

GENESIS OF AMBASAMUDRAM FROM THE LIGHT OF EPIGRAPHICAL SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to highlight the origin of Ambasamudram from the light of epigraphical sources. Ambasamudram is one of the earliest settlements of Tamil Nadu. It has been under the taluk administration of Ambasamudram of Tirunelveli District. This town is situated in the foot hill of Westernghats. Which is three hundred meters (Nine hundred and seventy five feet) above sea level. Ambasamudram is located thirty five kilometers (thirty one and half miles) west of Tirunelveli the headquarters of the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu on Tirunelveli - Papanasam road.¹ Papanasam Nagercoil road runs through Ambasamudram Sermadevi - via Kalakkadu, and Valliyoor. It is also in between the mid ways of Tirunelveli -Shenkottai railway line. It is on the northern bank of river Tamirabarani with a twin town Kallidaikurichi is situated on the Southern bank.

Key Words : Ilangoykkudi, brahmadeya, Mullinadu, Raja Raja ChaturVedimanglam

Introduction :

Ambasamudram is one among the seven municipalities of Tirunelveli District. Ambasamudram Panchayat union is one among the nineteenth panchayat unions of Tirunelveli District consists of twenty village panchayats.²

Ambasamudram comprises of many wet, dry inam and poramboke lands. According to the settlement of the revenue accounts the lands are mostly divided in to four broad divisions. They are occupied, unoccupied Inam and poramboke lands. In the first two divisions wet, dry lands, are included. Totally Ambasamudra has 17.28 square kilometers of land.

Ambasamudram, reputed for its holiness and fertility of the soil has glorious history. It is known from different sources that the name Ambasamudram is derived from Ambal pond. The Northern language word Samudram was consisted in the name of some Tamil village names. Big lakes were dug by the ancient Tamil rulers and wealthy persons were called as sea, ocean and varithi.³ The big pond dug by RajaRaja Chola I was

called as Cholasamudram.⁴ A pond dug near by the Ilangoykkudi was called as Ambasamudram. In course of time the name Ambal Samudram became changed as Ambasamudram.⁵ The name Ilangoykkudi become Ambalsamudram then renamed as Ambasamudram.⁶

Two vatteluttu inscriptions of pandya ruler sadiyen Maran alias Rajasimha II related to the first regnal year 905 A.D.⁷ Thirteenth regnal year 917 - 918 A.D.⁸ found on the south wall and on the left door Jamb of the Erichchavudaiyer temple situated half mile away south of Ambasamudram near the Tamirabarani river mentions the old name of the Ambasamudram was Ilangoykkudi a brahmadeya in Mullinadu 'KO' - Brahmanas - ilam -next - kudi - habitation) the habitation of the caste next to Brahmanas.

First regnal year 792 A.D. Tamil in vattaluttu inscription of Maranjadiyan-alias Varaguna I found on a slab setup in front of the Tirumulanather temple mentioned the old name of Ambasamudram was Ilangoykkudi a brahmadeya in Mullinadu.⁹ Jatavarman alias Sundarachola pandyadeva's sixth regnal year, 1027 A.D. found on the south wall of Tirumulanathaswamtemple mentioned the name of Ambasamudram during the time of cholas was Raja Raja ChaturVedimanglam, a brahmadeya in Mullinadu a subdivision of Mudikondacholavalanadu a division of Raja Raja Pandinadu.¹⁰ The old name of Ambasamudram, Ilangoykkudi was renamed as Ambasamudram during the time of Vijayanagar Emperor Venkata I. (1586 - 1615) vellanguli or vellangudi copper plates of Venkata I (1586 - 1615) In 1598 A.D. confirmed the name Ilangoykkudi renamed as Ambasamudram in Mullinadu in Tiruvadidesa. Kallidaikurichi was renamed as Virabhusamudram.¹¹

Historical region

Ambasamudram region on the upper valley of Tamirabarani river sustained and fostered an ancient civilization for more centuries than men can remember. The historical places of Kilambur. Valuthur and Cheranmahadevi speak the historical antiquity and soil fertility of the Ambasamudram, Archeologically, this particular region is very important as it represented an ancient civilization. The state department of Archeology and museums and Archeological survey of India conducted an elaborate survey in this region. In their halfway excavations itself they unearth many ancient things at valuthur. They asserted that there might have Dravidian settlement in this region. They found at burial urns and huge funeral pots of various shapes.¹² About Kilambur it also adds much historical values to Ambasamudram. Neolithic Celts and burial urns were discovered here.¹³

Ambasamudram was ruled by many dynasties. The Sangam Pandyas ruled from third century B.C. to 250 A.D. Kalabhras ruled the land from 250 A.D. to 550 A.D. From 550 A.D. to 920 A.D. early Pandyas ruled the Ambasamudram. The prominent Kings of the Pandyas who carved their names in the Pages of

History were Kadungon, Rajasimha I, MaranJadayen alias Varaguna I¹⁴, Sadaiyenmaran alias Rajasimha II¹⁵ and Virapandya.

When Pandyan embraced defeat and paled into in significance Cholas rose as a powerful force to gain supremacy over Ambasamudram. The eminent kings among the Chola rulers were RajaRaja I¹⁶ and Kulotunga Chola I.¹⁷

After the Chola decline, Ambasamudram fell into the possession of later Pandyas. Tenkasi Pandyas, Travancore rulers, Vijayanagar and Madurai Nayaks. From 1735 to 1801 A.D. Ambasamudram was came under the rule of Carnatic Nawab. From 1801 – 1947 A.D. Ambasamudram was ruled by the English.

Ambasamudram through the ages faced many invasions like Cholas, Tiruvadi rulers, Vijayanagar rulers and Carnatic Nawabs. The invaders were mostly attracted by the economic prosperity of this region.

The successors of Kadungon the founder of first Pandya rule, MaravarmanAvanisulamani (600 – 625 A.D.) Cheliyan Maransendan (625 – 640) MaravarmanArikesariRajasimha (640 – 670) Kochchadayen Ranadheeran (670 – 710) Arikesariparangusa Maravarman Dharma Raja I (711 – 765) Jatila Parantaka Nedunsadiyen (765 – 790) Rajasimha II (790 – 792) Varaguna Maharaja I (793 – 835) Srimarasrivallabha (832 – 862) Maransadiyen alias Varaguna Raman II (862 – 880 A.D) Parantaka Veeranarayena Sadiyen (880 – 970) Maravarman Rajasimha (900 – 943) and Virapandya (943 – 966 A.D.) ruled over four centuries over the Madurai and Tirunelveli region including Ambasamudram.

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