INTRODUCTION

Dynastic movement in South India was common due to various factors like social, political, religious and economic. But the political vicissitudes seem to be the prime factor for the drift of the Mahrathas of Thanjavur from their original home, Maharashtra.

The Mahratha general Venkoji also known as Ekoji the step brother of Sivaji the Great, who served under the Sultan of Bijapur took over the administration of Thanjavur in 1676 A.D., after defeating Chengamaladas, the last Nayak ruler of Thanjavur. The family feuds and traditional enmity between the Nayaks of Madurai and Thanjavur were responsible for the catastrophe and total ruin of the latter. After the establishment of the Mahratha rule at Thanjavur, a number of Mahratha families migrated to Thanjavur which subsequently were given settlements and endowments of lands in and around Thanjavur. The fertility and prosperity of Thanjavur coupled with royal patronage attracted scholars, artists and others from Maharashtra and various parts of the country.

Though the Mahratha kings had settled down at Thanjavur, almost every ruler married a girl from a reputable family from Maharashtra, which naturally kept their contacts with that region alive. For the purpose of the administrative convenience these military conquerors did not want to confuse their subjects by introducing unfamilier new systems in the realms of administration and social life. They adopted the existing system of administration as such at the outset and introduced only essential changes as and when the situation warranted. Their migration to Tamilnadu and their settlement at Thanjavur had their own impact on polity, society,
religion, art and letters. In addition, it introduced a multi-lingual situation in Thanjavur where Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Sanskrit, Urdu and English were generally in use due to exigency. The fusion between Mahrathas and the Tamils gave rise to a unique and distinct culture which is witnessed in their administration and social life.

This feature, though very conspicuous, did not receive much attention from Indian historians. Though, here and there some attempts were made, no systematic study so far, has been undertaken on the Mahratha polity and society based on the Modi sources which are indispensable for such a study. The true history of an empire does not consist in the “endless procession of kingdoms and despots”, the court intrigues, the interminable wars waged by the kings and the suppression of the rebellious feudatories, but is to be found in its administrative and social development. The study of the administrative institutions of an empire, the daily activities of the people, their religious and social observances their literary and artistic attainments are at least as important as its political history. A systematic and detailed narrative of the Mahratha rule in Thanjavur and its impact on administration and society has not yet been made and hence this attempt.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

There is no dearth of authoritative material on the Thanjavur Mahratha history. The works pertaining to the Mahrathas are mostly concerned with drum and trumpet and political history leaving little room for their social history. A connected and detailed narrative of Mahratha rule in Thanjavur has not yet been attempted and remains still an untrodden field. Only passing references have
been made by historians like Grant Duff, Orme, Fullarton, Mill and Wilks. As regards the history of Thanjavur Mahratha rulers, a few works deserve special mention.

W. Hickey gives a brief outline of this kingdom in his book *The Tanjore Maratha Principality*. It is sketchy in its details and does not contain any reference to the cultural aspect of Mahratha rule. T. Venkasami Rao has given an account of Mahratha kings in his, *The Manual of Tanjore District*. F.R. Hemingway has given only a summary of their rule in the *Tanjore Gazetteer*. The pioneer work in this field is *The Maratha Rajas of Tanjore* by K.R. Subramanyan, which is very useful for this study. But it has focussed only on the political history.

The other works, *Administration and society in the Carnatic* and *A History of British Diplomacy in Tanjore* by K. Rajayyan trace the relationship of Thanjavur kingdom with others. The other important work, *Mahratha rule in the Carnatic* by C.K. Srinivasan contain the general history, administration, military, literary activities and culture of the Mahrathas.

K.M. Venkataramiah's *Administration and social life under the Mahratha rulers of Thanjavur* (Tamil) published by Tamil University, furnishes information regarding the salient features of their administration and social life. S. Rasu's *Fifty Copper plates of the Mahrathas of Thanjavur* and *Fifty inscriptions of the Mahrathas of Thanjavur* also give some information about the history of Thanjavur Mahrathas.

A fairly reliable information can be gathered from the translated *Modi volumes* in Tamil edited by P. Subramanyan. These
also do not provide a connected history of the Thanjavur Mahratha rulers. Another important source material which needs a mention here are the Government reports as well as reports of the various commissions appointed to investigate Tanjore affairs. The Annual reports from the select committee on the affairs of the East India Company, 1812, Report on slavery 1828, 1838, 1840. Bourdillon’s report on the Madras Ryot, Annual report on Madras administration 1885 are of particular interest. The indigenous works in Marathi, Tamil, Sanskrit, accounts of foreigners, missionries and Jesuit letters are very valuable.

Apart from the literary works and reports, some books, journals and articles are listed in the Bibliography. They contain useful information about the Mahrathas of Thanjavur.

All the existing literary works and other sources do not give a complete picture of the administration and social life of the Mahrathas of Thanjavur and no systematic and authentic account of Mahratha rule in Thanjavur is attempted so far in a comprehensive way.

Here an attempt is made in the following pages to examine the topic ‘Administration and social life under the Mahrathas of Thanjavur’ in a fairly detailed manner. This work may claim to have done due justice to the subject.

OBJECTIVES

The first objective of the present study is to trace the concept of kingship and other agencies of the government of the Mahrathas of Thanjavur.
To make a historical study of the revenue and military administration of the Mahrathas.

To survey the judicial system and provincial administration of the time.

A study of the society from the advent of the Mahrathas till their decline in a detailed manner.

A study of their economy with a reference to trade and commerce.

To take into consideration the religion and religious institutions.

The last objective of this study is to survey the development of art and letters under the Mahrathas of Thanjavur.

SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

The primary source of this study are the official records, reports, Modi manuscripts, (Tamil translation), Mackenzie manuscripts, Jesuit records, Thanjavur temple inscriptions and contemporary literary works. Books, journals and Gazetteers are the secondary sources. The methodology adopted in this work is descriptive and analytical.

DELIMITATION

The research work 'Administration and social life under the Mahrathas of Thanjavur' covers the period from 1676 to 1855 A.D. that is from the time of Ekoji till the extinction of the
Mahratha rule. The kingdom was assumed by the British in 1799. From the time of assumption, to the time of extinction of Mahratha rule, i.e., from 1799 to 1855 the king's rule being confined to the fort alone.

**PLAN OF THE THESIS**

The research work consists of eleven chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction to the dynastic drift, its causes and results with a brief introduction to the Mahrathas of Thanjavur.

The second chapter entitled 'Central Government' deals with the aspects like the concept of kingship, routine work, mode of succession, royal court, palace, seals, emblems, titles and honours, ministers, officers and the nature of the government.

The third chapter examines the revenue administration of the Mahrathas. Here, various sources of revenue, method of collection, concessions and remissions made, the burden of taxation and the items of expenditure have been taken into consideration.

The fourth chapter reviews the military and mode of warfare, method of recruitment, divisions of the army, the foreign policy and the crimes and punishments that were in vogue in those days. It further examines the four fold judicial system of the Mahrathas and police organisation.

The fifth chapter gives a summary of the division of the empire, provincial administration and local self government.

The sixth chapter analyses the social setup under the Mahrathas. It highlights various social aspects like caste, village and
urban communities, social institutions, family, marriage status of women, daily life, dwellings, dress, food, ornaments, pastimes, beliefs and superstitions, ceremonies and festivals during the period under review.

The seventh chapter is focused on the economic conditions under the Mahrathas. The agricultural and trading communities, industry, trade and commerce, weights and measures, mint and coinage are dealt with in detail here under.

The eighth chapter is about religion. Various religions like Saivism, Vaishnavism, Christianity and Islam and other religious institutions like temples, maths, public charities and village deities are examined on the basis of the sources that are available on them.

Chapter nine highlights the system of education which prevailed under the Mahrathas. Elementary education, higher education, female education, vocational and medical education, charity and Missionary schools are reviewed here.

Chapter ten deals with the art and letters. The various aspects of art like Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music and Dance patronised by the Mahrathas are dealt in their proper historical perspective. The literary development under the Mahrathas are also discussed. The liberal patronage extended equally to Sanskrit, Telugu, Marathi and Tamil are dealt with as far as are warranted by the sources.

The eleventh and concluding chapter presents the research findings of the study.
Footnotes


8. K.M. Venkataramiah, *Administration and Social life under the Mahratha rulers of Thanjavur*, (Thanjavur, 1984).

   *Tanjai Marathiar Mannar Kala Arasiyalum, Samudaya Valkaium*, (Thanjavur, 1984).


The Mahratha Dynasty of Thanjavur

Shahji Bhonsle

Sivaji

1. Ekoji, or Venkoji
   1674-1685, confirmed in his post by Sivaji in 1678.

2. Shahji (1685-1711. No issue.)

3. Sarfoji - I, or Sarabhoji (1711-1727. No issue.)

4. Tukoji (1727-1735)

5. Bavaji, or Baba Sahib. 1735-1738.
   His widow ruled for 2 years

6. Sahiji, or Saiyaji, 1738-1741, and 1749-1765

7. Pratapa-Simha, or Partap Singh. 1741-1749.

8. Tulajaji 1765-1787

9. Amara, or Amir, Simha 1787-1797.

10. Sarfoji -II (adopted) 1797-1824.

11. Sivaji -II 1824-1855.

Amara Simha was deposed for mis-government, and pensioned in 1798, Sarfoji’s -II adoption being declared valid. Sarfoji -II ceded Thanjavur to the English, receiving the fort as his residence and an estate for his support.

Sivaji -II died without issue in 1855, and the line became extinct.
TANTAVUR UNDER THE MAHRATTAS.

Boundary of the Tantavur Mahatta Principality.

MAP 6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thanjavur Mahratha Principalities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chidambaram</td>
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<td>2. Devikottai</td>
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<td>3. Tirumullaivasal</td>
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<td>5. Tranquebar</td>
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<td>6. Karaikkal</td>
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<td>10. Sirkali</td>
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<td>11. Pandanallur</td>
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<td>13. Tirukattupalli</td>
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<td>14. Tiruvaiyaru</td>
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<td>15. Aiyampettai</td>
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<td>17. Tiruvaduthurai</td>
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