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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF NADU NAADU: A STUDY THROUGH EARLY TAMIL INSCRIPTIONS

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#### Abstract

Archaeological vestiges in the form of early Tamil epigraphs traced from more than seven places of the Nadu Naadu really opened new vistas in the annals of the Regional history. In this regard it becomes quite appropriate to cite the details of the epigraphs with find spot, critical remark for continuation of history of this region. The details of such findings are narrated at length for proper understanding and historical setting of Tamil Nadu. They are found at Jambai, Tondur, Nekanurpatti, Perumukkal, Arasalapuram, Paraiyanpattu and Thirunatharkunru.

This paper discussed the great phenomenon of Historical Importance of Nadu Naadu: A Study through early Tamil Inscriptions. We can understand the antiquity of Tamil Nadu in both time and space and to study the political, social and economic development of the Tamil Nadu during these primarily archaeological and epigraphically sources.

**Keywords:** Inscription, archaeological, epigraphy, engraved, salleanam, jain tradition, vadakkiruttal.

#### Introduction

Nadu naadu (or) Naduvu-nadu is usually considered to have compressed of the area between the Pennai and North Vellaru rivers. This view is based on the presumption that the Southern boundary of Tondai nadu was the Pennai River and

the Northern boundary of the Chola nadu was the Vellaru (White River).

Archaeological vestiges in the form of early Tamil epigraphs traced from more than seven places of the Nadu naadu really opened new vistas in the annals of the regional. In this regard it becomes quite appropriate to cite the details of the epigraphs with find spot, critical remarks for continuation of history of this

region. The details of such findings are narrated at length for proper understanding and historical setting of Tamil nadu. They are found at Jambai, Tondur, Nekanurpatti, Perumukkal, Arasalapuram, Paraiyanpattu and Thirunatharkunru.

## **Early Tamil Inscriptions**

### **Jambai**

This village is located in Tirukoilur taluk of Kallakurichi district enroute Tirukoilur-Thiruvannamalai motorable route. It is 19 kms North West of Tirukoilur and 25 kms of the south of Thiruvannamalai. A group of hillocks with fields surrounding the hill add a natural aesthetic beauty to the site. Etymologically the term Jambai means an area abundant with a type of reed namely Champu.<sup>1</sup> This place is said to have its pre-historic traces of habitation revealed through the occurrence of neolithic celts and megalithic traits. Moreover the area around the hill, being repetitively ploughed yielded black and red ware sherds datable to the early centuries of the Christian era.<sup>1</sup> The inscription is found engraved on the rear wall of the cave locally called Dasimadam on the Aluruttimalai hill. It is very well preserved. The inscription reads as

*'satiyapudo atiyān neduman ānci etta paḷi'*<sup>3</sup>

which means the heritage was given by Atiyān Neduman Ānci, the Satyapudo. This is the inscription which is of much historical relevance in setting the origin of Satiyaputto already referred in Asokan edicts. Although various scholars attributed Satiyapudo to other origin, it is this inscription that made the scholars attribute Satiyaputto to the ruler of Tagadur who having waged a war with Malaiyaman and conquering his territory recorded his endowment to a heritage as a mark of political prowess over the Malaiyamans. The Girnar and Shahbusgarhi garhi versions of Asokan edicts make references to the dynasties of Chola, Pandiya, Chera domains along with Satiyapudo as his (Emperor Asoka's) southern boundary.<sup>4</sup> In this context this early Tamil inscription at Jambai becomes an eye opener in solving the long felt riddle of Satiyapudo as none other than the ruler of Tagadur, the present day Dharmapuri and contemporary ruler of Malaiyaman Thirumudikkari of Villupuram region. The inscription

is dated to circa 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

### **Thondur**

It is 11 kms from Gingee. This epigraph is found on the rock floor outside the cave known as Pancanarpati on the hill to the south of the village with withered brittle surfaces of the rock. Initially Natana Kasinathan found and had given a reading in 1991. Later I.Mahendran(1994) and M.D.Sampath had given a revised reading.

*'[I]lan ka yipan e va akal-u r = aram  
Mo ci ceyita atīṭa n am ≡'*<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly the inscription (Plate No.11) means the charity by Akalur (was endowed) at the bidding of Ilankayipan. Three seats were made by Moci i.e. the charity collectively by Akalur at the bidding of Ilankayipan, Moci made 3 stone beds for the merchants. On paleographical grounds the inscription is dated to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

### **Nekanurpatti**

It is a small village in Gingee taluk of the district and 6 kilometers north east of Gingee town. This inscription is engraved within a rectangular boulder on the south face of the rock locally referred to as Atukankal. Although it is much worn out, the content is much legible. Initially noticed in the Dinakaran, Chennai on March 26, 1992.<sup>6</sup> Which I.Mahadevan, M.D.Sampath and others have viewed. The inscription reads as...<sup>7</sup>

*'perumpokal  
ce -k-kanti ta yiyaru  
ce -k-kant =anni ce-  
yivitta Paḷli.'*

The epigraphical record states that the heritage was caused to be made by Cekkanti (i)-aṇṇi, the mother of Cekkanti of Perumpokal. This is also a donative endowment by the joint effort of mother and daughter probably with the same name and they happen to be Jaina nuns. On paleography, the epigraph is dated from 3<sup>rd</sup> century to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>8</sup>

### **Perumukkal**

This site is located in Tindivanam taluk. This

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inscription is found on the rear rock wall of the cave with rock carvings on the eastern slope of the hill. It was brought to scholastic circle by A.Dhasarathan and B.Kannaiyan in 1993. Later R.Vasanthakalyani and K.Rajan have given their reading. This single line cum single word inscription with 4 letters reads as *iracar* which means the kings.<sup>9</sup>

### **Arasalapuram**

It is a small village in Vikravandi taluk. It is located 12 kms from Vikravandi. This epigraph is noticed on a granite slab found outside the local Pillayar temple in the village but now removed to the public works Department office at Villupuram. It has 2 upper lines above the figure of a fighting cock and the last line below is much weather worn and faint. The epigraph contains (the image of) the cock which was engraved after it had fought on behalf of Merceri (in) Mukaiyuru, it was published by Dinamalar Pondicherry in 1991. A revised reading was given by I.Mahadevan in 1997. In fact this is a memorial raised to honour the fighting cock which presumably died in the fight. The inscription is datable to 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. As follows....,

*'mukaiyuru me rc[e]  
ri[ku]-y =a ti-k-ka-  
rukiya ko li'* <sup>10</sup>

### **Paraiyanpattu**

It is located in Melmalaiyanur taluk. This inscription is noticed on the bare summit of the hill known as Cunaipparai which is deeply engraved but slightly damaged. It states about the observation of the fast unto death by the disciple of Vacananti Acariyar of Panaṭu i.e. let there be salutation to the seat of penance (where) the disciple of Vacananti Acariyar of Panaṭu completed observing the fast unto death.<sup>11</sup> This practice in Jain tradition is termed as Sallekanam and in Tamil it is referred as Vadakkiruttal mainly performed by people who having fulfilled their duties and desires of the mundane world, so as to reach the feet of the lord. Such practice among Jains is considered as an ardent auspicious practice of pious nature. This inscription is dated to 6<sup>th</sup> century AD and reads as follows....,

*'namottu pa na ṭṭu va[e]  
cananti [a]ca ri[ya]  
r ma na kkar =a ra tan i  
no r r u [m]utitta [ni]  
citikai' ...*<sup>12</sup>

### **Thirunatharkunru**

It is located in the Sirukadambam village of Gingee taluk. The inscription is in 4 lines and reads as follows....,

*'aimpatte l =an a  
cannan =norra  
cantirananti a  
cirikaru nicitikai' ...*<sup>13</sup>

It occurs on the bare summit of the hill known as Thirunatharkunru near Gingee town in well preserved condition. The inscription refers to the seat of penance of Cantirananti Acirikaru who observed the fast (unto death) for fifty seven days. Here too the Jain tradition of observing Sallekana is referred. The epigraph is dated to circa 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is quite interesting to note that the characters of the epigraph are in Vatteluttu.

### **Conclusion**

Until the commencement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the earliest known inscriptions in Tamil were those of the Pallavas in the Tamil script from the 7<sup>th</sup> century and those of the Pantiyas in the Vatteluttu script from the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E., The existence of two scripts for the language was puzzle, though their ultimate descent from the Brahmi script could be inferred by comparative studies. Even more puzzling was the complete absence of earlier written records in Tamil, even though the earliest literary works pictured a great civilization going back at least two thousand years. These puzzles were solved only when the cave inscriptions in Tamil in a script closely resembling that of the Asokan edicts were discovered in the southern districts of Tamilnadu around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the ancient Tamil country before Historical

Period (CEB-500) ancient men used the Graffiti marks, symbols and Paintings for communication each and one another to show the expertise that, they had during that ancient time. In this connection for few important examples are given here as the site's names, Arikamedu, Alagankulam, Udaiyaanatham, Kal-sirunnagalur, Kilvalai, Melvalai, Kodumanal, Kulamtakka, Sikkadu, Settavarai, Thirumalai, Neganurpatti, Padiyenthal, Perumukkal, Mallachchattiram, and Vettavalam respectively.

Apart from this in the continuous development men particularly using the knowledge of Tamil - Scripts to write the language and started records the events during that period called as Historical Period-CEB 500-300CE (500-BC to 300AD). From the Historical period or Iron Age period CEB 500-300 Men have the knowledge of using Tamil - scripts for the language and wrote their names in theirs used pottery along with the usage of already existing symbols either in the suffix or prefix in some cases in between the words also it has been used.

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