CHAPTER - VI

TEMPLE IN RELATION TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT OF TIRUVILIMILALAI
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SECTION I
SOCIAL CONDITIONS

This chapter attempts to reconstruct the social economic, environment in which the temple grew in the village of Tiruvilimilalai and the consequent interaction between the temple and community. The temple inscriptions throw light on different sections of community, their associations, their interest and contributions to the temple. Details of economic features of the village are also gleaned from the inscriptions; which is viewed in the second section of this chapter.

The gift of tax free lands or villages given for the maintenance of the brahmins called brahmadeya and such gifts are mentioned in the inscriptions right from 5th century A.D. down to the end of the Vijayanagara period. In the chola country a number of brahmadeya villages were patronised by the chola rulers right from Vijayalaya. The brahmadeya villages in chola administration can be examined from three aspects.

i) The special character of brahmadeya as residence of brahmins who were the elite.

ii) The close relation of brahmadeya villages with chola kings.
iii) Tenency for more than a few brahmadēya villages to be located in a nādu, (territorial division in central part of chōla country).

The brahmadēya villages played an important role in the local administration of the state and consequently functioned as an apparatus for social integration. This view is shared by Burton Stein in the sense that it integrated the society ritually and has been elaborated in his writings. Kathleen Gough considers this role of brahmadēya village, to be a substitute for the bureaucracy which she argued could explain the non existence of evidence on the bureaucracy proper. Tiruvilimalalai was a brahmadēya village in vennādu, a subdivision of Uyya konda chōla valanādu.

Brahmins

The Brahmin residence of Vilimalalai played a notable role in the society. A large number of records from the Tamil country state that they were not only proficient in the subjects but also capable of expounding them to their disciples. They were ready to hold disputation with rival scholars of other places in subjects like vyakarna, aṅgama, purāṇa and shatrakara (six types of logical disputation). Such high level of vedic knowledge and skills of interpreting them in discourses had offered them a supreme position in social strata. Epigraphical references mention the term Ainūṟṟuvar of Vilimalalai. The term Ainūṟṟuvar denotes five hundred brahmin families who had predominantly lived in Tiruvilimalalai among whom Lord Śiva was one. Similar brahmin
families had settled in Chidambaram called Thillai Nāyavar (three thousand brahmins of Thillai or chidambaram) who were also known as Thillaiyālāndanār (brahmins living in Thillai or chidambaram) Thiruvudaiyāndanar (learned wealthy brahmins) Deiva Vēdiyar (divine brahmins) Mummajayyirayar (three thousand brahmins). These brahmins had the privilege and blessing of having a glimpse of divine deity touching and performing pūjās to the idols of the temple. They were wealthy, highly knowledgeable and held a notable position in the āgamic rituals of the temple and had a high place in the society. They played an important role in maintaining social order and must have been the local nucleus of the chōḷā power structure.

Inscriptional references are found on the Ainūṟṟuvar of Tiruvilimilalai. An inscription of Vikrama chōḷā (1124AD) states the decision taken by Ainūṟṟuvar to resume the temple festival in Pidāriār temple. An epigraph of Kulōttunga III (1195 AD) states that the sale deed of land was signed by Ainūṟṟuvar.

There are about 1800 names of brahmins with the gōtrās mentioned in the chōḷā inscriptions. The exogamic rules relating to hindu marriage give room to three terms - gōtrā, pravarā and sapindā. Gōtrā denotes lineage on paternal side. The epigraphs of Vilimilalai temple mention three major names of gōtrās. An epigraph of Vikrama chōḷā (1120 AD) states brahmins of ātreya gōtrā and kousika gōtrā who received 16 kāsu from Senthāmaraikanān, towards lighting perpetual lamp in the temple. An inscription of Rajēndra III (1054 AD)
speaks of twelve brahmins of ātreya gotra receiving 32 kāsu from Pattālinangai for offering amudhu (food offering) to deity on 12 full moon and 12 new moon days of the year. 16 A mutilated inscription of 15th to 16th centuries on a pillar is southern inner prakara states the installation of the pillar by a bharadwaja brahmin individual named Devargalnayan. 17

The brahmins were not only the recipients of shares and money but also acted as donars and were delighted in offering food, medicine and asylum. 18 The kings and individuals also made endowments to feed brahmins on account of high level of respect towards them. An inscription of Parantaka I dated 913 AD, states the endowment of 120 kalanju of gold out of which 120 kalam paddy was obtained to feed four brahmins daily in the temple. 19 An epigraph of Vikrama chōla (1123 AD) states the grant of tax free land by sabha to feed the brahmins on the request of Viḷān Gangayarāyār. 20 Thus the brahmins enjoyed a high status and their services were solicited by the kings for performing temple and other rituals.

Valangai Idangai

Several inscriptions of Tanjavūr district record the existence and revolt of Valangai and Idangai groups. valangai and idangai means right and left hands. The dual division of society into such groups in south India is noticed from about 1100 AD onwards in inscriptions of the chola and vijayanagar periods. The current understanding of this division among most scholars is that the jātis or castes based on agriculture were grouped under valangai and the non-agricultural castes say,
artisans and traders under *idangai*.\textsuperscript{21} Nilakantasastri referring to the inscriptions at Aduturai writes 'the ninety eight sub sects of the *idangai* are again mentioned in a later inscription from Aduturai which records the hardships to which these sub-sects were exposed at the hands of the *vannia* tenants and the *brahmana* and *vellāla* land lords backed by government officials.\textsuperscript{22} The names of *jatis* or professional groups probably being included in *valangai* and *idangai* groups are as follows:

- **Settigal** (merchants)
- **Kaikkōlar** (weavers)
- **Manrādi** (herders)
- **Vanniar** (merchants)
- **Sekku Vanniar** (oil merchants)
- **Thachar** (carpenter)
- **Thattēn** (goldsmith)
- **Kusavar** (potters)
- **Nēvithar** (barbers)
- **Vannān** (washermen)

A few of the above were residing in Tiruvilimilalai village as gleaned from epigraphs that are taken for discussion below.

**Merchants**

Agriculture was the main occupation yet both inland and overseas trade were pursued by the merchant class. They were wealthy commonly termed as *Vaisiyas*, *Chettis*, *Vanigar* or *Nagarattār* in the early and later medieval period.\textsuperscript{23} On account of their occupation they played a pivotal role in the
medieval society and economy. They had their own guilds which traded with foreign countries. They made generous donations to religious institutions like temples. An inscription of Vikramachola in Vilinathaswamy temple mentions a gift of land called Tattamangalam by Gangeyarayen chetti for amudu (food) for the deity. In Tiruvilivilalai village the merchants or chettis are continuing with trading profession at present and contribute to festivals and rituals at an optimum level.

Manradi

The cowherds were commonly known as mandradis, konaars or ayars. Their main occupation was to tend the cattle, supply milk, curd, ghee, to the residents of the village. The inscriptions of Tiruvilivilalai temple refer to numerous gifts of sheep and cows for the supply of curd and ghee to the temple.25 Such gifts were entrusted to the mandradis who received them and agreed to supply a certain quantity of ghee or milk to the temple for the daily pujas. An inscription of kulottunga III (1185 AD) states the manradi (Ayar) with whom the cattle were entrusted, had agreed to supply one ulakku of ghee and one nali of curd everyday.26 The intention of the donor in donating the different categories of cattle was not merely to supply ghee, or curd but also to foster and cultivate the cattle population, and the temple in its role, as the biggest consumer of milk and milk products took care of the manradis and contributed significantly to the enrichment of rural economy and prosperity. This community still exists in Tiruvilivilalai village with a changed life style.
Vellalās

The main occupation of the people specially of vellalās was agriculture. They were quite widespread in the region and bestowed great attention to the agricultural operation both as land lords and cultivators. Tiruvālimilalai with irrigational facilities like river, lake and well, provided a congenial soil for agricultural operations. The vellalas of the village contributed to the temple and society through agricultural activities and made donations to the temple. An epigraph of Vikramachōla dated 1123 AD speaks of a donation of land by Veḷḷān Sesthāmaraikāṇṇān to the temple for food offering. An inscription of Kulōttungā II (1136 AD) states a land transaction by Veḷḷālar Tiruchirrambalam to Kotpulaindār who endowed the land to the temple and made the income from the land to be used for feeding the devotees. The vellalā community is prominent in the present day with agricultural occupation for some of them and the rest being educated have taken up white collered jobs, with constitutional privileges being offered to them on the basis of their community.

Thachan (carpenter) and Pon pattar (goldsmith)

Thachar (carpenter) and Pon pattar (goldsmith) were other communities that served the temple. These craftsmen were assigned tax free lands (for example thachamanyā for carpenter) for their services rendered to the village and the temple. An inscription of Rajarāja I (1007 AD) talks of grant of paddy to those who offered services for the night puja in the temple which included Thachachary Ārur Thongalan. An
inscription of Rājarājēśvara III (1247 AD) speaks in detail of the request made by Tiruchirāppalam thachachāri to temple officials (like Sri-kārayam, Devakaṇmi and Mahēśwara kaṇkāni) for tax free land as Thachasirīya kaṇi for the repair that he had under taken to complete in the temple. The inscription also states the sale deed executed on the name Thachāsriyar with hereditary rights.  

In the same way the goldsmith also served the temple by making jewels for deities. An inscription of Rājēndrēśvara III (1265 AD) speaks of a goldsmith called Ponnattar Chandrasekaran who sold his land and house site to Hyyavandhan Ōrikondar. The goldsmith was known by the term Ponnattar (The term pon means gold and pattar denotes the maker of ornaments out of gold or any other material) The goldsmiths might have received payments when they did ornamental work for the deities.

Kaikkōlar

The kaikkōlar mudali grew into an influential community after chola and pandya times. They were engaged in weaving silk and cotton cloths and were also known as sengunthar or mudaliyar. They had occupied a place in village and temple administrative proceedings. An inscription of Rājēndrēśvara III in his 12th regnal year states donation of land by a sengunthar whose name is not clear. The kaikkōlar or sengunthars were able to supply the large scale woven materials to the temple and society, and a sizeable population in Vilimilalai and neighbouring villages continue their profession even to day.
Women

There is a striking contrast between sanskrit and tamil literary ideals of womanhood. Sanskrit literature accepts several aberrations such as polyandry, widow remarriage and gāndharvā rites. Tamil literature on the other hand extols women who are truly chaste wives their only alternative being a religious life. The ideal of pātrīvratā (Pati means husband, Vratā means fasts and austerities) is more apparent in tamil literature than in sanskrit in the concepts of womanhood and motherhood. The high position held by women in the early and late vēdic periods is evident. The suppression of women starts with the development of a composite advanced society composed of vēdic and non vēdic elements. By the early medieval period royal families felt that women should not be exposed to strangers. Essentially concerned with the household duties they were excluded from taking part in other activities and brahmin women though shared some of the religious duties of their husbands were debared from the brahma vīdya or the vēdantic studies. They could not wear the sacred thread which alone initiated them to vēdic knowledge. Women became transmitters of religion and tradition. Vratās (fasts and austerities) were followed zealously to the extent of creating irrational beings. Though many women could get the tamil hymns by heart, they normally were not allowed to recite them along with the male reciters. They stand in a separate group during temple service and in all temples the consecrated water and food would be distributed to them after they are done to men. All these clearly indicate the secondary position given to them.
A few inscriptions of the Vilināthaswāmy temple throw light on the contribution of women to the temple through donations. Special mention is to be made on Pattālinangai who was a popular influential woman at the time of Rajādhīrājā I. She was close to the king and hence was known as Anukki pattālinangai (the tamil term Anukki denotes closeness). Pattālinangai contributed abundant wealth in the form of pon (gold) and jewels and a golden roof for the main shrine as stated in the inscriptions of Rajādhīrājā.33 (1054 AD). She had also donated 128 kalaṅju 4 manjadi pon (gold) which was for the holy bath and accessories like ghee, oil, curd, dhal, rice, betal.34 Such worthy contribution made by her to the temple had given room to a vāikkal (Canal) being named after her as Pattālinangai vāikāl.35

Another woman mentioned in the inscriptions was Sridevi mother of Pallavarājan, who was titled as Amarakujjangan Muppuliar kandarul kanda Pallavarājan.36 Sridevi donated pon (gold) to the temple according to an epigraph of Rājendra I.37

Devaradiyar

Manickavāsagar's (a famous saiva saint) description of devaradiyar seems to represent a completion of the synthesis of the bardic tamil culture and brahmin tradition of ritual and philosophic thought.38 He had given a description of the girls serving in the temple with an indication of their tasks in his poetry, which is as follows:

i. They adorned the temple in preparation of a festival.
ii. They suspended garlands wrought out of flowers and pearls.

iii. They placed dhūpa (incense) and dīpa (light).

iv. Sing auspicious songs.

These girls had moved into towns surrounded by singing devotees.

Variety of terms for temple dancers were used in epigraphs of chola times, such as devadāsi or devaradiyar (slaves of God) patiyilār (those belonging to pati meaning residence) talicheripendugal (women belonging to the street of the temple) manickatāl (ruby or dancing girl) and rudraganikā (courtesan of Rudra or Śiva). Rudraganikā is a term of respect that can be found in sanskrit āgamās and then commentaries. The devaradiyar danced during festivals when the deity was placed in pavilion from where the deity could watch the performance. The talaikkōli (female holding the talaikōl - rod on head) seemed to have been a title which was given to the dancing women whose initiation was performed by worship of talaikōl (rod) when she made her maiden performance in front of the deity. The type of compositions that a devadāsi sang had been,

i. ritual songs
ii. devotional songs
iii. artistic composition
iv. festival composition and
v. social composition.

The high degree of artistic sophistication was a result of artistic development of the period. The artistic capacity
of the devadāsi, Nitya Sumangalī (a name given by Sasika C. Kersinboom for devadāsis) had given her respect in the society.

Epigraphs of chōla times bear testimony to the respectable position enjoyed by the dēvadāsis. An inscription at Vēlināthaswāmy temple of Rājarāja III (1226 AD) illustrates that the king rectified the misappropriation of 2 nālis of rice by sivabrahmānā which was in fact assigned to dēvaradiyar of the temple, during the 39th reignal year of Kulōttunga chōla. After the decline of the chōlas deterioration set in and the moral standards of dēvaradiyar drew adverse remarks from many foreign travellers in India. At present the dēvadāsī do not exist in the Tiruvīlimilalai village.

Thus the account made above reveals the participation of every section of the society in the temple activities in one way or other and their contribution to the development of religious instruction as well as general well being of the village. Evidently there was a domination of male over female, landlords over landless but the records do not throw light on any specific social conflict or commercial differences. The society was pluralistic with different castes or occupational groups all functional within a larger framework of caste system which was the order of the day. The temple was the centre of the entire life of the village, gave employment, received donations fed the needy and played a leading and constructive role for the larger social and moral well being of the people.
SECTION II
ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

An attempt is made here to study the influence of the temple at Vishnulalai on medieval economy under chola and pandya rule. The study is primarily based on inscriptions.

The Temple as land owner

Agriculture was the basic industry on which the vast majority of the population depended for livelihood. The temple as a land owner filled a large place in the agricultural economy of the locality. Both royal benefactions and public patronage took the form of land grants. The land grants fall into two categories. The first category comprised of grants which transferred fiscal rights to the temple but rights over the possession of land were reclaimed by the donor. They transferred to the temple the royal share of the produce which did not affect the landed rights of the village land holders, permanent tenants, village officers, previous grantee and others. The second category included the grants which conferred proprietorship of the land upon the grantee. The donor would acquire proprietorship by inheritance, purchase, or exchange and then hand over to the grantee. Private individuals, petty officials, and members of the royal household who did not own land, purchased and donated.

Inscriptional references in the temple of Vishnulalai throw light on the above two categories of land grants. An epigraph of Rajendra II dated 1054 AD states the grant of tax free land which was ordered to have been registered in the
records for tax free land which was ordered to have been registered in the records for tax free lands by the officials and the income of the land was to be used for Tiruvādirai festival. The star Tiruvādirai being the birth star of Natarājā (an aspect of Śiva) and also of the king (Rājendra II). An epigraph of Vikrama Chōla (1123 AD) states the grant of a tax free land named Thattamangalam and the income from the land to be utilised for amudhu (food offering) for the main deity. Another inscription of the same king (1123 AD) mentions the grant of tax free land by the mahasaba on the request of Vellān Senthāmaraiyannan to be used for feeding the brahmins. Yet another epigraph of the same king (1124 AD) illustrates the grant of tax free land by the people of Vishnu Vardhanapuram to the temple of Vilināthuswāmy, as they were unable to pay their dues to the temple. An inscription of Jatavarman Virapāndya (1302 AD) on his 6th regnal year seen on the north wall of the north prakara, states the grant of 2½ ma of land to the temple, by an individual named Tiruvambalachokkan.

Inscriptions also reveal, purchase of land to be donated to the temple. A record of Kulottunga (1196 AD) which is partly damaged, mentions the purchase of land for the temple for an amount of 1000 kāsu. An epigraph of Jatāvarman Sundara Pāndya of 13th Century records the purchase of a land, and the order to utilise the income of the aforesaid land to resume the recital of Tiruppāttu or Tirumurai hymns in the Tirukaikōttī (which was probably a special hall or mandapa constructed for the purpose of facilitating the recital of hymns by large group of reciters).
The land grants had an economic function and purpose to bring land under cultivation, to create facilities for irrigating them and undertake wet cultivation where lands were sand cast by river floods or relapsed into shrub jungle or waste they had to be reclaimed. Lands reverting as Ṛrpodu (village common) to the township, due to relinquishment, or for future, or due to the lack of heirs had to be regranted to the occupants or to the service holders. Land grants to the temple gave rise to special tenures. The abundance of land and the relative scarcity of money, the immobility of the people and their attachment to the land favoured the growth of special tenures. These tenures can be broadly classified into two heads - service and beneficial. Service tenures fall under two broad categories:

(i) land given for services to the village

(ii) for services to be rendered to the temple.

Beneficial grants were made to the temple by the donors not in return for any material service but for spiritual benefits to the donor. Beneficial tenures held by the temple were known as Tiruvidayattan, dēvadanā, dēvagrahā, dēvabōga, talavṛitti. Beneficial tenures were made commonly to individual brahmmins known as brahmadeyā. The temple has inscriptional evidences which state ‘Tiruvilimilalai dēvadanam nirram’ and illustrate boundaries and crops grown in the land.
Individual transactions

Apart from land grants, sale of land by individuals, and such transaction between individuals are also stated in the inscriptions. Five inscriptions of the temple are of great value which speak of sale of land to temple and between two individuals. An inscription of Kulōttunga III of 1194 AD speaks of the sale of land by the temple authorities, such as Dévakanmigal to another temple in Tiruvilimilai. The exact measurement of land is not given. An epigraph of Rājarājā (1218 AD) states, a sale of land executed by Palanelkudayār vilaiyilavedensirubenkādudayār to Kōnārudyār ambalavar belonging to Nallāvur. The land sold was calculated to be 4 mākaṇi for the rate of 15,000 kāsu. Another inscription of the same king states the sale of 4 mākaṇi of land for 15,080 kāsu by the same Konarudayār ambalavar to the temple and the transaction was executed by the Dévakaṇmigal. Out of 80 kāsu a perpetual lamp was to be lighted. An inscription of Rājendra III (1265 AD) speaks of sale of 4 mākaṇi of arable land by an individual called Mallarkandan, a house site for 1000 kāsu and for 300 kāsu by Porppattan Chandrasekaran to Nerkuppai udayār vēavendarōrtikandār. An epigraph of Jatāvarman Sundarapāndian dated 1254 AD states the sale of 200 kūli punsei (land fit for dry cultivation) land for 32 paṇam to the temple. The above inscriptions give a picture of the varying market rates at that time.
Land assessment and taxation

The land assessment made in chōlā, pāṇḍya times has several intricate features which need to be unravelled. The available evidence is inadequate to set at rest all issues that are thrown up in the investigation of the subject. For one thing the evidence is scattered and fragmentary for another no exact ratio could readily be established between the classification and assessment. Land records maintained were very detailed and intricate. There were several records or registers such as olugu, vari or varipottagam, puravu and tarappottagam. The olugu was a register which had an account of occupancy and enjoyment rights of lands. vari or varipottagan was a register of taxes which contained information on

i. assessment of tax of land

ii. names of occupants from whom the land dues were to be collected.

iii. changes that came in occupancy rights of land

The puravu was perhaps a register showing the extent of land from which tax was levied and collected. The tarappottagam was a register showing such of those lands classified on the basis of the assessment rate charged for it. The term taram denotes the classification to which a classified land belonged. An Epigraph of Vilināthasvārī temple reveals classification of land and rate of assessment made in the time of Kulōttungā (1143-1144 AD) states that the sabayār of Tiruvilimilalai village fixed the rate of assessment. For instance the rate
of assessment during the reign of Kulöttungä was fixed as 150 wālam's of paddy per Vēli. This was the standard rate assessing the quality of land at the period. Further, 1 veli of land was fixed at the rate of 5.32 kalanju of gold at one time, and 9.91 kalanju of gold at another time. This variation may be due to quality of land (taram) prevailing at that time. These particulars seem to have been entered into registers like varipottagam.

Thus the temple followed a fairly well formulated administrative procedure in dealing with donations to the temple, especially land. In all land transactions the location of the village, their boundaries and names of owners of the adjacent pieces of land, are all recorded in the inscriptions.

Gardens of the temple

Apart from cultivated lands, flower and fruit gardens were also given as gifts to the temple. The temple required continuous supply of flowers and fruits for the purpose of daily puja and rituals. It was found economical to rear a flower garden as it ensured continued supply with less expenditure. A record of Vijayanagara king Viruppana Udaiyar son of Vira Ariyappa Udayar (Harihara II) (1307 AD) records a gift of land for a garden by a merchant of Kaveripumpattinam in Rājādhiraṇā vaḷanāḍu. A mutilated record on a pillar of Amman shrine records a gift of land for a flower garden to the temple of Vīlimilalai. The names of trees and plants grown in the garden were javandhi, (Indian crysanthamam) alari
(oleander) jādhi, (large flowered jasmine) champakā, (champek) mangoes, and lemon.

Irrigation facilities

Apart from the seasonal rains on which the cultivation mainly depended, irrigation by tanks, canals, and wells was prevalent. Tiruvilimalalai village received supply from canals dug from Arisilaru in addition to wells. An inscription of Kulottunga III dated 1192 AD, speaks of arrangements such as a sluice being made to bring the water from Mathanda river to Pattalivathi vāikāl a canal named after Pattalinangai, who was closely associated with Rajādiraja I. The canals in the area were called after queens and kings such as Tirubhuvana Mādevi vathi. Rājarājar chōla vāikāl. Bubendra chōlan vāikāl and Kaliyugarāman (pāṇḍya) vāikāl.

There are three wells in the temple which are located (i) in the southern side of the second prakara (ii) in the southern side of Amman shrine and (iii) near temple kitchen. Water drawn from these wells was used for abhisheka of deities for preparation of food and for cleaning purposes. The tank in front of the temple on the eastern side and the vishnu tirtha behind Perumal shrine on the western end of the village are considered punya tirtha (holy tanks) by the local people from the beginning. (Plate: 29, 30)

Units of land measures

Land grants made to the temple throw light on the prevailing land measures in Tanjāvūr region during chōla rule.
The standard land units mentioned in epigraphs are kulī, kāṇī mā and vēli. The land measures were:

100 kulīs 1 mā
20 mā or 2000 kulīs 1 vēli

and

1/320 of a vēli 1 muntiri
2 muntiri 1 araikkāṇī
2 araikkāṇī 1 kāṇī
4 kāṇī 1 mā

One kulī of land 144 sq ft and
One vēli of land 6.116 acres.

The area measured was not permanently or uniformly found the same. It varied according to the length of measuring rod used in different times. The common unit of measurement was called adī (foot) But the measuring rod was called kōl. The linear measures seen in chola times were

8 torai .. 1 viral
12 viral .. 1 chān
2 chān .. 1 muḷam or adī (foot).

There were different measuring rods such as pathinaradi kōl (measuring rod of sixteen foot - the tamil word pathinaru means sixteen, adī-foot, kōl - rod) and pannirandadi kōl. Measuring rod of twelve foot - pannirandu means twelve. The temple lands of Vīṭṭililalai were measured with pannirandadi kōl as stated in an inscription of Rajādhīrāja dated 1049 AD and sometimes the land was measured by the foot of a female
elephant as seen from epigraphic reference of the temple. The epigraph reads thus: pidi sūlndu pidāgai nadandhu (pidagai means female elephant). Further to mark the boundaries of land or village which constituted to form the new asrahāra (area occupied by brahmins) a female elephant would be taken to fix the boundaries.  

Varying land prices

Price of land of different categories is not clearly indicated in the epigraphs. In the fourth regnal year Rājarāja II issued an order to several villages in the Tanjāvūr district a 'samudāya tirumugam' as it was called regulating the prices of land sale. Yet variations can be seen in the transaction. An epigraph of Kulōttunga III (1195 AD) records the sale of 12 ma of land for 7000 kāsu. While an epigraph of Rājendra III (1265 AD) states the sale of 4 ma of land for 100 kāsu. Both epigraphs do not state whether the kāsu were made of copper or silver. It may be presumed that the coins found mention in Kulōttunga's time might have been copper coins and that of Rājendra's time as silver owing to wide variations in the price quoted. Further variations in the length of measuring rod, varying weights and measures and different types of coinage are seen leading to differences in prices.

Units of grain and flower measurements

The grain measures that were in vogue in the temple at various times were kalam, marakkāl, kuruni and nāli. In Tanjavur area the prevailing measures were as stated.
6 nālis - 1 kuruni
15 kuruni - 1 kalam

But a record of the same area stipulates
8 nālis - 1 kuruṇi
7 nālis - 1 uri
1 uri - 1 marakkāl

The generally prevalent denomination and their ratio are:
2 ālākku - 1 ulākku
2 ulākku - 1 uri
2 uri - 1 nāli
8 nāli - 1 kuruṇi or marakkāl
2 kuruṇi or marakkāl - 1 padakku
2 padakku - 1 tuni
3 tuni - 1 kalam

Some of the units of measurement were named after the kings and gods for instance Rājarājanmarakāl and Adavallānmarakāl.

Units of liquid measures

The temple of Tiruvilīmillālai had the privilege of receiving regular supply of different liquid items such as milk, ghee, oil, butter for its daily use on royal orders and from individual devotees. During the chōlā period the liquid measure that was continuously in usage in the temple was Arulmolīnanangai nāli which evidently called after the queen of Vira Rājendrā Chōlā whose name was Arulmolīnanangai.
Coins in temple transactions

The Chōla kings issued gold coins. The more usual standard coin was the Kalanji of twenty manjadi equal in theory to 72 grains but sometimes going up to 80. Pon also was a standard coin which was coined gold of the full weight of one kalanjju. This coined gold was called madaí. Commonly known as Madhurantakadēver madaí (named after Chōla king Madhurantaka) served as the standard of fineness for testing gold and yielded the same interest as one kalanjju of five gold. Exactly half of this madaí was the Rajarajankāsu issued apparently by Rajarāja I and was used in transaction as stated in the epigraph of Rājendra I. The details are unclear on account of the mutilated condition of the inscription. The use of kalanjju, manjadi, pon, are seen in all transactions in the inscriptions of Parantaka, Rajarāja, and Rājadhirāja I. The term kāsu and panam are also stated in land transactions of the temple as gleaned from epigraphs of Kulottunga I dated 1099 AD, and Vikrama Chōla dated 1120 AD. A tenth century epigraph in the Amman shrine mentions the land sale by an individual by Nambikandar for 15 elakkāsu, which probably was a coin in circulation from Elam or Ceylon (Srilanka). An inscription of 1254 AD of Jatāvarman Sundarapandya speaks of sale of 200 kuli land for 32 panam, 13th century gold or silver pandya coinage.

Commodities of consumption of the temple

Apart from land grants, individual donation of land, movable commodities like cattle, sheep, gold, ornaments were
given to the temple by members of royal families or individual devotees which served to the maintenance and upkeep of daily pūjās and festivals of the temple. Regular supply of rice from lands, milk and milk products from cows and sheep donated, had been consumed by temple apart from pulses, turmeric, pepper, mustard, jaggery, salt, arecanuts, betel, camphor, kumkum, and honey. Not only in the food articles and perfumery but in other articles like cloth, wooden works, jewels, gold, silver, brass, metal, lamps, decorative articles, the temple was the biggest consumer in the locality. Gift of gold ornaments, and silver dishes and lamps, were made to the temple. The temple stimulated and encouraged local trade and industry.

Thus the temple of Vilimalalai filled a large place in the economic life of the village. It reached a point of comparative affluence due to the patronage of chola and Vijayanagar rulers. The temple of Vilimalalai was not a big or royal like the Brahadiśwara temple of Tanjāvūr which helped boosting the image and status of kings, it remained sacred under overall care of kings and devotees. After the Vijayanagar rule, the temple met with a set back in its economic resources, which brought about a socio-economic cultural decline yet it continues to serve as a place of worship and religious inspiration for the pious saivite devotees of the village.
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