CHAPTER IV
ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE PEASANTRY

Agriculture formed the principal occupation and a main source of livelihood for the people of Tamil country. Besides, taxes on land and land-related ventures also represented the major source of revenue to the state.

Though, agriculture during medieval period under the Cholas was monsoon-based, but there were attempts made by the imperial Cholas to provide irrigation facilities to the people for the development of agriculture. Different patterns of land ownership tilting the balance in favour of the learned Brahmins and elites in the society was the practice during period. A number of crops like paddy, oil seeds, sugar and millets, were raised by the agricultural sector. The surplus agricultural produce was sold for a price or value both at home and overseas. A number of agricultural products had been sold in the domestic market. The overseas trade which was carried on through the coastal areas and towns by local and foreign merchants seems to have transacted business in coins made of gold and other metals taking them as legal tender money. Most of the produce sold internally were exchanged for other products fixing a value for them. This was called barter system.

In times of peace and copious rains and when agriculture was done profitably, the prices of agricultural products were normal and some times those products were available at cheaper prices. On the other hand, when monsoons failed and war and epidemic caused immense miseries to the
people and when the agricultural production was badly hit, there were not enough food grains for local consumption and prices of the agricultural products went high beyond the reach of the poor.

The temple was the biggest land lord of the Chola times. The temple lands were leased only to tenants and share croppers which were transferable for a fixed amount of tax. The temple authorities on the one hand and the village Sabha which had the exclusive rights over village lands also the owners of Devadana and brahmadeya lands usually employed the hired labour and cultivated their lands. The hired labourers were those who did not own any piece of land and other impoverished small land owning peasants. The temples had slaves and they were permanently in the service of the temples. They were also made to work on the temple lands.

The land holding pattern of the Chola times was also determined by the number of ploughs and cattle that any individual or institutions owned. In general the big peasants owned more number of ploughs and cattle needed for agricultural operations. From the inscriptive evidences it is revealed that a large number of peasants must have had very small land holdings. Some of the lands granted to Devadasis, temples, Brahmins and other people of kings’ liking were exempted from tax payment.

Since agriculture was the principal occupation of the people in the state, the land tax was the principal source of income of the state. In addition to paying land tax regularly to the state, a peasant had to bear the brunt of paying additional taxes to the state, like king’s coronation and birth day tax and tax for temple building works as also war tax when the king
made conquests and invasions. The distrait proceedings were launched against the defaulting peasants resulting in the peasants leaving their villages disowning their lands and some times committing suicide. Especially during the failure of monsoon, floods and other natural calamitous situations the peasants suffered a lot. Unless the remission in land taxes were given to these impoverished peasants their distress would have been very bad.

The peasantry during the Chola times was based on unequal distribution of land ownership. As a consequence there existed unbridgeable gap between the big peasants or land holders and the large majority of poor or small peasants. The burden of tax was greatly felt by the poor peasants. In the absence of large scale irrigation facilities the peasants both poor and rich had to rely more on monsoons. To wealth and prosperity believed to have been achieved during the period of Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola could have percolated to the poor peasants and their economic conditions could not improved much.

The early Chola epigraphs use the term *puravu* in the sense of land tax. But, the most frequently used term to denote land tax was *irai*. The inscriptions mention *irai* which was levied on land. Later probably from the time of Rajendra I, *katamai* was substituted and it became a popular term thereafter, the other terms used to denote land tax were *panchavaram (Kaanikatan).*

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It may be suggested that taxation in the Chola times, land tax predominated over the occupation throughout Chola country. *Kadamai* was another comparable term with *irai*. Nanjey and Punjay nilakadamais were also other terms used and they indicate land dues of the tax-payer. It also suffixes to terms like *perun-kudikal perar ka damai* (dues on land owner or cultivator), and *ettak katamai* (dues on water lift). The other terms related to land tax were *kanik-katamai, kar katamai, ner-katamai* and *nilakkatamai*.\(^{461}\) The term *kudimai* may be considered as a tax on cultivator. *Vari* is another term comparable with *irai* e.g., *pu-vari* (tax on crop, pu=crop).\(^{462}\) Another important term that may be considered here is *ayam*. It would literally mean income or receipts. *Eri-ayam* (cess on using water from tank), and *puravu-ayam* (cess on land) were other land-related terms that were in use.\(^{463}\)

Land revenue was mainstay of national economy and the tax was collected in both cash and kind.

The land tax was collected in paddy, gold and cash. It was collected by the *mahasabha* and *panchavaravaram*. The 1/6 of produce was collected from the *kudis*. The remaining of the total produce went to *vellanvagai kudis*.\(^{464}\)

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\(^{461}\) Ibid., pp.22-23.  
\(^{462}\) Ibid., p.25.  
\(^{463}\) Ibid., p.27.  
\(^{464}\) T.V.Sadasiva Pandarathar, *Pirkala Cholar Varalaru*, Annamalai University, 1974, pp.52-54.
There is a different of opinion regarding the land tax while some believe that the kings did not take more than 1/6 of gross produce as land tax, others are as honestly convinced that their share did not fall below one-third at any time.\textsuperscript{465}

The \textit{kadamai} or land revenue were of two kinds. (i) Those which give the amount of produce claimed by the government on a unit of land (ii) Those which state the share or proportion of produce demanded.\textsuperscript{466}

An inscription of 1325 A.D. states that the \textit{kadamai} did pay at the rate of 3 \textit{kalam} per \textit{ma} of land yielding 40 \textit{kalam}, i.e. 3/40. This rate seems, however too favourable to the peasant and must be treated as an exceptional one.\textsuperscript{467}

An inscription mentions that the dues \textit{antharaya}, and \textit{kudimai} payable on the lands, viz., \textit{puppon, panchavaram, velikkasu, nirvilai} and \textit{vetti, echoru, kurrinel} were borne by the villagers who sold the property to the temple \textit{panchavara} appears in the record under revenue among taxes or dues payable on land by the tenants who cultivated them. It seems probable that \textit{panchavara} had nothing to do with 5 committees and that \textit{panchavara variyam} was perhaps a body appointed to collect the \textit{panchavara} dues which were paid in kind. It somewhat liken to the modern \textit{melvaram}.\textsuperscript{468}

An inscription which belongs to Rajendra I, and was issued between 3\textsuperscript{rd}

\textsuperscript{467} \textit{A.R.E.}, 39 of 1924; Para 38.
\textsuperscript{468} \textit{A.R.E.}, 1913, Para 33, p.105.
and 30th year of his reign records that those who cultivated temple lands were exempted from paying *panchavara, sillirai, sittayam, echchavu kurrarisi, arrukkal-amangi, erikkadi, padganellu, uluvirai*, and *nirvilai* taxes to the state.\(^{469}\) Another inscription from Alankudi, belongs to Maravarman Kulasekhara and was issued in the 4th year of his reign, records a glimpse into the method of tenancy-cultivation prevalent in medieval times. Generally the custom and local conditions determined the rights and duties of the landlord and the cultivator, *varam* and *kudimai* rights, but they were different in different places. This inscription states that in the case of *kar* (single crop) and *pasnan* (second crop), 1/20 of the total produce should go to the landlord as his right share. The common dues like *palli, padi kaval, perupadi kaval, sudu* (sheaves of corn) given to servants, *araivadai* and *alkuli* were given to village and the remainder should be distributed in a ratio of 1:4 between the landlord and tenant. The straw and the green gram (*payaru*) is generally sown just before or after the harvest and were equally divided between them. In fact, from the *melvaram* of the land holders land tax *kadamaic* was paid to the state. The tenants (*ulukudis*) paid *kudimai* tax for their produce. The *kudimai* right is next stated and here in the case of *kar* and for the single crop ½ *panam* and ¼ *panam* for the second crop for every plot of land (*mattal?*) should be given towards meeting the threshing expenses for a single crop, 1 *tuni* and *padakku* for a plot (?) and for the second crop, ½ of the above to be born in common and in dry crops such as turmeric, castor seeds, cotton and gingelly, seed-grain to be supplied by the landlord and the yield *sevaram* to be divided equally. Supplying of coolies,

\(^{469}\) *A.R.E.*, 1923, Para 31, p.104.
storing of grain in the landlords granary and work of repairing ridges in the fields seem to have been developed exclusively by the landlord.\textsuperscript{470}

A few among the number of taxes collected during the imperial Cholas were antarayam, echchoru, kadamai, kudimai, muttaiyal, tattarpattam, vetti etc.\textsuperscript{471} There was broad-based tax system in vogue. Settlements like Agraharams, Chaturvedimangalams, Brahmadeyams and Devadanams (the temple lands) were exempted from taxes. Lands and villages were measured and land ownership titles were issued to the concerned. The lands were sold along with farm workers attached to the land. A kind of bonded-labour existed but never did the labourers suffer from want of food.

In addition to various taxes connected with land and its cultivation, various traders and artisans living in the towns, cities and villages were taxed. It is estimated that the imperial government had imposed about 400 taxes on people, but it is believed that they were not oppressive. The extensive tax structure of the government indicates that the administration had percolated to each and every aspect people’s life.\textsuperscript{472}

The following land taxes were collected during the reign of later Pandyas such as kadamai, antarayam, karpuvavilai, ponvari, viniyogam,

\textsuperscript{470} A.R.E., 1921, Para 38, p.100.
\textsuperscript{471} Noboru Karashima, South Indian History and Society, Studies from Inscription, A.D.850-1800, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, p.72.
kariya arachi, vettippattam, panjupili, sandivigrahapperu, ilancinaipperu, tari-urai, sekkirai, tattoli, tattarappattam, Idaiyarvari eriminpattam, kanikkai, and karttigai paccai. This trend is especially noticeable in inscriptions of the 12th to the middle of the 13th century A.D. The rates of land tax was varied according to the nature of the soil and crops raised.\footnote{D.Devakunjari, \emph{Marai through the Ages from the Earliest Times to 1801 A.D. for Archaeological, Historical and Epigraphical Research}, Madras, 1979, p.135.}

In the Pandiyan country from the post Sangam to the imperial Pandyan period the revenue and finance was more or less the same. The practice of exempting Brahmadeyas and Devadanas from taxes was prevalent in the Pandyan period also. (\textit{Vide Appendix: No.IV}) Lands were classified as nanjey (wet) punjey (dry) and tottam (garden). The assessment of revenue was fixed on the basis of fertility of soil and nature of the crops raised. The tax was paid both in kind and cash. The village assemblies helped in collecting the revenue from the assesses in the villages. The lands became useless and loss of fertility by soil were exempted from the tax. Taxes on doors, oil presses, and goldsmiths were also there.

An interesting instance of the rate of assessment in regard to devadana land could be seen during the period at the kadamai on some temple lands was fixed at three kalams on each ma of land and for this purpose of assessment, crops of full yield were taken into account besides nature of soil and crops raised.\footnote{N.Subrahmanian, \emph{Op.cit.}, pp.247-248.} The Tanjore inscriptions record the economic condition of the people of the Chola country about the beginning
of the 11th century. The (kanikadan) land assessment was roughly hundred kalam of paddy for each veli of land.475

Different Types of Taxes

There are technical expression like kadmai, kudimai, ayam, kanikkai, vari, pattam, irai etc. Some of which have only slight variations in impost.

Besides, even some inscriptions mention taxes and obligations due to the government alongside of contributions of a local or social nature payable for specific local and communal purposes. When such different dues to different persons are jumbled together in one inscription, we find it very different to analyse them under difficult heads. For example inscription issued by Jatavarman Sundarapandya I, secured from Tiruthangiri (Cuddalore Taluk, South Arcot district mentions the following items of taxation: kadmai, kudimai, ponvari, antarayam, kanikkai, kattigaippachchait, kirruvari, sanduvigrapper, vassal viniyogam, olai eluthupadi, kurrilakkai, kadaikkuttilakkai, pasippattem, erivari, inavari, idaivari, olukkunirppattam, visuvalaippattam, ariskanam ayavargam, tari, irai, tattapattam sek kayam, andu-eluttuttevai, palattevai, vetti, nilaiyal, tachchuttalvu, el-amanji and nattu viniyogam.476

Method of Assessment

In the levy of tax on lands, some important factors appear to have been taken into account such as the fertility of soil, the nature of crop grown and the probable yield from land, the facilities for irrigation and tenure.

A record of Jatavarman Kulasekhara I secured from Alagarkoil, Madurai district states that taxes were levied only on lands which had been raised.\(^{477}\) It is evident from another record for the purpose of taxation.\(^{478}\) These that had suffered damage or had failed altogether were excluded from assessment of tax. Some other records tell us that tax concessions were given in the case of failure of crops due to flood and scarcity of rain.\(^{479}\)

**Non-taxable Land**

The Tanjore inscriptions of the reign of Rajaraja I make clear that in each village some land was absolutely exempted from all taxes and imposts, such lands included the sites occupied by the *ur-nattam* (residential area of the village), temple, tanks the channels passing through the village, the *paraicceri* (the hamlet of the *pariah*), the *kammalaceri* (artisans quarters) and the burning ground (*sudugadu*).\(^{480}\)

**War Tax**

\(^{477}\) *A.R.E.*, 1924 Para 31.

\(^{478}\) *A.R.E.*, 409 of 1914, & 1915 Para 34


Parantaka Chola in the 30th year of his rule while engaging himself in a war with the Pandya country imposed a cess on his subjects to the tune of 3000 of *kalanju* of gold.\(^{481}\) A record from Alangudi states that Virarajendra levied a special tax of one *kalanju* of gold per *veli* of land to finance his war against vengi.\(^{482}\)

**Professional Tax**

From the inscriptions it is noticed that some taxes were levied on various professions in the medieval period such as *tari-irai*, *sekkiraippattam*\(^{483}\) and *tattarpattam*\(^{484}\) other taxes on professions like *idaivari* and *sandruvari*, *padikaval*,\(^{485}\) *passipattam*,\(^{486}\) *chettirai*,\(^{487}\) *chekkayam*,\(^{488}\) *tattolipattam*.\(^{489}\)

A considerable part of the income of the government was derived from the taxes on the different professions. There was practically no profession that was left untaxed. The tax must have varied from profession


\(^{482}\) *A.R.E.*, 521 of 1920.


\(^{487}\) *Ibid.*, No.147.

\(^{488}\) *A.R.E.*, 203 of 1932.

to profession and from time to time. The professional taxes includes taxes on weavers, goldsmiths, oilmongers, blacksmiths, potters and drummers.

Remission of Taxes

An inscription which belongs Kulottunga Chola deva, states the remission of the *perum padikaval* taxes on the village Mudigondasola-
*Chaturvedimangalam* an *agara – brahmadeya*.\(^\text{490}\)

Tax Exemption

Usually exemption from tax applied in the case of lands of the Brahmins (*brahmadeyas*) and the temples (*devadanas*) but when the rains failed and there was a famine the general exemption was granted to almost all land tenures.

An inscription of Rajendra Chola I, from olugarai, records sale of land to Vishnu temple exempting it from taxes like *siddhayaam, panchavaram, sillirai, echchoru, kurrur-arisi, arisi, arrukkal, amanji, erikkadi, padaganellu, ulavirai, nirvilai*, etc. for making flower garden and feeding Srivaishnavas of *matha*.\(^\text{491}\)

Burden of Taxes (or) heavy Taxation

\(^\text{490}\) *A.R.E.*, 133 of 1934-35.
An epigraphy found at Vembanur records probably about the heavy taxation was imposed by Mabali-vanarayar who was in-charge of all the villages and cities comprised in the territorial division of Kadaladaiyad – Ilangaikada Chola valanadu unable to pay the tax the people deserted village.\textsuperscript{492} To undertake temple renovation works, king Rajaraja I levied and additional tax of 100 \textit{kasu} from the inhabitants of Talaichangadu.\textsuperscript{493}

The inscriptions of the medieval period state that during certain periods of the later Pandyas, the taxes were heavy. The people could not bear the weight of heavy taxation and hence were at times forced to sell their lands to pay off the taxes.

An inscription which belongs to Maravarman Kulasekara I (Acc. 1268 A.D.) in his seventh regnal year states that the revenue from the village of Marudur in Urattur Kurram could not be collected as there were no people to cultivate the fields.\textsuperscript{494} Though these inscription since the evidence to the fact that the people suffers much on account of heavy taxation during latter Pandya period. It can not be held that such a condition was a continuous one.

In the Medieval times, in the Tamil country as elsewhere in India, famines broke out frequently. The inscriptions testify to that.

\textsuperscript{492} \textit{A.R.E.}, 357 of 1922.
\textsuperscript{493} \textit{A.R.E.}, 198 of 1925, p.38.
\textsuperscript{494} \textit{P.S.I.}, No.45.
An inscription found at Nattamalai, which belongs to Maravarman Sundara Pandya I, (1227-28 A.D.) records and allotment of different pieces of land granted by different people as kudininga tiruvidaiyattam for food offerings to god padinenbhumi-vinnagara Emperuman and his consort for whom shrines were erected by the nagarattar of Telingakulakapuram. The Nagarattar agree to arrange for the remittance eg 57 kalam of paddy measured by Sulakkal for the said service and took upon themselves the burden of paying taxes viz tiruvasal ponda irai, kudimai, antarayam, etc. In case of failure of crops, a remission was to be allowed after due inspection. One-sixth of the summer crops was paid to the temple.\(^{495}\)

**Reduction of Kadamai**

For lands cultivated with dry crops and for lands which had hitherto pay a kadamai of 20 kasus. Only 17 kasu shall have forward to be taken. Those that had of lands ranging from to 5 kasu, two kasu shall be reduced. Thus shall the dry assessment be fixed.\(^{496}\)

**Defaulting of Taxation**

A inscription of Rajaraja I found at Utkal, was an interesting record an order which Rajaraja I issued from his capital Tanjore on the 24\(^{\text{th}}\) year of his reign. This order mentioned the names of the defaulters of land revenue in the village held by Brahmanas, and Jainas in the Chola, Tondai

\(^{496}\) *A.R.E.*, 1919, Para 19, p.97.
and Pandya countries. The village authorities were authorized to confiscate and sell the land on which the taxes had been paid for two full years.\textsuperscript{497}

**Melvaram**

During the Chola period \textit{Melvaram} was collected at a rate of 64 and 20 per cent from wet and dry lands respectively. If that is the case, from a \textit{Devadana} land out of 15 \textit{kalam}s of paddy procured per \textit{veli}, 100 \textit{kalam}s of paddy will go to the temple. From the remainder of the proceeds of 50 \textit{kalam}s of paddy, a considerable share will go to servants of the village. Whatever left after having met the above requirements, a meager produce left alone will go to the agricultural labourers as cooly which will account for 5 to 10 \textit{kalam}s of paddy. This totally unremunerative cooly that these people had to get in those days after having invested their labour for long hours. In view of this, the plight of the agricultural labourer must have been pathetic and deplorable during the period.\textsuperscript{498}

**Revenue Officials**

The Tiruvalangattu plates of Rajendra Chola I, refer to revenue register \textit{varippottagam} and the officer in-charge was the \textit{varippotagak-kanaku}.\textsuperscript{499} The Puravari Thinaikala nayagam was obviously the department of land revenue or the department of revenue accounts; the \textit{varippottagam}
was the section incharge of the tax register. The officers of the revenue department were called *variyilar or puravariyar*.500

**Adhoc Taxes**

During the Chola times a number of adhoc taxes were collected by the State. They included taxes on repairing and maintaining irrigation tanks; *octroi*, on the movement of pepper, arecanut, cloth, rice etc was led.501

**Land Survey**

The land survey was usually conducted to assess the quantum of the land tax. The lands were then classified into a number of classes or grades on the basis of composition of soils and irrigation facilities available.

Land survey, as in the days of Rajaraja I and Kulottunga I became common in the Imperial Chola period and the results were noted in registers maintained for the purpose.502

**Earlier Revenue Survey**

The inscriptions found on the walls of the Prahadiswara temple at Tanjore, mentions that the accuracy of the revenue survey prior to the time of great Rajaraja I (who ascended the throne in 984 A.D. Land as small in extent of *veli* measured and assessed to revenue.503

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502 *Idem*.
There is a reference from the inscription found on the east wall of the first *prakara* at Tiruvalankadu. It refers to a survey of the Ulagalavu.\textsuperscript{504} Another inscriptive evidence goes to say about the land survey (*alavu*) conducted in the 16\textsuperscript{th} year of Sungam Tavirtharuliya Kulottunga Chola deva.\textsuperscript{505} Yet another inscription mentions the land survey and revenue settlement done in the 8\textsuperscript{th} year of Kulottunga I’s reign.\textsuperscript{506}

The elaborateness and correctness of land measurement are borne out by the minutest details regarding the division of land contained in the records land as small in extent as 1/52428, 800000 of *veli* (or 1500000\textsuperscript{th} of a quire foot) was assessed for revenue.\textsuperscript{507} There is an inscription from Lalkudi that mentions the peculiar land measuring of *mundirigai*.\textsuperscript{508}

**Irrigation**

The Tamil Country during the period was endowed with two major perennial rivers, namely, Kaveri and Tamraparani and other rain-fed rivers such as Palar, Ponnaiyar and Vaigai.

During the time of Imperial Cholas agriculture was monsoon-based and irrigation-fed. Prosperity of an agricultural country depends on the facilities provided for irrigation and the importance of securing an adequate water supply was recognized in South India from very early times. Natural

\textsuperscript{504} *A.R.E.*, 455 of 1905.
\textsuperscript{505} *A.R.E.*, 390 & 483 of 1907.
\textsuperscript{506} *A.R.E.*, 1906 Para 22; *A.R.E.*, 273 & 275 of 1907.
steams and dependable channels and canals were the first source of water supply. The agricultural development in the Chola country owned much to the Kaveri and its tributaries.

The river Kaveri known as the southern Ganges, has a course of 475 miles and is equally famous for its sanctity, its picturesque scenery and its usefulness for irrigation. Tamil literary works cherish many traditions of its origin and are replete with expressions of pious and fervent admiration for the life giving properties of its water.\textsuperscript{509}

The Cholas gave special attention to construction of irrigation canals and the Pandyas also paid their attention to the construction of the tanks. In fact, it was the duty of the state to construct and maintain sources of irrigation.

Canals were dug from the Kaveri river to cover the entire delta region in the country. Besides, the construction of tanks and digging of wells were not neglected with the expansion of the Chola empire, Irrigation facilities also increased manifold under their patronage. Irrigation works of good design were noticed during the period.

The importance of irrigation was well recognized in the Pandya country and this is evident from a large number of inscriptive evidences. According to them, construction of irrigation tanks was looked upon as one

\textsuperscript{509} K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{A History of South India (From Pre-historic Times to fall of Vijayanagar)}, Oxford University Press, Madras, 2000, p.38.
of the seven meritorious acts which a man ought to perform during his life time.\textsuperscript{510}

In the absence of natural streams tanks were used for irrigation. There were a number of tanks in the Chola Country and Pandya country. The Kaliyaneri tank near Anamalai in Madura, was dug by the king’s minister.\textsuperscript{511} The Chola-varidhi eri near Sholingar, North Arcot district.\textsuperscript{512} Kandarathitya Pereri of Ulagapuram, South Arcot District, Sembian Mathevi pereri near Tirumalaipadi, Tiruchi District also dug by Kandaradithyan and his queen Sembian Madevi.\textsuperscript{513} Maduranga Pereri at Tirupuvani in Puduchcheri was dug by the son of Kandaradidya Cholan.\textsuperscript{514} Parantaka Chola I, created Veeranarayana Chaturvedimangalam, near Chidambaram Veera Narayana Eri which in modern days is called as Veeranam Lake was dug by Uttamacholan, the son of Kandaradidya Cholan. The Cholappereri and Kundavaip Pereri at Brahandedam in North Arcot were the contributions of Parantaka II, Sundaracholan and his daughter Kundavai.\textsuperscript{515} Rajendra Chola dug a tank called Cholagangam on the western site of his capital Gangaikondu Cholapuram, which was composed of the water of Ganga river, and established there a memorial pillar of his victory. The water of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{510} N.Alagappan, \textit{Economic Conditions in the Medieval Tamil Country}, Thiruvarul Padippagam, Chidambaram, 1998, pp.31-32.
\item \textsuperscript{512} T.V.Sadasiva Pandarathar, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.557.
\item \textsuperscript{513} \textit{S.I.I.}, Vol.V, No.644; Madurandaga Pereri at Madurantakam, in Chengleput District.
\item \textsuperscript{514} \textit{A.R.E.}, 192 of 1919.
\end{itemize}
this tank was used for certain parts of Tiruchirappalli and South Arcot District. It is otherwise called as Ponneri.\textsuperscript{516} Now it is in damaged condition. The Chola-varidhi or Cholingar Eri, in Sholingar, Velur District, Kallinangaikulam in Cholapuram, Velur District and Rajendra Cholappereri in Punganur, Chittoor district.\textsuperscript{517}

Kalikantakappereri and Gandaratittappereri,\textsuperscript{518} Kilavaneri (near Periyakulam),\textsuperscript{519} Kokkilanadippereri,\textsuperscript{520} Pariyaneri,\textsuperscript{521} Madurantakappereri,\textsuperscript{522} big tank at Ambur,\textsuperscript{523} Kallinangaikulam at Solapuram, Vairamegha-tatakam of Uttramerur dating from Pallava times, the big tank at Bahur, Rajendra Chola Pereri at Punganur are other leading tanks\textsuperscript{524} which were dug during the Chola and Pandya times. The new channel Srivallabhap-peraru, was dug to irrigate some lands near Kuruvithurai, Varadavapperaru Channel.\textsuperscript{525}

\textsuperscript{517} Tamil Nattu Varalaru, Cholaperuvendar Kalam, 900-1300, Tamil Valarchi Thurai (Tamil), Chennai, p.202.
\textsuperscript{518} A.R.E., 140 of 1919.
\textsuperscript{520} A.R.E., 189 of 1919.
\textsuperscript{521} A.R.E., 188 of 1936-37.
\textsuperscript{522} A.R.E., 12 of 1945-46.
\textsuperscript{523} A.R.E., 1933-34.
\textsuperscript{525} A.R.E., Vol.XIV, No.231.
In addition to these big tanks, there were also medium-sized and smaller tanks dug by the Kings and their people as also by the Village assemblies.

In fact, there were *eri variams* comprised of elected members of the village assemblies, set up to look after the maintenance of rivers and tanks. Such schemes had the patronage of the rulers also.

The lands during the period were classified as wet and dry lands on the basis of available water and change in crop pattern. The lands which were irrigated by the irrigation canals and tanks were taxed more than the lands otherwise irrigated by natural water sources. The state stood to get more revenue by way of levying additional irrigation tax.

The Chola economy was mainly rested on agriculture. All the other ventures were related to agriculture. Tanjore, the capital city of the Cholas had the benefit of utilising the maximum extent the Kaveri river water for irrigation purposes.

**Tanks**

Kalinkatakappereri and Gandaradittappereri,\(^{526}\) Kilavaneri (Periyakulam),\(^{527}\) Kokkilanadippereri,\(^{528}\) Pariyaneri,\(^{529}\) Madurantakappereri,\(^{530}\) Big tank at Ambur.\(^{531}\)

\(^{526}\) *A.R.E.*, 140 of 1919.
\(^{527}\) *A.R.E.*, 169 of 1936-37.
\(^{528}\) *A.R.E.*, 189 of 1919.
\(^{529}\) *A.R.E.*, 188 of 1936-37.
\(^{530}\) *A.R.E.*, 12 of 1945-46.
The Chola-varidhi of Sholingur, the Kaliyaneri near Anaimalai in Madura, Kallinangaikulam at Solapuram, Vairamegha-tataka of Uttaramerur dating from Pallava times, the big tank of Bahur Rajendra Chola Pereri at Punganur are other leading tanks referred to by inscriptions.\textsuperscript{532} There was tank, Kilavaneri.\textsuperscript{533}

Canals

The Cholas gave special attention to construction of irrigation canals, and channels and agriculture continued to be the dominant occupation. The Pandyas also concentrated attention to the construction of tanks. Canals were dug from the Cauvery river to cover the entire Cauvery delta. Though the canals from the river who used for irrigation, the constructed tanks are digging of wells were not neglected. With expansion of the Chola empire, irrigation facilities also increased many fold under their patronage. Irrigation works constructed and they were good designs.\textsuperscript{534}

Channel

The new channel with the Srivallabhap-peraru. It was dug for irrigate some lands near Kuruvithurai\textsuperscript{535} another Channel collect

\textsuperscript{531} A.R.E., 1933-34.
\textsuperscript{533} S.I.I., Vol.XIV, No.48.
\textsuperscript{535} S.I.I., Vol.XIV, No.224.
Varadavapperaru, Sangam davirtha pereru. (Vide Appendix: No.V and VI)

Tax on Irrigation

Taxes on land were levied for the maintenance of irrigation works: *Katte, kaluve, kere, nirnilakkasu, nirkuli.*

To support village officers following taxes were imposed on land: *arimukkai, etuttukkotti, kankani, kanakavari, nadukaval, pattolakasu, padikkaval (kavalperu), nirupachambadam, talaiyarikam, tandalirkadamai, vettitaniyal, vettipudavai.*

In addition to the above, for the maintenance of temples and to support Brahmans *Kartigai arisi, kartigai kasu, kartigai-paccai, magamai, ubhaiyam,* and *dhiva-kasu* were also imposed on land.

**Eri-ayam**

The tax collected for the maintenance of tank and irrigation supply were called *Eri-ayam.* An inscription from Munnur in the 20th year of Kulottunga Chola deva, records gift of land for strengthening the bund of the big tank of the village. Wherever necessary some other taxes were

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540 *Idem.*
collected are mentioned like *eri ayam*, *padikkaval* and *eri-amangi*.\textsuperscript{541} An inscription from Nerkuntram registers a grant of land for the upkeep of a tank at Nerkundram. The king Rajakesarivarman declared these as tank land (*eripatti*) meant for the maintenance of tank at Nerkundram.\textsuperscript{542} In addition the taxes like *Nirilai*\textsuperscript{543} *pasivilai*.\textsuperscript{544}

An record of Rajendra I\textsuperscript{545} states that the great men of the village of Tribhuvanamadeddi-\textit{Chaturvedimangalam} made an order to the effect that every six ma of land situated within a specified locality and irrigated by the tank called mathuranthkapperi must pay, *kollam* of paddy as *eri-ayam* and that the great men in-charge of the tank supervision committee of the year ought to collect the dues and maintain the tank in proper repair. Thus, besides private donations a) *eripatti*, the income from which was to meet the cost of repairs of tanks, there was also a regular tax called *eri-ayam* collected for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{546}

An inscription from Munnur which records that a private individual purchased the right of collecting 1 *tuni* on each ma of wet land and 1 *tuni* on the dry lands, *kalam punjai* and *kattu punjai* and gave it over to the assembly of the village for strengthening the tank bund whenever necessary.\textsuperscript{547}

\textsuperscript{541} A.R.E., 66 of 1919; A.R.E., 1919 Para 17, p.96.
\textsuperscript{542} S.I.I., Vol.III, No.93.
\textsuperscript{543} A.R.E., 772 of 1915.
\textsuperscript{544} A.R.E., 227 of 1964-65.
\textsuperscript{545} A.R.E., 140 of 1919.
\textsuperscript{546} A.R.E., 1919 Para 17, p.96.
\textsuperscript{547} A.R.E., 66 of 1919.
An inscription from Nerukunam, Wandiwash Taluk, North Arcot district, registers a grant of land of land as eripatti for the upkeep of a tank at Nerkunam by a certain Nambiyamallanar, son of Nripatunga mangalapperariyar.548

The lands during the medieval period classified as wet and dry lands on the basis of available of water and change in crop pattern. The lands which were irrigated by the irrigation at canals and tanks were taxed more than the state's natural water sources. The state stood get more revenue by way of levying additional tax on irrigation.549

An inscription found at Paranur, Tirukkoyilur Taluk, the 24th year of Parakesarivarman (9th century A.D.) records that Arinjigai-vemban of Paralur, endowed land and paddy for the maintenance of the tank called Putteri which he had dug and for keeping its sluice in proper repair.550

An inscription found at Paranur, Tirukkoyilur Taluk, the 24th year of Parakesarivarman (9th century A.D. records that Arinjigai-vemban of Paralur, endowed land and paddy for the maintenance of the tank called putteri which he had dry and for keeping its sluice in proper repair.551

549 A.R.E., 353 of 1925.
Eri-variyyam

The inscriptions mention the existence of various *variyyams* such as *Eri-variyyam, tottavariyyam,* and *kalanivariyyam* in the medieval period.552

Another inscription mentions that *eri variyyam* (tank supervision committee) was also there to take care of the irrigation works and their maintenance.553

Flood

There were references about the occurrence of the flood in the Cauvery and other rivers in the medieval Tamil country.

There is a reference from the inscription of the second year of Parakesarivarman Rajendra about 1054 A.D. issued in the second year of his rule. It states that the floods in the river Cauvery caused damage to an irrigation channel and the adjoining lands (belong to the temple of Tirunageswaram) and that the chief Vikirama Pallavarayan granted land to the temple trustees, the amount required for restoring these to the original condition.554

During the sixth year of the reign of Vikramachola, there was a scarcity and distress due to conquest and a big flood which brought destruction to the villagers and their crops. A fairly extensive tract of land in the North and South Arcot districts seems to have felt the effect of the visitation.555 The consequent destruction of crops leading to the sale of some

553 Ibid., Nos.81 & 84.
554 A.R.E., 919 of 1911, p.59
555 A.R.E., 87 of 1900.
land by the \textit{Ur} which received money to pay the tax of the year. In the same year, the \textit{mahasabha} of Tiruvadi (South Arcot) sold the common land for the same purpose on account of difficulty experienced in the payment of the land tax for six regnal years. On the other hand the record of the eleventh year from the Koviladi (Tanjore district) registered that the village Tiruppeyer became deserted owing to the advent of bad times.\footnote{A.R.E., 276 of 1901; S.I.I, Vol.VII, No.496.} It is not certain however that this vague statement has in the two subjected to this distressed condition as a result of heavy taxation. As per the two inscriptive evidences cited above, it is inferred that there must have been other land holders.

The response to this cry of the villagers came from a certain Adittan Uyyavandan who purchased the land for 25 \textit{kasu} and made it over tax-free to a \textit{patari} of the Tiruvottur temple to be enjoyed by him and his descendants.

Apparently, the trouble of the villagers did not come to an end with this sale of 2000 \textit{kuli} of wet land. The 8\textsuperscript{th} year of Vikrama Chola reign.\footnote{ARE., 88 of 1900.} They were obliged to sell 4, 250 \textit{kuli} of their dry land for 20 \textit{kasu}. This time the purchaser was from the Chola country and he made land over tax-free to those who had to look after the streets connected with the Tiruvottur temple. It thus appears that remission of assignment was unknown in those
times even if the destruction of crops was due to causes beyond human control.558

An inscription found in the Pasupadisvara temple, Allur dated in the (3), the year reign Parakesarivarman records gift of land by a private individual purchased from the villagers, the land was silted up and hot lain for six or seven year owing to heavy flood in Cauveri.559

An inscription found at Tiruvottur in the North-Artcot district in the 7th year of Vikrama Chola’s reign refers to a big flood which destroyed both the village and the crops. The villagers were thus unable to pay the taxes which were due. Consequently out of the land belonging to the villager, 2000 kuli rod equal to the royal foot which measures the whole world had to be sold for 25 kasu. The villagers cried out, if there was any person willing to purchase the land, whose boundaries were specified and which included “the wet land, margins between rice fields forest, barren land, high land, trees overground and well under ground.560

An inscription of Jatavarman Sundarapandya found on the west wall of the Thiagaraja temple at Thiruvarur, Tanjore district states that the floods in the Chandramauli Peraru, overflowed the streets on its north.561

Thirumaraikkadudaiyan alias Vayiradevarayan arranged for the draining of the water and for preventing recurrence of the floods by changing

558 A.R.E., 1900, Para 24, p.9.
559 A.R.E., 375 of 1903.
the course of the stream in its higher reaches on the borders of the village of Kudaiyur. The old course of the stream was diverted to a second road surrounding the village the temple lamps utilized for the purpose were compensated by a gift of 2 veli of land, belonging to the chief at Parameswara Chaturvedimangalam.  

Famines

The general causes of famines were continued drought, excessive rains, flood and possibly destruction of crops due to war and other circumstances. Famine now and then came into disturb the peaceful life of people.

During the rule of Cholas and Pandyas in the medieval times, famines occurred at various times in various places. It is due to the famines the people faced, so many problems like scarcity of food grains, starvation and some times they sold themselves to the temples as slaves. At some other times the people of the particular villages deserted and abandoned their lands.

The country depended on the monsoons for its continued water and food supply. When monsoon failed, it led to famine conditions. The country has its own tradition of famines. In the Sangam age, a poet who sought remission since rains failed. In the Pallava period there was a famine during the early period of the reign of Narasimhavarman I. In the

later Chola period especially in the reign of Rajadhiraja II, Rajaraja II and Rajendran III, we hear of famines which obliged the Chola emperor to organize famine relief. Famine relief was adhoc and not organised in the modern sense. An inscription from Alangudi mentions a serious famine during the reign of Rajendra II.\textsuperscript{563}

A famine visited the Pandya country and for a short period. A record of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya mentions that a famine broke out in the 19\textsuperscript{th} regnal year of the king and in order to relieve the distress of the people, the trustees of the temple even sold some of the temple jewels. Next year when normal conditions returned, they restored the ornaments to the temple.\textsuperscript{564}

An inscription from Tiruchchengattangudi mentions an actual sale of four women to a temple for 700 kasu, no extenuating circumstances, such as famine or poverty, often found adduced in records of similar nature has been quoted to justify this act.\textsuperscript{565}

An inscription found on the base of the central shrine in the Seshapurisvara temple at Tiruppamburam mentions a famine broke out in the 23\textsuperscript{rd} year of reign of Kulottunga III, the peculiarly distressing circumstances under which a vellala of that village sold himself and two daughters as slaves (\textit{adimai}). It is herein stated that “the time was very bad, that paddy was sold at 3 nali for one kasu that his children were dying for

want of food and that consequently himself and his two daughters borrowed 110 *kasu* from the temple treasury and sold themselves”. Evidently about this period i.e., in the beginning of the 13\(^{th}\) century A.D., there was a severe famine in the Tanjore district which reduced the people to sell their personal liberty for want of food. Another instance there was famine in which happened about the middle of 11\(^{th}\) century A.D. in almost same part of the country. It mentioned in the report on epigraphy for 1898-99 Para 53).\(^{566}\)

In beginning of the 13\(^{th}\) century A.D. there was a severe famine in Tanjore District which reduced the people to sell their personal liberty for the want of food.

An inscription of Rajaraja deva II, issued 7\(^{th}\) regnal year of his reign refers to a loan borrowed by the assembly from temple treasury on account of “bad time (famine) and scarcity of grain (*akkam*).\(^{567}\)

There was a famine broke out of Alangudi 1054 in the Tanjore district about the middle of the 11\(^{th}\) century A.D. The village of Alangudi appears to have been afflicted with famine caused by failure of rain. The villagers had consequently no funds to purchase paddy for their own consumption, seed-grains and other necessaries for cultivation. It was a severe famine.\(^{568}\)

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\(^{567}\) *A.R.E.*, 397 of 1913.

An inscription found on the east wall of the Navaratri – mandapa in front of the shrine left entrance in the Oppilamanisvara temple at Arakandanallur in Tirukkoyilur Taluk records that a famine broke out in the 14th year of reign of Vikramachola, the tenants of the village kunram alias mativallabha-chaturvedi mangalam had deserted their lands. Later these lands were reapportioned among the remaining tenants. From the epigraphs record we can understand the serious famines broke out in Tamil country during medieval times.⁵⁶⁹

During the reign of Rajaraja II there was no sufficient money in circulation. The people had borrowed from the treasury.⁵⁷⁰

In the twenty-fourth year of Tribhuvana Chakravartin Kulottunga Choladeva, corresponding to 1201, 1202 A.D. there was a famine in Tiruvannamalai.⁵⁷¹

**Failure of Crops**

There is an inscription found at Tirukkachchur in the 10th year of Kulottunga Choladeva which records the consequent trouble of people due to the failure of the crops.⁵⁷² In the medieval times, in the Tamil country as elsewhere in India, famines broke out frequently. The inscriptions testy to that.

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⁵⁶⁹ A.R.E., 151 of 1934-35.
⁵⁷⁰ A.R.E., 92 of 1911-1914, p.91.
The available regarding famines in our period have been given in the form of Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1
The Available Regarding Famines in the Medieval Tamil Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date in A.D.</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Some Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1054</td>
<td>Alangudi, Tanjore</td>
<td>Failure of rain, the temple helps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1124</td>
<td>Tiruvathur</td>
<td>Severe inundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1160</td>
<td>Tirukkadayur, Tanjore</td>
<td>Drought, failure of crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1201</td>
<td>Tiruppamburam, Tanjore</td>
<td>Paddy sells of 3 nali per kasu; the temple helps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1241</td>
<td>Tirumangalakudi, Tanjore Nandalur, Cuddapah</td>
<td>---- migration of people from the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1390-91</td>
<td>Tiruppanangatu, North Arcot</td>
<td>Want of rain; paddy sell at 10 nali per panam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1391</td>
<td>Tirukkalar, Tanjore</td>
<td>---- 573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the period of the Cholas, measurements for measuring and weighing goods and commodities were widely used more or less uniformly throughout the Tamil country. The following information vouchsafe for that:

Grain Measures of Capacity

5 sevidu - 1 alakku
2 alakku - 1 ulakku
2 ulakku - 1 uri
2 uri - 1 nali
8 nali (padi) - 1 kuruni = 1 marakkal
2 kuruni - 1 paddakku
2 padakku - 1 tuni
3 tuni - 1 kalam

Among the grain-measures that were used kalam, marakkal, nali, kuruni, were widely used. An inscription from Tiruvorriyur mentions a peculiar kind of nail known as kurunali which was used for measuring rice. The marakkal was called Advallalan, which is equal to a Rajakesari. During the time of Rajaraja I the marakkal was called arumolidevan marakkal. The marakkal of Rajendra Chola period was rajakesari marakka. But there were different marakkals also. Another inscription mentions that the one ulakku of ghee measured by the kanali.

576 S.I.I.,No..II, 4.
The characteristic marks of liquid and grain measures used in different places and numerous kinds of nali, and marakkal are mentioned in the inscriptions. From the Tanjore inscriptions it becomes clear that the Adavallan equal to Rajakesari was adopted at the standard in the account of the capital city and perhaps of the empire in the time of Rajaraja I, possibly, the name measure is referred to as Arumolidevan in the reigns of Rajendra and Rajathiraja through the name Rajakesari also continued in use. The distinction between this standard measure Rajakesari and others called Vidividangan is clearly brought out in a record of twenty-six year of Rajaraja I from Tiruvamattur stating that surplus was left as a result of measuring paddy by the Vidividangan instead of by the Rajakesari.579

Measure of Weight

10 kani - 1 grain
4 katri - 1 ma
2 grains - 1 kunri
2 kunri - 1 manjadi
2 manjadi - 1 parattukkon
20 manjadi - 1 kalanju580

Weight of Gold

One manjadi = 2 kunri = 10 ma = 40 kani, twenty manjadi = one kalanju about (8 to 72 grain).581

Note: The \textit{ma} and \textit{kani} are usually $1/20$ and $1/80$ when applied to value of land,$^{582}$ refers that originally the \textit{ma} and \textit{kani} had the same fractional value even here, and sub-divisions of unit 2 \textit{manjandi} or a tenth of the \textit{kalanju}; coins called \textit{fanams} were usually a tenth of the standard \textit{kalanju} in weight and the \textit{panamukkam (panam weight)} has always been a tenth of the \textit{kalanju}.\textsuperscript{583} (unit – 3, Sivapuram) the \textit{ma} is nearly $1/20$ \textit{kasu}.\textsuperscript{584}

(b) Measures of Land

| 576 square feet | 1 \textit{kuli} |
| 100 \textit{kuli} | 1 \textit{kani} |
| 5 \textit{kani} | 1 \textit{veli} |

(In Tanjore:

| 144 square feet | 1 \textit{kuli} |
| 100 \textit{kuli} | 1 \textit{ma} |
| 20 \textit{ma} | 1 \textit{veli} |
| \textit{1 veli} | 6.6 acres |
| \textit{1 ma} | .33 acre |
| \textit{1 kuli} | .0033 acre$^{585}$ |

Agricultural Industry

Agricultural industries are those by which agricultural produce, i.e., the raw material yielded by the land whether grain, oil-seeds or sugar, fibres, drugs or dye stuffs, is worked up for consumption.$^{586}$

\textsuperscript{581} K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{The Cholas, Op.cit.}, p.624..
\textsuperscript{582} \textit{S.I.I.}, Vol.II, No.65.
\textsuperscript{583} \textit{A.R.E.}, 273 of 1927
Peasant Revolt

There were a number of peasant’s revolts that took place during the time of imperial Cholas and later Pandyas. The peasants resorted to protest against the king, the landlords like Vellalas and Brahmins for imposition of heavy taxation. They also fought for raising the wages.

An incident that took place in the Chola country was recorded in an inscription that belonged to the 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. A woman revolted against the exploiters. It was during the period of Rajendra Chola I rule (1012-1024 A.D.) in a village called Jambai in the present South Arcot district the farmers failed to pay land taxes to the ruler in time, because their crops failed that year. A lonely woman of very little means, in the village also could not pay tax when the tax collector demanded it. In front everybody in the village, the tax collector abused her and called her by names for not paying the tax. Notwithstanding this and considered it an insult to her self esteem and dignity and as a mark of protest against the exploitative tax-collector of the then ruler who did not understand the plight of the peasants. The woman consumed poison and committed suicide by jumping from the top of the hillock with every villager looking at her meekly. From this incident we can understand the impoverished condition of the peasants.\textsuperscript{587}

\textsuperscript{586} Ibid., p.469.
The small cultivators and other sections of people had to bear of increasingly punishing tax burden. The fight against tax burdens took several forms. Inscriptions provide evidence of movements refusing to pay taxes, of action for reduction of taxes, of campaign in opposition to certain taxes, and of cultivators themselves fixing the tax rate. In the third year of Kulottunga I (1070-1020 A.D.), the people decided not to pay taxes, in protest against the imposition of unprecedented tax on cows and buffaloes.  

Apart from the traditional hostility between the castes of the ‘right hand’ and ‘the left hand’, the toiling people belonging to both camps got together met in times of trouble opposing the exorbitant taxation that had no reference of quality of lands, the two camps had assembled together and themselves fixed according to quality of land and yield of their particular plots of land lent. The rate of rajakaram (dues to the king) and the rate of taxes due to temple, the Vaikavur inscription provide evidence on this.  

An inscription from Korukkai (Tanjore region) mentions that an assembly of the Tanjore region. The right hand and left hand factions assembled these and resolved to oppose improper taxes.  

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Inscriptions provide abundant material for historical interpretation of relation of production during the later Chola period.

Time and again during the latter Chola period, the struggles arose against Brahmin and Vellala landlords who were with hegemony and authority in the feudal system which constituted the basis of social life, several revolts burst out in opposition to tax burden and pursuit of sections of people. Agriculture supported the overwhelming masses of the people during this period. Land belonged to temples as devadana land to Brahmins as brahmadeya and to Vellalas as vellanvagai. Officials, dancing girls and soldiers also held land as Jeevitha, that is for a living devadana and brahmadeya were Iraiylili (or) tax-free. In some place jeevitha and land belonging to certain individuals were exempted from taxes. As the tax free land was considerable and tented to expand over the period, small cultivators and other sections of the people had to bear an increasingly punishing tax burden. The fight against tax burden took several terms.

Several inscription suggests that the movement for the reduction of taxes was conducted with militants. Struggles took the form of refusal to show until the objectionable taxes were lowered\footnote{S.I.I., Vol.VI, Nos. 50 & 58.} or taking shelter other villages and refusing to enter their own villages until tax were lowered.\footnote{A.R.E., 620 of 1909, p.30.} These kind of protects were took place during the medieval period.
Bater System

There were market places where busy mercantile transactions went on. Barter was in use which referred to the exchange of goods and articles for a value against different articles and commodities. Currency was used in capital cities for foreign trade. The currency of small denominations did not displace the ancient habit of exchanging things for corn. The earliest Tamil poems state that salt and venison were exchanged for paddy. In villages the house-wives may be seen pouring out the grain from their stores into the baskets of hawkers and dairy women in return for the vegetables, ghee or curd supply by them. The paddy played a main source of transaction in the barter system.

One kurni of paddy for one Ulakku of ghee, three paddy for one nali of pulse, three nali and one uri of paddy for curry, size nari of paddy for two nali of curs, one nali of paddy for pepper, mustard, curtain and tamarinds, one nari and one uri of paddy for twelve areca-nuts and twenty four betel leaves and four nari of paddy for five woods.

It is interesting to note that while most articles were exchanged for paddy at the beginning of the eleventh century, camphor could be purchased for money. Market fees (angadikuli) of the bazaar was collected.

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Market

Market is a place where merchandise is exchanged between a trader and consumer. In the economic development of a country markets play a significant role. In the Tamil country market system developed at least from prehistoric period. The Pallava, Chola and Pandya period shows proliferation of markets in different parts. The epigraphs inform us about the names of merchants, goods, manufactured and traded in market centres and the movement of traders. During the reign of Cholas there existed a market in the Brahmadeya village (Tirumayanam) Tanjore district in 873 A.D.\(^{597}\) The market was situated within the village and traded grains like paddy, rice and either commodities measured by capacity, probably brought from outside (puravur). The market tolls (angadiikkuli) also collected in the market. In the fixation of the angadiikkuli, the members of Brahmadeya Sabha took a leading role. Tanjore, the capital of the Cholas in its vicinity all mentioned in the inscriptions such as (1) Tribhuvanamadevipperangadi (2) Kongavalarangadi, (3) Rajabramaharajan angadi. The 4\(^{th}\) name of the angadi is damaged. All the four angadis were located in Purambadi i.e. the neighbourhood of the Tanjore.\(^{598}\) There was a market called Naduvilangadi in the inscription.\(^{599}\) The market fees (angadikuli) was collected from the bazaar.\(^{600}\) Market had functioned in many nagarams. A nagaram was a village mostly inhabited by merchant communities. The administration of the village was conducted by a group of merchants also known as nagaram,

\(^{597}\) Idem.
\(^{600}\) Ibid., No.90.
the administrative body. A *nagaram* produced commercial goods and also had markets for selling goods.\(^{601}\)

**Trade**

The trade and commerce, both inland and foreign and agriculture related ventures besides contributing to the livelihood and prosperity proved to an important factor of state revenue next to agriculture.

The writing of foreign travellers such as the Venetian Marco Polo and Muslim historians like Wassaf, contain much information about medieval Madurai and the Pandyan Kingdom which was known to them ma’bar. The Arabic term ma'bar means ferry or passage, indicative of the facilities for obtainable in the Pandya and country. Their accounts show that Madurai was the center of a kingdom with flourishing trade both internal and external. Marco Polo describes of length the kingdom of ma’bar, its ports such as Kayal, its pearl fisheries and trade in pearl and horses, the royal court and the king’s treasures.\(^{602}\)

**Internal Trade**

From the early times India carried on a flourishing commerce with the nations across the seas on either side of the peninsula. There was a free and

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\(^{602}\) D.Devakunjari, *Madurai through the ages from the earliest times to 1801 A.D.*, Society for Archeological Historical and Epigraphical Research, Madras, 1952, p.140.
active business intercourse between different parts of the empire. So, the internal as well as external trade flourished under the Cholas.\textsuperscript{603}

The medieval fairs and wandering merchants show that, the commodities which were localised and were not widely distributed. The merchants who brought goods from the distant places used to sell directly to the consumer. There were a class of wandering merchants visiting all the countries, gramas, nagaras, and pattanams with valuable articles in bags, or they usually accompanied their goods which they carried on asses, buffaloes and carts.\textsuperscript{604} Besides the fairs, the bazaars were seen with hectic activities in almost all towns.

\textbf{Articles in Trade}

There were a number of articles such as cut grain, cotton, turmeric, musk, saffron, sandal wood, pearls, pepper, grapes, camphor, mustard, cardamoms, lime dhal, rice, wheat, sugar, pulse, etc. These articles had both internal and external markets where they were exchanged or sold both for money and for goods.\textsuperscript{605}

\textbf{Salt}

The manufacture of sea-salt was carried on under Government supervision and control and subject to considerable imposts in kind and money, local and central. The salt-pan of Marakkanam, Kanyakumari,

\textsuperscript{605} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.429-430.
Variyar and Ayturai were among the more important centres of salt manufacture which was a widespread industry all along the sea coast.606

**Transport**

As a means of transport, we find for long distance, animals and carts were used, lighter articles were also carried men in short distance. Grains appear to have been invariably transferred cars, assess, oxen and were also used to carry the goods.607

Certain commodities like salt had to be transported over long distances i.e. from the sea-coast to the interior villages. The few main roads which connected distant part of the country were important as much for the traders as for the army these roads were called *Peruvali*.608

**Foreign Trade**

Foreign Trade was one of the planks on which the economic prosperity of Tamils depended Marco Polo mentions in particular the profitability of pearl fisheries at Kayal and remarks that imported of horses mostly from Arabia formed part of this trade. The Tamils had developed all facilities needed for brisk overseas trade like good harbours, light houses, ware-houses. The imports were usually luxury goods like glass, coral, wine and topaz and exports and other kinds like pepper, pearls, ivory, textile and

gold ornaments. The exports of special local manufacture like textiles, pearls etc., earned a lot of foreign exchange for the country; it helps for the royal treasury too. The king took one-tenth of the total earnings from pearl-diving and the sale of pearls as his royalty.

**Sungam**

Tolls on the commodities passing through roads a toll was levied. This was known as *ulku* or *sungam*. The word *sungam* is explained generally as including all the imports. The articles of merchandise were imported in ships at coasts from across the seas or the interior. Import duties were collected from the merchandise.

Adhoc cesses included taxes for repairing and maintaining irrigation tanks. *Octroi* on the movement of pepper, arecanut, cloth, rice etc was also levied. Kulottunga who abolished tolls in his 16th year of his reign.

From the early times India carried on a flourishing commerce with the nations across the seas on either side of the peninsula. There was a free and active business intercourse between the different parts of the empire. So, the internal as well as external trade flourished under the Cholas.

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Money or Coins

Coins the term used in Tamil country is *kasu* which in early times stood for gold, silver and copper coins. From the availability of coins we know some information about the Cholas and the Pandyas. Those kings have used many coins. Among them a small percentage of coins are available for study.

The standard unit of transaction in the exchange and buying and selling of goods and articles is called *kalanju* in the Tamil country. There was another unit of money called *kasu*. There were references in the inscriptions which mention the different type of circulation of coins in the medieval Tamil country such as *kalanju*, *kasu*, *akkam*, *kalanju* of gold (*tulaippon*), *Ilakkasu*, *manjadi*, *karunkasu*, *pilavu*, *diramam*, The *panam*, *pidukkuligai*, *anaiachchu*, *Soliyam kasu*, *dinars*, and *tiramam*. (Vide Appendix No.:VII).

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614 Ibid., p.513.
618 Ibid., No.22.
619 Ibid., No.27.
620 Ibid., No.67.
624 A.R.E., 1915 Para 34.
625 A.R.E., 62 of 1916.
The Merchant Guilds or Trade Guilds

The merchants organized themselves in groups or guilds. There were both merchants and trade guilds in the Sangam period known as Sattu. In the later times, the merchant guilds were called in different leaves. Such as the ainnurruvar, the nadanadesin (association of merchants gathering from various quarters? Manigram, Valanjiyar, Nagaratar, Anjuvannam etc. Manigramam gleans vanigramam (or) association of merchants. These merchant associations acting in unions in their public activities. These merchant guilds were gradually autonomous, and they enjoyed the advantages of freedom from state interference. They also suffered from the disadvantage of lacking state patronage.627

There were also local organizations of merchants called nagaram in big centred of trade like Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram. The local bodies of traders and the more general groups were like the manigramam and the valanjiyar. The Brahmins also engaged in the trade along with valanjiyar in the south bazaar of Ennayiram.628

An inscription from Tenkarai near Periyakulam belonged to the Sadvarman Srivallabha records the merchant guilds Aynpolil and appears to

record certain rules framed by them in regard to social class Valangai and Idangai.  

An inscription from Tiruvilakudi (Tanjore District) mentions the valanjiyar and Nanadesiyat-tisai ayirattainnuruvar who were the part of this place built a part of the temple at Tiruvilakkudi. The valanjiyar seems to have had their settlement originally in South Ceylon.

Merchants organized themselves into guilds and were associated with similar associations in other parts of India. Inscriptions in the Pandyan country dating from 9th century onwards give us graphic account of the activities of the members of the guild. Several facts concerning their free movement from one place to another, their settlements of the names of the guilds, their philanthropic activity both inside the Pandya country and outside are well attested by inscriptions. Among the trade guilds, the nanadesis were the most widespread. They were divided on a linguistic basis. We hear of a merchant guild called disai ayivathuainnuruvar. They were 500 companies of merchants from thousand cities in all the four directions. They were powerful autonomous corporations whose activities knew no political boundaries. They visited all the important Indian towns in the course their trade and everywhere they enjoyed a repeated a privileged position.

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An inscription from Ambasamudram issued in the 15th year of Jatavarman Sundaracholapandyas rule and relates to the gift of land made for the merit of the merchant community called \textit{nana-desi-disai-ayirattu-ainnurravar}, apparently of \textit{Pandi-mandalam} who were residing in the quarter called Rajendra Cholapperunderuvu probably at Rajaraja - \textit{Chaturvedimangalam}. This merchant-guild figures in a number of other records in the Tirunelveli district. The donor appears to be a member of this community named \textit{Solai-ainnurrvan}.\footnote{\textit{S.I.I.}, Vol.XIV, No..146.}

\textbf{Nagaram}

The \textit{nagaram} was in all probability a primary assembly of merchants, which was organised as one of the local assemblies in important trade centres and was the only assembly in places where the mercantile interests overshadowed all the rest.\footnote{K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{The Cholas, Op.cit.}, p.503.} There were local organization of merchants called \textit{nagaram} in big centres of Trade like Kanchipuram. There is a reference about the \textit{Nagarattar} guild or assembly who were another trading community in the Tamil country.\footnote{\textit{S.I.I.}, Vol.XIX, No.365.}

\textbf{Manigramam}

Manigramam was another self-regulating corporation of merchants. An inscription from Srinivasanallur mentions the mercantile guild of the \textit{manigramam} of the Rajakesaripuram in Malanadu.\footnote{\textit{S.I.I.}, Vol.XIII, No.26.}
An inscription at Tiruvisalur Kumbhakonam Taluk, Thanjavur district mentions the body called *Ayirattorunurruvar*.\(^{636}\) Another inscription from Vedaranyam mention the community *Tigai* (Disai) *Ayirattainnurruvar*.\(^{637}\) The origin of the body is not clear. As its name implies, it must have comprised a membership of 1500 individuals or families.

**Food**

During the medieval period, the food habits of the people varied in nature. The staple food of the people was rice. The people also prepared different kinds of side dishes called *pulinkani ponikkan* etc. Turmeric, mustard, ginger and other tasty foods were also included in the diet of the people.\(^{638}\) The meat, fish and milk products supplemented, the average Tamilian diet.\(^{639}\) The rice, dhal, ripe plantain, sugar were the staple food of the people.\(^{640}\)

**Dress**

The common people wore scarce dress made of cotton. Their women except on important occasions covered their upper parts without any braziers, whereas the rich and middle class women always paid attention to their dress and attire. Ornaments made of gold, silver beads, corals, pearls and diamonds adorned them. The poor used ornaments made of beads,

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\(^{637}\) *Ibid.*, No..216.


palmyrah leaves and wood, the rich could afford to buy the costly cloth brought and sold by the Greek and Roman traders. The rich women enjoyed taking to different hair styles.\footnote{B.S.Chandrababu, \textit{The Land and People of Tamilnadu – An Ethnographical Study, Op.cit.}, p.36.}

People in Tamil Nadu particularly in the rural areas were foliage as their loin garment in the summer. The more sophisticated sections in society wore cotton cloth occasionally supplement with the silk. Women cared less ornaments were more profusely worn than textile garments. The climate demanded sparse clothing.\footnote{N.Subramanian, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.263.}

\textbf{Land Measurement}

The land tax was main source of revenue to the state. There were different kinds of methods used for measuring the during the medieval times. The epigraphs mention these measurements.

24 feet \textit{adikal} (24-feet) and 18 feet \textit{adikol} were normally used for measuring land. Another kind of measurement \textit{kudi thanki} was used during reign of Maravarman Sundara Pandya I. It was 24 feet length. It was used for measuring land. \textit{Arul nidhi kol} was used during the reign of Maravarman Kulasekara. The 24 feet \textit{kol} called sundarpandyan \textit{kol} on 18 feet \textit{kol} erivirapandyan \textit{kol},\footnote{K.V.Raman, \textit{Pandyar Varalaru}, Tamilnadu Text Book Society, Chennai, 1977, p.179.} and Sundara Pandyan \textit{kol}.\footnote{A.R.E., 283 of 1977-78.}
Land tax predominated over the occupation throughout the Chola country. The tax was collected in both cash and kind. In general, the tax did not fall below one-third of the produce at any time.

Settlements like *agraharams*, *chaturvedimangalams*, *brahmadeyams* and *devadanams* were exempted from taxes.

A kind of bonded-labour existed but never did the labourers suffer from want of food.

Various traders, trade guilds and artisans living in the towns, cities and villages were taxed. It is estimated that the Imperial government of the Cholas had imposed about 400 taxes on people. There was practically no profession that was left untaxed.

The inscriptions of the medieval period state that during certain periods of the later Pandyas, the taxes were heavy. The people could not bear the weight of heavy taxation and hence were at times forced to sell their lands to pay off the taxes.

The lands during the Chola and Pandya times were also irrigated by the irrigation at canals and tanks provided by the state were taxed more than the state's natural water sources. The state stood to get more revenue by way of levying additional tax on irrigation.

In the medieval times, famines as elsewhere in India broke out frequently in Tamilnadu. During the rule of Cholas and Pandyas, due to the outbreak of famines, the people faced so many problems like scarcity of food
grains, starvation and sometimes, they sold themselves to the temples as slaves. At some other times the people of particular villages deserted and abandoned their lands.

There were a few peasant's revolts that took place during the time of Imperial Cholas and later Pandyas. The peasants resorted to protest against the king, the landlords like Vellalas and Brahmans for imposition of heavy taxation. They also fought for an increase in their wages.

Along side the cash transactions the barter system also existed and the paddy was the main source of transaction.

There were a number of articles such as grain, cotton, turmeric, musk, saffron, sandal wood, pearls, grapes, camphor, mustard, cardamoms, lime, dhall, rice, wheat, sugar, pulses etc. These articles had both internal and external markets where they were exchanged or sold both for money and for goods.

Merchants organised themselves into guilds and were associated with similar associations in other parts of India. The Pandya country inscriptions tell about the free movement of guilds from one place to another, their settlements, their philanthropic activities both inside the Pandya country and outside of it.

By and large during the period under study, the economic condition of people who were dependent on agriculture and particular, the peasantry, with the exception of landlords and those who enjoyed tax free lands was poor, but the treasury of the Imperial Cholas was fairly sound.