

**CURRENT PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGIES  
IN SOUTH INDIAN EPIGRAPHICAL AND  
HISTORICAL RESEARCH**  
(WITH SELECT CASE STUDIES)

**Prof. SATHYANATHA IYER ENDOWMENT LECTURES**  
(1993 — 94)

**R. TIRUMALAI, I.A.S. (Retd.)**  
(Delivered on 22nd and 23rd February, 1994)



**ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY**

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**DEDICATED**  
**TO**  
**THE FOUNDER**  
**Dr. RAJA SIR ANNAMALAI CHETTIAR**  
**AND**  
**Dr. M.A. MUTHIAH CHETTIAR,**  
**AND THE PRO - CHANCELLOR**  
**Dr. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY**  
**AND**  
**THE DISTINGUISHED HISTORIANS**  
**OF THE**  
**ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY**

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## FOREWORD

Annamalai University takes pride in publishing this important work titled **CURRENT PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGIES IN SOUTH INDIAN EPIGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH**. It is a collection of lectures by Thiru R. Tirumalai, I.A.S. (Retd) delivered under the Sathianatha Iyer Endowment Lectures (1993-94).

Prof. Sathianatha Iyer was a distinguished Professor of this University and did pioneering research in the Nayak Period and in modern South Indian History. The subjects covered by Thiru R. Tirumalai appropriately converge on the area of the late Professor's interest.

Thiru R. Tirumalai stood first among the first batch of I.A.S. Officers after Independence. He is an outstanding administrator with a consistent record of achievements in his long service. He settled the Zamindari, Inam estates, formed the Kanyakumari District, and was in-charge of Industries and Public Works Departments in the Tamil Nadu Government. He had several innings in the Government of India in important Economic Ministries, like Shipping, Economic Affairs, Commerce, Supply, and finally served as Secretary to the Cabinet Committee of Infrastructure, co-ordinating the activities of all the Economic Ministries. He was a member of



the Economic Administrative Reforms Commission for three years with the rank of the Minister of State in Government of India.

Thiru R. Thirumalai's abiding interest in historical research commenced under the doyen among historians Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri who enabled him to publish several works of original historical research. These include the "History of Ancient Townships of Pudukkottai" "Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Chola and Pandya Times", besides several other papers. Thiru R. Tirumalai's forte is his intimate knowledge of the original inscriptions (mostly unpublished) and original archival records.

What is significant in this work is that he is not content with discussing the principles and problems of historical and epigraphical research and methodology; and he has taken pains to demonstrate their application through several case studies, every one of which is, in itself, a striking contribution to the History of South India. I should particularly mention his in-depth study of the social and economic history of South India, the place names and their historical value. Especially the paper on the unpublished "Ship Song" brings out the maritime traditions of the Tamils. His study of "Village Communities in India" presented in an International Conference in Moscow and of the Board of Revenue and the Land Revenue records are models for use of archival material as a source for history. These have been acclaimed by international historians.

Above all, he has made a critical study of S. Satyamurti's unpublished correspondence to bring out

not only the personality of that great patriot, but also the inner democracy in the Indian National Congress in the 30s and 40s. This is a signal contribution. It is a model for handling private archival sources for historical reconstruction. Satyamurti had contributed significantly to the framing of the Act under which Annamalai University was founded.

Thiru R. Tirumalai belongs to the rare breed of dedicated Civil servants who devote themselves to original historical research. I congratulate Thiru R. Tirumalai on his equally remarkable original contribution to South Indian Historical Research, which is yet another feather in his cap. He is a model for emulation.

I have great pleasure in commending this work to scholars and the general public. It is a veritable mine of information, intensively and critically worked out, by a dedicated scholar - administrator.



(M.A.M. RAMASWAMY,)

Pro-Chancellor.



**Dr. M.G. Muthukumarasamy,**  
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India.

**Prof. Sathyanatha Iyer Endowment Lectures (1993-94),** delivered by Thiru R. Tirumalai, I.A.S. (Retd.) is a monumental and scholarly work on "Current Problems and Methodologies in South Indian Epigraphical and Historical Research". The Lectures are lucid, thought provoking, well documented and with excellent case studies. To substantiate his points, Mr. Tirumalai has analysed the inscriptions in a remarkable manner. He states "that glossaries should be prepared for the epigraphical terms language-wise". His suggestion that Annamalai University which has a strong research and language base is eminently suited for epigraphical study is well appreciated. He advocates the use of computers and mechanical data processing for an objective analysis of epigraphs.

His profound research of place names and study of various regions, communities, culture, religion and language are of great historical significance. The lectures give a glimpse of cultural contexts of Personal Names in South India - In the "Chola and the Pandya Country". Place names also reflect the 'socio-economic' factors of communities.

Lecture II briefly surveys the progress of epigraphic studies with particular reference to the interpretation of socio-economic terms occurring in inscriptions. A noteworthy project that he has outlined is the project of

preparing a Lexicon or Dictionary of Socio-Economic Terms. He also feels that the study of folk-songs, archival material, private correspondence, and revenue accounts can greatly help in reconstructing the history of a place or region.

His Lecture on "Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Historian of South India and His Techniques and Methods of analysing history of South India", especially Karnataka, reveals his deep commitment to his mentor and his critical acumen. Indeed "Prof. Nilakanta Sastri was the path-finder - a Margadarshi". Thiru Tirumalai's conception of history is certainly very comprehensive!

In addition to these studies, there are sections on "Epigraphy and Literature". A Tribute to Viyapuri, the Tamil Scholar, and "An Early History of the Christians in South India".

The section on "Village Communities in India - From The Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Century" reveals his ardent obsession with historical and social facts. However, the section is unusually long.

There are also sections on "The Village Panchayats in Madras Judicial System", "The Madras Board of Revenue - A Requiem", which reveals his profound knowledge of the nuances of revenue administration.

There is also an interesting study of "The Correspondence of Satyamurti" - wherein the letters reveal the personality of Satyamurti and the historical significance of the letters.

I take great pleasure in congratulating the authorities of the Annamalai University in publishing this stupendous work of Thiru. Tirumalai, I.A.S., a great Historian and noted Epigraphist.

Dr. M.G. Muthukumarasamy.

**Dr A. SUBBIAN, M.A., M.A., Ph.D., D.G., ABIRA, FABI, (U.S)**  
**Professor and Head, History Department,**  
**Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar - 608 002.**

## **GENERAL EDITOR**

### **INTRODUCTION**

I take this opportunity to thank Annamalai University authorities, Syndicate, Dr. M.G Muthukumarasamy, Vice Chancellor of Annamalai University, Professor Dr V. Gomathinayagam Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, Dean Faculty of Arts, Dr P. L. Sabarathinam, Registrar of Annamalai University, for having given all the essential help, encouragement for conducting this prestigious endowment lectures in the name of former Professor of History Prof. R. Sathianathaier in the Department of History.

In this endowment Lecture we invited Thiru R. Tirumalai I.A.S. (Rtd) to deliver the Prof. R. Sathianathan Endowment Lecture on 22nd and 23rd February 1994. It must be noted at the outset that Thiru R. Thirumalai has undertaken a task never before attempted. His aim is to analyse the "current problems and Methodologies in South Indian Epigraphical and Historical Research". Thirumalai claims: "If inscriptions are to be studied for their content analysis it is best to preserve the locational contiguity and integrity". This work, drawing on original sources, fills in areas not covered in the work of pioneers such as K N. Sivaraja Pillai, P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar and V. Kanakasabhai and some others Thirumalai attempts a first synthesis of investigations such as Prof K.A. Nilakanta



Sastri, N. Venkataramanaiah and other supplemented by his own comprehensive collection of documents from various sources.

He starts with a useful introduction on the political geography of Tamilnadu, illustrated by vast datas showing the distribution of the lands, royal revenues, political functions, power of the feudal barons led to their control of the economic life of the land.

Appendix contains a number of important documents on the main economic questions "Inam settlement of Pudukkottai", "Survey of Land Revenue Records" (AD 1600 to 1960). However this work lacks definitive documentation, though used, the previous lectures he had delivered woven into the text. The serious student of Indology who will be impressed by the literacy skill with which the endowment lecture is published cannot but be concerned about its objectivity - is this handling of ideas or historiography? With this work, Thiru Thirumalai has successful moderately, this volume deserves a place on the groaning bookshelf of South Indian History.

My thanks are due in great measure to the publication Division of Annamalai University who took care of the production, and Dr. N. Alagappan, Reader in History who read the proofs, and the printing press.

Dr. A. SUBBIAN,  
Professor & Head  
Department of History  
Annamalai University.

## PREFACE

I am grateful to the Annamalai University for inviting me to deliver the R. SATYANATHA IYER ENDOWMENT LECTURES (1993-94).

I thought the best form of my tribute to the Great Scholar is to survey the current problems and methods of epigraphical and historical research, with reference to the varied sources. The survey brings out the essential needs and aids for such research, and points out on what lines they can be undertaken. These should be of help to the researchers in South Indian History on what areas further work needs to be done.

The lectures bring out the 'adjectival' attributes of historiography. But I have not been content with setting out the principles and methodology for research. I thought the best way that would serve as a model to researchers will be to add specific case studies on substantive subjects applying the methods I expound and to illustrate everyone of them and what results they could lead to.

There are as many as 18 appendices which embody these case studies. They cover a variety of topics—problems of transition in the socio-economic history from the ancient to the medieval times, to the study of archival unpublished sources (the Board of Revenue, and village communities (18th to 20th centuries) and the private archival records on the correspondence of Sri S. Satyamurti.

These studies cover from the ancient to the modern times, as an act of homage to Prof. Satyanatha Iyer whose interest lay in the post 15th Century history. A variety of subjects like the historical impact of Place Names, a 'ship song', "Revenue Accounts", "an early history of Christians", also are indicative of the wide range for historical investigations modelled on the Annals School of France.

I owe my disciplined studies to my discipleship under the doyen of South Indian History, Prof. K.A. Nilakanta

Sastri. I trust I have been true to it, and have done justice to the memory of a Great Scholar and the kind invitation of the University. The indicative case studies, will I trust, further stimulate similar studies by Scholars.

Some of these papers have been severally published earlier but revised and incorporated here so that they can be available to Scholars in a conspectus. This has the inevitable side effect of a few repetitions which, however, have been minimised and where present, help add the necessary emphasis. I have acknowledged the publication in which they initially appeared.

I thank the Syndicate of the Annamalai University, the Vice-Chancellor, the Dean Dr. Gomathinayagam and Dr. Subbian for honouring me by extending this invitation. The Vice-Chancellor Dr. M.G. Muthukumarasamy took great personal interest in expediting the printing of this work and I acknowledge with pleasure his help.

I am particularly grateful to Dr. M.A.M. Ramasamy, the Pro-Chancellor of the University, for the "Foreword" which he has so kindly given to this work. It is of a piece with the great traditions of his family that he has evinced great interest in this work on Historiography, lead with the case studies.

I also thank the General Editor, Dr. Subbian for his Introduction.

I have pleasure to acknowledge the diligent proof correction work attended to by Dr. N. Alagappan, Reader in the Department of History, which has been a great help and I thank him.

My thanks are due to Sri R. Krishnakumar, Sri R. Balasubramanian, Sri. R.V. Seshapani and Mrs. K. Kamala and other members of my staff who have helped me in getting ready the material for publication.

— R. TIRUMALAI

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 1. ARE         | : Annual Report of Epigraphy   |
| 2. ASSI        | : Archaeological Survey of<br>Southern India Volumes                 |
| 3. BP          | : Board's Proceedings  |
| 4. Dis.        | : Disposal / Despatch  |
| 5. TAG Rao     | : Gopinatha Rao, T.A.  |
| 6. GO          | : Government Order   |
| 7. EI          | : Epigraphia Indica  |
| 8. EHAD        | : Early History of Ancient<br>Deccan - Yazdan (Ed)                   |
| 9. IESHR       | : Indian Economic and Social<br>Historical Review                    |
| 10. Ind Ephi   | : Indian Ephemeris<br>LD Swamikannau Pillai<br>(Agam Kala Prakashan) |
| 11. IHC        | : Indian History Congress  |
| 12. ILCP       | : Indian Legislature Council<br>Proceedings                          |
| 13. IPS        | : Inscriptions of Pudukkottai State                                  |
| 14. JES        | : Journal of Epigraphic Society                                      |
| 15. JESH       | : Journal of Economic and<br>Social History                          |
| 16. MLS        | : Madras Literary Society  |
| 17. Manu       | : Sacred Books of the East   |
| 18. NRPR       | : National Register of Private<br>Records                            |
| 19. KAN SASTRI | : Nilakanta Sastry, K.A. Prof.                                       |
| 20. OUP        | : Oxford University Press  |
| 21. PNSI       | : Place Names Society of India                                       |

## 22. Pudukkottai

Studies : Studies in the History Ancient  
Townships of Pudukkottai -  
(Institute of Epigraphy - Dept.  
of Archaeology-1918)

23. SII : South Indian Inscriptions  
24. SITI : South Indian Temple Inscriptions  
25. TAS, TVAS : Travancore Archaeological  
Series  
26. TSS : Travancore Sanskrit Series  
27. U Ve Sa : U.V. Swaminatha Iyer Library
-



# ERRATA

Page	Line	For	Read
7	20	date	data
20	24	Madras University	Tamīl Nadu Government
21	F.N. 22 last line	lend	lead
25	1	is	Omit 'is'
26	penultimate line from bottom	carlier	earlier
28	under item (7) second line	as high	Omit 'as'
29	2	for 'the'	Omit 'the'
29	10	Erahmins	Brahmins
34	7	previous	precious
41	4	Nadamuri	Nadamuni
58	7	prinkling	sprinkling
61	penultimate line from bottom	became Pallavarayan	Pallavarāyan
69	25 from bottom	creat	great
73	8 from bottom	Indo Anglican	Indo Anglian
91	14	undravelling	unravelling
92	3 from bottom	idiosyncracis	idiocyncrasies
94	12	compisite	composite
108	11	Pisanam	Pāsānam
112	7 from bottom	behaves	behoves
114	6 from bottom	lont-last	long-lost
115	14	Touvean	Jouveau
123	FN 2: line 1 FN 2: line 5	chase 'In an'	chapters Omit 'in'
			An
127	12	scepsicism	scepticism
128	3 from bottom	nurtures several	nurtured several

133	last para		
	2	Dr. I.	Dr. 'N'
	penultimate		
	line	a ministrution	administration
134	para 2		
	1	Repson's	Rapson's
135	7	even	been
138	5 from bottom	general	generation
139	3 from bottom	found	fount
142	11	understones	undertones
160	FN: 2 Line 2	Saku	Saka
193	5	1973	1793
	6	away	sway
166	5 from bottom	has been	had been
174	"	party	partly
175	FN-11	Roa	Rao
185	3	Constitutio-	Constitutio-
		nale	nale - N'
186	15	lets	lots
187	2	powerput	powerful
188	12	sucs	such
189	6 from bottom	motes	metes
196	9-10 from	In fact -to-	
	bottom	question	Omit
197	9	decrepi	decrepit
204	5	enjoys the	enjoys and
210	11	over	overt
213	14	strongese	strongest
216	FN: 32	Vizag ataian	Vizagapatam
217	para. 3 last line	Annexure-III	Annexure-IV
220	6 from bottom	Inam	Inams in
		Chingleput	Chingleput
	FN: 37	1009	1909

225	10 from bottom	parennes	parties
226	7 from bottom	position	portion
229	9 from bottom	<i>not been</i>	Omit "been"
232	para 2 last line	Sir Henry Main	Maine
236	5 from bottom	handover	hangover
237		"Acquisiti"	Acquisition
		in table	
242	16	guide	guise
249	4	rot	not
288	3 from bottom	what	when
315	3 from bottom	stablished	stabilised
316	last line	weeded to the	wedded to the
		coal	goal
327	FN: 1 penultimate line	Budan of	Burden of
328	4 of the text from bottom	and	any
340	14	sustemised	systemised
341	12 from bottom	rather	rather than
		principle	principle
342	18	foiled	field
345	15	in them	in their integrity
		integrity.	Perambulation
		Report	Report
	19	painfully	painstakingly
	penultimate line (2nd line from bottom)	tenancial	tenurial
351	3	data	date
353	FN: 33	B.P. (Sect.)	Sett.
357	4 from bottom	inner	minor
358	8	Sripandarangai	Sripandaravagai
370	8	such	much
375	16	today	toddy

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## LECTURE - I

### Introduction :

I deem it an honour and privilege to have been invited to deliver Prof. Sathyanatha Iyer Endowment lectures, 1993 - 94 in this renowned University.

I narrowly missed becoming its *alumnus*. When I passed my SSLC, I was underaged to enter the Madras University. My father's friend and a great Professor Sri V.G. Ramakrishna Iyer, a pioneer economist undertook to take me into the Economics Graduation course here. But it could not materialise. But my connection with some of the great Professors of this University, including S.R. Balasubramanya Iyer, C. S. Srinivasachariar and Sathyanatha Iyer, had been established without my being a student. Also I had the honour of being hosted by the Founder-Pro-Chancellor, Dr. Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar and his successor Dr. Raja Sir Muthiah Chettiar when I visited the University with Tamil Scholars like the late Sri T.K.C. and Prof. A.S. Raghavan. I had also accompanied my Professor K.A. Nilakanta Sastri when he presided over a session in the Indian History Congress held in 1945 under the Chairmanship of Prof. Tara Chand.

Prof. R. Sathyanatha Iyer was a very distinguished Professor, very painstaking in his work and had interest in the history of South India in the post-15<sup>th</sup> Century - an area which in his times had not been fully worked out. He was thus a pioneer, who reconstituted the history of the Nayaks of Madurai. It is my recollection he also contributed some papers to the Annual Conferences of Indian Historical

**Records Commission.** Above all, his History of India in several volumes were much sought after in our student days. He was a generous host, and I have had occasion to meet him at his residence here and while he visited Madras. He was one of my well-wishers who encouraged me to do historical research.

This is an opportunity for paying my homage to him. I thought the best form of doing so is to touch on the (i) current problems of epigraphy and historiography, and (ii) to delineate the "Historiographical methodology" that has been evolved in recent times, especially of application in reconstructing social and economic history of South India and (iii) illustrate through case studies on specific topics the application of the methodology. Aspects of these subjects overlap, and some repetition is inevitable and in places is even intended to add force and emphasis.

My first lecture deals with the first aspect; and the second lecture with the second. Cases studies are appended in illustration for both.

### **Content analysis of inscriptions :**

It is a truism to say that the wealth of epigraphic data available in South India is still to be harnessed for the reconstruction of the history of the tract - the history of its people, in their every day life, and the evolution of social, religious and economic trends say, from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century onwards.

The inscriptions, broadly have two parts - the first, the "MEYKIRTI" or "Prasasti" portion. It is a form of prosody<sup>1</sup> ornate in style and full of panegyric. Though conventional in style, this part forms the mainstay for reconstructing the political history of the tract. It was

---

1. *Pannirupättiyal* 311. *Ilakkanavilakkam* 805.

Rājarāja I who more or less, standardised this "Meykīrti" and after his time, the Cōla rulers adopted his example. Some of the 'Meykīrtis' were added to or give details not found in the epigraphs of an earlier date in the reign of the same ruler. This would help to "fix" the date of occurrence of the events and the chronological sequence of the historical events of the reign. But, it should not be understood that the 'Meykīrti' formulation adheres to the chronological sequence of events. Often, due to prosodic, or "*Eduḡai-mōnai*" or compulsions of rhyming, the versifier has his own manner of presenting the facts.

The historical interpretation of events cannot, indeed should not, solely rely on the version of a ruler of any single dynasty. For the eulogy is apt to slur over or omit or at best put in euphemistic terms, the facts unfavourable to the ruler, or not so complimentary to him.

It, therefore, becomes necessary to cross-check, correct, and balance the version of one dynasty with that of another. The victory claimed by one, on a cross-check with the inscription of the ruler of the rival dynasty, may well turn out to be the former's defeat. The history of South India can be and has been reconstructed only by the composite study and analysis of the inscriptions of the different dynasties, whose political and military exploits converge on the tract. Even then, there are possibilities of gaps in information, and scope for the "Grand perhaps" presenting itself. For instance, we, still, are not clear of the early years of Kulottunga III and how he came to occupy the Cōla throne.<sup>2</sup>

---

2. The Cōlas - Vol. II Pt. i. p. 116; Epigraphia Indica Vol. XXI pp. 269.



In the last 100 years, from the time of Burgess and Hultzsch, and Fleet epigraphists have naturally paid attention to this first part, trying to extract as much historical data as possible. Out of such data it has been possible to reconstruct the political history of the dynasties of South India in broad detail. A great deal still remains to be done. The chronology and the concurrent rulership and the identification of the Pāṇḍyan rulers are still an enigma. The Cōḷa history, at least from the time of Rājarāja I onwards, has been worked out in better detail but even here, as has been pointed out, there are crucial aspects and problem areas that invite fuller investigation.

The first part of the inscription has rightly received all along critical examination and attention. For it affords the basis for formulating the frame of the political history and its chronology.

But the main purpose of the epigraph was not merely to engrave the "Meykīrti". Some of the inscriptions take that for granted as when they state merely "Meykīrtikku Mōi".

The second part of the inscription is really its operative part. It conveys the purpose, and the content of the transaction that is recorded for posterity. Most of the extant inscriptions deal with grants and endowments made to temples or to Brahmins, or to Mathas (or Charitable institutions). Some gleanings can be had of the Schools run for teaching the Vēdas, or the *Prābhākaram*, or grammar in Brahmadēya villages.<sup>3</sup>

---

3. Please see the author's Presidential address at the Inauguration of the all India Level Institute in Post-Sankara Advaita - "Advaita in the Post - Śankara period" - The Cōḷa-Cāḷukya period-a Hiatus" Journal of the Madras University Vol. LVII-1 & 2 January & July 1985 pp. 3-4.

Even within those limitation, and granting the segmentary nature of the evidence, the inscriptions can and do yield a lot of data on the social and economic conditions of the tract. The content-analysis of the inscriptions, from this point of view, is indeed very rewarding. A typological study has been appended (Appendix-1).<sup>4</sup>

The transactions recorded in the inscriptions can be broadly categorised as follows :

- (i) grants of land by the ruler or at his command, and remission of taxes.
- (ii) sale or purchase of lands either from the Township organisation or from private individuals and endowed for temples or shrines for services, the contents of the grant, and *vice versa*.
- (iii) sale of land by private individuals to institutions or *vice versa* indicating the terms on which and what rights were transferred, and the price paid for the land *per se* and the capitalised value for payment of land dues.
- (iv) assignment of land rights by the township organisation or individuals.
- (v) voluntary endowments by social and economic groups; levies made by them by common consent.
- (vi) deposits of cash for services and for provisions in the temples and the Mathas.

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4. "Transition from ancient to Medieval Period-Problems of economic and social organisation identifiable in South Indian history". (App: I)

This study attempts to justify an appropriate watershed from the ancient to the medieval period, and describes the changes of economic and social import and the problems thrown up. This is indicative but reveals the dynamic character of the life and times.

- (vii) rights in land - the tenurial and sub-tenurial obligations of the holders of such tenures or sub-tenures.
- (viii) the scale of remuneration for various services, in the temple, the garden-tenders and others, and the relative scales of remuneration.
- (ix) the money to grain ratio; and the land extent or value to the scale of remuneration.
- (x) interest rates prevailing, particularly for charitable endowments which seems to be a category by itself ("Dharmapolisai") at about 25 to 30%.
- (xi) Community agreements and accords.

This categorisation affords an index of the variety of data that can be gleaned from the inscriptions.<sup>5</sup>

This task requires two conditions to be met. The responsibility for the first lies with the epigraphists. The responsibility for the second is shared by a wider section of scholars belonging to various disciplines including Tamil language and lexicology and students of historiography with a bias towards economic and social history.

The primary function of an epigraphist is to faithfully transcribe the texts of the inscriptions and help in their intelligible reading and interpretation.

The operative part of the inscriptions contain several terms which were readily understandable and could convey their meaning to the people of the contemporary times.

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5. For a detailed and critical analysis please see the authors' "Land grants and agrarian reactions in the Cōla and the Pāṇḍya times" - Madras University Publications 1987.

Tamiḷ is a language where the syntax and the general sense of words can be said to be well-preserved the longest. But even in that language several words have become obsolete or have obtained new meanings or new shades of meanings, distinct from that sense in which the words were used at the time. Some words do convey more than one meaning, *kudi*, *kadamai*, are illustrations. The correct interpretation of these terms can be obtained only through the contextual sense that has to be ascertained. In this respect, the textual accuracy and fullness are of paramount importance.

There are three other distinct aspects in which the epigraphist has a sovereign contribution to make. First, the operative portion contains a lot of detail of the location of land, extent, the quantum of *kadamai* or share crop, the cash and the intrinsic value which it had borne, and the mode of discharging the obligations. There is a tendency to slur over these aspects and in many inscriptions, a tantalising blank occurs in these parts of the epigraphs. This is bound to result in denying ourselves really precious and valuable information. The date-base for a comparative study of the relative rates of *kaḍamai* or land dues or obligations can only be had from such precise details. The intrinsic value and significance of the Cōḷa and the Pāṇḍya inscriptions is that they abound in such specific details and afford a secure basis for making inferences on economic and social conditions, trends, and occurrences. Together they help the economic history of the tracts and the times to be framed on an authentic basis.

If these details are lost or not made available we are left without any satisfactory source material. The details to be furnished need a correct and thorough grasp of the numeral system and comprehending the fractional values as adopted by Hutzsch (SII Vol. II) in editing the Tanjāvūr inscriptions. But since then, there has been a progressive diminution in

the amount of painstaking attention and care devoted to the numerals and the fractional values in which land measurements, the yield, the share of the land-dues, in kind and in cash and also the other obligations were to be rendered. My purpose is to invite attention to this all-important aspect; and to stimulate greater care and dedication in not only making a transcript available but also making the transcript, which will be faithful and full. My plea is that the substantive aspects in the operative part of the inscriptions have not had their fullest chance to be utilised in reconstructing the economic and social history of South India so far. And it is time that they receive the fullest attention at the hands of the epigraphists they deserve.

A second aspect in the inscriptions which could be puzzling is the use of contractions for words like *kaṇṇār*, *śadīram*, *nel*, *pāḍagam*, *paṇam*, etc. The only way in which the declensions of these abbreviations used can be attempted will be to empirically compile them and with reference to the context in which they occur and then to make a declension. An anthology of abbreviations will also be useful, to interpret the data. Luckily in some inscriptions both the declension and the abbreviation occur together. These have as much value to decipher the terms or value of numerals as bilingual inscriptions. A standard dictionary of the epigraphic abbreviation and their declensions will be of great help to the epigraphists and the interpreters of these epigraphs.

These details are of significance to ascertain the layout of a command-area especially canal-irrigated tracts and the way in which fields have been developed. A whole wet-ayacut-account can be reconstructed on that basis. The size of parcels of lands and holdings, especially in the irrigated area can be ascertained. The regulatory methods of irrigation, the gradient determining the flow of water, and the mix of

advantage in their various degrees can all be inferred from such data.

A third aspect on which the epigraphists have to be thoroughly faithful to the text of the estampages is in fully transcribing the signatories to the documents. A tendency is noticed even in some earlier transcripts to omit the details of the signatories noting 'a number of signatures follow'. I would submit that the full transcription of all the signatories is of supreme importance. Their utility is manifold. First, they help to identify the nativity of the resident population of a township. Second, by their occurrence we are able to determine the composition of the community body which belonged to a township. Thirdly, by the number of times within a specified consecutive period of sufficient chronological proximity we could ascertain the recurrence of the names, and fourthly the identity to see how the community organisations had their constituents selected or determined. The occurrence over a period of the executives of such organisations and the scribes even, can be suggestive of the tenure of these incumbents.

Similarly the names of the king's officials occurring as signatories, are important. In some cases, they are the only means to determine the date to which the inscription can be ascribed having regard to the occurrence of the same or identical names elsewhere. A patient analysis can also help correlate the nativity of the officials and the tracts where they had been working as the king's officers and their movements and transfers and the periodicity of such transfers.

These details have a further use. They help in cross-indexing and referencing. They can help as a national dictionary of proper names. Family histories can be reconstructed. Also migrations of population can be traced from one part of South India to another.

In short, my plea is that the task of the epigraphist is to decipher and transcribe the epigraph, coeval with the epigraph, and the whole of the epigraph leaving not a stroke, and adding not one either without proper, authentic and critical annotation.

The official procedures of the times are repetitive but these are a great blessing. Normally there is a supplication. The king's oral commands are reduced to writing (Tiruvāykeḷvi). They are conveyed in the form of a letter to the beneficiary (Thirumugham) as well. A memorandum (ninaippu) also had been issued sometimes. Then follows the *uḷvari* or the authenticated incorporation of the command in the revenue accounts and a copy thereof conveyed to the beneficiary. Details omitted in one can be had from either of the two copies. Sometimes, the name of the ruler and details, for identification are found only in the first. The other starts with *Kōnērinmaikondān* and hence the date and the grantor's name can be had only from the first. It is necessary to ensure copies of the transcripts are made independently and in full so that the lacuna in one document can be supplied from the others.

I now turn to another aspect - the manner of publishing these inscriptions. Various methods have been adopted - in the order of importance attached to the documents by the epigraphists<sup>6</sup> adopting dynastic arrangements<sup>7</sup>; The Pallavas<sup>8</sup>, The Pāṇḍyas<sup>9</sup>, of king's titles *Rājakēśari*,<sup>10</sup> *Parakēśari*,<sup>11</sup> etc.

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6. SII. Vol.I pt. I, pp. 66

7. Ibid Vols. I and II

8. Ibid Vol. XII

9. Ibid Vol. XIV

10. Ibid Vol. XIII

11. Ibid Vol. XIX

Other volumes, by and large, follow the order of the Annual Report number and the year in which they were copied.

It would be obvious that if the topographical contiguity of these inscriptions is preserved in printing and publishing them that would be a valuable aid for identifying many a common point, and correspondence of place-names and proper names and help arrive at the integrity of data and piece them up. I would, therefore, submit that this topographical contiguity provides a natural, simple and somewhat unerring means of linking up the data and correlating them or establishing their correspondence. The *Inscriptions of Pudukkottai State*, and the district-wise volumes of *Epigraphia Caernatica* are ample proofs of the utility of such an arrangement which has the logic of the most beneficial use for further investigation and research.

At the same time the backlog of inscriptions are so heavy that we could be grateful for their early publication rather than in the best manner of publication. I am aware that the erudite and enthusiastic Director (Epigraphy), Dr. K. V. Ramesh (since retired) and the Chief Epigraphist and his team of officers are all sparing no pains to get through this publication work. Even if the Annual Report number and the year of collection of the inscriptions were to be followed, an updated Topographical Index and a cross-referencing will be very helpful. The Topographical Index compiled by Shri C.R. Krishnamacharlu at the instance of Mr. F. J. Richards, a Scholar-Civilian of the Madras Province, stops with 1938. Since then an updated Topographical Index has been published upto 1972. There is need for bringing it up to date.

Alongside I would suggest a Topographical Index of published inscriptions can also be a great aid to facilitate the study of the relevant epigraphs in juxtaposition with the



period and tract of occurrence. I have so far, dealt with the responsibilities of the epigraphists.

The old published volumes can also be updated, revising earlier texts and translations with the later knowledge and understanding since built up; so that the errors in the pioneering work can be set right. This is the debt the present owes to the past. I had occasion to feel this need while studying the texts of inscriptions and their translations by that great and precise scholar Hultsch who edited *SI* Volume I and Volume II.

I now turn to the wider range of scholarship who at once depend on and foster epigraphic work. To take note of the occurrence of words and ascertain their contemporary meaning they had, is a truly exciting and rewarding pursuit of lexicography. In fact a fully documented epigraphical glossary can be prepared, citing passages and the contexts in epigraphs where words have been assigned a specific denotation. I am dealing with this subject in greater detail in my next lecture. My purpose in referring to it here is to point out without such scaffolding, the structure of the historical reconstruction cannot be undertaken.

I am aware that the ICHR has undertaken a pilot preparation of glossary of Epigraphical Terms. For one thing, it is confined to published inscriptions only. Even because of the back log in the publication of inscriptions extending to over 80 years, the available *corpus* is restricted. Secondly it may envelop all the languages.

I would consider that glossaries should be prepared for the epigraphical terms language-wise. The large volume of Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada and Telugu inscriptions will warrant it. Many Tamil Terms are not mere "Tadbhava" of Sanskrit Terms. They are local usages and have denotation.

I would pose this work as eminently suited for being undertaken simultaneously by institutions, like Annamalai University which have a strong research and language base.

A second aspect to which I wish to refer is the methodology to be applied for the study of the data in epigraphs. As I have already stated the operative portion of the epigraphs are invaluable source material for reconstructing the economic and social history of our land, provided they could be made 'to speak'. Various modes have been adopted. I may, straight away, say that *a priori* approach is fatal to such studies and we should look to the epigraphs not for what we wish them to say but for what they meant to the subscribers of the documents.

The use of a computer and mechanical data processing has been advocated. This has the merit of objectivity, being an external process. By the same token they are circumscribed by the faculty, and memory of the processing unit. Care should be taken to feed into such processing what meaningful compilation and analysis such computer-data processing are capable of. The whole effort at objectivity will be defeated if a subjective vitiation occurs *ab initio* either in the nature or form of feed of data into it. The analysis can only give the result of what material we feed into it. We get the fruits from the seeds and cannot 'gather figs from thistles and grapes from thorns'. We should not also feed them in such a way as to get the result that we wish to have. That will be polluting the fount.

Hence, while I do not rule out the applicability of applied mechanical techniques, I state it should be done with care and could be done only selectively, and by a careful choice of the range of data, the inputs wherein such processing can be attempted. As far as possible such feed

and processing should be homogenous, self-contained and without much complexity, and importation of extraneous ideas but glued to the original sources and what they convey. To ignore the inherent limitations or to typify factors or phenomena which are far varied, far more complex, and unintelligible is to invite self defeat in investigation. It could be as inappropriate and unproductive in its results as an electro-cardiograph would be for purposes of Electro encephalograph. Indeed instances of the use of the computer, without first determining the areas of their application has been fraught with typifying what is not yet typifiable, or what could be arrived at even without such computerisation. It could prove to be too costly a method for arriving at too simple or simplistic conclusions, which in any way could be arrived at by mere simpler empirical methods.

I confess I have been brought up in a *a posteriori* school. But my adopting it is not by accident of upbringing but by choice and conviction. I would swear by the data and nothing but the data. No pains are too great to unravel the mystery of the written word. It is not what we comprehend but what was comprehended by the subscribers, to repeat, that is material to the historian. But I am quite receptive to the new historiographical means and mechanics including computers, sampling analysis and the like provided the data-base could lend themselves for applying such mechanics and means and leading to meaningful results.

My own application of similar techniques but within limits have been very satisfying in that they have led to some new results and trends not hitherto apparent or taken note of. By all means let a historiographer be innovative, but he cannot be innovative for its own sake. His utility lies in the sustainability and validity of the end-results, for promotion of knowledge and further elucidating the

terms and meaning of epigraphical texts related to the times to which they belong and intelligible not only to us but as they would have been to the subscribers of the documents.

There are many a problem that still remain unresolved. For instance, the chronology of the Pāṇḍyas and the use of the term *edirāumāṇḍu* is one such. A working hypothesis adding the numerals before and after this phrase has been adopted. Whether it is the correct approach still remains to be established.

A number of numerals appear - 700 in Eḷunūrruvan, 1800 in Āyirattu-eṇṇūrruvan, 48,000 in Nārpaattenṇāyairavan, etc. What is the purport intended in such numerals used as proper names?

The numerals added to territorial divisions - Banavāsi - 12,000, Raṭṭapāḍi 7½ lakhs- are another aspect requiring a specific investigation to set at rest its correct import. There are several technical terms which are still awaiting final solution and interpretation.

I might refer to one topic which has not till recently attracted attention - viz. the study of place names and personal names. Thanks to the Place names Societies of India the studies on the subject are now growing. Appendix II, III, IV and V are typical case studies and inferences that can be drawn from them.<sup>12</sup>

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12. App. II: Presidential address to the 4th & 5th annual conferences of PNSI. 1984.

App. III: Some personal names from the Pandyan part of Kayal.

App. IV: Cultural contexts of personal names in South India in the Cola and Pandya Times.

We have to progress far in tackling these tasks. I trust scholars will put their heads together and help chalk out new paths to arrive at the truth and fresh modes of fulfilling the tasks.

I now turn to a few methods which will be most conducive to arrive at meaningful conclusions: First, if inscriptions are to be studied for their content-analysis it is best to preserve the locational contiguity and integrity. This enables the evidence from the inscriptions to be appreciated in its proper context and setting and sequence. In fact, very often, the interconnectedness of the transactions naturally unfold themselves and can be discerned from this grouping, and concentration. The identity of the donor occurring in the transactions, and the members of the family contributing endowments to a shrine or deity set up by their ancestors can be established.<sup>13</sup>

Again, from the location of lands owned by the members of the same family, or of the same nativity, the complexion of the population and the nativity of the residents of the township and their manner of holding can be recaptured.

To cite a third instance, from the signatures of those who attested the documents it will be possible to verify the constituents of the local bodies, the Ur, the Sabha or the Nagaram, and the Nadu. Where such evidence is available for a series of consecutive years the tenure of the individuals can also be inferred. The names of important royal officials in charge of an institution or township in whose presence the transactions were completed are also available.<sup>14</sup> These

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13. Please see the author's "Studies in the history of ancient Townships of Pudukkottai" - Madras Institute of Epigraphy (1982).

14. Ibid

aspects, I repeat, because of their significance. I stress that it is essential the inscriptions should be studied in their entirety, preserving their locational integrity.

It is important to remember that the Cōḷa and the Pāndya systems of village accounts and of the communications of royal orders were highly evolved and complex.

For instance, two kinds of land measurements were adopted—the area or linear measurement (Virivu or Parappu) particularly where the lands were not graded and assigned *Tarams*. The other is *Maḍakku Mā* (which seems to be a standard measurement folding up the *Tarams* and the extents of land under each *Taram*). This presupposes that the lands were graded on the basis of the assessment they bore.<sup>15</sup>

Even copies of the whole village accounts conforming to the integrity of tenure of the grant-village, are available with minutest details of the measurements of individual parcels of lands, and where the lands are not divided by metes and bounds, the respective shares of the institutions owning such lands in a composite tenure village. Rarely we come across the whole *Olugu* account also of the villages.<sup>16</sup> Together with the boundary description of lands, these details should help reconstruct the pattern of agrarian holdings, and the layout of the fields. A location sketch of even the villages for which full details are available can be reconstructed.

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15. Please see "The land grants and agrarian reactions" - pp. 103 to 126. Also Dr. Y. Subbarayalu - "Classification of land and assessment of land tax in early medieval Tamil Nadu" -

Proceedings of IHC XXXVIII-Session 1977 - pp. 341-346

16. Pl. see the author's paper 'A Cola Village account reconstructed' in Sr. S.R. Rao's Felicitation Volume.

The details of the agrarian economy can also be analysed with the data culled from the inscriptions where they are available in large numbers as from Śrīraṅgam, Chidambaram, and Kuṭumiyaṁalai. Also the changes that occurred in prices, in wages, or in interest rates, though rare could be brought out by this method preserving the authenticity of evidence.

The inscriptions bring out different tiers of tenurial structure, and also the incidence of the levies and services. In the later Cōḷa period these tenurial and sub-tenurial obligations have undergone considerable changes, and attempts have been made to stabilise them both by the community as well as by the affected parties and even the king had to intervene. Very often the ultimate remedy of abandoning the field, and cultivation, and migration are in evidence. A sure method of getting at an idea of the intensity of distress is to patiently index location-wise and chronologically these occurrences. The impression is irresistible that there was a skewed distribution of yield.

The third aspect of the content analysis of inscriptions relates to the subscribing part. Very often royal commands are attested by a number of officials. A Chronological arrangement of these occurrences can help establish the identity and continuity of the personnel and their movements can also be traced, if we index the topographical occurrence of the inscriptions where their names occur, taking care to see that the full identity of the names are preserved together with their nativity, their parentage, personal name and titles.

A concordance of Cola names has also been attempted.<sup>7</sup> The value of these proper names for reconstructing the micro-

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17. "A Concordance of the names in the Cola inscriptions"  
N. Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu and Toru Matsui (Sarvodaya Ilakkiya Pannai, Madurai, 1978 - Vols. I & II.

history and the regional history of the tract should not be under-estimated.

I should now turn to an important aspect - the approach or the methodology that can be applied for this content - analysis:

It is pertinent to examine the possible approaches made to economic and social history in recent times: First is the approach from Marxist theory. For one thing it is now accepted by Marxists themselves that the knowledge of Indian historical facts available to Marx were inherently limited:<sup>18</sup> His own brilliant theoretical projections - or predictions - were rooted in his appreciation of the contemporary situation.

Secondly, it shares the same point of criticism as any other *a priori* school, such as a recent attempt made to graft an exotic sociological model to the Cola monarchy and peasant society.<sup>19</sup>

An *a priori* approach can only lead to an *a priori* conclusion. For the consequent is the antecedent revealed and the antecedent is the consequent concealed. It is a classic example of the fallacy of PETITIO PRINCIPI or alternatively of the logical fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.

The use of sampling or statistical data analysis has been attempted. This is an improvement over the former. But

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18. Pl. see, for eg. Dr. Kosambi's "An Introduction to the Study of Indian History" - Chapter I. Also based on a personal conversation with Prof. Hiren Mukerjee.
  19. The Peasant States and Society - Burton Steins (OUP) Please also see the review of the book by Dr. R. Champakalakshmi - JESH, XVIII-Nos. 3 and 4 pp. 415-6. Also D.N. Jha's "Indus Valley to Mekong Delta" - Ed. N. Karashima (1985).



it has to be selectively applied to areas where the data can lend themselves for such analysis, and should not be applied indiscriminately or where the base is inadequate. Conclusions like all Brahmadeya villages had individual holdings and all Urs had common holdings are intrinsically inconsistent with facts of evidence <sup>20</sup> There are areas, - for e.g. what is the proportion of land-revenue remissions granted by the king *per se* among the totality of land grants, and to what extent it was only fractional - where statistical or computer analysis can give a clinching response. The issue is straight; the data is self-contained, and mono-type and there is no vitiation possible provided care is taken to have the geographical and time spread of the data base sufficiently wide, representative, localised and periodised.

I have completed a "Historical Geography of the Pandyan Kingdom" which I undertook as part of my studies with the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship. This is a subject which can lend itself for computerisation though I adopted mechanical means of indexing. As a result, I could identify the townships, the nadus or valanadus in which they were situated, the spread of every one of the nāḍu, Vaḷanāḍu. I could map out these areas indicating the few changes that fanned over a period of time. This work is being published by the Madras University shortly.

The importance of this study lies not only in what is but what it leads to. Based on the identification of the places, the nativity of the royal officials, the intensity of the nativity of these officials can be brought out. This is good case for applying computerisation.

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20. Pl. see author's critique of the methodology in "Allur and Isanamangalam Revisited" in "Svasti Sri" (1984) - Dr. Chhabra Felicitation Volume - pp. 25-55.

The methodology of the Annals School of France is by far the most comprehensive, circumspect and satisfying. It is a combination of all the different scientific, technological, statistical and even computerised data analysis. But it uses them as tools and the human mind, with all its intellectual, analytical, and even intuitive understanding and power are brought to bear upon the data-processing. Nuances are not ignored while broad generalisations are evolved. Detail is not lost in the totality of the historical experience. Individual is not sacrificed in the history of society and *vice versa*. Above all, the travails of the human mind and its economic motivation are interpreted in conjunction with its other impulses and reflexes. It enables economic life to be interpreted wholesomely and in whole. The force of the "Longue duree"<sup>21</sup> is clearly in evidence.

The truth is life is complex, and the human mind even curiously. The task of the historian is to divine from the known part-facts what could have been the whole and take a leap into the unknown.<sup>22</sup>

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21. French Studies in History - Vol. I - Maurice Aymaud Harbans Mukhia (Orient Longman) 1988.

22. The observations of Prof. Sastri may be recalled: "History" remarked Prof. Nilakanta Sastri, "is severely scientific as well as genuinely artistic. The historian has to make sure of facts by patient investigation and close analysis, and then" by the light of imagination and the living touch of sympathy' to make clear the significance of these facts to himself and to his generation. The pursuit of facts, simple as it may appear, is an arduous task. It is essential not only that each fact is correctly discovered and set forth. But that no relevant fact is overlooked. The historian must be content to go where his facts lend him with detachment".

p. 16 "The Study of South Indian History" - Inaugural lecture by Prof. K. A. N. Sastri (Journal of the Madras University).

What has been stated above is only to caution against abject dependence on any one methodology, or mechanism or mechanical process or the tendency to argue from effect to cause. It is also necessary to enter the caveat that vistas of investigation are only means to an end and the end lies far more distant. The lesser the quantum for, and the status of investigation or the area covered by it, the remoter is the whole and the end. A lack of realisation of this investigational inadequacy could at once produce disconcerting or awry results and be a pointer to the necessity for the fullness of investigation. A recent publication by an internationally reputed University (so far as the economic history of the medieval period is concerned) in relation to South India could amply bear out this observation. A string of studies however thorough, cannot be a history much less so if they are subjective and segmental.

To sum up, the contents of the inscriptions are varied but in the nature of these documents there is scope for drawing meaningful conclusions from the variety and volume of the data that can be gathered. There is thus ample scope for content-analysis of inscriptions.

The content-analysis requires a scientific mind, and an objective approach. No *a priori* assumptions can lead to reliable results. It requires a wide range of studies, knowledge of contemporary usages and nuances of meaning of terms. An inductive process of gathering the occurrences of the terms that occur to determine with reference to the context in which they occur, their definite import, or content should alone help. Sometimes even a single occurrence can light up the path of investigation and lead to specific results. The most useful method of indexing the evidence is to preserve locational identity and contiguity and chronological sequence. Reliance on the internal evidence is apt to lead to authentic conclusions,

and by applying the methods indicated we see the life of a past age steadily and whole.

Before I conclude, I would commend to the Scholars in this renowned University that they may consider preparing the following aids for Scholarship :

- (i) Standard dictionary of abbreviations and declensions found in inscriptions - numerals and revenue terms.
  - (ii) A Topo index of published inscriptions (updating the work done by Sri C R. Krishnamachariar upto 1938).
  - (iii) Preparation of a glossary of Epigraphical Terms in Tamil inscriptions -
- (b) with citations in support.

I trust the many-faceted disciplines in this University will find these items of work rewarding. These will contribute to the further intensive work that needs to be done in epigraphical and historical research.

# **Transition from Ancient to Medieval Period - Problems of Economic and Social Organisation : Problems Identifiable in South Indian History**

**R. TIRUMALAI**

The object of this paper is to set out some problems of economic and social organisation that can be related to the transition from the ancient to the medieval period in South Indian history. The term "South India" denotes the tract south of the Vindhya.

It has to be prefaced that the social and economic history of the tract has not been fully worked out. Facets of the subject have received attention and scholarly treatment. But an integrated and well-documented social and economic history is still to be framed for which the necessary spadework of regional studies and research are now being undertaken. Both with reference to such studies and more particularly drawing from my exposure to the original and unpublished epigraphic data the problems that stand out are picked out and dealt with below.

At the threshold the question arises what is the time-frame that marks the transition from the ancient to the medieval. There can be no clear-cut division of periods of time in the life of the community and its organisation. Every age in history is an age of transition. For life and activity of man spin "down the ringing grooves of change" and they "spin for ever," as the Victorian poet put it.

Periodisation itself is only a convenient aid serves the purpose of time-marks in the pages of continuous human history. For purposes of analysis, however, some criteria have to be adopted. They can be evolved as follows

- (i) Is there any distinct change in the mode of organisation?
- (ii) Is there any change in the quality of life?
- (iii) Are there any distinct differences in the type of social and economic activity and organisation as between the earlier age and age that follows?
- (iv) Are there any changes in values and the spirit of the age?

If we apply these tests to South Indian History perhaps A.D. 1200-A.D. 1250 could more or less, presage the trends that gathered form and force later.

First, it marked the end of the Colas in the South. The Pandyas were indeed rising; they held on to the hegemony till the end of the 14th century, but even earlier there were signs of their structure and cohesion cracking.

Further north the Calukyas of Kalyani who had held the Western half of the Deccan were bowing out of their supremacy by A.D. 1200. The Eastern Calukyas had already become merged with the Cōlas with the accession of Kulottungā-I to the cola throne. The thirteenth century was the age of four kingdoms - the Pāṇḍyas of the Second Empire, the Hoyslas (A.D. 1022 - 1342), the Kakatiyas of Warangal (from A.D. 1000 - 1326) and the Yadavas of Devagiri.<sup>1</sup> In the first few decades of the 14th century all

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1. Please see "The History of South India" - by Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Chap. X, Oxford University Press, 1977 Edn.

the kingdoms were raided by Malik Kafur and were over-powered by his army. They raided repeatedly for plunder and booty.

In between, the mid 13th century, say A.D. 1250 marked the end of the two great dynasties, the Colas and the Calukyas and the disintegration of both the Empires whose territory was shared now by the four Kingdoms.

Secondly, the quality of life appears to have changed into a more complex and pre-industrial state of economy. Manufactures, the growth of urban centres, and inter-regional trade, and commerce, and the arrivals of the Arab and Gulf merchants to pick up the commerce of the Southern Seas had all marked this period of transition. The observations of Marco Polo would confirm this situation.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, an imperceptible change is coming over the tract especially in the social and economic activity and organisation. The virile township community and organisation was visibly tending to become a shade weaker though they still survived for a long time thereafter.<sup>3</sup>

Land-ownership and occupancy were changing hands visibly and widely. Displacement of earlier occupants was resisted, and regulated.<sup>4</sup> Land-dues had become more rigorous,

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2. Please see Foreign Notices, by Prof. K.A.N. Sastri, pp. 161 - 172, 1972 (Madras University Publication)

3. See for e.g., the results of the study of the Townships of Pudukottai, by the author - pp. 192-197 and p. 281 - "Studies in Ancient Townships of Pudukottai" (Tamil Nadu State Department Archaeology Publication - 1981).

4. South Indian History and Society, by Prof. N. Koroshima (OUP). pp. 29-30, Please see for a further elaboration of this point the author's forthcoming publication "Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions".

indeterminate, and vexatious. There were visible signs of Chiefs and Nobles and Scions of the Royal family enlarging their holdings.<sup>5</sup> Social structure and classifications were becoming at once more rigid and flexible. A distinct sense of what is high and low among social groups and functional basis was being felt, and a clamour for social elevation was noticeable. The society had to accommodate such demands for its own survival.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, religious and theological schisms had gained strength - between Saivism and Vaisnavism already, and later even within Saivism and Vaisnavism among different theological adherents and sects.<sup>7</sup> New forms of religious practices and beliefs had also been rising, some like Bhakti movement soft ones and others like Vira-Saivism more virulent and challenging.

For all these reasons if any dividing line were to be drawn to mark the transition from the ancient to the medieval it could be placed in the middle of the 13th century or to be specific about A.D. 1250.

The problems pertaining to the Social organisation in the period of transition have been dealt with by many scholars. I need only recapitulate the distinctive attributes of the transition problems —

- (1) The growth of schisms and their institutionalisation.
- (2) The multiplication of several sects.

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5. Please see the Chapter on Burden of Land-dues: for e.g., in the Pudukottai Studies, op. cit. p. 350.

6. The section on Social Disputes "Pudukottai Studies". op. cit, pp. 299 - 302.

7. Please see for e.g., the Chapter on "Tirumayyam" in Pudukottai Studies, op. cit.



- (3) The spread of the humane, spirit of Bhakti, and Vaisnavism and with it, the Visistadvaita doctrine and the Madhva concept of Dualism.
- (4) The sectarian differences getting accentuated into Vadagalai and Tengalai among the Vaisnavas and development of two schools of theology with differential emphasis placed on the same tenets.
- (5) The differential economic opportunities and the external influences that played up the Schism sectarian rigidities.
- (6) The rigidities of caste and the reactions thereto Social conflicts also as between the Valangai and the Idangai groups and bitter feuds they led to.
- (7) Social stratification and the growth of consciousness of what is as high and low or what was savoury and unsavoury and the clamour, for privileges and parity as between 'the high and the low' castes or professions. The community's reactions to such clamour and attempts to compose the differences in the status and privileges among them was essentially one aiming at preserving the social structure as much as possible.
- (8) Exposure to greater contact from outside - the advent of the Arabs and the Jews for trade on the West Coast, followed by the Nestorian Church, the Franciscan and the Jesuit Missions later on the East, the Pearl Fishing Coast. The trade and Commercial contacts had also led to the Hindu society becoming outward looking. Brahmin priests were notice able in Gulf to minister to the Hindu merchant community and so too Hindu merchants active in their trade, had settlements in Armenia.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Please see the "Wheels of Commerce" by Fernand Braudell (Chicago University Press)

This summing up at once serves as a recapitulation and backdrop for the identifying the economic issues of the transition period. These issues are dealt with below:

**The changes in the agrarian system and structure in the Cola and the Pandya kingdom:**

There appears to be a distinct change coming over the agrarian system and structure. Prior to the 13th century, the categories of intermediaries were the eleemosynary tenure-holders, the temples, the mathas, land-based literate, the Erahmins. Below them the inextinguishable occupants were being increasingly inducted. So long as the stipulated fixed demand (Vadakkadan) on land or the scale of rent at rates varying with the type of the crops (Varisai) was paid to the Devadana (Temple) or Brahmadeya holder, the tenant had the status of an occupant as well, immutable and free to enjoy the residual share, though the proportion as between the two was skewed.<sup>9</sup>

In the dominion of the Western Calukyaś and even the Eastern though similar grants were made, the hold of the chieftains of Mandalesvaras and the officers under them was the greater. Perhaps this distinction is overdrawn to distinguish the tracts. But, by the 13th century the growth of chieftains and larger – landholders was noticeably on the increase. They cannot be strictly called “feudal” in the western sense. They were more in the nature of larger ‘estate – holders’ sometimes having bonded labour (*Adimai*) of men and women going along with the estates, liable to be sold or inherited. The later Colas had links with the Andhra tract and Western Deccan like Kulottunga – I and

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9. For a detailed account of these sub-Tenures, please see the Chapter on the subject (pp. 199–269), of Pudukottai Studies, op. cit.

Kulottunga - III respectively. Could it be that the influence of the system of organisation and its pattern in the West and the North had permeated down South? The rapid decline of the authority of the Cola monarchs accelerated the change in the agrarian pattern. The mobilisation of resources in men and provisions for the aggressive campaigns launched by some of the Pandyan rulers like Maravarman Sundara - I, Jaṭā-Vīra Pāṇḍya - I and Suṇḍara - I could have also had the same effect. Anyway by the mid - 13th century this change of pattern was distinctly noticeable.

Secondly, a sea-change was coming over the land-holding, and occupancy structure. The evidence is the greater and more striking so far as the Cola and the Pandya kingdoms are concerned and also relating to that segment of land-occupancy that pertains to the temple-grants, and grants to Brahmins. Even in early Cola times early in the 10th century, alienation of the lands granted for maintaining temples was noticed and individual cases were enquired into and remedied.<sup>10</sup> Rajaraja-I (A.D. 985-1016) prohibited such alienations altogether on pain of resumption of alienated lands.<sup>11</sup> But ever since the time of Rajadhiraja - I (1018-54), the distress conditions were increasingly surfacing, and the burden of land-dues too were tending to reach the breaking point. By the time of Rajaraja-III even the favoured category of landholders and occupants, including the temples and the Brahmadeyas had no means to settle their land-dues obligations other than by selling their holdings. New people from the more fertile areas south of the Cauvery where the density of holding should have been far higher, even grabbed lands to the north of the Coleroon, taking advantage of the distress of the occupants there. The

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10. For e.g., in Sucindram, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, p. 71.

11. S.I.I., Vol. V, No. 1409 - Karuntattangudi.

townships and the King (Rajaraja-III) had to prohibit such acquisitions by those other than the prior occupants.<sup>12</sup>

The change in the pattern of land holdings had become Curiouser. There was at once a lesser number of intermediaries and also a larger number or tiers of people intervening between the actual tiller cultivator of the soil and the estate-holders. The growth of proprietary estates – by the scions of the royal families, chieftains who acquired political authority by the power of their muscle and those who conquered territories for the king and later, assumed independent control over the tract – who were a class of rentiers or of the state share of the land – yield was on the increase.<sup>13</sup>

The impact of these changes could not but be felt by the agricultural community, and the cultivators. In the 13th century there was a visible activity and effort in two directions – first, to define the relationship between the king's men and the occupants of the land. The effort was, as far as possible, to contain the level of land demand at the *status quo ante*. Secondly, to make agreed arrangements defining the obligations of the tenants and the cultivators to the occupants and to the king's men. The result was sub-tenorial obligations had become at once the more defined and complex.<sup>14</sup>

There was, however, a positive side of the economic picture. Throughout the 300 years from A.D. 1000, with the progressive expansion of the Empires, migration of population

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12. Pl. see the forthcoming publication on "Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Cola and Pandya Times" by the author.
  13. pp. 192-197 and 281 of Pudukottai Studies by the Author, op. cit.
  14. For details, the author's forthcoming publication on "Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions" may be referred to.

from the Andhra country down South, and *vice-versa* from Malayala (Kerala and Karnataka) down South, and *vice versa* had occurred. The tradition that Ramanuja took with him a number of his followers from the lower Cauvery region to the Hoysala country would also corroborate such migration. Such new settlements wherever formed, as in the Vaigai basin and in Tambraparni and upper Cauvery and even in rainfed tracts like Cuddapah district had led to extension of cultivation. Reclamation of lands damaged by floods or sandcast was also undertaken with great vigour. The quantum of production should also have risen even if per unit yield had not. There are distinct indications to show that paddy was cheaper, at any rate available in larger quantities in the later Cola times than ever in the heyday of the Empire from the time of Rajaraja-I to Virarajendra's reign (A.D. 985-1070).<sup>15</sup>

The cropping pattern had also diversified, millets, cotton, and other dry-crop varieties were grown with rain water. Sugarcane, plantain, and arecanuts were consciously fostered. A graded system of levy with a limited moratorium so that in a period of 4 to 5 years the full assessment rate could be reached was adopted to help increased cultivation of these favoured crops. Similarly, increment remission were granted in assessing lands which were newly reclaimed and brought under cultivation.

Under the Rayas of Vijayanagar, particularly (after the advent of the Portuguese) new crops like tobacco and chillies were cultivated. Horticulture and mangoes and citric fruits were grown more extensively and their use in temples is

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15. Pl. see appendix-V to the author's study of "Wages, Prices and Rentals in Land Reclamation of Srirangam Devadana Lands" - Journal of Epigraphic Society of India, XI pp. 65-87.

attested as at Tirumalai-Tirupati, the favoured deity of the Rayas of Vijayanagar.

In the wake of the Cola - Calukya empires ebbing out of existence, and the rise of the four kingdoms, greater artistic activity in temple-building, sculpture, wood-work, and other manufactures had been given a further fillip instead of any abating of patronage. The pre-industrial state of manufacture was more widespread. Perhaps the largest extant collection of handicrafts and metal-ware, especially of the luxury items and objects of pleasure needed for the court and the temple, and the nobility could be traced in their beginnings to this period. Handloom, dyed, and hand-printed patterns and designs particularly became widespread and each locality was a byword for a particular specialisation of a variety. At the same time there seems to have been a conscious prohibition of the artisans Commingling (Udan Kuttam) together.<sup>16</sup> This might partly be a rebuff to the growing status consciousness and collective attempts to secure privileges.

Expansion of overseas trade had also received a fillip, — both on the west and the east. The influence of Arab merchants in native courts and of the early Europeans could be noticed. Natives too were getting converted as in the Tirunelveli Coast, but they still retained their old Hindu names couple them with the prosletysed names they acquired.<sup>17</sup>

The available evidence meagre as it is, seems to indicate that while during the hey-day of the Cola period a favourable balance of trade was maintained with China and the Far-East, in the post-13th century the balance of trade was adverse to

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16. From the unpublished inscriptions collected by the author.

17. Please see the Tombstone Inscriptions at Kayalpatnam, for e.g., ARE Nos. D. 374-91 of 1949-59; D. 306-19 of 1976-7.

South India. This could be attributed to the stringent measures China took to prohibit the outflow of gold and a whole gamut of import obligations from licensing to State Trading. The insatiable demand for horse, coupled with their poor upkeep had also led to the gold-drain.<sup>18</sup> This trend got reversed with the advent of the Portuguese and the flow of gold and precious metal from the New World, which enabled Vijayanagar to strike coins in gold in a larger measure and a level of wealth which led to dissipation, feud, and inter-kingdom rivalry and decline. There was more of currency coming into use, and the land demand was expressed in terms of currency than of grain.

These significant trends undoubtedly raised problems not hitherto faced by the people in the tract. The transition period marked a change of the Society from the comparatively static to a dynamic State. The predominantly agrarian economy was tending to become multi-faced. Money was coming to have its regime, relegating the grain. There were new impulses, influences coming from without which were working for a transformation of the society and the economy from a comparatively long held stability into one of perceptible changes from within and without.

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18. Please see the author's paper on "Trade and Commerce in South India" read at the Seminar in Delhi in 1983 and pending publication by the University of Philadelphia.

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

R. TIRUMALAI

I am deeply sensible of the great honour you have done me to be the General President of this session of the Place Names Society of India. When my scholarly colleagues suggested to me that I should join the Society as one of its life-members, I had no hesitation in doing so because the work being undertaken by the Society is of a pioneer character. It has also a great impact on the historical investigations, especially of the regional history and of historical topography.

Mysore has been a pioneer in many spheres in the course of its history. Karnataka has now stolen a march over other states in recognising the importance of these studies and the need for investigating on a proper, scientific and organised basis the place-names and the sociological data they can bring out. I must compliment the enthusiastic scholars of Karnataka who have given a lead to the country. In fact, their enthusiasm is infectious, and the attraction for the subject is catching up all over the country.

To me it is of intense personal appeal. As you might be aware, I am engaged in an intensive study of townships, region by region, in South India, with a view to bring out the social, and even more, the economic history of the tract in detail viewing these vistas of investigation through the integrated life and structure of the community in its most natural location, and natural forms of organised behaviour.



The place-names have a great fascination for this type of study and, in return, the study would throw a flood-light on the location, the origin of the place names and how they got changed or transformed over the ages, not to speak of their getting corrupted.

Rājarājapuram has several corrupt forms - Rārāpuram (which was adopted even in inscriptions for that matter), Rādhāpuram (in Tirunelveli Dt.), Dhārāpuram (in Coimbatore Dt.), and Dharāsuram (Tanjavur Dt.), and Dhadapuram (Dharmapuri Dt.), Kaliyeyamaṅgalam (in Tirunelveli Dt.) had been variously misspelt as Kalisēkharamaṅgalam, Kalikēsarimaṅgalam, Kulasēkharamaṅgalam and its current form is Kari-Śūḷandamaṅgalam. Fertile folk imagination also weaves stories around such corrupt forms of names, which at once invest those latter forms with a mythological credibility and bury the historic and authentic names and origins of townships fathoms deep. What folk-lore creates as pleasant diversions, the Sthalapurāṇas, in conventional forms of prosody and presentation, embellish with a whole set of supernatural superimpositions and complete outfit of place-trees, place-water sources, and the heroes, saints, divinations and minor gods of the pantheon.

Their lack of credibility for history often gets compensated by the poetic fancy and the wondrous elements of the supernatural that can appeal to a child, to the devout, the lover of folk-creativity. Where poetic flashes adorn the theme, there could even be a "willing suspension of disbelief" which to Coleridge, constituted poetic faith.

Charming as some of the stories are, they often charm us away from the authentic and true history of the places. The similarity of the stories and the legends also should make them suspect for a scientific historian. The kings and the heroes who come across the stage in the legends are more

often products of poetic fancy than historical figures. But a nuclear element of history, an embryo of a dim glimmering historical fact could still, sometimes, have been preserved in such legends. We have to rub the ore, cut the diamond and get at the probable from the providential, the human from the supernatural, and the fact from the fancy or even the fantasy.

But, by and large, the place-names in South India, — I can speak with personal authority of Tamil Nadu, have maintained a remarkable stability and continuity. I say this not merely based on the intensive epigraphical data that can be mustered but also on my field experience in revenue settlement all over the Composite State of Madras (as it then was), including some tracts which are now part of Karnataka.

You will pardon me if I draw illustrations mainly from my field experience in the tracts and knowledge of South Indian Epigraphy with which I have had intimate contact. I can straight away make three or four main points of interest based on this duality of evidence. First, place-name endings and suffixes reflect the geo-physical features of the tract. As you are aware, the Tamil classics classify—rather typify—the terrain into five divisions—Kuruñji (the hilly or mountainous tract); Marudam (the cultivated plains with well—exploited water sources); Mullai, (the pastoral tract); the Neidal (the sea-side littoral) and Pālai, (the arid desert tract). The place-names of each tract could have a distinct feature—such as Kuruchchi in Kuruñji, Paṭṭaṇam in Neidal, and Ur in the Marudam tract. In fact, the ūr is defined in a 16th century Tamil lexicon, Chūlāmani Nigandu as “the habitat surrounded by water and watered fields”. — “Nir paṇṇai śūlūr grāmam”. Of course, we should not foster a rigidity on such classifications and place-name characteristics. The Tamil grammarian would hasten to condone the overlap or

the hybrid or mongrel place-names and cover up tract-traits variations in literature as permissible poetic fallacy (Tiṇai-mayakkam).<sup>1</sup> One can argue from the coincidence of the tract and the place-name for their consistency, but one should not attempt to argue from the place-name alone the distinctive or typical tracts. That is to say, where a typified place-name occurs in a tract to which the place-name suffix is characteristically attributed the inference that this place is located in a typified tract is valid. When however, merely because the place-name suffix is of a type, it cannot postulate the typified tract to which such suffixes are attributed. While a Brahmadēya can have a *mangalam* suffix, a place with a *mangalam* suffix, by itself, need not be a Brahmadēya. A place like Nāgapattāṇa located in the Neidal tract could be necessarily a seaport; *pattana* suffix occurring elsewhere need not be on a littoral location. In other words, an inference purely based on the place-name suffix could be as wide off the mark as Srirāṅga-pattāṇa from the sea. The latter would be an example of the logical fallacy of "post hoc ergo propter hoc".

Many of the names have still survived almost from the dawn of history—Kumari, Korkai, Kāyal, Tonḍi, Puhār, Musiri, Viḷiṇjam, Chandragiri, Thaṅjāvūr, Madurai, Taḷakkāḍ and a host of others. If a medieval traveller who had visited these places were to come to life again, and were to have a memory, he could easily locate and identify them.

This continuity has persisted almost from the earliest times, in general, to the end of the 16th or 17th century. The names of the Nāḍus or Kūṟams, the territorial divisions,

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1. Please see Prof. K.A.N. Sastri's, "The Sangam Literature"—Its cults and cultures (1972) Swathi Publications, Madras—for further details.

and the principal townships after which they were sometimes named, have been remarkably continuing almost till the advent of the British. This is a generalised statement which necessarily should admit of exceptions or variations. But this helps. The student of history and the historian are, in this respect at least, singularly fortunate to have this great facility. My intensive studies of the regions made so far can testify to this fact. The South Pudukōṭṭai / Cheṭṭināḍ tract was even in the days of the native State till 1947 was known as Kāna-nāḍu; and it is perpetuated in the place-name "Kānāḍu Kāthān", Tirunelveli is referred to in the 18th century documents as located in "Kilavēmbu-nāḍu", Aramanai - Siruvayal, Mithilaipatti (in Rāmnāḍ) where Dr. U. Ve. Swaminatha Ayer found a number of manuscripts even in his time was known to be in Mīlalai Kūrṇam. The villages in south-western part of Śivagaṅgā were described as located in Tirukkānappēr Kūrṇam, even in Zamindari documents of the last century. So also Alvārtirunagari and its adjoining area are even now in Vaishṇavite literature and orthodox references referred to as "Tiru-vaḷudinaḍu".

The South-Eastern portion of Kanykāumari is even today known as "Nāñjil Nāḍu"; a name that occurs in the early Pāṇḍya and Chōḷa inscriptions.

Thirdly, even within living memory, it was the practice in conservative households to prefix the place of their original nativity, Vaṅgipuram, Kōrōvi, Kaḍāmbi, or Viriñchipuram, Māḍabūsi, Gōmaṭam, Karāmbi, Cheṭṭu, Naḍāttūr, Muḍumbai, or similar names to their proper names, and they are printed in formal documents like marriage invitations or obituary intimations. Of course, the persons would be residing far away and would hardly have any roots. But the persistence of these original places of nativity to a student of epigraphy, immediately

helps correlate the distributive occurrence of such place-names in the inscriptions and recapture the sociological trends of movement of families to trace their migration and fortunes in the course of history.

Mobility, especially of the Brahmin literati and of the agricultural people seeking pastures (Metaphorically!) new, and in river-fed tracts has been evidenced by the mass of data available in the South Indian inscriptions. The occurrence of the place-names, of family nativity and origin and the lingering vestiges of these names add a live dimension to the study, and could help locate even long-lost kinship or community groups and resuscitate social linkages out of oblivion.

It might even reveal that transplants of families and communities, — I use the last word in its literal proper sense of a body of people—from one region to another, and thereafter the further movements from the new settlements to their earlier or original location, but taking with them the acquired languages and names and customs. Witness the two families of Śoḷappāḍi who were restored their original possessions at Nandalūru<sup>2</sup> or several of the 74 Bhaṭṭas who were granted in A.D. 1125—26, *bhāgas* in Maṇṇūr alias Vikramacōḷamaṅgalam in distant Nandalūru (Cuddappah dist). Some of the grantees have their original nativity prefixed (Naḍerappaḷi, Muḍumbai, Uruppuṭṭur Iruṅgaṇḍi, Cheṭlūr etc. but certain others have characteristic Tamil names like Āṭ Kōṇḍān Bhaṭṭar, Tiruvisalūr Aḍigal Ālavandār Ulagamunḍān, Veṇṇaikkūttan, Aruḷālan, Ātkoṇḍa Vili, Ponnāḷigai. A doctor, of Kāsyapa gōtra was Śōlai-arasu Bhaṭṭan<sup>3</sup>. The wheel has come full circle, The original residents of

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2. *SII*, Vol. XXIII, No. 577.

3. *SII*, Vol. XXIII, No. 579.

townships in the Andhra area—in Guntur, Krishna Nellore tracts had gone down South to the Choḷa country. They had some of them, been influenced by the rising Vaiṣṇavite persuasion associated with Nadamuri and his grandson. Alavandan and assumed names that would suggest their influence or their immediate earlier nativity (e.g., Tiruvisalur in Tanjavur Dt. or Naḍāttūr in North Arcot Dt.) in the Coḷa country. All cultural and sociological forces do not traverse one way alone. Often, they move and act bothways and in the process with accretions and alterations easily discernable.

This would immediately correct any misconception that place-names have been stay-put or have not undergone changes. The Choḷas and the Pāṇḍyas, the former even more than the latter, were smitten with the vanity of changing names wherever they could, especially in the conquered tracts and assign new names after the ruler or the scions of the Coḷa family, and after their titles which were quite a few. For example, Cēraṇmahādēvi Caturvēdi-maṅgalam was known as Nigarili Cōḷa Cāturvēdimāṅgalam and such instances could be easily multiplied. Even the names of rivers were not spared. Tāmbraṇarī was re-named as Mummuḍi Cōḷappērāru and Gaṭana as Rājarājaāppērāru. The street names (*cēris*) were also named one each after the queens, the princes, the parents or other ancestors of the ruler<sup>4</sup>.

‘The whirligig of time brings in its revenges’. The successive rulers had no qualms in changing the place-names which had been till then bearing those of their ancestors.

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4. Please see the Pages 1-3 in the Author's "*Rajendra Vinnagar*" (1980), Dept. of Archaeology, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Madras.

Thus, Teliṅgakula-kālapuram (Nārttāmalai) is dropped and the township is re-named as Kulōttuṅga Choḷa Paṭṭṇam and this, just when the glory of that ruler, Kulōttuṅga-Ill and the Cōḷa dynasty was getting eclipsed. "Kēraḷāntaka Vaḷanāḍu" gets changed to "Iraṭṭappāḍi koṇḍa Cōḷa Vaḷanāḍu"<sup>5</sup>.

It was even more to be expected that with dynastic changes, the places too should get re-named after the new ruler or dynasty. But while so doing often-times the earlier names on rather the 'baptismal' name of the settlement was retained. Kiḷanettūr called Kirtivijayālanallūr (in Paramakkuḍi Tq.) is still known by that first name, though the grandiloquent medieval appellation had not survived. Vindanūr re-named as Parākrama Pāṇḍyacaturvēdimāṅgalam, in later Pāṇḍyan times,<sup>6</sup> is still called Vindanūr, the name it had originally in a record of Rājendra Chōḷa-I<sup>7</sup>.

Often, the emigrants from the Cōḷa country down south nostalgically named their settlements after their original place of residence. A replica of several place-names in Thanjavūr district could be found among the townships founded in the early eleventh century on the banks of Gaṭana in Tirunelvēli district.<sup>8</sup>

Even a typification of the townships, based on the predominant composition of the community of residents is possible. The townships of the land-based literati, the Brahmadēyas as Caturvēdimāṅgalam, those of the merchant residents—the nagaras, with suffixes of *pura* or *partana*, the

5. Please see pp. 4 and 7 "*Studies in the History of Ancient Townships of Pudukottai*, Dept. of Archaeology, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Publication of 1981.

6. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. XV. p. 255.

7. *Annual Report of Epigraphy*, 112 of 1905.

8. "*Rajendra Vinnagar*", *op. cit.* p. 2.

**Paḍaiparru** or garrison—townships as **Paiḍaiviḍu**, and of the agriculturist townships as **ur** or **Nallūr**. It should not be understood that the townships of one variety cannot have a place-name-ending of the other: or that all **Maṅgalams** are **Brahmin** townships or all **urs** are only of the agriculturist communities. Proof always flows from the antecedent to the consequent and not *vice versa*. But the associated attributes of these types are, by and large, borne out by a study of the place-names in the Tamil Country.

From these features, it will be obvious how very inviting and rewarding the subject of place-names study could be for the historical investigator. Emanuel Roy de—Ladurie, the reputed historian of the Annals School of France has brought out how from the study of place-names and the Parish records, the history of the families, the agrarian structure and the composition of holdings and the main influences in the sociological development of the tract could be gleaned and developed<sup>9</sup>

We should therefore be clear in our minds as to what to look for in the study of place-names. Secondly, having regard to these objectives, now the methods of investigations—what are the **data** that could be collected and how to examine the **data** should be applied to be productive of results.

First, as to the objectives: The study of place-names could indicate the vicissitudes through which, in its history, a human settlement has passed. It helps identify the super-imposed layers of the occupants and ownership or possession of holdings. It could highlight the structural changes in the

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9. Please see his "*The Mind and Method of the Historian*".  
—(Harvester Press).



agrarian formations leading to the interrogation why such changes had occurred. It could also suggest and even establish the consanguinity among the settlers, their family affinities and matrimonial connections. In short, it would be a focus on the social and demographic characteristics and the changes. Time has wrought on them. This, to my mind, is an area for historical investigation, co-eval with the life of the settlement and of the section of humanity living there, which has not received the full attention it deserved.

Next as to the methods: If the subject itself is somewhat untraversed, and hence more than fascinating, the methods of investigation to be deployed could be even more exciting and satisfying. I would approach this aspect from a wider angle and the methodology I outline is essentially related to, or even rooted in historiographical techniques. They form a distinct plank in re-constructing the history of micro-regions. They could help pick out the survival from the congealed memory of the most memorable events or personality that life and the times have thrown up in distinct locations.

Firstly, many places in medieval epigraphy have had more than one name. It is often the law of survival that only one among the several lasts and becomes current. That which could survive need not necessarily be the grandiloquent. Brahmadēsams, Chaturvēdimāṅgalams, Pāppākudī, Rājagam-biram, Virapāndī, could all be the survivals in part, or half a part of the fuller or longer names that the Brahmin settlements had.

Secondly, the place-names, particularly taking after the ruler's names could occur, recur, simultaneously in several locations. Hence, the full data of territorial divisions in which the places were located should be taken into account.

For lack of these data and circumspectness mis-identifications indeed could result and have. Nothing could be more fatal than to jump to establish identity through the euphonic similarity of the names that were and those that are. Such an impressionistic and seemingly similar nomenclature could lead to momentarily tickling identification but it is a snare for the historian. A patient collection of data, the full data, of the larger territorial division and the occurrence of any riverian tract, in which the place was situated (e.g., Tēnāṟṟu ppōṟṟu Nēmam) or other permanent geo-physical feature (Kunnathūr, implying that the township was near a hillock or at its foot; or Kāṭṭūr or Kāḍēru, that it was at the foot-hills) all these should be taken into account for making a proper identification. Due allowance will have to be made for the corrupting usage in time and the shortening trends in the spoken dialect, Kāraikuḍi could become Kāyakudi, Pāgūr as Pāvūr, Rājagambira Chaturvēdimāṅgalam as Rāṅgiam.

There should be a cross-check of the place-names with the surrounding villages and confirmation should be sought. The lesser the evidence the greater the need for confirmation.

To do justice to the very interesting, but some-times puzzling task, the student has to equip himself completely with the local topographical knowledge and detail. Luckily, most of our States have well-surveyed Taluk maps, with details of canals, temples and rivers, and the permanent features marked therein. Our Survey of India map can do credit to any country, thanks to their laborious efforts over a century. As one who has spent a third of his career in the survey and revenue settlement of the Composite State of Madras, I can testify to the quality and dependability of our survey maps and excellent aid and assistance they afford to this branch of study. I confess that this complementarity

of local topographical knowledge in all its detail together with the study of epigraphical evidence have enabled me to identify distinct problems of the tract, the characteristic processes of land reclamation and settlement and above all, they could caution against any hasty attempts to typify historical phenomena from segmentary data<sup>10</sup>. I would in this context recall the repeated warnings of my Professor, the late Sri K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, against "historical averaging". To the historian, every particular is a gem and a string of such particulars a jewel, laced with scientific reasoning and consistency, which help fix the gem in its place.

There are some place-names, which are straight-forward and reveal their origin by themselves—Pallipaḍi, Haḷēbiḍu, Paṭṭadakaḷ, Nāgārjunam, Gaṅgaikoṇḍa Choḷapuram, Aivar-malai—are all invitations to the Archaeologist or the historian to dig out their past or reconstruct their life-story. Our archaeological excavations should be a great aid to the study of place-names. It has helped, as in the case of Ukkiran-kōṭṭai, the identification of an ancient and important fortress and Pāṇḍyan capital with Kaḷakkuḍi which earlier by the ensnaring euphonic similarity was mistaken by some to be Kaḷakkāḍ. There should be selective and purposive archaeological excavations oriented to further our knowledge of at least the important centres like the capital and principal settlements of ancient times.

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10. For an illustration of this applied methodology, please see the author's "Grant, Resumption and Re-grant-a Study on the Irrigation Problems of the Vaigai Basin in the 11th Century" (under publication by Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppuswami Sastri Institute, Madras) and "Allur and Isānamangalam Revisited" in *Syasti Sri*. Dr. Chabra Felicitation Volume (Agam Prakasham. 1984.)

This branch of study, if it is confined to the mere nomenclature of places or how the names came to be fastened will only be doing less than justice to the subject as a whole. Such a study will be mistaking the egg-shell for the egg. As I said, the place-names are a window or a focus through which the whole history of human settlements could be gleaned and reconstructed. If such a steady wholeness of approach is to be brought to bear on the subject, it follows that the frontiers of our investigation are ever-widening. Tank-names, (Doḍḍakere, Dvārasamudra, Peruṅḡḷam, Māḍakkūḷm); field names, channel-names are all of equal interest and provide primary data for historical investigation. A proper name at least to the student of history, is not what John Stuart Mill called a "meaningless mark". To think so is to miss the mark. The human craving to be remembered, long after he was no more, the human vanity, pardonable as it is, to associate his name with the product of his creativity are all natural. The historian is precisely at work to unravel those cravings and the creativity of man. Hence these surviving embodiments and expressions of man's longing to be remembered and vestiges of his own actions invest an intimation of immortality even on the mortals and their doings. The tanks bear the names of benefactors, we hear of the merchant groups like Annūṟṟuvar, raising tanks. Fields reclaimed and brought under the plough have the names of the reclaimer (Aruḷ-peṟṟār Kuḍikkāḍu or 'Avuḍaiyān Kuḍikkāḍu') attached to such parcels. The tenure of lands (Bhaṭṭa-vṛitti, Trishvēkam, Vaidya-vṛitti, Bhāgavata-vṛitti, Uvachechan-vayaḷ), also reveal the purpose, the village functionaries, and the organised manner of providing for them. The channels excavated, or highway laid often revealed the person at whose expense these public utilities were

created. The Pāṇḍya and the Cōḷa rulers had a weakness to name the irrigation channels and the anicuts<sup>11</sup> — a weakness, if weakness it may be called—which is as contemporary as ancient.

In fact the tradition was to name the member of the family after the benefactor-ruler who made a land-grant. I have a hunch, my own name is an unconscious homage that my ancestors had paid to Tirumalai Nāyak of Madurai, during whose reign a number of Teṅgalai Vaishṇavites migrated from Kāñchipuram via Arantāngi down south to the Tāmbra paṇi basin and settled there. Also it was the practice to grant lands or *inams* in the olden times which was survived in the *zamindari* estates to a parent who had named the child after the *zamindar*. I have had occasion to deal with a number of such “Pērsolli Mānibams”-land-grants for naming the children after the *zamindar* in Sivagaṅgā and other estates. The practice undoubtedly has had long historical precedents.

The sphere of the study for the society should naturally embrace these aspects as well, For the whole family-histories can be gleaned from such evidence.<sup>12</sup>

There is a third interesting aspect of study that could stem from the same roots the study of the nativity of the officials, the signatories to the grants besides the beneficiaries themselves. I can only speak, as at present, with first-hand knowledge of the data in Tamil inscriptions. A number of the officials from different locations or signatories to the royal

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11. Please see the author's “Study of Koil Kurvitturai Grant, Resumption and Re-grant” — M. M. Kuppaswami Sastri Commemoration Volume (under publication).

12. Please see attempts made in these lines in “Studies in Pudukottai Townships”—especially in Nārthamalai and in Tirumayyam.

order conveyed and authenticated it. It would be a fascinating study to juxtapose the nativity of these officials with the geographical location of the grants. Such a matching, done painstakingly, could help trace the rationale of the distribution of the functionaries or if there was any territorial basis for the exercise of these functions. Some townships or areas figure oftener than others. Why should this be so? Was it because royal favour had been bounteously bestowed or did some areas throw up a larger number of chieftains or generals or officials than others? What can be the factor, was there any influence of the geo-physical features, the natural handicaps of the terrain and the clime, to which they belonged and the richer and more rewarding riverine tracts attracting the distribution of such official personnel, away from the tracts from which they were drawn. These are all questions which occur to any inquiring mind and these are questions, luckily, for which there are enough data to attempt to find plausible answers from.

The persistence of some centres of nativity of such officers also would demand an explanation and need a probe.

I have attempted to pose areas for study, and also to some extent the methodologies. All that I have said underlines the need for our studies to be whole and circumspect. We should not attempt to read and interpret evidence through the slit. The study should embrace the data, the whole data and nothing but the data. It follows our epigraphists have a solemn and sacred task to provide the complete texts in all their details. The epigraphic evidence for South India, luckily, is not that scarce and is more detailed than elsewhere.

I must take this opportunity to earnestly implore with my colleagues and fellow scholars in the Epigraphical work to attempt complete transcriptions and provide full texts. I con-

less that there is no easy way in epigraphical work and research. Each inscription is more important for the substantive content which it is intended to convey in all its details and not merely for the Prasasti or meykirti part of it. The preferential interest attached in earlier times to the political history for which the meykirti part of the inscription was essential was understandable, indeed necessary. But we have outgrown that stage: as we should.

Life is larger than political history. The current trends of modern historiography is to view life steadily and view it as a whole. To do so, the epigraphist has to be charged with the essential function to provide the whole text and not ignore the substantive content, however pardonable it might have been earlier. Once the sinews of such a complete study are available, the study of place-names, of field names, of tanks and roads, and of the proper names should all be vistas for investigation, individually and inter-connectedly. Cumulatively, they help unravel the past in its widest frame and in minute detail. The study becomes co-eval with life, and our knowledge and understanding of our people becomes fuller with meaning.

I am sure the Place-Names Society would wholly endorse the comprehensive approach I have advocated and open up further vistas for investigation and compilation. To this task I would invite you all to contribute from your rich tradition and experience. I am glad that in the 3-days' sessions we have a number of papers, the product of quality and painstaking effort. I would compliment the scholars who participate in this conference and commend their example to others interested in this field. It is also a good idea to devote a whole session to discuss the place-names in Karnataka, particularly because of her rich history. It should indeed be rewarding and this should be a pace-setter for other regions.

Eventually, the results could be formulated in the form of a National Dictionary of Place-names, an area-wise compilation of field names and those of tanks and also a National Dictionary of Proper-names. This should eventually be our goal towards which the Place-Names Society and the scholars in the field are making a good beginning and a genuine effort. I notice with interest that a project on these lines dealing with place-names is underway.

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## **SOME PERSONAL NAMES FROM THE PANDYAN PORT OF KAYAL**

**R. TIRUMALAI**

“Cail” (Kayal) is a great and noble city and belongs to Ashar (Maravarman Kulasekhara who conquered all countries - (A.D. 1268 - 1308), the eldest of the five brother kings. It is at this city that all the ships touch that come from the West, as from Hormus, and from Kis and from Aden and all Arabia, laden with horses and with other things for sale And this brings a great concourse of people from the country round about and so there is great business done in this city of Cail”.<sup>1</sup>

Thus wrote Morco Polo, the Venetian traveller, visiting the Pandyan Coast towards the end of the 13th Century (Circa A.D. 1293). He also refers to the very active horse trading the Arabs were carrying on with the Pandyan kingdom. In the first half of the 16th century Sulaiman-Al-Mahri still noticed this place as the most celebrated port of the Colamandalam from ancient times and as the residence of nautical authors.<sup>2</sup>

The place is also referred to in Tamil literature in an ancient work called, “Palsandamalai”. This work is not now extant in full. But ten verses therefrom are found quoted in

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1. Foreign Notices of South India (1972) - p. 179, Edited by Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri.
  2. Foreign Notices of South India, by Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (Edn. 1972); FN. 33.

an ancient commentary which, for lack of the original name, has been christened "Kalaviyar Karikai" by the editor of the manuscript, the late Prof. Sri S. Vaiyapuri Pillai<sup>3</sup>

The work "Palsandamalai" was composed in praise of a Muhammadan chieftain who belonged to the "Anju Vannattar" residing and having sway over Vagudapuri (Kayalpatnam) in Vajra Nadu.<sup>4</sup> Vagudapuri (Kayalpatnam) appears to have had another name "Andubar".<sup>4</sup> The residents are referred to as "Sonagar", or "Yavanar", presumably referring to all who had migrated from afar from the West, i.e., from Arabia, the Persian or Gulf Coast from as far as Egypt. The verses which give these details are extracted below from the work :

"NAGUTĀ MARAI MALAL ŚŪL VĀVI ŚŪL  
VACCRANĀDAR TANGAL VAGUDĀPURI YANNA  
VĀṆUDALIR MARRAVĀR TALAIYU MIGU NĀṆ  
MALARKALUM KONMINGAL KOLLĀVIDIN  
MADUVANTOGU KĀMANAINGAṆAIYĀL  
EMADAVIDU VAKKUṆṆUMĒ". (P. 41)

Again

"IYAVANĀ RĀJAN KALUPADI TĀMUDA LENṆĀ  
VANDORĀYAN MIKUTĀNĀIYA RANJU VANNATTĀ-  
VARANJA LENRĀK-KAYAVARGAL VĀL PADI  
POLATTINAI PUNAṆ KAY KOYDU-POMPAYA-  
NVINAI VĀMPADI PŪTTADU VĒNGAIPANI  
MOLIYE". (P. 86)

3. "Kalaviyalkarikai" 1931 Tamil Lexicon Office Publication.

4. Ibid pp. 168-169.

The place is said to be the residence of Sonakar, who are bounteous :

“VĀNADU NĀṆAKKODAYĀLULAGAI  
VALARTTARULUM ŚONAGAR VĀLUM SELUMPOLIL  
SŪLNDU PĀRANAIYĀ DĀNAṆI VĀṆUDAL KAṆḌŪM  
PAGALĒ TANITTANIYĒ MĀNAMILĀDRAI TĒRUM  
PARAVAIKADĀMALAGAILNDE”. (132)

A number of inscriptions pertaining to the 13th to the 17th Century are found at Kayalpatnam, in Arabic and in Tamil.<sup>5</sup> Quite a few of them are tombstones recording the demise of the Muslims buried there. Their names as given in the inscriptions are given below (arranged chronologically).

1. ARE 378 / 1949-50 A.D. 1272 A Sailor Sayed Ahmed,  
son of Saidullah.
2. ARE 385 / 1949-50 A.D. 1468-9 Ayya Mudaliar Vali  
(K. 644) Satar Mattariya
3. ARE 384 / 1949-50 A.D. 1495-6 Sadu Nayina Sayyed  
(K. 671) Ahmed Nayinar alias  
Vira Pandya Mudaliār  
- Samal Nayina Syyed  
Ahmed Nayinar Samal  
Nayinar Shaik Ali  
Nayanar alias  
Seṇbagarāma  
Mudaliyār

- 
5. ARE 102-05(B) 1948; ARE 374-91(B) 1949-50; ARE 158(D) 1965-66; ARE 135(B) 1971-72; ARE 250-251 (B) 1977, ARE 306-319(D) 1977, “B” - Tamil; “D” Persian/Arabic.

4. ARE 379 / 1949-50    A.D. 1498    Death of Shaik Abu  
June    Bakr. Son of Ultiman  
of Cairo
  
5. ARE 386 / 1949-50    A.D. 1512-3    Nolambhādarāya  
(K. 688)    Mudaliyār Kattiyar's  
daughter Bibiyar
  
6. ARE 389 / 1959-50    A.D. 1525-26    Kosali nayinar  
(K. 701)    Mohammad Kacci  
Nayinar magalar  
Nayina Sora Mudaliyār
  
7. ARE 105 / 47-48    A.D. 1544,    Shaik Ali, son of  
16th Sept.    Venerable Wali  
Jamaluddin S/o Abdul  
Mukarram a descen-  
dant of the most  
glorious Sadr.  
Sayyid Ahmed
  
8. ARE 377 / 1949-50    A.D. 1580-81    Sekkali (Sheik Ali)  
(K. 755)    Panikkar Shaik  
Uthiman Panikkar  
Sheik Adila  
Marakkayar
  
9. ARE 102 / 1947-48    May 1581 AD    Hasan Naiyina Yousuf  
(K. 756)    Nayinar Osu (Yousuf)  
Nayinar Samal  
Nayanina Sayyad  
Ahmad Nayana-Sheik  
Abdulla Nayna-Sayad  
Ahmed Nayana alias  
Immodi Senbagarama  
Mudaliyar

10. ARE 103/47-48 . 21-5-1581      A nobleman of exalted rank, "Maulana Abdul Gaffur, son of Sayyad Ahamad son of Sheikh Abdullah son of Sayyed Ahmad son of Jamaluddin son of Yousuf son of Hasanuddin

Some of them add the name "al-M'bari" - examples are:

- (i) ARE 135/1971-72 A.D. 1496      Shaik Ali son of Jama' luddin son of Sayyad Ahmad, a servant of Jamaluddin son of Sayyid Ahmad, a descendant of al-Malasali-al Mabari Sadru-d-din Ma'bari who died on 14th March 1496.
- (ii) ARE 158/1965-66 A.D. 1550      Abdul Ghaffar son of Ali son of Jamaluddin son of Shahabuddin Sayyid Ahmed son of the first Amir Jama-luddin son of Sayyid Ahmad Sadud-din-al-Ma'bari (death: 25-6-1550 A.D.)

## Inferences:

It is seen from these epitaphs that the place was frequented by merchants from as far away as Cairo in Egypt.<sup>6</sup> Three of the deceased were sailors or Members of the sailor's family. The names of the deceased which occurs first carry with them the names of their ancestors, for say 4 or 5 or even earlier generations.

The most fascinating evidence is that some of these Muslims had still retained their Hindu names or titles, for example Sl. No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9. In some cases, the Hindu names are attributed to an ancestor, 8 places away (Sl. No. 9). In others, the nearer ancestors also retain their names (Sl. Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). The titles occurring in Pāṇḍyan inscriptions such as Noḷambādirāyar, Vīra Pāṇḍya Mudaliyār also occur. These mark a period, perhaps, of transition. The title "Mudaliyār" should perhaps signify that they were chief-merchants.

A record of A.D. 1387 (July 31st) is particularly interesting. It comes from Vīrapāṇḍyapaṭṭanam in Tiruccendur Taluk, adjacent to Kāyalpatnam. It named the Jamad Mosque (now named Magdam Mosque) in the place Cōnāḍukonḍānpaṭṭanam (Vīrapāṇḍyapaṭṭanam) as Udayamārtandanperumpaḷḷi. The Kāḍiyar of the place (the Qazi) Abuvakkar (Abubakkar) was given the title of Udayamartanda Kadiyar. The mosque was also granted the privilege of collecting  $\frac{1}{4}$  panam for 100 panam ( $\frac{1}{4}$  percent) on the total value of all exports and imports on the basis of the ruling price at the roads of the Cōnāḍukondanpattanam.<sup>7</sup>

6. ARE 379 / 1949-50; ARE 378 / 1949-50; ARE 387 / 1949-50 and ARE 391 / 1949-50.

7. ARE 311 of 1963-64.

It is in evidence that the Arabs and the Egyptians were plying a busy trade, and carrying merchandise from and to the Coromandal Coast or Ma'bar (as it was known to the contemporary travellers). The trade was almost entirely in their hands both to the east and to the west during this period from the Ma'bar coast. The ports had a good sprinkling of local merchants and traders, many of whom had embraced Islam.

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# **CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF PERSONAL NAMES IN SOUTH INDIA - IN THE COLA AND THE PANDYA COUNTRY**

**R. TIRUMALAI**

Personal names are an important source of tracing history in several aspects - family history, migration of families, the composition of the constituents of a settlement, the particular Vedic sect, Pravara, Sākha, and Gōtra, and also persuasion, Saivite, Vaisnavite, or Madhvā or other sects. Copper-plate grants giving details of the grantees, on an impressionistic basis, could reveal the predominance of particular sakhas in South India, like Rig, and Kṛṣṇa Yajur, and of Gōtras like Bhāradwāja, and Kaundinya to which they belonged. Some Gōtras are scarce like - Sadamarsana and Vādūla in the earlier periods. The computerised data of these particulars can reveal the proportionate strength of the different gotras, and the Pravaras and also their relative strength, spread and distribution among the different tracts evidenced. They could also reveal the Sūtras, and the Gōtras that have become extinct. A further interesting aspect for study could be the compilation of the Gōtras and Sūtras of those who had gone abroad, which of them predominated. "Kaundinya" appears to have been a conspicuous Gotra of the Brahmins who had gone abroad. The later day ban on voyages overseas by Brahmins appears to have but weighed lightly with them.

The personal names of the settlers in Tamil Nādu in the Pandya and the Cōla times reveal the following: Their place of nativity. They might not be actually residing at that place, but have migrated far south yet they retain place-names in Andhra districts (in Guntur and Kṛṣṇa districts) like Karambi-cettu, Kōrōvi, Irungaṇṭi, though they were settlers on the banks



of Ghatana and Tāmbraparani rivers (in Tirunelveli district) and even in Nānjilnāḍu (Kanyakumari district). Waves of migration have occurred. Some of them sign themselves in Sanskrit, but it is too slender an evidence to state they did not know Tamil.

Some have adopted their intermediate places of settlement, like Veliyāthūr, Elayātta gudi, and places in between the Coleroon and Cauvery and these are, particularly, attributes of the Vaisyas. Among the Vaisya settlers, there appears to be three distinct divisions, Silai Ceṭṭi, Danma Ceṭṭi, and Brahma Cetti, though we could not get at the basis of this classification which had prevailed all over the South India. In fact, pure Tamil names assumed like "Solaippirān" "Aḷagan" occur among the Brahmin resettlers who migrated down south from Nandyal in Cuddapah district during a drought but re-migrated in the 13th century only to find that their lands had been encroached upon by the Reddis and others. The chieftain Manumasiddhi restored the lands to them upholding their prescriptive title.

The Cōla and the Pāṇḍya documents of grant contain a large number of signatories pertaining to be hierarchy of the Cola and Pandya administration. The designations like Puravuvuri Tinai, Puravuvuri Tinaikalam, Tinaikala nayagam, Mukavetti, Tirumandira Olai, Tirumandira Olai kankāni, all reveal their respective functions and whether the signatory is an executive or of a supervisory category. The names have different components. The village or township of nativity, and its territorial division are also mentioned. Very often the signatory officials belonged to the tracts different from those in which the grant-village or lands were located. Was there a conscious attempt not to allow officials of the same locality dealing with the administrative action pertaining to their native tract?

The names had two or three components - the personal name assumed, particularly, after the ruler's. It was the medieval practice of owning personal bond or loyalty - but not allegiance in the feudal sense - to the ruler and naming oneself after him or adopting one of his titles. Then followed the honorific. For instance, "Sirukānappēr Kūṟṟattu Neṭṭūr-Udaiyān Ilayālvān Deivaccilayan Kāṭingarāyar". Here Neṭṭūr was the place of his nativity in Paramakkudi taluk. It was in medieval times in the division of Kālayārkōil in Sivaganga taluk. Ilayalvan could be his father's name; Deivaccilayān was his personal name; perhaps he was named after the deity in the Viṣṇu temple at Tiruppullāni (near Ramanathapuram) south of Kīlanēṭṭūr. "Kāṭingarāyar" was the title he had assumed. Similarly, "Kṛṣṇan Rāman *alias* Rājarāja Brahmādirayan" gave the personal name of his father and the officers, his adopting the name of his lord and sovereign, and the title of Brahmādirayan, being a Brahmin general and of Rājarāja and his son Rājendra. "Rājendra Mūvēnda Velar" is, again, a title assumed by a Cola official under Kulōttunga-I (who had also the title of Rajendra). The chieftains, also assume names like "Maluva rayar", "Malayarayar", "Gāṅgēyan", "Cēdiya rāyar" "Kāṭingarāyar", "Kāṭingattarayan", which link the names with kingdoms or royal dynasties in the Northern India. Even temple priests as Siva Brahmanas assumed such titles as Brahmādirayar and often named themselves after the king, such as Sundara Pandya Brahmādirayar besides their own personal names.

One curious feature was the readiness to change their surnames after a ruler died, and to re-name themselves after his successor. Indeed this had gone too far when the Colas were over-powered by the Pāndyas there was no hesitancy to drop the Cola names and assume the Pāndyan ruler's name. In the post-Vijayanagar period, the chiefs and signatories assumed the names of Nāyak rulers, for instance Vaḷudiyur Pallavarayan became Pallavarayan, adopted names like Acyutappa Mallappa, after the Nayak rulers.

The names were also indicative of the group or clan to which one belonged often with several numerals, "Nalayiravar", (4000), "Nārpattettāyiravar", (48000). What they signified is a matter for investigation but the latter seems to suggest a clan of Siva-Brahmanas and they were in charge of temples, all over the Cola country.

The proper names after the 11th Century contain distinct echoes of the Divyaprabhandam and the Saiva Tirumurai works - such as "Solaimalaikkarasu", "Tiruvarangattamūdu", "Malaikuniyaninra piran", "Yamunaitturaivan", Ilangai Ceṇṇān"-all Vaisnavite names - "Anai namatenvar", "Tillaiyāli", "Taiyilum nallan", "Siruttondar", and other Nāyanmar's names are adopted suggestive of Saiva persuasion. Of course the personal names were often taken after the names of the local deity. These help to deduce the persuasion of the persons though there was no clear and exclusive division of the Vaisnavite and Saiva sects till, say the late 13th Century.

The dancing girls, and bonded tenants, too assumed their patrons or landlord's names - like Munayadarayan. The dancing girls and the leader of the troupe, Nattuvanār had names indicating their profession. like "Tandaiyum Kālum Aḷagiyān".

Enough has been said to indicate that proper names and personal names are "no meaningless marks". They denoted the profession, the nativity, and the political loyalty and affiliation not to speak of names of deities and the persuasion to which they belonged.

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## REFLECTIONS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS IN PLACE-NAMES

R. TIRUMALAI

Place-names are, often, the community's deliberate act of denoting a settlement. If named after a patron-king who fostered the settlement it was a sign of gratitude, and perhaps, of flattery in anticipation of further favours to obtain. The craving for perpetuating the memory of oneself is eternal, is as true today as of old. But it has its repercussions and subsequent rulers re-named the earlier townships freely after themselves.

While these are historical facts, the place-names have significance to denote, suggest, imply, and concretise social and economic factors. These are of great value for the historian, especially, for one interested in the evolution of the community.

For one thing, the settlements were generally homogeneous in character. The agriculturists were the predominant community and their settlements were termed as "ŪR", "NALLŪR". But the term "ŪR" was also used in a generic sense, to cover all kinds of townships. The "UR" was essentially a habitat surrounded by wet fields and water sources. A 16th century Tamil Lexicon: "CŪDAMANI NIGANDU", defines it so:

"NIR PANNAI SŪL ŪR GRĀMAM"

The term "Ūr" was synonymous with the term "GRĀMA" in Sanskrit. But the terms "Ūr" and "Grāma" did not

merely refer to the geographical location or the habitat but the community living within and denoted the collective body or assemblage of that community as well. But it should be distinctly understood that no "corporate" character could be predicated of that community. There was in other words, a joint and several obligation borne by the community members. In some cases the penalty for the collective or joint default was higher in its quantum than the several or individual default.

A varieties of community-settlements were in existence; the homogeneity of the people residing therein was also noticeable. The *Brahmadēyas* were *par excellance*, the Brahmin literati holding lands in the township. The NAGARA was the settlement of the merchant-community but they were as much agricultural holders as were engaged in trading. They were equally responsible for administering unoccupied land, inducting occupants and responsible for collecting land revenue. One other variety was the PADAIPARRU, i.e. agriculturists holding occupancy rights but having an obligation to serve in the soldiery either of the chieftain or / and the king.

Thus, the social, complexion of the township was reflected in the place-names which could at once be brought under one or other of the classification. Again the term "PATTANAM" had a general application to the merchant-township but more particular, to the coastal or roadstead locations on the coast. They were also predominantly fishermen-settlements, engaged in fishing, in chank and pearl-fishing. Indeed the number of such PATTANAMS was very large both on the east and the west coast of South India. Coasting traffic was much larger in volume and more popularly resorted to than the inland traffic. Roads were

very poorly maintained, not fordable in the rainy season and infested with robbers. The ships in the late 18th and 19th centuries carried even gems and high-value low bulk items and called from port to port all along from Visakhapatnam down to Korkai, and Kumari and thence on the west coast upto Calicut or Tellicherry.

The composition of townships had ensured a cohesion, an integrated approach. It should have facilitated agricultural operations. The agriculture was carried on as an "openfield system", and irrigation was from field to field especially in the Cauvery delta. In the areas where water was less plentiful, as in Vaigai and the Tāmbraparani basins, water-management was even more intricate and carefully practised. The surplus of the higher source afforded the supply for the lower down source, and waste had to be avoided. The interception of the supply channel also was prohibited and even lifting of water by piccottahs and more so by baling was an offence, and punishable. The community action was greatly facilitated by the homogeneity of settlement who were zealous of their riparian rights. Settlements on river banks or on streams were distinguished as "Revu" in Telugu and "Turai" or "Karai" in Tamil, e.g., KURUVITTURAI, ARUVIKKARAI.

The settlements in dry lands had also distinguishable suffixes like "VILAI", "VALASA", and "KĀDU", and "PUNJEY". These could help distinguish the unirrigated tracts from the irrigated tracts.

The place-names referred to each district settlement but there were clusters too. When the "adjuncts" or "suburbs" were called "PIDĀGAI" or "ŚIVARAM". Often the latter were settlements of distinct communities. Thus the main or mother village might be a BRAHMADEYA but some of its suburbs could be a NAGARA or a ŪR comprising trading

and agricultural population. But population was spare in every one of them. While one community could be predominant, surely there were others as well in clusters of habitats pursuing different avocations. To that extent the townships were as a whole heterogeneous constituents. Some of the larger townships in Cōla and Pāndya kingdoms were as extensive as a Panchayat Union with several divisions / streets or Cēris, and wards (KUDUMBUS). These, again were named after the predominant complexion of the community, or a section there of, such as SANKARAPPĀDIYĀR (oilmonger) or ŚĀLIYAR (weavers). The names of these streets and the wards thus help identify the sectional, occupational, and professional groups and their avocations.

The place-names also help trace the movement of the community or population from tract to tract and time to time. Such migrations had not been uni-directional. There have been movements from the Kashmir valley and beyond as there have been from Tamil Nadu to the North. Tamil merchant colonies named after Kulōttunga-I had existed at Visākha-patṇam. A strong admixture of Tamil names acquired during their stay in the south prefixed with the original nativity-place-names like "IRUNGANTI", "KARĀMBI CETTU", "KōRōVI" (in Guntur district) are noticed in the names of the MIRĀŚI grants even in remote areas like NANDALUR in Cuddapah district. The pressure of the growing population or rather the inelastic trend of production to support the increasing population could also be an inference applicable to particular locations.

The interconnectedness of economic activity and communities is also discernable. Often groups of such communities join together to implement social obligations, community endowments or to fulfil the charities undertaken out of voluntary levies on commodities or products moved in transit.

or sold in particular locations. They also reveal the original nativity of the merchant-groups.

Everyone of the points above can be substantiated with epigraphic data. I have refrained from doing so in this paper for two reasons. First, my object was to indicate the lines of investigation that the available data admit of every one of which can be intensively undertaken. Secondly, I have, by way of model studies, done this elsewhere.

One pitfall should be guarded against-the defect of "historical averaging" which Prof. K.A Nilakanta Sastri used to criticise. Nothing is so unsuitable as to connect the Mōtupalli inscription of Kākatīya Ganapati and the Piranmalai inscriptions of the Nagarattars or join together the inscriptions of Ayyavōle Svāmis. The divorce from place and time of an activity is the negation of history.

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## LECTURE - II

This lecture deals with five aspects; first, the history of epigraphic studies and their present status and focus. Second, the methodology that I have found to be most fruitful in interpreting the socio-economic terms occurring in the inscriptions. Third, the status of our knowledge of the state, social, urban and local formations and institutions. Fourthly, some thoughts on the outline of the project for preparing a Lexicon or Dictionary of Socio-Economic Terms. Lastly, I have touched on the other sources for reconstructing history, like folk songs, archival material, private correspondence, and revenue accounts. I have illustrated their use by several case studies on every type of source material.

**Brief survey of the progress of epigraphic studies with particular reference to the interpretation of socio-economic terms occurring in inscriptions :**

The Department of Epigraphy, and sister-organisations in the former princely States, wherever they existed, have done a monumental work in collecting copies of inscriptions which were brought to notice. This effort has been a century old. But except in a few cases like the inscriptions of Pudukkottai, Travancore, and *Epigraphia Carnatica*, the collected transcripts of inscriptions have not yet been published even to cover the initial ten years. The Department of Epigraphy is just completing the publication of inscriptions listed in 1909. That leaves a backlog of over 80 years. Further additions are being made from time to time. Out of a total of 85,000 inscriptions collected only about 15,000 have been published so far. Some work are in the press. The backlog is formidable.

I would reiterate the observation I made in my Presidential Address delivered at the Thirteenth Annual Congress of the Epigraphical Society of India held at Patna in April 1987. (Appendix-I).

“It is imperative that the transcription and the critical edition and publication of inscriptions are done on a vigorous and systematic basis. Even a phased programme for publishing the texts at 10,000 per year will take over seven years to cover the backlog. Meanwhile the current collections at the rate of 500 per year will also need to be transcribed and edited then and there, to avoid a further build-up of backlog”.

Great significance has to be attached to the texts of the inscriptions. For without the texts, we will not be able to bring out the full import of the terms used therein and interpret the texts of the inscriptions satisfactorily and fully. I trust this oft-repeated insistence on the publication of inscriptions will be heeded and attended to by the Government of India.

Right upto the Fifties, the attention of scholars was devoted to unravelling the political history of the different regions from the Prasasti or Meykīrts portion of the inscriptions. This is in a sense, essential. For it will provide a chronological framework, and political changes, within a time-frame: It helps us to fix the date of the inscriptions and the events recorded therein. But the pendulum had swung too far, as when a great savant like T.A. Gopinatha Rao commented while editing a Sucīndiram inscription. The inscription recorded that certain arrangements were made by the Sabhā regarding the cultivation of the temple lands, and realisation of land-dues which the Mūlaparūḍayār in charge

of the temple and the occupants declined to undertake any longer. Gopinatha Rao proceeds to comment :<sup>23</sup>

“It is not to give to the public this little piece of information contained in the document nor with a desire to add to the stock of inscriptions of the reign of Rajaraja-I that the present one is edited, but to revise the interpretation put on certain important passages of the historical introduction by the former editors and which has by sheer repetition got so fast into the mind of the scholars and laymen alike and which was equally firmly believed by at least a small section of the scholars from the very beginning to be an unsatisfactory explanation”.

Leave alone the scholarly polemic, the passage brings out the exclusive importance attached to the examination of the political events described in the “Meykīrti” - the historical introduction. Such an exclusive pre-occupation with the conquests and dynastic changes is apt to ignore the socially and economically significant events recorded.

The inscription in question throws a flood of light on the agrarian hierarchy,<sup>24</sup> and lends itself to the interpretation that the occupants relinquished their holdings in 1000 A.D. as the land dues were increased a year earlier (999 A.D.)<sup>25</sup> For reconstructing the economic history of the region this inscription is, indeed, invaluable. The justification for this pre-occupation of the earlier savants with political history was provided by Prof K.A Nilakanta Sastri in an address delivered in 1929. “Such criticism (that undue importance is attached to political history), whatever its

23. TAS, Vol. II, p 1 - 1916

24. Please see my “LAND GRANTS AND AGRARIAN REACTIONS” pp 84-85.

25. *ibid*, pp 47-49.

validity, at other times, appears to be somewhat inopportune at the present moment because it is yet too soon to turn our attention away from the study of political history. Any picture of social life (we could add economic conditions as well) if it is to be of real significance, must have a firmly established chronology to fit into."<sup>26</sup>

Thanks to the contribution of scholars all over India in the first half of this century, this political framework has been established fairly well now. Gaps and problems may persist here and there, but by and large a chronological scheme has been evolved for dynastic or regional histories, with a reasonable measure of consistency in their inter-relationship.

The stage then set for the objective study of the economic and social conditions has been exploited but partially thereafter. An authentic economic history of Southern India is yet to be written. Northern India has had a larger output; thanks to the efforts commenced by Moreland, and further enlarged and accomplished by scholars like Nurul Hasan, Dr. R. S. Sarma, Irfan Habib and a host of others. The tardiness of output in the South can be explained by the inherent difficulties in the process of investigation. The texts of the inscriptions are but available for a fraction (one-eighth) of the total collections. But the more valid reasons have been set out by Prof. Sastri himself.

First, "In the inscriptions of South India are to be found many technical terms bearing on social, economic, military and administrative matters. A correct understanding of these terms is an essential preliminary to the reconstruction of the social (and economic) life of the period". Secondly, "the scientific study and interpretation of the sources of South Indian history has not advanced far beyond

the elementary stages. The temptation is very strong to forge ahead with sweeping conclusions drawn from stray facts without waiting for the chain of evidence to be completed".<sup>27</sup>

These comments of the great Professor have to be taken to heart. Indeed the two points are inter-twined - no generalisation should be attempted without understanding the full import of the terms used. The import can be interpreted with relevance, only by paying attention to the tract, the locale, the time or the period, and the form of the document and the manner of expression used:<sup>28</sup>

“DĒSAŚCA, KĀLAŚCA, RŪPAŚCA”

Manu's dictum on the interpretation of judicial evidence has an equally valid application to the methods of historiography. The methods adopted by Professor Sastri and the analysis of the working of his mind is itself an inspiring study. It fully brings out the features of the *a posteriori* school and its fidelity to the sources.<sup>29</sup> Appendix II, III bring out these features. Appendix IV is a study of the similar methodology applied to the study of Tamil literature and editing the Classics by a great savant and contemporary of Prof. Sastri, the late Sri S. Vaiyapuram Pillai. There is much in common in the intellectual methods and workings of the two Professors. It is not an accident that they both worked together so intensively and ultimately, that Prof. Sastri has hailed Professor Pillai as his “guru” so far as studies in Tamil literature are concerned.

A term in epigraphical occurrence can be interpreted meaningfully only by a comprehensive understanding of the

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27. Journal of the Madras University, 1929, op cit.

28. Manu, VIII-45.

29. Appendix II, III & IV.

totality of circumstances. It cannot be interpreted merely by trying to dismember it etymologically much less by superimposing *a priori* notions or 'models' on them. For the task of the historian is to understand a term in the sense in which it was or could have been (to be more precise) used by the participants at the time of its use. But that sense, to be more authentic and clear, can be extracted only by a realistic understanding of the social and economic *milieu*, the structure of the economic or social formations and their accredited characteristics. Failure to appreciate this need will land us in isolated, or inappropriate or anachronistic meanings being applied to the terms.

The attention paid to social and economic, cultural and local histories has been growing after Professor Sastri's observation in 1929 quoted above. These have contributed in varying measures to the general understanding of the milieu, and the conditions obtaining at the time. But some of them, in varying degrees, seem to proceed, somewhat inevitably, from the consequent to the antecedent. This, as we shall see, is not a method to be totally discarded but has its limitations which one has to be conscious of.

The attempts at reconstructing economic and social structure and life of the ancient and medieval periods is a very challenging task. But those who undertake it have, as yet, very few aids. We still depend on the Indo-Anglican Dictionaries, Monier Williams, Winslow, Kittel, Brown's for trying to understand the meaning of the terms in Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu respectively. More often the scholars fall back upon their own ingenuity and it could be easily fallible. For the same term could have different meanings in different places and certainly so in the ancient or medieval as distinct from modern or contemporary usage.

An opportunity presented itself when the "Tamil Lexicon" <sup>30</sup> was compiled (1937-1939), but it has been utilised but partially. Prof. Sastri himself regretted, "It is obviously within the province of Tamil Lexicon to take up the systematic study of such terms and the omission to do this has caused some disappointment". Prof. Jules Bloch, for example, wrote to him (8-10-1929): "The Madras Dictionary does not help me to explain KONĒRINMAIKONDĀN. By the way, it is a pity that the compilers of that Dictionary neglected so much the inscriptions. Perhaps it would be time now to compile a vocabulary of the technical terms and of the archaisms generally contained in old inscriptions - perhaps also a list of the proper names of persons and places".<sup>31</sup>

This wish of Prof. Jules Bloch remains largely to be fulfilled yet. The reasons for this delay of over 60 years are not far to seek. Interpreting every term is an exercise in itself. It requires a patient compilation of the texts of several inscriptions over a period of time in each region and then with reference to the context in which it occurs, interpret the import or content of each term. It has to be borne in mind the same term may have different meanings in different contexts (e.g., Kuḍi, Kaḍama).<sup>32</sup> The denotation may also vary from tract to tract.

The observations above will apply as much to Tamil inscriptions as to Kannada and Telugu inscriptions. The translations made so far may be said to be 'free', indeed 'freer than what the discipline of epigraphic interpretation

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30. "Tamil Lexicon" - Madras University Publication, 1939.

31. "The Study of South Indian History" - Journal of Madras University.

32. Pl. see my "Land-grants and Agrarian Reactions" pp83-93.\*

would' allow far. Even the otherwise well got up new edition of *Epigraphica Carnatica* has left quite a few solecisms in the translation of the Tamil inscriptions.<sup>33</sup>

It will be clear that a Lexicon or Glossary of epigraphical terms is a felt-want. Dr. D.C. Sircar's Glossary<sup>34</sup> is a pioneer work and a noteworthy beginning in this direction. But as Dr. Sircar rightly terms it "it is a nucleus" and "the majority of the words collected in it occur in the inscriptions in Sanskrit or in the Sanskritic and Dravidian inscriptions". Dr. Sircar aimed primarily at collecting Sanskrit words and generally the Prākṛit and Tadbhava words were given in their Sanskrit forms, only some of the Dravidian or Dēsi words were included. But Dr. Sircar, the great scholar that he was, was keenly sensible of the formidable task and the inherent difficulty of tackling it single-handed.<sup>35</sup> It may be added that the volume of the terminology used in inscriptions in everyone of the Dravidian languages itself will require and merit even several glossaries, at least one in each. T.N. Subrahmanyam's attempt in *SITI*<sup>36</sup> is a good basis and it has been largely depended upon by Sircar. It is a basis but it has to be further improved upon.

33. Pl. see my paper on "The Cola inscriptions of Mysore district"—published in the journal of Mythic Society, Vol LXXIX, No. 4, Oct - Dec. 1988

34. Motilal Banarsidas, First Edn., 1966.

\* Madras University - 1987.

35. The verse at the end of the Preface may be recalled :  
 "PRAMANA SIDDHANTA VIRUDDHAM ATRA  
 YET KUNCID UKTAM MATI MADYA DOSAT  
 MATSARYAM UTSARYA TAD ARYA CITTAH  
 PRASADAM ADHAYA VISO DHAYANTH".

36. *SITI* (Oriental Manuscript Library Publication), Vol. III, pt. 2(1957) and pp 1389 ff.



I propose now to describe the methodology I have found helpful and productive in my experience and deduce therefrom a few principles relevant for interpreting the terms of social and economic import occurring in inscriptions.

I should preface these observations by referring to a wide range of sources that stretch beyond the texts of the inscriptions, though the texts are by and large, the sheet-anchor of our hope and a sure guide in this effort.

The simplest method to interpret the terms of social and economic import is to project backwards from current survivals. In Marc Bloch's phrase it is to trace "the origins of the embryo from the adult" with which we are familiar. I will give one example. "Kaṇḍu Kṛṣi" is the term applied to the "crown lands" or home farm lands of the ruler of Travancore, the erstwhile princely State which were under the direct management and supervision of the king. Some of the usages in Malayalam have frozen the meaning of terms occurring in the Tamil inscriptions upto the 16th century. The term "Kaṇḍulavu" occurs in Pāṇḍyan inscriptions of the 12th and 13th centuries which exactly corresponds to the term "kaṇḍu kṛṣi" and refer to crown farm of crown lands in which no occupancy claims could subsist.<sup>37</sup> But in Tamil Nadu this connotation of the term had been lost even when Burgess and Natesa Sastri brought out the inscriptions of South India in the late years of the last century.<sup>38</sup> The term "Kaṇḍu" has even today a specific meaning in agrarian parlance - "to directly supervise or inspect" as in "Kaṇḍu mudal" - the yield quantum verified directly by the landlord or measured in his presence which affords a clue to this word. The vestiges of agricultural or agrarian practices and

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37. Please see my paper on "Kandulavu", Journal of Epigraphical Society, Vol. X-1983, pp. 55-60.

\*38. ASSI Vol. IV, p. 43-it is taken to be a field name.

terms used as well, as in the fishing or country crafts should be assiduously collected and their application to the epigraphic data could be examined with care. Wilson's Glossary affords a threshold for opening up such a collection<sup>39</sup> of administrative terms.

The second and allied method is to resurrect the original meaning of terms from survivals in other cognate languages. the term "Pramāda" occurs in South Indian Tamil inscriptions to refer to a "violent occurrence or tragedy or calamity."<sup>40</sup> The word has acquired a totally different meaning and has disordered this obsolete sense in modern Tamil usage. But in Telugu even today, the word is used currently in the same sense as in the South Indian Tamil inscriptions. Even in a Tamil work, BHĀRATI VEṆBĀ (prose) it occurs in the sense of "accident", "mishap".<sup>41</sup>

While these aids are suggestive or evocative and can give helpful clues, a more dependable and rewarding method is to get at the authentic prevalent contemporary meaning in literature and in the works of the same period or nearabouts as that of the inscriptions. I have found this method to be effective in my experience. I can illustrate this by several instances.

Among the criminal offences that are listed in medieval Tamil inscriptions a term "Sunḍāyam" occurs.<sup>42</sup> Nammālvār referring to the unreliability of Kṛṣṇa uses this word, which the medieval commentators have interpreted to convey

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\*39. Wilson's Glossary, Eastern Law House, Calcutta, 1940.

40. "Nirvaḷakkāṭṭu sutta pramāda paṭṭamayil" - my index card for this Inscription is not readily traceable.

41. Tamil Lexicon, Vol: V, p. 2690

42. Please see my Pudukottai Studies, pp. 354-355.

‘hypocrisy’ – ‘svārtha” parārtha”<sup>43</sup> The term “Paḷḷi” occurs in medieval inscriptions. – e.g., the Cōḷa inscriptions at Kōṭṭār. In the context in which it occurs this could not mean a “Jaina Shrine” nor a “funerary temple”. The term “Paḷḷi” has been used in the sense of a “chieftain”.<sup>44</sup> This makes the meaning perfectly intelligible. Again, a dispute relating to the title to the land has been expressed as “Toḍaippaṭṭu Kiḍanthamayil”. This term “Toḍai” has the meaning of “raising objection” or “disputed” and it is used in that sense in PURAPPORUL VENBĀ MĀLAI.<sup>45</sup> Many other terms like, “Vāriyan”, “Kāriya vārāitci”, “Polisar”, “Kummāyam”, “Kaḍaikūṭṭu” occur in the Tamil commentaries which adopt the same colloquial or conversational style as the inscriptions. They thus afford the most authentic source for us to get at the meanings of the ancient terms which have their own characteristic ring and meaning.

I may digress here to refer to the type of sources which help in trying to get at the authentic meaning of the terms at the time of their use. The first, important category of sources are the Tamil classics, the Śāṅgam literature and the medieval epics, Rāṇāyana, Tiruthonḍar purāṇam of Śēṅkīlār, himself a minister under the Cōlas, the Diṽyaprabandam, the Tēvāram, Tiruvāsagam and other works of the four great Nāyanmārs - Appar, Sundarar, Navukkaraśar and Māṇickavāsagar. Also works such as Purapporuḷ Venbāmālai.

43. Divyaprabhāṇḍam, 6th hundred: Second ten. verse 1. See Tdn. commentary thereon, Tdn. Vol. VI, p. 71 (V. 3238) - Maytai Madavadasan, Edn. 1962.
44. "Rajakkaḷ pōga, paḷḷigal vandu pugura māppōlēyumu" - Divya prabhāṇḍa - Iyarpā - Tiruviruttam 40 - Vyākhyāna 235.
45. Tamil Lexicon Vol. IV, p. 2089 (1982 Edn.) ARE 111 and 112 of 1910.

The interrelationship between literature and epigraphy is itself an interesting study; some features of such a study are brought out in Appendix V.<sup>46</sup>

The second category of literary works that help in interpreting the inscriptions, as the commentaries of Tamil Classics - the Uṟais or glosses of authors like Aḍiyārku nallār, Pērāṣiriyar, Parimēlaḷagar. They congeal the traditional meaning and could be a window into the import of terms as understood in their times and beyond.

The third category are the Glosses or Commentaries are the Vyākhyānas to the Divyaprabhandam which have a lot of utility as a reference book and a sure guide to interpret economic and social terms of import in the inscriptions. For one thing, the commentaries were almost contemporary to the inscriptions - 13th and 14th centuries. They are couched in the colloquial or conversational style as I have noted above and as such, they capture the true authentic import of works in use at the time. These Vaiṣṇavite commentaries are "Onpadināyirapadi" of Nañjīyar, "Muppattārāyirappaḍi" of Nambillai, and the "Irupattunālāyairappaḍi" of Periyavāccānpillai and the "Muppattarāyirappaḍi" of Vaḍakku Tīruvīdipillai.<sup>47</sup> To this category should be added the Jaina commentaries as in Jīva Sambōdhana of Dēvēndra Muni. There is a prose portion which is in *Mani pravāla* style. Words like "Veḷakkārar" and "Vāriyar" occur in this work.<sup>48</sup> These works, both of Vaiṣṇavite and Jaina Commentaries in

46. Appendix V.

47. Please see "Bhagad Visayam" - p. 24 (Introduction) by S. Krishnamachari (1924), Ganesa Printing Press

48. Please see the Edition of this work for the Madras University by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai and his note on the work in Prof. K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar Commemoration Volume, pp. 435 ff.

prose are of value in our attempts to interpret the words that occur in South Indian epigraphy.

The fourth category of works of assistance and help in our task are the Nigaṇṭus, the earliest of the Tamil Nigaṇṭus, Śendan Divākaram,<sup>49</sup> (8th century A.D) and Pingalam in the Cōla period, Śulāmaṇi Nigandu of the 15th or 16th century. Another very useful and interesting dictionary is the Divya-prabhandā Agarāthi,<sup>50</sup> which has preserved and elucidated many rare usages of words. To these should be added though of lesser utility, latter-day Nigaṇḍus (post-sixteenth century) like Vaḍamalai Nigaṇḍu,<sup>51</sup> Vākāṭa Agarāthi,<sup>52</sup> Agarāthi Nigaṇṭu,<sup>53</sup> Arumporuḷ viḷakka nigaṇḍu,<sup>54</sup> Pothigai Nigaṇṭu,<sup>55</sup> Nāma Deepa Nigantu<sup>56</sup> The 'Vāstukōsa' of Nāga varma II is a relatively short Lexicon of 800 granthas<sup>57</sup> giving Kannaḍa equivalents of Sanskrit terms and may be suggestive. Doubtless, the Nigaṇṭus in other languages like Malayalam and Telugu should help interpret the terms in those languages and even be suggestive in interpreting the inscriptions in other languages.

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49. A definitive edition of this earliest Lexicon is just to be brought out - by Dr. M. Shanmugam Pillai (Madras University).
  50. R. No. 1464, R. No. 1465 of Madras Govt. Oriental Manuscript Library (Madras Govt. Oriental Series No. CLXXIV (1961).
  51. Dr. U. Ve. Sa. Library publication, 1983.
  52. Dr. U. Ve. Sa. Library publication, 1982.
  53. Dr. U. Ve. Sa. Library publication, 1983.
  54. Published by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai "Great Tamil" publications (1931).
  55. Published by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai (1934).
  56. Published by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai (1930).
  57. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri - "A History of South India" p. 396.

The most appropriate and productive course is to look into the occurrences and contexts in the inscriptions themselves. This method will yield a great deal of circumstantial evidence, and the most authentic form of the usage prevalent at the time. I have applied this method in interpreting terms like “Karpūṣavilar”<sup>58</sup> “Kuṭṭi”, “Kuṭṭimai”, “Kuṭṭi nīkki”, “Kuṭṭi Nīkka”<sup>59</sup> which are otherwise apt to be misconstrued. We should list out a sufficient number of occurrences in the inscriptions, and the context in which they occur. Then the greatest common measure of relevance can be extracted and a meaningful interpretation can be arrived at. In doing so, care should be taken to see that the inscriptional evidence elsewhere does not materially contradict or conflict with the meaning attributed to any term. This caution is essential. For the same term has got different meanings in different contexts and sometimes the same term conveys one meaning and also its exact opposite. Tamil is not the only language; even Sanskrit has such roots/ words which convey antithetical meanings and one has to be selective in finding the correct meaning of the term appropriate to the context, the whole structure of the document. Sometimes words used have acquired specific denotation in the Revenue parlance, like Madakku, Varisai, Ninaippu, Puravu, and it is essential to understand and bring out its true import.<sup>60</sup> Discerning the exact significance of some land revenue terms occurring frequently in inscriptions, Prof. Sastri observed: “We derive no assistance from literature, indigenous or foreign in the elucidation of these terms, and we must depend solely on the

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58. My “Padukottai Studies” pp. 214 - 224.

59. My book “Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions” pp. op. cit.

60. Pl. see my Note on the Land Assessment Modes in the Cola and Pandya Times - Journal of the Ep. Society, Vol. XIV, 1987 pp. 61 - 68.

possibility of the texts of various inscriptions interpreting one another where they are read together. Though a sure method, this is necessarily slow, and cannot be pursued on a large scale when the majority of the inscriptions remain unpublished. Sometimes we derive much knowledge from a casual phrase in an otherwise unimportant inscription".<sup>61</sup> There are still several terms which await a satisfactory explanation like "Kāsu koḷḷā Iṟaiyili" which occurs even in cases where the Township has collected both the land-value (Vilay dravyam) and the capitalised amount the interest from which was meant to meet the Irai and other obligations (Iṟai Dravyam).<sup>62</sup>

The meaning of any term has to fit in with the socio-economic milieu in which it is used. It should fit in with the totality of agrarian attributes or otherwise with the economic system or the social fabric to which the terms apply. Failure to attach significance to these conditions will often lead to impressionistic and *a priori* formulations which will stand contradicted by a deeper study of the economic and social institutions or practices and their characteristics as revealed in the inscriptions. In the early stages of epigraphic interpretation, for want of Lexicographical referencing, a tendency had crept in, to literally translate the terms, applying the layman's meaning and that too as found in present-day usage. This could be very misleading. The contemporary idiom could be as different from the medieval idiom - even in languages (like Tamil) with established continuity, as chalk from cheese. It has led to internal

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61. "Irai, Irai Kāval", "Iraiylil" - K. A. N. Sastri - Dr. S.K. Iyengar Commemoration Volume, p. 191.

62. ARE 374, 375 of 1918.

inconsistencies and irrelevant conclusions<sup>63</sup> which should be totally avoided. It is equally important that the researcher should not import his own ideas or thoughts while interpreting these terms. This is the fallacy that an *a priori* methodology always leads to as the thought is pre-conceived and is fallible.

I have dealt with the methodology in some length; these principles are common to lexicography, historiography and interpretation of epigraphs which combine both the disciplines. I wish to conclude this part of my address by referring to two other aspects. First, most of the inscriptions in Southern India are couched in the regional language. The key for interpreting these epigraphs should therefore be sought in the evolution of everyone of these languages and the status of the meaning of terms occurring in each.

Sanskrit and its allied languages Prakrit or other regional variations have their own terminology, the meaning of which has to be garnered. Heavy reliance has rightly been placed on Monier William's Dictionary. Sircar's Glossary is also a good aid. But there is a great deal of systematic work to be done, and the full import of every one of the terms occurring in the Sanskrit inscriptions, and their linguistic basis has to be ascertained. In bilingual charters like the Cōḷa or Pāṇḍyan Copper Plates, the Sanskrit portion is usually short but some of the terms used therein help to unfold the content of the terms used in the detailed grant portion of the charter couched in Tamil. In fact the two portions could complement each other and better the understanding of either of the portions.

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The inter-language disciplines, as I have already pointed will be found to be very helpful in studying the Tamil,

63. Please see for e.g. the note on the phrase - "Kaḍamai kolḷa kaḍan pātra mayil" - annexure in "Rājendra Viṇṇagar - pp. (i) to (xv). -



Kannaḍa and Telugu inscriptions. The Cōḷa rule when extended to the territories of the Cāḷukyas had brought in some features of its own system, and the terms of economic and social import prevailing in the Tamil country had got grafted to the system in vogue in the uplands of Karnataka. Similar trends could be noticed in the Coastal Andhra areas. But the system was a graft; it had retained essentially many of the local features. It will be necessary to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to bring out the common features of the two systems and the variations. I have noticed elsewhere that for lack of such an inter-language discipline some of the translations of Tamil inscriptions in the otherwise well-brought out *Epigraphia Carnatica* (Revised Volumes) have gone awry.<sup>64</sup>

Finally in dealing with the methodology, we should consider the use of modern technological aids. The use of Computer is one such. As I have said earlier, I would welcome the adoption of such technical and mechanical devices or aids. But their adoption has to be selective. Where to apply and how should be determined before resorting to computerisation.

In historiography, as well as in epigraphy, it is a scintillating paradox that a whole range of repetitive data could yield but little while a single clinching document (like the Hati gumpā inscription of Kharavela) could afford un rebuttable information on a fact.

The complaint is often made that the inscriptions are repetitive. The volume is not a help by itself. The large corpus of the later Pandya inscriptions in Tenkasi, and its

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64. Pl. see my paper on the "Cōḷa Inscriptions in Mysore District" - Journal of Mythic Society, Vol. LXXIX, No. 4 October-December 1988.

adjoining townships yield little more than the remuneration of temple servants. On the contrary, a few inscriptions as from Kandramanikkam (Ramanathapuram - now Sivagangai District), or Achalpuram throw a flood of light on complicated agrarian issues.<sup>65</sup>

I should now devote some attention to the major topics to be covered in this investigation. The topics fan out into the several aspects of the substantive contents of the inscriptions. Let there be no mistake, the repetitive Prasasti was formal. The substantive content conveys the purpose of the inscription, and helps in the study of Economic and Fiscal formulations or formations. Indeed, a large part of the epigraphical evidence from Tamil Nadu could yield data on this aspect. They have not been fully exploited either. A vast area of almost virgin field awaits the attention of epigraphists and historians. I will illustrate. The medieval Tamil inscriptions bear out an agrarian structure and tenurial obligations which have faced changes, transformations and stresses and strains. It is well worth tracing the beginnings of these changes, and the remedies applied, and how the different tiers in the - structure reacted to these stresses as well as the community's own efforts which were more effective can be brought out in full. Recently studies have been made on these lines and their results have to be taken into the main stream of South Indian history.

The functional content of the State formation itself has been the subject of great debate. The idea that the Cola monarchy corresponded to the "Segmentary State" has been propounded with force of novelty based on exotic models. It has, as intended "provoked" criticism, for and against.

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65. I am touching on this aspect in the second part of my Pandyan Townships - under publication by Madras University.

Dust seems to be settling down on this debate. But the epigraphic evidence has to have the last word on it, and it can be decisive. The Japanese Scholarship has been more realistic in appreciating this epigraphic evidence. At least at the heyday of the Cōla, monarchy, surely the king granted lands in remote, outlying parts of conquered territories.<sup>66</sup> The Scions of the royal family made endowments in newly conquered tracts.<sup>67</sup> The procedure for communication of the royal orders had shown a highly evolved bureaucratic discipline – *nirūpam*, *ninaippu*, *niyōgam*, *Tirumugam*, *Ulvari*, and a number of other terms and designated official hierarchy which could not lead to any other conclusion. Even temple services were subject to royal commands indicating the incumbents held the posts at the pleasure of the king.<sup>68</sup> Even when the monarchy had weakened it took steps to arrest the agrarian unrest and provided relief against levy of non-customary dues and obligations. A document to be inscribed on temple walls, involving private transactions had often been accorded royal sanction.

This is not, however, to under-rate the autonomy of local institutions which had a dual role. It was an instrument for executing royal decree and also a functionary at the local level, in its own right, especially of the unoccupied lands and the village common. An inclusive approach, and harmonisation could more truly reflect the medieval organisational and functional tracts than an exclusivist approach.

The plurality of organisations co-existing or acting together is another striking feature of the social formations. what every particular organisation stood for, and how every

66. Pl. see "Rājendra Vinnagar" – op. cit., pp. 14 – 15.

67. "Cōla Inscriptions of Mysore District" – op. cit.

68. For e.g., please see my "Land Grants Agrarian Reactions" p. 13 – (Madras University – 1987).

one acted, or inter-acted with others is an area which still requires detailed study. For instance, *Mula parudai* occurs as a management committee of the temple, co-existing with the *Sabhā*. In some cases in Tanjavur district, the *Mūlaparuḍai* has itself discharged the functions of the *Sabhā*, as I have recently noticed in my on-going study of the Tanjavur inscriptions. The data presented by the epigraphs could bear out one essential caution - that generalisations on the basis of what Prof. Sastri used to criticise as "historical averaging" - can easily be made as they can be controverted<sup>69</sup>

The institutions and social formations had their own individuality - every one of them. The medieval social balance was anchored on this pluralistic check and balance system, with common cognizable capability vested with every one of them when a crime or social - misdemeanour or stress had occurred. Typical crises even as late as in the eighteenth century in Madurai and Tirupparankunram are cited as case studies<sup>70</sup>. So long as the pluralistic formations were functioning this detection and punishment could be effective.

The best way to study such a pluralistic organisation is by adopting a pattern of micro study of local histories and institutions. It is not enough to run away with a "GCM" of concordance of evidence. Every locale has to be studied, and every inscription set in place, every detail has to be culled out, interpreted and weighed in its own context, and in juxtaposition with others. A number of micro histories will bring out the wide variations in the pattern of

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69. A recent publication on "Two Merchant Guilds" by a Scholar who has tapped many sources bears out this vulnerability.

70. (Appendix. VI)

local institutions and people's lives. It is, however, necessary to note that there was a pattern which could be discerned from the evidence. Family histories, motive forces for human actions, and unnoticed features of the social and economic life of the people, and the movements - religious or cultural - that had swept the tract could all be recaptured and presented not in their semblance but in themselves. In other words, the epigraphs can be made to speak and speak out the true import of the language used in the inscriptions.

It is not correct to think that even religious forces at work in the medieval times were unchanging. During the Cōḷa - Cāḷukya periods - indeed from about the 9th to 14th Centuries - the South seems to have adopted more widely the Kālāmukha, the Gōḷakhi maṭha, Pāsupata, Lakulīsa and other forms of Śaivism in temples. There is very little evidence of Advaitism of Śankara developing during the period. On the contrary, Prābhākaram which was anterior to Advaita advent, was more popularly studied and the Vedic sacrifices and rituals appear to have been fostered.<sup>71</sup>

But the most fascinating part of the study is the economic and fiscal formulations. The data base in inscriptions seems to be marked out as it were for this study. The chapter on the "Economic History" of Medieval South India" that are contained in Volume-I of a publication by a world-renowned University is a testimony to the vast scope that exists for detailed study, and how for lack of that study, the treatment of this subject has been admittedly inadequate. Again, this lacuna could lead to wrong statements of facts. We are told that crown lands were not in

71. Pl. see my paper on "The Cōḷa Cāḷukya Period - a hiatus in the development of Advaita Philosophy," - Journal of the Madras University, Vol. LVI, Nos. 1 and 2, Jan - July, 1985.

existence in the medieval times. This can be attributed to the want of knowledge of the true import of terms that occur at least in the Pandyan inscriptions which clearly testify to the king owning crown lands. Above all, the tenurial obligations and their modes is a subject which can break new ground, once a patient understanding of the import of these terms is reached.

Intensive study of the fiscal terms is called for. For their true import both in ancient and medieval times, has still to be worked out. Here no external models, I submit, can help. An inductive process carefully marshalling the internal evidence in the inscriptions alone, coupled with all or some of the principles I have set out in the second part of my address, could help. I can add that I have found my attempts on these bases to be satisfying.

The issues I have outlined above on the social, administrative and economic formations can be solved only if the content of the substantive parts of the inscriptions is recaptured fully. The recapturing should be true to the authentic conditions as revealed in the epigraphs. The epigraphs had no need to explain the terms they used as they were perfectly intelligible to the contemporaries. But they are not to us. At the same time the individual interpretation of terms should reckon with and keep in view the totality of medieval entities and their characteristic and essential traits. Otherwise the import or the meaning we attribute to terms will just not fit in. I should also invite attention of scholars to an inherent characteristic of land tenures and medieval expressions. Many of them are not translatable verbatim. They can only be described and very often a glossary of terms has to be appended to scholarly works to authentically reflect the content and the incidence of the terminology used. Indeed to adopt the terminology

from other languages (which reflect alien conditions) may do more harm than good and confuse instead of clarifying.

The task requires both study and historical perspective. Attention paid to these essential aspects of life in ancient and medieval times has been growing over the recent decades. This trend is encouraging, but it can easily be subjective and one's own wish or limited understanding can be easily super imposed, resulting in an untenable basis. The growing interest should be channelled through the disciplined study of ancient terminology and the particular or technical use of those terms as understood in those times. Without such an objective canalisation of thought and interpretation, inferences on ancient and medieval action, society, and structure could deflect from the realities of conditions then obtaining. Hence the need for a glossary of the terms used in inscriptions having economic, social and administrative import.

A glossary cannot spring up from a void. Some terms are somewhat, if not fully, explicit and speaking like, Accu, pon, Kāṇikaḍan, Iṭai, etc., but others need intensive research to get at the true meaning and import of those terms, like Kudinikki, Kudinikka, Karpuravilai and citation to back up the interpretation. It is the product of effort. This results from hypotheses tested, from extensive research, from refinements and is the constructive cumulative output of the continuous hard work of many. The time has just arrived for a compilation of the glossary of the technical terms. In fact this compilation should go hand in hand with original research, and closer check and examination of each of the terms and the import. These could unsettle some of the settled notions. But no glossary is ever served on a plate. It is heartening that the ICHR has launched on the compilation of a Glossary though of an all India application and limited to published inscriptions.

I would reiterate my appeal yesterday to this University to put in hand a Glossary of Tamil epigraphical terms.

I have so far, dealt with mainly epigraphy and to some extent or rather, incidentally, literature. The treatment of the subject warrants notice of a few other equally productive sources for historical investigations. I touch on some of them.

Folk songs, especially of the later centuries give specific accounts of coasting voyaging, and trade, and sidelights on contemporary economic aspects. One such unpublished "Boat Song" (Kappal pāṭṭu) came to my notice. My study of this work can at once be an example of this type of source material and an instance of applied methodology for undravelling its content. It is appended.<sup>72</sup>

"Foreign notices" of travellers and missionaries give a lot of detail of their observations. But they are interest-specific, and the products of subjective observations. In areas where that activity is a segment of historical experience to be reconstructed, their utility is high. A case study of the "early history of the Christians in South India" (upto AD 1660)<sup>73</sup> provides a model for the appropriate methodology to be applied to the Jesuit and Franciscan correspondence and sources. But these are mostly in Portuguese or Latin. The knowledge of the languages in which the correspondence was carried on, is a pre-requisite

I must not fail to refer to an important source-material the archival records. These have been increasingly put to use but I am afraid the applied historiographical system - analysis can bear a lot of improvement. I had occasion to

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72. Appendix VII.

73. Appendix VIII.



study a significant aspect of the history of Village communities in South India from the 18th to early 20th century. The period was a watershed and had marked a transition from a long era of social stratification and economic community holdings to one of individual rights legally enforceable in courts of law set up by the British. It at once contained vestiges of the old and the impress of the new way of life and legal concepts. Making use of the original archival material I have made a study and examined the causes of the weakening and decay<sup>74</sup> of the village communities. This study I thought, could be both an illustration in the methodology of use of the archival data, besides the substantive subject being significant and the original conclusions thereon.

A second such archival study is, on "the Board of Revenue", a historic institution in Madras administration, its working and its characteristic features. This study helps to understand the evolution of the Revenue administration of the 'Presidency of Madras' and the decisive role of an institution which was next only to the Governor-in-Council in the powers it wielded. It was, "the sovereign of the sovereign" as it could suggest legislation to Government even at its inception. Over the century and a half of its existence, due to administrative changes and the growing concentration of authority with the Government it almost got reduced to the position of a "servant of the servant"; much to the chagrin of the senior most Civil Servants in the Board. This paper brings out the Board's functional efficacy and in a lighter vein its idiosyncracis.<sup>75</sup>

An equally important but scarce material in our country are the private papers and correspondence of our national

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74. Appendix IX.

75. Appendix X.

leaders. They throw light on their personalities, the role that they played in public life and the contribution to the national struggle. They are even more significant revealing the 'inner democracy' in national organisations, the interaction among the varied personalities and the particular, characteristic manner of their individual or personal points of view. As a case study I have analysed the correspondence of the late Sri S. Satyamurti.<sup>76</sup> This paper has an even greater topical and local significance as Sri S. Satyamurti played a very prominent part in the framing of the Act which brought this University into being

I may also refer to another work of mine, which has utilised the 150 years of archival records of the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry, supplemented by the unpublished records in Governmental archives for the period of study (1830 to 1982). The "Voice of Enterprise"<sup>77</sup> is a history of the growth of industry and commerce first under the Raj and later in free India. It deals with every aspect of economic problems that had been faced during this period.

Towards the end I must express a note of concern. The memory house for intellectual effort is getting dismantled. It is apt to, when any existing old order yields place to the new. In the process the very concept of where to locate sources and what to look for therein are both fading. I thought it should help research students interested if they

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76. Appendix XI.

77. "The Voice of Enterprise" - Macmillan International (1986). A similar exercise from the unpublished papers of the late Sri T. T. Krishnamachari has been completed in his biography bringing out his ideas on economic development and contribution thereto (East West Publication - 1988). T. T. Maps, Madras.

could get an idea of the Revenue system of Madras as embedded in the revenue records of the State. These have a long history tracing their roots to the Cola and Pandya times. Many a feature of our earlier age have survived and got grafted to the evolving administrative structure that the British reared. But that structure itself is now giving way and is apt to get dismantled in parts in fifty years after Independence. The 'lounge duree' of the accounting and administrative systemisation is itself under threat. It is therefore, I thought, topical to make use of this academic forum to give an integrated and comprehensive system of Land Revenue Records of the compisite State,<sup>78</sup> their purpose, and their historical utility.

Finally, history itself has now come to be interpreted as a study of the life of man, in all its aspects. There is no longer an antithesis between history viewed as an art and the physical and material sciences. That fashionable view of the nineteenth century has become obsolete. If history were to deal with life of man as a whole it concerns itself with his occupational, nutritional and physiological, medical and all other aspects of his life. An Annals School Scholar, Roy de Ladurie has even analysed statistically data from the Church records of birth and established how stress affects woman and her menstrual cycles. The war, periods of long separation, of tension and family stress have been held out to cause amonnorhea. With this widened vista of historical investigations, history is also a source for reconstructing the history of sciences. How it can be done from ephigraphical sources and to what areas are they relevant have been set out in a paper.<sup>79</sup>

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78. Appendix XII.

79. Appendix XIII - Epigraphy as a source of history of science.

In these lectures I have aimed at presenting four distinct aspects - first, problems of epigraphy, second, historiographical methods as applied mainly to epigraphy and what to expect from such investigations, third the varied sources and aids available or necessary for the historian to utilise, and above all, the manner in which they can be used. I have not merely been content with enunciating the principles and methods but have appended case studies on different topics in relation to the particular type of sources best suited for every one of them. The results, I trust, will be a dependable guide to the genuine researcher even as the reasoned conclusions in the case studies will be of interest to the students of these substantive subjects.

These, I thought, would be the most worthy form of paying my tribute to the late Sri Sathyanatha Iyer, a pioneer in the history of the South in the post-16th century and modern times, a great guide and teacher to honour whose memory these lectures are delivered.

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## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS\*

I am keenly sensible of the great honour done to me by the scholars assembled, and the Epigraphical Society of India in electing me as the General President of the Annual Congress this year, I am equally aware of my own inadequacies to hold this high office. I accepted it, nevertheless, in great humility. First it is an act of kindness of my eminent scholar-friends which I cannot but requit. Second I owe it to the discipleship and life-long association with that great savant, my Professor, the late K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, and I would take this honour as the tribute to the discipline he inculcated in me. Third it encourages me a great deal to do continued original research in the most fascinating part of my life's work—to interpret the technical and administrative terms in the inscriptions and further my efforts to unravel their authentic meaning and purport. The data thus yielded help reconstruct in a fuller canvas the economic and social history of the people and of the different tracts, a task still left with large gaps to fill.

I bow to the scholarship and achievements of the great savants, the past Presidents from Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra, and D. C. Sircar, downwards and to the doyens in the field like Dr. K. D. Bajpai and K. V. Ramesh who are valued guides in the discipline and for our deliberations. Our homage is also due to the pioneer epigraphists of India, Dr. Hultzsch, Kielhorn, Fleet, Venkayya, Krishna Sastri, K. V. Subrahmanya

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Delivered at the XIIIth Annual Congress of the Epigraphical Society of India held at Patna on 17th, 18th and 19th of April 1987.

Iyer, Gopinatha Rao, A. S. Ramanatha Iyer, V. V. Mirashi, Hirananda Sastri and a host of others. It is appropriate to invoke them, as we do in a Nāndi ceremony—on this Centenary Year of the Department. To them we owe the rich source-material and the persistent and pains-taking efforts to reconstruct the history of our land. The histories of almost all dynasties in the Central and South India and of the mighty kingdoms of the Mauryas and the Guptas mainly rest on the life-work of those eminent epigraphists.

I am a student of epigraphy and history by innate interest and involvement. Administration was the area of my service by turn of circumstances. In my case the two had blended, and mutually nurtured each other. For a good part of my career, I was commissioned to investigate land tenures and formulate proposals for legislation, and to settle the intermediary tenures involving over 10,000 sq. miles of field work. The methods of historical investigation inculcated in me were of avail for my administrative work and helped locate and identify the different tenures. My 12 years' field settlement work, footing every bund, and ridge and heath, fastened my mind on the agrarian factors and practices and agricultural usages and the authentic terminology in the rural areas. It also threw up sites and inscriptions which had not been noticed earlier. Close to the ground, face to face with the surviving modes and terms of agrarian economy that the inscriptions present, it also gave a facility to interpret the terms back from the still extant practices and usages. Mark Block's methodology of proceeding backwards from the "grown animal" to the "embryo" was thus applied, with this difference that the embryo itself had survived in some cases, as if they were frozen for centuries. It is not an accident that many Settlement Officers and Administrators had contributed to epigraphical discoveries and historical research.

The intertwined discipline also underlined the importance and utility of a firm grip over the location and geo-agrarian conditions and helped formulate a methodology of my own which are evidenced by the several papers, and my work on the Townships of South India. I was enabled to pursue the latest of the series, the Pāṇḍyan townships under the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship so graciously awarded to me.

We are particularly fortunate in the venue of the session. Patna was the capital of the first great monarchy in Indian history. It was here that Kauṭilya resoundingly proclaimed the inherent integrity of India: 'Dēsaḥ pṛithvī tasyām himavat-samudrāntaram udīchīnām yōjana-sahasra-parimāṇam tiryak chakravarttikshētram'.<sup>1</sup>

"The land which extends north to south from the Himalayas to the sea, and measures a thousand yōjanas across, is the field of the Chakravartin" - an ideal fully realised under Aśoka.

That statement enunciates the "lively realisation of the possibility of a united state embracing all India, which was attained centuries before the beginnings of the British rule in India, in the 4th century B. C. when the first all India empire of the Mauryas" was established. This articulated concept of the integrity of India is the gift of Kauṭilya's mind to India.<sup>2</sup>

Patna has not only made history, but has helped reconstruct it. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who was a First citizen evinced great interest in the Bhāratīya Itihāsa Parishad's project for a comprehensive history of India. We are meeting under the distinguished auspices of a great Institute

1. *Arthaśāstra* ed. by T. Ganapati Sastri, *Adhikarana*, ch. 1, p. 45, T.S.S.
2. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Chakravartikshētram*, K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar Commemoration Volume, pp. 82 - 86.

named after the eminent historian and orientalist, K. P. Jayaswal and the Bihar Research Society. Sri Jayaswal was a pathfinder (*mārgadarsi*), and has made original contribution on ancient Indian polity. The Bihar Research Society has to its credit a good deal of original works. Our thanks are due to these organisations for hosting the Congress and making excellent arrangements. Bihar is an inexhaustible State for its natural resources as well as its historic and antiquarian relics. It was the cradle of Indian civilization.

I may also recall a coincidence which gives me particular strength and personal happiness. The Ninth Session of the Indian History Congress (1946) held here in Patna 40 years ago was presided over by my Professor, K.A.N. Sastri. It is relevant to recall his observations made in his address on epigraphical research at the time. He stated "while the Archaeological Department has apparently entered on a period of expansion and renewed activity under our National Government (formed in 1946) epigraphy does not appear to be getting the measure of attention it merits. This is a matter of importance to all students of the ancient and medieval history of India, and it is vital to the study of South Indian history. Only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of inscriptions listed has been published as yet, and much of it with no sort of aids to the students; and what is more, large areas rich in their inscriptions still await systematic survey and exploration. The need for strengthening the epigraphical branch of the Archaeological Survey particularly in the Southern circle both for exploration and for speeding up the publication of the annual reports which have not appeared after 1938 and of the texts of inscriptions is, indeed, very urgent".<sup>3</sup>

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3. Indian History Congress, Ninth Session (1946), Presidential Address by K. A. N. Sastri, p. 29.



Prof. Sastri's assessment made in 1946, a watershed period, could well afford a benchmark for us. The Epigraphist Department, reckoning from the date of Dr. Hultzsch's assumption of office (21-11-1886) had then completed 60 years. The current year is the centenary year of the Department. It is opportune to take stock of the magnificent achievements of the Department over the century, and the progress made after India became free, and formulate the lines of further development, and means for the effective utilisation of the rich treasures garnered by the Department.

The intensive survey of inscriptions, in the Southern states especially, is a long felt-want. Many of the monuments are crumbling, and the stones bearing the inscriptions are being removed, mutilated or lost. The field investigation staff of the Central Epigraphical Department has to be strengthened by opening a few circles, or decentralize units functioning in each State. The survey can, predictably yield a rich crop. The sooner these efforts are organised, the greater will be their utility. The central units can also co-ordinate with the State agencies and others in the field, and consolidate the field discoveries. The stress laid by Prof. Sastri on the need for strengthening the staff for epigraphic explorations is as valid today as it was in 1946. Our Prime Minister has set a high store by our ancient and rich cultural heritage, and has taken several steps to revive the glory of the past. We can trust that the Government of India would take note of the primary need to collect and conserve the most authentic part of our heritage, the inscriptions, without which the true history of our people cannot be compiled. It is, indeed, yet to be for many regions of the country.

The Department has collected over 85,000 estampages of inscriptions scattered all over India in all the regional

languages, besides Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. But exploration and listing of inscriptions has still to be done intensively, especially in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. New finds are also reported from other States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. Almost all the states have organised their own Department of Archaeology with field staff in the districts to bring to light new archaeological and epigraphic finds. Many registered societies and voluntary organisations are functioning besides. The proliferation of these agencies brings, in its wake, problems of co-ordination and consolidation of data. A sub-committee of the Planning Group on Art and Culture in the Ministries of Planning and Culture, which I had then the privilege to chair has recommended a network of three-tier information system-voluntary agencies reporting to the State Department of Archaeology. The Department will add its own listed inscriptions and send an annual list to the Epigraphist Department of the Government of India, which will be the Central agency to consolidate and publish the lists for all India. So too, the estampages and the texts of inscriptions together will be collected by the State Department of which it will furnish a duplicate set to the Central Epigraphist Department to consolidate and publish the gists thereof in the annual reports. Even if the State Departments or other agencies have their own publications, there should be a cross-referencing in the Epigraphist Department's publication series.

The listing should include the Sanskrit, Tamil and Prakrit inscriptions in overseas countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam and China, besides the Trans-Himalayan regions in the U.S.S.R. and in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These are indispensable for an indepth study of India's contact with the surrounding areas in the continent

and the Far East. The corpus of the inscriptions overseas could also be brought together in one or more volumes.

It is gratifying to note that the annual reports have been published upto 1977 - 78. The remaining backlog for over 8 years persists. The sooner this is liquidated the greater will be the source-data available for historiographical analysis.

The most pressing problem is the publication of the texts. Of the 85,000 inscriptions listed in the Annual Reports, only about 15,000 have been so far published. Some more are in the press. The backlog is formidable. Only inscriptions collected upto 1909 have been published, more are in the Press. Inscriptions copied in 78 years thereafter are still not edited and printed. This is fraught with serious consequences.

The estampages are already 78 years old. Many of them are the only available copies of the inscriptions. In the last 100 years temples have become dilapidated, structures had been pulled down for renovation. Stones have been dislodged, removed or lost. In remote villages sculptures and stones have been the victims of art piracy abetted by thefts and pilferage. It is no longer possible to replace the estampages of the inscriptions lost for ever. Also due to age some of them, however carefully preserved could crumble or be misplaced or disarranged. In the absence of the original inscriptions, and their estampages, we have to rest content with the brief abstract notice in the Annual Report, without any means of checking it or of obtaining essential details.

The ideal method would have been for the field copying staff to transcribe the texts and cross-check them with the eye-copy and with the topo-details of location of each.

In the beginning of the century even upto the forties - when the inscriptions were copied, the local idiom, the authentic rural usage of agricultural, agrarian and tenorial terms, the local measurements, and their units, and the arithmetical system of the lands were all in avogue. The early epigraphists could get at the retained memory of the indigenous and agrarian usage. Unfortunately with a gap of two or three generations, the deciphering staff at the desk at this distance of time, devoid of these aids are placed at a great disadvantage. The scribe uses symbols for numerals, or for denoting coins or area measurements and contractions for many others, the field *ayacut* (command area) divisions (*Kannar, Sadukkam, Pādagam*). Some of these symbols signify several values, which would have to be distinguished from the context. The use of the symbol or contraction was as natural to them because the contemporary knowledge was only too familiar with it as it is bewildering to us.

As a result, some texts, as a whole, and in others the crucial operative parts of the inscriptions are apt to be left blank. The transcriptions could suffer from inaccuracy, and corruption. I have found these deficiencies in some of the texts published by some agencies. The premier organisation of the Epigraphist Department, with its supreme stress on quality, fidelity and accuracy endcavour to stcer clear of these possible deficiencies. They have to guard against these by conscious and systematic training which I have stressed below.

Printing too, poses problem. Over the years even the State Government Presses which printed the *South Indian Inscription volumes*, have become depleted in the requisite types and letters, especially for scripts like Tamil-Grantha and Nāgarī for Sanskrit inscriptions. Either the script has fallen into disuse or the school curricula do not provide for

its learning. Proof readers are even more scarce. The difficulties will only get aggravated in future.

It is imperative that the transcription and the critical edition and publication of inscriptions are done on a vigorous and systematic basis. Even a phased programme for publishing the texts at 10,000 per year will take seven years to cover the backlog alone. Meanwhile the current collections at the rate of 500 per year will also need to be transcribed and edited then and there, to avoid a further build up of backlog.

In this context I should pay a tribute to the Government of Karnataka and the Mysore University and Dr. B R. Gopal for the excellent re-editions of the *Epigraphia Carnatica*, nine volumes of which have been published in the last few years.

It is necessary to bring out a parallel series for publishing inscriptions from the Northern States-North Indian Inscriptions. Sanskrit, Prakrit and the local dialects are now getting scarcer attention. The late Dr. D C. Sircar whom I met, before his demise, wept that there are no adequate epigraphists with training in deciphering Sanskrit inscriptions.

The Department's prestigious publication of the *Epigraphia Indica* is also in arrears, as the Government Press is not able to cope with the high-quality technical work involved.

It is necessary to take corrective steps, organizational expansion, and systems-remedies. The Epigraphist Department's circle offices, outlined earlier can help tackle a larger volume of editing, comparing and proof-reading and printing of inscriptions. Secondly, the available capacity of the State Government Presses and the Central Government Press should be harnessed in full. Specific items of printing could be entrusted to private agencies if any additional capacity is needed, in view of the priority attached to the work.

Recognising this need, the Seventh plan has treated the printing and publication of the Inscriptions as a Plan scheme and an adequate provision has been made. Under its energetic and capable Director, Dr. K V. Ramesh, the Department is seized of the urgency and importance of this work and pushing through the work; despite the unrelieved shortage of staff.

The older volumes of the *Epigraphia Indica*, the *South Indian Inscriptions* and the *Annual Reports* are a mine of information, and have to be reprinted. This is best done by the photo-offset process. The Department can have a Press for its own special and technical work, as the volume will justify it. Mechanical aids like word-processors, photo-copying machines and latest state-of-the-arts office equipment, if provided, would greatly facilitate a speedier completion of the tasks.

The recent Pay Commission's recommendations could also help alleviate in some measure the real hardship to this highly qualified and specialised staff. I have been, in my own humble way, contributing my mite to help the Department in its dedicated work, when I was in the State Government and in the Centre. But more remains to be done.

The requirements noticed by Prof. Sastri in 1946, have been only partially fulfilled through the several steps taken. We have to persist in these measures until the set objectives are fully realised.

I now turn to the substantive part of the discipline. Naturally, my observations are drawn from the *South Indian Inscriptions* which are my field of specialisation. Every scholar acquainted with inscriptions knows that there are two distinct parts of the inscriptions. The first is the formal part giving the *Prasasti* or *meykirti* of the rulers, the names of the rulers and the regnal year in which the grant was made. Some of

these *prasastis* are valuable because they consciously update the achievements of the rulers from time to time. This enables us to fix the data of particular historical events. This part of the inscriptions has received closer attention both from the historians and the epigraphists in the last 100 years. It is natural, indeed essential. Without such a study a chronological frame of the political history of the tract cannot emerge. If we now have a fairly well-settled dynastic history for the different tracts, we owe it to this pioneer study.

But the inscriptions are not primarily meant to merely record this formal part of it. Some of the inscriptions consciously slur over this part by using the phrase "*meykirtikku mēl*" without giving the full text of the *meykirti* itself. The second part is the more important because it gives the substantive purport of the deed—the conveyance of a grant or the terms of the occupancy or tenancy attached to the land and the shared interests in their different proportions from out of the yield of the land. A systematic study of the second part of the inscriptions will throw a flood of light on the economic and social conditions and the structure and organisation of the community at the time. This part of the work is yet to be accomplished in full though a broad framework already available will bear revision, and certainly, amplification. But it is not easy to interpret this part of the inscriptions for varied reasons. Here again Prof. K.A.N. Sastri may be quoted :

"The criticism (that the political history has received primary importance) whatever its validity at other times appears to be somewhat inopportune at the present moment because it is yet too soon to turn our attention away from the study of political history. Any picture

of social life, if it is to be of real significance, must have a firmly established chronology to fit into".<sup>4</sup>

While this statement had its validity when Prof. Sastri wrote it in 1929 enough work has been done subsequently by the learned Professor himself, in the field of political history, his work on "*The Cōlas*" being the most outstanding contribution on the subject, and this political framework has been established fairly well, and Sastri himself showed the way for analysing the administrative and social life of the people in his book on "*The Cōlas*"; very little was done subsequently on this field. The reasons are not far to seek. Prof. Sastri, recognising the difficulties in the process of enquiry, has brought out two important points when he observed :

- (i) "In the inscriptions of South India are to be found many technical terms bearing on social, economic, military and administrative matters. A correct understanding of these terms is an essential preliminary to the reconstruction of social life of the period", and
- (ii) "the scientific study and interpretation of the South Indian history has not advanced far beyond the elementary stages. The temptation is very strong to forge ahead with sweeping conclusions drawn for stray facts without waiting for the chain of evidence to be completed".

It is time that we devote fuller attention to the deciphering of the inscriptions in these known areas of lacunae. In doing so, an epigraphist will have to acquire several

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4. Address by K.A.N. Sastri, *Journal of the Madras University*, (1929).



primary requisites. First, the contemporary idiom of the language has to be mastered and their terminology, and etymology well understood. It will be fatal to import into the medieval usages the modern sense the words have come to acquire over the ages. *Pisānam*, for instance, is a term which denotes the main paddy crop raised. It occurs in Rājārāja's inscriptions not to go beyond. It is derived from a variety of paddy called *Pisānam* a long term variety of paddy grown to synchronise with the normal north-east monsoon in the South.<sup>5</sup> Of late, attempts have been made to connect it with "*Pisānam*" or irrigation. The *Pisānam* crop is not only grown in the irrigated areas, but also in the rain-fed tracts as well. Secondly, one has to acquire a thorough proficiency, in the linear and liquid measurements of the times, and also the mode of calculations prevalent at that time. There is for instance, a work called '*Kanakkadikāram*' though perhaps compiled late by one Karipulavar of Sirkali, in verses. It still gives an insight into the methodology of the pre-British modes of arithmetical calculations. This is particularly important in the context of unravelling the linear or area measurements given in the inscriptions. After the laborious and painstaking efforts of Hultzsch given in the footnote to Volume-II<sup>6</sup> of the *South Indian Inscriptions* while editing Thanjavur inscriptions, there has not been further detailed study of this aspect, to my knowledge.

Thirdly, a glossary of the contractions or the abbreviations used for the denominations of cash, for area measures or linear measures should be compiled. The same abbreviations had served more than one purpose or denotation :

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5. *Tamil Lexicon*, Vol V. p. 2648; see also *Wilson's Glossary* (1940).

6. *SII.*, Vol. II, p. 66, f.n. 1 and p. 73.

also the abbreviations could vary from tract to tract and certainly so with the languages of the inscriptions. It is important that we do not ignore these measures or these details of location and measurements, and topo details which are essential for reconstructing the cadastral structure of the township and the agrarian system.

Fourthly, for lack of attention to such details the most vital part and fascinating part of the inscriptions are apt to be missed. Many of the South Indian Inscriptions give details of the terms of occupancy or tenancy of the varied scales of dues payable to the State or to its assignees (*varisai*). Latterly for lack of sustained interest in the numerals or because the estampages were not clear because of age, much of data in numerals are apt to be left blank or are not adequately accurately transcribed.

Fifthly, even the earlier epigraphist has sometimes been affected by a tedium. When a number of signatories are found at the end of the inscriptions he had merely noted in the original transcriptions, a number of signatories that follow. Here again I would submit that the full details of the signatories are an important mine of information. Where the signatories are royal officers, it helps us to connect the inscriptions to particular ruler or period if the identity of the royal officers who had subscribed to the documents could be established. Further the nativity of the royal officers who signed the various documents found in the different tracts would reveal whether there has been any pattern or system of deploying officers in parts of the kingdom or tracts other than the places of their nativity. It could even throw up why particular localities have contributed a larger contingent of the officialdom.

The names of various signatories representing the different organisations like the *sabha*, the *ur*, the *nādu* and the *nagaram*,

also yield a lot of information on the nativity of the persons who subscribed to the documents. Family histories could be compiled. The contributions made by successive generations of the original family of the donors who constructed the temple or those who made additions to it could also be gleaned from such proper names of the signatories.

We would indeed be missing a good part of the authentic data essential for reconstructing the social and economic history of the regions if we do not pay fuller attention to these aspects of the inscriptions. Let it not be forgotten that it is this substantive part of the inscriptions giving such full details that had really been of contemporary interest and that was the motivation for recording documents on stone. We should prove true to the heritage of such lithic records. In fact some of the important inscriptions dealing with the agrarian conditions have been repeatedly recorded as in Mannārguḍi in the same temple or in adjacent localities of different places, like Tirukkaḍugāvūr and Achalpuram or Perichchikōyil and Kaṇḍramāṇikkam. This repetition is a measure of the contemporary significance attached to the transactions recorded therein, and how vitally those transactions affected their life.

The points made above only underline the need for the thorough equipment for the epigraphist. It is as important for him to acquire mastery over the accumulated expertise of the eminent scholars of the past, as to have the further investigational curiosity and equipment to verify, correct and interpret the terminology and the use of expressions in the inscriptions to accord with the original intentions of those who made the deed or subscribed to the transactions. This is an arduous task. It requires scholarly discipline. It requires a respect for tradition, but not an unquestioning respect, but tempered with the scientific spirit of interrogation.

The qualities enunciated above can be ensured only if a strong cadre of epigraphists is built up. We have some continuity of this cadre, but its strength is not enough. It will be necessary to build a much wider cadre of epigraphists all over the country. This pre-supposes specialisation. It is not possible for any one to deal with the inscriptions of all languages in which they are written all over the country. The cadre should have wings - one for Sanskrit and Prakrit and another for Kannaḍa, a third for Telugu, a fourth for Persian and Arabic, the fifth for Tamil and Malayāḷam, and so on.

Indeed, there should be as many wings as there are languages in which these inscriptions are inscribed. There should also be a correlation between the spoken language of the times and the inscriptional diction. For, very often they are complementary. A study of the *Iḍu* commentaries (13th and 14th centuries) on the *Divya Prabandha* could unravel the meanings of the many of the terms used in the inscriptions. I am sure that a similar correlation of the language and the literature of every tract and inscriptional diction could yield suggestion which is otherwise apt to be missed.

I would, therefore, conclude this address with an earnest appeal to the Government of India and to the State Governments to build up a cadre of epigraphists. Perhaps the surest organisational method of building up the cadre is to constitute a separate Department of Epigraphy under a Director-General. The volume of work, and the wide range of operation will need it. With the expansion of field work and increase in the volume that are contemplated in the collection, transcription, editing and publication of the inscriptions and on merits, it will be fully justified if the Department is no longer tied to the apron strings of the Department of Archaeology.

The Department of Archaeology has also expanded, and has its own intensive work and excavations and studies to conduct. The Department of Epigraphy has come of age, and it can and should have its own specialisation, individuality, and free orbit of functioning. I would earnestly request the Government to give serious thought to this suggestion towards its early implementation.

I would submit that the epigraphists should aim at mastery of particular linguistic diction or scriptory modes which are used by the inscriptions of particular tracts so that an intensive knowledge and expertise can be developed for each. Quality is important and nothing but the most authentic could or should satisfy the epigraphists. Such qualities, thoroughness and comprehensiveness and an earnest attempt to get at the true meaning or purport of the words used have been the characteristics of the pioneer of the epigraphists in the country, Hultsch; and he was a beacon for generations to come. We should revive those standards. It is not the least part of the work to fully transcribe and interpret the contents of the inscriptions in its entirety, not ignoring any part of it and not leaving out of account any part as formal and not of consequence. To do so, to repeat, would be to lose consciously, shall I say, criminally the valuable leaves from the pages of the past. The best of all accounts of the past could only be a Palimpsest and the more we lose the details, the greater will be the void in it.

It behoves us, therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, to pay the fullest attention to get at the facts, the whole facts, and nothing but the facts that the inscriptions yield us. I am sure the Epigraphist Department and the noble but small band of scholars working in the field are fully alive to these desiderata. Some of the suggestions that had occurred to me would also appeal to fellow-scholars and friends in the field.

If these are translated into action, the future of epigraphy will be assured, and the more assured it is, the greater is the scope for study and understanding of our own past better and fuller. A country like India with its long and rich heritage can ill afford to lose any part of it, without being brought to light.

We should bend our energies to this task, and turn our mind on the still lurking and lingering blanks or gaps in the deciphering and interpretation of epigraphs. There is little time to lose in undertaking this task.

I thank you, once again, for the honour done to me and I trust that I have been of some assistance in defining the task before us. I am confident that it is a task which is well within our reach and grasp.

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PROF. K. A. NILAKANTA SASTRI  
**THE HISTORIAN OF SOUTH INDIA - HIS  
TECHNIQUES AND METHODS**

The first half of this Century in India was a strange combination of Imperial Rule of Britain, and the Indian intellectual efflorescence. One of the forms it took was the impetus given to scientific investigation of our past. It drew inspiration as much from the historiographical approach and techniques of the Western historians, as from the sense of national honour and consciousness fostered by the patriots of India. The former held the mythological traditions in a willing suspension of belief. The latter inspired the historian to bring out all past achievements, truly great and noble. The result was a fabric as striking and appealing as the Indian cloth which held the East and the West "in fee". Truth was its warp, and proof its woof.

The enquiry in South Indian history was also a product of this paradoxical mix. Historiography was freed from the bonds of legend and myths. It assiduously sought evidence, its crosscheck, and proof. The conclusions drawn, embedded on verified data, marked a distinct advance in our knowledge of the true history of the country.

Facilities for such investigation were alongside becoming increasingly available. The long-lost Tamil classics were discovered and published by Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer and his precursors. Sanskrit works like the Arthasastra of Kautilya and Bhana's plays were brought to light by R. Shyama Sastri of Mysore and Ganapathi Sastri of Trivandrum. Palmleaf manuscripts secreted by the mutts and

families of Pandits were unearthed and rescued from termites feasting on them. Robert Sewell (of the Madras Civil Service) painstakingly compiled the list of antiquities in the Presidency. New monuments and epigraphs were brought to light by Collectors like Pate, F. J. Richards and Butterworth and Settlement Officers like Chadwick.

Above all, the Epigraphical department organised by the Government of India (then under the control of the Madras Government) in 1886 was headed by able German Scholars, E. Hultzsch and Burgess. It systematically copied the inscriptions strewn all over South India, analysed and translated some of them, and edited and published them with meticulous fidelity and attempt at precision. Others like Kielhorn laboured to evolve the chronology. Jouvean Dubreil brought forth original material on Pallava history. True, a pioneering work can always admit of improvement and modification. But the foundations laid were solid like the rock on which the epigraphs were recorded.

An even more lasting contribution of the pioneer scholars was the chain of Indian Epigraphists whom they trained and made full use of. To name a few, Venkayya, Krishna Sastri, T.A. Gopinath Rao, A.S. Ramanatha Iyer, K.V. Subrahmanya Iyer and C.R. Krishnamacharlu. Their collections ran to tens of thousands, but the pace of transcription and publication was slow. Even today there is a backlog of 81 years of copied inscriptions to be published, which the present Joint Director-General Dr. K.V. Ramesh, and Dr. Katti, Government Epigraphist are assiduously clearing.

Limited though the available data be, they attracted a number of scholars like K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, V. Kanakasabhai, and a number of others. Their work unravelled some phases and



facets of South Indian history. It provided the sinews of a fullfledged story which was still to be framed.

This felt want was supplied by Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. An old sword in its scabbard preserved in his ancestral house at Kallidaikuruchi seemed to suggest that this Telugu Niyogi family had migrated south as part of a military entourage of Vijayanagar in the 16th Century. Born on August 12th, 1892, Nilakantan had his school education in that town, and in the Ambasamudram High School under a legendary headmaster, Sadasiva Iyer with whom he kept contacts till late in their lives. He had his college éducation in the Hindu College, Tirunelveli. Prof. V. Saranathan, S. Vaiyapuri and P.N. Appuswami were his classfellows. Nilakantan got a I Class in F.A. His father gave him Rs. 100/- when he left for Madras to join the Christian College. He took a First Class in M.A., standing first in the Presidency. His was a genius which blossomed out of chill penury, but nurtured by the just adequate scholarships which his merit had won for him.

The first two decades of the Century was a period of national resurgence. It took many forms, some violent and misguided, fired by fiery speakers like Bipin Chandra Pal and others benevolent and constructive under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Gopalakrishna Gokhale, the founder of the Servants of India Society. The "five M.A.s" as they were called, Nilakantan, K.P. Yagnesvara Sarma, V. Saranathan, N. Sankara Iyer and K.C. Veeraraghava Aiyar were inspired by the lofty idealism of Gokhale. They evolved a scheme by which the Hindu College was to be made a replica of Fergusson College, Poona where selfless teachers (foregoing half the meagre salary they would secure) would turn out generations of students imbued with a sense of patriotism and sacrifice. But the scheme came to grief owing to the

opposition of the Conservative Principal, Srinivasa Iyer, and of the management under Narayana Aiyah (1913 - 1918).

Nilakanta Sastri became Professor of History in Benares Hindu University (1918) founded by Pandit Maḷavya. Two years later, on the invitation of Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar, he became the Principal of the Meenakshi College at Chidambaram. During his 8 years tenure he built up the College from an Intermediate college with about 70 students, to the level of the (Annamalai) University.

The following 18 years (from 1929-47) when he was Professor of History and Archaeology in the Madras University was the period of his great intellectual achievements, and outstanding contributions to South Indian historical research and historiography. He held the Professorship of Indology in the Mysore University (1952 to 1956) and was a visiting Professor in the Chicago University (1959). From 1957 to 1971 he headed the Institute of Traditional Cultures founded under the auspices of the UNESCO in Madras. In his later years, he had also contributed articles to "The Hindu" on some problems of the day. He passed away on 15th June, 1975.

His first work was the reconstruction of the Pandyan History (1929). His MAGNUM OPUS was "The Cholas" in two volumes (1935 and 1937). His other works included editing the "Foreign Notices of South India", and the "Further sources of Vijayanagar History" (together with Dr. N. Venkataramanayya), both source books for research. His interest in South East Asian History fanned out in "The History of Srivijaya" and a number of articles on the South Indian influence in Far East. Besides a large *corpus* of learned research papers (running to three volumes) he has also authored the "History of South India", a comprehensive inter connected story of the Deccan and the South upto the

end of Vijayanagar era. He contributed several chapters to the "History of the Deccan" edited by Yazdani. His association with Dr. Rajendra Prasad began in 1937 when the Bharatiya Itihas Parishad was founded. He edited the volume on "The age of the Nandas and the Mauryas" writing many chapters in it himself. The volume on the Mauryan period edited by him was the only volume to appear under the ambitious scheme framed by the Indian History Congress. He was the General President of the Indian History Congress, Patna in 1946 and of the All India Oriental Conference, Lucknow in 1952. In 1958 he was decorated with the award of "Padma Bhushan".

Prof. Sastri realised the need to frame and inculcate a methodology, adopting the principles of modern historiography. "Historical method in relation to problems of South Indian History" is a penetrating and practicable analysis of the methods of investigation which can be applied to the available sources for South Indian history. He was a path-finder (Margadarsi). He not only laid a path for further research, but guided how the path has to be laid, clearing the wood and the maze. His was essentially an *a posteriori* method. Gathering of data from all available sources was the first pre-requisite, and its cross check with collateral evidence and analysis next. He would not rest content without gathering data, and he would not desist from arriving at a conclusion or altering it where fresh and dependable data warranted it. He took nothing for granted and was almost magisterial in weighing and evaluating evidence. "The principle adopted in this work" (The Early History of Deccan) wrote Prof. Sastri "is not to accept as history any statement of Bilhana (the author of *Vikramankadeva charita*) which is not clearly corroborated by other evidence". Nor was he entirely sold on the 'Meykirtis' in Chola inscriptions or pure literary works like "*Parani* and *Ula*". This rendered his inferences more

secure And yet, he had often altered his conclusions on the Pandyan history when the evidence from the Chola epigraphs or the Ceylonese chronicles would argue for it. He did not hesitate to revise some of his conclusions in the Cholas when the Chalukyan evidence was clinching against the version in Chola panegyrics.

Prof. Sastri had an integrated perspective of South Indian History. He appreciated that the history of one tract or dynasty or even an age was necessarily intertwined with that of others, near and remote. An integrated wholeness of the History of South India stretching out its arms across the Vindhya was the result. Life would not admit of a parenthesis in its sequence, if only evidence could be had for the whole.

His conception of history was comprehensive, coeval with every aspect of human activity or achievement. In every one of his works he touched on the social, the economic, the religious, art and literary aspects of the age, however, inadequate the available material was, and however difficult the interpretational effort involved.

He disseminated this approach and methodology among his students and research scholars. From that fount streams of scholarly investigation and discipline flowed; they continue to. His substantive contribution was to provide a cogent and well formulated framework for the political history of South India as a whole. It provided a plinth and a scaffolding for superstructures to be raised and embellished by the generations of scholars thereafter.

As a teacher he took paternal interest in the students. The author during his Fellowship under him and even after, was a 'boy of the home' spending almost the whole day with him, imbibing his working processes and his spirit of inquiry,

fidelity to fact, and fearless freedom of thought and expression. That "Gurukula" discipline also gave him the invaluable exposure to great minds of the day, like Sri T.R.V. Sastri, Sri V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, Professors Saranathan, and Vaiyapuri, Swaminathan and a host of others. The long evening walk was at once a physical and mental exercise, keeping the body and the mind trim.

The Professor cared for the welfare of his students. Advising me to compete in the first all India Services Examination held in 1947, he cautioned from the summer holidaying at Fernhill that "adequate rest pauses in the midst of strenuous effort was a necessary part of the preparedness for the examination". Characteristically, the tiffin with him every afternoon was brown bread and honey with a cup of fine tea. His was a simple life, devoted only to learning. He would seek knowledge and information from his colleagues like Vaiyapuri and T.R. Chintamani like a student, and would generously acknowledge his indebtedness to them. Even in later years, he assiduously kept up his studies, writing to schedule, dictating the texts with brief notes in hand.

His principal works on the Pandyas and the Cholas still hold the field though the Professor himself was keenly sensible of its inherent imperfections and was anxious that they should be made good. Every one of his chapters in "The Cholas" can lend itself to be developed into a volume. Traversing the entire range of the very transcripts, he had worked with as the author has had the good fortune to, the author is struck by the amazing extraction of data from the minutest detail, the fidelity to the epigraphic sources, the precise statement of his findings coupled with suggestive observations and areas for further probe. These attributes invest his works with the stamp of true classics.

The Centenary celebrations of this great historian and noble person (1992-93) should remind us that dedicated work alone can make our lives purposeful and sublime. His own works have left a lasting impress – History is truth, and truth history. The more we learn the more we know. Research scholarship cannot be static and can never be complete. If prophesy is no part of his work, the historian can yet “like a showman, point to the things of the past as they unravel themselves with their manifold and mysterious message”.

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## **THE CONTRIBUTION OF PROF. K.A. NILA KANTA SASTRI TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF KARNATAKA**

The political history of South India<sup>1</sup> (from A.D. 600 to 1600) is essentially the history of the several dynasties which ruled over the different tracts therein, and the interaction among them. The pioneer historians naturally, concentrated on this basic and important aspect. It became evident to everyone of them that an intelligible and cogent history of any one dynasty or tract cannot be presented succinctly without the study of the data on the dynasties or the tracts that came into conflict with or struck alliances of peace and matrimony with the former. The alliances helped to enlarge the spheres of influence of the principal contestants or alternatively to mutually respect the integrity of each other's domain and power.

The period from 7th to the 9th century witnessed the struggle for supremacy among the three empires, - the Cālukyas, the Pallavās and the Pāndyas. The four centuries from the middle of the ninth to the beginning of the thirteenth constituted an age, when the Cōḷas and the Cālukyas had their borders running cheek by jowl. The Raichur doab and the tract between the Tungabhadra and

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1. This term 'South India' is used throughout this paper to refer to that geographical part of the country, South of the Vindhyaś, upto Kanyākumari and hence includes the Deccan.

the Krisna was a veritable cockpit of the age. This was followed by the 'age of the four kingdoms', - the Pāṇdyas of the second empire, the Hoysaḷās, the Yādavas (Sevunāḥ) and Kākatīyas. Lesser dynasties who found themselves sandwiched between the principal powers, like the Gaṅgas of Taḷakād, or the Bāṇas and the Kadambas were inevitably drawn into the vortex of the politics, which was dominated by the principal powers named above. No dynasty or tract could remain in isolation and be exempt from the effects of the policies of war and peace pursued by the dominant power, *interse* or *vis-a-vis* their neighbouring kingdoms.<sup>2</sup>

It was only after Vijayanagar attained the dimensions and the status of a really imperial power that South India came to be held by one authority, whose impact was felt all over the South in varying degrees of potency.

There is a second compulsion. The mainstay of the sources for reconstructing the political history of South India are the epigraphic records strewn all over the area. The PRASASTI or the MEYKIRTI part of the inscription gives (a) the details of the lineage of the ruler, and (b) the principal exploits of the rulers with special emphasis on the conquests of the ruler for the time being. Sometimes, the epigraphs get deliberately amplified periodically to incorporate the subsequent events and the conquests made from time to time.<sup>3</sup> These help in two ways. (i) to fix the

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2. This was the conceptual rationale of the chase formulated in Prof. Sastri's "History of South India" (OUP - 1976) and in "The History of India Part - I" (Publishers: S. Viswanathan - 1963). In an intertwined account of the political history of the different dynasties is given.

3. Such instances could be noticed in the Pāṇḍya, the Cōḷa, the Cāḷukya epigraphs.



chronology of the events with the evidence as far as ascertainable, and (ii) to cross - check the events with the evidence coming forth from the inscriptions of the counterpart rulers of the rival dynasties. This latter helps to assess the averments of one, with the assertions of the other, and helps mutually evaluate the veracity of the different and even contradictory claims and sources. In short, this process is a necessary and determinant pre-requisite to extract history from PRAŚASTIS, and facts from fiction. "The principle adopted in this work (*The Early History of the Deccan*)", states Prof. Sastri, "is not to accept as history any statement of Bilhana (the author of *Vikramāna Dēva Carita*), which is not clearly corroborated by other evidence".<sup>4</sup>

Prof. Nilakanta Sastri, as one of the pioneer historians, was struck by the interactive nature of the components of South Indian history even in his early works, like "The Pāndyas" and more so in "The Cōḷas". The history of the Cōḷas from the 10th to the 13th century is really the history of the entire South India. The dynasty had a succession of able ruler from Parāntaka-I, who would not sheath their swords till they extended the empire from coast to coast. From the time of Rājarāja-I their ambitions traversed the whole of the Deccan, progressively drawing within their ambit the Cālukyās of Kalyāṇi, of Vēngi and other powers holding sway in between. Retaliation as between the Pallavas and the Bādāmi Cālukyās, and as between the Cōḷas and the Kalyāṇi Cālukyās had left historic and permanent epigraphic and sculptural monuments.

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Even as the Cola Imperial ambition widened in concentric circles, so too the scholarly interest and investigations of the

4. The Early History of Deccan, Ed. By. G. Yāzdani (OUP - 1960) - p. 345, footnote (2).

historians of the Cōlas expanded to envelop the data and countervailing facts of the rival dynasties, leading sometimes to the countermanding of his earlier conclusions. Prof. Sastri's approach to historiography demanded it. For he would not rest content without gathering data, and he would not desist from arriving at a conclusion or altering it where fresh and dependable data warranted it. His was essentially a scientific approach which took nothing for granted, almost magisterial in weighing evidence, and essentially *a posteriori* in its procedure.

The effect can be felt in the works of Prof. Sastri: how often he altered his conclusions on the Pāṇḍyan history when the evidence from the Cōla epigraphs or the Ceylonese chronicles would argue for it. He did not hesitate to revise some of his conclusions in "*The Cōlas*" when the Cālukyan evidence was clinching against the Cōla panegyries. Prof. Sastri's was an inquiring mind, and hence a mind which allowed the subject to grow with time and evidence. Though his pioneer works still hold the field, he was conscious that the last word was not still said on many aspects - if ever it could be.

The contribution of Prof. Sastri to the history and the culture of Karnāṭaka bear the characteristic marks of such growth of scholarship and inquiry. These can be classified under four heads:

- (i) Direct contribution to the history of Karnāṭaka;
- (ii) Contributions on aspects of history and culture of Karnāṭaka through research papers and articles;
- (iii) Contributions to the growth and development of epigraphy and archaeology in Karnāṭaka - when he was ex-officio Director of Archaeology (1954 - 56) besides being the Prof. of Indology (1952 - 56) in the University of Mysore: and

- (iv) Indirect contributions – guiding and directing research in the history of those dynasties which were ruling in Karnataka.

The lasting impact of Prof. Sastri's contributions on the history of Karnāṭaka in particular, and in the history of South India in general, can be discerned from the details of such analysis.

### **I. Direct contributions to the History of Karnataka :**

The direct contributions to the history and culture of Karnāṭaka are contained in the three parts (contributed by Prof. Sastri) of "The Early History of the Deccan", (Edited by G. Yazdani, published under the authority of the Andhra Pradesh Government, at the Oxford University Press, London in 1960). These were :

Part - IV : The Cāḷukyas of Bādāmi.

Part - VI : The Cāḷukyās of Kalyāṇi and the Kalachūris of Kalyāṇi.

Part - VII : The Eastern Cāḷukyas and the Cālukyas of Vēmulavāḍa – This last was the joint contribution of Prof. Sastri and Dr. N. Venkataramanaiah.

In the "Early History of the Deccan", Prof. Sastri has had occasion to deal with all the dynasties of Cāḷukyas except that branch which held sway over Gujarat. He has taken the opportunity to succinctly examine the results of the earlier scholarship of Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar, and J.F. Fleet and G. Jouveau Dubreuil and others – and he had the highest regard for their scholarship and work already done – and updated the information on the three dynasties and the Kalāchūrīs (Kalachūryas) of Kalyāṇi and the Cāḷukyas of Vēmulavāḍa with reference to the further epigraphic

publications then available in the South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. IX. These chapters constitute a distinct stage in the systematic presentation of an authentic history of the Cāḷukyan dynasties in its three different branches. The chapters are marked by the succinct statement of facts, and their critical appraisal, and lucidity in presentation.

Prof. Sastri has categorically stated that the Bādāmi Cāḷukyas belonged to the Karnāṭaka (Kuntaha) country and their mother-tongue was Kannaḍa, clearly discarding the view of earlier writers often expressed that they were a foreign tribe, who entered India along with the Huns.<sup>5</sup> Prof. Sastri's temperamental scepticism about mythological stories could only reject "the interesting beliefs cherished by the members of the historic dynasty as peurile stories which are, of course, of no value as factual history"

He has also felt the need to give up the views of J. F. Fleet that as a result of a northern invasion of Mangalēsa, he acquired the whole of the northern territory upto the river Kim, if not upto the Mahi, - "in the face of Kalachurya Buddha-rāja's inscriptions of A. D. 609 and A.D. 610 when he was ruling in full regal splendour as an independent monarch".<sup>7</sup>

He spots out the beginnings of the long-drawn-out struggle between the rulers of the Deccan and those of the further South, in the Pulakēsin - Mahēndra Varman - I conflict - "the first of the most persistent lines of conflict in South Indian History". "It became almost a social law that kingdoms in Karnāṭaka and those concered in the Tamil

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5. EHD, Vol. I. p. 205.

6. Ibid. p. 1206.

7. Ibid p. 210-pl. also see p. 238, FN(1) and p. 239

FN(4) for further variations in interpretations from Fleet.

country should not tolerate each other but should keep up an almost perpetual war in which the rulers of the Mysore country and the Andhra Pradesh mingled and took sides, sometimes in their own interest, against others, and even that of their suzerain".<sup>8</sup> This statement could apply also to the rule of the Hoysa'ās, who acted as a balancing factor in the Cōla-Pāndya conflicts in the 13th century and in the process, even collected tributes from the Pāṇḍyan townships.<sup>9</sup>

One of the significant features of Prof. Sastri's work was the attention he paid to the administrative, social, and economic aspects of history. He was conscious of the limitation at the time. The records and data were not complete. Many terms were obscure and an interpretation could only be attempted by the contextual occurrence of the terms, and at best could have the status of a hypotheses. But within these limits, he interpreted the administrative structure and their special conditions and drew attention to the economic aspects, waiting to be investigated further. Attention was also paid to the cultural history, the state of earning of the arts, religion and literature. His conception of the history of Karnāṭaka, as of any other tract was comprehensive, through circumscribed by the availability of published original data at the time.

He was conscious of the scope for improving upon and revising the earlier works, including his, with a rare catholicity of outlook. He allowed that a thousand flowers could bloom, and himself nurtures several of the plants.

Dr. Ramesh had taken up the threads in his latest works on the Cāḷukyas of Vātāpi, when he has felt the need

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8. Ibid. p. 216.

9. ARE 295 of 1949-50 and ARE 308 of 1928.

to revise the conclusions of Prof. Sastri on Pulakēṣin's role as the founder of Vātāpi.<sup>10</sup>

The chapter on the Cālukyas of Ka'yāni is even more detailed because of the greater availability of evidence from the inscriptions in too volumes of the *Epigraphia Carnatica*, the *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. IX (1939) and of the 'Karnataka Inscriptions', by Dr. R. S. Panchamukhi (1941). This chapter again bears his imprint - the fidelity to facts, eschewing panegyrics, re-assessment of the texts and the translations and weighing of evidence. The juxtaposition of the Cōḷa epigraphic evidence with that of the Cālukyas has been assiduously set out. The multi-faceted diplomatic and political moves and their effects sometimes favourable to the Cālukyas and at other times beneficial to the Cōḷas are dealt with in detail and with clarity. Bilhaṇa comes in for a great deal of well founded disbelief in the face of contemporary epigraphic evidence.<sup>11</sup>

If he was hard on Bilhaṇa, he was harder on himself. He did not hesitate to re-evaluate the evidence from the Cōḷa inscriptions and discount the degree of success claimed by Kulōttunga-I. Vikramaditya was compelled to withdraw to the Tungabhadra frontier, leaving the territory south of that river to Kulōttunga-I. But Kulōttunga's claim that he advanced upto the western sea was rejected in his "fresh interpretations of the Cōḷa Inscriptions".<sup>12</sup>

The History of the Colas itself could only be less than complete without the Counterpart history of the Cālukyas of Kalyāni and the Vēngi branch. The Cōḷas were at war with

10. "The Calukyas of Vatapi", by Dr. K.V. Ramesh, pp. 38-39; published by Agam Kala Prakashan (1984).

11. EHD, p. 353.

12. Ibid, p. 354 contra "the Cōḷas", Vol. II, pt. I. pp. 10 ff. (1937 Edition)

the first, and were matrimonially allied to the latter in three successive generations. If the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāni projected eastwards their ambition to displace the Vēngi princes married to the Cōḷa princesses, the Cōḷas processed northwards in support of the latter, and westwards in order to oust the proteges of the Kalyāni Cāḷukyas, when they temporarily succeeded in gaining possession of the Vēngi kingdom or a part thereof. Hence, Prof. Sastri' Cōḷās' mirror-reflects the relevant Cālukyan history, specially its conflicts with the Cōḷas.

Similarly, the Hōysaḷas in the 13th century acted as a balancing factor, interceding on behalf of the weaker of the two contesting Tamil Kings, the Cōḷas and the Pāṇḍyās and claimed in turn to be the re-establisher of both the royal dynasties. This part of their history comes out in relief in his history of the Cōḷas and the Pāṇḍyas.

The chapter on 'the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāni' in *The Early History of the Deccan*, also devotes attention to the administrative and social aspects. It throws to several topics that would merit further detailed investigation. Instances are the following :

- (i) A systematic work on the official nobility of the times based on a study of all known inscriptions.<sup>13</sup>
- (ii) The village institutions and their pluralistic characters and cognizability.<sup>14</sup>

He himself makes the point, "the system of mutual checks, always tacitly understood, is for once stated in express terms (in the Sogal Inscription).<sup>15</sup> And the existence of such

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13. EHD, p. 398.

14. Ibid, p. 404.

15. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XVI, pp. 1-9.

a form of organisation goes far to explain the stability of ancient Indian Institutions.<sup>16</sup> Not content with it, he has also outlined the individual traits of the several townships, some with long and connected records as Bālgūḷi.<sup>17</sup> (Bēgali in Bellar District).

(iii) He spurs further investigations into the character of the community organisations and their competence to make fiscal levies.<sup>18</sup>

(iv) He has also indicated the scope for a detailed study of the Pasupata Āgama, and the Āgama of Lakulīsa on which there is plenty of evidence.<sup>19</sup>

This school had gained wide patronage and acceptance in Karnataka, as well as in Tamil Nāḍu during the Cōḷa and the Cāḷukya times.

The chapters on "Administration" (pp. 382-418) and "Social and Economic Conditions" (pp. 419 - 453) in "*The Early History of the Deccan*", are also instructive, as a succinct account of the data gathered by a discerning mind and are the more valuable as they themselves are the painstaking products of the *posteriori* methodology, which, if taxing, could be only rewarding in its results.

His brief history of the Kannada literature<sup>20</sup> brings out the development of this noble language and the high quality it had maintained, fostered by the royal patronage of the Rāstrakūṭas and the Kalyāṇi Cāḷukyas. Both Hindu and Jain writers contributed to this development of the language.

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16. EHD, p. 403.

17. END, p. 403.

18. Ibid p. 408.

19. Ibid p. 441.

20. Ibid p. 444-451.



It was an age of transition, when the Hale Kannaḍa with Dravidian letters tends to disappear. The area comprising Kisuvolal, Copana, Puligere, and Onkunda" was the well of pure Kannada undefiled", where Kannada speech was excellent and the idiom limpid.<sup>21</sup>

Already by A.D. 1112, Nayasena was among the earliest to raise his voice in protest against the introduction of an undue proportion of Sanskrit words into Kannada works and to demand a proper standard of what he called "Śuddha Kannaḍa". He was a purist and grammarian too. Prose in the style understood by the common people, especially women, had led to the growth of the *Vacana* style and the *Vīra Śaivas* enriched this aspect of Kannaḍa literature.

It is relevant also to refer to his paper on "Kannada Literature in the Cāḷukya Inscriptions",<sup>22</sup> in which he has dealt with the literary aspects of Kalyāṇi Cāḷukya inscriptions and in particular, with several PRAŚASTIKĀRĀS or composers of inscriptions, and has indicated the several literary works to which the Epigraphs refer. A section on Kannaḍa in "Dravidian Literature" updates the history of Kannada literature right upto modern time.<sup>23</sup>

The Chapters on the "Cāḷukyas of Vēṅgi" together with the Appendix on the Cāḷukyas of Vemulavāḍa are perhaps more relevant to the history of the Andhra Country than Karnataka. Prof. Sastri's paper on "The Cāḷukyas of Vēṃulavāḍa"<sup>24</sup> has thrown light on some aspects of

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21. Ibid 445.

22. South India and South East Asia - Geeta Book House, Mysore (1978) pp. 73-78;

23. "Dravidian Literature", published by S. Viswanathan; 1949 pp. 23-33.

24. The Journal of Madras University, Vol. XV, No. 2

Rāstrakūta history as well, and is a close historical study of Pampa's great work "Bharata", with reference to the inscriptional evidence of the dynasty. The chapter on "Eastern Cālukyas" in the *"Early History of the Deccan"* brings out the part played by the Western Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi and their interference with Vēṅgi rulers, if only to offset or counter the Cōḷa influence before Kukōttunga-I and his authority after he united the Cōḷas and the Vēṅgi kingdoms under one rule. This policy, after the time of Vikrama Cōḷa, has had the effect on that ruler and his successor. They had to make the hard choice of confining the selves to the Tamil kingdom alone.

His direct contributions also comprise two other works. The first is the *Compilation of Foreign Notices of South India*<sup>25</sup>, a compendium of the extracts relevant to the history of South India from foreign travellers and writers, from Megasthenes to Ma Haan (mid 15th century), and a handy source reference.

"The Further Sources of Vijayanagar History"<sup>26</sup> was a joint contribution of Prof. Sastri and Dr. I. Venkataramanaiah. The work again is a compilation of the village accounts, "Kaifiyats" from the Mackenzie manuscripts, and other literary and unpublished sources based on which a history of the empire and its administration can be reconstructed in fuller detail.

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25. "Foreign Notices of South India", published by the University of Madras (Re-printed 1972).

26. The Joint work of Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and Dr. N. Venkataramanaiah in three Volumes, published by the University of Madras, 1946.

## II. Contributions on aspects of the history and culture of Karnataka through research papers and articles.

A list of papers / articles contributed by Prof. Sastri touching on the history of Karnāṭaka and the dynasties that ruled in that tract is opened (Appendix). The papers touch on several important aspects stretching over the entire historical spread from the age of the Satavahanas to the last days of Vijayanagar. The contribution on the Śātavāhanas and the Śakas has several new aspects to suggest. "His interpretation on the Nāsik records on the basis of the method of their dating is quite revealing".<sup>27</sup>

He has refuted Repson's suggestion that Vāsiṣṭīputra Puḷumāyi was the son-in-law of the Great Satrap, Rudradāmar "as it is impossible that Pulumāyi, who, according, to Ptolemy, was a contemporary of Chasthtana married the latter's great grand-daughters"<sup>28</sup>.

The other papers bring out new facts or new interpretations of the events in the History of Rāstrakūṭas the Cāḷukyas, the Hoysaḷas and the inter-relationship between the Cāḷukyas and the Pallavas.

## III. Contributions to the growth and development of epigraphy and archaeology in Karnataka.

Nilakanta Sastri was Professor of Indology in the University of Mysore for four years from 1952-56. During this period, the full reteness of his experience, coupled with an autumnal mellowness, were of avail to many a student

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27. The Early History of the Deccan, Pt. II, p. 100, Prof. G. Venkat Rao.

28. The comprehensive History of India, Vol. II, General Editor: K. A. N. Sastri; Orient Langmen. (1957) - The Chap. on the Satraps of Northern and Western India p. 28.

who have in their own right become historians of eminence, and have written authoritative works on different aspects of Karnataka history, arts and culture. Even at that ripe age, he took classes to the students of the University. The inspiration that flowed from the fountain is still noticeable in its vigour and lasting impact in the epigraphic and historical research that Karnataka has even contributing in value and in volume.

Above all, he realised the need for re-editing and re-publishing the *Epigraphia Carnataka*. What with the earlier editions becoming out of print, the great advance in knowledge and detail, and the discovery of several new inscriptions, there was need for re-editing the volumes. His interest in this important work was so abiding that even in his sick-bed in his last days (1974-75), he would make searching enquiries on the cross of work and the time it would take to complete whenever scholars from Mysore called on him.<sup>29</sup> It is a tribute to these scholars and to the Epigraphists, Dr. B. R. Gopal in particular, that already seven volumes of the re-editions have been published in a set pattern with fidelity to sources, and care and attention in providing translation.

Prof. Sastri's interest in this work was of a piece with his genuine and persistent anxiety to get at the original sources and have them published as quickly as possible. His persistent insistence on a planned, but expeditious publication of all the inscriptions copied by the Government Epigraphists of the Archaeological Survey of India is still relevant. Only collections upto 1908 have been published. The backlog extends to nearly 75 years of their collection. It is how given to the enthusiastic and scholarly Director of Epigraphy, Dr. K.V. Ramesh, to organise the systematic publication of this vast backlog. I must take this opportunity to pay a tribute to his dedicated work, and the

personal attention he is bestowing on this important task which is a tryst with Time that awaits fulfilment.

Prof. Sastri was also appointed as Ex-officio Director of Archaeology with effect from 27th January 1955. Conservation of the monuments, preservation of the mural paintings found in the temples in the State exploration and inspection of the Kadamba inscriptions in Chitaldurg, and additional collections to the Museum at Chitaldurg, all received the attention of the Director, and the band of devoted officers working with him. An exhibition of the photographs and original Copper-plate records, bearing on the history of Karnāṭaka has organised at Delhi in April 1954 and another under the Indian Historical Records Commission at Mysore in January 1955.<sup>30</sup>

New monuments as the Siddhesvara temple at Belagutti, and Śrī Narasimha temple at Narasīpur, the former a late Cālukya monument, and the latter a Hōysale temple were discovered. Exploration yielded 15 new monuments, as at Arakere, Narasīpurā, Bhairavanagudda, Kyāthanahalli, Ballēsvara and Beḷagutti. A good number of megaliths were discovered and studied in detail. But the outstanding discovery was the site of the early man near Bāṇasandra hill in Tumkur district. Thirty new inscriptions including 4 copper-plate records were collected; Some of them belonging to early Kadamba, Gaṅga and Rāstrakūta rulers.<sup>31</sup>

The Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. XVI – Tumkur Supplement was also issued under his editorship, though the inscriptions themselves were collected by the veteran, R. Narasimhachar, between 1906 and 1922 and were printed as long back as 1923.

#### IV. Indirect Contributions :

His indirect contributions to the reconstruction of the history of Karnāṭaka and its culture can now be touched

upon. In the composite State of Madras, the Madras University had a band of scholars, working in the history of the different tracts and the dynasties that extended to the whole of South India upto the Vindhya. Full-fledged departments, not only for Tamil, but also other Dravidian languages, like Kannaḍa and Telugu, in addition to Sanskrit, fostered critical studies in the history and language of Kannaḍa, Telugu and Malayālam speaking tracts. Prof. Sastri set the pace for the scientific investigation of the history of these areas by his own presentations on the Pāṇḍyas and the Cōlas. But he was aware that in themselves the work was half-done. In fact, every chapter of these works and every paragraph of his chapters in the "Early History of the Deccan" could lend itself for a full and adequate investigation, research and reconstruction, in fuller detail. This appreciation of his led to virtually the farming out of the different aspects of the history of South India among his research scholars and fellows, working under him, so that the studies could fan out, and become co-eval with the full-spread in time and space.

He carried the spirit of investigation with him when he adorned the chair of Indology in the University of Mysore. It would indeed be useful to compile the subjects of research carried out during his 18 years tenure as Professor of History and Archaeology in the University of Madras (1929-1947) and in Mysore University (1952-1956). But the point is illustrated by the following items of research undertaken by scholars under his direction or guidance :

- (i) The Gaṅgas of Talakāḍ (Dr. Ananta Rao Baji, unpublished)
- (ii) The Cāḷukyās of Kalyāṇi (Vedam Venkata Rayan)
- (iii) The Kalācūries of Kalyāṇi (G.R. Kuppuswamy-Iyengar, Mysore).

- (iv) The Hōysalas (A. Krishnamurthy; 1932; unpublished)
- (v) The Eastern Gaṅgas (Dr. S.K. Rao) – unpublished.
- (vi) The Cāḷukyas of Vēmulaṅga  
(Dr. N. Venkataramanaiah)
- (vii) The Sevunās of Dēvagiri  
(Dr. A.V. Narasimha Murthy)
- (viii) The Townships of Ancient South India  
(R. Tirumalai) (being published area by area)

To these could be added the following :

- (i) Administration and social Life under Vijayanagar.  
(Dr. T. V. Mahalingam)
- (ii) The Economic Conditions of South India  
(A.D. 1000 – 1500) (Dr. A. Appadurai)
- (iii) The Early History of Andhra Country  
(Dr. K. Gopalachari)
- (iv) The Kākatīyas of Warrangal (Dr. O. Rama Rao)
- (v) Some Minor Dynasties of Kōṅār district  
(C. Krishnamurthy)<sup>32</sup>

Prof. Mahalingam during his tenure as Professor of History in the University of Madras dealt with the Bāṇas in his Sankara-Parvati Endowment Lectures 1950-51.<sup>33</sup>

Prof. Sastri's methodology of investigation premeated through these scholars who came into contact with him and through them, they spread to the younger general, as one candle could light several others.

### A SUMMING UP :

Prof. Sastri's contributions can be best summed up by assessing the lasting impact he had left on re-constructing the history of Karnāṭaka in particular and of South India

in general: (a) in its methodological or historiographical aspect and (b) in its substantive aspect.

### **(a) Historiography :**

Prof. Sastri was the path-finder – a Margadarshi. He has set out his own conception of historical method in relation to the problems of South Indian History, which is a good guide for scholars in research. He consistently applied the scientific principles of historiography to the available evidence, archaeological epigraphic and literary. He evaluated the evidence critically, both intrinsically and with cross-reference to the data from other collateral sources.

His conception of history was comprehensive, co-eval with every aspect of human activity or achievement. Hence, in every-one of his works, he touches on the social, the economic, the religious, Art and literary aspects of the age, however inadequate the material available was, and however difficult was the interpretative effort involved. This had one conscious result. He spotted out several aspects or areas that would merit or lend themselves for fuller investigations and treatment.

He had an integrated perspective of South Indian History. He appreciated that the history of any one tract or dynasty or even an age was necessarily inter-connected with that of the others, near and remote. An integrated wholeness of the History of South India stretching out its arms across the Vindhya and of life which would not admit of a parenthesis in sequence was the result.

During his tenure in the Universities of Madras and Mysore, he disseminated this approach and methodology among a number of scholars. From that found, streams of scholarly investigation and disciplines came to flow– they continue to.



## ANNEXURE

1. "The achievements of Rāstrakūta Indra-III as Yuvarāja"-  
Journal of Oriental Research.
2. "Amoghavarsa-I and Karka Suvarpavarsa of Lāṭa,"-  
Journal of Indian History, XXVI, 1948, pp. 21-23, also  
Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress X, 1947,  
pp. 210 - 214.
3. "The Battle of Venbai", Indian Antiquary, a volume of  
Oriental Studies, 1947, pp. 254-56.
4. "The Cāḷukyās of Vēmulaṅkāda" Journal of the Madras  
University, XV, 1943, pp. 101-128.
5. "Did Dhruva Abdicate?" - Journal of Oriental Research,  
XV, 1945, pp. 475 - 81.
6. "The Duration of Hoysaḷa Viṣṇuvardhana's Reign"-  
Proceedings of Indian Historical Congress, XI 1948,  
pp. 129-133.
7. "Epigraphical Notē - Vikramāditya VI and Hoysaḷa  
Viṣṇuvardhana" - Indian Culture, X 1943-46, pp.
8. "Gonka-II and the Cāḷukyās", - Proceedings and  
transactions of the All India Oriental Conference X,  
1940, pp. 419-22.
9. "Hemavati Pillar Inscription of Kulōttunga Cōḷa-I  
year 2, Epigraphia Indica, XXXI, 1956, pp. 269-2.
10. "An Inscribed Pot from Nandūru", - Journal of  
Oriental Research, IX, pp. 95-99.
11. "An Inscription from Paṭṭadakal", - Journal of the  
Madras University, XVI, 1944, pp. 59-61.
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## **A PIONEER LITTERATEUR**

(A Tribute to Vaiyapuri, the Tamil Scholar in his  
Centenary Year which begins today)

(From THE HINDU Friday October 12, 1990)

The first half of this century in many respects, was a watershed period. For literature the period was one of renaissance. It, at once turned back to the past, to resurrect the rich treasures of Indian languages, and was also a period of highly creative poetry, marked by patriotic ardour. The shackles of purely conventional versification were being shed. Prosody and grammar which reigned supreme were replaced by genuine poetic fervour, the spirit of man asserting itself.

In South India, there were three strands of literary trends. First, the traditional indigenous scholars steeped in the known corpus of Tamil literature and known for impromptu versification. Patronised by the zamindars, they revelled in conventional panegyrics, spiced with "double entendre" "the lowest form of humour" (as a critic put it) or with dubious-erotic understones. Others composed puranas, mythological glorification of sacred shrines and deities. They were stereotyped where form got the better of the content.

Theology thrived at the expense of devotion and poetic charm. Another strain noticeable was the religious and the theological discourses by religious preceptors steeped in the Saiva or Vaishnava prabhandams with a strong bias towards their own persuasion. Some of them composed verses on deities, shrines and saints. They were a foil to the Christian missionaries who were active since the 18th century and even earlier.

Some of the missionaries felt the need for mastering the local language and idioms which could have a direct appeal to their flock. Others struck by the richness of the ancient Tamil heritage, were even anxious to make out that the devotional outpourings of the Alvars and the Nayanmars had for their mainspring the influence of Christianity. A few others were genuinely interested in Tamil, the language and literature, its grammar, and comparative philology. Some even composed epics and poems adopting the Tamil literary forms.

Fr. Beschi (Veeramamunivar), Bishop Caldwell and Winslow, in the 19th Century and Dr. Pope, Rev. Chandler and Rev. A.C. Clayton later were the forerunners who worked on comparative philology or set to compile lexicons, conscious though they were of their limitations. This interest spread to Jaffna in Sri Lanka.

The third stand of scholarship drew inspiration from the intellectual and academic discipline of the West. Exposed to Western literature and methods of compilation, they drank deep at the fountain of English, French and German works. They were inspired to apply the scientific techniques and methods they had imbibed to Tamil – both in editing Tamil classics, and in the critical appraisal of works. Lexicography, a discipline in itself was a felt want. There was another compulsion for undertaking the work. Sanskrit literature was much more popular and more widely known to the Western world. Tamil was not.

### **Orthodox School:**

In this setting, there were great scholars of the orthodox school patronised by mutts like Tiruvaduthurai, Dharmapuram and Nanguneri. The Vaishnavite centres like Alwar Tirunagari and Srirangam had scholars in the Divya Prabandam and the commentaries of the Acharyas. The Pravachana school

propagated them. Even Kamba Ramayanam and Villi Bharatam were subjects of popular expositions that appealed to the literate and the illiterate alike.

The orthodox school had eminent scholars like Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, R. Raghava Iyengar, Mu. Raghava Iyengar and U.V. Swaminatha Iyer. Though their scholastic attainments were acquired in the traditional manner some of them were keenly sensible of the scientific techniques of textual editing and literary criticism.

The eclectic school of scholarship to which S. Vaiyapuri belonged was influenced by the newly wafting Western influence. The votaries were imbued with the spirit of rescuing Tamil literature and language from the ruts into which they had fallen. They adored the spontaneous escapes of the soul, the torrential outpourings of the spirit of the age, especially of that bard of freedom, Subramanya Bharathi. New forms like the novel, short story, and translations of English classics were coming into vogue.

In this age of renaissance Vaiyapuri was ushered in. Born on October 12, 1891, his centenary year commences this year. Vaiyapuri had his early training in Saiva and Tamil literature and grammar under his orthodox and religious parents. Later he was instructed by Pamban Swamikal and Swaminatha Panditar of Jaffna. He finished his FA from the Hindu College, Tirunelveli and graduated from the Madras Christian College in 1912. Married to a lady from Trivandrum, he was distantly related to the author of Manonmaniyam, Sundaram Pillai.

He took his law degree from Trivandrum and started practice there. But interest in Tamil was born in him. He had kindred spirits to share his interest like Kavimani Desigavinayagam Pillai, the Tamil poet of childhood, and

epigraphic scholar Lakshmana Pillai, the composer, K.N. Sivaraj Pillai, Tamil scholar and K.G. Sesha Iyer. They formed a society for carrying on their literary pursuits. It was here that Vaiyapuri met Subrahmanya Bharathi whose poetry he was one of the earliest to appreciate instinctively in 1918.

When he moved to Tirunelveli in 1923, there were scholars of the same ilk, to name a few Chakrapani Nambiyar, M.P. Subbiah Mudaliar, P. Sri Acharya, VVS Iyer, R.P. Sethu Pillai and Anantarama Iyengar.

### **Change-Over :**

Vaiyapuri's scholarship in Tamil gained wider recognition. Circumstances favoured his change-over from his legal profession and he became a full time editor of the Tamil lexicon then being undertaken by the Madras University. With the able assistance of pandits like Mu. Raghava Iyengar, V. M. Gopalakrishnamachariar, S. Somasundra Desikan and others he completed the seven volumes in 10 years.

In 1936 he succeeded Anavaratavinayagam Pillai to the Readership in Tamil in the Madras University. He published several scholarly books – the Tolkappiyam with Ilampuranam a rare commentary and a number of Nikantus, (Tamil glossaries or homonyms) and Sangam classics. He also wrote several papers on world literature, literary criticisms, and the principles of editing the classics. He retired in 1946.

From 1951 he had a three-year stint as Professor of Tamil of the Travancore University. Of indifferent health and always dedicated to his work, he relinquished the post and passed away two years later in 1956.

Vaiyapuri's contribution to Tamil development and scholarship are varied and many sided. First, the Tamil

lexicon he edited was the **MAGNUS OPUS** which distinctly marked an advance over all earlier dictionaries. The schematic presentation followed a general order in arrangement – the word, its transliteration, the part of speech, origin and derivative, the cognates, the meaning (a) in English and (b) in Tamil, and the quotations under each meaning with citations of works, the author and illustrative expressions. Where words were derivative, the new special meanings were given, and even distortions were not omitted. Wherever possible the chronological arrangement was followed, to bring out the historical origin and development of the meaning or words.

The lexicon bore the mark of a wide range of scholarship, pressing into service the great Tamil classics of the sangam period published in the first few decades of the century, the Vaishnavite and Jaina prose works, glosses and commentaries, the works on grammar and citations therein, and the great Tamil commentator's interpretations.

Above all, Vaiyapuri systematically collected a large number of Tamil Nikantus in palm leaf manuscripts and edited them. Reliance was rightly placed on them. Some of the special treatises on arts, sciences, astrology, dancing and mathematics were also utilised. Epigraphical data belonging to different periods and usages of particular locations and sections of the community were all brought to bear on the compilation. This was a truly remarkable work done in a record time.

Nevertheless, as Prof. Jules Bloch complained many of the epigraphical terms did not find mention. The occurrence in the Tamil glosses also was not exhaustively referred to. These are the constraints of the times in which the lexicon was compiled and not of the scholars. The South Indian inscriptions published at the time were but a fraction of the

total corpus so too authentic and accurate editions of Tamil works.

Indeed, as Vaiyapuri pointed out the works edited in the early decades freely made a hotch-potch, a compendium from various anthologies; in their anxiety to make the work complete, they ignored the fidelity to original texts and interpolations and the personal counterfeits of the editor were at a premium.

### **Models for Emulation :**

Vaiyapuri was determined to rescue the Tamil classics, and literature from such misguided attempts at "comprehensive reconstructions". He helped Murray S. Rajam and Periyar Srinivasa Aiyangar respectively in editing the *Divyaprabandam*, and the *Kamba Ramayanam* based on the *Alvarthirunagari* manuscripts. These editions are models for emulation.

The introduction to the "Mudalayiram" the first 1000 verses of *Divyaprabhandam* edited by him is a classic (1955) and is a grammar for editing Tamil works. His criticism of the customary recital methods, and the pauses was trenchant though it could upset the orthodox. He stressed and delineated a new scholarly method of editing the work, making textual corrections, where copying or manuscript errors were patent, or where the word-combinations were split erroneously resulting in distortion or lack of meaning. Though the rhythm would have helped when verses were set to tunes for singing, they may at the same time detract from the literary appreciation and distort or disturb the meaning. He traced how these errors and distortions could have occurred and he edited the verses splitting the compounds into simple words, to bring out the sense, intensity of meaning and experience it conveyed.



He had envisaged a whole scheme of publishing the Divyaprabandam texts with annotated Purana allusions a note on the literary merit, on the age of the Alwars, a glossary of words, and meaning of difficult words, and comparative notes etc. in five volumes. But the Text itself needed four volumes. Meanwhile death snatched away the great scholar the next year and the work was but half complete. The same fate befell the Kamba Ramayanam of which only two cantos were partly edited by him. The first seven chapters of Bala Kandam remain an appetiser.

This thoroughness, fidelity to texts and objective editing of the manuscripts were characteristic of all the Tamil literary works he had edited, including Sanga Ilakkiam (Pattupāttum Ettu Thogaiyum) Tirumurugatru padai, Tolkappiyam, Jivaka Cintamani and a number of later works.

A scholar so meticulous and thorough was apt to discountenance any subjective or impressionistic editions of classics. This led to an acrimonious controversy between him and his friend Chidambaranatha Mudaliar. The latter had an aesthetic perception but was too arbitrary in discarding a large volume in Kamban's work depending only on the appeal to his personal appreciative sense. The present writer has been associated with both and had heard both sides from each direct. The scholar was found to be right and the connoisseur capricious.

Perhaps Vaiyapuri's greatest contribution was in the field of literary criticism and research. Indeed his criticism was based on research. Here again he not only marshalled internal evidence from the works themselves, but also made a comparative study of the usages, the idioms and characteristic turns of expressions in other works to arrive at the age of the works. Here was a pioneer who dared to fix the chronology of works on what struck him as authentic,

scientific, and tested evidence. This was a daunting subject. He sought strength in external evidence from epigraphs, from historical events, and from collateral works in other languages, and of other countries. His knowledge of French, German and Sanskrit was of great avail. He was truly eclectic in his approach. He laid the real foundations for an objective development of the history of Tamil language and literature. Some of his conclusions were found to be prescient by later discoveries, even if some others were found to require revision. True scholarship can never be static nor sentimental.

The views of a pioneer, admittedly, can be easily improved upon, but further research was needed. Vaiyapuri would be the first to be convinced if rebuttal by evidence and proof could be forthcoming. But as he observed "vague generalisation, *ipse dixits*, dictatorial pronouncements and "intuitive perceptions" are out of place in any scientific study, textual criticism not excluded".

A frail, small figure almost inconspicuous, he was yet a man of convictions and his views were firm. A campaign of vilification, attributing motives (of which he was totally innocent) ensued in his life-time. Prejudice is the homage that passion pays to erudition.

Any lesser person would have succumbed or withdrawn from the field. But not Vaiyapuri. For he was receptive to proven data and would accept a better view than his if sustained by reason. He was perhaps a true rationalist in literary and textual criticism but with a difference.

His aesthetic appreciation of the Tamil literature was genuine and of a high order. He was one of the earliest to recognise the genius of Bharati. He welcomed the originality of poetic conception and form of Bharathi. Tamil, the

Promethoes, was unbound. Sincerity and directness of expression a true ring of rhythm and vision, and poetic diction were ushered in. Vaiyapuri recognised these attributes of Tamil renaissance. He himself contributed to it by chartering courses of critical and investigational techniques. He was a true path finder and a beacon for generations of scholars to come. He had also a novel, a few short stories and poems to his credit.

A society chaired by Prof. K. Swaminathan, Vaiyapuri's close friend, has been formed. It has undertaken to publish all the works of the scholar with assistance from the union and the State Governments and universities. It is hoped that the Madras University too will republish his edited works, as they are of great value to study and appreciate Tamil culture and its greatness. Two volumes have been released and one more is under print.

This author had the good fortune to study Tamil under him while working on the research fellowship under Prof. K.A.N. Sastri, another close friend and associate of Vaiyapuri. The method the professor inculcated in me was novel but effective, like Marc Bloch's proceeding from the known adult to the embryo. He started me on Bharatidasan and Bharati's works and led me backwards through the Puranas, Kamba Ramayanam, Sangam classics, Tirukkural and on to Tolkappiam to the earliest works in Tamil.

He would take pains to verify the palm leaf manuscripts to ascertain the veracity or authenticity of the statements or quotations attributed to early works and correct me where a recent or modern edition had "enriched" the old texts by interpolations. To him I owe my love and knowledge of Tamil and a simple, direct, suggestive style of Tamil prose using Tamil words in preference to the mouthful words of extraneous extraction.

Extremely unostentatious, easily approachable, always helpful, ever solicitous to the students who went to him for guidance, Vaiyapuri was a man of great humility and was God's own man, with abiding human values. He was a Happy Warrior.

“Who laboured good on good to fix  
and owed to virtue every triumph he knew”.



## EPIGRAPHY AND LITERATURE

It is proposed to touch in detail on the relevance, of epigraphy and literature and their interconnectedness in Tamil inscriptions.

The Epigraphs broadly contain two distinct parts - (i) The prasasti or meykirti of the ruler in whose times the substantive transactions had occurred (ii) The operative and substantive part conveying the transaction.

Many prasastis have been drawn up ornately in the style in vogue in Sanskrit or in Kannada or in Tamil and sometimes bilingually.

Famous prasastikāras had been noticed almost in every dynastic prasasti. Harṣena is known for his high flown glorification of Samudragupta in the Allahabad Pillar inscription where he details the latter's exploits and political conquests. He almost defines the Imperial authority "Rājādhirājprthvīm jītvā Divam jayati aprativārya vīrah".<sup>1</sup>

Ravikīrti, a Jain poet, the author of Aihole Pillar inscriptions of Pulakesin II modelled his Prasasti on the Digvijaya of Raghu described by Kālidāsa in the Raghuvamśa, and claims the fame attained by him was equal to that of Kālidāsa and Bhāravi.

The Mahākūṭa pillar inscription of Mangalesa (the Cālukya of Badami-AD 600) borrowed the florid prose style of Bāṇa, the court poet of Harsa and incorporates striking

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1. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. IV, pp. 26 27.

passages from the *Ārthasāstra*, the *Rāmāyana* and *Raghuvamśa* of *Kālidāsa*.

Many of the copper plates of *Rāṣṭra Kuṭas* successfully imitate the style of such authors as *Subandhu* and *Bāṇa* (EI IV. p. 60).

The inscriptions of the *Kalyani Calukyas* refer to a number of authors and their works about whom we do not know otherwise, and that indicates the loss of valuable literary works for posterity. But *Belatūra* inscriptions (AD 1057) which pertains to the reign of *Chola Rajendra II* is noteworthy for the soul-stirring lament of *Dekabbe*, the wife of *Echa* who was sentenced and put to death at *Talakad* for having challenged a prince of the *Talakad Gangas* for a wrestling match and she entered the fire-pit. The *Shikārpur* inscriptions (AD 1068) of *Someswara II* brings out that *Santinatha* was not only an efficient general but a man of letters as well.

The relationship between Epigraphy and literature is quite close, and mutually complimentary. In general the epigraphs are couched in a colloquial form of expression—especially the operative texts, using many an expression quite intelligible to the contemporaries, but puzzling to the decipherers and historians, while interpreting the terms. Literary uses in specific contexts and their interpretation in glosses and by the commentators could throw welcome light on some of the terms, which have become obsolete or obscure over the ages.

For example, the term “*Paḷli*” occurs in an inscription of A.D. 1264-65 at *Kōttār* (“*Ikkoyil Paḷli Uḍayā*”). (IA) The term ‘*Paḷli*’ has a variety of meanings. In the instant case it is a *Śiva* temple, the Chief having control over which is referred to. The sense becomes clear from the *Vaiṣṇava*

commentators' 14th century work 'oru Irājā pōy, pala paḷḷigaḷ vandārpōlēyum'.<sup>2</sup>

The term "Sunḍāyam"<sup>3</sup> occurs among several offences which the community would hold as culpable. This term occurs in "Tiruvāymoḷi" of Nammālvār and interpreted by the medieval commentators as "Svārtha Parārtha" - i.e. meaning one to oneself, and another to another-hypocritical. A glossary of terms in epigraphs with citations from contemporary literary works is a felt-want. Attempts already made in this direction by the savants like Mu. Raghava Iyengar and S. Vaiyapuri Pillai in Tamil Lexicon (Vols. I to VII)<sup>4</sup> need to be further intensified, and a fuller compendium has to be brought out.

Epigraphic references to the Tamil Literary works are important. They indicate the time by which these works had come into vogue, and have been recited in temples. For instance, a Śriraṅgam inscription<sup>5</sup> refers to the citation of "Teṭṭerundiral," a Pāsuraṁ composed by Kulasēkhara Ālvār. Another inscription from Mannārkoyil reveals that when the kings visited the temple, the Tiruppāvai used to be recited for invoking the benediction of the God on the King".<sup>6</sup>

2. Tamil Lexicon, Vol. IV, p. 2952 (Madras University 1982) Also Divya Prabandham - Iyaṟpa - Tiruviruttam - 40 - Vyakhyanam 235.

3. IPS 799 - please see p. 285 of the author's Studies in the History of Ancient Townships of Pudukottai and fn. 7 at p. 327 (Pudukottai Studies for short) - Department of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu Government Publication) 1982.

4. Tamil Lexicon, Vols I to VI and Supplement (Républished 1982).

5. South Indian Inscriptions Vol. XXIV, No. 63-Kulottunga I, 1181 AD

6. ARE 402 of 1916 - A.D. 1209.

The Tiruppadiyam of the Nāyanmārs had come into vogue and were sung in the temples even earlier than the times of Rājarāja I as at Lālguḍi, Āttur, Paḷuvūr and Tiruvāvaḍuthurai. In fact in Tiruvallam provision was made for singing Tiruppadiyam even in the reign of Pallava Vijayanandi Vikrama Varman. Tiruvembāvai, Tiruccālal, Tiruvādavurāḷi Nāyanār's (Māṇikkavācakar) work are specifically mentioned. A hymn of Jñānasambandar on Tiruviḍai not otherwise found in the compiled canonical works has been preserved in an inscription (ARE No. 8 of 1918) and is incorporated in the edition of Jñānasambandar's work in the Pondicherry edition.

It also helps to fix the chronology of these literary works and the authors. References to several poets and commentators are strewn in inscriptions. These have been compiled and examined by a great Tamil Scholar, the late Pandit Mu. Raghava Iyengar in his "Śāsana Tamiḷ Kavigaḷ".<sup>7</sup>

The "Meykīrti" or the kings saga is itself recognised as a form of prosody.<sup>8</sup> Very often the names of the composers of the Prasastis are available in the inscriptions themselves.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Please see the list of the poets at pp. 8-15 in Śāsana-Tamiḷ Kavi Caritram by Pandit Mu. Raghava Iyengar. This is a scholarly work in Tamil collecting comprehensive epigraphic data on Poets and literature.

8. Panniru paṭṭiyal, 33.

9. The composer of the Sanskrit portion of the Charter of Karandai Copper plates is said to be Narayana, son of SANKARA a resident of Parsvagrama, who was identical with the composer of the Sanskrit portion of Tiruvalaṅgaḍu plates. Ananthanarayana of Kōttaiyur was the composer of the prasasti of the larger Leyden grant Sanskrit portion - pp. 53-54: Karandai Tamil Sangam Plates, - of Rajendra Cola - I, Edited by K.G. Krishnan (Archaeological Survey of India 1984).



Above all, there are whole verses, some of them of true literary merit preserved in epigraphic records. There are several verses in praise of the Pāṇḍya, Māra-varman Sundara-I<sup>10</sup> and of the Eāṇa Chieftains in Kuḍumiyāmalai.<sup>11</sup> While not all of them are of literary merit, some are truly poetic. One of them of true literary merit is a Nindāstuti or Vakrastuti by a poet named Ādinādar. It runs thus:

“Engalnalakkunṛaṇaip Pārttu Ēlulagum Inra  
 Umānagai Palakālum Nagai Seyyume  
 Gangaiyurai Kongai Kamal Śadilam Poykuḍumi  
 Yāy Viṭṭatengē Yini Māraippār Enru”<sup>12</sup>

Pārvati, the youthful lady who gave birth to the seven worlds, looked at Śiva (Nala kuṇṇa) and laughed, and laughed many a time. For, now that the Jaṭa or plaits of hair, unkempt as they were, rendered fragrant by the fragrance of the sandal applied to the bosom of Gaṅga Dēvi concealed with intent, but defying such concealment, revealing her presence within, have become a false topknot; where then will Śiva hide her any longer? The allusion is to a local apocryphal story of Śiva Linga growing some hair to rescue a priest out of his predicament when he handed over the flowers worn by his love-as prasadam (with a hair within) to the king on an unexpected visit.

There is a whole series of verses, 103 in number, of a poet recorded at Tirucirapalli. Its prosody is Antadi - i.e. the last word of the previous verse is the beginning of the next. This is in praise of Śiva at Tirucirapalli. This is

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10. & 11. Please see appendix A to Kudumiyāmalai Chapter in the Pudukottai Studies, op. cit.
12. IPS 1092 - Also p. 106 - *Pudukottai Studies*. Please also see the author's article in Tamil in 'Ulaga Idaya Oli' 1981 March.

couched in a diction of great felicity and bear shades of the emotions in the Tiruppadiyam.<sup>13</sup> There are also echoes of the phraseology of the works of Nayanmars in certain passages. It is worth while undertaking a detailed study of the period to which this work can be ascribed. A few stanzas are reproduced in the annexure.

13. SII, Vol. IV, No. 167 – These verses were composed by Narayanan of Seyaṅālūr in praise of Śiva at Tiruchirapalli Contra – Mr. Raghava Iyengar pp. 3, 4, 5.

### திருச்சிராப்பள்ளி அந்தாதி

Tiruccirapalli andādi

1. உலகம் மடந்தை நுதலுறந்தைப் பதியந்நுதற்குத்  
திலகம்பரமன் மருஞ் சிராமலை யம்மலைவாயலகி(ன்)  
னிறைந்த
3. மொழிந்திடு மெய்ம்மை முனிந்திடும் பொய்ம்மை  
முயன்றிடுமின்  
கழிந்திடும் யாக்கையைக் கைப்பணி கொடல் -  
கருமுகில் வான்  
பொழிந்திடு மெல்லருவிச் சிராமலை புகுந்திடுமின்  
இழிந்திடும் நும்வினை யீசனங்கெ வந்தெதிர்ப்படுமெ.
4. படும் பொழுதாயிற்று வெங்கதிர் கூற்று(வன்)  
பற்றிநம்மை  
யடும் பொழுதா வஞ்ச லென்பான் சிராமலையர் ஏரி வந்  
திடும்பொழுதாயிற் எதிர் கண்டிடிவெ மருங்கொடியர்  
நெடும்பொழுதா லென் கலொ வந்பர் நிர்வந்து  
நிற்கின்றதெ.
5. நிற்கும் துயர் கொண்டிருக்கும் பொழுதின்றி நெஞ்சனுங்கித்  
தெற்கும் வடக்கும் திரிந்தே வருந்திச் சிராமலை மேற்  
பொற் குன்றனைக் கண்டு கொண்டேன் இனிப் புறம் போக  
வொட்டேன்  
கற் குன்றனைய நெஞ்சிற் செல்வராலில்லை காரியமே.
21. மதவிடைப்பாகன் மதியிடைப்பாகன் மழைநிறத் தொர்க்கு  
உதவிடப் பாகன் உமையிட பாகனுயர்கலிங்கு  
கதவிடப்பாகு கமுகெழக் காமர் கடிநகர் வாய்ப்  
புத மடப் பாய்புனற் பொன்னி சிராமலைப்  
பொன்வண்ணனே

Literature has been also deftly woven into the text of the inscriptions. A grant of A.D. 1432 by Mavali vaṇadarayan a Baṇa Chief ruling from Tirumalirunṅōlai consisted of a village called Tiṇṇiyan;<sup>14</sup> in Ramanathapuram district to the Āṇḍal Temple at Śrīvilliputtūr. But it is not written in a conventional form. It is couched in an imaginary duet between Āṇḍal and Sri Raṅganatha. Āṇḍal hurls her abuse in anger at the long neglect of her by Raṅganatha who

14. Tiṇṇiyan is located in Tirumangalam Taluk, ASSI, Vol. IV No. 26.

22. பொன்வண்ண மாளிகைப் பூந்தண் சிராமலைப் பள்ளி  
கொண்ட

மன்வண்ண மால் கடணஞ்சம் மிருந்த மறைமிடற்றான்தன்  
வண்ணந்தி வண்ணங்கண்டு தளிர் வண்ணம்வாடிச்

சென்றான்

மின்வண்ண நுண்ணிடையாள் எங்கனெ செய்யும்

மெய்ப்பணியெ?

29. உறைவாய் சிராமலையுள்ளும் என் சிந்தையினுள்ளும்  
என்றும்

பிறைவாய் மழுவாட் பெரியவனே நுன்பியற் கணிந்த  
கறை வாயரவங் கடியாவகை யடியே னறியென  
அறை வாயழறுமிழும் புரிந்தாடி யல மருமெ”.

30. அலமரு நெஞ்சத் தரிவை கண்டாற்றுங்கொல்

பொற்றலர்தங்

குலமரு முப்புரங் கொன்றவன் கொலச்சிராமலை சூழ்  
நில மருதென்றுளி நித்திலங் கொப்ப நெடும் பொழில்கள்  
சல மருவெள்வடம் பூணத் தண் கானெடுந் தாழ்ப்பணியெ.

97. பொய்யினைப் பேசி பொருளினைத் தேடி புழுப் பொதிந்த  
மெய்யினைக் காத்து வெறுத் தொழிந்தேன் வியன்  
பொன்மலை மேலை யனைத் தேவர் தங்கோனை எம்மாளை  
அம்மான் மறி செர் கையனைக் காலனைக் காய்ந்த

பிரானைக் கழல் பணிந்தெ

103. மற்பந்த மார்வன் மணியன்மகன் மதிள் வெம்பயர்கோன்  
நற் பந்தமார் தமிழ் நாராயணனஞ் சிராமலைமேற்  
கற்பந்த நிழலில் வைத்த கலித்துறை நூறும் கற்பார்  
பொற்பந்தனிழலரன் தன் திருப்பாதம் பொருந்துவரெ.

was having, she accuses, a gay time with 16,000 Gōpis. The phrases and even one whole verse are all taken verbatim from *Nācciyār Tirumoli*, Āṇḍaḷ's passionate utterances in *Pranaya kalaha* or *Odal* against her Lord, Raṅganātha pacifies her, giving presents to her messengers, and a pearl-decorated paianquin to her and jewellery and above all Tīdiyan village for meeting the kitchen expenses explaining away his absence as due to his functions to receive the tributes or to relieve the quiver of the 33 and odd immortals and Gods, which Āṇḍaḷ herself was cognizant of.<sup>15</sup>

This is an instance of the true enjoyment of the passionate literary piece of Āṇḍaḷ and its debt interweaving in a grant-epigraph and testifies to the fine literary sense of the composer and how very much the verses were in daily vogue.

To conclude, epigraphy has thrown up a number of works and poetry not otherwise known in the history of Tamil literature. Epigraphy has also brought out the variety of forms of literary and prosodic compositions – the *veṇḇā*, the *antādi*, *Pēr vañji* or *Peru Vanji*, heroic verses sung to rouse warriors to acts of valour, the *meykīrti*, and several others. Above all some of the verses inscribed are of true literary merit. Also literature has been deftly interwoven with the text of the grant as in the last instance cited. The taste and the variety of ways in which the people of the times enjoyed literature can be gleaned from the epigraphic evidence cited.

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15. ARE 977 of 1926. The author's article in Tamil in *Ulaga Idaya Oli* – 1981 January.

## TWO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CRISES IN THE MADURAI AND TIRUPARANKUNRAM TEMPLES

(AD 1712 and 1793)

A lithic record on a pillar in the first Gopura of Sri Sundaresvara Temple at Madurai sets out a poignant episode.<sup>1</sup>

In the reign of the last of the Nayak rulers of Madurai, a crisis had occurred in the Meenakshi Amman temple at Madurai. This was “on the 12th day of *Panguni* month (March–April) in the *Kara* year, *Saka* 1632”. It was Saturday, an *Ekadasi* day (11th day) in *Purva Paksha*, *Ayilya* asterisk, i.e., 11th day prior to *Purnimavasya*. The corresponding date in the Gregarian calendar is 8th March Ad 1712.<sup>2</sup>

Vijayaranga Cokkanatha Nayaka was the ruler of Madurai (AD 1706 to 1731). He was the last of the Nayakas. Kumara Dalavay, Kasturi Ranga Ayyan was the General of the military forces (*Dalakattam*); Venkita Krsnayyan was the *Pradhoni* (the Chief Minister) of the Nayak kingdom. Sökkappanayakka was the General in-charge of the fortress of Madurai. The administrator (*Maniyam*) of the Madurai tract (*Sirmai*) was Muttambala Mudaliar. *Samprati* (Accountant) was Sinnappayyan. The Temple administrator was Valappur

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1. ARE No. 6/1913 (Unpublished).

2. Ind. Ephemeris, Volume VI, p. 226.

The date does not tally. *Kara* year falls in *Saku* 1634. Saturday, *Ekadasi Tirhi* and *Ayila Nakshtra* in *Pangnni* month fall on the 10th day of that month in *Saka* 1634—corresponding to March the 8th A.D. 1712.

Mudaliar. The temple priests (*Talattar*) and executives were Anantaguna Vikrama Pandya Bhattar, Kulasekhara Muttannavi Bhattar and the sectarian heads of Saiva Acharyas were Tatpurusa Deva Tirumalai Kutti Mudaliyar, Periya Deva Mutta Mudaliar and Viluppadaraya Muttaiyyan.

There were 4 shares (*Karai*) of the *Vahana*-bearers (*Sripadam Tanguvar*) of the temple of Sokkanatha, the principal deity. These were Cella Mudali, Kannirainja Mudali, Cokka Mudali and Kandiyur Deva Mudali. There were 64 members, in all belonging to the 4 shares enjoying the lands on service tenure on an obligation to bear the deity in the various vehicles or *Vahanas*.

The lands endowed for this *Sripadam* service were in Samanatham, Cikkalai, Pungankulam, Sengulam Ayacuts excluding the Maikaval lands, i.e., lands endowed for guarding the deity's person, i.e., the idols. These are all tanks and the command areas in Madurai district.

The 4 shareholders of this service-tenure were in enjoyment of the lands. The palace officials had demanded *Poruppu* from them. *Poruppu* is a concessional levy in lieu of land tax or quit-rent collected from the assignees in recognition of the sovereignty of the king and as consideration for assignment of revenue. They also demanded other levies or service obligations as due on the lands. The service-tenure holders were outraged by this levy. They all assembled in front of the deity's august presence and declared that they would lay down their lives in the front entrance beneath the temple-tower. One of the service-holders, Sokka Mudali, son of Andi Mudali climbed up the front *Gopura* to the top and fell on ground therefrom and died.

On this tragic occurrence, the *Talattar*, the Temple authorities assembled in front of the temple gate and locked

the entrance of all the four doors, apparently desisting from the *puja* services. There upon, the officials incharge of the temple endowments, Kattalai Sockappanayakkar, the administrator of the tract, Maniyam Muttambala Mudaliar, *Samprati* (Accountant) Cinnappayyan, the officials in-charge of the daily routine, *Dinasarikkaran*—they all assembled at the temple gate, gathering the temple priests and others responsible for the temple services and inviting the service-holders of the 4 *karais* or shares. They decided and declared that no *poruppu* or any other levy contained in an earlier letter of the royal executives need be collected and that the lands in the command area be declared as *Sarvamanya*.

#### Comments:

This was a concerted action by the four service-holders to protest against the levy of *poruppu* on the lands assigned to them, which had not been previously in vogue. It led to self-immolation by one of the members of the service holders' family. It was a common practice right upto the end of the 19th Century, if not even later, for persons to give up their lives in protest against any illegal exactions or any violent intervention with custom and usage. The bearer service-holders had their rights recognised, at the end, but not without loss of life.

The inscription throws light on the persons in-charge of the temple and the State administration at the time. They were closely interconnected. A Brahmin appears to be the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the military forces (*Dalavay*).

The royal officials at last yielded, but not without loss of one life. The demand of the protesting service-holders were conceded and they were also granted the entire lands as *Sarvamanya*, i.e., all taxes were remitted and assigned to the beneficiaries. It could also be an index of the attempt

to raise the rates of taxes higher in the last period of the Nayaks' rule.

Another instance of a similar self-immolation to safeguard the interests of Tirupparankunram temple had occurred in A.D. 1973 some eighty-one years later.<sup>3</sup> By that time, the Madurai tract had come under the sway of the Nawab of Carnatic—Asata Kapila Nabab Saheb; Amir Kadar Saheb was the *Mamalatdar*, the ruler over the dominion of Madurai.

In *Saka* 1715—*Paritapi* year, *Panguni* month, 4th day on a Wednesday (corresponding to 13th March<sup>4</sup> 1793) the troops of the East India Company camped at Sokkanatha temple at Madurai and the Subrahmanya temple at Tirupparankunram. They broke open the temple walls and took charge of the towers and occupied the *Asthana mandapa* and broke open the wooden gates of the main *Gopura* and were about to enter *Kalyana mandapa*. The festivals had ceased, the temple and the township were about to be deserted by the inhabitants. The *Bhattars* and the temple authorities, six in number, and the *Nattanmai* (head of the townships) and the 6 share-holders of the Temple watch and ward directed one Kutti son of Vairan Muttukkaruppan to fall from the temple tower; and he did and died. The East India Company troops thereupon withdrew. A 'blood grant' for the man who laid down his life was granted in the Tenkalpuravu—one *ma* (i.e. 33 cents) in extent and another plot of a similar extent in the ayacut adjoining Tirupparankunram, north of the Madurai Road—in all 2 *ma*—(or 66 cents) in extent, in recognition of the sacrifice Kutti had made to safeguard the temple and the township interests.

3. ASSI, Volume IV, p. 41.

4. Ind. Ephemeris, Volume VI, p. 388.



## **A SHIP SONG OF THE LATE 18th CENTURY IN TAMIL**

**(Some light on South Indian Shipping and coasting trade)**

The Eighteenth Century was, in many ways, a turning point in the history of South India. Politically the ceaseless struggle for supremacy among the Western powers who had, ostensibly gained footholds for establishing their trade but were trying to acquire the political authority over the tract was determined in favour of the English by the end of that century. The French were left with a few possessions on the coast. The transformation was more significant and conspicuous in the social and economic aspects. The trade with the West and the East through the European merchants had exposed the Indian producers and handicraft manufacturers to the products in demand. Trade as an economic functions to gather the produce and make them available at the time and place where the European merchants would want them, had been developed. There was money in it and money could and did easily break the barriers of caste. Brahmin merchants advanced money to the procurers of spices, pepper and to the weavers or else purchased from the producers the products which they in turn sold to the European merchants.

1. On this subject please see – Arasaratnam S - “Indian Commercial Groups and European Traders (1600 - 1800) (II National Conference of the Asian studies Association of Australia, Sydney-May 1978)
2. “Indian Merchants and their trade methods”. (International Conference, of Economic History, Munich, August 1965)
3. “Wravers - Merchants & Company” 1700-1790 (IESHR – Reversed Vol. XVII No. 3)

The Brahminr merchants had also owned ships, and boats. These were engaged in coasting shipping or else to deliver the products to the Europeans merchant – ships which anchored off the road-stead. Naturally boat building was also undertaken as an adjunct. There were works which laid down the astrological and astronomical data on the favourable time for boat building and for raising the sails and the auspicious days and other measurements of the sails, and different kinds of anchors, add the measurements and specifications for the European ships.<sup>2</sup>

The merchant princes were prosperous and apparantly they were also granting gifts to the ballad-writers who praised their actions or described their activities. One such ballad is “Kulatturayyan Kappal-pattu”.

This is a work available in Manuscript form written on palmleaf. It seems to euologise a merchant operating in the South West and eastern coast by name Kulathur Manikanda Ayyar. He was operating on the Quilon – Trivandrum coast late in the 18th century. The ballad in palmleaf manuscript is in my possession and has not been published.

The ballad first pays the conventional obeisance to Ganesa, Subrahmanya and Durga and local deities like Sangili Bhuttattan Karuppan, big and small devatas.

The owner of the ship is referred to as Muthian alias Manikandyayyan of Kulathur near Kollimalai also called Accan Koyilayyan near Quilon in South Travancore. The

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2. For a typical example please see “Kappal Sathiram” in Tamil Madras Govt. Oriented service I (1950) – This was printed from a manuscript available with the descendents of a Dubashi (who worked with the Danes) Kalinganaya pillai in 1620 AD residing at Tranouebar.

ship built for him and engaged was a war-ship. (Pōrk Kappal) If the reading is *Porkappal* it could mean a golden ship. The owner had commissioned some ship building crafts men from Vadamandai, made presents to them and had the construction of the ship begun on a Wednesday in the month of Panguni (March - April).

The first task was to locate the suitable timber in the forests. The craftsmen searched for the right type in the Western Ghats, near Ponmalai, across Podigai Hills near Sandanakkadu. They rejected some varieties like Kongu, Kandi, Vengai and other varieties and proceeded west towards Pavalamalai. The specified timber for the ships were Vembu, (Margosa) Iluppai, Punnai and Naval. These were for the floating bottoms for the side planks and supporting beams Venteak, Teak. The ship was propelled by wind and had sails for the purpose. There were different varieties of sails, and different kinds of ropes of coir used for building the planks. The poem panegyrically, describes that the planks were strengthend by metal plates made of gold (Pasumponnai ellam orupal tagadakki) and nailed with rubies (Reddina anitariyittu). It had several sails (Tiraimiru Irettu Pamaram nirutti). The sails were applied glues so that they may not change directions of their own accord and had golden festoons (Por Kunjalām) and had flags displaying the swan and the bow. The ship was claimed to have been designed for vanguishing the European vessels.

It had also fitted guns or canons (Tunder Birangi) and had magazines to store powder. It has been fitted with an anchor so that it may be stable and with tie ropes and sails and heavy loads.

The artisans who built the ship were rewarded with earrings and brace-lets, and presented with shawls.

The ballad proceeds to enumerate the commodities carried for merchandise - drugs, kept in separate containers, turmeric, musk, vermillion, perfumes civeat, Javadu, dried shenbaga flower petals, Korochana, ahil, sandal, pulankilangu, and other medicinal herbs, like cittarattai, tippili, jirakam (cummings seed) garadappaccai, and other varieties, Kasakasa, sigakkai (Soapnut powder). These were carried in head load and loaded on the boats in the first instance.

Other varieties of spices like Jatilingam, Tuttam, Sulpher, Camphor, adimaduram, Ilavangappattai, Tirikaduku, Kadugu (Mustard) ginger Saindavam, Soda ash, salt (Uvar Uppu) for washing, and phosphate salt (Induppu) and aromatics like vilamicchai, gingelly, Kanrunjeeragam, Jatikkai (Myrobalam), Parangiepattai, and some poisonous drugs (Pasanam) betal, and the new variety of cashew (Pudiyavam mindiri) (apparently recently brought in by the Portuguese) honey, and ghee and the nine varieties of gems. These were first loaded in boats and then taken to the ship and loaded. The ship owner's seal was also affixed and they were kept under strict guard by watchmen who would not sleep or be remiss.

The South wind was sighted, and the sailors were hastened to get into the ship so that it may set sail taking advantage of the favourable wind.

Another hold in the ship contained valuables, different varieties of pearls, they being secured with locks. In the same hold there was gold dust, metals, Resadattagadu, (Plates of mercury or metal cover). This chamber was in a messanine room and was locked with a secret chinese lock (Kallasinattuppu) which was fastened in place.

The ornaments and other valuables, crowns, and swords made of valuable metals, and stones, and ornaments were all

kept separate or were dismembered (Tundutundakki) and tied on in sacks and secured in leather bags. Cloth and woven fabrics of silk were other items carried.

The ship also carried a lot of cash-coins of various kinds. Kandiyān Virarayan Muhara, Parangi Bhuvarahan, the Anandan Varahan, Sultan Varakan, Ikkeri gold pattak Ravuee Kindirai, Pattak and other coinage in vogue in Puducheri, Bombay, and Surat, Sulipanam of Tanjavur Peishkari Arkot Kulambu, Tiruvidankode Silver chakram, Kesaiēkaī panam of Mylapore. The varieties of coinage current in each town or trade centre had varied, and different varieties of treasure were taken for buying articles at different centres.

Varieties of paddy also were taken and several strains of paddy were listed. To the accompaniment of the booming guns the ship sailed and reached Cochin where a gun shot was fired and the merchants and citizens were happy the cargo laden ship had arrived, and distributed sugar and got into the boats and reached the ship anchored off the shore and saw the valuable gems and pearls of high quality.

Leaving Cochin the ship set sail to Mandagakottai and Tellicherry fort. The bells ringing and the 21 guns booming the ship proceeded to Bengal, Kalingam, Maradam, Kannada and Macholibandar, a palpable exaggeration and proceeded north skirting Sri Lanka, and sold all the drugs, medicinal herbs. the anchored at Madras for a day. Madras (Channai-patnam) was a 'Sorna Patnam' a golden city. The English Governors, Wallace, Medows, the Governors of Madras of the Honourable (East India Company) visited the ship A China Vessel came to Madras with some foreigners and merchants. The English merchants along with the Tamil Merchant chieftains (Mudalimar) Konkanis, Sonakar, and other merchants and from the Andhra country (Machiliar)

and Kannadigas, were all interested in the several drugs and enquired of the prices, and saw the several varieties of cargo and they exchanged for cash and for other goods which were secured. The ship sailed by sunset, reached Pondicherry, and steered clear of the several varieties of Whales, Sharks, fish and Sea Tortoises. South of Pondicherry, a pirate ship was skulking like a tiger and from the black band it was seen that piracy was their aim. It came close to the ship and the pirates came and anchored their ship and rolled up their sails. The Manikandan ship fixed its guns and spit fire and chased the pirate ship and caught the ship and captured the pirates.

Then the ship touched Cuddalore, Veerampatnam, Karaikal, Nagur, Nagapatnam the estuary of the Tiruppundi pottu, Vedaranyam, Kodikkarai, Tulasiyarapatnam, Adiviraramapatnam, Devipatnam, Pavanamkottai, Kanyakumari, Trivandrum, (Tennanandapuri Pundurai) where the famous Jayaramavarma was reigning. The soldiers, the royal servants and all the generals of the ruler were present at Trivandrum and it was a sight to see them in their glittering attire. They were accompanying the King of Travancore who was proceeding with his Pradanis and Ministers to worship Sripadmanabhaswami. Dewan Kesavadas Shangagaraman himself came and saw the ship. The Dewan and the King was presented with costly jewellery, and silk fabrics and gems and salvai as tribute.

Thereafter the ship proceeded towards Anjutangal; Varkala, Kollam, Mavelikkarai, Arattu Kadavu.

Thus the voyage completed, the sailors were offered presents.

## **The Historical Significance of the work and the Inferences that could be drawn therefrom :**

This ballad is in palmleaf in my personal collection in the Tamil script of the 18th century.

The value of the ballad lies in its reflecting the coasting shipping, and the pattern of trade in the 18th century. The date of the work can easily be determined on the basis of the specific mention of Governor Wallace, of Fort St. George, and Dewan Kesavadas Shanbagaraman of Travancore. (i.e late 18th century, beginning of the 19th century).

The ship was owned by a Brahmin merchant, Kulathur Ayyan. The shipping schedule was to start navigation about the onset of the South west monsoon from the west coast from Cochin and go round to the east coast skirting Sri Lanka as far north as Bengal and (Kalinga) Orissa(?) in the north touch the various road-steads, the principal ones being Masulipatnam, Bandar, Madras, Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Adhirampattinam, Cape Comerin and Trivandrum.

(The maps appended show the road-steads used in early 19th century.)

“Milburn lists in his ‘Oriental Commerce’ (1814) Pulicat, Armagon, Gondegam (Great Ganjan) Mottupally, Guntur, Kondapalli, Ellore, Rajamundry, Masulipatnam, Vizagapatnam, Buimlipatnam, Ganjam, Manickapatam, Jaggaranat Pagodas, Black Pagoda, and point Padmira as road-steads. The coasting trade was extensive. The peninsular littoral was studded with a number of ports on the west and the east coast. Inland communications were difficult with roads not in good repair. Rivers were unfordable in the monsoon and

security a great risk. The political conditions were unsettled too. Sailing vessels plied a busy trade.<sup>3</sup>

The ships built on the west coast were fitted with cannons, armed against pirates and searollers, and deftly steered by experienced sailors who could steer clear of the sharks, whales and under-sea dangers. They were anchored at a distance off the road stead, and small boats took cargoes from the shore and loaded the ships.

The cargoes were of high value - low bulk items. Medicinal herb, scents, perfumes, sandal silks fabrics, spices condiments, pepper, ginger, turmeric, the 'newly cultivated' Cashew, gems, stones and pearls. All valuables were secured under the seal of the ship-owner. A variety of paddy and rice, and coinage of various issues and denominations that were current in the different parts of the peninsula and different towns were loaded. Their variety was bewildering. Their exchange value would have been perplexingly fluctuating widely, and money changes should have had a busy trade. Hence the preference for precious metals, and jewellery which could ensure stability of value.

Undoubtedly the ballad has a lot of exaggeration and flights of poetic fancy but they can still yeild interesting and authentic data on coasting shipping and trade at the time.

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3. 'The Voice of Enterprise' - The History of the Madras chamber of commerce' - by R. Tirumalai.



## AN EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH INDIA

(Upto A.D. 1660)

The beginnings of Christian settlements in South India remains, and, perhaps will ever remain, obscure. The most persistent tradition connects St. Thomas, the Apostle with the conversion of a number of people in Malabar as early as A.D. 52. The Syrian Christians themselves universally and implicitly believe in this tradition.<sup>1</sup> The Syrian belief is supported by the abundant references to St. Thomas and his labours in India found in the liturgies and in the hagiologies such as the ancient, though fictitious *Acts of St. Thomas*. Jerome in A.D. 420 speaks of the mission of St. Thomas as a universally acknowledged fact. Medieval travellers only preserve the continuity of this tradition as when Marco Polo localises, rather fancifully the martyrdom of St. Thomas at 'Malêpur' (Mylâpore, Madras).<sup>2</sup>

"The tradition of St. Thomas preaching in India is very old", says Yule, "so old that it probably is, in its simple form, true". No direct or conclusive proof for this tradition is available, and indeed, there are other contradictory legends crediting the conversion of the people in Malabâr to others<sup>3</sup> though of the same name, Thomas. There is, however, nothing improbable in the story of St. Thomas itself, for

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1. Day, *The land of Perumal*, p. 212.

2. K. A. N. Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India*, p. 173.

3. Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. XII p. 178; *Indian Antiquary*, Vol III, p. 308.

there was an active contact between the Mediterranean countries and South India in the wake of the Indo-Roman trade during the early centuries of the Christian era. The early migrations of Jews and Christians to Malabār might be traced to such commercial relations<sup>4</sup> and it is but natural that these early settlements should have been sprinkled along the Eastern, and more along the Western littorals. Also refugees streamed into South India, owing to persecutions in their own country.<sup>5</sup>

Egyptian merchants of the second century carried tidings of these Christians of Malabār to Alexandria. In the commencement of the fourth century the Council of Niese was attended by one "Johannes", "Metropolitan of Persia and the Great India". Thirty years later, Freemantius, a Syrian by birth, was invested with episcopal authority by Athanasius and he became a martyr in South India. In about A.D. 350 Theophilus, an Arian Bishop, visited India. The Christian settlements had thus begun to exist already in the early centuries of the Christian era and "in its origin neither the Malabār Church nor its mother the Syrian Church was Nestorian for they both existed before Nestorianism was propounded"<sup>6</sup>, that is before A.D. 457.

Yet when it emerges into any authentic history the Malabār Church was a Nestorian Branch, usually ordained in Persia. The first certain historical testimony to the existence of Christians in South India is that of the Alexandrian merchant who afterwards became a monk, known from his travels as Cosmos Indicopleustus. His *Christian Topography* (A.D. 547-560) speaks of a number of Christian churches on the coast of India, "at Male where pepper grows

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4. Warmington, *Early Contacts between Rome and India*.

5. Day, *op. cit.*,

6. A J. Maclean, *Article in Hastings, op. cit.*, p. 180.

and Killiane town", and in Ceylon and Socotra. "The Church was one of Persian Christians who have settled here and a Presbyter is appointed from Persia and a deacon ordained by the Persian archbishop of Seleucia and a complete ecclesiastical ritual". "The natives and the Kings in Taprobane", Cosmos adds, "are however heathens in religion"<sup>7</sup>.

In the seventh century the shores of India and even Persia lay in darkness, "and were deprived of the light of the divine doctrine which shines forth through the bishops of the truth", as lamented by the Nestorian Patriarch Jesu Jabus Adjatanus. This was partly due to the revolt of the Persian Metropolitan against the Nestorian Patriarch of Babylon, and partly due to dissensions among the Malabarities. In about A.D. 658 the Metropolitan of Mosul declared that the churches in India and Persia were in a declining state owing to the neglect of the Primate of Persia stating that as he now refused to acknowledge the authority of Seleucia the succession of priesthood had been cut off from India. The Moplahs too gave trouble to them.<sup>8</sup>

Two immigrations of Christians to Malabar from Baghdad and elsewhere occurred in the 8th and 9th centuries, the latter under two Nestorian priests, Mar Sapis and Mar Peruz. More important was the advent of Thomas Carra, the Armenian merchant who appears to have greatly increased the numerical and material strength of the community. The fame of the Malabar Christianity spread to the West, and King Alfred of England sent ambassadors to this country.

"The history of Christianity during the following six centuries is almost a blank."<sup>9</sup> We lack details but we are

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7. K. A. N. Sastri, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

8. Day, *op. cit.*, p. 215-216.

9. G.T. Macenzie's article in *Travancore State Manual* p. 144.

not without archaeological and epigraphic testimony; corroborated by the foreign notices which bring out the increasing importance and the slow spread of Christianity during the period. The stone cross monuments at St. Thomas Mount and at Kottayam, and the Pahlavi inscriptions they bear may probably be assigned to this period.<sup>10</sup> The stone cross Pahlavi inscriptions at the Mount and even the one at Kottayam with slight variation appear to be carrying the meaning "(he) whom the suffering of the Selfsame Meassiah, the forgiving and uprising (has) saved (is) offering the place whose origin (was) the agony of this". An old Syrian inscription under the larger cross at Kottayam has been identified with the first part of Galatians VI, 14. "But far be it from me to glory Save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Far more helpful are the three copper plates, one belonging to the Jews of Cochin and the other two at present possessed by the Chirstians of Kottayam. It is easy to mistake the importance of these copper plates, both in regard to their antiquity and in regard to their content and a note of caution is not misplaced. It is unsafe to accept the early dates which the pioneers of epigraphic research<sup>11</sup> ascribed to the Cochin plates of Bhaskara Ravi Varma and the Kottayam plates of Sthāṇu Ravi and Vīra Rāghava, in view of later researches of Venkayya, and T. A. Gopinath Rao. On paleographical grounds the Cochin plates belong to the 10th & 11th century.<sup>12</sup> The Kottayam plates of Vira Rāghava are assigned to the first half of the fourteenth century<sup>13</sup> and if the astronomical calculations of Prof. Keilhon are to be given full credit, to

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10. *Epigrapia Indica*, Vol. IV., p. 176.

11. T.A.G. Roa, *Tr. A. S. II.* p. 32.

12. *E I IX.* p. 85.

13. *Ibid.* IV, p. 293.

A. D. 1320<sup>14</sup>.— The Kottayam plates of Sthānu Ravi alone are considered to be earlier than the first two, and are ascribed to the latter half of the 9th or the earlier part of the 10th century.<sup>15</sup>

The plates of Sthānu Ravi register the grant of certain privileges, lands and grants during his reign by Ayyanadigal Tiruvadi to the Church Tarissapalli built by Isodattavirai (sic) (Iso Tapir) of Kurakkenikollam, probably at the instance of Maruvan Sapīr Iso (Ipparidu Viḍupeṟu attipperaga Ayyanaḍigad tiruvaḍiyal Trissappalliku aṭṭiviḍu-ttukkaḍuthan Maruvān Sapīr Iso)<sup>16</sup> Some of the endowments were to be under the protection of Maṇigramam and Añjuvaṇṇam whose rights and liberties were detailed in the second set of the record. Dr. Gopinatha Rao considers the grant of privileges to and relaxations of social disabilities attached to the untouchables (Ilava) on their embracing Christianity are in sharp contrast to the treatment meted out to them in the Hindu religion due to the hold of priesthood over the rulers and chieftains (*ibid* p. 67). The dues and cess from the families numbering 12, and one family of washerman were assigned to the Church. Even if they were, in anyway, culpable the Church authorities were to enquire and dispense justice (Ivagalaippiḷai seyyilum palliyarēi Arāyndu koḷḷapperuvar) (lines 19, 20-*ibid* p. 68), perhaps, analogous to the Communal forums of justice prevalent at the times.

The Cochin plates of Bhaskara Ravi Varman (later half of 10th and first half of 11th century)<sup>17</sup> register the grant of certain privileges honours (in terms which are not easy to

14. *Ibid.* VI, p. 83-4.

15. T.A.G. Rao, *op. cit.*, II, p. 62.

16. *M.L.S.* XIII pt. 2, p. 129, *Tr. A.S.*, pp. 67-68.

17. *Tr. A.S.* II p. 32.

interpret) to "Yusuppū Irappan" (Yusuf Raban)<sup>18</sup> The occurrence of this Semitic name combined with the present possession of the plates and its Hebrew translation by the Cochin Jews leads one to believe that the donee was a member of the ancient Jewish Colony of the western coast. But the privileges were more commercial than religious. A Malayalam translation of this deed preserved in Cochin State Archives has the heading "A copy of the copper plate granted to the (Mudaliyar). "Chieftains of Jews by His Highness of Cochin ME 370 = A. D. 1215".

The commercial character of the privileges of the Kottayam plates of Vīra Rāghava is again much too predominant. It is a grant of certain privileges and honours incidental to the title of 'Maṇigrāmam' to the grand merchant of the Cēra country, (Cēramānlokapperuñceṭṭi) Iravi Korittan. It also reveals some of the administrative functions of the Añjuvaṇṇam and Maṇigramam.

There is nothing in the names, as Dr. Gundert was rightly perplexed, or even in the document itself to suggest that the donee was a Christian. The terms "Maṇigramam" and Añjuvaṇṇam, long taken to be corporations of foreign or Manechean, Christian and Mohammedan merchants have now been established to be indigenous trading corporations, Hindu in character.<sup>19</sup> Also the grant did not create those institutions but only conferred certain privileges on them.

It is, thus, more than warranted by the plates themselves when Dr. Haug permits himself to say that the plates form

18. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. III, pp. 66. ff.

19. K.A.N. Sastri. *A Tamil Merchant Guild in Sumatra*, 1932, p. 4, also Tr. A.S. Vol. II pp. 73 ff; E. A., IV pp. 293-4 and p. 296 fn; *Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XVIII pp. 69-73.

“part of the grant which records the rights and privileges of the early Christians on the Malabar Coast”.<sup>20</sup> These plates, then, testify to the grant of a number of privileges, commercial in character and privileges to individuals some of whose names sound foreign. The Sthānu Ravi plates explicitly refer to a grant to a Paḷḷi or Church probably at the instance of one who belonged to the Christian settlements. The endowment was to be protected and administered by the semi-independent trading corporations as Maṇigramam and Añjuvaṇṇam which were not necessarily foreign, or Christian but were indigenous and widely spread in South India. Their liberties were detailed and their functions too were thus widened.

Macro Polo who visited the Tamil Coast in A.D. 1293, wrote:

“The Christians who have charge of the church of St. Thomas who works miracles have a great number of Indian nut trees whereby they get their living and they pay to one of those brother kings (the Pandya rulers) six groats for each tree every month, year? (F.N. p. 173)”.

John of Monte Carnavo who visited the coast late in the thirteenth century wrote:

“In the regions of the sea are many Saracans and they have great influence but there are few of them in the interior. There are a very few Christians and Jews and they are of little weight. The people prosecute much the Christians and all those who have the Christian name.<sup>21</sup> Friar Jordanus (1323-30) speaks of the scope for conversion in India.

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20. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. III, p. 315.

21. K.A.N. Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India*, pp. 188-189.

"I will only say a word as to the harvest to be expected that it promises to be great and encouraging. Let friars be ready to come for there are three places that I know where they might reap a great harvest and where they could live in common—Supera (Sopara), Parocco (Broach) and Columbus (Quilon)".<sup>22</sup> He exigently cried out:

"If our Lord, the Pope would but establish a couple of galleys on this sea what a gain it would be! And what damage and destruction to the Soldon of Alexandria".<sup>23</sup> He himself was appointed Bishop of Columbum (A.D. 1328) although it was not known whether he ever reached the place. Nicolo Conti (A.D. 1420–21) and Varthema (A.D. 1505) visited the Christians of Malepur and Kayamkulam respectively (20 miles north of Quilon). "They keep Easter", writes Varthema, "like ourselves and they all observe the same solemnities that we do. But they say mass like the Greeks. They use four names John, James, Mathews and Thomas". The Vijayanagar monarchs were, as a rule, tolerant. Krishṇa-dēvaraya extended "such freedom that everyman may come, and go and live according to his own creed without suffering any annoyance and without enquiry whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or Heathen" (Barbosa).

With the arrival of the Portuguese on the West Coast in quest of "spices and Christians" a new chapter opened up in the history of the Christians in India. Taking advantage of the already established church, Vasco de Gama on his second trip in 1502 extended Portuguese protection to the Christians. This policy was continued by Alfonso de Albuquerque who secured the 'ancient privileges' of the 25,000 native Christians he found in Quilon from its Raja. Missionary activity and religious prosecution were not slow to

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 198.



appear once the political power of the Portuguese got its foothold. In A.D. 1542, St. Francis Xavier of the Jesuit Order, arrived in South India and made a large number of conversions in the South-East coast and in Travancore. By the close of A.D. 1544, it is said, he had founded forty-five churches in Travancore alone. The Portuguese were too zealous to allow the Nestorians their own creed and rituals. The inquisition was set up in 1560, and by 1599 they effected an ecclesiastical revolution. The synod of Diamper (Udayampuri) meeting under Archbishop Menzes of Goa united the Malabar Church to Rome and rooted out all traces of Nestorianism. Celibacy of all the clergy was enforced, all old books and liturgies were destroyed or altered. The Malabar Christians at first opposed these innovations under the leadership of their bishop Mar Abraham but his death soon after made the real union with Rome possible. The Pope's name was substituted for that of the Patriarch of Babylon, and the episcopal see was transferred from Angamala to Cranganore on the coast to facilitate the greater hold of the Portuguese over the native Church.<sup>24</sup>

The Malabarites were never fully reconciled to these changes and by 1653, they 'swore at Cannon Cross' in Mattānceri never again to obey the Jesuits. The church was thrown into confusion. The Pope sent a Carmelite Mission in A.D. 1656 to restore order. The vigorous measures of its head, Joseph brought back a section of the old Christian communities but troubles reappeared with the Dutch conquest of Cochin. Bishop Joseph was ordered to leave the coast forthwith; however, the opportunity thus created to throw off the Roman Catholic hold could not be fully utilised by the Malabarites as they were disunited. Half of them remained under Rome, while the rest were under Gregarius who came from the Jacobite Patriarch in A.D. 1665. He consecrated

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24. Hastings *op. cit.*, Vol. XII p. 180.

Thomas as Metropolitan and since then the Malabarites have been, in the main, Jacobite.

The troubled affairs in the Christian Church of Malabar form no isolated episode. They have their counterpart in the South-East Coast as well. Even earlier than the last quarter of the 15th century Christians had begun to penetrate into the South Travancore and into the South-East Coast. At Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) two granite pillars stand near an old church, 'Tōmay Palli' (Thomas Church) bearing inscriptions dated AD 1494 and AD 1526. The harbour dues, as the tax on nets, and the toll of one *panam* on every ship touching the port, and one *panam* on every laden boat leaving the port, the toll on rice and perquisites at Muttam, Kovalam, and the tithe of fish caught in or brought to these harbours, were granted to meet the expenses of coconut-oil (*Velichenṇai*) for lighting lamps in the Church at Kumari Muttam. Certain other exemptions were also granted.<sup>25</sup>

In the South-East coast too Christianity made much headway during this period. Following the decline of the later Paṇḍyas the country was thrown into political confusion. Governmental authority was lacking. The Paravas were much troubled by the Nayak chieftains and the Mohammedans over the question of pearl fishing. They appealed for assistance to Michael Vez, the Vicar General of the Bishop of Goa. Vez sailed with the deputationists back from Cochīn and on their agreeing to become Christians, repressed the Moors (Mohammedans) with Portuguese help. The Paravas became Christians and in 1532 the "Christianity of the Pearl Fishery Coast" was established under the supervision of the Sea of Goa.

In A.D. 1542 the celebrated Jesuit, St. Francis Xavier visited the new Christians in the Pearl Fishing Coast. He

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25. Tr. A.S. VI., p. 176 f.

learnt Tamil, translated the creed, "The Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria" and travelling bell in hand from village to village collected the inhabitants and baptised them. The Franciscan Friars also established themselves at St. Thome and at Nagapatanam and in the latter place built two churches in the same year and converted about three thousand people to Catholicism.<sup>26</sup> Their power steadily increased and they even began to demolish Hindu temples. The conversion of Indians to Christianity implied the transfer of political allegiance of the Paravas to the Portuguese. This greatly alarmed the Vijayanagar rulers and Aliya Ramaraja sent an expedition to the south under his brother Timma sometime before A.D. 1544 and himself made a sudden attack on St. Thome in AD 1558 to chastise the missionaries.<sup>27</sup>

But the progress of conversion was only temporarily checked. Some of the Āravīṭi rulers themselves extended patronage to the Jesuits, liberally endowed the educational institutions of the missionaries at the Capital and at Vellore. From the sea coast Christianity spread into the interior in the next hundred years. In A D. 1600 there were, according to Caldwell, twenty-two congregations scattered over the districts of Tinnevely and Madura, on less than 16 of which were on the coast. The work was in charge of 17 fathers and 3 brothers, the chief residence of whom was the college already established at Tuticorin.

About the same time "the Madura Mission" was established with the object of converting the high caste Hindus. A leading missionary Robet de Nobili anxious to achieve this ambition, for a time even adopted rites and practices of the Brahmins and tried to win them over to Christianity. The

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26. Heras, *Aravindu Dynasty*, p. 67.

27. *Further Sources*, I pp. 248 ff.

Mission formally continued to be under the 'Malabar Province' but it was practically autonomous in its own pastures, and had its own methods. The Southern districts were under the control of the missionary at Mulupādi which mainly worked in Tiruchirapalli, Tanjavur and Madura districts. Fr. Emmanuel Martin enthusiastically took up the work of penetrating into the interior in 1638, and (in his own words) "spent all his time in running over the district of Tinnevely like hunters"

The Pearl Fishing Coast continued to belong to the Malabar Province and was controlled by the Bishop of Cochin. Its chief place was Tuticorin, but the Paravas had to experience much difficulty at the hands of their Hindu neighbours. The Jesuit Fathers had more than once to seek asylum in the islands opposite the town. In 1612 the Bishop of Cochin had quarrelled with the Bishop of Cranganore and the Viceroy of Goa, and the Jesuit Fathers, on the Bishop's advice, withdrew to Ceylon and Cochin. Eleven years later when they returned they found the Fishery Coast had fallen on evil days. The rapacious Portuguese officials had taken away all the treasures of the Church, where there was "neither altar, nor image, nor doors". The priests had to endure troubles at the hands of the natives whom they had alienated by their own excessive zeal. Tirumalai Nayak of Madura to whom they appealed for help was, indeed, considerate. In 1639 he even agreed (as a *quid pro quo* for Portuguese assistance he received in his fight against the Maravas of Ramnad) to build at his own expense one church at Ramnād and seven others in the coast between Pāmban and Toṇḍi and gave permission to all those who might desire to become Christians".<sup>28</sup> But even this concession was not of much avail.

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28. Danvers, *Tirumalai Nayak Portuguese and the Dutch*, K.A.N. Sastri in Indian Historical Records Commission, 1939, p. 2. ff.

The Portuguese too were declining in their power and what the Portuguese officials began was completed by the Dutch who captured Tuticorin in A.D. 1658 and converted the churches into warehouses. But the Paravas clung to Christianity and, to this day, remain Christians.

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# **VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN INDIA - FROM THE EIGHTEENTH TO EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

**(With Particular Reference to South India)**

## **I. Introduction and Historical Background :**

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French historian was once asked to give his opinion on the English Constitution. His reply was characteristic: "*En Angleterre la Constitutionable - A' exist pas*" (In England a Constitution! It does not exist.)

One could be tempted to give an answer likewise: "In India! - Village Communities in the 18th to 20th centuries? They did not exist. For the two half centuries could well mark the progressive disappearance of the village communities even in such form as they had existed in India at the commencement of the 18th century.

But that would only be a partial statement. For the "village communities" had deep roots in India, as elsewhere, in Russia and in Teutonic townships, and even in England. The village communities have almost been taken to be the most natural, simple, and organised form of life of the people in their early settlements. Clearing the jungle, turning pastoral lands into arable, and forming of irrigation sources, and harnessing the waters for wet cultivation, all needed the conjoint, collective and co-operative endeavour of the settlers.

The weighty observations of Sir Henry Maine in 1876 gave at once the impression that the village communities in

India had still been alive, active and existing in their pristine vigour as late as in his times and that they need to be studied in depth from the angle of comparative historical jurisprudence. Maine asserted :

“The Indian Village community is a living and not a dead institution”<sup>1</sup> “It was itself the source of a land law in India”.<sup>2</sup> “It is most desirable that one great branch of native Indian usage should be thoroughly examined before it decays in as much as it is through it that we are able to connect Indian customary Law of the western world”.<sup>3</sup> He spoke of the “Indian customs of agricultural tenure and of collective property in Land”, though he appreciated the salutary effects of Ryotwari settlement system of the country”.<sup>4</sup> He pictured a village community where the arable lands were divided into separate lets but cultivated according to the minute customary rules binding on all; the waste or common land out of which the arable *mark* has been cut, was enjoyed as pasture by all the community *pro indiviso*.<sup>5</sup> He added, “They were part of the domain of the various communities which the villages theoretically are only waiting opportunity to bring under cultivation. But the Indian native Government nevertheless sometimes claimed (though in a vague and occasional way) some exceptional authority over the wastes”.<sup>6</sup> There is the village consisting of habitation each ruled by a despotic *pater-families*,<sup>7(a)</sup> and the council of elders could

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1. “Village Communities - East and West”, by Sir Henry Maine, John Murray, Albemarle Street, London; 1887; p. 12.
  2. p. 18, *ibid*
  3. p. 77, *ibid*
  4. p. 106, *ibid*
  5. p. 107, *ibid*
  6. pp. 121-2, *ibid*
  - 7a. p. 107, *ibid*

even legislate occasionally.<sup>7(b)</sup> This summary of his views<sup>7(c)</sup> could well bring out his power and stimulating presentation of the "village communities" in India. It evoked a great deal of thought and critical analysis at the hands of scholars after him<sup>8</sup>

7b. p. 116, *ibid.* Confer Mr. Laing, Finance Member : "In India's village communities and the Panchayats, we find traces which may remind us that the Hindu as well as the English and Teuton are descended from a common stock of Aryan ancestors". Also, "The village communities each of which is a little republic are the most abiding of Indian Institutions". - *Gazette of India Extraordinary*, dated 14th September 1864.

p. 55 - M. Venkatarangiah's "The Beginnings of Local Taxes in Madras Presidency" (*Orient Longmans*; 1928).

7c. Contrast however the reservations of Sir Henry Maine speaking on N.W. Province's Municipal Committee's Bill: "Speaking as an English member of Council, we must say that it was surprising that the natives of India should be fit for municipal Government at all". "As however gentlemen of great local experience assured him it was possible here to have municipal institutions with no more than a reasonable amount of corruption and mismanagement, he of course bowed to this opinion .... Considering how native society was divided into castes and sects and religions and races it was surprising that there should be practicable anywhere a system of municipal election at once fair and free". (*I.L.C.P.*, 1868). This appears to be somewhat ambivalent from his views expressed in *Village Communities*.

8. For e.g., (i) *History of English Law*, Vol. I and II; Pollock and Maitland and (ii) "Township and Borough" by F.W. Maitland—where he emphasised the "Borough Community was corporate, but the township community was not". The caution is equally well-placed in its application to the "Village Communities in South India". The omission of the



## Historical Evidence of Village Community Organisations:

The history of the village communities could be traced in the form revealed by the medieval epigraphic evidence which is abundant (say, from the 9th century to the 15th century).

Land-grants have been made to the Brahmin literates of various *Gotras* by almost all the Hindu dynasties. The content of the grant was a question of fact, and the nature and condition of the land granted. If it was already under cultivation and occupation, the land-revenue share, and if it was not, even the right to till and appropriate the produce could have been the content. But several instances are known where lands were not divided by metes and bounds (NILAM KALANTA PADI). In such cases, the enjoyment of the land was by common cultivation, and the constituent-grantees each taking the produce according to his allotted 'share' (PANGU). This form of collective enjoyment of lands (KARAIYIDU) had subsisted almost till living memory. Stokes noticed the 'KARAIYIDU system' even in the late 19th century.<sup>9</sup> The author could testify to its survival and final breaking up at the instance of the Revenue Settlement party of which he was the head in Tanjore district even in the fifties of the present century. But this was exceptional that proved the general rule of the divided and separate enjoyment.

Even where the grant was of the land-revenue share, it could be held in shares of varied fractions-collected in common and distributed among the grantees. This accounts for the

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word 'corporate' throughout this paper is, therefore, deliberate. Also Sir Paul Vinogradoff: HISTORICAL JURISPRUDENCE (OUP); COLLECTED PAPERS (two Vols.); ENGLISH SOCIETY IN THE 11 TH CENTURY; and ENGLISH VILLAGE COMMUNITIES by Seebhom.

9. Indian Antiquary, Vol. III, pp. 65-69.

INAM,<sup>10</sup> being described as DVIBHĀGAM( $\frac{1}{2}$ ), TRSVĒKAM( $\frac{1}{3}$ ), CATURBHĀGAM( $\frac{1}{4}$ ), PANCAVĀRAM( $\frac{1}{5}$ ), SĀNBHOGAM( $\frac{1}{6}$ ), and so on.

The collective enjoyment of the shares was only one element, or form of enjoyment by the village community. It is also easy to exaggerate the collective and communal form of the village-holdings in medieval times.

All along, the king and the township were intent on reducing the unoccupied wasteland by inducting occupants into them. This has resulted in the multiplication of individual holdings. In fact, localising lands to equitably distribute the good, the middling and the inferior types of lands, parcels of lands in different parts of the command area were allotted to reckon with the differential advantages of the parcels, in soil, in irrigation-capability, and the distance from the habitat, etc. Hence fragmentation of holdings and separated enjoyment and a sense of individual ownership of the land were already noticed even in the 10th century and beyond and these were increasingly evidenced in the following centuries.

The prevailing pattern then, was one of collective holding of unoccupied lands, and of the lands that had reverted to the township. Individual holdings in separated enjoyment of parcels, divided by motes and bounds, particularly in the wet holdings in command areas of the tanks, the river channels, and streams were also exclusive possessions. There was absolutely no basis, then, for characterising the "Village Community" as "Corporate". It was collective, with joint and several responsibility enforceable on the "community"

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10. A grant, made, recognised, or confirmed of the land or the land revenue share to a beneficiary.

and its leaders or the elders of the constituents acting for and on behalf of the latter (SAMAINDA).<sup>11</sup>

The village communities were more complex, and were noticeable in their virile form in the Cōḷa and the Pāṇḍya times. It is relevant to sum up the organisation and functioning of the townships during that period. For the characteristics noticed in the study period (18th to the 20th century) were only the vestiges of this form of organisation and its structural traits, dating back to the Cōḷa and the Pāṇḍya periods.

A variety of settlements, based on the homogeneity of the land-holding occupants were formed. The Brahmadēya was the township of the land-based literati. The Nagara was the township predominantly of the mercantile community holding the land. The Ūr was the township of the agriculturists and the Paḍaiparru (Cantonment township) was a species of the Ūr or/ of the agriculturist land holders with a difference. They had the obligation to render military service to the chief of the king; and in return were shown some concessions in the quantum of the land-dues obligations. The available evidence on the manner of their functioning and their character can be summarised :

Undoubtedly, there was a collective body of the resident landholding elders, variously called the Sabhā in Brahmadēyas, the Nagara in the mercantile townships, and the Ūr in agricultural townships respectively. The explicit evidence available in regard to the composition of the Sabhā shows it to be a

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11. Please see the chapter on "Land Tenures and Sub-tenures and their obligations" in the author's STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT TOWNSHIP OF PUDUKOTTAI (1982) (Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, Madras).

closed and inward-looking body, oligarchic in character; and only persons fulfilling qualifications of landed property, and Vedic learning were competent to participate in the executive committees of the Sabha.<sup>12</sup> They were not only (a) regulating the affairs of the township in its organised form, but (b) were the accredited agency through which the king's Government acted, and enforced the obligations due to it.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note this twin characteristic of the Cōḷa and the Paṇḍyan townships. It is equally necessary to recall that the right of assigning out of the waste was concurrently exercised by the township and the king.<sup>14</sup> But while the king could forego his share of the revenue and the other obligations due to him, these which the township and the larger territorial units collected for themselves could be remitted only by the respective bodies. The village autonomy was not then absolute, but qualified. The king's authority was not all-embracing, but limited to the customary dues and obligations rendered to him. It is a tribute to the genius of the Cōḷa and the Paṇḍyas that they harmonised the central authority of the kings (when they were strong) with the legal initiative and autonomy within the customarily recognised limits, without the farmer sapping the energy and operation of the latter.

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12. See for e.g., Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's "RURAL ADMINISTRATION" in *"Studies in Cola History and Administration"* pp. 81-84 (Madras; 1932).

13. For full description of the Township's functions and obligations under both the categories, please see the author's STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT TOWNSHIPS OF PUDUKOTTAI (op. cit.).

14. Sir Henry Maine has correctly stated the position (please see Introduction, Supra).

The structure and functioning of the village community underwent noticeable change during the Vijayanagar period. The land-dues and obligations, already heavy, were the more exacting in the later period. Collective obligation of the community was preferred, for ease of collection.

Structurally too, individuals and their personal-agencies for collecting the dues on behalf of the scions of the chieftains' families to whom the tracts were assigned, or the Nayak generals who came from a far were increasingly in evidence. These changes in the structure of the township and land-system were on the increase in the three centuries from the 15th to the 18th century. Further, alienations of lands had occurred even from the 13th century-end due to heavy exactions and excessive and indeterminate levies by way of services, and cash levies, and partly due to the natural calamities. This has resulted in the "new men" with wealth or muscle acquiring the ancient holdings even in the townships of beneficial tenures like, Devadana or Brahmadeya.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the integrity of the land-occupant community was disturbed and the land occupancies became heterogeneous. These trends in the changes in the composition of the township and land occupancy could be speculated to be perhaps, on the increase in the three centuries from the 15th to the 18th.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the agrarian and village community structure should have presented a picture comparable to a large ancient manor house, dilapidated

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15. On this please see the author's "Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in the Cola and the Pandya Times"-Sankara-Parvati Endowment Lectures; University of Madras (1987).

mostly, but good in parts occupiable by the decrepit scions of the ancient family with some super-impositions and bizzare additions of the later times, but still on the whole retaining the grey, ivy-covered spires and domes, their plaster waiting to peel off at touch, and the bricks tenuously holding fast only to be dismantled by a downpur or a term.

## II. Village Communities in the Eighteenth Century: (In South India)

By the beginning of the 18th century, the ancient dynasties of the South had been swept off the scene, except the Mahratta Raja of Tanjore, who was also weakening. True, the local chieftaincies like the *Tondaiman of Pudukottai*, and the (later Zamindars) Rajahs of Sivaganga, Ramanathapuram and a number of Polygars of various strains were holding every one the right to collect revenue from within the respective territories, big and small. Alongside or under them, were a number of Mirasi villages, hereditarily held by the land-occupants claiming ancient inheritance and prescriptive title; they were all governed by the customary rights and obligations, as modified, added to, and enlarged by the efflux of time.

At this time, the extension of the sway of the Nawab of Carnatic (about A.D. 1710) had occurred. He was theoretically, subordinate to the Nizam-ul-Mulk of Hyderabad who, in his turn was a vassal of the Moghul emperor. In practice, except for the payment of tribute from the lowest to the highest there was hardly any effective control by the higher on the lower echelons, nor was such control possible, in the progressively declining state of the Moghul emperor. The principal aim of the Nawab's regime was to recover as much revenue by increasing the land-demand even to proportions which could only be termed exactions. This aim they sought to achieve without unduly disturbing the

structure and organisation of land tenures as they saw it. They adopted two methods: First, when the system/existed or wherever possible, to treat the lands as AMANI, i.e., by treating the holders or the occupants of lands as directly cultivating the lands under the Nawab. By this assertion they claimed the right to jack up the land-demand or rent—there was hardly any distinction in conception between the two—to the maximum, sometimes at  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the produce, and at other times even higher at two-thirds or more. In addition, miscellaneous levies, indiscriminate and *ad hoc* in the form of cash or service were fastened on the occupants. In the generality of cases, this type of land-tenure could subsist only as between the State or its assignees and the holder of land, individual and collective.

The second method which, perhaps, was the more prevalent was by farming out the revenue-collection to the highest bidder or to the lessees on a "KATTU KUTTAGAI" (fixed lumpsum payment). Often, the first farmer of the revenue could be a Prince or scion of the Nawab's family. And there could be two or three tiers of sub-lessees. The lower the tier of the lessee the more the men of muscle or men who could effectively collect the demand from the occupants were engaged. Where land was collectively held, the collective body of the occupants were pressed into service at the ground level by the sub-lessees who had their own personal demands added to the fixed lumpsum payable to the Nawab. Thus at every stage of the lease, and the sub-lease, the demand could be enlarged and cumulatively and practically, appropriate the entire land-produce, leaving hardly any margin to the occupant or the peasant-holder or the collective-community of the land occupants, much less to the actual cultivators (ULKUDI); land levies had become arbitrary, and at the discretion of the lessees and the sub-lessees, everyone only adding to the

burden. This thoughtless system of exaction had produced a number of effects:

(i) The superficial structure and organisation of the village communities, such as they were, wherever they existed, still straggled along in their attenuated form. The most valuable part of this survival was the right to claim or occupy portions of the common-holdings, the waste.

(ii) There was a somewhat contradictory trend in regard to the waste. On the one hand, there could have been an accretion to occupied holdings. There was a tendency at least for the more favourably situated lands to be appropriated by the few oligarchic leaders of the community, who enlarged their own personal holdings. Even because the rent charged was high, they could have been still left fellow. This could have made a dent on the extent of community-holdings which should have shrunk.

(iii) At the same time, the area under cultivation could have progressively diminished, as there was no incentive to cultivate. Relinquishment, abandonment and desertion by individual occupants could have been the result.

(iv) Lands, even of the favourable or eleemosynary tenures, and of the Mirasi tenures (or erstwhile hereditary occupants) had been alienated, partly on account of the heavy rates of demand, and also because of other economic pressures. The trend to alienate, already noticeable even in the 14th century should have gone on apace in the succeeding centuries and particularly in the 18th. It should have disturbed further the homogeneity of the community of the land-holders or occupants. Lands were held no longer by any one community or class of holders but by a heterogeneity of occupants, claiming rights of purchase, or prescription, or other forms of alienation, including encroachment and appropriation.



(v) The age-old customary obligations of the village community, enforceable by it on individual occupants and the tenants, and the cultivators, lingered retaining still the traces of the ancient character of these obligations, which the virile townships of the medieval times (9th to 13th century) had enforced. But these were a pale shadow of those old and far off times, and were often obligations pertaining to the temple, or religious festivals or the social gatherings of the community.

(vi) The *finale* of it all was, in the prosperous riverine areas as the Tambraparani-fed tract, some 50 years prior to the assumption of the assigned revenues by the East India Company (A.D. 1802), the Nawab even resumed the old Devadayam lands granted to the temple and the religious institutions on the eve of the handing over of the revenue administration in order to boost his own annuities from the East India Company. The age-long security of tenures and of their rights was rudely shaken.

### III. Village Communities in the Nineteenth Century :

There is a large volume of literature on the subject in the reports of the Collectors and the Revenue authorities, and the Board of Revenue, the Government of Madras. Even the Court of Directors in distant London had exercised their minds over this question. In fact, so deep was their minds over this question. In fact, so deep was their interest in the subject that they wanted to go into the "origin" and the attributes of the "Village Communities", still lingering in such form as the early British Land Revenue officials saw them.

This intensity of interest was due to two factors: First as part of the reorganisation of the Land Revenue system and to settle the land, investigations were found necessary as to

- (a) Who were the persons with whom such settlement was to be effected; and
- (b) What was to be the content of the settlement.

A second compelling circumstance was the growing demand for land, especially from persons of European extraction, particularly in and near Madras and in Chingleput district in the first half of the 19th century. For both these reasons Government were interested in a detailed enquiry into the "Village Communities", (in such attenuated and decrepit form as they existed, and especially their rights and privileges).

The documentation on this subject is available in the following sources :

1. Three Treatises on Mirasi Right, by C.P. Brown, Madras; 1852.
2. Dayley's note on "Mirasi Tenures"; London; 1856.
3. Papers on Mirasi Right, edited by W. Hudleston; Madras; 1862.
4. The Fifth Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the affairs of the East India Company - 28th July 1812; Firminger, W.K., edited, Vol. 18.
5. Sir Thomas Munroe's minutes and papers in Madras Government Records.
6. Official "Consultation" volumes of the Board of Revenue (Madras Archives).
7. Original Settlement and Re-settlement papers of the districts in Madras Presidency (Madras Archives).
8. Selected Papers of the Inam Commission, Madras (1948).

9. Maclean's Manual of Madras Administration, Vol. I which gives good sketches of the land tenures and Mirasi villages and their treatment.

The data available in the sources are summarised below :

A chronological table of British acquisition in the Madras Presidency is appended (Annexure-I).<sup>16</sup> It will be seen that the territory in and around Madras (the 'Jaghir' of the Company) was acquired in 1765 and the "Carnatic" districts in 1801.

The territory had comprised a wide variety of villages and holdings. There were the direct-revenue-assessed lands held by the occupants (PATTADARS). There were the Polygar or other Estates which became later the Zamindari estates. There were villages, whole or part, which were held as Inams on special rates of favourable assessment. There were share-villages in which a portion, a moiety,  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{5}$  or  $\frac{1}{6}$ , etc., were granted to some beneficiaries. The Mirasi tenure was only one among the many. It was not an Inam in character as the ryots paid full assessment barring some parcels held tax-free (perhaps for community services rendered) and the customary levies they collected from the non-Mirasi cultivators. In fact they were settled as "AYAN" (Government) villages (with reservations). But the communal character of the holdings; and more so, of the services and obligations had lingered, the longest and were most perceptibly and intensively brought out by the Revenue Officers dealing with the villages in Chingleput district, close to the seat of Government. These have led to a somewhat disproportionate attention paid to this tenure and its characteristics out of proportion to the extent of the villages of the tenure. On account of these factors, the "village communities" have, almost, come to

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16. Manual of Madras Administration (History), p. 159, f.n.

be equated with the Mirasi villages and their rights in the Madras Presidency.

But in all the villages, there were in varying degrees, the customary community rights and obligations, privileges and duties collectively enforceable on the land-occupants, in general, by or through the body of land-holding elders. These bundle of rights and obligations were neither uniform, nor universal in their prevalence. In many documents they were mere formal recitations. Also in practice, only a few were noticed to have been in force, and many had fallen into disuse. The one tangible privilege tenaciously claimed by the land-holders was the right to appropriate the waste lands or rather, the prevention of any induction of outsiders into them, without payment of a fee to the Mirasi-holders. As the rights belonged to the community as a whole, what with the brittleness of the community-consciousness, they actually vested with a few leading occupants claiming to act for all. These leaders were zealous in claiming their own privileges and rights much more than in the discharge of their obligations. These features were more prominently brought to light in the Mirasi villages in Chinglepet and Madras (as these tracts claimed the immediate, direct and intimate knowledge of the Government and its Revenue Officers) and the pressure on land was felt there the more keenly and at the earliest than in other areas like Madurai and Tirunelveli, though even there these rights were vaguely noticed to exist. They were the most prevalent in tracts like Tanjore where the Maharatta rule lingered the last and the Muslims gained but a little foothold. They were noticed the least in tracts held by the Muslims, such as Salem, Coimbatore and portions of North Arcot and Dindigul which were part of the Kingdom of Haider Ali and Tippu. These features were also the most persistent in the native state of Pudukottai and in the areas that became zamindaris later.

Even subsequent to the permanent settlement "Darmila Inams" grants for Brahmins (Dharmasanam) and others had continued to be granted and collective holdings had continued in divided or undivided shares.

Enquiries were instituted as early as on 2nd August 1814 when the Board of Revenue circulated 26 questions regarding the Mirasi rights to the Collectors. The only reply received in some detail was that of the Collector of Madras (and Chingleput) Mr. F.W. Ellis, who dealt with 17 questions either himself or through his former Serishtadar, Mr. Sankarayya, a Brahmin. Twenty-six documents of sale were also appended to the report. The reports of the other Collectors received were either sketchy or superficial and 10 Collectors did not even respond. The Collector of Madurai and Tirunelveli stated generally that Mirasi right extended to waste. Hence, Ellis's Report has assumed some significance, although the conclusions reached by him or on the basis of his report were contested keenly by other administrators who could draw from their equally intense experience in tracts where the Mirasi tenure and its incidence were little to be noticed. Thus two schools of thought each tenacious in its views had come to be: the first adopting the views of Ellis and Bourdillon going almost along with it. The opposite school had its protagonist in the powerful Sir Thomas Munro. Bayley also relying on him contests the views of Ellis.

It is necessary to briefly set out Mr. Ellis's understanding of the Mirāsi tenure.<sup>17</sup>

(i) The term "MIRĀŚI" (Arabia) was originally used in two senses - its Tamil equivalent was "KĀṆIYĀICI"

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17. Answer to 14 questions - Mirasi Papers, edited by Huddleston.

This term applied to (a) the hereditary rights in the occupancy and usufruct of land, and its produce: and (b) of an office with lands endowed for it, such as an accountant of a village or for any other service.

(ii) In the former sense, the right was vendible and transferable otherwise, besides being hereditary.

(iii) The nature and content of the right had differed from tract to tract. It was neither uniform nor universal in its prevalence.

(iv) In the Madras and Chingleput districts, each "Mirasidar" had a tax-free arable land (Cawny, Grama or Ur Manyam) and also the right to receive a certain amount of the produce from the taxable lands under the names KUPPĀṆTAM, KĀṆIMĒRAI.

(v) The Mirasidars of Chingleput enjoyed certain privileges not enjoyed by the Mirasidars of other districts such as "TUṆDUVĀRAM" or "SVĀMIBHOGAM" - a fee or percentage of the produce on lands granted by the Government to non-Mirasidars. TUṆDUVĀRAM was a portion of the KUDIVĀRAM fixed by custom or agreement paid by the Payakars (non-Mirasi cultivator or tenant) from the produce of the lands cultivated and paid to the Mirasidars; sometimes in grain and at other times in money. SVĀMIBHOGAM is the rent paid for the land held in farm from the Mirasidar for the fixed period, which was in addition to the MĒLVARAM or the share paid to Government.<sup>18</sup>

(vi) The Mirasi villages were either held jointly by the Mirasidars without division of land by metes and bounds, (PĀSUNKARAI) or by severally distributing the land yearly

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18. *Land Tenures of Madras*, by S. Sundararaja Iyengar p. 48; (1916).

or for some other fixed period. Alternatively, lands had been divided and held in separate enjoyment severally by the Mirasidars, cultivating each his own land and no redistribution of land periodically was entailed (ARUDIKARAI).

(vii) Where the lands were held by the resident tenants (ULKUDI) their tenancy was almost permanent and they had security of tenure. Other lands were held by those who came from without the village (PURAKKUDIS) they were mere tenants-at-will, who had annually renewable engagements to cultivate the land but no hereditary right.<sup>19</sup>

The sale documents contain some further details of collective or communal levies. Of the 26 documents Ellis appended, 7 are not relevant to trace the content of the Mirasi tenure of the 18th century. The remaining 19 are tabulated in Annexure-II.<sup>20</sup> From the evidence in Annexure-II, Dr. Karashima<sup>21</sup> rightly deduces that the Mirasi right was not limited to land, but it was a complex bundle of rights, together according the purchaser or the grantee the position of a leader of the community. Some of the privileges were rendered only to the Mirasidars and others were reflected as in turn, they were to be rendered to the Government by the former.

It should be noticed particularly that what were in ancient times collected for the king by the village community, the tax on the loom and the oil-press, were continuing to be enumerated and also MUTTAI or forced labour for communal and governmental purposes - levies which find mention in medieval inscriptions.

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19. p p. 40-52, *ibid*.

20. Please the summary - in Karashima's "South Indian History and Society" - pp. 169-176 (OUP).

21 Karashima, *ibid*, p. 175.

The inter-village and inter-caste sales had become quite common in the 17th and 18th centuries. It should be clearly recognised that the SROTTRIYAM or AGRAHĀRA, villages were only one type of the Mirasi villages. They could be the surviving part of the Brahmādēyas. But the collective holdings and common enjoyment of waste were also the attributes of the other types of townships, the agriculturist (the Ūr) and the Jīvitam (of the Chieftain) and of the merchant-residents (Nagaras). These are reflected in the survivals where the Grāmaṇis and the Nāṭṭār or the Mudaliārs (where the lands or the shares had devolved on them hereditarily) had the Mirasi interests by inheritance. Even in others as Mirasi interests had been bought and sold for consideration over the ages, and sections of the society other than the original holders of such rights had come to acquire them by purchase, they could, by the terms of the sale-deed, claim such rights as their predecessors in title possessed.

### **The Mirasi Rights to Waste:**

But the most valuable privilege or right claimed in the Mirasi tenure, viz., the right to the waste was a very highly debated issue in the first half of the 19th century. The view propounded by Ellis was that the Mirasi rights extended to it, and the Mirasidar may cultivate the land or rent it to others but they have no right to break up immemorial waste or poromboke without the consent of the Government and then this land becomes TIRVAPATTU or taxable land. To quote Ellis and his Serishtadar, Sankarayya:

“If a Mirasidar does not cultivate his share of the “Varapattu” lands, nor gives it on rent, the State may employ other, ryots for a fixed term and perhaps resume his Mirasi Srōtriyams or privileges”.



### Sankarayya amplifies:

“Mirasi rights extend to all wastes and even to immemorial waste and poromboke but a permanent right appears to be vested in the state and if the Mirasidars fail to cultivate and loss then accrues to the State, the Sircar enjoys the exercise the right to cause lands to be recultivated and issue COWLES. Again, if the Mirasidar neither cultivates nor rents his lands, it has become customary for Sircar to select a person to enjoy his Mirasi and confirm him in possession by Cowle”.<sup>22</sup>

In fact in the latter part of the 18th century and early 19th century, the Company's officers in some districts had acted in utter disregard of the claim of the Mirasidars for the waste and for a payment of *Tuṇḍuvāram* or *Svāmibhōgan* from others who were inducted into the waste. In 1799 when the Mirasidars in Chingleput district refused to bind themselves for certain defined quotas to make up for the standard revenue fixed for the village, Government inducted others with the same full rights as the Mirasidars were insisting on their own privileges but persisting in refusing the obligations incidental to the tenure which gave them these privileges. In South Arcot, Garrow's (1802-3) ryotwari settlement though not finally sanctioned by Government had contributed to the equation of the Mirasi and the non-Mirasi holdings.<sup>23</sup>

In South Arcot, again, Major Macleod (1804) regarded most of the claims of the Mirasidars as pretentious and as such “repugnant to good policy”. Ravenshaw never acknowledged its existence (A.D.1805-13) Hyde, who succeeded him in 1813-14 stated that the *Merah Tuṇḍuvāram* or share of the tenantry in the division of the crop or other rights of the

22. Quoted in Bayley's Note of 1856.

23. Bayley's *ibid* Also History of Land Revenue Settlement Board of Revenue - Minute, dated 5th January 1818; Revenue Consultation, Vol. 240, P. 3707.

Mirasidars in that district were incorporated with the Ryotwari Tirva and no sort of remuneration was granted in lieu thereof. He categorically stated that the Mirasi had never been acknowledged by any of his predecessors. He also queried whether "ryotwari settlement"<sup>24</sup> could be concluded with a few leading men in each village calling themselves Mirasidars or with the ryots in long occupancy whether called Mirasidars or not. Real Mirasi, no longer existed in South Arcot, and it would be hard to make the ryots pay fee and Svamibhogam to those who would now be set up as Mirasidars.<sup>25</sup>

Bourdillon, the Collector of North Arcot, however, took a different view that the Mirasidars have a claim to the waste and if any European desired to acquire the land he could hold it only as a sub-tenant. This was in 1853.

The Board of Revenue eventually directed that the land should be offered to the Mirasidars and if they would give security for the payment of the assessment, they might retain it and cultivate or not as they pleased. The Board declined to enter into any discussions with Mr. Bourdillon on Mirasi rights.

Next year in his proposal for settlement Bourdillon recommended a reduction of assessment accompanied by some recognition of the rights of the Mirasidars and in particular recognition of the rights of the Mirasidars to receive rent and sublet land even waste. He acknowledged that though the Mirasi rights were claimed for the community as a whole the

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24. This phrase, in its meaning should not be confused with the settled import of the term it has since acquired.

25. Bayley, *ibid.* Due to the time lost in correspondence and slow communication, the actual course of action implemented in the districts could well vary from the views of the higher authorities at Madras and London.

right vested in every case with some recognised individuals and was generally respected. Bourdillon wanted the right of the Mirasidars over the unoccupied land declared with full right to cultivate it themselves or sublet it. "I think", he wrote, "as a general rule no Dharkast should be received but that the village communities who have hitherto borne all the burden of the high assessments on the land cultivated and compelled to contract their holdings by the exorbitant Government demand, should now be left to themselves to take measures for the cultivation of the waste lands". "Of course if they neglect this", he added significantly, "Government can step in and arrange for the cultivation of the lands for a term, resuming the interest of the proprietor under the old law". The Board in which Bourdillon had by then taken a seat did not wish to state their views except to leave it to the Mirasidars to occupy the formerly cultivated lands, now laid waste and to reserve the right of the Government to take measures for the cultivation of the land if the Mirasidars did not cultivate the lands. It was given to Bourdillon as Revenue Secretary, again to implement this course based on his own report as Collector.<sup>26</sup>

Thus by the middle of the century, the policy of Government was not uniform. It could not be as different views were expressed by different Collectors and conditions differed from district to district. In South Kanara and Malabar alone, because of the plantation holding, and the Janmom rights in land-property the individual holdings were distinctly recognised. In all other areas arable lands were held in open field system. The Collectors of Tirunelveli and Madurai stated that the rights of the Mirasidars extended to the waste lands, but what this right was had not been particularly defined. In Tanjore and Chingleput, the old Mirasi rights were perpetuated

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26. Bayley's Report, *ibid.*

under early British - But in North Arcot they were cut down to a mere right of occupancy and in South Arcot too they were not recognised. The term was held to convey "the use and the occupancy of the land or any permanent interest". In Salem and Coimbatore and Dindigul tracts, the rights were not at all recognised and they were held to be non-existent. Sir Thomas Munro who was exposed to the conditions in these last tracts minuted as follows (31-12-1824):<sup>27</sup>

**Minutes of 31st December 1824 :**

"It has been maintained by some that in Arcot, and other Tamil countries, the Mirasidar of the wet land is bound to pay rent only for what land he does cultivate, and that if he leaves it all uncultivated, Government have no demand upon him for rent; and that if Government send another person to cultivate this land, the Mirasi has a right to exact from this person, the landlord's share or rent. If such a right existed we might have expected it in Malabar and Canara where private landed property is more perfect than in Arcot, and when Government bear no part of the expense of cultivation. But in these provinces, there is no such right and the landlord is liable for the whole fixed rent of his land whether he cultivates it or not. There does not seem to be any proof of the existence of such a right in Arcot. The belief of it appears to have arisen from confounding the tenant of the Mirasidar with the tenant of the Government. The Mirasidar may undoubtedly make such terms as he pleases with his own tenant, but when he can neither cultivate the land himself nor find a tenant and the Government provides one he has no claim for rent against this tenant of Government. The right of Mirasidar to derive a rent from the land for which he neither pays the public revenue, nor finds a tenant it certainly not acknowledged, most probably, never was at any former time".

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27. Bayley's Report, *ibid.*

Munro commented on Ellis's views:-

The waste in Mirasi villages in Arcot is supported by Mr. Ellis to belong to the Mirasidars jointly, and he supports his opinion by documents showing that when a Mirasidar seeks his cultivated lands he transfers by the same deed to the purchaser his right in the produce of the waste, the quarries, mines, fisheries, etc., within the limits of the village. This is a mere technical form, which can give no actual property right to the waste. It is used in villages where there is no waste as well, or is and may be used where there is no Mirasi. It confers a right but not a right of ownership to the pasture or the waste lands and the fishery of the tanks and *nullahs* in common with the other Mirasidars of the village".

"Mr. Ellis (Munro continues) does not seem to be very decided as to the nature of the property to be enjoyed by Mirasidars in waste. He admits that he cannot break it up without the permission of the Sircar. He does not say that he has any specific share of it, or that he can sell it alone, with the cultivated land or he can do more than sell with his arable, his right of common in the waste. The Sircar from ancient times, has everywhere, even in Arcot as well as in the Provinces, granted waste in INAMS (Sict) free of every rent or claim, public or private, and appears in all such grants to have considered the waste as being *exclusively its own property*. It has been supposed that in Mirasi villages in Arcot in the original compact between the Sircar and the first settlers, the exclusive use of the waste was secured to these settlers—but it has already been shown that in all villages whether Mirasi or not, the inhabitants, reserve to themselves the exclusive use of the waste. But this right is good only against strangers, not against the Sircar which possesses, I think, by the usage of the country, the absolute right of disposing of the waste if it pleases in the villages which are

Mirasi as well as which are not. But the question regarding Mirasi is one rather of curiosity than of any utility; for in most districts. the Mirasi is worth little and has no value that might not easily be given to the lands in any province by a moderate reduction in the assessment."

The whole issue was finally disposed of by the Court of Directors in their Despatch No. 8, dated 28th July 1841 as below :

"Without entering upon a discussion of the respective replies of Government and the Mirasidars over waste lands (a point still under consideration of the Superior Tribunal to which the case has been appealed) it will be enough for us to state our opinion that it is desirable in all cases that where Payakarers (outsiders) propose to cultivate the waste lands of a Mirasi village, their proposal should be in the first instance communicated to the Mirasidars, to whom, in the event of their being willing to cultivate or to give security for the revenue assessable on the lands the preference should be given. We consider that Government has a clear right to the Revenue to be derived from the conversion of waste lands into arable but at the same time think it preferable that the object should be attained, whenever practicable, without causing the intrusion of strangers into the village community".<sup>28</sup>

And this was reiterated in the Despatch No. 17, dated 3rd July 1844. Some five years later, when the principles of

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28. Bayley's Report, *ibid.* Dr. Karashima cites Ellis in the main, but I have drawn from contemporary original notings of both the schools of thought.

Survey and Revenue Settlement of Madras were being prepared, Government asserted their right to grant Dharkasts for waste, if the Mirasidars declined.

If history were to pronounce a verdict on this decision of the Court of Directors, it could be fully said to conform to the practice in the middle ages borne out by epigraphic evidence, viz., the right to induct an occupant into the waste was concurrent, exercisable by the township community, or by the king.

The final position that emerged was in the districts where there was a direct or explicit or over admission of the Mirasidar's claims to waste (as in Chingleput) or where the revenue settlement had reckoned with the capabilities and not mere actuals of the land revenue, and where the British Government had themselves compensated such (notional or real) interests, the Mirasi claims for a share of the produce (Tunduvaram or Svamibhogam) from the non-Mirasidars was respected, but it was left to the Mirasidars to collect it themselves. In other districts where there was no such explicit recognition or where the rights had fallen into disuse, they were ignored and allowed to lapse. This position was reached by the middle of the 19th century.

### **Village Settlements vs. Ryotwari Settlements :**

But still the idea of a village community haunted the early British administration in another manner, viz., in answering the question with whom the Revenue Settlement was to be concluded. Here again, there were two schools of thought – the Ryotwari school expounded forcibly by Sir Thomas Munro – to settle with the individual ryots. The other, which found an expression through the Collectors of Tanjore and South Arcot and even Tirunelveli, in the first two decades of the 19th century, was to collect the total

demand from the village community - meaning, thereby to invoke the joint and several responsibility of some leading landholders of the village. When these methods too were being cogitated the question whether the *Mirasi* tenure could be re-introduced in the districts where it existed only in name, was also raised. The view expressed by Bayley was that Ellis was describing the *Mirasi* tenure in its "pristine integrity" as it once was, not as it had been in practice at the time of the British assumption. It was hence inexpedient to revive a system though known at one time to have existed but had since become obsolete. And in any event, the rights / privileges of the *Mirasidars* could not be alone revived without the counterpart obligations / duties being fastened on them and enforced.

The issue of the village settlement of Revenue *versus* individual settlement with ryots was debated and in the first half of the 19th century almost every district had adopted some time or other the village settlement in the Carnatic. A summary of the district revenue experience is appended (Annexure-III). Except in Tanjore, the "village settlement" tried in the first and second decades of the 19th century was so named less because the settlement was with the entire body of the landholders or the occupants in the village as a whole as because the quantum of land-demand was fixed for the village as a whole; even then there were cases where the total assessment agreement was with the headman and principal holders of land - an oligarchy and not with the entire community. The primary obligation of the individual ryot was to be enforced first; the collective - the joint and several responsibility of the principal landholders or those who had subscribed to the settlement invoked next. In several cases, these latter were renters and the former lessees, perhaps, in the Nawab's regime, and hence their concern was to exact



the maximum. Instances were not wanting where each individual holder was also held responsible for the totality of the assessment for the village as well.

The system adopted had local variations and was changed from time to time, as none of them was a success. Even in 1812, the Court of Directors were convinced that the ryotwari principles were to be applied in future and they reiterated it in 1818.

In Tanjore alone the collective or joint holding of the village had, left a more lasting impress and hence the 'village settlement' on the basis of the collective – joint and several responsibility of the body of landholders – had greater chances of success. In fact when the early Collectors broke down the demand patta-wise, and even field-wise, the Board of Revenue took umbrage at this change from communal to individual responsibility likening it to the forcible "dissolution of a joint stock company in England and requiring each proprietor to trade upon his own portion of it in order that it might be separately taxed". They believed the economic viability of the ryot would be impaired by this process. But they overlooked or ignored the realities of the situation. For one thing even in the collectively and joint held villages, the share of each constituent was defined if not localised with inheritability and vendibility and all the attributes of private property. For another, by the middle of the 19th century, of their own volition the collective holders were breaking up the holdings so that every one secured a localised parcel of land which he could enjoy or dispose of at will uninterfered with by and not mingled with any other's property. The conclusion of an engagement in respect of such divided parcels in metes and bounds was no insuperable problem but only a logical corollary which the Revenue Settlement on ryotwari basis consummated.

The few villages with undivided shares still held collectively were exceptions.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the Mirasi landlords' rent was stated to be about 20 per cent of the crop in Tanjore and in Tirunelveli it had shrunk to  $13\frac{1}{2}$  per cent (vide page 114 – Maclean's Manual of Administration, Volume-I).

By the middle of the 19th century, the structure and functioning of the village community in regard to land management and revenue obligations could be summed up as follows:

Due to historical reasons, there were several types of village organisation. Individually held lands were common and widespread. The self-contained and self-regulating village community had almost ebbed out of existence. The strongest surviving relic of the "village community" was in the Mirasi tenure of villages and this has received considerable attention at the hands of the British administration.

The term 'Mirasi' (SVASTIYANDĀR — SKT) — (KĀṆIYĀITCI in Tamil) denoted a 'hereditary property'. It applied in South India to denote the tenure of the villages held jointly by co-shares who, as a body, constituted the proprietors thereof and enjoyed the produce "according to their respective shares in what is known as MARAKKĀL KOOTTU". The evidence of this tenure noticed was the strongest in Chingleput district.

The village was divided into PANGUS or shares, each made up of lands yielding an equal amount or entitled share of the produce; each had claimed a proportionate share of all the benefits of the common property, like the waste, mines, quarries, fisheries, forests and pastures. The village was divided into KARAI and each KARAI had many PANGUS. The lands falling to each PANGU was not a compact

contiguous whole, but distributed throughout the village, making allowance for the differential fertility of the soil and facilities for irrigation; comprising both dry and wet. The number of shares, naturally, varied from village to village and fractional interests had further crept in due to the transactions of sale, gift and inheritance and bequeathal. The share was nevertheless the unit of entitlement in the village and all part-interests expressed as fractions thereof. There was a KOSAM or an account kept of the village shares. The shares were liable to periodical redistribution and this was noticed in the 19th and mid twentieth century rarely (KARAIYIDU). All the shares were jointly and severally liable for the whole revenue of the village.

The ULKUDIS or permanent occupancy tenants cultivated the lands when the Mirasi-holder himself did not.

Mirasi villages were held both by Brahmins (AGRAHĀRA VĀDIKY as they were called in Southern districts), and PAṆDĀRA VĀDIKY were these held by other communities; Muslim villages were Mirasi and this term came to be applied for all. Paṇḍāra Vāḍiky was distinguished on the basis of caste than of tenure. The SUDRA Mirasis in South Arcot were called MANAVĀDOO villages.

When the lands were cultivated either by joint stock and labour, cattle and implements and the produce was shared by the Mirasidars or where each Mirasidar cultivated the land separately but brought in the produce to be subsequently shared by all according to their shares it was SAMUDĀYAM or PASUNKARAI. The only separated land was the backyard or garden attached to the house-site.

The villages in the southern districts and Tanjore went by the name of KARAI villages, and the co-sharers, KARAIKĀRS. Here lands were not parcelled out, but held

in common and in shares. They were periodically redistributed (KARAIYIDU). This has been compared to the Russian term "MIR".

"The Russian MIR is an instance of the common property in land. The land belonged to the communes and the individual as a member of the communes had merely the usufruct or the right to the temporary enjoyment of a share. The communes were responsible for the discharge of these liabilities which by way of taxation or otherwise were imposed by the Government. This community of rights and privileges, the members of the Unit and the lands which belonged to them collectively were called the MIR. The MIR was originally an association of freeman, and when the Czar became their father, ruler and master, they became his children, subjects and servants, but never serfs"<sup>29</sup>.

Sir Henry Maine has also noted the almost universal prevalence of "periodical redistribution". "It has continued to our own day," he says (1876) in the Russian villages<sup>30</sup> This periodical redistribution was once in 30, 27 or 12 years as usage dictated. The redistribution was prevalent in 1876 in some villages in South Arcot district and had lingered in Ganapati Agraharam (Tanjore district) upto the middle of this century when the Inam Estate Abolition was effected and in some Inam villages (Karambiyam for e.g.) in Pattukottai taluk (Tanjore district). But these were exceptions that proved the rule.

Gradually, the periodical redistribution gave place to a final distribution (ARUDIKARAI). There after the lands were held in severality with individual ownership and individual

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29. S. Sundararaja Iyengar: "Land Tenures in Madras" (1916).

30. Sir Henry Maine: "Village Communities"; p. 82.

liability for payment of Government revenue. This trend was more extensively in vogue from the 19th century onwards.

The village as a functioning entity had a body of village servants, the Headman, the Accountant, the Talayari or Police, the Totti – who had to do sundry duties of measuring the paddy, the “IRGANTI who distributed water, the village boundary watchman KAVALKARAN, the Astrologer, the priest, the Brahmin, the school master, the artisans like blacksmith, carpenter, the potter, the washerman, the barber, the cobbler, the cowherd, the doctor, the dancing girl, the musician and the poet. They were assigned MANYAMS or grants. These were service Mirasi or Mīa. Even a revenue peon was a Mira as he could not be removed unless for misbehaviour and on his death or retirement his son succeeded to his office”.<sup>31</sup> Even in the Telugu country, where it was unaffected by subsequent Muhammadan super-imposition, this system had been broadly prevalent.<sup>32</sup>

#### IV. THE LATTER HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

**The changes introduced by the Revenue Settlement and subsequent legislations that marked the disintegration of the Village Community.**

The “Mirasi” tenure and the “Ryotwari” tenure have been contra-distinguished by the Revenue administration of the mid-nineteenth century. Munro, the father of the Ryotwari settlement felt that the settlement with the individual ryot was the best and Government have a right to waste if left uncultivated by the Mirasidars. There were other

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31. Board's Minutes on Mirasi, dt. 11—12—1823 – Board's Consultations, Vol. 970, pp. 101-13.

32. Board of Revenue Selections I. 909, Vizag ataian district; p. 112. - a predominantly “Zamindari”, tract.

advantages too. Every proprietor held the land independently of the other, and paid the revenue direct to the Government. Besides the unappropriated waste belonged to the Government. The "open field" system practices any way ensured such common regulation of the rights of users, of irrigation, maintenance, and fencing and other agricultural needs to be served in common.

Even as early as in 1812, and again in 1818-19 the Court of Directors had distinctly come to the conclusion that ryotwari settlement was the best for Carnatic. By 1841 and 1844, they had definitely formed the view that the Mirasi rights should be contained within the prescriptive limits. Where the Mirasidars had not availed of the right of first refusal given, Government could assert their right to grant Dharkasts for waste lands even in Mirasi villages. The ground had been prepared for a full-fledged revenue settlement on ryotwari basis.

The latter half of the 19th century was *par excellence* the period of revenue settlement operations in the districts. A calendar of Revenue settlement is appended (Annexure-III).

With the ryotwari settlement of the tract such vestiges as the "Village Communities" had left became extinct. The tenure persistently received attention only in Chingleput and not so much in other districts. It was not as if they were deliberately put an end to. On the contrary, in line with the general tenor of Government views, according the right of first refusal to the Mirasidars and containing their special privileges to receive a fraction of the revenue as "TUNDUVARAM" and "SVATANTRUM" the original settlement explicitly recognised the rights of the Mirasi-holders.

Puckle, a veteran in settlement, proposed and Government approved<sup>33</sup> that in Chingleput district the nature of the settlement and the rights conceded to the Mirasidars should be clearly set forth in the Descriptive Memoir that accompanied each settlement register. Accordingly it was recorded that the Government recognised the Mirasidar's claim to a percentage fee (SVATANTRUM) on the Taram assessment which was fixed at two Annas in a Rupee of assessment of both dry and wet lands for which the lands were divided as PANGU, DHARKAST and waste. After stipulating the shares and the conditions under each of these lands the names and the shares of the then Mirasidars were noted. The SVATANTRUM fee payable for each field was entered in the body of the settlement register against all lands except lands granted on a Dharkast by Government, which were exempt from payment of SVATANTRUM, as pattas had been issued to non-Mirasidars prior to settlement. Government had no hand in the collection and payment of these fees to the Mirasidars.

In effect, the Mirasi right was reduced to the right to receive a fixed percentage fee (out of the assessment) on lands held by non-Mirasidars excluding outright assignees holding land under the Government and their rights were enforceable only in the Civil Courts, being customary personal dues.

During the resettlement of Chingleput district,<sup>34</sup> Stuart drove one more nail on the coffin. He felt that there was no need whatsoever to record in resettlement registers any information regarding the amount of SVATANTRUM, shares, list of Mirasidars, etc., as was done in the original settlement.

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33. G.O. Ms. Revenue No. 590, dt. 14th April 1875.

34. Dis. 471, dated 27th March 1908.

Government had nothing to do with them and were not bound to record them in Government accounts. While agreeing with the proposal, Government felt<sup>35</sup> that a complete omission of all references to the Mirasi rights would attract such an attention that it would have a great effect in reviving dominant privileges. Hence a brief recital was added to the Descriptive Memoir:

“The right of the Mirasidars to levy a SVATANTRUM fee of 2 Annas in the Rupee on the assessment in certain cases which was recognised by Government at the original settlement is not affected by the resettlement”.

In fact a similar general recital without specifying the content was already appended regarding the customary, communal, obligations of KUDIMARAMATH by the ryots in all Villages, for maintenance of tanks, channels, and silt clearance.

Stuart also dealt with Mirasi claims such as SAMUDAYAM PATTAs, claims of Mirasidars in village site, and preferential right given to the Mirasidars in the special Dharkast rules of the Chingleput district. He proposed to do away with SAMUDAYAM pattas by sub-dividing the lands as far as possible, and registering them in the names of the respective enjoyers and if claimed by the whole body of Mirasidars to issue patta in the name of one or two of the Chief Mirasidars with the consent of the rest. Similarly in the case of the fish pattas and tree pattas enjoyed in common, he proposed to grant the patta in the name of the Chief enjoyers with the consent of the villagers. He proposed the transfer of the village-site to the AYAN (Government) such as were under the cultivation of the Mirasidars

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35. G.O. Ms. No. 1511, Revenue, dated 13th May 1910.



and grant them on patta. He left the more serious claims of the Mirasidars to all vacant sites and their right to oust any non-Mirasidars to be contested in courts. He negatived the Mirasidar's preferential rights to water from irrigation sources.

The Government accepted<sup>36</sup> the proposals of the sub-division and registry in the name of the separate owners of SAMUDAYAM lands wherever possible, and in other cases to treat them as ordinary cases of joint pattas. Where the village-sites had been in possession and cultivation for a period of 60 proven years, the land shall be transferred to Government and assessed. The fishery and tree pattas were also brought in line with the general practice. The registry was revised, particularly to get rid of the registry in the name of the Mirasidar wherever possible.<sup>37</sup>

“The Mirasi tenure was confounded for a time with the settlement of Inams, and Government feared the conflicting tenures of the Mirasi rights might be perpetuated by enfranchisement. But on being clarified, the Inam settlement dealt only with the grant of the MELVARAM payable to Government they authorised the Inams Chingleput district also to be settled and enfranchised extending to such rights as the Inamdars held in place of the Government.”<sup>38</sup>

It has been already noticed that due to successive extension of revenue settlements with the individual ryots, the Mirasi tenure and collective or community holdings in Tanjore

36. G.O.Ms. No. 2868, Revenue, dated 19th October 1909 and G.O.Ms. No. 1868, Revenue, dated 4th June 1910.

37. Dis. 3548, of 19th November 1909 of the Settlement Officer.

38. G.O. No. 945, Revenue, dated 3rd June 1864. See “A Collection of Papers relating to Inam Settlement in Madras Presidency” (1948), p. 224.

had practically ceased (barring a few Inam villages) by the time of the Original settlement. Similarly in Tirunelveli district also such vestiges as CATURBĀGAM a remission granted to the Brahmins and certain cesses for village services (DUPATI MĀṆYAM, STHALA KĀVAL) were all done away with during the original settlement.<sup>39</sup>

The increasing authority of the headman, particularly from 1860 to 1915,<sup>40</sup> the growth of the Collector's personal authority and the intensive direct check through the revenue administration after 1915 had all fostered the individual holdings and enjoyment of land. Judicial proceedings too upholding individual property rights have had the same effect.

To complete the picture, the second category of Miras of offices or services performed against grant of land for maintenance, like Devadasi, village headman and village establishments and the village artisans – they were all variously enfranchised and the holders freed from the conditions of service. The Village Cess Act of 1864 transformed the Karnams into Government servants from being the service holders of the community. In effect, the legislation in 1890s were tightening the hold of the Government/Proprietor (in Zamindaris) over village servants.

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39. A History of Land Revenue System and Abolition of Intermediary Tenures – Tamil Nadu Government (1977), p. 502.

40. "An Indian Rural Economy (1880–1955)" by C.L. Baker, pp. 446–7 and 450 (CUP; 1984).

"Without the village headman, it was held there was no fulcrum on which to rest the lever" – C.S. Hearn.

"In Maharashtra too the Patel was the head of the village community with social and religious privileges" – Indian Antiquary, LV, 1926 – p. 108 ff. (S.M. Edwards)

The village service Inams were enfranchised in 1891,<sup>41</sup> and the "favourable rate of 5/8" was raised to full assessment in 1901.<sup>42</sup> Those in proprietary estates followed suit in 1904<sup>43</sup> The Devadasī Inams were enfranchised under Sec. 44-A of Act-II of 1927 as amended by Act-V of 1929 and Act-XIX of 1951. The artisan Inams-for the village craftsmen for services like carpentry, blacksmithy, washermen, etc., were ordered to be resumed or regranted in the thirties of the century. The services for the "Community" with a "retainer" of a land endowment and community contributions at the time of harvest in paddy were no longer enforceable. Thereafter "service" was a contract, informal or formal, on payment of wages, in cash or kind, and a professional transaction between the individual needing such services and the artisans. But still the hold of the village died hard. Often when the more affluent in the village brought a famous artiste (a Nadhasvaram player, for e.g.,) for a marriage or a carpenter from outside the normal right of first refusal or at least concurrent engagement of the local artisan could be preferred by them and they were also often accommodated. Another lingering relic was the MAHAMAI, a private levy collected by the trading community in particular for common religious, charitable, and social purposes. In more recent

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41. G.O.Ms. No. 20, dt. 12-1-1891.

42. G.O.Ms. No. 53, Revenue, dt. 25-1-1901.

43. G.O.Ms. No. 198, (Confidential), dt. 18-4-1904.

The discussions in the Madras Legislative Council on the village cess Act of 1864 and those on Proprietary Estates village Establishment Act and Village Officers Hereditary Succession Bill discussions in 1894-95, the Council discussions fully echo the controversy of the two prevailing schools of thought viz., treating the village officers as the servants of the village community *vis-a-vis* the concept of Village Officers as the servants of the Government.

times these were absorbed and administered as part of the functions of Trade and Communal Associations or registered Societies in places.

What the latter half of the 19th century began, the 20th century completed. The last lingering pockets of the vestiges of the village communities and their practices lingered in the Inam and Zamindari villages and in the "erstwhile native States" areas like Pudukottai and Kanyakumari district. These also died a natural death with the extension of the individual ryotwari settlement by legislation, the break up of the joint holdings where they existed into individual patta (engagements) direct with the Government, and the statutory abolition or enfranchisement or resumption of service Inams.

In the erstwhile Travancore State - or rather the south-eastern part of it - Kanyakumari district where the open field system was very much the agrarian pattern, individual holders directly paid revenue to the headman, an officer appointed by the Government. But the impulse of the village community continued to express itself in the form of a loose social organisation, the SAMUDAYAM administering voluntary levies and in particular cases, lands endowed for the purpose administered by the trusts which catered to the common needs of the residents of the locality as for festival, or a temple renovation, or in more recent times for social and cultural purposes like setting up a library, or a marriage-hall or a community centre or park. This survival could almost be traced to the present day.

#### V. VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS IN NORTH-WEST PROVINCES (UNITED PROVINCES - THE PUNJAB)

By way of contrast to the "individual ryotwari" settlement in Madras, the village settlement in the North West (The United) provinces may be cited.

The village system was introduced in the provinces of North-West, Punjab, and the Central Provinces (as they came to be called later) by Hastings, the Governor-General based on the scheme drawn up by the local officers. The Regulation of 1822 was hailed as the *Magna Carta* of the village system. It was allowed to grow for we cannot say it was introduced in the territories which came afterwards to be called the North-West Provinces (later the United Provinces), the Punjab and the Central Provinces. The essential feature of this system was that the settlement made by Government was not with the individual ryot but with a village community, the amount of revenue assessed for each village being paid by each individual owner being left to arrangements made among themselves. Each proprietor was primarily responsible for payment of his share of the Government revenue due from his portion of the estate and the whole country was made ultimately responsible for the amount due from the entire Mahal. The Punjab system of revenue settlement was thus described by John Lawrence: The proprietors did not engage individually with the Government but by villages. The brotherhood of the village through its headman or representative undertook to pay so much for so many years and then having done so, they decide the amount among themselves assigning to each one his quota. Primarily each man cultivates and pays for himself: but ultimately he is responsible for his companions and they for him and they are bound together by a joint liability. But the assessment was as periodical as under ryotwari.

It had the advantage of the Zamindari system that it did not break up the communal life and organisation of the village and the advantage of the ryotwari system that the hold of the Government over the people was constant and close. Survey and Settlement left people in touch with each

other although the number of people that were brought into contact with Government and Government officials was not so great as in Ryotwari. Over the village officials, the headman and the Accountant, the Government had as much authority and the Collector was the keystone of the arch of revenue administration. "On the unabated zeal and activity of the Collectors in superintending with a wakeful and pervading eye and controlling with a firm and energetic hand the conduct of the native servants employed under their authority from those on the Huzur establishment down to the Mocuddum and patwaris of the villages" depended the efficiency of Revenue administration in the ceded and conquered Provinces of Agra in the first quarter of the 19th century. In settlement work especially the Collector was expected to be frequently employed, for nothing was more calculated to enlarge his views and extend his general information than this branch of his duty. From a general RUKBA of the extent of parganah provided by the Kanunge and a DOWL or estimate of its average produce, from other information received from the village to be settled or neighbouring villages or opposite parties and interests, after a consideration of the former accounts of the village, after determining with whom the Government is to engage, a question frequently of the utmost nicety, the Collector offered settlement to the village or the proprietor. There was reason to believe that in the first decade of the 19th century in the Upper Provinces of Bengal the duty of the settlement was frequently left to the Thasildars. Partiality, injustice and even fraud flowed from this devolution of the Collector's duty to settle".<sup>44</sup>

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44. "Some Influences what made the British Administration in India" by Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy; 1939; (Luzac & Co.) pp. 317 - 18.

## VI. THE BREAK UP OF THE VILLAGE COMMUNITIES AND ITS CAUSES - THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

The disintegration of the village community could be ascribed to the early 20th century. It was a process creeping through, palsy-like, over the ages, but it got accelerated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its causes were many - structural and sociological, economic, administrative and legal - in short the ethos of the time, which had felt the full impact of the western ideas of life and organisation and education and culture.

### **Structural and Sociological :**

If the village community was itself, projected as the extension of the joint family, the joint family itself was under stress and strain, and was falling to pieces progressively in the early 20th century. The family was much less closely knit by this time than what it was earlier. Western education and influence had contributed to it. The joint family in the latter half of the 19th and the less so in the early 20th century had assiduously put the brighter among its members to schooling and collegiate and even professional education on western lines. When they became employed mostly in Government service, and in private avenues and moved out of their native townships and surroundings the idea of separate families and divided enjoyment of property, especially the self-acquired property struck roots. Those who had filial family ties, no doubt, parted with a position of their earnings for maintaining the rest of the members of the family staying at home. But the practice of contributing their entire income into the common kitty of the joint family had diminished, only to eventually disappear.

Education and training on western lines had resulted in the mobility of those who had benefited out of it, from

their native habitats. The slow but distinct process of urbanisation had given a fillip to it. Though manufacture was still far, far behind, commercial enterprise, trade especially in imports and exports, and the avenues of employment thereon had multiplied. This commercial and economic expansion had cut across the traditional caste structure and there was greater dispersal of individuals to urban and semi-urban locations, fostering a measure of cosmopolitanism.

### **Economic :**

As a corollary, the land-occupancy patterns in the rural areas also were slowly, but surely, undergoing changes. The hereditary title and possession alone, no longer determined the composition of landholders. Often cross-sales, mortgages and inter-community transfers had occurred, due to the economic compulsions. The left-behind members of the joint family, with contracting sources of sustenance, had often to resort to the disposal of their land. The new rich people, with earnings from without, would invest their earnings on land, as land offered security and assured income at that time besides conferring a status.

To this trend, should be added the growing claims of the tenants and cultivators intent on consciously enlarging their own share at the expense of the landholders or occupants. The trend was further facilitated if the landholder was an absentee from the village or even if a resident was weak. This had added economic pressure on the landholder, weak and impoverished, to sell away his land and eat out of his capital. Together, the landholding class, living out of the produce, without much of their own economic contribution to production was becoming extinct.

It had two consequences-first the social cohesion the homogeneity and the integrity that resulted from it had become



a thing of the past. The homogeneity and cohesion which most obstinately endured in the residential part of the township also gave way in the latter half of the 20th century. No longer were the habitats sequestered on the basis of caste but there was a mix even in the habitat. Secondly, the customary communal obligations like silt clearance, channel clearance, tank-maintenance, and obligations in maintaining pathways, had all fallen into disuse. They were reduced to a nullity surviving only in the letter of it being still preserved in the Descriptive Memoirs of the Village Settlement Registers and the Kudimaramath Act surviving in the Statute Book. The Madras Government records of the first half of this century are full of correspondence on the customary obligations falling into disuse, and the consequent difficulties in irrigation, especially in the Tanjore and Tirunelveli riverine and deltaic areas. There was a tug-of-war between the Government and the AYACUTDARS (command area landholders), each blaming the other and each wanting the other to undertake the repairs. But, neither attended to them.<sup>45</sup>

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45. From the author's personal experience and study of records of Public Works Department (as Secretary, P.W.D.) of the period. The experience regarding the village common reserved for grazing ground was also similar. Garstin (Member, Board of Revenue, Madras) answering an interpellation stated in 1893 as follows:

"There is no village common land set apart by the villagers for the grazing of their cattle. The village grazing lands where they exist are State property. Government ordered waste land desirable to conserve and protect as sources of fuel or fodder supply or as grazing grounds for cattle to be legally conserved by Forest Act - but it will not interfere with proved rights of grazing". (Fort St. George Gazette Supplement, p. 3, dt. 21-11-1893).

The classic instance in the 1920s was the Tanjore land-holders' demand for silt clearance of the irrigation channels by Government on the ground it was a part of the regular maintenance obligations of the major system by the Government. The Government negatived it on the ground that apart from the silt-clearance of the Cauvery channels being a running sore, the obligation was part of the customary Kudimaramath obligations of the landholding community. They alone had to attend to it; more so because the land assessment of the district was already low. To quote the forceful Executive Councillor of the time, Forbes, "Government will have none of it", which needed additional funds from Government for taking on an additional obligation which was not theirs already.

The landholder *versus* the tenant conflicts had their impact, each trying to foist the obligation on the other. The "community" which had to fulfil the obligations had ceased to be. Government too would not oblige.

The natural political evolution could have been for the Panchayat institutions as the modern edition of the community-administrative organisation to take upon themselves these obligations. But that evolution had not been effectively taken place nor the Panchayat Unions, for political reasons would be willing to tax the community for funding the community obligations.

It was left to the author to attempt a "patch-work" in the sixties, by suggesting a voluntary cess to be raised by the land-holders to be matched by a Government grant. But even this did not have much chances of a success in the Sixties.

### Administrative:

The natural decadence of the village community was quickened by the new revenue system. The engagement was between the ryot - not necessarily the tenant and the cultivator - and the Government. The ryotwari system put a premium on the sub-divided and separated enjoyment of the parcels of lands by the individual and discounted the joint holdings and more the village community-holdings as a whole. For the former alone resulted in the certainty of the person who had the obligation to pay revenue; indeed, it was a coveted certainty as it gave a status and social prestige to the holder of the land.

Government also was asserting its right to assign the unoccupied waste-lands to those who applied for it. After the resettlement operations what little lip-service was paid to the Mirasi rights in districts like Chingleput and Madras had also ceased. The use of the land had become varied; demand for such land in and around new urban centres had increased. The pressure of population added to such economic pressure. These had led to a larger number of applicants for the limited stock of land. Land revenue rates were far lower than the historical rates in pre-British times and were unrelated to the crops raised. New cash-crop cultivation like sugarcane, cotton, oilseeds, and tobacco for exports with variegated possibilities had also led to increased pressure on land. Wastes had become less. D.T. Chadwick, an experienced Settlement Officer and Director of Agriculture commented in 1961 as follows:<sup>46</sup>

“When under crop large tracts of the country present a rich appearance, a visible testimony to the inherited agri-

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46. Playne: “Southern India” (1916); p. 754.

cultural skill of many generations of farmers. It is the sight of the communal and waste lands, and also of the ordinary village cattle which mars the results of the ceaseless industry”.

But this was no longer the case in the decades that followed. Cultivation had gone apace to extend to the sub-marginal lands, unless such lands are so bereft of any soil that “Nature herself could not cure it”.

If ever the village community could have lingered the longest it was in the manner of dispensing justice and deciding civil causes. This was because of the hold of caste and caste elders and village Panchayat. Buchanan notes in his tour of Karnatak (1800-1801):<sup>47</sup>

“In every part of India with which I am acquainted wherever there is a considerable number of any one caste or tribe. It is usual to have a headman, whose office is generally hereditary. His powers are various in different sects and places, but he is commonly interested and entrusted with the authority of punishing all transgressions against the rules of caste. His power is not arbitrary; as he is always assisted by a council of the most respectable members of his tribe. The punishments that he can inflict are fines and stripes; and above all ex-communication or loss of caste, which to a Hindu is a most terrible of all punishments. These hereditary chiefs also assisted by their council frequently decide civil causes or dispute among their tribe; and when the business is too intricate or difficult it is generally referred to the hereditary chief of the ruling tribe of the site or division to which the parties belong. In this case he assembles the most respectable men of the division and

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47. “Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar,” Vol. I; published by Black Parry and Kingsbury, Leadenhall St., London; 1807.

settles the dispute and the advice of these persons is commonly sufficient to make both parties acquiesce in the decision; for everyone would shun a man who could be so unreasonable as to refuse compliance. These courts have no legal jurisdiction; but their influence is great and many of the ablest Amlgars enforce their decisions by the authority of the Government"

The controversy between the village communities and the courts of judicature modelled and introduced by the British to enforce individual rights had a great deal of parallelism with the community *versus* individual settlement in the Revenue administration (vide Annexure - V).

In the end, the British judicial system with a growing volume of statutory laws to enforce had fostered the concept of rights (as against obligations) and the status of the individual (as against the community). Courts of justice established in every Administrative division with elaborate procedures, were more accessible - which promoted litigation even if needless. To quote Sir Henry Main :

"Usage, one recorded upon evidence given, immediately becomes written and fixed law. Nor is it any longer obeyed as usage. It is henceforth obeyed as the law administered by a British Court, and has thus really become a command of the Sovereign. The next thing is that the vague sanctions of customary law disappear. The local courts have of course power to order and guide the execution of their decrees, and thus we have at once the sanction of penalty following disobedience of the command. And, with the command and with sanction, come the conceptions of legal right and duty. I am not speaking of the logical but of the practical consequence. If I had to state what for the moment is the greatest change which has come over the people of India

and the change which has added most seriously to the difficulty of governing them. I should say it was the growth on all sides of the sense of individual legal right; or a right not vested in the total group but in the particular member of it aggrieved, who has become conscious that he may call in the arm of the State to force his neighbours to obey the ascertained rule. The spread of the sense of individual right would be an unqualified advantage if it drew with it a corresponding improvement in moral judgement. There would be little evil in the British Government giving to native custom a constraining force which it never had in purely native society, if popular opinion could be brought to approve of the gradual amelioration of that custom. Unfortunately for us, we have created the sense of legal right, before we have created a proportionate power of distinguishing good from evil in the law upon which the legal right depends".<sup>48</sup>

Henceforth, the legal accent was on the individual than on the community, on the former's rights than on his duties, on the judicial declaration and enforceability of these rights than on the custom. The authority of the headman and the village elders and the conciliar form of village courts had vanished.

Lacking its own sanctions and losing its own utility, the village community was no more.

## CONCLUSION AND SUMMING UP

In ancient times and in its functional content the "village Community" in South India was the embodiment, the machinery, and the instrument of a way of life. It was

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48. "Village Communities East or West" (Opcit) - pp. 72-73.

rooted in land its use and land occupancy. A homogeneity of its constituents was predicated in the middle ages which gave it cohesion, and sanction, social and moral, and legal - all thrown in one. It was also the accredited agency and the local arm of the king's authority and a willing and deferential medium for implementing his commands. Its virile functioning could be noticed in the four centuries from the 10th to 14th (the Cola and the Pandya times).

But towards the end of that period already changes had occurred. Landholdings had become dispersed. The homogeneous character of landholdings got impaired. The authority of the chieftains and individuals growing in authority had encroached on and abridged its effective functioning. The growing burden of the land-dues had added to the waste and the liabilities of the community. During the Vijayanagar and Nayak rule perhaps these trends further increased. In the 18th century under the Nawab's regime, the problem got aggravated by his exactions and the renters and the lessees playing havoc with the village economy. This was the situation on the eve of the British assumption of power. The early British administrators, had noticed vestiges of the village community, which nevertheless, bore distinct marks of its earlier structure and attributes.

In the 19th century there was an intensive enquiry into the village communities which had survived, in its remnants, in the Miras villages. The enquiry was promoted by the two live issues of the times: (1) with whom to conclude the Revenue Settlement for land demand, and (2) the rights of the Mirasidars *versus* those of the Government for waste. Practices and procedures followed varied in every district. But the final position was that for a time "Village Settlements" with the headman and the leaders or lessees were

concluded, the demand was shown for the village as a whole. These were considered to be the customary mode prevailing in the Carnatic. But they all failed. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Province settled down to a Ryotwari system, under which an individual engagement with an individual ryot for the parcels held by him was concluded for being directly paid to the Government through its revenue machinery. Parcels of land held by individual holder were also localised and sub-divided.

In regard to the right to waste, the Government unwittingly admitted the Mirasidars' claim for a time, but only in a few districts like Chingleput, and later modified their view. They thought it would suffice to give them the right of first refusal, and if they did not take up the land or left the land waste and uncultivated, Government could induct others willing to pay the revenue. The right of the Mirasidars for the customary levies they had been collecting hitherto was contained and recorded in the original settlement register of Chingleput district specifically, but they were not enforceable by or through or as against the Government. In other words, it was a civil right, which, based on factual evidence, would have to be established and enforced through the civil courts. Even these details were omitted in the resettlement of that district, barring a vague and general mention. The customary levies lingering upto the 18th century were also getting discontinued.

In other districts such rights were ignored or allowed to fall into disuse (as in South Arcot, Tirunelveli and Madurai districts) or were non-existent (as in Salem, Coimbatore districts). In Tanjore, the Mirasi tenure and periodical distribution of the shares (unlocalised on ground-KARAIYIDU) had been existing the longest. But by the



time the original settlement was taken up, by a natural process of attrition and localised sub-division, the Mirasi villages had broken up even in that district and became disintegrated.

The village communities were wider than the Mirasi tenures and not merely the agencies for enforcing collective revenue obligations. It was a form of organised socio-economic fabric. With the spread of English education and opening up of employment, opportunities away from the home-village, and urbanisation, mobility of population had been engendered. Landholdings became dispersed in ownership, and the homogeneity of the community was lost. Economic pressures and the effect of legally enforceable individual rights and of contract had accelerated the disappearance of the joint family and the disintegration of the community and its moral authority. By the mid-twentieth century, the village community had lost its community consciousness. It had ceased to be. What was left of it was the vague "hand-over" of a social commonality of objectives, to the extent they could voluntarily bind the residents of a locale or of the identity of a trade or provision, often invoked for a local religious institution or festival or a social purpose of the relevant constituents.

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Note: The statements made for which citations have not been given are drawn mostly from the intensive personal observation and field study of local conditions and archival records made in the author's ten-year revenue settlement experience in the composite state of Madras from 1950 - 1960 and as Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu, Public Works Department from 1963-1969.

## ANNEXURE - I

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OR BRITISH ACQUISITIONS  
IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY

Year	Acquisiti
1759	Masulipatnam Circar      Havelly; Di      Mallore: Ingoodoo; Pedana      Oommidy; and Narasapore Mahau      Nizampatnam Circar; Acoolamannaud; I      Condaveed Oor; Gongarnapully; An      Sakhinedapally;      Kistna Rameswaram; vedhy.
1763	Chingleput      Greater portion
1768	Chicacole, Rajahmundry, Ellore,      nugger      Northern Mus and Moortizanugger Circars      Circars
1792	Dindigal and Pulney Talooks      Madura Present
1792	Pulney Talooks      Salem district (except Oosoor Talook)
1792	Cungoondy Talook      North Arcot
1799	South Canara
1799	Coimbatore
1799	Neilgherry Hills      Except South East Wynaud
1799	Oosoor Talook      Salem
1799	Vencatagherrycottah talook      North Arcot
1799	Poonaganore Talook      One-third North Arcot
1799	Tanjore      Greater portion

1800	Bellary	
1800	Cuddapah	
1800	Bunganapully	
1800	Kurnool	
1801	Carnatic	Present Nellore district North Arcot (except Cungoondy and Poorganore); South Arcot, Trichinopoly, Madura (except Dindigul and Pulney talooks) and Tinnevely; also the feudatory state of Poodoocottah).
1801	Payeen Ghaut	
1803	Poonganore	Two-thirds, North Arcot
1803	Wynaud	Part in Malabar, Part in Neilgherries

{Source: Macleans Manual of Administration; 1885, Vol. I}

ANNEXURE - II  
A SUMMARY OF SALE-DEEDS ENCLOSED TO  
ELLIS'S REPORT

Documents of (1)	Details (2)
A.D. 1661	Transfer of $\frac{1}{2}$ pangu by a Brahmin of Sirumangadu to another Brahmin - without any boundary description or measurement-included house-site, gardens, rice-fields, etc., the taxes on oil-presses, looms and the privilege of using forced labour - astabhoga tejasvamyam - mavada; maravadi (animal and tree profits).
A.D. 1676; A.D. 1696 and A.D. 1692	Transfer of land from Brahmin to Brahmin - plots described with measurements - in one, a share or pangu specified - right to water sold also the right to oil-presses. If mortgagee pays PANNU or land revenue to Government, the mortgagor to reimburse with interest.
A.D. 1762	Two Gramanis of Sandavelur grant $\frac{1}{8}$ pangu to a Brahmin of Echoor on a solar eclipse for his merit - no right to oil-presses.
A.D. 1763	The same Gramain sold land. Taxes on oil-presses included.
A.D. 1727	A part pangu sold by a Mudali to another Mudaliar of Konnur in auction - Tondiarpet held in 10 Karais (1 karai = 1 pangu). One-third of 1 karai, i.e., $\frac{1}{30}$ th of the village sold-another sale of $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{20}$ th of the village included are the residential areas of the Paraiyar, wells, taxes on oil-presses, etc. - the purchaser to pay all rent and assessment and also render labour service to Government.

- A.D. 1728    The URAVARGAL or Gramatiar or Tondiarpet transfer lands to others for specific purposes – charitable like flower garden for village deity, water-service stall for wayfarers – No price – Dharmadana lands geographically described – A collection gift of the usufruct. Report to taxes mentioned.
- A.D. 1733    Transfer from the Uravargal to a Chetti – a company merchant.
- A.D. 1728    A vendor or Madanambedu sold 3 shres (Vritti) in kilmadanambedu to a vendee of Amur-shares purchased by Tavanakrayam (i.e., usufructary mortgage deed) – house-sites included.
- A.D. 1772    Vendor from Konnur and accountant of Vepery sold their rights in lands adjoining Vepery of a salt-pan and wet paddy field to a Mudaliyar of Purasawalkam.
- A.D. 1772    A Brahmin from Sirunayam mortgaged  $\frac{1}{4}$  village to a mortgagee of Amur-mortgagee to pay taxes and render free labour to Government.
- A.D. 1782    A Mudali of Sirudayur sold  $\frac{3}{16}$  of land to a Chetti of Saidapet. Whole Sirudaiyur – comprising  $\frac{1}{2}$  Rajakkal holding;  $\frac{1}{4}$  another Mudali,  $\frac{1}{4}$  the vendors less  $\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{16}$  sold in the transaction. Included house-sites, garden, cultivated field, pond and also right to taxes and water.
- A.D. 1793    Five Gramanis of Tondiarpet sold two house-sites of the village to a Mudali and right to water.

(Source: Rearranged from the analysis in Dr. Karashima's "Studies in the History of South Indian History and Culture").

## ANNEXURE - III

## SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS IN DISTRICTS DURING THE FIRST TWO DECADES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In South Arcot, Captain Graham adopted the "village settlement" system and the assessment was fixed for the village as a whole and settlement effected with the head inhabitants of the village under joint security for the revenue. This was in 1801. The leases with the heads of villages for a three-year period was adopted by Ravenshaw. But following the recommendation of Hodgson ("Tanjore Commission") village settlements with heads of villages were adopted for three years from 1808-9 in almost all the villages. The board felt this system had several advantages, viz., —

- (a) Familiar to the people;
- (b) Facilitated and reduced collection charges;
- (c) Little demand or attention of the Collectors to detail;
- (d) No discontent likely so long as the village was not over-assessed; and
- (e) Protection afforded to ryots against oppression by heads of villages.

Where the Mirasi rights existed, the Mirasidars should be given preference and made jointly and severally responsible for the assessment. If they refused, engagements may be made with one or more of the Mirasidars or with others. Where Mirasi rights did not exist, engagements may be made with Patels or with heads of villages or even the resident ryots in reference to strangers. In all cases, the renters so

engaged shall issue patta to the cultivating ryots.<sup>1</sup> But the rent-collectors were oppressive. The cultivators faced distraint and prices fell. The scheme failed. The decennial settlement introduced with such 'heads' and renters also led to the impoverishment of the ryots. By 1812, the Court of Directors had felt that there could be, in the circumstances, no sounder system than the conclusion of Ryotwari settlement with engagements wherever possible with the holders of the land.

This experience was also repeated, barring local variations in Madurai, Tirunelveli and Ramanthapuram tracts almost as a pattern.

The experience in North Arcot was also similar. Stration introduced a settlement with the heads of villages on a joint and several responsibility borne by them. Again the renters who took up this system in the guise of heads of villages abused it. Salem and Coimbatore went through the process of village settlements, fastening joint and several responsibility of the ryots (1805), and the triennial (1808) and decennial village settlements in 1811 and found them all unproductive. Ryotwari settlement was the final system decided on by Sullivan.

In Tiruchirappalli, Annual Village settlement with the headman of each village and leading inhabitants were made, but each cultivator was made responsible for the whole village and the collective, i.e., joint and several responsibility was enforced till 1827 when it was abandoned.

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1. History of Land Revenue Settlement and Abolition of Intermediary Tenures (Tamil Nadu Government Publication; 1977).

In Tanjore alone, the vestige of collective township system had lingered the longest, and in better shape; there was a stronger adherence to the traditional collective responsibility system of the village. Starting with *Amani* (or share cropping with the State in 1709, and annual leases in 1804-5 to 1807-8) under which a proportionate amount out of the lumpsum of the village was made payable, and later apportioning it even on each field owned by a ryot (1805-7); it was the forerunner of the ryotwari system. Tanjore too, followed the pattern of the triennial leases, recommended by Hodgson and a "village-rent" and "settlement" with the headman and leaders was entered into in 1806. This was followed by a quinquennial settlement and under Kindersley's MOTTUM FAISAL system—a total assessment for the whole village was fixed, but it was distributed among the surveyed fields. But this was not approved by the Government and in 1831 they forbade its extension, but it was again acclaimed in 1859 to be the best suited for Tanjore. In 1865 even under Mottum Faisal system, individual pattas were introduced, expressing the holdings not in terms of acres and cents, but a fractional share of the whole village, following the prevalent practice in private sale-deeds. Thus several modes of revenue settlement were prevalent on the eve of introduction of ryotwari settlement.

But the peculiarity of Tanjore was that the Mirasi system was universal, but where the village community had held the lands jointly. It could be either by joint management of the lands by all the Mirasidars or the distribution of the lands at periodical intervals among the villagers for their individual cultivation. It was in appreciation of this joint and collective holdings that early settlements with the villages as a whole were preferred. But though the community holding was the basis, in actual practice, it was applied to the unoccupied waste or common. The system had always involved a scale



of individual rights to specific shares in the net produce, however secured, of the general property. Each Mirasidar's share (*karai* or *Pangu*) was clearly defined and recognised within the village and all essential ingredients of the individual ownership inhered in such a concept of the localised or recognised share. In fact, the progressive tendency was to finalise and crystallise shares into the specific plots localised and enjoyed by each (ARUDIKKARAI) and held as unalterable private property of each.

The Mirasi system, then even in its decadent form was Janus-faced. It could lend itself to the village settlement or to individual ryotwari settlement.<sup>2</sup>

When the early Collectors decided on such individual localisation of land and of individual holdings, as the basis for settlement, the Board of Revenue objected to the change from communal to individual responsibility and compared it to the forcible "dissolution of a joint stock company in England and requiring each proprietor to trade upon his own portion of it in order that it might be separately taxed".<sup>3</sup> They believed it would impair the economic viability of the individual ryot. The Board and the Government finally decided that though each ryot should be assessed with a part of the joint village yet the rent should still be a fixed money rent imposed jointly on the village and the whole village should be still jointly liable for any failure to pay it. The Collector could then first proceed against the defaulting individual, to recover arrears of revenue but failing complete recovery therefrom could hold the whole village liable. No assessment of the individual fields was to be attempted.

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2. History of Land Revenue Settlement and Abolition of Intermediary Tenure; pp. 414, 420.

3. p. 414 *ibid*.

Thus both the principles, of individual responsibility for assessment and the joint liability of the village for any arrear not recoverable from the individual ryot were concurrently in force. So long as periodical distribution of lands was persisted in, the transfer of pattas had to be made with the consent of the parties to reflect the resultant individual holdings. In an extreme case where a partial transfer of land was made year after year, the whole village was entered in one joint patta and such exceptional cases still lingered almost within contemporary experience and memory. But in the generality of cases, the practice of periodical distribution stopped and a formal final division of shares localised in land-parcels was crystallised and made permanent. With that the traces of the old communal ownership of village lands was practically dead, by A.D. 1887 when ryotwari settlement was decided to be introduced in the district.

## ANNEXURE - IV

CALENDAR OF ORIGINAL REVENUE SETTLEMENT  
AND RESETTLEMENT

District	Year of original settlement	Year of resettlement
Madras		1909
Chingleput	1875 to 1878	1909
South Arcot	1887-1893	1918-23
North Arcot	1878	1913
Salem	1871-73	1904
The Nilgiris	1881	1924
Coimbatore	1875-81	1909-12
Tiruchirapalli	1874-75	1924-25 (Musiri talook)
	1858-59*	1910-11 (Karur)
	1879-80	1903-04 (Thattiangarpet)

\* finished in 1864

Tanjore	1892	1923-4
Ramanathapuram	1872-78	1911
Madurai	1872-84	1916 1918
Tirunelveli	1862-74	1903-5

## THE VILLAGE PANCHAYATS IN THE MADRAS JUDICIAL SYSTEM

(1812 – 1883)

The role of the village and district panchayats and of the village headmen (as the successors of the village communities) was considered in detail between 1812 and 1816 *vis-a-vis* the Judicial system introduced by the British, viz., District Munsiff's court, Zilla Judge and the Saddar Court. This was more or less, a counterpart of the discussion of the role of village communities *versus* the individual landholder in the Revenue system.

Here the roles were reversed. Colonel Munro was the protagonist of the village Panchayat system. As the Commissioner of Internal Administration, he minuted in 1807.

“There can be no doubt that the trial by Panchayat is as much the common law of India in Civil matters, as that of jury of England. The native who has a good case always applied for a Panchayat and who has a bad one seeks the decision of the Collector or the judge because he knows it is much easier to deceive them”.

He was supported and assisted by Stratton. A series of regulations were drafted to empower village Munsiff and “review village panchayats to hear and decide cases of a limited or petty nature and village boundaries.

These measures were undertaken at the instance of the Court of Directors and the Governor-General in Council.

But the proposals were strongly criticised in principle and in their details by their Sudder Adalat Court and more vehemently opposed on principles by Fullerton in his minutes, dated 1st January 1816. The Sudder Adalat wrote:

“Col. Munro, as quoted by the Court of Directors, describes every village with its twelve Ayangudies’ a little republic with the Potal at the head of it”.

The inhabitants during the war look chiefly to their own potal; they give themselves no trouble about the breaking up and division of kingdoms. While the village is entire, they care not to what power it is transferred. Wherever it goes, the internal management of it remains unaltered. The potal is still the Collector and Magistrate, Sudder Farmer. If this description be correct, either the British Government must have caused a gross and violent disturbance of the Municipal administration beyond what was experienced under former conquerors or else the internal management of the village remains unaltered; and any regulations concerning it must be at the best unnecessary. And if every village has been deprived of its municipal institutions, and has made no complaint of the deprivation the inference is that those institutions have either been lost so long as to be forgotten, or they have from whatever cause ceased to be desirable. The act, therefore, by which potails may be now called upon to discharge judicial functions will be regarded as an imposition of new duties, and not as a revival of the former institutions of the country or it will be considered as the renewal of the obligations, which none of the parties concerned wished to have renewed”.

Mr. Fullerton was even more forthright:

“The general reasoning of Col. Munro seems intended to support the administration of justice by Potails and

Punchayats as a system of itself superior to that lately introduced. I am fully persuaded the real advantage of the Punchayat mode of administering justice was that at the time it prevailed, there existed no other. If a man had rot a Punchayat to settle his cause, he obtained no settlement at all. Punchayats are not however excluded from our system of judicature, all cases of account are, by Regulation-XXI, recommended to be so adjusted; and what is a Panchayat but an arbitration. It is perfectly within my own knowledge that no inducement is ever spared to prevail on parties to submit such cases to arbitration, and for reasons too obvious to require remark, to save the court the tedious process of investigating an intricate account; in very few instances are parties brought to accede to arbitration and when they are, the award generally gives rise to a suit intricate in itself and proceeded by a harassing investigation as to the existence of partiality and corruption, the proof of which can alone admit appeal from it".

"That the employment of Punchayats may have been the practice best suited for the times and circumstances under which those military authorities have written, I do not dispute; where men lent money without bond or receipt, or gave the bond for more than was received or having given it, repaid it without getting the bond back; when written engagement were unknown, and each depended on the other's verbal promise, it must be admitted a Punchayat of the village, who from proximity to the litigant parties were themselves personally acquainted with the transaction, was the best calculated to decide; a mode of decision however, not resulting from the common course of evidence, or voucher for, or againt, but from personal knowledge of facts in the breast of the judges, a system which, however calculated to adjust the petty disputes of a village can form no ground for a general system of judicature in a great commercial country,

but it may well be asked if it be expedient or reasonable that such a state of confusion should continue. The case quoted by Col. Munro is surely an argument rather in favour of, than against the existing judicial establishment; the banya cheats the ryot as much as he can, because the ryot's property is protected from sale for regular payment, for fear of Government losing revenue. A strict conformity to such rude and barbarous practices, tending to obstruct the progress of improvement and civilisation, to keep the general administration of justice secondary and subservient to the collection of revenue, is surely not desirable by the Government, nor just to the people. When men find that a note or bond is the best legal acknowledgement of debt, regular receipt the best proof of its discharge, and a written agreement the best voucher for a thing to be done they will conform to the practice so obviously advantageous. The lender will require the bond, the payer the receipt, and the contracting parties the written obligation, regularity in dealings and accounts will unquestionably lead to facility of decision, and ultimately to the prevention of disputes, to discourage fraud and false evidence and promote the first object of good laws, the general amelioration of the morals of the people".

"The retrospective operations of the judicial system did certainly at the outset embarrass the courts, they were called upon to decide suits originating as far as 12 years back, besides the over-pressure from numbers, the cause of action was involved in all the confusion and uncertainty inseparable from the state of anarchy, operation been limited to a few years, and preceding disputes been left to be decided by the same irregular course of justice under which they arose; the remark of Col. Munro, is in this respect just, the lender certainly does obtain a security, usurious interest, the want of that security the want of the just that security produced, for the court would allow only 12 per cent. I cannot entirely

acquiesce in the reasoning of Col. Munro, where he ascribes the careless dealings of natives to a reciprocal confidence in each other's integrity. I am afraid some thing must also be laid to the side of premediated evasion, while no written voucher is forthcoming each reserve to himself the right of putting his own construction on their transactions and verbal agreements, and also of making up his accounts in his own way".

"But in judging of the state of things in the days of Punchayat practice, I am not bound to the opinions of others. I have myself been 26 years in the country and have spent the most of them in the provinces. I have seen the country under the old as well as the new regime. I have had the means of personal observations and have been in public stations called upon to exercise of judicial powers. I well remember the state of anarchy that preceded the introduction of the judicial system, the inefficiency of Punchayat or arbitration, and the extreme and the difficulty of getting an award from arbitrators even when they were once assembled, and the still greater difficulty of enforcing it when given. It was easy indeed to principal inhabitants, each party chose two and the public officers added one; but here ended all appearance of regularity what followed was a course of dispute, bribery, and intrigue, wrangling, and contention, which effectually obstructed decision, giving more trouble to the person acting as judge, and less satisfaction to the parties than if he had settled the cause himself".

Ultimately, a watered down draft of the village panchayat system to be convened by village munsifs was drafted. It limited the jurisdiction of the panchayat system to the following :

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1. Suits for sums of money or other personal property without limit of amount or value;



2. Where both parties agree to the adjudication / arbitration by village panchayats;
3. Cases not barred by 12 years; land-disputes were excluded.

The Panchayats were to have an equal number of persons of the caste or profession to which each party may belong.

Despite the dissent of Alexander and Fullerton, Government finally promulgated the Regulation on village Panchayats and for boundary disputes by village munsifs in the order, dated 17th May 1816.

But the Collector of Tirunelveli reported that there are many villages where the head inhabitants do not enjoy a MANIEM and have declined to undertake the duties entrusted to them under the Village Munsif and Village Panchayat Acts. The Government had no other answer than to ask the Collector to use his persuasion and induce a Mirasidar to voluntarily undertake the office if need be, to remunerate him, collecting an additional assessment upon the lands of others.

The Collector of South Kanara reported that the task will be too heavy in the dispersed conditions of houses in his district and the revenue work of the Shanbogues will suffer.

The Collector of Tanjore, Hepburn, calculated to the minutest detail that to circulate the copies of the 7 Regulations on the changed judicial system, it required  $1\frac{1}{2}$  quires of country paper and for 6,117 villages 6,117 quires of dummy paper or 7,646 quires of country paper or 1,83,510 manuscript sheets besides 11,01,060 cadjan leaves for the use of headmen and Karnams. And the task was just beyond his powers to ensure speedy execution.

The Commissioner for Revision of Judicial system had no better answer than to comment that "no real co-operation could be expected from the Collector of Tanjore". Government passed no final orders.

But Munro himself minuted on 30th January 1827 as follows :

"The village munsifs are so far from abusing their powers that very few of them act at all, their dread of being summoned on some false complaint or other to the Zilla court is so great that most of them avoid exercising the authority entrusted to them". It would in his view take long for them to be infused with confidence.

The introduction of village panchayats so zealously advocated by the Court of Directors in 1812 was somewhat haltingly promulgated in 1816. The position as it obtained in 1883 is as follows :

**"VILLAGE MOONSIFS" COURTS AND PUNCHAYATS,**  
— A still lower court is that of the Village Moonsif, established by Madras Regulation-IV of 1816. to meet the simple requirements of a Village community. The head of the village is under the Regulation 'ex-officio' a Village Moonsif; local custom however sometimes has it otherwise Under Madras Act-IV of 1883, the Village Moonsifs' Jurisdiction Act, the Village Moonsif's Judicial powers extend to suits for personal property upto 20 rupees, his decisions not being open to appeal; if the parties consent, he may try and determine similar suits upto 100 rupees in value in the character of an arbitrator, and when the litigant villagers wish such a course, he has power under Madras Regulation-V of 1816 to summon a punchayet, generally of five persons, to decide suits for personal property without limitation as to the value (the value

of the suits was enhanced in 1888-89 following the recommendations of Sri. T. Muthuswami Iyer Committee - vide Abstract proceedings of Council of Governor of Fort St. George, dated 17th January 1888; 1888-1889).

Under Madras Regulation-XII of 1816, Collectors of Districts may summon punchayets through the Village Moonsifs, and may, with the consent of parties, refer to such Punchayets the settlement of suits respecting the occupying, cultivating and irrigating of land between proprietors or renters and their ryots; as well as claims to crops and lands and cases of disputed boundary. There were in all 36,642 village Munsifs in 1883, but the number of village Munsifs that actually exercised civil powers was 2,339. There were 48,967 suits instituted in these courts in the same year, the total value of the suits being Rupees 3,09,255/-.

But the response of the Collector of Tanjore is a standing example of how a reluctant bureaucrat, zealous of his own authority and unyielding in his own power of control, could reduce even Munro's passion - which was the obverse of his revenue pre-occupation - for judicial reform into almost a comic sarcasm!

- (Sources: 1. Selections from the Readings of Fort St. George - Village Panchayat and other Judicial systems of Administration, 1812-16.
2. Also Maclean's Manual of Administration, Vol. I and II.
3. Life of Thomas Munro, Vol. II; 1830; - Gleig

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## **THE MADRAS BOARD OF REVENUE: A REQUIEM**

I HAD a quaint communication from the Government of Tamil Nadu in October last year. It read: "The Government direct that Thiru R. Tirumalai be confirmed as First Member, Board of Revenue with effect from 15-6-1980"

Soon after, the Tamil Nadu legislature, it was reported, passed a Bill abolishing the Board of Revenue. It has since become law, and has come into force from December 1, 1980.

This coincidence set in its trail memories of a number of anecdotes, true and documented, I have come across in the 'transactions' of this hoary institution—on the men and matters connected with it. They extend well over two hundred years of its existence. What more fitting farewell to the Board can there be but to recall them. And who else can more poignantly sing its requiem than its last confirmed 'first member'?

### **CONSTITUTION**

The Board of Revenue was constituted by the order of the government dated June 20, 1786, with the sanction of the court of directors. It originally consisted of a member of the governor's council and three ordinary members. The governor was its president, and could participate in its deliberations if he chose to. Practically the governor and the members of the council ceased to attend the meetings of the Board, and the functions of the president were exercised by the senior most member. At that time, the powers of the Collector had

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Former Member, Economic Reforms Commission, New Delhi.

grown and were growing and had to be controlled. Many Collectors had invariably been functioning as independent authorities (like the Nabobs or the Rajas, whom they replaced) what with the slender means of communication and the unsettled times. The Board was given powers upto 1828 to summon the Collectors and even to fine them.

The Board became a statutory body, constituted under and regulated by the Madras Regulation I of 1803 which came into force on January 1 of that year, as modified by Madras Act I of 1894. The 'regulation' was made by the Governor-in-council of Fort St. George with its application limited to the Presidency, prior to assumption of sovereignty by the crown. It was declared by the Local Extent Act of 1874 to be in force in the presidency of Madras. And what a presidency! It extended from the agency tracts of Ganjam to within eight miles north of Cape Camorin, Coondapoor in South Kanara to Anjengo in Travancore and had comprised parts of five States of our times. The spoken languages were nine within.

### MOTHER OF MANY DEPARTMENTS

In its long and chequered history there was hardly any aspect of public administration which was not entrusted to the Board for some time except the presidency police. It was the Court of Madras under Regulation V of 1804. It administered salt monopoly under Regulation I of 1805 and from 1816 the general stamps. Between 1817 and 1863 it was in charge of religious and charitable endowments and properties escheating to government, but under Act XX of 1863 the religious endowments and institutions were taken away from its functions though it had ceased to perform these functions even earlier under orders of the Court of Directors. In 1821

the Sea Customs Act was transferred to it. In 1822 a cutcherry or native establishment was added to it so that "they might have the same sort of aid in the preparation of accounts and advice in all matters connected with taxation and improvement of the country which a collector obtains by means of his cutcherry from constant communication with intelligent native revenue servants". Between 1825 and 1854 it had control and superintendence of irrigation and ferries, canals and roads, and the Chief Engineer had a seat in it from 1836. But in 1854, the PWD was separately organised. By Regulations IX of 1822, VII of 1828, VI of 1831, it was conferred appellate powers over decisions of Collectors. It was in charge of audit establishment from 1861 to 1877 when the Accountant general was made a separate authority. Between 1871 and 1885 it was in charge of local funds and in the latter year government got this transferred to itself. The forest office was a part of it till 1875 when the Conservator of forests was separated. The opium monopoly and licence entrusted to it in 1878 continued to be with it ever after. This last, I suspect, was not without its side effects on the Board itself!

### COMPOSITION

The Board had normally, like the *trimurtis*, three members—the commissioner for land revenue (first member or as the Regulation terms him the 'president'). The other two were in charge of irrigation and land revenue, and excise and separate revenue (after 1937) and commercial taxes respectively. Exigencies, administrative, personal or functional as in war time, or for special efforts, always resulted in additions to the members. When my turn came, I was posted as the VI member but before I could take my seat I had a windfall promotion as V member and by the time I vacated (mark the words) it, within a year I was already the IV member.



The Board member never 'takes charge' nor does he sign the joining report. He only takes his seat and vacates it. The Board secretary submits this historic event to the government to take note, and to the accountant general for more mundanc purposes. Prior to 1873 the members had to take an oath and the consequences for violation were provided in sections 2 and 3 repealed in that year.

The junior most member had the privilege statutorily vouched to him by clause 19 to record his opinion first on questions 'put to vote' and in the deliberations of the Board. The seniors could never have their say first. There was a compensation, though. The junior member would often record a long minute with facts and reasons, either out of his anxiety to impress the first member, or by inclination to do hard work. The senior could record laconically 'I concur' or 'I disagree'. He 'may' record a dissenting minute but it was not obligatory, only it should be done before the Board adjourned. The first member had always the prerogative to sign last and he may choose merely to strike the marking by the secretary as 'M1' and sign—a privilege, alas, I could never exercise. Others with an ego would express it with a flourish after their immediate junior had recorded his agreement, 'so do I'.

## ITS PROCEDURES

The Board's proceedings or deliberations in the old days were always maintained in huge leather bound thick volumes of handmade paper called 'consultations'. They were truly hidebound and smelt of tan, more so when exposed to the moisture and dampness in the seeping 'Cuddapah flooring' of the old Nawab's palace where they were housed. 'They were to be careful to preserve the records complete but the members shall not have copies of any records' nor 'remove

any of the records from the office'. Members wishing to refer to them shall cause such records to be brought into the meeting room of the Board and shall peruse these there. The Board was referred to in those days in the plural 'they'. It could be a term of honorifix or an expression of showing (mildly) the distance, and good humoured banter or derision that the government in the Fort wished to mete out to the Board housed to its north in the present customs house and later across the Cooum in Chepauk. But the plural had a legal significance, to denote the collective character of the Board's deliberations which was formalised by the Act I of 1894. As Mclean puts it, "the advantages of the portfolio and council system were thus combined as in the case of the Governor's Council".

The Board had its dignity and aura of the ancient and was authorised, no, obliged, to use in the transactions of official business "a circular seal two inches in diameter, bearing in the English and Persian languages the inscriptions 'The Seal of the Board of Revenue' and no other seal was to be used. Note the Persian language which was adapted to Hindi or other specified languages only as late as in 1950, after the constitution came into force. The Board was historically the successor-in-authority to the 'sirkeel' or vazir of the Rajas, and the Moghuls and, not to be outwitted and to guard against fakes, it had to have a seal which should not suffer in comparison with the 'mohuis' of the moghuls and the nabobs!

The Regulation had been punctilious in detailing the manner of the functioning of the Board. They shall assemble twice a week at least for the 'despatch of business'. Often, it was the government's complaint, and the Board's confession too, that there was 'lack of despatch'. It had to keep two separate sets of their proceedings. one for broken periods to

accompany their general report to the government and the second to be kept in office. Their reports were not only elaborate and detailed but they had to prepare and annex a 'copious' index. This was the statutory origin of the annual indices of the Board's proceedings, which the first assistant had to prepare. The first assistant for long was the highest office to which an Indian could aspire in the Board and could reckon Seshiah Sastri and Chentsal Rao among its incumbents.

The Board's proceedings had also to be accompanied with a letter stating summarily the nature of the subject submitted and with distinct opinions and recommendations on each subject for consideration and decision of government—a requirement which earned the taunt of 'the Fort sluggards on the other side of the Coom' for the secretariat officers. One secretary even commented (with malice) that they could not be the wiser for all such 'spoonfeeding' and 'readymade' solutions.

### THE FIRST MEMBER

The Board had its president—later termed first member—who had a casting vote if 'votes' were equally divided. He could appoint or change the days of the meeting or summon extra meetings of the members, or adjourn or postpone them, but they shall meet twice a week. He would, during the intervals, on his own authority, issue occasional or subsidiary orders necessary for executing the 'existing resolutions'. He shall propose resolutions on all papers, read for the consideration, and may state specific questions for the opinion of the members on the business. In emergency, he had the authority to decide questions requiring immediate decisions and to issue orders on references requiring immediate reply. He alone would require copies of any records or the originals to be sent to him for perusal. He could call collectors to

account. Such details in the Regulation reveal the anxiety of the times that the Board could not be functioning smoothly all the time and, often, rivalries, personal, professional or temperamental, could mar its proceedings. Frictions there were and in the 19th century one member was even assaulted! The president or the first member was intended to pour oil over troubled waters, being the acknowledged senior among them all, who could call others to order.

### ITS STYLE OF FUNCTIONING

In the 'halcyon' days the consultations were recorded in flowing writing penned by the quill or feather and in dark black ink (treated with myrobalam) and dried by spreading black river sand on ribbed handmade paper. Leaves would refuse to be dogeared but would break if not reverentially handled. The style was often ornate and the sentences long and complex that even Thomas Browne would marvel. Initially the Secretary or the Member himself in his own hand had commented on the incoming communications, some-times on the back of the docket. The Board had standing orders on such details as prohibiting the tendentious habit of noting the date and month without the year and insisted on all signatures being fully subscribed in black ink with the year too noted in four digits. Later, the secretary made a note and the member corrected it before the former issued it. One member, Castle Stuart was keen on his own formulation of his ideas and wrote a draft, adding 'secretary, may criticise this draft'. The secretary dutifully forwarded the member's draft adding only his signature. The Board knew of no note file or office copies. They only deliberated and resolved.

When printing and wood pulp paper came into vogue the Board's proceedings were classified as BP press and BP

manuscript (ms for short) ! Those of 'eternal' value-of all time-were classified as press and 'those of the hour' as the ms. But the Ruskin-like classification did not carry with it the authority to print, and it required the special orders of government.

These elaborate rituals, reflected the 19th century habits of life and the apotheosis of the insignificant. But the functions and duties of the Board had something to do with them. Earlier, the Board of Revenue had exercised judicial authority in determining civil cases on appeal from the decision of collectors who had exercised both revenue and judicial functions. After the establishment of courts of judicature and zila courts, for cases civil and criminal, the Board's authority had to be correspondingly abrogated. But its powers in respect of the execution of administration of the revenue had to be defined and published. Hence the Board have been declared to have the authority for the general superintendence of the revenue from all sources and making recommendations of such propositions to the government as in their judgment may be calculated to augment and improve these revenues. This carried with it superintendence and control of all persons employed in the executive administration of revenues including collectors, zamindars, rayats, and farmers and others. Being a creation of the statute, their duties and powers were derived from the enactments and were subject to the limitations they imposed, a fact which, latterly, earned the criticism that they were an inflexible and rigid body.

The Board of Revenue and the new building which now houses the Board are incongruities. When I first became *ex officio* secretary (settlement of estates) in the Board, it was still located in the ancient buildings that had formed a part of the palace of the Nawab of Carnatic and preserved

(appropriately) under the Ancient Monuments Act. The four minaret towers rose above the building. The summer diwan-i-am of the nabobs was turned into the chambers of the members and the secretary. There were pulleys and chains through which rattan-the duffadars always pronounced it as 'rotten'-trays of files were literally sent 'up' by the Board's office ('cutcherry') shroffed by the first assistant. The records were unloaded and taken by the daftaries and duffadars - to my recollection-wearing the frilled gowns or frocks with liveries in red, bordered with yellow or golden frills with waist bands to match with a golden tuft pended and a turban with a red and yellow band stuck to it athwart. They closely resembled the dark beavers or butlers (that some of them were) in white robes in the Indo-Anglian paintings of the 19th century. They took the records to the secretary first and then to the members in order, from the junior most to 'M1' as marked by him. The more intelligent amongst them, though illiterate, could read at sight what the contents were!

There was, of course, a big and long meeting hall opening out into the cool avenues to the south and overlooking the sea. It had a gallery on the sides where the ladies of the zenana in 'purdah' used to sit to watch nautches or ceremonies in the nabobs' days. Half the room was occupied by the secretary (LR) and the confidential records of all officers were held under his custody. The other half served as a dining and meeting hall with a long table and rows of high backed chairs on either side. If their size was any indication, surely the occupants of old should have been awe-inspiring in their very 'corporeal majesty and presence'. Nothing in the place, even inadvertently, imparted anything modern except the apologetic intrusion by a lone black telephone receiver shame-facedly hung on the hook and the electric

bulbs concealed in victorian ceramic domes suspended by a copper chain. In the fifties, the lunch was no ceremony, at any rate for the collective Board to meet. The members came to lunch, so to speak, in turns one after another and the lunch time extended from 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. or even 4 p.m. There were exceptional occasions when it extended to the whole of the afternoon even beyond office hours.

### CHANGING TIMES

On one occasion a member came in with visible excitement and exclaimed. "A time-honoured system has been abolished. The Board standing order has been cancelled. The full Board should meet and consider this question in all its aspects". "Which standing order?", asked the senior. "The one which authorises the Board members to indent on the services of the village officers to procure and supply on payment the provisions in the camps while on tour" (The Board member could also claim allowances for taking his cook with him on tour). The senior replied. "Look, the heavens have not fallen. This was an anachronistic order which had long fallen into disuse. It is as good as cancelled. There was no need to raise a hue and cry over it".

These last observations may aptly fit in with the Board itself. For many aspects of its functions had become obsolete and out of tune with the times. Failure to reconcile themselves to it made some of the incumbents over-react and get characterised as reactionary. If someone had an angularity or choleric temper he would flare up. Besides, they were self-conscious of their own seniority over the Secretaries to Government, younger in age and closer to the seat of power, having the ears of the Governor or the councillors. Finally the substance of authority and decision making was inherent in the government.

The Board of Revenue was increasingly becoming an instrument for implementing government's decisions and laws and orders. The 'sovereign of the sovereign' in its inception, when it could urge legislation and exercise judicial authority over executive actions, had become the 'servant of the servant'. This process became more pronounced with the better means of communication, the quickened pace of administrative activity, and democratisation of government, the legislature and the council of ministers. Level jumping either, consciously or overtly or as an act of deliberate design was inevitable. Power got attracted to its natural seat and an accretion to its source could be involuntary.

#### THE BOARD'S APPROACH *vs.* THE GOVERNMENTS

In its earlier days the Board expressed itself in strong language with conviction. They were polemical, conscious of their being the repository of all revenue knowledge and experience. Often they clung or 'adhered' (to quote their favourite expression) to their views notwithstanding points of view to the contrary.

Typical instances of how the Board reacted to issues could now be noticed. Its *forte* was revenue settlement and land tenures. In the composite Madras State, zamindari and undertenures had abounded in the Circars, Ganjam and Vizagapatam Districts. There were a number of grants called 'mukhasas' made by the zamindars for their relatives, followers or military service, where the *peishcush* (fixed revenue demand) fixed as permanent settlement for the zamindaris (under the 1802 Regulation) had reckoned explicitly or implicitly with these grants as part of assets, the reversionary right (on the death of a life-grantee or on failure of heirs or on illegal alienation) belonged to the zamindars. In other cases it fell to the government.



Taylor, the Inam Commissioner, had by inferential reasoning opined that in two zamindari estates (which were administered under the court of wards for some time), Jallantra and Kalikote in Ganjam, the reversionary right belonged to the government. This was referred to the Board of Revenue. The Board relying on its own authority of 1804 records differed from Taylor. They went further and stated that on a mistaken impression that government had the reversionary right, the *peishcush* had earlier been added to by Rs. 5000 per annum, to regularise the purchase of the two 'mukhasas' by the zamindar of Kalikote. This the Board felt was unlawful and they recommended the refund of the additional collection.

The Collector of Ganjam, G. I. Forbes, was a forceful personality. He supported Taylor relying on the registers of mukhasas which he felt were incomplete and hence presumed the reversion belonged to the government. The Board, undaunted, refused to be vanquished. Its secretary - the member never writes to government-Huddleston wrote:

The incompleteness of the registers, perhaps, tends to weaken the argument as expressed by the Board in their former proceedings, but at the same time the fact that the mukhasas are not entered strengthens the case against the government in as much as to establish their reversionary right to the 'mukhasas' it is essential for them to prove that the 'mukhasas' were permanent alienations by the competent authority and the non-entry of these tenures as inams in the registers prescribed by law in a great measure, if not entirely, destroys the feasibility of such proof. Sd. W. Huddleston.

The government, with a supreme air of confidence, passed an order in 1862 as follows:

These papers relate to the mukhasa villages in the ancient zamindaries in Ganjam. Out of the total of 250, all except 47 have fallen into the hands of the zamindaries already under circumstances which would render it extremely inconvenient to interfere with them.

In strictness, the solution to the question of these 47 villages turns on the point whether the assets on which zamindar's *peishcush* was fixed included the full value or the rental of the villages or only the favourable amount paid by their holders to the zamindaries.

Under all the circumstances elicited by his inquiries the inam commissioner recommends that government should waive their reversionary claim to the mukhasas in all the Ganjam estates except Kalikote and Jallantra.

The Board took the same view but would not except Kalikote and Jallantra and in a demi-official note Taylor states that on a reconsideration he acquiesces in the Board's conclusion.

The government accede to this proposal. They do so as a measure of expediency and liberal policy and not from being satisfied of the zamindar's right ...

After quoting Walter Elliotts view that customarily the reversion had been in favour of zamindars, the government ordered :

Under these circumstances the government resolve to instruct the inam commissioner not to interfere with these villages and to waive their claims to them on the ground as already stated of expediency and grace. They do not admit the right of the zamindars but they will not press their claims hereafter.

On the Board's recommendation to remit retrospectively the additional *peishcush* collected for about two years at Rs. 5000 the government added :

The government have already pointed out that as a matter of right the zamindars have no claim to the villages. They have foregone further claims as a matter of grace and good policy but they are not prepared to reopen the question in regard to the arrangement made with the present zamindar which therefore will not be disturbed.

Apart from illustrating the style of the times this instance brings out the difference in approach to an issue as between the Board and the government. The former was entirely legalistic, dialectical and revelling in their revenue experience and knowledge of detail. The latter was decisive, applying expediency, grace and ground of public policy to the case.

The second anecdote could be of permanent interest. In 1848 the last Tanjore Maratha ruler Raja Shivaji died. The government promptly treated the temple properties and the *chatram* properties as having come under their purview and assumed administration. The Tanjore Rani, Kamatchi Baye Saheba, contested this act and went up to the Privy Council claiming the right of trusteeship and administration of the properties and institutions to herself and her family. The Privy Council distinguished between the religious institutions and properties held for the purpose and the *chatram* and public charitable endowments. Religion being a personal faith, it was held, the Rani Saheba was entitled to the administration and charge of the temples and temple endowments. They added that it, would be for the government to decide whether they would relinquish the *chatram* properties they had assumed charge which were for a charitable and public purpose.

The government consulted their agent in the Tanjore court at Vallam, Forbes. He promptly recommended, if inevitable, temple properties might be restored but, "for the sake of the district of Tanjore, the government should retain administration of the large and extensive *chatram* properties and institutions".

Government (in about 1862) accepted this and ordered:

The Governor in Council now resolve, in the light of the decision of the Privy Council, that the temple and temple properties being religious endowments shall be renditioned to the Dowager Rani. But the administration of the charitable and *chatram* properties and institutions shall vest with the government. The Board of Revenue shall, under the Charitable Endowments Regulation of 1817, administer these properties. Should the Rani Saheba be so advised she may prefer her claims in a court of law.

This order was signed by T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary. (The main long bazaar street from Royapettah to the Marina in Triplicane still bears his name).

On receipt in the Board, Huddleston, the secretary has noted in pencil across the docket sheet:

MI may kindly see. It is very kind of them to have passed on their trouble to us, and then set up people to sue us.

The quaint humour apart, this case was important. For ever after, the extensive *chatram* properties and institutions were administered by the Collector and the Tanjore district board and the railway lines were laid from their proceeds, and several educational institutions are still being run in that district.

## BOARD'S DELAYS

The Board was known for its delays. One important report was prefaced by it thus :

The Board regret the delay that has occurred in meeting the requisition of government but it has a reason partly from their desire to bring the subject fully under the consideration of government but chiefly from the extreme difficulty of getting information from the districts.

More often the Board was *aposteriori* in its approach while the government can afford an *apriori* view, conscious of its sovereignty.

The government could also tick off the Board. "The Government cannot but notice the great delay which has attended the Board's proceedings in this case", although in the order of August 11th (1860) they were expressly desired "to take up the subject without delay and report on it as early as possible". They could also be peremptory; when the Board's secretary's report was incomplete, "They will now be so good as to supply the omissions".

## DISTRICT EXPERTISE AND PERSONALITIES

Some of these delays were due to the Board's procedure of referring the issues to the collectors for their views and facts. The Board's 'cutcherry' could also gain time that way. Later, such references were restricted to select Collectors—to those who were reputed to have a special mastery on the subject or intensive personal knowledge of the tract. In a province of so wide and varied tracts, this was a facility and a need, but it was not an unmixed blessing. Often when such officers took their seats in the Board each tried to score over the other. Conflicts of views surfaced and endless

minutes could ensue until government pulled up the Board to mean business. G.T.H. Bracken-his initials, I am told, were declined as 'go to hell', as he was a stern disciplinarian-was an authority on Vizagapatam and big games. J.A. Thorne on Tanjore, Puckle on revenue settlement, Hall on Madurai, Holdsworth on revenue matters. So was D.T. Chadwick who described the soils of Sivakasi 'red as Chepauk'. Masterman had left his personal papers and collections on local self-government which are now housed in the Cambridge University and are made good use of in the Cambridge East Asian Studies publications. Some of them had colourful personalities and were creative, but occasionally were noticed to be off colour.

Puckle had some domestic unhappiness while at Sooramangalam where he was working out the original settlement of Salem; his report was not up to the mark. The Board mildly hinted at this inadequacy. Government regretted to observe that the circumspectness and soundness of proposals that characterised always Puckle's reports were somewhat missing in the report under disposal. They trusted that Puckle "would soon bestow these qualities on his future reports".

Another instance was nearer our times. G.W. Priestly submitted the resettlement report of Tiruchirapalli in 1923-24. His report was in five or six volumes, with enclosures, appendices, and statistical data. Mr. McMichael, the commissioner for settlement, minuted on the report in these terms:

Mr. Priestly has taken a lot of pains and collected a lot of valuable data. But they are badly put. He has treated me to the distinction between *kadarambam* (dry) and *nirarambam* (wet lands) at least ten times in the first 15 pages of the report. His ideas, though numerous, are not

clear. He will be doing a great justice to himself and to the subject if he were to abridge his report and confine it to essentials. He will also frame a draft notification succinctly stating the principles of his proposed resettlement for consideration of the Board. For a notification is to the report what a degree is to the judgment.

The member added :

Assistant secretary (K.E. Chidambara Aiyer) may suitably convey this to the S.O.I. notice Mr. Priestly is due to sail on furlough and he may have time to attend to this while sailing home.

Priestly on arrival from Tiruchirapalli was shown the minutes and he dutifully complied with the instructions, took the tomes to do the home work and re-presented it on return, reducing the volumes to three.

The inams were a favourite subject. In 1936 the government decided to resume and enfranchise village artisan inams. The Board secretary passionately pleaded that they be left alone as an essential community service was being performed by the artisans and if one ceased another could be inducted by the community. He lost his case, and the government asserted its reversionary right.

In framing title deeds for the artisan inams, the Board raised an abstruse point—whether in a case where the service ceased, the government could straightaway resume the land or a show cause notice was necessary. The advocate general P.S. Sivaswami Aiyer was referred for advice. He drew a distinction between ‘estate upon condition’ and ‘conditional limitation’. He suggested a clause: ‘should the artisan inamdar fail to render the service the inam shall *ipso facto*

cease and determine'. The Board felt gratified with this clinching format.

The Board had some times stormy petrels as secretaries. One such was the 'junior' Galleti. He was prone to paroxysms of noting. In the forties, government entrusted the rural indebtendness survey to an eminent economist B.V. Narayana-swami Naidu. He proposed to engage economic research assistants from the university and lecturers as investigators to collect field data. The Board secretary was outraged. He insisted on the revenue staff being utilised. The late development department in the secretariat and the government were inclined to agree with the economist. The Board was overruled. Galleti noted:

M1 might see. We strongly oppose the idea. It is wasteful. We have trained RIs (revenue inspectors) and karnams who could do this job better at lesser cost with an honorarium. The graduate investigators being new to administration will be misled and data collected will be vitiated and inaccurate. The government is not only deaf (as they did not heed the Board) but also blind (as they did not see what was obvious to the Board).

It took all the persuasiveness of the mellow M1 to contain and assuage his irrepressible secretary. Finally he succumbed to M1's directions to send a suave reply drafted by the members.

### THE BOARD—A DIVINITY TO REVENUE STAFF

The Board was a veritable divinity to the revenue staff and subordinates in the districts. Certainly it was when it used to create the deputy tahsildars and deputy collectors. A leading weaver in Nakkapalli village (Vizagapatam District)



had applied for acquiring house sites, signing his request as president of the co-operative society. His intention was to grab a neighbour's land out of ill will. But he cleverly made it appear to be a public purpose for a co-operative society. The Board was cleverer, and could not be outwitted. They queried if the application was preferred by the co-operative society and if so for its members. As assistant collector undergoing training as revenue inspector, I had enquired into it and reported that the applicant, though a president of a service co-operative, did not apply qua president of housing society nor did one exist. As such, it did not attract the provisions of land acquisition permissible for co-operative housing. This statement was repeated by the tahsildar and reproduced by the RDO and the collector.

A few months later, I was under training in the collector's office. One day the *huzur* head clerk came running to my small room overlooking the sea and stood before me with bated breath and whispering humbleness. I asked him what the matter was. "Sir, .... sir" he muttered, after being calmed, "the Board has *in toto* approved what you had written, sir. This was the first occasion in my service that the Board has approved *in toto*, sir". They *have* written *in toto*, sir". He would have repeated the latin phrase at least a dozen times, like a chant!

The Board's secretary could sometimes unwittingly nod. The Board was asked if the survey of land should be redone adopting the metric system.

The member minuted :

The acre and cent system has the essence of the metric system (1 acre: 100 cents). It would cost high to resurvey and revise revenue accounts. There was no commensurate advantage either. If we should however toe the line of others we may go along with it.

The secretary faithfully conveyed to government:

The Board submits that it sees no advantage or merit in adopting metric system, not already found in the acre and cent system. They submit however if we should toe the line of others they would recommend its adoption.

After the PWD was separated in 1854, major irrigation was the exclusive and direct charge of the chief engineer and the PWD secretary. But on matters relating to customary maintenance and repair obligations of the channels, the Board was consulted. In the second decade of this century a raging question was whether the silt clearance in Cauvery channels should be undertaken by government. The view held for long was that government need not. But P.S. Sivaswami Iyer forcefully represented the Tanjore pattadars' request that government should undertake it for better command. Morin, the new chief engineer, ventured to differ from the traditional view of his predecessor, Smart (a legend in Madras PWD), and recommended silt clearance. The Board endorsed it. Promptly came the rebuff from the governor's councillor (Forbes) with a thud: "Col, Smart has more of Cauvery irrigation in his little finger than is contained in the whole body of Mr. Morin". The Board was spared! That placed the lid on the issue. Even N. Gopalaswami Iyengar (incidentally the first Indian first member) as the first Indian PWD secretary could not modify it. The Board of Revenue never again reverted to this issue till the sixties.

### LATER DAY ANECDOTES

When I joined the service, my professor (late K.A. Nilakanta Sastri) spoke to his friend S Ranganathan, the then first member to grant me an interview. He kindly obliged. He had weak eyes. When I went to his room he

rose from his seat, moved up his dark glasses, shook hands and offered me a seat and counselled me. "Young man, don't be afraid of committing mistakes. Try to learn as you go along and be inquisitive".

Some members took keen interest in the youngsters and were true to the standing order: "When on tour the commissioner shall call for the diaries of asstt. collector, go through them and comment on the quality of training imparted and afford guidance to the assistant collector". Hejmadi deputed me to inspect the flood affected areas in Anakapalli taluk and generously mentioned my report in his despatches.

A first member visited us, when the assistant collectors were under settlement training, at Sivaganga. I was assistant settlement officer. In the big hall we had all assembled. The visiting member was a tall and arresting personality who had a reputation for being a hard task master. He arrived and took his seat and so did the collector and the settlement officer. I stood by, The SO introduced me to the commissioner. He turned and looked sternly at me and said, "Tirumalai! What sort of reputation you have"! My heart stopped beating. The commissioner continued, "And that so early in your career". There was absolute silence, consternation writ large on every face. The commissioner turned to me again and said. "If ever there was any lone inspection bungalow or a tent pitched in a remote grove or inaccessible village and if a lone petromax light burnt there at night, sure as anything, the ASO Sivaganga would be camping there" At that moment I was reborn.

The Board could be uncompromising in its standards but it was not lacking in appreciation where it was due. Instances could be cited where the Board members were harder on

themselves than on others. On the eve of the States' reorganisation, in 1956, the then first member M.V. Subramanyam was deputed to tour the 'transferred territory' of the Kanyakumari District and Shenkottah. He was to propose the lines on which the administration should be reorganised and brought in line with the then Madras administration. Despite his ill-health he toured intensively and did not spare himself. He dictated his report in bed, and 'poured out the last ounce of energy he could muster' into it. Already several heads of departments had submitted their reports. But his was a *tour de force*, a model in form and content and fully orchestrated to the needs of the situation. He divided the work in its appropriate stages, the meshing-in arrangements, the adaptation process and finally the structural changes to be introduced to fit in the new area with the Madras State which to the people of Nanjinad was still known as the 'British'! I was a personal beneficiary as this work fell to me to implement.

There were many varieties of personalities among the Board members. A few, of course, were interested in good food, and *nautch* parties or big game and had other weaknesses. But some had literary and other achievements. William Meyer was a constructive good writer and remembered the Madras University to provide an endowment in his will. Pate was a man of letters and the Tirunelveli Gazetteer he wrote while still being the collector continues to be a classic. Butterworth edited with Venugopal Chetty the Nellore inscriptions and wrote the 'Land of Siva'. George Boag was known to be a kind-hearted and generous person remembered in the Periyar tract in Madurai long after his time for the benevolent assessment he made. Rutherford was a foil to him. The first Indian first member, Gopalaswami Iyengar, was a seasoned administrator and was always looked up to for suggesting

reforms in the administrative system and procedure. He wrote a neat hand, his style was crisp, and his concepts and expressions clear and precise.

L.D. Swamikannupillai the secretary of the Board was in his own right a great astronomer and mathematician and brought out the Indian ephemerides in six volumes. They provide a concordance between all Indian calendars and the Muslim and Christian era for well over twelve centuries, day by day. They are indispensable for any student of history and epigraphy.

### AN EPITAPH

The Board was a creation of history. It was intended to superintend, check and control the collectors and the revenue machinery when the latter were unbridled in their authority and their freedom was uncharted. The Board was to advise the government which needed their advice. But even very early in its career, one of its first members, Lushington, held it to be a redundancy, glorifying in petty details and nuances of revenue administration, and a fifth wheel in the coach. The question of its abolition and substitution was raised even within a few years after its creation, as early as in 1831 and in 1855 and 1885, and many times there after. If a cat had nine lives the Board had many more.

It made history in evolving the administrative procedure and practices and had four volumes of standing orders to incorporate them. It preserved them to such a degree that it earned for itself a reputation for being unbending and conservative. It was Chesterton who said: "The progressive is ever a conservative; the reactionary is always a rebel"

# **THE CORRESPONDENCE OF SATYAMURTI - A STUDY**

**(A case study in the historiographical analysis  
of the archival documentation)**

A good many of the letters written to late S. Satyamurti, and some of his own, fortunately, have been preserved for posterity. They are of great archival historical interest, and will help recapture the political nuances in a period of intense activity (1918 to 1943) in the country, for well over a quarter of a century. In India, the private correspondence of the political leaders has become available only occasionally, in this form, for the historian, the researcher and the public.

The letters bring out the personality of Satyamurti as well as of those who wrote to him, and the historical importance of some of the events covered therein. The correspondence truly reflects the spirit, and the diverse sections of thought and activity that held the field during the period. Only those of historical, national and lasting interest have been dealt with in this paper.

The letters published contain some written by Satyamurti, as well as those received by him from his correspondents. The latter far outnumber the former. And what a galaxy of correspondents they were: What varied sections of public opinion they reflect: Almost all the statesmen of the times, Indian and the British concerned with Indian affairs, are represented in the collection.

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**Note:** The microfilm of the original correspondence and papers referred to are available in the Jawaharlal Nehru Museum, New Delhi.

The papers of Satyamurti cover the main areas of his interest, ranging from the problems with / of the "tiny Native State" of Pudukkottai to which he belonged, to questions of high national and constitutional policies. The same issue is viewed by different leaders differently, and vary differently at different times. The fluidity of thought and the paradox of human reactions are fully reflected in the correspondence.

Letter-writing is an art in itself. Letters are "conversation in writing". They are, at times, the free fearless expression of the minds, of the moods of man, passing though they be, arrested, and preserved for ever. At other times, they are the escapes of their soul.

Some are continuous extending over several years, reflecting the life long friendship of Satyamurti, as with V.S.S. Sastri, and A.V. Ramanathan. Others are, as it were, a parenthesis, and capture the exigent issues of the time and glow with the fervour and animation of the participants (Asaf Ali, Sri Prakasa). Some parts of the correspondence are episodical and pulsate with the reactions of the writers to a particular circumstance or event. Still others exude the transparent sincerity and warmth of affection and feeling subsisting between Satyamurti and his correspondents Nripendranath, Sircar Mirza Ismail. Where they are written with an abandon and frankness, the thoughts and emotions conveyed are genuine. Meant to be personal, they are uninhibited in their sentiments and reactions; their expression is also unedited. Their frankness could be disarming at times; at times it could even be brutal, and could hurt. We then partake of the full frankness of the kindred personalities who have nothing to hide among themselves, or from themselves.

Others are laconic and do not give away anything. They seem to be anxious to avoid communication. The times were

difficult, and they would be guarded, insuring themselves against any premature leakage, contemporary exposure, or even an intrusion by posterity into the ways their minds worked.

The letters, then, afford the most direct, reliable and authentic key to the character and personalities who wrote them. The man and his spirit, and the spirit of the times are blended in many and the reactions to events or men are revealing.

Now some of them might be embarrassing to those who wrote them had they been publicised at the time they were written. For they were not originally meant or intended to be published. History however is privileged to partake of the secrets of the past. For, like the Muse of Poetry, Clio can also and does recollect "emotion in tranquility". Time takes the edge off the sharpness of debate. The acrimony of the moment gets lessened. The personalities of a bygone age revive in the way they revealed themselves, and not in semblance. Fidelity is the homage that a delayed publication pays to the past correspondence.

Are we intruding into the privacy of the Pyramids? Will we be stung by the curse that guards the secrets of the souls? We need not have any such fear. More than half a century is an adequate span in the bridge of Time to recapture the past in its entirety. The personalities involved (barring fortunate exceptions) many of them are no longer with us. We have no better means of seeing them as they saw themselves.

Letters are like Windows, or some, keyholes in a house affording glimpses of the interior. But we see only what we can, as through a slit or the bars of the window. Truth is



wider, the whole Truth. Letters by themselves, are inadequate to perceive it, and what we perceive sometimes could be the very antithesis of it. But all that we see are also ingredients of Truth, essential for reconstructing history. This caution is the price of circumspectness, and the norm of historical interpretation as well.

The letters deal with the principal events of a quarter of a century. We see the events as viewed by the correspondents. Some of them may not - do not - have any appeal (e.g., Pudukottai succession; Hindu orthodox reaction to Sarada Act) or the same significance today, as they had to the participants; they belonged to a vanished past. Others, however, pulsate with the national resurgent spirit, and the urge to get national independence. The aim was common but the methods could and did differ. The goal was identical but the terminology could vary. The function of history is to recapture the attitudes of the contemporary personalities and their reactions to the events. The letters help fulfil it.

The letters also bring out the personality of every one of the correspondents. The personality of Satyamurti gets revealed directly through some of his letters, and indirectly as mirrored in what others wrote to him.

Based on Satyamurti's political beliefs and career, the correspondence made available, can be classified, for convenience, into two periods - prior to 1935 and after. The span is uneven; so is the tenor of life.

The pre-1935 phase could be termed the "Swarajist" phase. Satyamurti actively promoted and worked for the Council-entry programme. But the "Swarajist Party" with C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, V.J. Patel, and A. Rangaswami Iyengar, was "of the Indian National Congress". Satyamurti's

courting arrest in 1930 and in 1932, obeying the Congress mandate was perfectly reconcilable with his own conviction in the Council-entry programme. He revived the Swarajist Party in 1934.

After 1935, the Congress itself contested the General Elections, and it accepted office in the "Provinces" for a while (1937-1939) under the Government of India Act of 1935. Satyamurti's own political programme and that of the Congress converged for a short while thereafter. Neither the Congress nor its votaries were troubled by the tyranny of dichotomy.

In the first period, the letters from friends of the Swarajist persuasion are more numerous. The total volume of correspondence, especially from the Congress leaders, increases in the second period.

The earliest letter available is an extract of C. Sankaran Nair's advice to Satyamurti on reviewing a pamphlet of his. Sankaran Nair was a leading public figure who partnered Kasturiranga Iyengar in taking over "The Hindu". The extract sets out the ethics for a reviewer and a writer.

The earliest letter of Satyamurti is dated October 24, 1914 to "The Hindu", when he was 27. Endorsing the recommendation of the Currency and Finance Commission (presumably under Austen Chamberlain of which J.M. Keynes was a Member), Satyamurti wanted at least 15 millions in the Currency Reserve Fund in the form of gold. It reflects the anxiety for keeping the stability of the Indian Rupee and the contemporary view that "gold alone is Gold".

Satyamurti hailed from Tirumeyyam in Pudukkottai, then a native State. He was "very much attached to the place

of his birth, and education" and evinced a keen interest in its affairs throughout.

Martanda Bhairava Thondaiman (1886-1928) had married an Australian, "a good looking woman" and there was opposition to the "Eurasian urchin", born to them being installed on the Gaddi of the native State. Satyamurti voiced this opposition to his friends in the British Parliament some of whom frankly could not care less. The ruler prohibited (2-2-1921) Satyamurti's entry into the native State. This hurt him. He wrote to several friends in India to V.S.S. Sastri and T.B. Sapru and in England, including the Secretary of State, and even the Viceroy, and had the issue raised in the Council, but without any result. The Viceroy used his good offices, and the Regent cancelled the order on 29-12-1922.

Satyamurti sustained his interest in the "tiny little Indian State from which he came" even later in 1940. He wrote to the Viceroy in August 1940 that a young civilian, European or Indian, "preferably the former" should take the place of Alexander Tottenham, the Administrator who was "too old for the job". He also moved the Administrator to arrange for the comprehensive education of the prince, Rajagopala Thondaman (of the Western Palace) chosen by the Government of India to succeed to the rulership in 1928, including administrative training in Mysore, a native State with a record of enlightened administration for which then and ever after Satyamurti had great admiration.

The sixteen years (1919 - 1935) were dominated by the issue "Non-Co-operation" *versus* 'Council Entry', Mahatma Gandhi had launched the non-co-operation movement and the "No Changers" (Vallabhai, Rajaji and others) were for making it the sole Congress programme. C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Satyamurti and N.C. Kelkar belonged to the "Pro-

Changer's" the second school. Kelkar sensed a two faced fight-with the moderates "who were less wide awake", and with Mahatma Gandhi on the other in the Congress. The issue came to ahead at Gaya Congress. Sarojini Naidu hoped that Gaya "so far from proving a centre for the Shradha ceremony of the Congress will prove a real shrine of reconciliation with a place for every Indian whose inalienable birth-right it is to serve his country". Motilal Chose (of the Amrit Bazaar Patrika) predicted Gandhi was "rising for a fall". But it did not come true. Veteran leaders like C. Vijayaraghavachariar and Ghose himself were anxious to keep the Congress united. Even within the two broad sections, there were groups reflecting the different political views held by the intellectuals who were on the scene.

Personalities, too, were strong in every group and held tenaciously to their views. None but the most uncompromising, the moderates would cut themselves away from the Congress. To all others the Congress gave shelter, as an umbrella. "Even one and the same conclusion could be upheld on different grounds" said Kelkar. In a fabric woven with so many threads everyone was trying his hand at the spindles he considered suitable.

So did Satyamurti; he ardently advocated the Council Entry Programme. When "The Hindu" criticised him, he came out with a letter full of vitriol against it in 1923 January. His views found support from the moderates, too, like Jayakar and Srinivasa Sastry and T.B. Saprú. Satyamurti was even criticised as "blessing the official tours of V.S.S. Sastri". Naturally, a far larger number of letters are from the Moderates. The letters of the Congress leaders and the Mahatma tend to increase only from 1929-30 onwards.

S. Kasturiranga Iyengar and A. Rangaswami Iyengar encouraged Satyamurti during this period and gave him support. When Satyamurti went to England as Secretary of the Congress delegation to place the nationalist views on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform proposals before the Joint Parliamentary Committee, A. Rangaswami Iyengar kept him posted with events at home. The issue, according to him, in 1919-20 was not so much Reforms which, anyway, were unsatisfactory but Civil liberties. The Government dared touch "The Hindu", after all, and demanded a security of Rs. 2,000/- on May 8 1919, for an editorial on the then Punjab situation. Even C.V. Acharya was shocked at the stalking "metamorphosed Prussianism" which perturbed but a few "good Englishmen". But he lamented "God alone knows when the people of India would have learnt the art of saving their country from themselves in order that it might be saved from others".

A Rangaswami Iyengar also warned against S. Srinivasa Iyengar's "manoeuvres" and inter-group cliques in Swarajist party. S. Srinivasa Iyengar confesses that "his brain stood heavily mortgaged to Mahatma Gandhi as his Guru for over three years". He has "since shed one more, and that the most precious of his illusions". (21-6-1924).

In 1922-24, as perhaps, even before and after, the country was in a "a flux", a "universal" flux. Annie Besant convened a Conference in October 1922 at Delhi to suggest an outline of a Constitution for India for public discussion. Jayakar doubled if it "might have the evil effect of making our differences manifest, and thereby strengthening the Government". He had himself despaired only eight months earlier, it "was impossible what sobriety will emerge on both sides (Government and the Congress) out of the eddying storm". He stood for forming a wing in the

Congress, a bold outspoken courageous party that will sell its conscience to none, and would that Satyamurti could "capture" Srinivasa Iyengar as well.

With the Labour Party assuming office in England, the Veteran, P. Rajagopalachariar wrote to Satyamurti that Lord Olivier (the new Secretary of State) "was a very good man, anxious to do the correct thing but his difficulties are great and so also the difficulties of the Labour Government being a minority Government. They could ameliorate matters considerably if our people would meet them halfway". (1924)

Srinivasa Sastri's letters to Satyamurti are intensely personal and have literary merit. One may not agree with his political views; but his mellowness and suavity of expression charm the reader. They are delightful models of letter-writing. He conveyed that the Secretary of State called Satyamurti "alive" and added "Rightly" (16-6-1922).

"All things change - don't they? In this universal flux it would be sad if differences alone persisted" (1922) he wrote on the eve of his wanderings to the dominions - Australia, Canada and New Zealand (25-4-1922).

"How hard it is to break with the past though it may be sound policy. It is a good rule to remember this when we criticise the bureaucracy - a moral for me as well as for you". (16-3-1925)

He advocated the Swarajists ought to accept office, "for changing the spirit of administration and for getting hold of political power, among others" (13-3-1925). When he was appointed as the Agent-General of India in South Africa, Satyamurti's congratulatory letter evoked this response:

“Why not the world as well? Unblushing flatterer. It is somewhat bold of the Government to start an experiment with an old man who has never known office. May they never regret it”. (9-5-1927).

As Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University he invites Satyamurti (23-2-1940) to stay with him. “Don’t hesitate for any absurd political reasons; liberals are not social outcasts. If you want any special diet, let me know”.

C.R. Reddy, C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, T.B. Saprú are among others who figure as correspondents. What was the reason for public men holding so diverse and differing views addressing Satyamurti? He was almost a clearing house for thoughts for them all. The answer is set out in two passages. The first is from C R. Reddi :

“Though differences on public questions – or rather methods have arisen between us, I am very delighted to find that it had little or no effect on your uniformly kind and considerate attitude towards me personally. So long as a propitious atmosphere of this kind is maintained, I won’t give up the hope we are all marching to the same great objective though perhaps by different routes”.

T.B. Saprú strikes the same note :

“What strikes me as the most regrettable feature of the present day politics is that political differences should affect personal relations. Personally it is always a pleasure to me to meet a man who holds a different set of opinions. I should always welcome a free exchange of views as whatever I may be charged with, I don’t plead guilty to the charge of holding that I am always right and those who differ from me must always be wrong”. (2-11-1921).

The Congress itself was a mansion with many suites and lobbies. It was exposed on many fronts to the fresh air wafting from the lawns too. It is not to be pretended that there was at that time – (was there at any time?) – complete homogeneity, much less unanimity within that great national organisation. Each section of political thought was trying to muster public opinion and gather support for its own programme. Motilal Nehru had a dig at Madras: “Yours is a truly benighted Presidency in this respect” and appealed to Satyamurti “to muster as many of the 410 delegates (to the Gaya Congress Session) as possible”, to convert the minority into the majority for the Swarajist policies. In 1923 Council-entry was accommodated as part of the Congress programme. Motilal was gratified by the compromise. He would have preferred Satyamurti to enter the Central Assembly but the latter had prematurely announced his candidature for the Provincial Council, even before he was formally adopted by the Provincial Committee of the (Swarajist) Party to which Motilal demurred “as a grave irregularity”. Satyamurti was a member of the Provincial Council of Madras (1923-1929) and made his mark as a Parliamentarian and forceful speaker.

The “Swarajist” Party was still of the Indian National Congress”. The link is represented by the letters with its leaders, Patel, Rajaji and the Mahatma. It, understandably, grows from 1929.

The most important letters exchanged are those of Satyamurti to Mahatma Gandhi (20-4-1921) setting out at once his desire and reservations about joining the Non Co-operation movement and Gandhiji's reply (16-5-1921). On the “Office controversy” Gandhiji had not followed it”. (19-5-1929). He reprimanded Satyamurti severely in January 1930 on his walk-out from the Congress Session when S Srinivasa Iyengar and Subas Bose, the exponents of



Complete independence were not included in the Working Committee. The Mahatma at that time was for a compromise, if it could be reached within a short time on the basis of Dominion Status for India. Satyamurti was piqued that his walk-out was characterised as "unpatriotic and ungentlemanly" and he defended himself. They agreed to differ. Satyamurti's suggestions to Mahatmaji were "succinctly" made on Indian States, Defence, Finance, and External Affairs, when Gandhiji attended the Round Table Conference. He had frankly advised the Mahatma to abandon the Civil Disobedience in 1932-33. The Mahatma scribbled: "if the Congress will, let me carry on Civil Disobedience independently of it. I would gladly conduct it". (13-7-1933).

Letters from Vallabhai Patel are a few. They are to the point and business like.

Rajaji's letters for a decade (1925 - 1935) are far more numerous. He was impatient at Satyamurti's suggestion to spread a total prohibition programme over 20 years. He could not tolerate the Liberals "as they can never get rid of their baeneful conscience and cowardice" (4-1-1926). His presumption frankly was Satyamurti (unwittingly) "was working to put mischief-mongers in and you do not see what is good for yourself Kill caste hatred and deprive its power. This fair land of ours should have liberty, equality and fraternity, but in peace and goodwill. We must have some civil policies of social reform, not Badmasheeism and mobocracy" (4-1-1921). In October 1930 Rajaji "was wanted by the Government" and he nominated Satyamurti as his successor-President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. "After all action is our duty and our joy" and Satyamurti's lead had caught on, and Rajaji "would be angry if he were not jolly" (1-1-1931). The Tamil Nadu Congress affairs occasion comments of caution. His advice to Satyamurti "as unto a brother" was to keep

calm and be unruffled. In the face of difficulties, "silent prayer and a short diet on Saturdays" are other receipes. The letters which increase in 1935-36 pay tributes to Satyamurti on his organising the election campaigns. Rajaji's own Stoic forbearance, his sharp crisp comments, and the power of suggestion behind the word are all in evidence. "The edge of my language", he confesses, "is still too keen", and could hurt sometimes. "The wretched thing refuses to rust" (4-1-1926). "He cannot put all on paper" (3-11-1935). The correspondence also reveals Satyamurti's own 'emotional' temperament, his habit of taking seriously every detail of any programme he was handling, and taking to heart any adverse circumstance or comment. Rajaji many a time consciously plays the mentor.

Satyamurti wrote in despair to Subhas Bose (4-5-1933) that the situation was "baffling". "We are hopelessly divided among ourselves. The national movement now threatens to become a religious movement confined to the Gandhian coterie. Those of us who are realist politicians must rescue the national movement from this miasma. The white paper constitution may fall short of our expectations but we shall be committing political suicide as a party if we boycott the next elections by 30 millions of our people. We must put forward a militant political and economic programme before the electorate and contest, making it clear that we cannot accept any constitution short of Purna Swaraj". Friends like Yagnesvara Sarma cautioned him "against any sort of conflict between the two wings of the Congress for there are people and parties to work against you on personal and party grounds outside. Even discussion will be called fight by the ignorant" (28-7-1933). Satyamurti reiterated in February 1934, that "to sustain the Civil Disobedience programme in any form was not practicable, most of the workers are in favour of its

withdrawal and are prepared for the constructive work" (which in Satyamurti's conception) would include Council Entry. He revived the Swarajist Party, in March 1934, though Rajaji felt it should be possible to start "his programme with the whole Congress behind it rather than as a separate party" (9-4-1934).

In June 1935, B.C. Roy characterestically wrote :

"Get the Congress to agree with us as we fought last year to get it to agree".

In November 1935 Ansari wrote : "I am afraid the Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee have all been frightened out of their wits, and have postponed the only live issues. I don't think they can get away from the inevitable consequences of the decisions taken regarding parliamentary work unless the whole thing is turned down at Lucknow and that contingency is quite possible if our friend Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is elected as the President" (14-11-1935). Subhas Bose distributes his exigent criticism on all - the Mahatma, the Swarajya Party and the Congress Legislative Assembly leader Bhulabhai *et al* (18-5-1935 - III/74).

The third group of correspondents are the British dignitaries, the Secretary of State, Members of Parliament, and the Private Secretary to the Viceroy and the Civil Servants of the Central and Provincial Governments.

Edwin Montagu appreciates Satyamurti's congratulatory letter (7-1-1920), "coming as it does from one who from the sincerest motives, feels bound to differ from me on important issues". Satyamurti importunately appeals to the Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald and the Labour Members of Parliament and the understanding and well-meaning Viceroy Irwin to help bring about an honourable and peaceful settlement (1930).

Lord Olivier, the Secretary of State, spoke out his mind acknowledging Satyamurti's letter. He was strongly disposed to share "his confidence that a closer contact with the Swarajist Party is very desirable". "Certainly", he added, "it seems to me that the maintenance of the communal system is antagonistic to the possibility of any proper working of democratic institutions in India". Satyamurti immediately released it to the Press. It led to a debate in Parliament and the Press in the United Kingdom and in India. Lord Olivier comes out of it all with great credit. He defended himself as having said nothing more than what the Labour Party had held, and considered it no act of impropriety for Satyamurti to have released it. Even S.S. Iyengar in retrospect, felt that Satyamurti's release of the Secretary of State's views on a public issue, though in a personal letter, was not blameworthy.

Wedgewood Benn's reactions were one of a more studied formality. Satyamurti pursued with him the need for easing the situation.

The correspondence between Satyamurti and Cunningham, Private Secretary to the Viceroy Irwin was more satisfying. Satyamurti persists in urging the Viceroy to receive a deputation on Sarada Act and urges the orthodox view that those who held pre-puberty marriage of their girls was a religious obligation should be exempted from the Act, or the minimum marriageable age should be reduced from 14 to 12 for girls. A deputation from Indian States suggested was dropped.

In January 1930 he reacts critically to the Viceroy Irwin's delineation of the scope of the Round Table Conference. The minorities should not be encouraged in the belief that they could block the way for Dominion Status for India. Cunningham could only offer the "comfort even in a platitude" that the course of the Round Table Conference cannot be

prejudged. But the sincerity of the Viceroy evokes Satyamurti's appreciation who believed that "India has never had a better friend than Lord Irwin, with the single exception of the Late E.S. Montagu".

Rushbrook Williams who was Director of Bureau of Information in 1922 was in touch with him, closely following his political utterances. Marjori banks replies with a touch of humour that seven years' standing "stipulated for the voters of the Graduates' Constituency cannot be relaxed and hence franchise cannot extend to the noble band of 1929. Sorry, I could do no better". (1-12-1929)

During Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's tour of Tamil Nadu, there was apprehension of a breach of the peace in Tenkasi due to party and communal disturbances, as a hang over of the District Board elections. Warren, the District Magistrate in his own hand wrote to Satyamurti advising him not to hold a meeting at Tenkasi (31-10-1935). That was respected and notified accordingly. The mutual regard shown by the District Administration and the Congress Leaders for each other is evident in this correspondence.

The letter of the Inspector-General of Police on some aspersions cast on the District Police of Tirunelveli reinforces this impression.

### THE POST - 1935 ERA

When the elections were announced under the Government of India Act (1935) Satyamurti was in-charge of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee having been its President ever since Rajaji threw up the towel and retreated to Tiruchengode.

In 1936 Kripalani, General Secretary of the Congress wrote a caustic letter on the defection of Congressmen elected

to the local bodies in Tamil Nadu. Satyamurti defended the Province's reputation but added the criticism that "mere authoritarianism cannot succeed in a democratic organisation has wider application to all-India affairs". He was categorical that the separate electorates were harmful and it appeared as though there was a race between the Government and the Working Committee of the Congress as to who was more concessional to the minorities. Pandit Nehru, the Congress President clarified that it will have only a limited application for electing the representatives of the Constituent Assembly and not for the Parliament that will come into being under the Constitution. Another point of view conveyed by Satyamurti was that Dominion Status, from the way General Hertzog and De Valera had acted, was practically the same as Independence.

Satyamurti, having thrown himself whole-heartedly in organising the Congress Party for the elections in Tamil Nadu, had achieved spectacular results. Patel had paid a tribute to his ability, industry, selflessness and contact with the masses and the control over Tamil language. With all these Satyamurti could neither get into the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress nor into its Working Committee. But Satyamurti's drafting capacity was in frequent demand - Patel desired from him a short Bill to deal with the anti-Hindi agitation. He also sought his advice on the co-ordination of the work in the Provincial Legislatures and Ministries and the Central Assembly. Patel also advised Satyamurti to take extra care when serving as Mayor of Madras so that the confidence of good friends and their good opinion could be retained. Satyamurti took his advice in good part and agreed to exercise greater discretion and caution.

The victory in the 1935 elections was the beginning of further hurdles in the way of accepting office. The controversy

over the "assurance" asked for from the Governors not to interfere in the day-to-day administration and the exercise of the powers vested in the Ministers, under the 1935 Act was prolonged. Satyamurti was "unhappy" with the breakdown in the Provinces on this score, but deferred to the "Aptha Vak", the Counsel of the dear well-wishers (referring to Gandhiji). The Mahatma was, however, clear that it would be "a fatal blunder" to accept office unconditionally and admonished Satyamurti against his impatience: "We lose nothing by moderation. We lose everything if we surrender what moderation dictates". Eventually the Congress accepted office in 1937 but it resigned in the wake of the declaration of War in 1939.

In 1939 the Congress Working Committee decided that the Congress Members of the Central Legislative Assembly should stay away from its meetings. Satyamurti was very unhappy about it. So were some other members of the Congress Party. Azad wrote to Satyamurti back that "the Party should attend the (Central) Assembly" (27-3-1940) though when as Congress President he could have decided the issue he had not allowed the Congress Members to attend. In 1941-42 Satyamurti was trying his strong persuasion with Mahatma Gandhi to permit the Parliamentary activity to be resumed, and even to resume office in the Provinces where the Congress was in a majority. Gandhiji again chided him for his indecent haste. He accused Satyamurti "of not having an open mind, and that his opinion was made up". "We cannot go back with dignity to office". He concluded: "You are ill and need rest". Again, Gandhiji commented, "You are off the track".

Satyamurti desired freedom to convert the Congress to his views in October 1941 and Gandhiji replied that there was no bar and hence no permission was needed for

propagating his views. To Gandhiji, Satyamurti appeared to be "unnecessarily nervous".

A second issue was the formation of the Linguistic Provinces. The Mahatma was all for it, but Satyamurti had his grave reservations; he added "at any rate, it could wait till freedom was attained; the Andhra leaders were queering the pitch".

A subject on which Satyamurti again differed from Nehru was about the Western type of Socialism, which he felt, had several undesirable features. "The Congress had not yet accepted it, he said; "While Pandit Jawaharlal preaches it, I have a right to preach against it". But he clarified that he was not opposed to Socialism as a whole, "if it does not imply lawlessness, violence and the destruction of all tender human relations".

Rajaji's correspondence with Satyamurti continued to be frequent. Rajaji was the picture of caution. "All our letters are carefully read by others. So we cannot be too wary in our communication". He also warned characteristically "I see that newspaper people hang about you alright". Counselling against any big gathering for deciding on selection of candidates for contest in elections, "I hope you will not find trouble and fraud. It is rather dangerous to invite too many outsiders and open the door to fruitless discussion and debate" .... Don't let a big committee overwhelm reason and efficiency in the selection of candidates". Counselling diplomacy in dealing with the dissatisfaction among Congressmen in Tirunelveli. "You must not drive friends out but must find a golden mean between losing our ideals and losing our friends" He added sourly that "these local bodies programme has destroyed all notions of discipline and restraint. All our Congress workers are aflame with ambition and there is any



amount of encouragement for indiscipline. I am so much at sea in regard to the things you have done that I cannot get in like a nut in a screw at this stage". "A certain amount of moderation in public work is not only good for ourselves, but good for those whom we wish to benefit".

In 1938 Rajaji too was softly impatient. "If you had more direct knowledge of the gentlemen of the Working Committee and their tempo, you would understand my difficulties in getting business through". A year and a half later, while congratulating Satyamurti on his election as Mayor, Rajaji wrote from Wardha: "things are as bad as they were".

Even in 1940 Satyamurti was clear that the cry for Pakistan should cease. In 1942 Satyamurti considered Rajaji's propaganda to concede the principle of Pakistan was utterly harmful. Patel agreed that Rajaji was doing an injustice to the Congress and his speeches caused tremendous mischief and harm. "Unfortunately big people often set wrong examples and disregard ordinary rules of etiquette and discipline". Azad also commented to the same effect.

The Congress Members of the Central Assembly, Satyamurti, Bhulabhai Desai, the Leader: Jogendra Singh, the Whip, Asaf Ali and Sri Prakasa frequently exchanged letters among themselves. Indeed, there were problems on account of personalities, and the varied views held by several of them. Bhulabhai Desai counsels: "unless differences become entirely irreconcilable, on principle, we should as far as possible try and overlook the failings of our colleagues". This was with reference to the "academic differences between Asaf Ali and Gadgil and the trivial differences between Asaf Ali and Jogendra Singh". "Unless we behave as members of a family knowing each one is different from the other solidarity and work in public life will become difficult". He commissions Satyamurti

to study the Income – tax Bill to see” if it carries out the amendments as we intended so far as its meaning in a proper constuction is concerned” and propose further amendments necessary. He also asks for suggestions as to how to implement the Working Committee’s decision to abstain from Legislature consistently with avoiding the consequence of the seats being declared vacant—perhaps by attendance on a non-official day. Bhulabhai too differed from the decision of the Working Committee in 1940.

They were all as a group, (barring Asaf Ali initially), not for abstaining from the Assembly, as decided on by the Working Committee. Caustic comments were made on the decision and on the Civil Disobedience movement which according to some of them, would be barren, and on the prevailing indecision on other occasions.

Asaf Ali too, has complaints – that the Congress Working Committee is “more unapproachable than the Government of India, and people of ideas are kept at arms’ length”. He pays a tribute to the hard work of Satyamurti: “Poor dear Satyamurti is the only one who has to carry everyone else’s burden and the cross of the covert and insane criticism of certain persons. He slogs and works and keeps the Party’s flag flying, and others without doing any intensive study of a subject grouse, grumble and go about sulking”. Jogendra Singh seconds it, paying tribute to the “wise advise and hard labour” of Satyamurti. “We have all become more or less shadows of Arjuna, real good Hamlets”, Singh comments on the Congress leadership.

The members were on the whole a group not quite happy with the decisions of the Working Committee which they had to abide by, and chafing that they had no opportunity to

The two recorded notes of interviews Satyamurti had with the Viceroy, Linlithgow on 9th September 1937 and on 12th April 1938 are significant. They cover almost entirely the political issues of the times and they were very candidly discussed by both. Satyamurti had the impression that the Viceroy was anxious to secure the goodwill of the Indian National Congress, "as he belonged to the new school", unlike Willingdon. The political views of Satyamurti come out very clearly in these notes.

Satyamurti and Gilbert Laithwaite, Private Secretary to the Viceroy Linlithgow had maintained continuous correspondence. Satyamurti was clarifying the issues even after the "Ramgarh Congress", stressing that the door was still open for negotiations with the Congress and "the Mahatma would go to the Viceroy 50 times", and the Viceroy's invitation to the Congress leaders would do a lot of good. The Congress' willingness to negotiate is contrasted with the intransigence of Jinnah, (IV / 13 dt. 9-8-1940). By that time Satyamurti had become so intimate with the Viceroy's Private Secretary, Laithwaite that he drops addressing him as Mr. L" and would that the latter returns the "compliment". Ever since the War, Satyamurti's effort was to see that India pulled her weight in the War to help Britain but Col. Amery's utterances had changed his mind. He, for one, would wish God grant Britain and India the wisdom and statesmanship to sail together as friends. "The clouds will pass over"; he hopes, and "the political sky will become bright".

His correspondence with Nripendranath Sircar, the Law Member covers a wide field. They are marked by transparent frankness and free expression; nor are the letters written as from an "official to an opponent" but from "friend to friend". Satyamurti confesses that he too "may not approve of some of the methods of the Congress, but there is no alternative

to the Congress, if the freedom fight was to be carried on at all". The diametrically opposite points of view are discussed openly between the two. Satyamurti believes in Sircar "profoundly" in regard to the Insurance Bill which introduced several provisions to contain the non-Indian Insurance business. Satyamurti tells Sircar that "an European has told the former that an "Indian like Sircar can criticise the Congress bitterly but not an European in similar terms". Sircar responds "that does not surprise me; because worse things were said by them in connection with your frank speech about Indian character". Satyamurti was outspoken about the lack of political character, among Indians, and that it would take 50 years to clear up our Augean stables after the last British Indian soldier left the shore". He castigated the average level of Indian character as not very high; they are afraid of speaking the truth and standing by their conviction, so unlike the Britisher who formed his conclusions and adhered to them. Corruption, communalism and lack of party loyalty were other deficiencies in India. On this exchange of letters, Satyamurti felt, "we are quits" (August 1937).

Sircar and Craig both apprehended the Legislative Assembly would be depleted of men who study their briefs if the entire talent shifts to the provincial legislatures. "I am ready to be torn to pieces though no one will either be better or worse off for a wordy warfare, and each party will have the satisfaction of thinking that it has wiped the floor with the other" wrote Sircar. Satyamurti's reply: "I see your cynicism is growing stronger day by day".

Legislative procedures, Bengal politics and national issues are also discussed with candour in the correspondence between Satyamurti and Sircar.

The letters of G.S. Bajpai also breathe the same freshness and candour and personal regard and warmth of consideration. Educational policy, overseas Indian issues are raised and dealt with in some detail.

Sir Frank Noyce joins issue with Satyamurti on how he formed the opinion "that Noyce was anti-Indian", Satyamurti explains that the progress in Indianisation of the Broadcasting Department was not adequate and that there were more Europeans than Indians. but he assures Noyce "I have no desire to hurt your feelings".

The letters from European official members of officers also reveal their keen desire to make available all information on points raised by Satyamurti. In fact, they could at times disclose freely in a letter what they could not officially give out in the Assembly.

P.J. Grigg, the Finance Member, and a powerful member of the Government could cut jokes even on serious occasions. He could not accept an invitation to visit the Congress Exhibition because Grigg quips: "I cannot help feeling that acceptance of it would have been regarded in some quarters as a breach of that neutrality on the part of the Government to which your colleague Pant attaches so much importance". Satyamurti does not agree that even the most important (Finance) Member can be equated with the Government of India.

When a Committee consisting of Khaitan, Kasturibhai Laibhai and Walchand Hira Chand raised funds to conduct a campaign against the Income-tax Inquiry Report and the resultant legislation which was "hasty and unwarranted", Grigg wrote a note in hand enclosing the Press cutting and reacted to Satyamurti: You pledged me Congress support in

this matter. I wonder!" and as a postscript, added "The Three Musketeers".

Grigg was personally as antagonist to British capital as well, as to Indian "Marwari" interests. On the former he said "personally he would not regret if every expatriate businessman left India tomorrow" and on the latter he gave out his misgivings to Asaf Ali. Grigg confesses "The Assembly without you (Satyamurti) is a dull place and even your new Congress recruit (Sri Cowasji Jehangir) cannot enliven it. I suppose you welcome his support in order to show that Congress represents all classes, even the richest. However, I must not provoke you at this time". On a New Year eve Grigg sends "our best wishes on the understanding that we are to be the judges of what is best", and Satyamurti accepts the good wishes and the condition, "provided that it does not involve my giving up the Congress".

The correspondence has a moral: However different the political views of a person from another, they can still maintain the best of personal relations. Informal discussions on even official and legislative issues smoothen the relationship and help avoid unnecessary strain, or bitterness.

The letters exchanged with Brackenbury, Chief Secretary to Government of Madras, and with Elwin, Secretary to Governor of Madras are a little more to the point, but they also clarify the issues raised by Satyamurti on the legislative election rules and procedure, with perfect understanding of the other man's point of view.

The letters exchanged between Mr. M.S. Aney and Satyamurti (1940-1942) can be noticed here. Aney was the member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy in 1942. The official letters deal with the problems of Indian evacuees, especially from Burma. During this period Satyamurti was

tirelessly striving for bringing about Hindu-Muslim accord, and also a settlement between the Congress and the Government. But in March 1942 Aney confesses that the Indian problem will be solved by "God and not by man". Satyamurti commented: "The British are obstinate and we are foolish"

With the war, knocking at the doors of India, Satyamurti was keen to bring about a settlement which was eluding both Britain and the Congress, but this was not to be had in Satyamurti's lifetime. His last public statement from the sick-bed was on August 12, 1942: "The freedom of India is bound to come; the only question is whether it will come with goodwill on both sides or otherwise". India attaining independence fulfilled Satyamurti's confidence as much as the way it came—that it was with goodwill.

Some letters are of quaint interest. A.K. Fazlul Huq in a letter, dated 17th June 1935 states "you know that I have always voted with the Congress, and shall do so till the last day of my life. I know only one principle to act, and that is to go into the lobby against the Government". He incidentally refers to the support Bhulabhai Desai had extended to the princes. N.N. Sarkar is in agreement with Satyamurti that communal electorates are a bane, and that Congress should not have resigned office (December 28, 1939).

Two or three formulae to which Satyamurti also had contributed, for resolving the political deadlock including a draft from Sikandar Hyat Khan circulated by Shiva Rao are of historical interest.

The period was full of speculation in the future political set up and C.P. Ramaswami Iyer airs his ideas on "Federation"; but "you do not expect the Princes", he adds, to

sign their own death warrant by agreeing to a Republic in the near future". (29-1-1938). C.P. Ramaswami Iyer was surprised that Satyamurti dropped out of the Provincial Assembly elections, yielding place to Rajaji (Jan. 1937). M. Visvesvarayya regrets that an attempt to start an automobile factory has been a failure "on account of Government opposition". (3-3-1942)

Chief Justice Sir Maurice Gwyer gives expression to his views on the critical situation in 1938 and applauds Rajaji's address to the University students, as "clearly and forcefully put".

The letters from liberals thin out in this period. Examples are T.R.V. Sastri's support to Satyamurti's fight in favour of acceptance of office (12-4-1936) and Jayakar's exclamation (on 17-9-1941): "How we had drifted away: The strong band that Das would have kept together?". Several of them express a wish to meet Rajaji.

Mirza Ismail, like Satyamurti, has strongly urged his views with Gandhi on "acceptance of office". Both Mirza and Satyamurti have mutual regard and appreciation for each other's views - on maintenance of law and order, on communal electorates and on labour troubles. Mirza Ismail has some caustic remarks on the Mysore State Congress (1937-1939).

Seeing Satyamurti in the robes of offices of a Mayor "with a lace (mind you), turban", he exclaims, "splendid". I am glad you had the courage to put it on and it must have looked dignified". In a letter, dated 8th June 1942, when going to Jaipur as Dewan he adds: "I had to yield in the end. I am not sorry. There is no room in the Government of India for a man like me and I think Delhi will always remain "dur" to me".



A.V. Ramanathan, a lifelong friend in Mysore Police / Civil Service was the "Conscience Keeper" of Satyamurti with whom the latter shared many a critical moment in his life. His withdrawal from the Legislative Assembly elections, (in January 1937) for which he worked so much gives the occasion for a few poignant letters exchanged between the two. When Ramanathan endorsed Satyamurti's decision "his happiness at his own decision was complete".

Satyamurti's contacts in the Imperial Legislature and in the Corporation had won for him a number of friends among the Europeans. These included Ladden of Simpson, who briefed him on problems of the Transport industry and F.E. James of the European Group in the Central Assembly with whom he often crossed swords on the floor, and A.A. Hayles, Editor of "The Mail". As A.F.W. Mills, a Planter, stated that the Congress Party and the Europeans were "friendly enemies", and there was no reason "for not appreciating the work done and success achieved by one's friendly enemies". The letters give an insight into the personal and private reactions of the Europeans on the national issues. In 1936 Satyamurti was invited to state the Congress point of view at Anamalais before an European audience. Satyamurti explained "the objective of the Congress was complete Independence but the articles of the Constitution (of the Congress) do not say severance of the British connection. Severance depended on both sides, more on England than on India and Dominion Status of the Statute of Westminster variety practically meant independence". His statement that the Congress as a body will not accept socialism raised a spate of criticism from many. He clarified he was thinking "of socialism implying for its attainment violence". His personal views were that it was for free India to decide whether she would accept socialism or not

and that he was as much entitled to propagate his view as Jawaharlal Nehru his. F. E. James too maintained friendly exchange of views which sometimes helped forge the lobbies in the Assembly. Two letters dated 12th July 1940 and 13th July 1940 indicate a meeting held between the European Association and Rajaji and Satyamurti at Mr. Town's residence, "Waterton House", Cathedral Road. The object is not stated. But if from circumstantial evidence a guess could be hazarded, presumably, - the meeting was to probe the European business community to lend support to the idea behind Rajaji's resolution - that Britain should declare India would be free at the end of the War, and if an all Party National Government was formed right - away the Congress would prosecute the War as an ally. This was moved and accepted in the All India Congress Committee meet at Poona (28-7-1940). Raj Mohan Gandhi quotes Rajaji:

"British businessmen had realised the gravity of the situation and appealed to the Government to come to terms with the Congress". But the views of the senior I.C.S. Britons, the men advising the Viceroy and the Secretary of State were reactionary and out of date".

Was this discussion at Mr. Town's place the scene where this European business support was gained for Rajaji's formula?

The last set of letters relate to the Mayoralty of Satyamurti in Madras. His great achievement was the Poondi Reservoir for augmenting the Madras City water supply. An inaugural function was arranged on 8th August 1940. Mr. Prakasam and the Andhra Group vehemently opposed the Congress Mayor and the Councillors participating in a function in which the Governor was the Chief Guest. They raised a shindy. The Congress President asked Satyamurti to absent himself from the function, but it was too late. Rajaji

sent the correspondence to Satyamurti with the exclamation "These are for you to see" (August 5, 1940).

The second set of letters are those exchanged between Satyamurti and Pulla Reddi, the Commissioner. Both were strong personalities. The role of the Civil Servant *vis-a-vis* a popular elected Mayor had not been clearly defined then. The correspondence brings out the initial controversial tones, and the final adjustment reached. Both the Mayor and the Commissioner come out with credit out of the polemics.

Satyamurti had during his energetic tenure moved several proposals for the improvement of civic affairs – a Beggar Industrial House, preventive measures against sea erosion in North Madras, the City Improvement Trust to be formed by levying a surcharge of Sales Tax. The Advisors to the Provincial Governor, Boag, Rutherford and the Civil servants were helpful in examining and giving shape to these ideas. Both Satyamurti and the civil service expressed their appreciation and mutual thanks on the fulfilment of many of these ideas.

A few letters on secondary education, on Hindusthani, and on the role of music in AIR programme illustrate Satyamurti's interest in education and music.

### A SUMMING UP

Satyamurti had a keen intellectual bent of mind, combined with an intense emotional nature. This made him tirelessly argue for his point of view with those who did not see eye to eye with him. Indeed, he would leave no opportunity unutilised to convert even Mahatmaji to his own political programmes. But then the Mahatmaji was of a sterner mould; he relied on intuition, and would consider Satyamurti's importunate advocacy as either 'impatience' or 'nervousness'.

While the Mahatma had at all times since 1920, a majority of the Congressmen with him, those who agreed with Satyamurti's way of thinking were admittedly in a minority. A keen logical, reasoning mind with an emotional fervour imparted to it by the strength of conviction, being in a minority, Satyamurti was apt to be 'exigent', more so because Satyamurti was no less anxious to do things and get things done. He felt the programme of entering the Council for which he was eminently suited, would help reach the aim of freeing India sooner. Hence his firm adherence to the 'Parliamentary' programme. It was a tribute to the accommodative spirit pervading the Congress that from 1923 both the "Council - Entry" programme and "Civil Disobedience" were accepted for simultaneous pursuit. The "Swaraj Party" was of the "Indian National Congress" and Satyamurti could adhere to his own conviction, without violence to the Congress creed. His efforts in the first phase could be considered to be partially successful.

The crowning success of Satyamurti's efforts was in 1937 when the Congress won the elections and assumed office in the Provinces, where it had a majority. It was also the crowing hour of self-abnegation for Satyamurti. Few could have worked harder than he for the Congress victory. He was no less equipped to lead the ministry it would form. But few would have stepped down at the eleventh hour as he did yielding place to Rajaji.

The convergence of the official Congress programme and Satyamurti's own political conviction was short-lived. In 1939 the Congress directed the Party members not to attend the Central Assembly. The Congress Ministries had resigned. Civil disobedience was the official programme of the Congress under Mahatmaji. Satyamurti was again unrelenting in his efforts to convince Mahatma Gandhi of the futility of

withdrawing from the Central Assembly. But the Mahatma and the Congress were unyielding. Strong in his own conviction he spoke with anguish; when he was not even afforded a chance to put across his point of view before the Working Committee he and some other members of his ilk who were chafing, spoke in deep frustration.

Satyamurti was a true democrat - he articulated his views till a decision was taken and if it went against him he did not fail to carry it out. He was no dissentient defector. Still his tireless striving was stretching its arms towards finding a constructive solution, trying to negotiate his way through with the Government, to end the political impasse. To dynamic Satyamurti a static situation was untenable. His supple mind could not admit defeat.

His flair for negotiation, and accommodation was a great asset in his Parliamentary activity. Hence the large volume of correspondence (1937-1941) between him and the official members of the Assembly, and with the Private Secretary to the Viceroy. Legislative processes were assiduously pursued by him. He was looked up to by his leader, Bhulabhai Desai and his colleagues always for effective and constructive contribution to legislation, and often the Finance Member and the Law Member, could appreciate his reasoning. The latter, with his personal amiability could go the farthest to accommodate the suggestions of Satyamurti.

This success in Parliamentary proceedings was equally due to the thorough homework, the painstaking studies on comparative legislation, that Satyamurti had always put in on any subject he handled. His draft legislation for the anti-repression laws illustrates this ideally. But then, to his dismay, the Congress ministries in the Provinces were themselves having recourse to these very laws and the proposal

could not make headway. There are several pages of notes, references, and jottings made in his own hand and used as aids in his Assembly speeches. He admittedly, made full use of the Library. His forceful persuasion was backed by knowledge; and his knowledge was the fruit of his painstaking studies and scholarship.

When people with different points of view meet, a spirit of deference towards those who hold views other than one's own, is an essential requirement. Satyamurti showed this deference in an exemplary manner, as the correspondence he had with Frederick James, the leader of the European Group, and with the Government spokesmen, like Noyce, Grigg, and Bajpai reveals. When anyone felt hurt by his remarks he was ready to explain his statement and clear himself of any intention to cause personal hurt.

The Assembly without Satyamurti, it was unanimously agreed, was dull and colourless. When illness enforced silence on him the Assembly was shorn of its liveliness. Government spokesmen felt that no worthy debate was possible without the man who could match eloquence with study, and energy with dedicated and purposeful work. These qualities had made him the indispensable "work-horse" for the Congress Party in the Assembly. Sardar Patel warmly acknowledged the role of Satyamurti in the Parliamentary activity.

His energy and constructive pursuit harnessed to the Civic affairs of Madras was productive – the augmentation of the City Water Supply, the legislation for the City Improvement Trust, civic amenities like "Beggar Homes", and several other schemes were formulated or had fructified. A good working relationship he had stabilised with the Commissioner after an initial tiff, and with the bureaucracy made them responsive.

His was a manysided personality too. He was as facile in quoting from classical Sanskrit works (which he often did in the debates) as from English literature. He loved Carnatic music and offered advice on how it could be harnessed to broadcasting programme. He had an abiding faith in South Indian culture, and was catholic enough to try to accommodate even the orthodox usages. In this respect he was essentially "a child in the house" (to borrow Walter Pater's phrase).

His interest in higher education and University affairs (both Madras and Annamalai) was abiding and life-long. His contributions to the discussions in the Senate were marked by deep study and anxiety to maintain standards and broadbase education. To him Humanities were as essential as the Sciences; the former gave a true essential cultural outfit to the citizen besides.

Beneath the frail frame was an indomitable spirit, ever ready to seek the opponents, conversion, amiable to his friends opposite, outside the arena of controversy. Himself quite frank and outspoken he could appreciate in others the same frankness and could take a joke at his expense with good humour. A lover of the good things of life, of music, and drama and the arts, he was essentially human to a fault, warm and loving, and a good sport in debate who bore no ill-will. In his early days, he had known penury but was not often above it even later. His intense love of personal comfort and of the good things of life was matched only by life's denial of them to him for a major part of his life. Satyamurti's qualities won for him friends as well as enemies; but the former far out-numbered the latter.

Above all, he strove with all his energy and strength to further the cause of India's freedom in ways he considered best. He was passionately weeded to the coal.

He exemplified the “Dhira” as defined by Birthruhari in a Sloka he was fond of quoting:

“RATNAIR MAHĀRHAIR TUTU SHURNA DĒVAH:  
NA BHĒJIRĒ BHIMA VISHĒNA BHĪTIM  
SU DĀM VINĀ NA PRAYAYUR VIRĀMAM,  
NA NISCITĀRTHĀT VIRAMANTI DHIRĀH”.

“The treasures from the ocean-bed did not exhilarate the Devas, nor were they frightened by the dreadful poison that gushed forth. Unless they got at the nectar, they did not slacken their efforts. The valiant never swerve from the set goal”.

The goal was the same but the means could differ. Where the means suggested by his own reasoning differed from the official policies of the Congress or of Mahatma Gandhi he would go the full length to express his thoughts and try to muster the support of his opponents, however powerful they might be. He felt the British Parliamentary System and the Presidential system of USA and France had everyone of them its own deficiencies. He even stated that the ideal form of Government for India was governance by an intellectual aristocracy. But the intellectual aristocracy should have the authority of the will of the people, the democratic life-spring and impulse. (Ref. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri Endowment Lecture in the University of Madras on “what is the best form of Government for India”). That fearless freedom of thought backed by study, knowledge, reflection, and strength of conviction at once marked him out as a truly sincere intellectual, and great individualist. Yet, he had the democratic virtue of unflinching loyalty to the National organisation to which he belonged till his premature demise in 1943.



## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- ACHARYA KRIPALANI — The President of Indian National Congress and had differed from Gandhiji.
- ALEXANDER  
TOTTENHAM — Member of the ICS (Madras) and Dewan of Pudukottai (native State) after retirement for a long time till his demise.
- (COL.) AMERY — A die-hard Secretary of State for India - London.
- M.S. ANEY — A sometime Member of the Indian National Congress, and later a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council during the II World War.
- ANSARI, M.A., — President of Indian National Congress.
- ASAF ALI — A Congress Member belonging to the 'Swarajya' Party - who preferred entry into the Legislative Council (as Satyamurti) as a means of fighting the British.  
Governor of Orissa after India became free.
- BAJPAI, G.S. — A Member of ICS and a Senior Civilian in Government of India.

- BHULABHAI DESAI** — A Member of Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress - Member of Central Legislative Council.
- BRACKENBURY, C.F.** — Member of the ICS and Chief Secretary to Madras Government.
- COWASJI JAHANGIR** — A Parsi leader and Member of the Central Legislative Council.
- CRAIG** — Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.
- CUNNINGHAM** — Secretary to the Viceroy Lord Irwin.
- C.R. DAS** — A great lawyer and orator, President of the Indian National Congress, who was also a Member of the Swarajya Party.
- ELWIN** — Member of the ICS and Secretary to Governor of Madras.
- FAZLUL HUQ, A.K.** — Muslim Leader and sometime Premier of Bengal at the time of partition - Joined the Muslim League.
- FRANK NOYCE (SIR)** — A Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

- GADGIL** — A Member of Swaraj Party of the India National Congress — Member of Central Legislative Council.
- (MAHATMA) GANDHI** — Father of the Indian Nation.
- LORD IRWIN** — A very friendly and sympathetic Viceroy of India—concluded Gandhi-Irwin Pact.
- JAMES, F.E.** — Leader of the European Group in the Central Legislative Assembly.
- (Sir) JAMES GRIGG** — Finance Member, Government of India.
- JAYAKAR, M.R.** — A distinguished Lawyer — a Moderate and liberal.
- JOGENDRA SINGH** — A Member of Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress—Member of Central Legislative Council.
- KASTURIBHAI LALBHAI** — Indian Industnalist with interest in textiles.
- KASTURIRANGA  
IYENGAR, S.** — A lawyer, purchased 'The Hindu' and made it a leading nationalist newspaper.
- KELKAR, N.C.** — 'Swarajist' Leader, Member of Central Legislative Assembly.

- KHAITAN** — Indian Industrialist with interest in textiles.
- KRISHNAMACHARI, T.T.** — An Independent Member who supported nationalist members in the Central Assembly. - Finance Minister in post-independent India.
- MARJORIBANKS** — A Member of the ICS and Chief Secretary to Madras Government.
- (Sir) MAURICE GWAYER** — Chief Justice of India and later Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University - a friend of India.
- (Sir) MIRZA ISMAIL** — A distinguished administrator, Dewan of Mysore and Jaipur.
- MONTAGU, E.** — A liberal Secretary of State for India and a friend of India.
- MOTILAL GHOSE** — Editor, *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*.
- MOTILAL NEHRU** — A distinguished lawyer of the Indian National Congress who fought for the Council-entry programme in the Gaya Congress.
- PANDIT (JAWAHARLAL) NEHRU** — The renowned President of Indian National Congress.
- NRIPENDRANATH SIRCAR** — Law Member of Government of India.
- Lord OLIVIER** — Secretary of State for India, in the British Government.

- (GOVIND BALLABH) — A Congress leader of U.P.  
PANT and Member of Congress  
Legislative Assembly.
- PULLA REDDI, O. — A Member of the ICS  
(Madras Cadre). Commissioner of the Corporation of  
Madras during the Mayoralty  
of S. Satyamurti.
- RAJAJI — The foremost Congress leader  
(C. RAJAGOPALACHARI) in Madras and was a “No  
changer”, strongly advocating  
Non-Co-operation in the  
Thirties. First Prime  
Minister of Madras Province  
under Provincial autonomy in  
1937.
- (Sir) P. RAJAGOPALA — A noted administrator,  
CHARIAR Chairman of the Madras  
Legislative Council and later  
Member of the Council to  
advise Secretary of State in  
London.
- RAMANATHAN, A.V. — A high Police officer / Civil  
servant in Mysore State and  
an intimate friend.
- RANGASWAMI — Editor of ‘The Hindu’ - a  
IYENGAR, A. believer the Council-entry  
programme - close friend of  
S. Satyamurti - Was an Indian  
representative to the Second  
Round Table Conference  
(1931).

- REDDY, C.R.** — A great orator, and educationist. A member of the Madras Legislative Assembly – Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University.
- ROY, B.C.** — Distinguished Congress leader of Bengal – a Swarajist.
- RUSHBROOK  
WILLIAMS** — A distinguished Professor and a facile historian – Was Press Adviser to Government of India for some time.
- SANKARAN NAIR, C.** — A lawyer, purchased and partnered with S. Kasturiranga Iyengar “The Hindu”.
- SAPRU, T.B.** — A distinguished lawyer - a Moderate and liberal.
- SAROJINI NAIDU** — Congress leader who tried to bring together the Swarajist and Non-Co-operation Wings – a poetess.
- SASTRI, T.R.V.** — A leading lawyer, a former Advocate General and liberal and friend of Satyamurti.
- SHIVA RAO, B.** — Representative of “Hindu” and was a Mediator between the Government and Gandhiji and Congress.
- (Sir) SIKANDAR HYAT  
KHAN** — Muslim League Leader from Punjab.

- SIRCAR, N.N. — Law Member and a leading lawyer.
- SRINIVASA  
IYENGAR, S. — A leading lawyer, President of the Indian National Congress, but later had differed from Gandhiji and resigned. Supported Swarajist Party.
- SRINIVASA  
SASTRI, V.S. — A great 'Liberal', Was Agent to the Government of India in South Africa, and held high positions including his last, the Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University. A silver-tongued orator, Scholar in Sanskrit and friend.
- SRI PRAKASA — A distinguished Congressman from U.O. of the Swarajya Party — Was Governor of Madras in the post-independence period.
- SUBHAS BOSE — President of the Indian National Congress. Differed from Gandhiji and a plemical leader.
- VALLABHBHAI PATEL — One of the foremost leaders of the Indian National Congress and close associate of Mahatma Gandhi; opposed to the Council-entry programme; and a staunch protoganist of Non-co-operation.

- VIJAYARAGHAVA — Congress President; one of the  
CHARIAR, C. oldest Congress leaders from  
Salem lived to a ripe old age.
- (Sir) VISVESVARIAH, M. — A great Engineer and Diwan  
of Mysore. Promoted indus-  
trialisation in that State.
- VITTALBHAI J. PATEL — Was the Chairman of the  
Central Legislative Council -  
Brother of Sardar Patel.
- WALCHAND HIRA — Indian Industrialist with  
CHAND interest in Shipping.
- (Col.) WEDGEWOOD — A.M.P. in U.K. and a friend  
BENN of Satyamurti.
- YAGNESVARA — A Congressman of Tirunelveli  
SARMA, K.P. district and a Member of the  
Legislative Assembly, Madras.  
(1937-39).





# THE LAND REVENUE RECORDS OF MADRAS

(A.D. 1600 to A.D. 1965)

## A. Introduction :

“The Revenue of the State”, said Burke, “was the State”. The records pertaining to land revenue, the system and its administration, especially after the British established themselves, constitute, perhaps, the largest and most valuable part of the recorded history and the archives in Madras. The administration was brought in direct touch with the land, and the owners thereof, the ‘rai-yats’ Land was not merely a factor of production but a form of property, of value, conferring status and rights, and privileges. No aspect of the life and customs of the people was at once the more difficult and essential to be comprehended by the early British administrators, when they assumed the governmental authority initially as the agency for the Muhammadan rulers, and later in their own right. In the process, a *twin* benefit had accrued: first, a large *corpus* of literature, and second, some really sympathetic and scholarly and yet practical administrators well-acquainted with the customs and the culture of the land were thrown up, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their enquiring mind built up an incisive and intimate knowledge of the land, the people and their culture and character, sometimes angularly viewed or presented, and at other times erroneously understood, but always pursued with the instinct of curiosity and craving to know.

## The Impact of Cola Land Records System :

The history of land revenue documentation, dates to the beginnings of epigraphic evidence from the 7th century

onwards. Grant and title-deeds specify the immunities from taxes and service obligations attached to land, and the rates of assigned revenues, if any. The Cōla and the Pāndya inscriptions repeatedly refer to two forms of documentation, *par excellence* (i) the *puravu*, the field-register of occupied and occupiable land, whether assessed at *Tarams* (or grading on the basis of assessment) or on the basis of area or linear measurement (*virivu* or *parappu*) and (ii) of the *vari* or *vari pottagam* the demand-register of assessment and obligations. This latter should have also included the name of the respective occupants. Where relief in revenue demand was afforded, the methods adopted were involved and complex sometimes. Epigraphic evidence unmistakably brings out an intricate and complex system of written land records including traverse survey of villages and their assessable land and demand and revenue accounts maintained, including wet ayacut accounts, and the varied forms of revenue obligations or their termination, consequent on the community bearing them, either on their own volition or on receipt of a capitalized deposit, the interest proceeds of which were adequate to defray the recurring annual liabilities. In fact, the Chancery procedure for conveyance of land grants and revenue assignments were detailed and distinct steps. The royal intention was conveyed in the form of a memorandum (*Ninaippu*), the order or command as (*Kēlvi*), the *Ulvari*, the authenticated extract of the official entry in the Revenue demand register and the extract of the Tax-register (*Variyilidu*) were all conveyed, signed by number of accountants (*Tinaḷ*), and superintendents (*Tinaḷ kalam*) of land registers and revenue demand (*puravu vari*).<sup>1</sup> The vestiges

1. On the Cola and Pandya system of land tenures and revenue administration, please see the Author's "Studies in the History of Ancient Townships in Pudukottai", (1981), - published by Dept. of Archaeology, Govt. of Tamil Nadu - Chapters on "The Land Tenures, Sub-Tenures", "Irrigation" and "Budan of Land Dues" will be of interest in this context.

or the permanent impact of such a highly developed complex system can be discerned even in the present-day land-rights and recording system and accounts.

### **Scope of this Paper:**

This paper presents the available category of records relating to land revenue in the period A.D. 1600 to A.D. 1965 and their utility for the reconstruction of the history of the land-organisation and obligations in the "Madras Presidency" as it then was. The Presidency had comprised the entire States of Tamil Nadu and the Andhra Pradesh, (excluding the former Nizam's State), and the district of Ganjam now in Orissa, the districts of Bellary and South Canara, now in Karnataka and the district of Malabar and Anjengo now in Kerala State.<sup>2</sup> The tract was as varied in its geo-physical features and cropping patterns, as the characteristics of the land tenures and systems in vogue were distinct and different, in the different parts of the area. Nor could and single system of land administration, even if human ingenuity could forge one, suit or fit in with such varied tracts that had defied at the very inception the introduction of uniformity and, to some extent, even systematisation.

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2. Various parts of the Madras Presidency came under the British at different dates. For instance, Chingleput, Masulipatam, the nucleus of S. Arcot Dist., were among the earliest to come into the possession of the British (1750-1763); the northern areas in 1768; Krisna and Guntur in 1788; Salem in 1792 / 1799. But the southern dists. came under the British in bulk in 1801 and the dists. (Cuddappah and Bellary, etc.) ceded by the Nizam in 1800. For a chronological list of territories acquired by the British. Pl. see Appx. XLII at pp. 277-278 of Maclean's Manual of Admn. Vol. 2. The dates adopted for the limited purposes of periodisation in this paper, broadly follows the earlier and the later dates of acquisition of territories by the British.

The period, for the purpose of this paper can be divided into six sub-periods: (i) A.D. 1600 to 1759 / 1800-1-Pre-British period comprising the post-Vijayanagar-Nayak and Mahratta rule; (ii) A.D. 1760/1800-1 to 1855. The initial period of British land administration, more or less continuing the earlier systems but trying to introduce changes therein, by a process of trial and error. This was also the period when (what with the means of communication being slow) due to political and administrative exigencies, the Collectors of the districts had a large scope for personal initiative and making innovations, but they were progressively made subject to the direction and control of the Board of Revenue. The proprietary Estates were settled under Permanent Settlement Regulation of 1802 also during this phase; (iii) From 1855 to 1900 - being the period of original revenue settlement of the tract on the 'ryotwari' basis; (iv) From 1901 - 1937: The period of resettlement of the Ryotwari districts and the progressive systematisation of Taluk, revenue and village accounts until Resettlement was abolished. (v) 1938 to 1950: The period when the systems of land-revenue were proposed to be revised and the deliberations thereon; and (vi) From 1951 to 1965: The abolition of intermediary tenures, and the conversion into ryotwari system including the territories comprised in the former native State of Pudukottai and the transferred territory of Kanyakumari district (which was formerly a part of Travancore native State, and later, of Travancore-Cochin State).

In the account that follows, the records pertaining to land revenue are dealt with, adopting the periodisation above.

## **I. A.D. 1600 - A.D. 1759 / 1801:**

It lends itself to be sub-divided into the period of the Nayak (1600 to 1675) and Mahratta rulers (1675 to 1802). In the extreme south, the successors of later Pāndyas exercised

local authority in and around Tenkasi and Kari-valam-vandanallur and Kayattar in Tirunelveli district. The Mahratta rule in Thanjavur had not also formally ceased till 1855 though Rajah Sarfoji surrendered to the British the Thanjavur territory in 1802. In between the Polygars, and the chieftains were gaining in power and often, depending only on their personal might and power extending their authority to collect land taxes in the adjoining areas at the expense of others.

The Nawabs, of the Carnatic and Arcot, owing allegiance through the Sultan of Bijapur to the Moghul rulers in "distant Delhi" had taken over the political authority over these territories towards the end of the 17th century, other than the Thanjavur areas under the Mahratta Raja.

Remnants of the revenue administrative data could be gleaned from the extant stone inscriptions collected by the Epigraphist Department of the Government of India. They contain details of tenure of lands endowed to the temples and the mutts, the conditions of service tenure lands granted either from out of the revenue-yielding or assessed waste-lands or from the home-farm lands of the Crown or King or of the deity to whom they were endowed. The rates of *svami bhogam*, being the share of the king or the deity, and the other customary obligations are also recorded. Where assignment of land dues to the temples had been made, the rates of levy were specified. The king and the deity had home-farm lands, leased (*pāttom*) or under direct cultivation (*Kandulavu*).<sup>3</sup>

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3. On this subject, please see the author's paper published at pp. 55-60 – Journal of Epigraphical Society of India – Vol. X, 1983. (The Epigraphic Society of India – Dharwar).

The old revenue records especially of the erstwhile Mahratta administration and of the Zamindaris form part of the documents brought to notice and listed in the National Register of Private Records. These are illustrated below :

**PUDUKOTTAI STATE RECORDS 1740-1800  
REVENUE ACCOUNTS<sup>4</sup>**

**OLUGU OLAI OF RAMNAD AND SIVAGANGA  
(palm-leaf)<sup>5</sup>**

**ZAMINDARIS REVENUE RECORDS OF  
KANTHARVAKOTTAI (Tanjavur Dist),  
VALLIANKUMARAN ZAMIN SUVADIS AND PALM  
LEAF RECORDS<sup>6</sup>**

**REVENUE RECORDS OF PALACE - ESTATE OF  
TANJAVUR MAHRATTA PALACE AND RELATING  
TO PALACE INAMS<sup>7</sup>**

**PINGLE'S COLLECTIONS OF COLLECTION OF KIST-  
COLLECTION AND TAHI - CORRESPONDENCE -  
LAND REVENUE RECORDS IN MODI SCRIPT<sup>8</sup>**

**TANJAVUR MAHRATTA RECORDS - APPORTION-  
MENT OF LAND DUES BETWEEN THE BRITISH  
AND THE MAHRATTAS INCLUDING PEARL  
FISHERY RENTALS<sup>9</sup>**

**THE ZAMINDARI RECORDS OF SINGAMPATTI;<sup>10</sup>**

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4. National Register of Private Records No. 6.
  5. NRPR No. 5, pp. 194-5.
  6. NRPR No. 8, p. 27, 53-55.
  7. NRPR I, pt. 1 (i)
  8. *ibid* II pp. 93 ff.
  9. NRPR I, pt. iii, p. iii
  10. NRPR III

## PERUR ZAMINDARI AND KANDRAGULA (RAJAHMANDRY)<sup>11</sup>

though belonging to a later period can also throw light on the back-period.

A second category of useful accounts available are the temple records especially Srirangam<sup>12</sup> and Madurai<sup>13</sup> when they were directly administered by the Company Collectors in the beginning of the 19th century, and the Tirumayyam accounts of leased lands and taxes collected by the temple<sup>14</sup> in particular and of the "Ulthurai" accounts of the former Pudukottai State temples<sup>15</sup> and the Mahamai accounts of Chikala Velli-Thambala Kattalai<sup>16</sup> and the collection of papers from Jathi Thalaivan of Tuticorin the head of the Parava community throwing light on import and export duties,<sup>17</sup> constitute other suggestive sources which can be utilised together with the Madurai Mission records kept at<sup>18</sup> Shenbaganur and Tiruccirapalli and Palayamcottai for corroborative purposes to reconstruct the economic and revenue history of the period; palm-leaf and copper-plate deeds of the Nāyaka period stipulating conditions of land grant<sup>19</sup> and revenue dues are also available with the descendants of grantees.

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11. *ibid* I/pt. III

12. *ibid* III

13. *ibid* V-A, No. 10

14. NRPR No. 7/No. 28

15. NRPR No. 10

16. NRPR No. 7

17. *ibid* No. 1/pt. III

18. *ibid* No. 6

19. The author had seen one in Panaiyur village, Sankaranai taluk, dating back to the period 17th century, Vadamalappa Pillaiyan.

The administrative records of the village, especially in the Telugu country known as Dandakavalis or Kaviles were maintained by the Karnams. These now form part of the Col. Mackenzie's manuscripts. The Colonel, the first to recognise the value of these records, sent into the villages his Clerks to copy them who prepared digests of the registers where they could not copy the original *Kaviles* in extenso. These are known as *Kaifiyats*. These are an admixture of legend, fiction and fact, but luckily the accounts pertaining to the nearer times are the less undependable.<sup>20</sup>

Another set of records collected by Col. Mackenzie of some value are the Vamsavalis of the Palayapats.<sup>21</sup> Besides giving a traditional account of the geneology of the Polygars, they also throw light on the land-demand, the farming or bidding systems, the exactions of the polygars and the Nawabs and of the Company's servants as their agents and the difficulties of the land-owning community. These, again should be dealt with great caution as hearsay, and undependable information, palpable exaggerations are easily capable of being detected. They would warrant critical scrutiny and corroboration.

The earlier the period we stretch back the lesser is the amount of direct and authentic testimony. But collateral evidence is easily available and the sources especially in the private zamindari records could be as authentic as Government records and more dependable for that reason. The *Mudaliar Manuscripts of Nanjilnadu district in Alagian-*

20. Please see pp. 7-8 - Introduction - 'Further sources of Vijayanagar History' Ed.: Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and Dr. N.V. Ramanayya (1946).

21. Palayapattu Vamsavalu, I, II and III - some of these accounts have recently been published by the Tamil Nadu Dept. of Archaeology (1981).



Pandiapuram and elsewhere in Kanyakumari district together with the lithic records available in that district throw a flood of light on the agrarian hardships, the exaction of land-demand by the palace and the temple officials, aggravated by the Nayak depredations into Nanjilnad in Tirumalai Nayak's and Mangammal's time. The Travancore ruler often helpless and a hapless victim of his own officials and soldiery. was anxious to redress the grievances of the agriculturists and gave in to their demands which had the strength of the collective will and action to back them.

## II. From A.D. 1760 – 1801 to 1855:

The period of the Nawab's rule in the Carnatic do not appear to have left behind direct evidence and original records of land revenue administration. Firmans constituting grants of land or alienation of revenue, or creation of *wakfs* exist, here and there, and also the indirect evidence of the claimants before the Inam Commission. But the more valuable testimony to what had obtained then could be found in the recapitulations of what had transpired before the British occupation and the conditions on their taking over the administration, in the reports by the Commissioners and Collectors specially asked to report on the revenue conditions immediately preceding, British acquisition, and the officers who assumed the political authority, over each tract. Also the Estimates of the assets of the zamindaries, based on Paimash and Olugu accounts, such as were available, had been framed on the basis of which the Peishcush payable by the zamindars granted 'sanad-i-Istimrar' were fixed—for example, the reports of Col. Lushington on Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga Zamindaris and the Palayams of the South, and the Records of the 'Baramahals' containing the assets of the *mittahs* and the content of the grant or part village – grants like Trishvēkam, Caturbāgam, Dēvibagam, etc. Some

of these have become part of the consultations of the Board of Revenue (1790-1830) and the "Revenue Consultations" (1792-1830) contain the policy directives of the Governor in Council in the Fort St. George, including the minutes of the Governors and the directions issued to the Board of Revenue. The volumes of correspondence between the Fort St. George and the Court of Directors in London called the "Revenue Despatches" from and to England afford evidence of the manner in which the Home authorities and the Court of Directors shaped the land revenue policies, and principles of the Province. They also contain the various experiments conducted in the different parts of the Province and their effects and how the Madras Government re-acted to the directions of the Board of Directors.

The two principal administrators who had gained reputation of shaping the land revenue administrative structure and its procedures, at the earliest phase that came to be subsequently termed "Ryotwari" were Sir Thomas Munroe, and Col. Read who applied their methods in the "Baramahals" (comprising Salem, Dharmapuri, Tiruppattur-North Arcot District tracts.) These are available in the following:

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MUNRO AND  
THE BOARD OF REVENUE (1799 to 1807)

THE MINUTES OF SIR THOMAS MUNRO AS  
GOVERNOR (1820-27) IN THE RECORDS OF THE  
PUBLIC RECORDS AND PUBLIC SUNDRIES  
RECORDS, Vol. 121 and 122.

ORIGINAL LETTERS AND REPORTS AND MINUTES  
OF MUNRO IN THE CEDED DISTRICTS.

Also in the British Museum Official Minutes in copies of Sir Thomas Munro (1820-27) (added MSS No. 22-071 to 22-081) and letters and papers relating to Canara (1799 to 1805-ADD MSS p. 3-679).

Mr. K.N. Venkatasubba Sastri has utilised these data in his "The Munro System of British Statesmanship in India", (The University of Mysore, Mysore 1930), which contain extracts of the minutes of Munro and his reports as well.

The miscellaneous volumes of the Board of Revenue contain the 7 reports of Col. Read on various territories acquired from Tippu and the General Report on Salem.

The printed Baramahal records reveal the evolution of the direct settlement of land demand with the ryots. They are a veritable means of detailed information of SALEM and Dharmapuri villages and the *mittars*; and throw a flood of light on economic conditions of the tract.

The Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the affairs of the East-India Company (in 3 volumes edited by Firminger) also are valuable to trace the evolution of the land revenue administration.

The District Records consist of two categories - The records in Tamil, Telugu, or Canarese or Malayalam - as prevalent in the tract - which contain a large number of receipts of petitions and cases for investigation and the "olugu" accounts. The latter were mostly in palm-leaf manuscripts. Some of them appear to have been copied in paper in some districts. There are counterpart records in the Taluk cutcheries at least in some of the older taluks.

The important district records, more of political significance than of revenue, were also listed chronologically with brief abstracts and published as "Guide to District Records". - They usually cover the period A.D. 1740-50 to 1835.<sup>22</sup>

22. The Record office has also collected records upto 1857, but the period 1835-59 has not been catalogued with brief description of each record. The initial date varies from district to district.

This second period A.D. 1759/1801 to 1855 was the most formative and experimental phase of land revenue administration. The records have therefore intense appeal to the historian anxious to trace the beginnings and evolution of land revenue policy, system and administration under the British.<sup>23</sup>

It is also a record of trial and error of the initiatives of individual Collectors (like Kindersley, who introduced the 'Mottum Faisal' system in Tanjavur). In fact, the study of the land revenue records of this period of each district

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23. Please see the number of works on this aspect :

- (a) The Ryotwari system in Madras - Nilamani Mukharjee (Firm K.L. Mukhoppadhyay (1962).
- (b) Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. II (1982).
- (c) Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India - M. Ruthnaswamy (Luzac & Co.) 1939.
- (d) The Munro System of British Statesmanship in India by K.N.V. Sastri, op. cit.
- (e) Dr. B.S. Baliga - Studies in Madras Administration Vol. I and Vol. II.
- (f) Studies in Madras Admn., Vol. II, Dr. B.S. Baliga, please see pp. 82-98; The Early Land Revenue Systems in Madras Land Rev. Collection in kind or the avani system., pp 99-116; Land Tenures in Ryotwari Areas pp. 117-153.
- (g) Cambridge History of India, Vol. V.
- (h) B. Natarajan : 'Rise and Growth of Ryotwari system of Land Revenue Admn. in Madras Presidency'-unpublished D. Litt. dissertation - Museum Library.
- (i) A detailed Resume of the History of Land Revenue Settlement and abolition of intermediary tenancies in Tamil Nadu-published by Government of Tamil Nadu in 1977.

could bring out its own individual peculiarities - the 'palmyrah forests of Tirunelveli', the 'Kadarambam' rates of Tiruccirapalli, the Amani system in Tanjavur, the 'Mirasi' rights of Chingleput, the Cowle rules of Salem and so on - and also the efforts, successful and unsuccessful of individual Collectors and Commissioners in-charge to deal with them. Annual settlements with headman, Joint-rent system, triennial and quinquennial and decennial leases, revision of paddy-rates and price commutation were other features which distinguished the methods adopted in some tracts from those of others. It was also a period of the 'education of masters', the Board of Revenue trying, to draw lessons from experiences in the districts and applying them to others, and in the process, tending to forge some uniformity in the principles and procedures applied.<sup>24</sup> The Board of Revenue had also by 1826 compiled its own Standing Orders of importance in the actual working of the revenue and ryotwari system.

### **The Third Period 1855 - 1905 :**

This was the most creative and constructive period in the Revenue History of the composite State of Madras and the records left behind, naturally are the largest, most detailed and valuable. By this time, two main policies had come to stay. Firstly, the Permanent Settlement Regulation of 1802 and its implementation had been completed. The Zamindari and whole Inam villages had been confirmed. An Inam Commission was established on 16th November, 1858, had completed its deliberations substantially by November

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24. On a sketch History of the Board of Revenue and its functioning, please see the author's article in the "Madras Board of Revenue - a Requiem" published in the Indian Institute of Public Administration Quarterly Journal - Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (pp. 97-112) reproduced herein App. No. X.

1869 when the remnants of its work were transferred to the Members of the Board of Revenue.<sup>25</sup> The rest of the tract was decided to be applied the method of individual engagement (Patta) with the Government based as a surveyed measurement of land and assessment to be charged by the Government as directed by the Secretary of State in 1864 as "a moiety of the net produce, subject to a deduction of 10 per cent for unprofitable portions of fields, of which the survey did not take account, etc". Thirdly, the structure of land revenue records, accounts and returns with some uniformity had been evolved.

The cumulative effect of these three proceedings was to establish a system of revenue administration that had survived almost to our times.

The Inam Settlement Proceedings deserve some description in the first instance. What was most striking was the systematic and pragmatic tone set by Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Governor in his justly famous minute, the perspicuity of approach and knowledge of details of the Inam tenures, varying in their types, characteristics and history from district to district and the clear set of instructions which could be applied with precision by the field officers, the uniformity of principle applied to the treatment of Inams tempered with equitable considerations that were brought to bear upon the settlement of the cases, and the decisions by the Inam Commissioner himself in complicated cases where his intervention was called for. The original Inam Records of the Commission are preserved in the Records Office at

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25. The New (Revenue) Series No. 1 A Collection of Papers relating to Inam Settlement in Madras Presidency (1948)- Madras Government Press is a very valuable collection of the important proceedings of the Inam Commission.

Madras. But "Inam Fair Registers" were copied in a concise form, setting out the particulars of Inam, their character, the services or obligations attached, the Paimash extent, the 'poruppu' or 'jodi' or old customary payments if any, a brief summary history of the case as far as could be ascertained - not necessarily authentic or scientific though - the documentary evidence in support of title, and how far they were sustained and the rule or principle to be applied, whether the Inam was to be confirmed or not, and the quit rent and the basis (usually in the pattern of the prevailing assessment in the nearest Government land or village) therefor.<sup>26</sup> The Inam settlement proceedings could be held not only as a just and equitable regularisation of a complicated tenure, but as a model for any systemised civilised administration. No amount of praise can be too much for the Inam Commissioners, G.N. Taylor and W.T. Blair, who conducted the proceedings and brought to bear a judicial approach and an enquiring mind on their work. They were ably assisted by officers of high calibre, like A. Sashiah Sastriar, who rose to be the Diwan in Travancore and Pudukottai and T. Muthuswami Aiyer who later became a Judge of the Madras High Court. These officers brought to their task 'ability of a high order, great assiduity and strong integrity'. "The popular reception of the Commission is, in no small measure", acknowledged Mr. Blair, "to be ascribed to the influence and respect they personally commanded among their fellow countrymen".<sup>27</sup>

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26. The author had personally and intensively used in original the Inam Settlement Records while preparing his Report on the proposals for settlement of Inams of Pudukottai (erstwhile State) and in the field settlement work done or supervised by him in all the districts.
27. His completion Report, dated 30-10-1869 at p. 326 of the Collection of Papers.

The Inam Commission was charged with the settlement of the Tenure and title and enfranchisement of defective holdings. The land revenue settlement was the determination of the location, extent, registry and the assessment on the land or rather the parcels of land held by each individual who had to enter into an engagement with the Government. The procedures for this settlement were involved and complex and time-consuming and demanded a large number of field-officers and staff. Ultimately fiscal considerations would demand compromises with the set procedures and principles applied in field and, often the revenue determined on the basis of classification and assessment rates had to be varied sometimes. In these respects, the Revenue Settlement of the district was somewhat a foil to the Inam Settlement proceedings which had a meticulous precision and unswerving logic that had universal application. In Ryotwari settlement the anxiety, to avoid loss of revenue was the primary concern of the administration right from the time the East India Company had acquired possessions in the country—first to foster trade and secondly for a return.<sup>28</sup> Expediency rather principle, past and present compulsions than a system and the effect rather than the basis, in short, the end than the means had often vitiated the revenue settlement proceedings.

During this phase, detailed Cadastral Survey was undertaken in the districts of the Madras Presidency to be followed by a detailed Revenue Settlement with individual holders of land.

The survey work was of three distinct categories. The Trigonometrical Survey based on a connected system of major triangulation afforded the most scientific basis for the second; (2) a topographical survey from producing maps (of the

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28. Some Influences - pp. 228 ff.



typical size 1 inch = 1 sq. mile) and (3) the Cadastral Survey for revenue administration. A decision to carry out a Trigonometrical survey was already taken as early as in 1800 when Lord William Bentinck was the Governor and also at the instance of the Commander-in-Chief. This was done by the "Imperial" Survey of India organisation.

In Madras, Survey embraces the other two categories - the topographical and the cadastral. Under the former, Taluk maps were prepared and 'minor circuit' maps for Zamindari or whole Inam villages in which a fixed assessment for the zamindari or village as a whole was levied. But there were enough data of villages, rivers and topographical details incorporated.

The cadastral survey was detailed. It had three parts - the village map incorporating boundaries of survey fields, channels, topo-details like tanks, house-sites / village, temples, etc. the Khandam sketches being convenient parts of combined foiled maps, and the detailed field measurement books incorporating sub-division sketches reflecting the individual and separated enjoyment on ground. The work had progressed so well that Mashham described the Madras Revenue Survey in 1870 as one "in which the Survey and Revenue Officers work together and which is conducted on correct principle in every detail, in the field measurement as well as village boundaries with a complete series of tests ... The Madras Revenue Survey System alone answers this description and must be considered consequently the best".

The cadastral survey records of Madras constitute a very valuable and detailed set of records that afford a solid base for revenue administration. The work was undoubtedly arduous and had demanded a varitable army of field survey officers but the product of such labours was of permanent

value, capable of easy modification to reflect later changes and maintenance and updating. A chain survey manual provides a handy code of instructions on the methods and procedures for survey.

The Madras Survey and Boundaries Act 1860 (Act XXVIII of 1860) afforded a statutory basis for the survey but it was amended by Act II of 1884 to make it the obligation of landowners to maintain survey marks and for empowering boundary settlement officers to summon parties. Act-IV of 1897 enabled the survey of proprietary estates as well at their cost and on application. Act VIII of 1923 (The Madras Survey and Boundaries Act) made the law self-contained and made the record of survey conclusive proof that the boundaries determined and recorded have been correctly done unless the survey had been modified by a decree of a Civil Court after three years of its completion.

In the fifties the survey work was undertaken in the proprietary estates and Inam villages taken over and where an earlier framework had existed, it was adopted and updated details alone being filled in. These afforded satisfactory and less costly basis for the Revenue Settlement of the Estates and Inams taken over by Government.

The Survey was to be followed by re-survey prior to resettlement. But as a matter of policy, resettlement had been given up after 1937; and re-survey work also had not been undertaken. To update the records resurvey has been taken up in Chingleput and Tanjavur districts in 1964 and it is being extended to other areas.

The original Revenue Settlement papers contain any number of detailed points for decision in field survey and they were considered in consultation with the Revenue and

Legal experts and determined then and there without which field work would have got impeded. To cite one typical illustration, a question arose whether an irrigation or supply channel to tanks should be surveyed only in the inner width of the channel excluding the bunds or should include the bunds. Mr. Mullings, the Director of Survey rightly opined, "a channel without a bund is an egg without an eggshell" and it was decided that the boundaries of a channel should include the bunds on both sides. The practical impact of such details to keep in-tact the vital water courses and prevent encroachments, could be easily appreciated; what was more, it settled the law and the course of administration for ever after.

The Indian Revenue Settlement, in the formative period of British, administration was a matter of some political importance. The deliberations of the Government itself being of an uncertain nature with regard to various abstract matters (of principle) such as the question with whom they would settle the demand, and other points, a considerable share in the discussions of these questions fell to the settlement officer. Hence, the larger number of political reputations obtained in the former times from settlement work. And hence also, the voluminous nature of the old reports on settlement.<sup>29</sup>

By 1830, it had been settled that the Ryotwari system be adopted and applied to the Madras Land holdings other than those permanently settled estates and the Inam villages. Within 28 years thereafter in 1858, a Department of Settlement was instituted. Ryotwari settlement operation consisted of five stages - demarcation of boundaries, and survey, inspection and classification of soils, assessment, and record of rights.

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29. Maclean - Manual of Administration, Vol. I, p. 102.

The first two stages formed part of the survey and yielded the records of topographical and cadastral survey. The detailed Revenue settlement involved an intensive field inspection by field staff, with checks and over-checks by the higher officers in the hierarchy. They had an excellent opportunity to intensively check on ground the soil characteristics, cultivation particulars, the yields, whether irrigated or not, and the period of available irrigation, and what the prices and conditions of the market ruling nearby, the gross yield and net, after allowing for cultivation expenses for the principal and widely grown crops, and the money rate table that the soils could bear. In addition, the registry of lands, and disputes, if any existed, could be settled. The unoccupied and Govt. lands and porombokes for communal use or the village common could also be secured in them integrity. Report - being an initial study of the tract features, and issues likely to arise, and the principles on which they could be settled. (2) After the orders of the Govt. and the Board were obtained, field work was intensively undertaken. (3) Based on the comprehensive statistical data painfully collected in field on all aspects of crops grown, grain prices, commutation rates, money rates were evolved based on 'half net' theory, and the scheme for the settlement. This was the scheme Report submitted to the Government. (4) Based on the orders of the Board of Revenue and the Government any revision necessary and the fiscal and other effects thereof would be worked out and if need be revised orders would be sought. (5) Introduction Report of the whole settlement and its effect.

The original settlement papers for each district are a laborious compilation of statistical, geophysical, revenue and tenancial directions. The quality of the work naturally varied from area to area depending on the personality and

sometimes, even if the officer be of proved calibre and experience, his personal or mental preoccupations at the time. The one officer who, perhaps, had the largest contribution to make in original settlement in the southern districts was R.K. Puckle but even his report on Salem district did not 'have the usual characteristics of clarity, conciseness, and precision' - the Government felt, which Puckle attributed to the personal domestic "blues" he was passing through at the time. The Government of India claimed, "In no official relation does a member of public service come into such close contact with the people as in settlement work and it cannot be his desire to aggravate those among whom he is spending some of the most laborious years of his life, or to initiate a settlement which, after a short interval, will break down". (vide Land Revenue Policy of the Indian Government (1920) Calcutta Government Press.)

The original settlement papers and the correspondence relating to it constitute a very valuable documentation, throwing light on many aspects of social and economic conditions in the latter half of the 19th century. They can also bear testimony to the close contact of the department with the people. These papers printed and bound for each district are available in the Records at Madras besides copies thereof in some of the districts. The correspondence in individual cases and field work have also been deposited with the Collector's records in the districts on the conclusion of the settlement operations.

The final results of the settlement operations are embodied in a diglott permanent settlement register or "A" Register for each village which had a descriptive memoir attached. This formed the basic foundation for village revenue work.

Alongside, a revision of land revenue accounts was also found necessary, as the old system of accounts in Government taluk officers and the villages was extremely complicated and cumbrous. A thorough revision was begun in 1855. A well-known native official "Jayaram Chetty" (who was the Head English Accountant in the Collectorate of North Arcot) was appointed as an uncovenanted Assistant in the office of the Board of Revenue. Four changes were introduced—the substitution of the native languages in vogue for Mahratta as the language of accounts. Mahratta had been introduced during the Tanjore Rajas' regime and they had a reputation for keeping systematic written accounts. (but not without the secretive side effects of monopoly and exclusiveness, and in breeding of the personnel appointed in the various districts due to nepotism and relationship) in Modi script, and were continued by the Nawabs of Carnatic, and even the British till 1855 in the Huzur Offices and Collectorates. That needed a double translation in the native languages for lower officials and the Karnams and in English to the higher authorities. Even correspondence between the Tahsildars and the Collector in some districts and in the cutchery of the Revenue Board, for the sake of uniformity together with the accounts were kept in Mahratta till then. This was abolished. Secondly, paper came into vogue in place of cadjan leaves for writing. The form of accounts were substituted had 'brevity, order, simplicity, and clearness in place of the prolixity, and repetition, the utter want of system, the complexity and the confusion which had distinguished the previous system". A monthly statement of the collection in every district under the great divisions of land, and extra sources, comparing the current year with the past, as well as the total collections under each sub-division of the extra sources, for a similar comparison and an explanation of notable variations. The practice hitherto for

transmitting all the village accounts to the Taluk and the Collector's offices for monthly compilation was discontinued. Above all, printed and standardised forms were introduced. Still the number of village accounts in 1855 was 22. A Manual of village accounts was approved in G.O. No. 517, dated 24-6-1886. The Taluk accounts were never so numerous. But still columns grew and the accounts tended to become complex and repetitive, until a revised set of village and taluk accounts were evolved by the Board of Revenue in consultation with the Collectors who complained, that the Karnams had at once groaned under the weight, complexity and number of accounts and had made them the engine for oppression of the ryots". A revised manual of village accounts was the result<sup>30</sup> in 1906. A village officers and ryots' manual followed suit and it was approved in G.O. No. 1615, dated 30-5-1911.

The Taluk Manual of Accounts was published first in 1858, but further revisions had been made from time to time. The accounts kept at the taluk headquarters relating to Jama-bandi (or the annual closure of land-demand) were for the most part prepared on the same pattern as the village accounts substituting whole villages for individual holdings. Individual particulars of arrears were however kept at the taluk to watch recovery or where necessary remission or write-off. The lands occupied, cultivated and settlement of land demand with remissions and demand collection and balance accounts were also kept, besides the Darkhast accounts for assignments especially for plantations. In addition, a number of statistical returns on miscellaneous aspects were also sent including birth and death, cattle stock live and dead, and the data for quinquennial returns submitted by the Collector to the Board-on the number of ryots, rent rolls, population, agricultural stocks, sources of irrigation and extent of cultivable land.

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30. B.P. 322, dated 31-8-1906.

The accounts kept at the Huzur were purely Treasury accounts relating to cash received and expended. These are sent in the prescribed monthly abstracts to the Accountant-General, the most important being the account current. In 1882-83, Government prescribed that regular estimates of revenue and receipts, for the official year be prepared with reference to the actuals for 11 months by the Collectors (B.P. 1106, dt. 18th April 1883).

The Board of Revenue consolidated all the data in the form of an annual statement/settlement Report for each Fasli commencing every July. The complaint has often been voiced that there was paucity of essential or purposive data especially for an economic analysis of the conditions of the Presidency in the midst of plethora of data various and minor and sundry aspects. But still the annual reports by and large, could be analysed with advantage to discern secular trends in changes and the effects of natural calamities where they occurred. Periods of retention, some being permanent, are prescribed. The village accounts are also deposited in the Taluk Offices and maintained for reference upto prescribed periods.

Micro-filming selectively of the extant records, and the better upkeep at centralised places, say at Madras or at District headquarters of the earlier records of the village Olugu, and original settlement registers and records would be a valuable aid for a critical economic analysis of the primary data available therein.

The currency of revenue settlement effected during the period was for 30 years generally, a term accepted as early as in 1837 in Bombay and thereafter extended to Madras and finally decided by the Secretary of State in 1895. The districts became due for re-settlement at the expiry of that period. This fell to the next period, 1905 to 1937.



But note should be taken of the parallel revenue settlement, of enquiry into Inams undertaken in the former native States, Pudukottai and Travancore, although their features were very different. The Olugu accounts of the former / State of Travancore and the original settlement Registers (Printed in Malayalam / Tamil) have been transferred and brought over to the Collectorate of Kanyakumari as also the Survey Records available after the States Re-organisation and transfer of the territory to this State.<sup>31</sup>

Thanks to the personal direction of the Dewan of Pudukottai, Sir Richard Alexander Loftus Tottenham, the Inam Records which were compiled during the settlement done by Dewan Seshiah Sastriar, (an old and experienced hand in this aspect of work in Madras) and the land records relating to various methods adopted *amani*, Olugu, leases, etc. during the 19th century have been very well preserved docketted and maintained in the former Pudukottai Durbar office and subsequently in the Collector's office. There was also a Paimash survey on the Kazra method adopted for localing Inams. The accounts prepared and available for the Pudukottai Inams settlement are set out in the Appendix-I. A land settlement effected was, however, later in 1911.

#### Period IV - A.D. 1900 to 1937 :

In the beginning of the century, the land revenue policy of the Government was the subject of criticism by the Indian intelligentsia. Sir R.C Dutt, formerly acting Commissioner of Burdwan, addressed the Viceroy in the course of 1900 a

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31. The author had personally handled this work as the Special Officer for States Reorganisation and District Collector who formed the District of Kanyakumari and got the Olugus records transferred from Trivandrum to Nagercoil.

series of letters concerning the land revenue system of the different provinces, and made certain recommendations as to the future policy and action. At a little later date, the Secretary of State transmitted to the Government of India a memorial signed by certain retired officers of the Indian Civil Service suggesting a somewhat similar line of policy and action. They alleged that the intensity and frequency of 'recent famines (late in the 19th century) were largely due to poverty caused by over-assessment.

They would have the Government believe the permanent settlement in the form of Zamindaries was a better system than the ryotwari system of assessment. The Government of India welcomed the opportunity of reviewing the entire land revenue system but found against the contention that the Permanent Settlement based on the Zamindari system was better than the Ryotwari settlement. They also found against the allegation that the famines and hardship of the people were the result of the Ryotwari Settlement and its principles <sup>32</sup>

In the period under review, the districts had come up, in turn, for resettlement on the expiry of the 30 years at different dates. Hence, it was pre-eminently an opportunity for fresh investigations in theory, into the grain out-turn, the commutation prices, determination of cultivation expenses and 'half-net', and working out money-rate tables. In addition, it involved a *de nove* classification or reclassification of soils and of irrigation sources and based thereon, revised assessment rates for land. Though many of the Re-settlement Reports had gone through these motions, in practice and effect, the settlement process was made a much abridged

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32. Land Revenue Policy of the Indian Government (Resolution of the Governor-General in Council, dt. 16-1-1902) op. cit.

affair. Reclassification of soils was undertaken, more or less on a rough and ready process, where the initial classification was patently wrong. For instance, the soils in Sivakasi Taluk (Ramanathapuram district) "as red as Chepauk" were classified as "Black" for want of a suitable rate higher than the highest "Red-soil sort". This was rectified. Irrigation sources which had benefited due to projects and Tank restoration schemes to afford better supply were also marked up. For the rest, the revised assessment largely, took the form of a percentage increase—usually limited to  $12\frac{1}{2}\%$ —of the original settlement rates, without disturbing the logic—or the lack of it—in the original settlement structure. Opportunity was however availed to effect subdivision to reflect enjoyment on ground, and updating registry.

This process was in progress and was not complete by 1937 when the Congress Government under Sri C. Rajagopalachari assumed office under the Provincial autonomy scheme of the 1935-Government of India Act. In view of the prevailing depression, the burden of agricultural indebtedness, and rural economic backwardness, Government ordered that Resettlement of Land demand be given up, as a matter of policy.

The Resettlement Reports were also voluminous records containing the economic and agricultural data of the tract and noticing the effect of the original settlement, where it had gone wrong, and areas needing rectification or revision. They also brought out the trends of changes in agriculture and irrigation since the original settlement times. These records preserved in the Record Office and in the districts can lend themselves to an analytical study of the agrarian holdings and conditions in the first half of the present century.

The period 1900-1937 had witnessed several ancillary developments in the land revenue administration and the records reflect these measures and transactions. First, the Estates Land Act (Act I of 1908) was enacted, which, inter-alia, protected communal and poromboke lands from encroachment and conversion to arable land unless so permitted by the District Collector (under Sec. 20-A). Secondly, it afforded the security of tenure to ryots, and provided for a record of rights to be prepared after survey and enquiry. A corpus of judicial verdicts on these two aspects - communal rights, vis-a-vis the proprietary privileges and ryots' obligations vis-a-vis landholders' interests had also grown during this period which the Revenue machinery of the Collectorate had to implement and oversee in day-to-day administration. These shaped and could rank alongside the body of common law and defining of "customary easement and rights" by judicial pronouncements and are of historic importance. Thirdly, the reversionary right of Government to lands escheating, or Service Inams which have ceased to be (where term-based) or where alienation had occurred or had to be rescinded or enfranchised was asserted. Government also took powers to call for data, in times of distress, from proprietary estates. As a consequence, the Collectorate had built up a large volume of records pertaining to these aspects. The village and taluk accounts also needed recasting in line with the effects of statutory modifications. Forms of village accounts for Estate villages were prescribed and a Manual compiled for the purpose.<sup>33</sup>

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33. Board Proceedings Press 59 (Sect.), dt. 7-5-1920.  
 B.P. No. 5 (Sect.), dt. 24-1-1924.  
 B.P. No. 68 (Sect.), dt. 1926.  
 B.P. No. 30, (Sect.), dt. 20-5-1927.  
 B.P. Misc. No. 1891, dt. 27-6-1930.  
 G.O. Ms. No. 1594, Rev., dt. 6-8-1937.  
 B.P. No. 27, dt. 13-3-1937. etc.

The period from 1920 1937 marked an intensive activity of Government to bring under greater control the proprietary Estate villages and the revenue administration therein and collect data therefrom and regulate and systematise their accounts. There was an added reason in that the Government had to collect water rate from lands in Inam or Proprietary villages supplied water from Government sources. Also the enfranchisement of *Dēvadāsi* Inams under the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act needed similar incorporation in village accounts. Many of the proprietary Estates had fallen to be administered either by a Court of Wards (the Board of Revenue) and through the Estate Collector, or when they were hopelessly in debt, through Civilian Officers appointed as Dewan. These circumstances, also helped in the smooth implementation of these changes in the land revenue accounting system.

The period had also witnessed extension of irrigation. Questions like levy or revision of water cess, the obligations of the land-owners vis-a-vis the Government under *Kudimaramat* in silt clearance and maintenance of the field channels, tank bunds and supply channels, (as in Thanjavur district) had also been brought up and extensive correspondence on these aspects are contained in the recorded Government Orders and Board's Proceedings of the period. The Government was very chary of abridging its conception of the obligations of the ryotwari land-holders while the need for maintenance attention was urgently felt, as the cost thereof was increasing, due to the break down of the ryots' obligation (*Kudimaramath* system) without any satisfactory substitute in sight, the whole set of obligations had failed to be adequately performed. The District records on these subjects also are of relevance. In short, this was a period of documentation of how the settled rights and obligations in the ryotwari tracts, and in the

zamindari tracts, consequent on Act-I of 1908, were worked out and they became defined and modified.

The system of taluk and village accounts were also under constant revision, and modifications made from time to time.

#### **Period V-1937 to 1950 :**

This was a period, less of action than of cogitation. The National movement was in full swing under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The World War-II had also diverted the attention of Government, to mobilise resources and war effort organisation as India also had been drawn into it. Meanwhile, the Congress' resolution were urging, as a policy, the abolition of all intermediaries and *ad interim* reduction in rents. The reports compiled by the Estates abolition Commission and other recommendations for interim relief and final reforms are however documents of contemporary and historical interest. These trends culminated in a series of legislations - the Rent Reduction Act, the Estates Abolition Act (Act XXVI of 1948). Above all, India became independent in 1947, and the constructive energies of the nation were fastened on the framing of a Constitution for the sovereign democratic republic through the Constituent Assembly.

#### **Period VI - 1950 to 1965 :**

One of the earliest Acts of the States after independence was attained was to abolish the Intermediaries - the Zamindaries, the Land Tenures and Inams, - etc., The Estates Abolition Act (Act XXVI of 1948) and its implementation immediately gave a fresh lease of life to the survey and settlement operation in order that the Zamindar and Inam lands taken over may be converted into Ryotwari tenure. The rough estimated extent of such estates in the composite State of Madras was about 11,877 sq.miles.<sup>34</sup> In actual

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34. p. 149 - Dr. Baliga, Vol. I.

survey it had covered 12,795 sq.miles, including the whole Inam villages abolished under the Act, 26 of 1963. At the time this Act came to be implemented, the Survey and Settlement organisation in the State had been almost completely dismantled. A handful of experienced Survey Officers with field experience were gathered from out of their retirement and younger staff were trained. The settlement organisation too was built from the scratch. The operations lasted for well over 15 years (1949-1964) though the bulk of the volume of work had been finalised by 1960-61. As a number of cases were however pending judicial decisions, there implementation had to be put by, and given effect as and when decisions were pronounced.

The Estates Survey work was only an improvement of the existing framework wherever already available. To save cost, time and staff, wherever a cadastral survey had been done either under the Acts prior to that of 1923 or under the Estates Land Act for record of rights preparation even if they had not been finalised, they were taken as the ground-work and sub-divisions of enjoyments within field boundaries and demarcation of porombokes was made as on ground, or as they ought to be, respectively. The survey party handed over the village map, field measurement Book and Khandam sketches together with the Land Register, noting the registry as well as for each sub-divided enjoyment.

The settlement work done under the Act grafted the money-rates applicable to lands as found in a select Resettlement Notification in a ryotwari area from among those in force in the district approved by Government. In other words, there was no need to ascertain standard grain yields, fix commutation rates and evolve a new set of money rates or "Tarams". What was however necessary was to classify lands into the standard types of soils and sorts and

classify irrigation sources and apply the approved money-rate to the resultant "Taram", fastened on the land. It was also held that if the Resettlement Notification applied had any anomalies, the task of the Taken-over Estates Settlement was to "perpetuate the anomaly" faithfully, and adopt the features of the ryotwari revenue system with all its known deficiencies.

The aim was to secure as far as practicable a parity in the conditions of Revenue Settlement rather than to modify or improve the existing pattern in its application to the Estate area. The settlement parties had elaborate set of accounts, as many as 22 or 24 to prepare, tailored both to the time-honoured revenue requirements like classification Register, wet ayacut account, transfer from wet to dry and vice-versa but also to the particular needs of the statutory provisions of the Estate Abolition Act like service tenure lands register, etc. On the completion of settlement work, these records of actual field inspection and enquiry were deposited in the respective Collector's Offices.

Adopting the 'ryotwari pattern', a permanent A-Register, B-Register, 'fair adangal' together with the Survey Records were handed over to the Collectorate together with a Descriptive Memoir.

The same procedure resulted in a similar set of land records prepared in the Land and Inam settlements of Pudukkottai (former native State). The registers, were updated, consequent on the abolition of the Minor Inams and whole Inams (post-1936) village-estates, which were largely contained in the surveyed villages or were largely hamlets, within a village group. Where the whole Inam villages were too large and were left localised by exclusion or surveyed as inner circuits, they were taken up for survey in detail and settlement registers were prepared on the same pattern as for proprietary estates.



The settlement operation had one lasting impact-field demarcation was done and sketches to identify fields, village maps, and above all registry of the land-holdings were all updated.

The transferred territory of Kanyakumari district had its own special features, -a basic land tax which the Supreme Court held to be violative of the Constitution, besides lands belonging to Sri Padamanabhaswami temple (Sripandarangai) and rents assigned to that temple even out of occupied Government land holdings (Tiruppuvaram). Lands held by the ladies of Travancore Palace (Sripadam) and Kandukrishi or (home farm lands) of the erstwhile Royal family, besides minor Inams.

Detailed reports on very one of these tenures were prepared by the author of this paper as the first Collector of Kanyakumari on its transfer to this State and they form part of the permanent disposals of the Collectorate, the Board and the Government. Broadly, to cure the land-system of its legal deficiencies a ryotwari settlement based on classification of soil and irrigation sources was completed, applying the money-rate table in force in Tirunelveli district, but equating the highest Taram in Kanyakumari with the second highest in Tirunelveli, to allow for the lower average productivity of soils in the former district. The special tenures were abolished on payment of appropriate compensation, treating them on a par with the corresponding category of Inams, religious or personal. Also the special rental obligations of Government lands to Sripadmanabhaswami temple were equitably extinguished. These settlement records are lodged with the Collector's office together with the Survey records. A special variety of Joint Holdings of trees in lands, ownership of which belonged to others, Oodukur Settlement was also finally done away with, by appropriate integration or disintegration of land and tree rights.

The recent period (1960-65) was, essentially a period of land reform. The policy of the Government was to converge the ownership of the land (now with the occupant) with the cultivating tenant, and to afford security of tenure and a more equitable porportion of the yield to the latter. These objectives were sought to be secured under the Tamil Nadu Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land) Act, 1961 and the Laws amending it, the Tamil Nadu Public Trusts (Regulation of Administration of Agricultural Land) Act (Act 57 of 1961).

The tenancy reform was sought to be achieved through a number of legislations - the Tanjore Pannaiyāl Act 1952; the Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants' Protection Act 1955; the Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants Payment of Fair Rent Act 1956; the Tiruccirapalli Kaiyerwaram-Iratterwaram Act 1958; the Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants (Special Provision) Act, 1968; and the Tamil Nadu Occupants Kudiyiruppu (Concerment of Ownership Act 1961; Tamil Nadu Agricultural Lands' Records of Tenancy Right Act 1969; Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants Right to Purchase Land Owner's Right Act.

In addition, the Tamil Nadu Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulations) Act 1976 and a series of Acts to afford relief from agricultural indebtedness and arrears of rent commencing from 1936-38 to 1972-75 complete the legislation on land reforms. The implementation of these Acts are in different stages of progress. When completed their permanent contribution to land revenue records will be to add a set of excess land-distribution records, land-rights' registers and Tenancy rights records - in short, a Record of Tenancy rights for the Ryotwari land-holdings as well, that will cure the deficiency in the extant, authorised land records where the 'pattadar' or the occupant alone is reckoned with. In

fact, even in the fifties, if not earlier, for purposes of procurement of grain for civil supplies, Government had directed the Adangal should contain the names of lessees (Pattomdars) and cultivators in addition to pattadars so that the procurement obligation could be got discharged through them. But this practice had been discontinued and a statutory registry has been now made of universal application.

The terminal date 1965 has significance in another fundamental respect. Within two years thereafter, Government waived the basic assessment on dry lands and restricted the collection to the water charges alone.<sup>35</sup>

#### Summing up :

This paper seeks to describe the nature of land revenue records available, at various levels, the village, the taluk, the district and at State headquarters and archives, touching on the systems which have yielded the records. The available land revenue records are voluminous. They have at once become more systematised and grown complex, progressively. They will bear testimony to the practical difficulties encountered in the early British administration and how they were attempted to be overcome. Voluminous as they are, it will not be difficult to find significant areas of lacunae in relevant information for a consistent, analytical, discernment of economic trends and the scientific basis for many latter-day features of economic administration. Nevertheless they have served somewhat adequately the limited watch of land demand, collection, and recovery but have become victims of neglect and secondary importance when land revenue itself no longer held the place of prime significance in the State fiscal structure. The nature of land records kept also correspond

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35. G.O. Press No. 1122, Rev., dt. 22-6-1967 and B.P. Press No. 600(F)/D, dt. 17-5-1968.

with the progressive shifts in emphasis and direction of land policy. This has resulted in deviation in purpose and form.

Originally land revenue records were created and maintained for correct survey of holdings, classification of land, and fixation of assessment and also registry. The village accounting system afforded the basis for the taluk and State level compilations of accounts, mainly on season and crop reports, extent of cultivation and area irrigated, and based on these data land revenue demand, collection and balance - current and arrears. It was in other words, a watch-register for Government revenue collection from the occupants.

With the waiver of dry assessment on land, and land and tenancy reforms, the emphasis has shifted to make land records more a record of rights as between the Government and the occupants and the occupant and the tenant. This latter aspect which till the 1960's was left completely to be governed by private contractual arrangements have now gained statutory significance and sanctions. With the Governmental policy of assisting small farmers - not necessarily land-holders but non-landholding tenantry, the revenue record of registry and rights have become the much needed basis for sanction of loans and crop-inputs-assistance to be afforded to the small farmers; the more so because of the multiplicity of financing and assisting agencies both Governmental and non-governmental who are involved in implementing such schemes. The original purpose of the revenue records can, thus be, said to have been side-stepped. It should not be surprising that in several States, the land registry has become out of date, and has needed special plan assistance to update and correct registry and even re-survey and sub-divisions of fields to reflect divided occupancy and cultivating tenancy rights on ground.

From the archivistic point of view, the land records are veritable mine of information, yielding data on social and

economic history in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The following steps are necessary for the conservation of these records:

(i) Preserve the Olugu and Paimash surveys for each district. It is, understood, that these original records in Cadjan or palm leaves have been surrendered by some districts (like Kanyakumari and Tiruchirapalli) and are now kept in the Oriental Manuscripts Record Office. These would demand careful preservation, chemical treatment and arrangement, district taluk and village-wise.

(ii) In the Taluks, there are still original records from 18th century onwards, especially in older taluks. These need careful scrutiny. To selectively pick out important documents of historical value or for re-constructing history, a complete check is necessary. They can all then be assembled, and conserved at the district headquarters. A district archives will afford sound organisational support for this purpose. This work needs to be done on a systematic and urgent basis lest the records should get decayed, if they have not got already. This survey, selection and conservation can also embrace divisional records which, after all, could only be compilations from the Taluk records.

(iii) District records upto 1857 of importance have been transferred to State Record Office at Madras. But only records upto 1835 have been indexed and printed. It is necessary to properly index and prepare a descriptive catalogue of the records left from 1835 to 1857.

(iv) The district records from 1857 to say 1956 need to be scrutinised; to pick out documents of historical importance for the State as a whole, - not merely from (a) the political or administrative point of view but also (b) of value for social and economic history. Documents of category (a) can

be transferred to the State Archives. Category (b) can be conserved in the district archives. To the State Archives too, should be transferred the records of historic cases, laying down a principle or policy or interpretation of customary rights embedded in the important judgments of the High Court, say at least upto 1950.

(v) The zamindari and Inam village records were left mostly with the erstwhile landholders or the village officers serving under them. These should be got surrendered by enlightened persuasion or acquired and added to the district or the State Archives.

(vi) The Board's proceedings and the Government Orders were originally classified according to the manner of their issue - in printed form (Press) or in manuscript (Ms). Proceedings and orders of permanent value or of long-standing importance were usually printed; or classified as "Press". But over the years, this distinction has not been maintained carefully and the recording system has become confused, lacking system and method. Even Government Orders and Boards Proceedings classified as "Routine" could sometimes be of considerable importance. The whole classification hinges on the sense of appreciation that a Section Officer/the Assistant can bring to bear on the records who is now empowered to issue these orders. It becomes all the more necessary to scrutinise all Government Orders/Board's Proceedings of whatever series, -Press, Ms, and Routine - to pick out records of lasting or permanent value and conserve them properly classifying and indexing them; and if need be, assigning new numbers and providing a key for the re-numbering to link with the old.

These in outline are the processes to be undertaken and a phased programme for implementing them is a felt-want.

ANNEXURE - I

**ACCOUNTS PREPARED IN THE INAM  
SETTLEMENT OF PUDUKOTTAI**

1. The *paimash alavu* register which has been described as the only register with which the fields in Brahmadeyam Inams and whole-village Inams will have to be localised and verified on ground now, as after the inam settlement there was never any internal treatment of Brahmadeyam inams. It is also necessary for determining the real tenure of inams as yet unsettled.

2. The *Taram* statements being the data statements recorded from the inamdars and Taram lists (corresponds to "Classification Register"), giving the full reasons and the descriptions of the lands with their productive capacity and their situation, source of irrigation, if wet, and the advantages each individual field had possessed, and the amount of "paimash" assessment fixed on those lands.

3. The General Statement files, being the claim statements of Inamdars.

4. The Inam Faisal Registers corresponding to the Inam Fair Register maintained in the Madras State.

5. Office copies of the title-deeds issued to the inamdars.

6. *Isanvarai* (corresponds to Chitta), being an individual-wise account of the fields comprised in each inam holding. This gave the name of the pattadar, the General Number and the title-deed number, the *dittam* for the inam, the Paimash number and description, extent, full assessment on the extent and the quitrent fixed thereon.

7. An abstract of the Faisal Register (corresponding to Vernacular Quit-Rent Register) was also prepared.

8. **Podukkadai virasu :** In the Inam settlement, all lands held in common without division among the inamdars (*Podukkodai* or *Samudayam*) by metes and bounds were measured into paimash fields, and the paimash assessment for these individual paimash fields fixed. Then, arithmetically the extent of the paimash fields under each taram valuation was split into as many shares as are held by the Inamdars and the extent so arithmetically divided under each taram valuation was shown in the individual title-deed and chitta. The separate quit-rent worked out for these portions of Samudayam lands split was added to the quit-rent on the lands actually in the individual possession of the inamdar to whom a title-deed was issued together for all the lands. A Virasu or abstract of all the arithmetically divided extents of the Samudayam was made to reconstitute the total samudayam. This account is in *cadian* leaves and is available only for few villages

9. **Karar-namah:** Register in which was entered all viyangams and inams resumed and fully assessed for which cowle was granted by the Durbar and a Karar-namah was got executed from the enjoyer.

10. **Ulthurai Settlement Records :** The records prepared at the Ulthurai Settlement were also few. Lists showing the various duties to be performed by the temple servants had been prepared by the Devasthanams and these were the basis on which Faisal Registers were drawn up. The Faisal Registers were prepared in very brittle paper, and the bulk of the record are now lost. Only a few samples remain. Chittas were prepared and these were handed over to the Karnams, and they alone afford a basis for dealing with these Inams.



11. The field staff prepared the following preliminary records:

- (i) The Enjoyment Register.
- (ii) The Discrepancy Register.
- (iii) The Field Enquiry Register.
- (iv) The Alteration Memo. Register; and
- (v) Sub-division sketches.

After preparing these records, the inamdars' statements, were scrutinised, and Faisal Registers were submitted to the Durbar for sanction. An abstract of the Faisal Register corresponding to the Vernacular Quit-Rent Register was also prepared, and the Inam Chitta for maintenance in the village.

## ANNEXURE - II

### SURVEY OF LAND REVENUE RECORDS (A.D. 1600 to 1960)

- |             |  |  |   |
|-------------|--|--|---|
| 1600        | Kaifiyats; Koil Olugu Accounts, Ulthurai<br>Native State Records as in Pudukottai)<br>Trivandrum.  |  |   |
| 1709 - 1800 | Confusion :  | Ms, }<br>Zamindari olugu accounts }<br>Inam village accounts } | hearsay accounts<br>lingered within<br>living memory. |
| 1802        | <b>Firm ground :-</b><br>(a) Istimwari assets - Survey<br>(b) Ryotwari survey - Baramahal Records;   |  |   |
|             | <b>Looking backwards :</b>   |  |   |
| 1750 - 1860 | Various experiments in land revenue settlement.<br>Discretion of Collectors. Local Variations - no<br>uniformity - Amani - motum fysal etc., |  |   |

1860 - Revenue settlement proceedings

(i) Mullings: Land survey Land Settlement Principles, - classification of soil and irrigation sources. Well irrigation.

(ii) Inam Settlement Paimash accounts Khana method Assets. Quit-rent from .....

Revenue accounts system - Village accounts

### Available

Records : Taluk and districts - Taluk manual accounts -

(i) Vernacular records

(ii) Olugu Accounts

(iii) Settlement Papers

Not designed as basis for economic survey	}	(iv) Annual Settlement Reports
		(v) Season reports

Registry changes - Jamabandi - when introduced/  
early system. Ryotwari areas Resettlement of  
Intermediary tenancies Act of 1948.

## **EPIGRAPHY AS A SOURCE FOR HISTORY OF SCIENCE IN SOUTH ASIA**

Epigraphy is a permanent record of human activity and transactions available to us. They are inscribed on lithic material or on copper plates. There are quite a few distinct subjects on which epigraphic data can throw light. Primarily it is an invaluable base for reconstructing social and economic evolution. As such, epigraphy provides the ground material for reconstructing the social and economic life through the ages and a basic source for the social sciences.

No less important data can be extracted therefrom on different branches of physical sciences – on agriculture, on irrigation and on the state of metallurgy, food and dietary habits, and their nutritional effect, and on the life expectation and environmental and habitational traits that condition it and public health and even forensic medicine. The object of this paper is to indicate how the data available on these latter aspects of science and technology can be garnered, with particular reference to the abundant epigraphic data available from South India.

### **Agriculture :**

The earliest extant strata of evidence from Pallava copper plates bear testimony to the felling of forests (Kāḍuveṭṭi) to make it arable. The grants of Brahmadēyas and Dēvadāna lands are themselves one form of extension of agriculture. The most favoured crops for wet cultivation

were in that order, rice, plantain, sugarcane, areca palm, and coconut, besides flowers, and fruits. Varieties of paddy were cultivated - the 'sennel' or 'red rice' being raised in the Kharif season was preferred for offering to Gods and the elite. In fact, white rice was offered to crows as "*bali*" or offering to the departed, and the learned and the deities were offered red rice and ghee.<sup>1</sup> The inscriptions too corroborate this latter practice.<sup>2</sup> In this respect the preference for polished white rice (often from paddy grown in the Rabi season - the II crop or the main crop *Pisanam* was much a later one and can be traced to the 13th or 14th century when *vennel* (white rice) came to be offered in temples.

Paddy cultivation had adopted two distinct techniques - (i) broadcast paddy (*Tellanellu*) "*Teli*" to broadcast<sup>3</sup> The second technique was to raise seedlings and transplant them in wet fields prepared with impounding water and puddling. It is reasonable to infer that the former practice was more in vogue in monsoon-dependant areas and the latter in tracts watered by rivers, streams and adequate tank water.

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1. Pl. see Kuruntogai - Dr. U. V. S. Edition (1937), p. 96-7, introduction.
  2. Nrpatunga Pallava - 122/1929; 259/1912, Also Note 'H' at p. 154-55 of "Administration and Social life under the Pallavas". - Dr. C. Minakshi.
  3. 'Tellu' has another meaning - to store or impound or overfull (vide p. 20339 Tamil Lexicon Vol. IV) This is by impounding water in the field and transplant seedlings from the seed bed "*nerrangal*". The broadcast paddy is mostly by dry sowing and hence the opposite form - "*Tellanellu*" (paddy grown without impounding water (73/1900). My interpretation of this differs from Dr. Minakshi's op. cit.

Plantain, sugarcane and arecanut needed greater preparation and tending with water supplied at frequent intervals. Hence they were not so widespread. They were raised mostly in fertile tracts with abundant water supply. Also the yield from paddy was biannual while these other crops would take a longer time to come to yield, especially arecanut. Hence a graded system of levy was in vogue.<sup>4</sup>

Dry cultivation was such wider as the area benefitted by gradient flow of water was restricted. The process of reclamation was long and tenuous though water harvesting was increasingly and painstakingly undertaken. The varieties of plants grown were trees, shrubs, horsegram and samai and ginger, besides cholam and cumbu. The staple diet of the poor classes must have been these millets, Gingelly, horsegram, pulses, samai, cotton, besides brinjals and pumpkins were the crops mainly grown in unirrigated tracts.<sup>5</sup>

Even in riverine tracts like the Cauvery the undammed water and freshes had transformed arable lands into sandcast waste, and uncultivable for paddy or wet crops. Erosion of soil was also another handicap. From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries the epigraphs show a long tenuous process of reclamation undertaken in the Cauvery-fed tracts; As a consequence there was need to change over to horti-

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4. ARE 257/1926 Kılappaluvur – and ARE 201 of 1909. Also p. 103, 145, 147 of Land grants and Agrarian reaction; by R. Tirumalai, Madras University publication (1987).
  5. Pl. see Studies in the History of Ancient Townships of Pudukkottai pp. 178–81. – by R. Tirumalai – Department of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu Government Publication (1982).

culture and growing flowers and fruits even in arable lands which were rendered unfit for wet cultivation.

A study of epigraphs can clearly indicate the seasonal pattern of cropping and methods of horticulture, and agricultural practices. It can also bring out the relative preference for crops, and the interspersed cultivation. On the whole, horticulture in the early times appears to have been somewhat far less extensive than agriculture. The scope for extending cultivation with new irrigation could have rendered intensive cultivation only superfluous, what with the customary organic manures, poor productivity of ploughs and small size of holdings and small capital that is applied and the skewed distribution of yield, and undependability of the monsoon, especially in dry belts.<sup>7</sup>

### **Irrigation :**

Epigraphic evidence is abundant on the development of irrigation.

In riverine tracts, the effort was to construct anicuts and to take water through long lead channels running parallel to the river in the riverine ribbon.<sup>8</sup> Later the surface hydrological principle was fully understood and efforts were made to take the channel-head upstream, so that a longer if not wider basin can be served with irrigation. There is ample

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6. Pl. see my paper on 'Allur and Isanamangalam Revisited'-Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra Felicitation Volume 1984 pp. 25-55 and 'Land reclamation of flood damaged and sand-cast lands'-*Journal of the Epigraphic Society of India*, Vol. XI, 1984, pp. 64-87.

7. Pudukkottai Studies - op. cit; conclusion chapter;

8. The Tambraparni basin and the Bhavani river basin are good examples.

evidence of the scientific location of the anicuts on rocky beds which helped divert water, without affecting utilisation lower-down. The Grand Anicut, across the Cauvery, the anicut across the Vaigai ahead of Koil Kuruvitturai<sup>9</sup> are examples.

The problem faced at the time was the heavy rainfall in the catchment far and near due to the ecological facility and forest-growth. Hence flash flows were common. The channels alone did not suffice; besides they could not run all through the cropping period. Hence two methods were adopted depending on the terrain. In a flat plain spread over a whole tract (as in Cauvery delta) flood irrigation by allowing water to pass down the flows parallel to the course of the river from lateral channels taking off from the river or the main stream helped the storage of water in the fields themselves and moisture retention even long after the monsoon ceased. A number of small ponds (kulams) in occupied lands also served the same purpose besides providing water for communal uses.<sup>10</sup>

The other method was to let the channels into tanks and store water. The tanks were so located that the water harvesting was maximised by also harnessing the waters of the immediate catchments ahead. This practice was particularly wide in the Pandyan kingdom, where the river flows and monsoon fall were seasonal.

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9. On the importance of location and diversion of water *vis-a-vis* established riparians; please see my paper on "Grant, resumption and regrant" in Mahamopadhyaya S. Kuppuswami Sastri Centenary Commemorative Volume.
  10. On this please see my comments on "Reconstructed Village account" (in S.R. Rao, Seventieth Birthday felicitation Volume).

Water management in distribution of supply was very intricate and widely practised. A chain of tanks helped optimise the storage and utilisation, the higher tank surplussing into the channel that supplied lower down tanks. Extension of irrigation fully utilising the gradient to the very end of the contour and economy in the use of water, the village community ensuring and undertaking not to waste water were the distinguishing traits.

But surface flows alone were inadequate either in quantity or the period of supply available in particular tracts as in Pudukkottai district or in Chingleput and South Arcot districts. Well irrigation was widely in vogue and the land with well facility was valued higher. Indeed the well itself was valued higher than the unit cost of land.

Epigraphic evidence can be harnessed to study the scientific basis of the irrigation, the deep knowledge of surface hydrology and ground water availability, the gradient or contour of which full use was made, and the modes of harvesting, harnessing and storing of water ensuring ecological balance and environmental integrity and utility.

### **Food and nutrition:**

We can glean some data on the food and dietary habits and their nutritional effect. Provision is made in the temples for food offerings, and for feeding the Brahmins and the mendicants. The food and dietary preparations in the medieval times were largely starchy and with high fat content of ghee and oil and fried curries in use. Sugar was used comparatively less. For instance for one meal, cow's ghee was 1 uḷakku, curry fried 1 āḷakku, and for offerings per day ghee was 1 nāḷi and uri. For one offering 1 nali beside 1 uri of curds. Boiled or steamed green grams in



steam was another preparation. Rice was of the red variety and the recovery of rice from paddy was 1 : 3 i.e. for 1 nali of rice 3 nalis of paddy.<sup>11</sup> In other instance the recovery was 10 : 8 or 5 : 4. Later this ratio of recovery is stipulated as 5 : 2 or 10 : 4 in the 12th or 13th century inscriptions. This perhaps, refers to the recovery of polished rice from the dehusked rice. It may be inferred in the earlier period the rice was more unpolished and had more bran content. Over the ages, the polished rice came to be preferred more and more and also the white variety. These dietary practices could lead to the inferences that the food was full of starch and fatty substances. Protein rich pulses were fewer although vegetables were in use the range of which could have only contained a few, like Brinjals, pumpkin and raw plantain etc. Hence there could be deficiency of vitamins and the high cholesterol content of the fatty foods could have been a cause of maladies leading to high mortality rate. Two caveats have to be entered: first we have evidence only through the slit and it does not cover a comprehensive range. Secondly, it represents the articles consumed by the scholastic classes occupying "the higher rung's of society" as then recognised. The poorer classes, the mendicants, wandering pilgrims, seem to have been served with pot-rice ('satti-soru') and one curry or some curds, perhaps mixed. Even this meal was highly starchy for e.g., the Mahesvaras were fed with 1 nali uri of rice, 3 alakku of curd and 1 curry.<sup>12</sup> Later in Vijayanagar times variegated items of food offerings with various rice preparations, and delicacies like Adirasam, Dosai, Vadai and

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11. S.I.I. XIV/16 A Tiruchendur inscription of Maranjadayan. Pl. also see my analysis in the "Pandyan Township" Part II - a forthcoming publication by the Madras University.

12. Pudukkottai Studies - p. 69; SII Vol. XVII, 377 and PS 67.

Tengulal were offered, and distributed.<sup>13</sup> Even here fried food items with more protein content and spices than was in vogue in the earlier periods were noteworthy. The nutritional impact thereof could have varied. Among fruits mango, jack-fruit and plantains and occasionally pomogranates were consumed.<sup>14</sup> Betal and nuts were persistent and ubiquitous articles of consumption. Astringents like pepper, Cardamom and cloves also were in use. 3 adukkus of betel and 14 nuts were the standard for one offering.<sup>15</sup> The proportion of nuts appear to be rather far higher than the present day usage. It will be interesting to trace the changes in dietary items and the consequent nutritional content of the food consumed.

The common man and the agricultural classes seem to have had a protein-rich and more nutritious food as they consumed fish, meat, smoked meat of goat, the flesh of tortoise, today and a variety of palmyrah products, honey and fermented honey, venison and rabbit-meat roasted. They also consumed millets, Tinai<sup>16</sup> (horsegram).

It follows that the life expectancy in the medieval times of the so-called upper classes was far lower, and mal-nutrition could be surmised. The bronze statue of the Brahmādirāyan, a Brahmin high placed officer of the Cōla times now in the Tanjavur Art Museum shows the physical features of a stocky man, pot-bellied and somewhat short in stature.

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13. The Tirumalai-Tirupati inscriptions abound in this evidence.

14. The Srirangam Inscriptions in S.I.I. Vol. XXIV could bear testimony to this.

15. S.I.I.XV, 16 A, Op. cit.

16. Pl. see the note on food varieties gleaned from Purananuru - p. 84. Introduction in Purananuru - by Dr. U.V.S. Iyer (6th edition 1963 and p. 96-97 in 'Kuruntogai' Introduction by Dr. U.V.S. Iyer (1937 Edn.)

This sampling should suffice to indicate the range of evidence available and the type of scientific data and inferences that can be drawn therefrom.

### **Animal husbandry :**

A detailed study can be made of the cattle stock, of Sheep, goats, buffaloes and cows and their milk yield and fat content. I have done one such study in my 'Pandyan Kingdom'. It shows a 'longue duree' of poor yielding cattle with little improvement in stock for over four centuries.<sup>17</sup>

### **Metallurgy :**

On the state of metallurgy, there are abundant materials. The various icons cast from the Pallava period onwards display a high technical skill and technological processes used. Archaeological excavations could yield, perhaps, greater evidence of the tools and implements and technological processes. The manufacture of these icons—their wide variety and their extensive spread could only bear out that it was undertaken locally at several places.

Vessels were made of gold and silver besides bronze or alloys, as in the case of lamps manufactured for instituting services in temples. Ornaments made were of gold, using precious gems and semi-precious stones. The ornaments endowed and listed in the inscriptions of Raja at Tanjavur<sup>18</sup> and of those presented by Sembiyan Madevi at Konerirajapuram and elsewhere are really staggering. The "lost wax" process was widely in use for casting images of Gods which need not be chiselled (Vitangar). The vessels and lamps were not standardised but varied in their weight, and size and alloy content, and made to order in most cases.

17. Pl. see my forthcoming work on "the Pandyan Townships"—Part II published by Madras University.

18. For e.g., S.I.I. Vol. II Part I Nos. 3 & 8.

### **Surgery and Medicine :**

We do not have detailed evidence of the system of surgery and medicines in use and even forensic medicine. But there were established hospitals (*Adulasalas*) and the barbers (*ambattar*) were the village surgeons. Besides there were Savarna and Brahmins practitioners who were specially provided for by the village community.

### **AMBLAYOPIA**

An interesting case of murder on grave provocation at site had occurred in Malayadipatti in Bahadanya year. Avudaiyattevan of Paccikudi had been to his courtesan in Tirunedungolam to her house, where he saw her living with a Brahmin. Provoked by what he saw Avudaiyattevan killed both of them, and was coming by the foot of the hill when both his eyes became blind. To get rid of the sin (*dosam*) he prayed Vagisvaraswami and offered to part with a parcel of his land and thereafter he regained his eyesight. And he gifted away his holding called Avudaiyan-Kudikkadu".

This was a case of temporary blindness caused to a murderer by shock termed in forensic medical science as 'AMBLAYOPIA'.<sup>19</sup>

### **Construction techniques :**

Construction of temples had mainly utilised initially brick and mortar and later stone but they display a high level of the construction technique and a high state of geometrical knowledge. The technical terms used in architecture is itself a branch of study and some work has been done on this aspect already. The numerous inscriptions governing the area or extents of land also predicate a high state of mathematical grasp and mental calculations.

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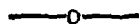
19. (P. 297, Pudukkottai Studies) I.P.S. 904.

**Conclusion :**

Although the illustrations are drawn mostly from South Indian inscriptions they apply in varying degrees to the other regions in South Asia and the Far East on account of the historical, cultural and trade contacts within.

The points made above are but indicative. A patient collection of data and their analysis over the period (say from the 6th to the 17th century) could easily bring out the details, the techniques, the evolution and the changes therein noticeable from time to time. These will afford a good basis for visualising and tracing the history of sciences in South Asia.

The trends and status of science and technology had a reasonable long tenures and characterised by the "Longue Duree" which accounts for the slow but still noticeable process of change imperceptibly creeping in. A visible break with these traditions was ushered in only after the contact with the Western powers and their knowledge.



## ENCLOSURE I

S No.	The list of articles papers where presented	Where first presented	Date
1. Lecture-I - Appendix-I	Transition from Ancient to medieval period - problems of economic and social organisation : Problems identifiable in South Indian History.	Under the auspices of the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi.	(Since revised) April 11-3-1985.
2. Lecture-II Appendix-IX	Village communities in India - From 18th to 20th Century.	International Historical Seminar at Moscow.	(Since revised) 1981
3. Appendix-XIII	Epigraphy as a source for History of Science.	International Conference of History of Science in South Asia.	(Since revised) 1988

## ENCLOSURE II

Papers where first published.

S.No.	Name of paper	First published in
1.	Lecture-I Appendix-II Presidential address in Place Names Society of India	Published in relevant volume of the Place Name Society Journal.
2.	Lecture-II Appendix-I Presidential Address.	Journal of Epigraphical Society, Vol. XIV / 1987.
3.	Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastry - The Historian of South India.	Published in "The Hindu",
4.	Contribution of Prof. Sastry - History and Culture of Karnataka.	Published in the Quarterly Journal of Bangalore - Vol. LXXX.
5.	A Pioneer Litterateur - Vaiyapuri Pillai.	Published in "The Hindu",
6.	Epigraphy and Literature	Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Culture, University of Madras.
7.	Two 18th Century crisis viz., Madurai and Tirupparankunram temples.	Published in the transactions of the National Archives in the Indian National Archives Conference.
8.	A Ship Song.	Published in the studies in maritime history by the Department of History, Pondicherry University.
9.	An Early History of the Christians in South India.	National Museum Bulletin 4-5 and 6.
<b>Lecture - II</b>		
10.	Village Communities in India - From 18th to 20th Century.	International Historical Seminar at Moscow.
11.	The Madras Board of Revenue	The Indian Journal and Public Administration Published in Vol. No. XXVII - No. 1 (Jan. March 1981 - pages 97-112).
12.	Epigraphy as a source for History Sciences.	International Conference of History of Science in South India.

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