

Socio-Economic Condition Of Kongu Region With Special Reference To Salem District

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the history of the Kongu Vellalas from the tenth century A.D. to the arrival of the British on the scene. The Vellalas started migrating to the kongu country from the tenth century A.D. gradually and spread throughout the Kongu country. During this period, the Vellalas fought against the native tribes. With conflicts, emerged intercultural contacts. Till the dawn of the eighteenth century A.D., the history of the Kongu vellalas was a history of conflicts and problems. The post-eighteenth-century history of the Kongu Vellalala needs a separate study. Hence the present study stops with the eighteenth century A.D. in the post eighteenth century, several far-reaching changes have taken place in the history of Tamil particularly so in the Kongu country. The early tribal organization gave place to caste organization. A pattern will throw light on the caste structure. The importance of ancient kongu Nadu is well known- the kongu country had commercial contact with the western world during the first few centuries of the christen era. To substantiate this, more than two thousand Roman coins were unearthed from important places like velanthavalam, anaimalai, Pollachi, vellalur, Karur, and kalvamuthur of kongu country ranging from 1st century B.C. to the century A.D.

Introduction

Salem district inland District in the South of the Madras Presidency, lying between 11°29' and 79°2' E., with an area of 7, 530 square miles. It is bounded on the North by Mysore and North Arcot; on the East by North and South Arcot and Trichinopoly; on the South by Trichinopoly and Coimbatore, and on the West by Coimbatore and the State of Mysore.

Kongu Region is made up of three district tracts of country, which were formerly known as the Balaghat, the Baramahal, and the Talaghat.

The Balaghat, consisting of the Hosur taluk, is situated on the Mysore table-land and is the most elevated portion of the District, the greater part of it being 3000 feet above sealevel. The Baramahal is the next step in descent, and its extensive plain comprises the Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Tiruppattur, and Uttangarai taluks. Of these, Klishnagiri slopes from 2000 down to 1300 feet, this is the general level of the other three. An almost unbroken chain of hills, traversing the District a little South of its center from East-South-East to West-North West, separates this tract from the Talaghat. The latter, comprising the Salem, Atur, Namakkal, and Tiruchengodu taluks, is, as its name imports, below the Eastern Ghats, and descends from a maximum of about 1200 feet in the Salem taluk to the level of the plains of the Carnatic on the East and South

Kongu region

The name '**Kongu**,' literally, means honey and pollens. Kongu Nadu has a long stretch of mountains and so honey is collected in this region. This region was ruled by Konganivarmann a king from Ganga Vamsa, keeping '**Thalaikaadu**' as his konagar. It is believed that the name Kongu Nadu came after the king's name. The Vettuvass were called the '**Aathikudigal**' of the Kongu Nadu and so they were called the '**Kongars**' (Vettuvass). The Vettuvass was brave, generous, and devoted. The Kongu Nadu is always known for its history and heritage. The present Coimbatore district, Namakkal district, Erode District, some parts of Dindugal district, almost the entire region of Karur, and Salem districts were the regions of ancient Kongu Nadu. The history of Kongu Nadu begins from 3 C.E. itself. The 'Kongu Mandala Sathagam', 'Cholan Poorva Pattayam', 'Vettuvar Poorva Pattayam', 'Oothalar Kuravanji', 'Annamar Swamy Kathaigal', 'Mackenzie's manuscripts show the later history of Kongu Nadu.

The Sangam period of Kongu Nadu's history is evident from the Sangam Tamil literature which depicts the Vettuvass as the 'Poorvakudigal' and 'Aathikudigal' literally meaning the 'Early Society'. The Kongu Vellalas came to Kongu Nadu and settled here. The Vellalas have been identified as hard workers and great farmers as their name suggests. After 10 C.E. the Kongu Vellalas are mentioned in the "Kalvettukkal" (stone inscriptions).

People

Salem is more sparsely peopled than any other of the more Southern Districts of the Presidency. The numbers at the four enumerations were as follows: 1,966,995 (1871), 1,599,595 (1881), 1,962,591 (1891), and 2,204,974 (1901). The decrease of 19 percent, in 1881 was due to the severity of the great famine of 1876-1878; but the recovery was rapid during the ten years ending 1901, the rate of increase is higher than in any

District except Kistna. Salem consists of nine taluks, the headquarters of which are at the places from which they are named. The chief of the eleven towns in the District is the three municipalities of Salem, Tiruppattur, and Vaniyambadi. Of the population in 1901, 2,116,768, or 96 per cent, were Hindus; 68,497 were Muslims; and 19,642 Christians. Tamil is the mother tongue of 7.1 percent. Of the people, Telugu is spoken by 19 percent. In Hosur, Kanarese is the vernacular of a considerable proportion.

Rainfall and Climate

In Hosur, which is on the Mysore tableland, the climate is as pleasant as that of Bangalore; while in the lower Talaghat section the heat is as oppressive as in the adjoining District of Trichinopoly. The mean temperature of Salem city is 82° F. the Shevaroyis from their elevation naturally boasts the coolest climate in the District, the thermometer rarely rising above 75° F. in the hottest months. The other hill ranges approach the Shevaroyis in this respect, but they are not free from the drawback of malaria. The rainfall is fairly evenly distributed through the plains, except in the two Southernmost taluks of Namakkal and Tiruchengodu, which get an average of only 30 inches annually as compared with the District average of 32. The Shevaroyis are quite exceptional, receiving nearly double as much as the rest of the District.

History of Salem

The District was never an independent political entity. In early times the North of it was ruled by the Pallavas, while the South was included in the Kongu kingdom. In the Ninth Century, the Chola kings annexed the whole, and subsequently, it passed under the Hoysala Ballalas. In the fourteenth century, it was conquered by the Hindu kings of Vijayanagar, whose sway was acknowledged till the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the District passed under the Naik rulers of Madura. From 1652, parts of it began to fall under the power of the rising Hindu dynasty of Mysore, till the whole was absorbed by Chikka Deva Raja, the greatest of them, about 1688-1690. In 1761 Haidear Ali usurped the Mysore throne. In 1767 the English reduced portions of the Baramathal and carried on, both within and without it, desultory warfare with Haidar, in which the latter had the advantage.

Early History

The Sangam economy for the whole of Thamilaagam was simple and mostly self-sufficient. In the Sangam works, the extreme opulence of some classes of people as well as the extreme poverty of some other classes was described. The wealthy were such that they "scared away the hens from the courtyard where grains were spread for drying, by throwing their

precious earring at them". The Sangam Age economy was mainly agricultural, the industry being subordinate and ancillary to it and confined generally to urban areas. The industry was naturally encouraged by rising demand in foreign markets. The shipping and other allied industries like harbor building and warehouse construction etc. developed to sustain this foreign trade. Agriculture operations, fishing, and hunting were the major occupation. The textile industry, house building, planning and building of towns, October-December torging of weapons, and other avocations were of only secondary importance. The Vellalas derived their name from the Tamil word Vellanmai(cultivation) and were generally agriculturists who normally possessed their lands. The Vellalas in Tamil Nadu has been divided into four groups. Their titles Chola, Tondaimandala, Pandya, and KonguVellalas reflect their geographical habitat areas.

Historic Timeline of Salem

The Third Century BC was the period of a remarkable Tamil Siddhar, Bogar, and the new religions, Buddhism and Jainism advented into Salem. In the 1st Century A.D., we can assume that the region was well advanced in economic social, and cultural aspects with evidence as silver coins of the Roman Emperor Tiberices Claudices Nero (37-68) which were found in Koneripatti of Salem in 1987. The 2nd Century A.D. experienced Pandiyan dynasty rule at Salem. In the 4th century A.D., the Pallavi dynasty placed its foot in Salem, and in the 6th Century A.D., the region was under the reign of famous ruler MahendraVarma Pallava. It is also the same time when the Saivite principles and temples developed over the region. The reign of Narasimha Varma Pallava was during the 7th Century A.D. After four centuries, the religions Buddhism and Jainism flagged in the 7th century A.D. With 8th Century A.D. and 9th Century A.D. experienced the rise of the Pandiyan dynasty and Pallava dynasty respectively. In the 9th century A.D. with the strong emergence of Saivasamayam, Jainism and Buddhism vanished from the region. The 10th Century A.D. witnessed the downsurge of Pallavas and the upsurge of the Chozha dynasty which lasted till the 1st century and later shifted towards Hoysalas in the 12th century A.D. The Hoysalas rule was strongly recognized in after a century, however, some parts of Salem were still under the Pandiyan dynasty. In the 14th century, Salem was a part of the Vijaya Nagar Empire. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the region witnessed the rule of Chalukyas and Madurai Nayakars. 18th Century A.D. needs attention since it is the period when the region was taken by the British. Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan ruled the region but later it was taken over by the British.

When it comes to the 19th century, a new revenue system was implemented in 1856. In the same year, a new revenue survey was

undertaken. 1857 marked the end of company rule and the establishment of crown rule in India. In 1860, Salem city was made the capital of the Salem District. Subsequently, in 1862, Salem Central Jail was built. The second half of the nineteenth century was catastrophic as the period witnessed epidemics and famines. 1866-67 was affected by famine. Salem was under the disastrous rages of the epidemic of Cholera in 1875. The three other stern famines were during 1876-1878, 1891-92, and 1896-97, the last famine of the century.

Economic Condition

Any study of a people's culture would be incomplete without a study of their economy. In terms of its economics, any government is deemed prosperous. The nation's economy is linked to public works maintenance, agricultural development, and people's defense from external aggression. The use of money, various types of taxes, revenue officers, guilds, and commerce transactions are all recorded in inscriptions from Saivaite temples in the Kongu region.

Tamil Nadu was famous for its trade activities from very early times, particularly with the Western countries. Roman coin hoards were discovered in many places. Arikkamedu and Alagankulam excavations have exposed the rich trade activity between Rome and Tamil Nadu. The Kongu province has reported the most number of Roman Coins as treasure. All of these were evidence of the early Sangam literature similes. Textiles and their Nigamas" are referred to in the inscriptions found all over Tamil Nadu.

Merchants and traders carried on new business in agricultural products from the medieval period onwards. With the strong patronization of ruling dynasties, they acted very independently and assisted the rulers by remitting their taxes. Many charities were under the responsibility of local administration had been taken over by the mercantile organizations in various places in Tamil Nadu.

Revenue System of Kongu Region

The inscriptions in the Kongu country furnish nearly sixty-four revenue terms. During the reigns of Kongu kings such as the Kongu Cholas, Kongu Pandyas, and Hoysala rulers, taxes were collected. According to the tax terms, the majority of the taxes were collected between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries C.E.

Between 1178 and 1300 C.E., the majority of the taxes were imposed. Tax, Pattam, Ayam, Erai, Kadamai, Sarigai, Kanam, Kurram, Denadam, Viniyogam, and other terms like Sumaisungam, Padu, Ugavai, Elavai, Aratchi, Vendukol, Manru, Eluvana Mulaippana, and Kanikkai Nallerudu were also listed in the categorization.

The term Variyedu refers to the process of recording revenue accounts, whereas Varivilar refers to the officials who collect revenue and enter it into the register. The entire method of making entries on palm leaves was supervised by Variyilar personnel.

Taxes on Kongu Region

The term "vari" is used to describe the tax. This is most commonly found in Chola inscriptions from the eleventh and twelfth centuries C.E. Many tax names have been suffixed with the term Vari, such as Achchuvari, Idayarvari, Inavari, Cillvari, Nadarravari, Peruvari, Ponvari, and so on. The tax appears as a suffix to names such as Palavari and Puduvari⁷.

Nata Tax

The 'Nata' Tax is a fee charged for settling or residing in an Ur (village). This money was set aside for the management of the settlement area. Inscriptions from Venjamankudalur from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries C.E. mention Nata Tax.

Thiruchchula Tax

The Thiruchchula tax was a charge levied on land at the time of the survey when a stone bearing the Thiruchchula mark was erected to define the land's boundaries. Thiruchchulakal is the name given to such border stones.

Aayam

The term Aayam has been prefixed with taxes, with Sitrayam denoting minor taxes and Uppayam denoting a tax on salt or salt production. Sitrayam appears to be a synonym for Andarayam, which refers to the local tax.

Kadamai

Kadamai is a term for land use that is similar to Irai. Kasi Kadamai, Perkadamai, Peralkadamai, Chekku Kadamai, and more tax words with Kadamai as a suffix existed. In the inscription of the regional research, the name Kadamai has been suffixed to tax terms like Erkadamai and prefixed to the terms Kadamai Varagam. In the twelfth century C.E., both were utilized¹¹. In the Kongu region, the term Kadamai has indeed been provided significance. The term Erkadamai refers to the dues charged on each plough for individual cultivation or agriculture labor. Peralkadamai, a similar phrase found in Chola inscriptions, refers to the dues levied on landowners or cultivators

Pattam

Pattam is a noun that refers to a profession's charge. Tattarat-pattam, Ulaipattam, Chekkirai-pattam, Kilirai-pattam, Pari-pattam, Munpattam, and so on have all been suffixed with this word. The phrase Tattarappattam refers to a goldsmith's tax. Inscriptions from the Chola and Kongu Chola periods regularly reference this word. The Tattans were from the Kammala community, and their presence in Chola inscriptions reflects the community's numerical strength. Tadipoli Pattam is an ambiguous tax phrase. It is most likely the first time it occurs in the Kongu kings' inscriptions. It's possible that the fee was paid to maintain the Poli, or Vali, that exists between the lands and is referred to as Tadi.

Viniyogam

In his study on Economic Conditions, Appadurai included Viniyogam under the name Kudimai. It also entails spending. It is a suffix to the tax phrase Nattu Viniyogam, which is referenced in one of Venjamankudalur's inscriptions. The taxes by the village of Vasal Viniyogam are mentioned in inscriptions at Venjamankudalur from the thirteenth century C.E.¹⁴ The word Thiruvasal Viniyogam refers to levies collected to cover the costs of persons who served as gatekeepers.

Sarigai

The phrase Sarigai Vari refers to the toll charged on goods moved on roadways. Kudirai Sarigai horses were generally linked with it. It was sungam, or a levy levied on commodities being transported. Traders and merchants who transfer commodities from one location to another are usually subject to this levy. The word Sarigai appears in the Avinasi inscriptions of Vira Raendra and Vira Vallala. Sumai Sungam was also mentioned in Vira Rajendra's inscription from Tirumuruganpundi and Vira Pandya's inscription from Avinasi. The levy imposed on cartloads or head loads is referred to as this tax. Taragu Sungam was a tax imposed on goods coming in from outside the area.

Danda Kuttram

These two tax words are interchangeable and refer to judicial fines. Danda Kuttram, also known as the Kuttra Dandam, refers to the fines imposed on persons who commit crimes. Dandam was imposed on anybody who failed to keep the temple lamp lit on the prescribed days. Only the court of justice may levy the fine. Inscriptions from Tirumuruganpundi, Avinasi, and Venjamankudalur from the reigning time of Vira Rajendra include the phrase Danda Kuttram, as do inscriptions from Avinasi from the reigning period of Vira Ballala. Kuttra Dandam appears in the inscriptions of Venjamankudalur's Jatavarman Sundara Pandya. Both of these words

allude to the monetary contribution made by an individual or a group to the offense committed. The revenue collected through these taxes was sometimes excused and gifted as Iraiylili (tax-free) to the temple to fulfill various expenditures.

Agricultural Development

Agriculturally, the Northern and central sections of the District are generally inferior in soil and situation to the Southern or Talaghat section. The prevailing soil everywhere is red sand, which occupies as much as 82 percent, of the whole area. This, however, is not the ordinary barren red sand of Trichinopoly and South Arcot but is of superior quality and as good as red loam. The first three months of the year are usually rainless, and the fall in April is not great. The May rainfall, the early showers which precede the South-West monsoon, is usually copious and marks the commencement of the cultivation season, which goes on through the South-West monsoon, on which the District mainly depends, and the North-East rains. The months during which the largest sowings are made are July, August, and October, but over the greater part of the Western taluks, a wide area of the crop is put in even before June. The development of irrigation facilities and related works led the composite district to transform into an agro-pastoral economy. The hunters, the fisherman, and pastoral folk supplemented the labor to become agro-based. Irrigation facilities were made available by the rulers and the aristocracy of the land. The maintenance of that amenity was facilitated by suitable taxes. Reclamation of spoilt land and fresh cultivation of virgin soil were both encouraged. There is no means of exactly determining the price of land in those times though we have a rare instance of mention of the sale price of land e.g., one veli" of land being sold.

Agricultural Statistics and Principal Crops

A considerable portion of the District is composed of zamindari and inam land, which covers 2,052 square miles out of the total area of 7,530. Returns are not available for the zamindaris, and the area for which statistics are collected is 5,675 square miles. The following table gives details for 1903-1904, areas being in square miles.

Sl. No.	Taluks	The area shown in the accounts	Forests	Cultivable waste	Cultivated	irrigated
1	Hosur	873	388	129	228	16
2	Krishnagiri	377	54		226	23

3	Dharmapuri	738	293	62	289	25
4	Tiruattur	371	159	6	129	17
5	Uttangarai	764	304	92	280	13
6	Salem	962	281	28	446	55
7	Attur	789	1 14	122	241	52
8	Namakkal	374	50	72	210	38
9	Tiruchendur	426	13	25	326	52
	Total	5,675	1,656	558	2 75	291

Irrigation of the total cultivated area of the Ryotwari and minor inam land, 291 square miles, or 14 percent was irrigated in 1904-1904 of this, 122 square miles were supplied from wells, all square miles from canals. The Cauvery is of little use for irrigation till it enters the Namakkal taluk. Here three channels of a total length of 49 miles take off from it and convert more than 7000, acres, which would otherwise be barren, into a fertile area that has with justice been called the garden of the District. Distributaries of the Cauvery did have not the same constant flow as the mainstream, and the land watered by them is liable to failure of crops, owing to a short supply of water.

Land Revenue

The land revenue history of Salem District is of considerable interest, as the beginnings of the Ryotwari system were evolved here. The old native method was to rent out the country by villages or other small areas to the village headmen or other lessees. Captain Read, the first Collector of the District, took charge in 1792. The government instructed him to affect a settlement for a term of five years with the cultivators themselves. To do this, Read, with the co-operation of his Assistants, Graham and Munro, surveyed all the land in the District and fixed a money assessment on the fields, the operation being completed in five years (1793-1797). During the time the survey was in progress a change had come over reading's opinion, and on December 10, 1796, he issued his famous order which gave ryots the option of holding their land either under the old lease system or under annual settlements, the latter mode allowing them to give up early in each year whatever land they might not care to cultivate that year and to retain for any length of time such land as they wished, subject to the payment of assessment for it. This was the form of the Ryotwari system, but the revenue system of Bengal, where Lord Cornwallis had introduced permanent settlement, was extended to Madras by the Government of India.

Conclusion

The Social- Economic condition in the Kongu Vellalar was mainly based on the Agriculture move made by the population and the artifacts obtained were segregated into three broad divisions as Agriculture, economics, and technology to confine the variegated artifacts within a particular. The economy of a region must be kept as nearly as possible in equilibrium with the information and constraints from the social organizations, division of labor, taboos, individual personality, the availability of the products, etc. In a stable relationship with the environment. The Economic practice

Vol. 81, No. 4(1V) refers to the transformation of natural resources into socially useful products, political practice to the reproduction and administration of collective social relations and their institution's forms, and ideological practice to the constitution of social subjects and their consciousness.

Man is leading a cohesive social life. Clans are a subdivision of a social structure. Clans are set to identify the people in the community. There are more than a hundred clans among the Vellalar people. Religion is intertwined with human life. Religion is supposed to regulate human life. Religious beliefs can also be traced back to human traditions. The flood Vellala Gounder is often found in idolatry. The naming of children is based on tribal deities. The rituals from the birth to the death of the Kongu Vellalar are often similar to those of the Gentiles, but not without a few unique rituals. As the kongu region is a land of temples and another place of worship no wonder, that it has an opportunity to celebrate various festivals. People professing different faiths celebrations of indigenous and national festivals. Generally, the festivals bring unity and amity, which enable all to be happy and joyous. For all the major as well as minor deities they have their festivals. Kongu holds both traditional and modern features. The tradition is maintained by keeping certain customs alive in the marriage and other rituals. Continuity in the kula teyvam clan deity) worship, recognition of the chief's families are some of the other futures indicating their affinity to the traditional modernity comes from every direction; the technological advancement helped the region to thrive in the agriculture industry.

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