

History of Pudukottai District a Study

^[1] P. Manikandan

^[1] Ph.D. Research Scholar, P.G. and Research Department of History, V.O. Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi.

Abstract:- Pudukottai became a separate district only during recent times. The area is clearly founded upon ancient traditions. The district of Pudukottai has a very eminent history. It seems to have seen the ruling of various dynasties over the course of time. Our Tamil literature has seen various poets who have hailed from this particular area. It proves to be a very sacred land to the Pandiyas. It was a great centre of trade and business. History tells that many of the wars between the Pallavas and the Pandiyas have been fought in this area. Tamil literature of the Sangam period has mentioned many places of this district. The district became a sort of marcher land between the Pandiyas and the Pallavas. The Cauveri river plays an important role in the geography of the area. The area is a reserve for various archaeological explorations. It has many monuments and scriptures that identify the diversity of rulers the land has seen. It is a abode of cultural inferences. The ground has always been a point for power struggle between the Cholas, Pandiyas and the Pallavas. The area was at its beneficial peak only during the reign of Raja Raja I. In the 17th and 18th centuries the area also saw the rule of the Thondaiman Dynasty. The famous Carnatic Wars were mostly fought around Tiruchirappalli. The history of Pudukottai is of vital importance in order to understand the transformations that have taken place in Tamil Nadu over the course of time.

INTRODUCTION

Pudukkottai is the administrative headquarters of Pudukkottai District in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is a big town located on the banks of River Vallaru,[1] it has been ruled, at different times, by the Early Pandiyas, Muthurajas, Thondaimans, and the British. It is situated about 395 kilometres (245 mi) southwest of the state capital Chennai and about 55 kilometres (34 mi) southwest of Tiruchirappalli. The people in the city are employed majorly in tertiary sector activities. Tamil Nadu's first woman Asiad Santhi Soundarajan is from Pudukkottai.[2]

Being the district headquarters, Pudukkottai accommodates the district administration offices, government educational institutes, colleges and schools. Pudukkottai is a part of Pudukkottai constituency and elects its member of legislative assembly every five years, and a part of the Tiruchirappalli constituency that elects its member of parliament. The city is administered by a selection-grade municipality established in 1912 as per the Municipal Corporation Act. The city covers an area of 21.25 km² and had a population of 143745 in 2011. Road ways is the major mode of transport to the city, while it has also got rail connectivity. The nearest airport is Tiruchirappalli International Airport, located at a distance of 45 km from the city.

SEPARATE DISTRICT

Pudukkottai was organised as a separate district, on 14th January 1974, comprising the former Pudukkottai Division of Tiruchirappalli district with some additions from Thanjavur district. At present, this district is composed of

two Revenue Divisions, namely, Pudukkottai and Aranthangi and nine Taluks, namely, Kulathur, Illuppur, Alangudi, Pudukkottai, Gandarvakottai, Thirumayam, Aranthangi, Avudaiyarkoil and Manamelkudi. There are 763 Revenue Villages. The area of the district is 4663 Sq.Kms. The population of the district is 16,18,345 (as per Census 2011). The district depends a great deal on the monsoon for its water supply.

Many of the villages are of ancient foundation. The district was one of the homes of pre-historic man. A very large number of burial sites found in the northern and western parts of the district attest this fact.

The history of Pudukkottai is an epitome of the history of South India. In and around Pudukkottai, there are many vestiges of the oldest habitations of man and some of the lithic records known in the south. The Pandiyas, Cholas, Pallavas, Haysalas, Vijaynagar and Madurai Nayaks ruled over this part of the country and fostered it's communal organisations, trade and industries and embellished it with temples and monuments of outstanding merit.

LITERATURE

Sangam Tamil literatures mention some place names of the district. Oliyamangalam (Thirumayam Taluk) is called as Ollaiyur in Purananuru. It was the birth place of poet Ollaiyur Kilan Makan Perumchattan and Ollaiyur Thantha Budha Pandyan. Agananuru also mentions Ollaiyur. It seems to have been an important city of the Pandiyas. Four other places also find place in the Sangam classics. They are Ambukkivil, the ancient Alumbil, referred to in Agananuru; Avur the home of the poets Avurkilar, Avur

Mulamkilar; Erichi, the ancient Erichalur which had been identified with Erichi Village in Pudukkottai - Aranthangi road (But according to recent researches a village near Illupur). It was probably the home of the poet Madalan Madurai Kumaranar. Avayapatti is traditionally associated with Avvaiyar, who is believed to have lived here for some time.

There are also few other sites of such finds in the east coast. These, while pointing out the exchanges of the exportable products for Roman gold and silver currency would also indicate the places mentioned to have been active trade centres. The Karukkakurichi hoard contained the issues of the Roman emperors and their queens, successively from Augustus (BC 29 - AD 14) upto Vaspasianus (69-79 AD).

PANDIYA EMPIRE

The next phase in the history of the district, follows the overthrow of Kalabharas by Kadungon in Pandya country about 590 AD. The first Pandya empire inaugurated by Kadungon spread in to the district. This is shown by the presence of inscription of the rulers of this dynasty in Kudumianmalai, Thirugokarnam and Sittannavasal. The poem, Pandimandala sathakam states that Pandya land's northern frontier was river Vellar. The Vellar that flows north of Pudukkottai town has been from the ancient times was the traditional boundary separating the terrains of the Cholas and Pandyas. This dividing line formed the Konadu and Kanadu, on the north and south respectively. The buffer zone between the kingdoms of the Cholas and Pandyas and formed the family of nobility from which kings and other chiefs made matrimonial alliance.

THE PALLAVAS

The period of three centuries between C 600 and C 900 AD relates to the reign of the Pallavas of Kanchi and Pandyas of Madurai who ruled over the entire Tamila Nadu with their boundary in between their empires oscillating on either side of river Kaveri the bone of contention being Chola mandalam the home of Cholas and the fertile Kaveri delta that was the granary of the south and as such always been the cynosure of all powers contending for supremacy during the entire historical period. The Cholas themselves were in eclipse and hibernating only to revive again in the ninth century, when the Pallava power came to an end, the Pandyas were holding on for some more time to yield place ultimately to the waxing Chola power.

Though Mahendravarma Pallava (604-630 A.D) inherited the Pallava empire from his victorious father Simhavishnu

that reached up to the bank of the Cauvery, Chola mandalam could not be retained by his immediate successor, as it was over-run by the Pandyas of the further south. The available historical evidence under the first Pandya empire is rather scanty. The best known is the inscription at Sittannavasal in the reign of Srimara Srivallaba (851-862 AD) and at Kudumianmalai in the reign of Kochadayan Ranadheeran or Sadayan Maran (C 700-730 AD). In the reign of Maravarman Rajasimha-I (C 730-760 AD) a number of battles were fought against the Pallavas, one of the sites was Kodumbalur. The inscription of the reign of Nedunchadayan, (C 768-816 AD) the greatest king of the dynasty is found in Thirugokarnam and Nirpalani. Of the reign of three successors of Srimara Srivallaba ending with Rajasimha-II (C 920 AD) who lost his kingdom to the resurgent Cholas, there are no reference about the Pandya rulers in the district.

BHAKTHI MOVEMENT

The age of Pallavas and Pandyas of the first empire, the Mutharaiyars and Irukkuvelirs was the age of Tamil Bhakthi Movement. The Thevaram mentions several temples in the district. The three Nayanmars from this district were, Idangalinayanar of Kodumbalur, Perumizhalai Kurumbanayanar associated with Devarmalai and Kulachirai Nayanar of Manamelgudi. Jainism well flourished in Pudukkottai area up to 11th century. There are a number of Jaina vestiges in the district. The Buddhist vestiges in the district come from the former Thanjavur district. Buddha idols are found at Kottaiappattinam and Karur.

THE CHOLAS

With the exit of Pallavas from the political scene and the subsequent elimination of the Pandya power by the Cholas who established themselves at Thanjavur as their capital at the close of 9th century. By 11th century they extended their sway even beyond, Tamilakam. Pudukkottai among many other places come under them. Their rule extended till about the middle of 13th century when the Pandyas staged a comeback.

Under Chola Vijayalaya, this district formed part of his dominion but perhaps fitfully. The notion that some temples of ninth century in the district, belong to early Chola period, is erroneous. The full benefaction of the Chola rule is revealed in their inscriptions in the district. These inscriptions are of great value is showing how effectively local administration functioned in this part of Chola Kingdom.

Rajaraja-I appointed his son the viceroy of the conquered Pandya and Chera lands. The entire district formed part of the Chola kingdom until the last year of Kulothunga-III (1178-1218 AD). At the death of Rajaraja-II and the succession of Rajadhiraja-II, the Chola power began to decline.

The Pandyas began to assert their independence from the time of Kulothunga-I. Towards the end of the reign of Raja Raja-II, Kulasekara one of the two contenders for Pandya throne pealed the Chola for help. His rival Parakrama turned towards Srilanka. Pudukkottai also become seat this civil war. Parakrama Babu the Srilanka king sent an army to assist Parakrama Pandya according to Culavamsa, the Sinhalese chornicle the Sinhalese army engaged itself in the war in the parts of the district and burnt down the three storeyed palace at Ponnamaravathi. The outcome of the civil war became disastrous to the Cholas.

The history of the district after the fall of Cholas could not be told in detail for the records are comparatively minimal.. The Pandyas of the second empire spread their influence in the district gradually. The Pandya power reached its height in the district under Jatavarman Sundra Pandya-I and Jatavaraman vira Pandya-I the joint rulers. The inscription of Virapandya in Kudumianmalai, throws much light on his relationship with Srilanka and his kingdom across the seas. During the reign of Maravarman Kulasekara-I who acceded in 1268 A.D, Marcopolo the Venetian traveler visited Pandya country.

ROLE OF MUSLIM KINGS

Malikafur the general of Alaudeen Khalji the Sultan of Delhi took advantage of this and invaded Pandya country. This led to the incorporation of the Pandya country in the Delhi empire in subsequent years. A sultanate was established at Madurai. There are two inscriptions relating to the period of the Sultans of Madurai in the district, one at Rangiam (1332 AD) and another at Panaiyur (1344 A.D). The brief spell of Muslim rule (Sultanate of Madurai) at Madurai lasted for about 75 years and again there was political unrest and chaos and Pudukkottai region also shared the fate. Minor princes ruled small territories here and there. By about 1371 AD. Kumarakampana, the Vijayanagar prince took over Madurai and the Sultanate came to an end. But the Pandya power did not survive on the Hindu conquest and slowly it ceased to be a historical force in the district.

The Hoysalas of Karnataka arrived in the southern part of Tamil Nadu and actively intervened Chola - Pandya feuds

and soon they came to occupy the region on either banks of river Cauvery with the capital at Kannanur (modern Samayapuram). They established themselves in the area by the middle of 13th century and much of the Pudukkottai area was under their sway till the end of 13th century. The Vijayanagar Rayas centered in Hampi took over Madurai, from the Muslims when the whole of southern Karnataka, Andra and Tamilnadu came under one rule - the Vijayanagar empire.

Under the Vijayanagar Sangama dynasty (1336-1485 A.D) the inscriptions in the district refer to many local chiefs such as Suraikudi, Perambur, Sendavanmangalam, Vanadaraiyar, Gangaiaraiyar and Thondaimans of Aranthangi. During the brief Suluva rule (1485-1505 A.D) Narasimha Raya the first Suluva emperor, during a tour of his dominions passed through Pudukkottai country on his way to Madurai. Vira Narasimha Nayak, the Tuluva usurper and the general of Saluva Narasimha-I, led a campaign against the Pandya chiefs and marched through Pudukkottai.

VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE

A great Personality of the Tuluva dynasty (1505-1570 A.D) was Krishna Deveraya (1509-1529 A.D). He had visited Brahadamba Gokarnesa temple at Thirugokarnam on his way to Rameswaram and gifted many valuable presents to the temple. Under his successor eastern part of Pudukkottai district formed part of the Thanjavur kingdom for some time and the rest was under the Madurai Nayaks. The Thondaimans of Pudukkottai rose to power by about the end of 17th century. The provincial viceroys of the Vijayanagar empire, the Nayaks of Madurai and Thanjavur asserted independence after the downfall of the empire. The Pudukkottai area thus came under the Nayaks of Madurai nominally and under the Thanjavur Nayaks frequently. The Thondaimans of Pudukkottai came to rule with full sovereignty over the Pudukkottai area from the middle of the 17th century till it's amalgamation with the rest of India after Indian Independence in 1947.

The ancestors of the Pudukkottai ruling line of Thondaimans, are migrants from Thiruppathi region in the Thondaimandalam, the northern stretch of the ancient Tamil Kingdom, along with the Vijaynagar army, which was in engagement in this part of territory in the early 17th century. It is probable that one among them got some lands assigned to him by the local Pallavarayar chieftain and settled down at Karambakudi and Ambukovil area, and became the chieftain of the area, later came to be called as the progenitor of Thondaimans of Pudukkottai ruling house. According to the legendary account found in a Telugu

poem, Thondaiman Vamasavali, the Thondaimans belonged to Indravamsa and the first ruler was Pachai Thondaiman. Avadi Raya Thondaiman, the successor of Pachai Thondaiman, with the favour of Venkata Raya-III (1630-1642 A.D) the king of Vijayanagar got extended the land in his possession in the region and he was also conferred the title Raya

His son Ragunatha Raya Thondaiman came close to the Nayak of Thanjavur and Rangakrishna Muthuvirappa Nayak of Tiruchirappalli. He was appointed as the arasu kavalar of Tiruchirappalli. Vijaya Raghunatha Kilavan Sethupathi (1673-1710 A.D) the Sethupathi ruler of Ramanathapuram married Kathali Nachiar the sister of Thondaiman. This marriage strengthened the ties between these dynasties. The Sethupathi presented the tract of land to the south of Vellar to the Thondaiman. The tract contained in these taluks, later came to be known as Pudukkottai State (Pudukkottai Samasthanam).

Vijaya Raghunatha Raya Thondaiman (1730-1769 A.D) was the second in the line of Thondaimans. During his period the whole of India come under the umbrella of the Mughals. The Nayakdoms of Ginjee, Thanjavur and Madurai were subjugated and became tributaries of the Mughal rule so also the smaller palayams which were under them. The Nizam of Hyderabad was appointed as the Mughal representative of South India, in turn the Nizam entrusted the Tamilnadu region then known as Carnatic, to the Nawab of Arcot. Many of the tributary states did not remit the tributes regularly and such provinces were invaded by the Nawab's forces. Nothing like this happened in the case of Pudukkottai and was left undisturbed by the Nawab.

THE THONDAIMAN EMPIRE

The Thondaiman's act of friendship towards English continued by the next ruler Raya Raghunatha Thondaiman (1769-1789 A.D). Because of this the Thondaiman had to encounter the strong forces of Hyder Ali.

Vijaya Raghunatha Thondaiman (1789 - 1807 A.D) helped the English and the Nawab. The Nawab Mohamed Ali conferred up on the Thondaiman the title "Raja Bahadur". The political wind was in favour of the English. The entire Carnatic region was taken over by the English by 1800. During the process of consolidation of the English rule, the Thanjavur Maratha kingdom was taken away, Ramanathapuram was reduced to a Jamindari but Pudukkottai was on the firm grounds and it was allowed to be separate principality (not as a part of British India) with honours and was high in British favour. Pudukkottai was

treated as a State and the Raja was quasi-independent ruler with full powers of administration.

It was during the time of this ruler Vijaya Raghunatha Thondaiman, the Poligar war took place between the English and the rebellious palayakars of Thirunelveli, the most significant of whom was Veerapandia Kattabomman or Kattabommu Nayak. Kattabomman defied the authority of English in collecting revenues on the Sicar lands and also in remitting the tribute regularly. Hostilities commenced against him, and Panchalamkurichy fort was attacked. While Kattabomman has risen in general estimation as a hero, the image of Thondaiman as reflected in the events of the time, has suffered a fall because capturing and handing over of Kattabomman and come to be regarded as betrayal and as an unpatriotic act. Seen however in the political background then prevailed in the context of Thondaiman's fidelity to the English in prosperity and adversity and to the fact that Kattabomman never sought asylum with Thondaiman and hence the Thondaiman's role may objectively summed up as the reflex action of the ally and does not amount to betrayal.

The next ruler Raja Vijaya Raghunatha Raya Thondaiman (1807-1825 AD) was crowned when he was a minor and the British Government appointed Major John Black Burn, to undertake the management of the province of Pudukkottai. Since he was the former Resident of Thanjavur he brought to Pudukkottai a good deal of Thanjavur administration of Maratha mystique and Marathi was the language of administration of Pudukkottai for about seventy five years. The town was planned with straight roads bisecting each other in the four directions of the palace and thus Black Burn laid the foundation for modern town of Pudukkottai. (This palace, "The old palace" has disappeared completely, we can see the remains of the high wall in a few places in the vicinity of the present west main street and south main street (Rajaveethi)).

Raghunatha Thondaiman (1825 - 1839 A.D) was conferred with the title "His Excellency" by the British Government. He planned in 1830 to bring the Cauvery water to Pudukkottai through a new canal but could not succeed due to paucity of funds. Raghunatha Thondaiman was succeeded by his son Ramachandra Thondaiman (1839 - 1886). His long tenure of office was marked by extravagance and gross mismanagement. The towering administrative office building in red brick colour in Pudukkottai was constructed under the supervision of Seshaiyah Sastri. The Pudukkulam, the big lake in the town was another creation of Seshaiyah Sastri. Ramachandra Thondaiman has renovated many temples in the State. He was succeeded by Marathanda Bhairava Thondaiman.

International Journal of Science, Engineering and Management (IJSEM)

Vol 3, Issue 4, April 2018

Marthanda Bhairava Thondaiman (1886-1929) became the ruler of the state at the age of 11. The administration was looked after by a council with the approval of the British Government. He toured in Europe extensively.

Raja Rajagopala Thondaiman (1928 -1948) the last and ninth in the line of Thondaiman rulers, was selected by the British Government and was crowned when he was six years old. The administration was looked after by English administrators, among them Alexandar Totenham was noteworthy. After Indian independence in 1947, the Pudukkottai Princely State was amalgamated with Indian Union on 04/03/1948 and became a division in Tiruchirappalli district. The long history of the Thondaimans rule came to an end.

CONCLUSION

Such a brief historical sketch covering a period of time of over two millennia will beside acquainting one with the political forces and trends of the area located at the centre of Tamil Nadu, will help to appreciate the nature, variety, origin chronology and importance of the monuments their inscriptions architecture, sculptures iconography and other aesthetic contents.

They extended their sway by the eleventh century and Pudukkottai among many other places came under them. Their rule extended till about the middle of the thirteenth century when the Pandyas staged a comeback. The history of the district after the fall of Cholas could not be told in detail for the records are comparatively minimal. The Pandyas of the second empire spread their influence in the district gradually. The brief history of this district covering a period of over two millennia helps in giving an insight into the variety, nature, origin, chronology and importance of the monuments and their inscriptions, architecture, sculptures iconography and other aesthetic contents.

ENDNOTES

- [1] "About Pudukkottai". Pudukkottai municipality. 2011. Retrieved 2012-12-29.
- [2] Ancient History of Pandyas (1st ed.). Publications Division. 1990 [1981]. ISBN 81-230-0658-6.
- [3] "Climate and Rainfall" (PDF). Retrieved 2018-01-01.

- [4] Dirks, Nicholas B. (1987). The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of An Indian Kingdom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 66–67. ISBN 0-521-32604-4.
- [5] Howes, Jennifer (2012). Courts of Pre-Colonial South India. Routledge.p. 115. ISBN 9781135789961.
- [6] Stein, Burton (1989). The New Cambridge History of India. Cambridge University Press. pp. 136–138. ISBN 9780521266932.
- [7] V., Annamalai (1996). Formation And Transformation Of Power In Rural India. Discovery Publishing House. pp. 26–28. ISBN 9788171413232.
- [8] "Poll ticket, crowd-funded academy on Santhi's agenda". The Times Of India. TNN. 201605-07. Retrieved 2018-01-01.
- [9] Urban Infrastructure Report 2008, p. 5
- [10] Urban Infrastructure Report 2008, p. ii.