

Ocean Trade In Ancient Tamil Nadu In Post Sangam Age- An Analytical Study

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Abstract- A land area bordering the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea to the east and west, has helped Ancient Tamil Nadu to trade. The Chinese and South Asian merchants in the lower reaches did not go far beyond middle India, and the western Arabs, Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, commonly known as Yavaarka in ancient Tamil peoples, were not much interested in crossing into India and trading with the underlying nations. . The location of Tamil Nadu was an opportunity to trade with countries in both the East and West, in the maritime trade between the Mediterranean Sea and the South China Sea in the West, known in the West. The data on trade and maritime commerce in the Sangam literature is of great importance for the study of antiquarian maritime trade. This article entrusted to bring the Literature evidence of ocean trade, Equipment's used , various Ports of ancient Tamil Nadu and Imported and exported commodities.

Keywords- Sangam age Literature, Yavanarkal, various ports, Imported commodities , exported commodities

I. INTRODUCTION

The Tamil Sangam Age is important and unique for the Tamils ' social, economic, religious and cultural life. During this period, there has been an all-round development. These developments are revealed by the Sangam literatures as well as the archaeological findings from the very early times, Tamil country had carried on extensive foreign trade. From around the third century B.C, the Greeks and Romans had commercial contacts with the Tamil country. Throughout the Sangam era, these trade relationships had lasted. During the Sangam Age, we had plenty of sources for studying maritime activities.(1)

Trade, domestic as well as international, was well organized, and all the time our internal trade was brisk, merchant caravans and pack animals carried their goods from place to place, Barter played a major role in all transactions, and salt was a major commodity of trade. (2) Though there are many wars in the Tamil kings, they are not in control of the business of the merchants. Others, such as Narasimha Pallavan II (720 BCE), Rajaraja Chola (1015 BCE), Rajendra Chola (1030 BCE) and Kulothunga Chola (1070 BCE), sent

ambassadors to the Chinese government to promote business relations.

The region of Tamil Nadu, which is known as a linguistic and homogeneous language, has been in constant struggle since the ancient times, between the three kings and the minor kings, but the business of Tamil Nadu was not affected even though it was not a stable empire.

Therefore, it is not necessary to have a strong stable government for maritime trade and domestic business to flourish. Maritime trade in antiquity has been excellent, with no strict taxes, restrictions, and government interference in other ways.

The merchants were lived in a group, and that the best merchants were honoured by the state with the award of 'Eddie Exchange' and the Gold Medal. Some of the merchants were literate, some were wealthy people who lived in loft houses, and some were wealthy people who supported religious institutions. Based on the size of the wealth, they lived with the names of Ippār, kavippar and qualifications of being a caliber, a rich merchant.(3)

II. ANCIENT SANGAM AGE TRADE IN THE WORLD



SOURCE: E-DOCUMENTS-SPICE TRADE-WIKI.

The blue line in the diagram above shows the ancient sea trade and the dashed red line the ancient ground trade. Countries from China to Rome were held in ancient trade. The

early Tamil trade was only a coastal route from the Indonesian islands to the Persian Gulf. Only then did it evolve into a mid-ocean business. Since then it has spread from Egypt to the west, from Rome to the east to China.

The Tamils, from the earliest times to the longest, have visited the Indonesian islands and the Persian Gulf. It was the Arabs who distributed the products of Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka and the South East Asian countries mainly to the West and the perfumes and spices. In the ancient times, the West needed very much perfumes and spices. Then the Tamils went to East Africa and did business (Somalia).

Tamils have been living in their respective countries since ancient times. Sumeria, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persian civilizations originated in Persia, pictured above. The perfume island (Moluccus) and other southeast Asian countries are located near the site of Java in the map above. In ancient West Tamil Nadu (Kerala), near to Cochin, present-day Musiri and Barygaza, near Mumbai, are shown on the map (4)

III. FOREIGN TRADE EVIDENCES IN SANGAM LITERATURE

In Sangam Literature, One verse in the Mullaiappattu describes them as "dressed in broad and puffed skirts, folded up and supported by a whip with their stiff corset, awe-inspiring, strong body, hardened, watch over the tiger chain separating the beautiful room." This verse references to the 'Yavanas' (Westerners in general) in many documents, which on circumstantial evidence may apply to the Greco-Romans. (5)

"Nakkirar, the Sangam's leading poet, refers to the statues of female lamp bearers of the Yavanas ' excellent workmanship(6). The same poet in another verse makes a pointed reference to the sweet-scented wine (tankamal teral) brought in by the Yavanas ' lovely ships "served to you (king) every day on chiseled gold trays by girls with sparkling wrists and after degustation of it, may you be loaded with marriage."(7)

Another early poet, Tayan-Kannanar, sheds light on the Chera (west coast) pepper trade. He describes how the Yavanas ' magnificent ships came stirring the Periar (of the Keralas) white foam sailed in with the gold and sailed off with pepper making Muziri (the port city) prosperous.(8) Likewise, on the east coast, Kaveripumpattinam's famous port town. Kaveri, identified by Ptolemy as the ' Kaberis Emporion,' had extensive overseas trade connections in the early centuries and, according to the Tamil epic Silappadikaram, Yavanas had

their residences or colony there, whose prosperity never waned. It also describes them (Yavanas) of rough speech.(9) Another interesting reference to the Romans is found in the epic-Manimekhalai (5th or 6th C.A.D.) It mentions how the artists from Magadha, Mahrathi Cratsmen, blacksmiths of Avanti and the Yavana carpenters contributed to build the splendid city of Kaveripattinam. The word used is ' Yavanatachar(10)

Sea navigation and equipments used

The term "Navai" refers to the ancient maritime cost of the Tamils. In examining this ancient phrase, the way in which it is presented, explains the history of our Tamils. Our words are born with the "tongue" movement. Similarly, the term "occupation of the sea" may be thought of as navigating the ocean, making air and the sound of human beings waving and making waves in the water. It points to the study view and myth of the Tamil language. Sea voyage is not simple.

Sea navigation can only be planned and executed by those who have an accurate knowledge of nature. The experience of wind trajectory, direction and wind pressure is essential for sailing. The ancient Tamils had such ability. They had the skills of shipbuilding Tamil sailors, knowledge of the sea, high knowledge of the wind, navigational skills, and fighting pirates. This is the reason why many of the islands have crossed the ancient Tamil Nadu territory.(11)

Nautical words of ancient Tamil literature

Netunalvaatai, Malaipatakataam, and Tirumurukaarrupatai do not have nautical words among all 20 sangam literature texts as they are not related to maritime activities. Four forms of vessels are depicted by mathuraikkaanji of pathupattu. In addition to Narrinai, Akanaanuuru and Puranaanuuru, Kaliththokai and Paripaatal anthologies provide knowledge of many words. The later epics of Silappathikaaram and Manimeekalai provide details about five crafts styles.(12)

Ambi

This boat could be understood to have been used in both coastal fishing and river crossing. according to Tamil Lexicon (TL) is a small boat found in 14 cases (TL 1982:96). There are ten occurrences in the context of the vessel(s) with the sea and four occurrences with the river(s). The tightly constructed ambience applies to horned buffalo floating in the pond (Nattrinai 315:3) with regard to the presence. This was also compared to the elephant's movement to quench their thirst after mirage (Akanaanuuru 29:18). These boats were

probably black in color and could look like an elephant's head. No mast or sail reference is found.

Reference to *ambi* as a ferry service on the stream is mentioned within the literature of later period(s), except on one occasion of an early amount (Puranaanuuru 381:24). The later literature mentions stream crossing by *ambi*. The bows of *ambi* were embellished as horse, elephant and lion faces. This can be quoted long with *marappunai* (wooden float) that was thought-about less luxurious (Manimeekalai 13:178-179). From the higher than data it will be inferred that *ambi* was a tiny low craft of no more than elephant size and was employed in the coastal fishing and transport of goods, and conjointly used for stream crossing. As *ambi* isn't mentioned with any sail and conjointly used for stream crossing it might be propelled by paddles.

Kalam

There are many meanings to the word *kalam* in Tamil. But the key sense is tube, a wood, soil, or any metal container. The meaning of this study is a boat or a ship (TL 1982:778).

One could discern in the literature of 17 occurrences that *kalam* has been used for a sailing ship and that it makes long journeys. However, the term used for a littoral fishing boat was used in one instance (Akanaanuuru 30:9). Ironically, *kalam* has been sailed by wind power in most cases (Puranaanuuru 26:12; Puranaanuuru 30:12; Puranaanuuru 386:14; Kaliththokai 5:6). It is often considered a ship that carried riches in terms of wine and gold (Akanaanuuru).

Mithavai

'The word *mithavai* meaning float (TL 1982:3199) is quoted only once as *mithavaiyar* (boat people) i.e. raft (Paripaatal 6:35) without further information.

Navaay

This is a ship or a vessel (TL 1982:2109). It was like a *kalam* deep sea boat. The Chera 3 kings used these kinds of ships and sailed in the area of the Arabian Sea, carrying gold (Puranaanuuru 126:15). It is accounted for the *naavaay* full of goods from different countries (Natrinai 295:6). This type of ship went up to the mouth of the Ganges river loaded with northern products and western horses (Perumpanarrupatai 320; Mathuraikkaanji 83; mathuraikkaanji 321).

Otam

A ferry or raft (TL 1982:621) means a Tamil *otam*. A solitary reference to *otam* (Akanaanuuru 101:12) is found in the literature. Here the rising Sun in the sea is compared to implying a small vessel.

Pahri

It means a ship (TL 1982:1494) and in one example it occurs (Pattinappaalai 30). It was a coastal boat used to paddy salt barter. It can be compared to the *ambience*, as it was also used for fishing paddy exchange (Puranaanuuru 343). The *ambi* for bartering is mentioned in poems, however, in the sense of the west coast, and *pahri* is accounted for in the east coast.

Punai

That is a float or a raft (TL 1982:1707). Throughout earlier literature, this word is used such as *kurunthokai*, *akanaanuuru* and *puranaanuuru*. This word was therefore prevalent from the early period, but all in the river boats sense. These were made of bamboo reeds from Europe. *Arundo donax* 6:8; *akanaanuuru* 180:9.

The life-saving floating wood in the sea is accounted for when the ships wrecked in a cyclone (*kaliththokai* 134:25). It is compared on other occasions with the hero becoming a lover's life-saver (*punai*). The *punai* was a major craft in the Vaigai river near Madurai used for water games (*kaliththokai* 72:15).

Thimil

The word *Thimil* refers to a bull hump or fishing boat (TL 1982:1047). This word is only found to be used in the Ocean sense. The Tamil *paratavar* fishermen used this craft to hunt the sharks and other fish. Going into *thimil* catching sharks with nets (*Natrinai* 111:6; *Akanaanuuru* 340:18) and many occasions with harpoons (*Natrinai* 199:6; *Natrinai* 388:4; *Kurunthokai* 304:4) are referred to as fishing and conch shell diving (*Kurunthokai* 123:5; *Akanaanuuru* 240:3; *Akanaanuuru* 350:11). It was not possible to distinguish the shape and size of the *thimil*, but they were only used in shallow waters.

Thoni This word denotes a boat (TL 1982:1236). This kind of boat was referred to in lines like the ships (*Thoni*) floating on the sea (*Puranaanuuru* 299:3) moving horses. After fishing, the *thoni* has been brought ashore, is reported in *Akanaanuuru* (50:1). It is interesting to note that as *thoniar* were mentioned the people who fished in the *thimil* boat, implying that the *thimil* was also called *thoni*.

Vangkam

The word Vangkam means a boat that moves quickly (TL 1982:3452). The term meant large ships traveling long distances in the literature. So the ship's size might be quite large. The vessel going up to the Ganges River is considered to be vangkam (Natrinai 189:5). It also mentions the vangkam mast (Natrinai 258:9). With the aid of light buildings, the captain sailed the vangkam (Akanaanuru 255:1). To obtain wealth, they left for different places (Pathirppaththu 52:4; Silappathikaaram 14:107).

The curve shape of the vangkam (kaliththokai 92:48). It is also mentioned making series of ships going up to Ganges (Silappathikaaram 26:165). The Java Island people came in vessels of this type of vangkam (Manimeekalai 14:73). And on many occasions, in Manimeekalai (14:73-85; 21:85; 25:126; 25:238; 26:85; 29:7), the deep sea vessel vangkam is registered. Manimeekalai also accounts for the vangkam that was destroyed (29:16).

Light houses

Kalangkarai vilakkam (vessel > kalam, Shore > karai, light > vilakkam) is the term lighthouse in Tamil. There are examples of the high lights used as navigation points for the tower. The Pattinappalai (111-112) also attests to this, but the vessel used to fish is described as Thimil.

The Perumpanarrupatai (346-351) alludes to the lights illuminated at night by climbing on the ladder on the building nearly touching the sky for the vessels. The word Kalangkarai vilakkam, however, is found in silappathikaaram (6:141).

Anchors

The solitary reference is the stone anchor that damaged the ship as a result of a cyclone in Mathuraikkaanji (375-379)

Building and repairing of vessels

While there is no direct evidence of ship building and its position, the word Nankalam tarunarum (Silappathikaaram 5:31), kalampunar kammiyar refers to those who built ships on the seafront.

The word kalamcey kammiyar (the shipbuilder) indirectly refers during this time to the shipbuilding activity. The captain repaired the damaged ropes and joints of a ship with the help of some sort of resin (Paripaatal 10:53-55).

Various Ports in Sangam age Tamil Nadu

There were many ports on the coast of Bengal during the Sangam. These ports played a major role in the barter trade at home and the ancient sea trade abroad. The Sangam literature shows the Pandya country as the ports on the banks of the Bay of Bengal, the Kaviripumpattinam of the Chola country, the Aerapattinam of the Oyama and Thondai nattin Neripeuatu. Eriyapattinam was a prosperous port during the period and was sunk in the Bay of Bengal by natural disaster(13)

Ironically, the port of Enayam in Tamil Nadu is not the first of its kind. As early as the 3rd century BC, the state had more than 16 such ports— between Chennai and Tirunelveli — which helped it establish direct maritime connections with China, Egypt, parts of Europe, and countries in Southeast Asia. Archeologists say that ancient Tamil literature and excavations are proof of the existence of such ports that in the past played a major role in overseas trade. Secretary of the Madurai-based Pandya Nadu Center for Historical Research, C Santhalingam, said that the Sangam period (3rd century BC— 3rd century AD) can be traced to trading activities by Tamils via sea route.

"Kaveripoompattinam's historic coastal town (Poompuhar in Nagapattinam district) reported imports of horses from Arab countries and finished goods from Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The port has also been a major center for South India spice exports," he adds. References to Kaveripoompattinam can be found in Tamil literary works such as 'Pattinappalai' and 'Silappathikaram.' Santhalingam says reports of ship repair units and dock yards in many parts of the state point to the ancient maritime trade of TN with the rest of the world.

Excavations showed the presence of a port in the district of Ramanathapuram at Azhagankulam, while Tamil scripts described a port in the district of Tuticorin at Korkai. Mamallapuram was established in the north by the Pallavas as a vital seaport. Mylapore in the districts of Chennai, Kovalam and Sathurangapattinam (Sadras) and Kulasekarapattin(14)



PC: Wikipedia

Ancient Port connected with Roman trade



S.NO	ANCIENT PORT	MODERN NAME
1	Nnura	Cannanore
2	Tyndis	Tondi
3	Muciri	Miziris
4	Nelcynda	Kottayam
5	Bacare	Varkkalai
6	Kolklioi	Korkai
7	AJagankulam	Alagankulam
8	Camara	Kaveripumpattinam
9	Karaikadu	V Palghat pass
10	Poduke	Karaikadu
11	Sopaima	Arikamedu
12	Vasavasamudram	Marakkanani
13	Mamallapurain	Vasavasamudran
14	Manarpha	Mamallapurara

Alagankulam may be identified with ancient Saliyur(15)

Trading commodities

Agriculture was the most important profession. Rice was the plant that was popular. The other plants are ragi, sugarcane, cotton, pepper, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon and a

variety of fruits. In the Chera nation, Jack's fruit and pepper was popular. Paddy was the main crop in the nation of Chola and Pandya. The Sangam era crafts were popular. These include weaving, metal and carpentry works, ship building and ornamentation using beads, stones and ivory.



Since internal and external trade was at its height during the Sangam era, there was a great demand for these goods. The poems refer to the cotton clothing as thin as a steam cloud or a slough of a snake. In the western world there was a great demand for the Urayiur woven cotton clothes. External trade took place between the Greek kingdoms and South India.

The Roman trade took on importance after the rise of the Roman Empire. Puhar's port city became a foreign trade emporium, as large ships entered this port with valuable goods. Tondi, Musiri, Korkai, Arikamedu and Marakkanam are other commercial ports. Periplus ' author provides the most useful foreign trade information.

In all parts of Tamil Nadu there were found plenty of gold and silver coins issued by the Roman Emperors such as Augustus, Tiberius and Nero. They reveal the extent of trade in the Tamil country and the presence of Roman traders. Cotton fabrics, spices such as pepper, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon and turmeric, ivory products, pearls, and precious stones were the main exports of the Sangam age. The main imports were gold, horses, and sweet wine.(16)

The Chola Coast finally focused on all the articles prepared in Egypt for Tamilakam's markets as well as all Tamilakam's own products. Pepper was brought into ships from distant lands beyond the sea; gold and precious stones came from the north mountain; sandal and akil came from the mountain to the west: pearls from the south and coral from the east seas. The products of the regions watered by the Ganges; everything that is grown on the banks of the Kaveri food items

from Elam or Sri Lanka and the "kalakatn" manufactures have been brought to the Pukar markets.(17)

The Yavanas also shipped sugar sweets to Tamilakam. An item in great demand was a lamp shaped like a black swan (the odiman); the peculiarity of this sort of lamp was the flame in which it did not flicker, but it was a steady flame and a novelty for the Tamils.(18)

Tamilakam exported gold ornaments. The Periplus testifies to the South Indian export of coconut oil, while Pliny includes bananas, rice, millets and various medical plant products, including tamarind. The imports into Muziri are given by the Periplus as "a great quantity of coin, topaz, thin clothing, linen, antimony, coral, crude glass, copper, tin, lead, moderate quantities of wine and wheat only for the sailors, for this is not dealt in by the merchants there". (The exports from there included a large quantity of fine pearls, ivory and silk cloth from kottanora (Kuttanadu).(19)

While Tamilakam exported fine varieties of cloth, some varieties of cotton fabrics appeared to have been imported from other countries. Kalingam and Kalagam are imported Kalinga and Malaya varieties of cloth. Large ships filled with "Tamarind mixed with jaggery and salt and dried mother chops, brought the large ornaments and horses tamed with difficulty to the land of Yavana."(17) Pearls, silver, diamond and ivory were the main items shipped to the north by the Tamils. It is interesting to note that tigers, elephants, hounds, parrots, peacocks, snakes and pythons have been included among exports from India to the West(20)

IV. CONCLUSION

In the Sangam Era, both domestic and foreign trade was well coordinated and carried on briskly. Detailed information on this topic is provided by the Sangam literature, Greek and Roman accounts, and archaeological evidence. Merchants carried the goods from place to place on the carts and on the animal-back. Most of the internal trade was based on the system of barter. High quality was obtained by spinning and weaving cotton and silk fabrics. Even though there was a political changes, trade was not affected. This study further discussed about various port city in ancient sangam age with both archaeological evidences and literature evidences. Ocean trade, trading commodities, equipment used indicates that well advanced trading practices in Sangam age.

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