This may account for its legacy within contemporary agricultural production. Further research, however, is necessary to confirm these observations.

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