

# Role of inscriptions in identifying the temple and society

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## Abstract

The inscriptions are considered as very reliable historical sources. Generally, the inscriptions reveal the contribution of the rulers to the temple and society. The rulers donated lands to the different set of people for various purposes. Priests, soldiers and temple servants received tax free lands from the king for their service to the society. We can understand the causes for the donation of lands from the inscriptions. The rulers showed their offerings to the temple in so many circumstances. So, temples are the part and partial of the society and it continues up till now.

## Introduction

The history of Tamil Nadu from 4th century A.D. to 17th century A.D. could not have been written as we know it today, if there had been no Tamil inscriptions. Inscriptions are more reliable than other sources as they are least subject to revision. Inscriptions are easily datable and that is the first and foremost requisite for being historical evidence. So inscriptions are considered as very reliable historical sources. Generally, the inscriptions reveal the contribution of the rulers to the temple and society. The rulers donated lands to the different set of people for various purposes. Priests, soldiers and temple servants received tax free lands from the king for their service to the society. We can understand the causes for the donation of lands from the inscriptions. Then they show the measurements which have used in those period. *Ma, veli, mukkani* are some measurements which are used to measure the land. *Pathakku* and *thuni pathakku* are the words used to measure the paddy and other food grains. We can understand their economic status through the inscriptions. The inscriptions exhibit the value of the coin through its metal value. Temples are useful to safeguard the life of the people because they provide employment to many of them directly and indirectly.

This paper deals about the inscriptions of the temples which were under the kundrakudi Tiruvannamalai atheenam. It is a saiva mutt, located in sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu. They are, Thiruthalinathar temple in Thirupputhur, Shanmuganathar temple at Kundrakudi, Thiru Kodungundranathar temple at Piranmalai and Thiru Kakolapurisvarar temple at Thirukolakudi. All are belonged to Pandiya kingdom. These temples were under the control of Kundrakudi Tiruvannamali Atheenam in 1690 A.D.. There are 51 inscriptions in Kundrakudi, 63 inscriptions in Piranmalai, and 101 inscriptions in Tirupputhur and 88 inscriptions in Tirukolakudi.

## Setup of Valanadu

Nadu or Valanadu is a term used to refer the territory. The kingdom was divided in to so many provinces and the provinces themselves divided in to many divisions. Tirukolakudi inscription mentions about the keralasinga valanadu, kadaladaiya Thilangai konda chola valanadu, Mathurothaya valanadu, Virudharaja valanadu, Vada vellarana sundarapandya valanadu, kulothunga chola valanadu<sup>1</sup>. Chola mandalam and Malai mandalam are the two sects mentioned in these inscriptions. Pandya kingdom was under the control of Cholas for certain period. So the Pandya region was called as Chola Pandiya Valanadu.

Rajaraja I's inscription denotes that Kundrakudi is one of the region of Rajaraja valanadu. Later it changed into Rajendra valanadu. Rajendra valanadu transformed into Keralasinga valanadu in later Pandiya period. Kundrakudi inscription describes about Thiruvalluvar valanadu.

## Nadu

Valanadu were further divided into Nadu. Nadu and *kurram* are the same revenue divisions which give the same meaning. Thirukolakudi inscription mentions about the *ollaiyur kurram*, *Arumbar kurram*, *Muthurru kurram* and *Milalai Kurram*. *Ollaiyur* and *Muthurru Kurram* are very ancient among them. Poolankurichi inscription describes about the *Muthurru kurram*.

Thirukolakudi inscription also denotes about the nadus like Poonkundra nadu, Kalvayil nadu, Anda nadu, Keelvemba nadu, Surabi nadu, Karungadi nadu, Keelaichambi nadu, Tirumalai nadu, Kana nadu, Aevvirukkai nadu, Vadathalai chembi nadu, Vaduvalluvar nadu, Kulothunga Cholavala nadu, Uruma nadu, Vada Pirappu nadu, Thivanthakkudi nadu, Melai Iraniyamutta nadu and Panaiyur nadu. Kundrakudi inscription also describes about the Athalaiyur nadu, Kalvayil nadu and Niyamaparru.

## Oor

Thirukolakudi inscription gives the name of 134 oors (small villages). Among them fifteen names are ended with 'oor' like Okkur, Vetchiyur, Melur and Kanoor. Nineteen names of the villages are ended with 'kudi' like Aaikudi, Sirukudi, Vanyankudi, Kumarathakudi, Namankudi and Ilaiyarrankudi<sup>2</sup>. Four names of the villages are ended with 'puram' like Kulasekarapuram, Sundara pandya puram, Rasa vallapuram, eluthei perun theruvana veera pandiya puram. Nineteen names of the villages ('oor') ended with 'nalloor' like Perunalloor, Chakarabani nalloor, Kalyana sundara nalloor and Sri paranthaga Nalloor.

Eight names are ended with 'Mangalam' like Kannamangalam, Pullamangalam, Mavilimangalam, Korramangalam, Kumara Mangalam and Rasasingamangalam. Some of them are related with water sheds like Puthuper Kulam, Manjaneri and Nattiyathankulam.

Kundrakudi inscription gives a record about the names of the oor in detail. Most of them in Kundrakudi inscriptions are ended with Mangalam, Kudi, Oor and Nalloor, Sengani, Padaikani, Maniyathirai, Arcadu, Niyamam, Mullikundu, Koneri, Kuratti, Naduvakkottai (now it is called as Naduvikkottai) Thulayur Valli and Kulasekara Puram.

## Administrative setup

The inscriptions of Thirukolakudi reveal about the administrative setup of this region. Saba or Sabai is the administrative body which maintains its functions in Mangalam and Chaturvedi mangalam. Likewise Oorar and Nattar (representatives of the village) controlled the Oor (village) and Nadus for administration.

Thirukolakudi inscriptions explain about the 'Nattars' and their agreement with the temple authorities of Thirukolakkudi. They collected a tax called 'Nattu Viniyogam'. The document of this agreement is countersigned by the members of Nattars like Thappila velan, Nilamai Alagiya velan, Pirakada kanda velan, Periya velan, Manamothavan velan, Kariyandan and Athiyaman. Kulasekaradeva's 44th year inscription describes about the gift of the village Perunallur to the temple of Sivadhanmis varamudaiya nayanar at Thirukolakudi by the residents of kana-nadu alias virudaraja bhayankara valanadu, for offerings at the service *senbaga-kulaisegaran* - *sandi* instituted by the king and for the festival *Tiruvani-tirunal*.<sup>3</sup>

Ulagantha chola kana nattan, Valla nattu velan, Munaiya thariyan, Uthama chola kana nattu velan, Uruma nattu velan, Neela kangaraiyar, Ponnandar, Thiruvanaikavudaiyan and Sundaraperumal signed in this document. Thirupputhur inscription reveals about its name "*Koluvur kurrathu Brahmatheyamana Thirupputhur*" and "*Koluvur kurrathu Meekundarru Brahmatheyamana Thirupputhur*". It is regarded that Thirupputhur as Brahmadeya. Thirupputhur is also called as "*Keralasingsa valanattu Brahmatheyamana*

*Thirupputhur*". Keralasinga valanadu was one of the divisions of Pandya region. Koluvur kurram and seermai is also one of its administrative divisions.

### Temple administration

There is lot of officials who administrated the temple of Kundrakudi like Devakanmigal, Srikariyam Seivar, Srimagesuvara Kankani Seivar, Sri Rudramagesvarar, Aganaligaiyar, Koil Kanakku. They are generally called as Thanathar and Thalathar.<sup>4</sup>

The inscription of Kulasekhara deva records that the assembly (mulaparshai) of Tirupputtur wished to go to Madura to pay respects to king Kulasekara and accordingly made certain temple lands rent-free on receipt of a specified amount, for the expenses of the journey.<sup>5</sup> His another inscription of record that some lands belonging to temple of Kailasamudaiya - Nayanar a were made rent-free for money received by the sabha of Tirupputtur, in order to provide for offerings on a festival in the same temple, mentions Samvatsara-Variyam.

The inscription of Tirukolakudai reveals that the temple administration was made by Sri Karyam, Srirudhra Sri Magesvarar, Thanathar, Devakanmikal and koil Kanakku. Sri karyam is called and koil kankku. Srikaryam is called as chief in the temple administration. In the end of 13th century (1290 A.D) Thiruchirrambala pattar, Tirunelveli Udaiar, Kulasekara Pattar, Alala Sundarapattar, Visuvesvara pattar, Thillaimoovaira pattar, Malaimel Marundhi, Periyapattar were Magesvaras of Tirukolakudai temple and Chandraasekara Pallar was as Devakanmi, Uyyanerkallinar was as Sri magesvarakankani, Kappalorudaiyan was as Srikariyam and Thirugnana sambantha velar was as koil kanakku in Tirukolakudi.<sup>6</sup> Virapandiyadeva's 44th regnal year inscription describes the sale of privileges pertaining to padikkaval by the sabha of Tirupputhur to Avaian alias Malava chakravartin of Suraikkudi.<sup>7</sup>

### Taxes

Kundrakudai inscriptions describes the various taxes prevailed in this region. They are Kadamai, Kudimai, Antharayam, Veli, Arisi, Pulugu, Peeli, Vetti, Mutiaval, Achchuvai, Silvari, Peruvai, Echchoru, Kurrarisi and Viniyogam.<sup>8</sup>

According to Tirukolakudi inscriptions, the taxes are Kadamai, Kudimai, Kudikalam, Anthrayam, Elavai, Kasu, Mavadai, Tharitrai, Ayavarkam, Sekkirai, Thattoli, Thattarpattam, Aalvari, Inavari, Kulameenpattam, Ponvari, Kanikai, Karthigai pachai, Ugavai, Kaiyerpu, Viniyogam, Olaiyeccluthu, Aalthvai, Thachuthevai, Anaichalai, Kuthiraipandhi, Kulrathandam, Peruvai, Muttaval, Silvari, Karpooravilai, Aattuvai, Sattuvai, Eelam Punsei, Sevagam. The people paid one third of their total production to the government. Sundarapandiya's inscription reveals about the taxation fixed during that time. Kulottunagacholadeva I's inscription of 40<sup>th</sup> year (1109-1110 A.D) registers the remission of tax by the person in favour of the deity Tirumalai Udaiya Mahadava of the devadana lands situated in all the villages including Sengani, Palavankudi Puravari- Nallur, Siru Vettivayal, Maniyattira land Palaivayil belonging to Ainnurruvan Uyyavandan alias Adalaiyur- Nadalvan Kangayan. Kulottunga Chola deva's another inscription states that the gift of tax and all other levis such as Antaraya from the village Kilkannamangalam for god offerings to god Tirumalaiudaiya Nayanar of Tirukkunrakkudi, at the time of the procession of the deity, by Virasekharan alias Adalaiyur- Nadalvar, who is described as Nattar.<sup>9</sup>

Maravaraman Sundara pandya's inscription records the gift of paddy perhaps purchased out of the money got from the produce of lands in Niyamam, one of the village irrigated by (the river) Tenaru in Keralasinga-valananadu to a deity (name lost) probably by Gandan aludaiyan alias Kalvayil nadalvan.<sup>10</sup>

### Land Gift

Maravarman alias Tribuvana chakravartin kulasekaradeva's inscription of 22<sup>nd</sup> year registers a public sale of land to the temple of Tirukolakudi, by the residents of virachchilai, in order to pay the taxes due by them, states that the original documents were deposited in the temple. It refers to the oppression by

Tirunelveli udaiyar a subordinate Kandiyadevan.<sup>11</sup> Kulasekaradeva's another inscription registers an order of Gangaiyan issued to the temple authorities of Tirukolakudi recording the sale of the karanmai right of a land in Korramangalam which was a village near Ilaiyattakudi in kalvayil-nadu, to a certain Nakularaya and the grant of the several taxes on the land to the temple.<sup>12</sup>

Another inscription in this temple reveals that gift of land situated in the village of sirukudi in vadapirappu-nadu, to the shrine of Aludaiya pillaiyar established by the king, for offerings during the service called 'Buvanekaviran-sandi' named after the king Sundarapandiya's inscription of 21<sup>st</sup> regnal year, registers a sale of land of the village munnaikkudi in Puramalai-nadu to the temple of Tirukolakudi. The lands were owned by the Maravas of velangudi in Pungunranadu. The order (olai) of vikramasingan had written in continuation of the record and signed by Tennavadaraiyan ,states that the gift was to be utilized for the service of Viramindan-sandi.<sup>13</sup>

The inscription of Kulasekaradeva reveals that gift of the village Perunallur to the temple of sivadhanmisvaramudiya nayanar at Tirukolakudi, by the residents of kana-nadu alias virudaraja bayankaravala nadu, for offerings at the service senbaga kulai segaran sandi instituted by the king and for the festival Tiruvani-tirunal.<sup>14</sup> Srivallaba's Tirupputhur inscription states that gift of the village of varagunaputtur for the merit of Visvanatha Nayakkar, son of Nagama Nayakkar.<sup>15</sup>

Vijayanagar ruler Krishnadevarayas's inscription describes gift of some lands by Timmappar alias Vengala Nayaka, son of Krishnaya raja for maintaining a water-shed on the eastern bund of the tank called Timmappan-Urani at Nedumaram, a hamlet of Tirupputhur, for the merit of swami sellappan alias Vira Narasimharaya Nayaka who bears the title "Kanchi puravara dhisvara".<sup>16</sup> This inscription explains the role of king in the public welfare activities. Achyutadeva-maharaya's inscription registers gift of the village Santamangalam in sola pandya-valanadu as devadana to the temple of Tiruttaliyanda Nayanar by periya Ramappa-Nayak, son of Golla Basa (va) yya Nayaka, for the merit of the king, fixing the rates of taxes to be paid by the tenants on the several kinds of produce. A portion of the gift was endowed to (god) Tyagaperumal Nayanar.<sup>17</sup> His inscription seems to register gift of land by Aludai Tirumalai alias Tamiladaraiyan of sadaiyaneri in jayangonda-sola-vinayagar-alvar at Tirupputhur.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

By the analysis of all these inscriptions it is known that the temples were in the continuous tradition of worship and maintenance. The kings of various dynasties, chiefs, nobles' merchants and common people showed much interest in the wellbeing of the temple. Temple was the centre for society in which all human activities are revolved. The inscriptions exhibit the local administration of Pandya kingdom. The assembly of the villages has adequate knowledge in administration. The rulers showed their offerings to the temple in so many circumstances. So, temples are the part and partial of the society and it continues up till now.

## References

<sup>1</sup> M. Nalini, R.Kalaikovan, Then Tamil nattu Kudai varaigal, Chennai, Sekar Pathippagam, 2007, p.94

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97

<sup>3</sup> ARE (1915-1917), No. 112

<sup>4</sup> M. Nalini, R.Kalaikovan, op.cit., p.31

<sup>5</sup> ARE (1906-1910) No. 101

<sup>6</sup> ARE 1916, No.110

<sup>7</sup> ARE (1906-1910), No.122

<sup>8</sup> M. Nalini, R.Kalaikovan, op.cit., pp.30

<sup>9</sup> SI volume XXVI, A.R. No. 32 of 1909

<sup>10</sup> SI volume XXVI, AR, No. 36 of 1909

<sup>11</sup> ARE (1915-1917), No. 81

<sup>12</sup> ARE (1915-1917), No. 80

<sup>13</sup> ARE (1915-1917), No. 102

<sup>14</sup> ARE (1915-1917), No. 106

<sup>15</sup> ARE (1906-1910), No. 113

<sup>16</sup> ARE (1935-1938), No. 177

<sup>17</sup> ARE (1935-1938), No. 179

<sup>18</sup> ARE (1935-1938), No. 181

