

EPIGRAPHICAL STUDY OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL
VILLAGES IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY

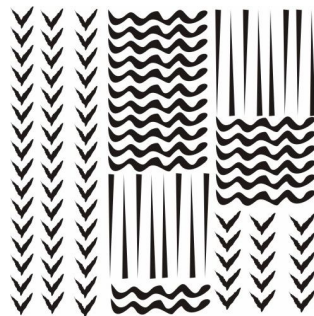
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STUDYING VILLAGE ECONOMIES IN INDIA
A COLLOQUIUM ON METHODOLOGY

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Inscriptions as historical source-material

My paper must be an exception in this conference as it discusses the study of ancient and medieval villages by examining contemporary inscriptions, in contrast to the examination of government statistics or researcher's field survey in other papers for the study of modern and contemporary villages. It is a well known fact that India lacks history books compiled in ancient and medieval period on Hindu dynasties, excepting a few like *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*. In compensation, however, there remain from remote past a large number of inscriptions which enable us to reconstruct history of ancient and medieval Hindu dynasties, though there is a difference between north India and south India in the number of inscriptions that have survived from the past.

First, let me show you the distribution of inscriptions according to the language and period. The number according to the language is as follows:¹

Table 1

Language	Number
Sanskrit	7,800
Other Aryan languages	5,000
Tamil (D)	28,000
Kannada (D)	11,000
Telugu (D)	5,000
Others (Persian, Arabic, etc.)	3,000
Total	59,800

You will understand from Table 1 above that Dravidian-language inscriptions remaining in the south far surpass the number of Aryan-language inscriptions remaining largely in the north including the northern part of Deccan.² Inscriptions are mostly engraved on the stone walls of Hindu temples, and the fact that far more number of ancient and medieval Hindu temples remain in the south than in the north explains this difference. To some extent the same reason may explain the difference in the remaining of inscriptions among the three Dravidian languages.

¹ The following figures are taken from the counting of inscriptions made in Garbini, "Software Development in Epigraphy" and Subbarayalu, "Inscriptions as Sources for History".

² A good number of Sanskrit inscriptions remain in south India too.

The chronological distribution of them, if we take up Tamil inscriptions for example, will be as follows:

Table 2

Period	Number
3 rd century BCE to 5 th century CE	100
6 th century to 9 th century	900
10 th century to 13 th century	19,000
14 th century to 16 th century	6,000
17 th century to 19 th century	2,000
Total	28,000

From Table 2 above you will understand that we have a large number of Tamil inscriptions for the period from the 10th to the 16th centuries, in which fall the periods of the Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagar states. More or less the same tendency will be found in the chronological distribution of inscriptions in other languages too.

Village studies based on inscriptions

Inscriptions usually refer to the reigning king with his regnal year or the year of some era such as Saka era, on the basis of which we can reconstruct the political history of the period to a certain extent. Moreover, as the contents of inscriptions, especially those of Tamil inscriptions, are various, many different matters being recorded, we can know from them the socio-economic conditions of the period too. The inscriptions engraved on temple walls mostly record grants of money, cows, land, state revenue as tax, etc., made to that temple for conducting therein daily worship, festivals and repairs. Matters are often recorded in full length, and if we take up land grant for example, it often goes into such details as to inform us how the grantor acquired the land, who should cultivate the land, what should be cultivated, what sort of taxes should be paid by or exempted from the temple, etc., in addition to the extent and location of the land defined by four boundaries.

Inscriptions record other matters also such as the government order to the locality, decision made by local assemblies such as *ūr* (assembly of an ordinary village), *sabha* (that of a Brahmin village), *nagaram* (that of a town) and *nāḍu* (that of a local unit called *nāḍu*), solidarity pact of some community, revolt resolution by some oppressed social groups, dispute among people and villages, and political compact between local chiefs. Therefore, we can make village study also based on inscriptions for the period from the 10th to 16th centuries in case of the Tamil country.³ That is the study which I have actually been making.

³ For the character and function of temple inscriptions, see Karashima, "South Indian Temple Inscriptions".

Accordingly, in the past studies some efforts were made to elucidate also the condition of ancient and medieval villages by examining Tamil inscriptions. The best example is found in the works of Nilakanta Sastri made in his *Studies in Cola History and Administration* (Madras 1932), in which he clarified the functioning of the *sabhā* formed by Brahmin landholders in Brahmin villages called *brahmadēya* or *chaturvedimangalam*. *Sabhā* managed village affairs including cultivation through various committees (*vāriyam*) formed under it including those for garden (*tōttam*), tank (*ēri*), wet field (*kaḷani*), tax (*pañchavaram*) and accounts (*kaṇakku*). The method of electing members of *sabhā* and *vāriyam* was also clarified by Sastri. About the same time as Sastri made these studies, A. Appadorai also studied the condition of agrarian society of medieval south India by examining inscriptions of Tamil and other languages in his *Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000 – 1500 AD)*, (2 vols, Madras, 1936). Landholdings in the villages were also discussed in this book.

However, these studies had their own problems, though they were excellent pioneer works. One problem concerns their nationalistic bias related to the nationalist movement carried out in the 1930s. Sastri and others tried to prove the existence of democratic local government in ancient and medieval India and gave much emphasis on the democratic way of electing *sabhā* members in Brahmin villages. The other aspects of village study, therefore, were left out without being examined.

Another problem concerns the way of treating inscriptions. Appadorai picked up only one or two inscriptions for his argument in most cases, though there are plenty of relevant inscriptions to be analysed including those by which we can argue contrarily. Moreover he did not depend on the original inscriptional texts for his argument, but depended in many cases only on the brief gist of inscriptions published in English in *Annual Report on Epigraphy*. In the case of general works as his, especially in a pioneer work which cannot depend on some more specific work made previously, this deficiency may be permitted to some extent, but unfortunately this attitude is still prevalent in recent works too. That is why I introduced statistical method in the study of inscriptions by dealing with a related corpus of inscriptions, in the place of single inscriptions, to avoid arbitrariness of study, conspicuous in the past studies.

Village communities revealed from Thanjavur and other inscriptions

Now I will explain my village studies based on inscriptions taking up some of my past studies for examples. First, let me introduce the study of village community as revealed from Thanjavur inscriptions,⁴ leaving an explanation of the statistical method to a later section. There are three long and continuous inscriptions in Brihadisvara temple in Thanjavur (*SII*, ii, 4. 5 & 92) recording the grant of revenue from more than 56 villages in south India and Sri Lanka. The inscription

⁴ Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, pp. 40-55.

starts with the preamble, which runs:

Hail! Prosperity! There was engraved on stone, as orally settled, the revenue in paddy, -- which has to be measured by the measure (*marakkā*) called (after) Adavallan, which is equal to a *rājakēsari* measure, -- and the gold and money, which has to be paid from the land paying taxes; and there was also engraved on stone the land free from taxes, -- including the village-site, the sacred temples, the ponds, the channels passing through the villages, the quarter for Paraiyas, the quarter for Kammalas, and the burning ground, -- in the villages, which the lord Sri Rajarajadeva had given in the Chola country (*maṇḍalam*⁵), and in other countries as divine gifts for the expenses required by the supreme lord of the sacred stone-temple, called Sri Rajarajesvara, -- which the lord Sri Rajarajadeva has caused to be built at Tanjavur. ...

After this edict, there are enumerated the full details for each of the 40 villages in the Chola-mandalam and some abridged records for 16 villages in other *mandalams* including Sri Lanka. For the 40 villages in the Chola-mandalam, therefore, we are able to know the extent of the village, the extent of the taxable and tax-free land, the amount of tax imposed on the taxable land, the categories of tax-free land, the categories of residential quarters, of temples, etc., contained in each village. From these we are able to know the existence of threshing ground and granary as tax-free land and of the residential quarter for the Ilavar too, though they are not mentioned in the preamble. From the amount of tax in paddy and the extent of taxable land we can calculate the rate too, which is more or less 100 *kalam* of paddy per *veli* of land, though the similar inscription in Gangaikondacholapuram (SII, iv, 524) gives us a somewhat different ratio, ranging from 16 to 92 *kalam* per *veli*.⁶ Chart 1 in the appendix shows the result of analysis of these matters for the 40 Chola-mandalam villages of the Thanjavur inscription and some select seven villages of the Gangaikondacholapuram inscription.

In relation to the residential quarters for various communities, another type of inscriptions reveals the inclusion of a variety of village-servant groups in villages. That is the inscriptions

⁵ *Maṇḍalam*, meaning a 'country', was the biggest administrative division of the Chola kingdom.

⁶ The difference comes from the existence of different kinds of land such as dry-land in the villages in the Gangaikondacholapuram inscriptions, while the land in the villages in the Thanjavur inscriptions seems to have mostly wetland. See Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, pp. 94-105.

recording royal grant of villages to Brahmins for establishing a *brahmadēya*. The land in the village to be assigned to Brahmins and others including village-servant groups and temples is usually expressed in terms of *paṛigu* (share) in these inscriptions, and most of the Brahmins are given one *paṛigu*, while village-servant(s) and temples are given somewhat differently. First we shall see them for the Tandantottam plate inscription of Pallava king, Nandivarman II (*SII*, ii, 99: 789 CE). The assignments are as follows.

Table 3

1 Vishnu temple	1 <i>paṛigu</i>
1 Siva temple	2
1 reciter (<i>vāsippān</i>) of <i>bhāratam</i>	1
1 drummer (<i>tattalikottī</i>)	1
1 water supplier (<i>tannir attuvār</i>) to a public hall	1
1 physician (<i>vaidyan</i>)	2
4 accountants (<i>madhyastha</i>)	3
3 water distributors (<i>vāyttalai</i>)	3

A Chidambaram inscription of Vira Pandya (*ARE* 1958/59-309: 13th century) reveals the following distribution.

Table 4

Temple	1 <i>paṛigu</i>
Vēda-teacher <i>vritti</i>	3
Sūtra-teacher <i>vritti</i>	1
Physician (<i>vaidya</i>)	2
Physician (<i>ambattan</i>)	1/4
Accountant (<i>ir-kaṇakkū</i>)	1/2
Drummer (<i>uvaccan</i>)	1/4
Carpenter (<i>taccan</i>)	1/2
Goldsmith (<i>tattān</i>)	1/4
Washerman (<i>irāṅgollī</i>)	3/8
Barber (<i>nāvitān</i>)	3/8
Watchman (<i>pādukappān</i>)	3/8
Public servant (<i>vettiyān</i>)	1/8

From these inscriptions we are able to know about the existence and composition of village-servant groups in Brahmin villages. More or less similar groups, except *vēda/sūtra* teachers, seem to have existed in non-Brahmin villages too.⁷

⁷ Analysis of Allur inscriptions to be made later reveals the existence of dancers, a musician, a village accountant and an astrologer in that non-Brahmin village.

Two different types of landholding in two different types of village

Next let me show you an example of my study of landholdings.⁸ My intention was to argue for the change from common landholding practiced in the early Chola period (more or less 10th and 11th centuries) to individual landholding prevailed in the later Chola period (more or less 12th and 13th centuries). For that we shall first examine the existence of two different types of villages, in which different types of landholding were seen in the early Chola period.

From the early-period inscriptions of Allur and Tiruchchundurai, both close to Tiruchirappalli on the southern bank of the Kaveri river, we are able to ascertain the common landholding that prevailed in *ūr*-type villages in contrast to the individual landholding seen in *brahmadēya* villages.⁹ The *ūr*-type villages were traditional villages that had existed from earlier periods and were inhabited by agricultural and herding castes such as Vellalas and Manradis. The *brahmadēya* villages, quite different from this, were created in and after the Pallava period by royal grants of villages to Brahmins who had been invited from the north. As stated earlier, villagers in *ūr*-type villages formed an assembly called *ūr*, while Brahmins in *brahmadēya* formed the assembly called *sabbā*.

In Allur, which was an *ūr*-type village, there remain nine inscriptions recording the donation and sale of land in this village to a temple, and the remission of taxes on the temple's land. Of the eleven land transactions, seven were made by *ūrār* (members of *ūr* assembly), two by *talaiñāchchāṅṅār* (regulators of the water supply at the main sluice), one by a *kōyilār* (temple priest?), and the remaining one by the temple itself. This shows that in Allur the relationship between land and individuals was very weak, with most of the land being held by the village community, a group of people, or an institution. In Tiruchchundurai temple there are 21 inscriptions recording similar transactions concerning land in Isanamangalam, a *brahmadēya* village. In the case of Isanamangalam, out of the 21 pieces of land three were transacted by the *sabbā* (village assembly), four by a *parudai* (group of *sabbā* members), one by a *kiḷavar* (landholder in a *brahmadēya*), two by an individual and his followers (*ullittār*), and 13 by individual Brahmins. This is quite a contrast with the situation seen in Allur, showing that there was a stronger relationship between land and individuals in Isanamangalam.

In both villages most of the lands transferred are described in inscriptions in terms of their four boundaries, such as water channels, roads, some other land, etc. If we check closely the land appearing as the boundary, we are able to determine in some cases the person who possessed the land. In the case of Allur, out of the nine pieces of boundary land connected with some persons, six were owned by dancers, a musician, an accountant of the *ūr*, and an astrologer. These people,

⁸ There are several papers of mine which discuss this issue, but see Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, pp. 1-35 and Karashima, "Emergence of medieval state and social formation".

⁹ A detailed study of landholding in these two villages is given in Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, 3-13.

however, do not seem to have possessed the land as individuals, but possessed it only as an emolument given to them as village servants who served the village by performing their profession.¹⁰ In contrast to this, out of the 21 boundary lands of Isanamangalam, 18 pieces seem to have been owned by persons individually, and this confirms the difference between the two villages concerning landholding.

Another important finding of this comparative study was that in Allur the landholders, who made up the *ūr*, were themselves the cultivators of the land held by them.¹¹ In contrast, the landholders in Isanamangalam, who were Brahmins, obviously did not cultivate the land by themselves and instead either rented it to others or engaged cultivators for wages. Therefore, the villagers in *brahmadēya*-type villages were stratified at least into the two distinctive strata of landholders and cultivators, while the villagers in *ūr*-type villages were basically not stratified, though the land held by astrologers, dancers, etc., in Allur may have been rented out.

Importance of statistical study of inscriptions

Although landholding practices in these two villages were quite different and contrastive in character, namely, common landholding by cultivating landholders in the *ūr*-type village and individual holdings by landholders separated from cultivators in the *brahmadēya* village, this was just a case study, and it does not allow us to generalise about the findings. However, some other studies, including two statistical studies conducted afterwards, warrant our doing so to a certain extent.¹² The following table shows the results of a statistical study made by Subbarayalu concerning about 260 land-sales recorded in the published Chola inscriptions.¹³ He checked the chronological distribution of the people who sold or granted land by dividing the Chola period into four sub-periods and the transactors into seven categories, such as Brahmin assembly (Br-As, *sabhā*), Brahmin individuals (Br-Ind), non-Brahmin assembly (Non-Br-As, *ūr*), non-Brahmin individuals (Non-Br-Ind), merchant assembly (Mr-As), etc.

Table 5

Period	Br-As	Br-Ind	Non-Br-As	Non-Br-Ind	Mr-As	Temple	Others
I 875-985	54.1%	27.8	12	1.5	1.5	-	3
II 86-1070	37.5	10.4	29.2	4.2	8.3	8.3	2.2
III 1071-1178	48.1	11.5	17.3	7.7	7.7	3.8	3.8
IV 1179-1279	25.9	3.7	11.1	37	11.1	3.7	7.4

¹⁰ The *kōyilār* (temple priest?) mentioned above may also be included in this category. Karashima, “Kani Right in Tamil Inscriptions and Mirasi Right in British Records”.

¹¹ There is clear evidence of this. In an Allur inscription (SII, viii-692) there appears the phrase “the *ūr* itself should cultivate the land.”

¹² Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, pp.13-15.

¹³ Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, p.14. Another statistical study is the one on the donation of temple land made by myself and given on pages 13 and 14.

A remarkable trend to be seen in this table is the decrease with the passage of time in the Brahmin assemblies and individuals that transacted their land (except Period III), and instead the unbelievable increase in non-Brahmin individuals. We shall discuss this point later, but the important thing here is the contrasting difference existing between Brahmin individuals (27.8%) and non-Brahmin individuals (1.5%) and also that between non-Brahmin assemblies (12%) and non-Brahmin individuals (1.5%) in Period I, which seems to indicate that non-Brahmins, who lived in *ūr*-type villages, did not possess the land individually in this period. Though not stated earlier, in some of the *brahmadēya* villages the land was held by the *sabhā* in common and not individually. Even in the *brahmadēya* villages where most of the land was held individually, a part of the land was held in common, and there were many cases in which such common land was disposed of by the *sabhā* for some charity. This accounts for the high percentage of transactions by Brahmin assemblies. At any rate, this analysis endorses, as well as allows us to generalise, the findings of the comparative study given above. Herein lies the importance of the statistical study of inscriptions.¹⁴

Individual landholding which prevailed in later Chola period

Next I will briefly examine the late-period inscriptions to clarify changes in the landholding system. On the wall of Tiruvanaikka temple in Jambukesvaram close to Tiruchirappalli there have survived many inscriptions from the time of Rajaraja III and Rajendra III in the 13th century, which record the sale/donation of land to this islet temple.¹⁵ The lands were scattered throughout several villages not far from the Kaveri river on its northern bank and were sold or donated by people who had *kāṇi* right¹⁶ to the village land.

Four inscriptions record four sales of dry-land at Isanaikkurai village to Tiruvanaikka temple, one by an individual (*uḍaiyāṇ*) and his brother, two by two individuals (*uḍaiyāṇ/araiyaṇ*), and one by the *ūr* of the village. Though some land was owned by the *ūr* in this village, other lands were held and transacted by individual persons whose names are given with their titles, such as *uḍaiyāṇ* (literally meaning possessor) and *araiyaṇ* (literally meaning king), in contrast to the transactions made by *ūr* without any reference to personal names in the early-period inscriptions.

Five inscriptions record the sale of five pieces of land in Rajaraja-kurrangudi village. These five pieces, which constituted the whole village, were sold by 39 people whose names were known,

¹⁴ Another example of the merit of the statistical study of inscriptions is its application to the study of revenue terms in inscriptions. See Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, pp. 69-94 and Karashima, *Towards a New Formation*, pp. 183-204.

¹⁵ For the study of them, see Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, pp. 15-31 and Karashima, "Emergence of medieval state and social formation".

¹⁶ *Kāṇi* in Tamil means hereditary right to land, profession, office, etc. In inscriptions, however, it usually means the right to landholding, unless otherwise specified.

but the records reveal that all these pieces were once owned by an *uḍaiyāṇ*-title holder and his younger brother, from whom the 39 people had purchased the land they sold. An inscription records the sale of Sembian-kurrur village itself by an individual who was an *uḍaiyāṇ*, but it is also known that this village was once possessed by four *kilavaṇ*-title holders¹⁷ and their three brothers. Another inscription records the sale of Sembian-nallur village itself by an individual who had the *uḍaiyāṇ/arayaṇ* title. This seller appears in another inscription also as a seller of three *vēli* of land in Tattanallur village, and in yet another inscription as a donor of seven and odd *vēli* of land in two pieces in Tandangurai village. He inherited these lands from one of his ancestors. This ancestor is stated to have purchased the land from people who had obtained it at a government auction (*peruvilai*).¹⁸

These inscriptions clearly show that landholding practices changed drastically between the 10th century and the 13th century. In the 13th-century villages examined above, which were all of the *ūr* type, the land was held individually by persons who were described mostly as *uḍaiyāṇ* and had in some cases grand titles such as *araiyaṇ* or *nāḍālvāṇ* (the one who rules *nāḍu*). It is also shown clearly by the records that frequent land-sales took place between individuals living in *ūr*-type villages. Government auctions of land also took place. Though the villages examined above are restricted to a small area of the lower Kaveri valley, if we check the inscriptions of the 12th and 13th centuries, we can readily see that this situation was prevalent in many localities in the Tamil country placed under Chola rule. The figure of 37% for sales by non-Brahmin individuals in Period IV in Table 5 explains the situation well. Individual landholdings, which had been seen mostly in *brahmadēya* villages in the early period, became prevalent in *ūr*-type villages too in the late period.

Then, what brought about this change? Answering this question, however, will take us out of the scope of this colloquium, in addition to time shortage for doing so. Here can I say only that the change seems to have been caused by the frequent grant of land to Brahmins and state officials by the kings of the middle Chola period. If you are interested in this issue, please see the papers, Karashima and Subbarayalu, "*Kaṇiyāḷar* old and new" and Karashima, "Emergence of medieval state and social formation".

Villages, the locality called nāḍu, and formation of jātis

Now we shall proceed to examining the relation between villages and the locality (*nāḍu*) which includes a number of villages. Royal orders to some locality are usually addressed to the *nāṭṭār* (representatives of a *nāḍu*), *kilavar* of *brahmadēya*s (leading landholders of *brahmadēya*s), *ūrgaḷilār* (representatives of *ūr*-type villages) and *nagaraṅgaḷilār* (representatives of towns), from which we

¹⁷ *Kilavaṇ* meant "possessor", as did *uḍaiyāṇ*.

¹⁸ For government auction of land, see Karashima and Subbarayalu, "*Kaṇiyāḷar* old and new".

can understand the importance of the locality called *nāḍu* in the state administration. *Nāḍu* was the basic areal unit where agrarian production and reproduction were carried out in ancient and medieval Tamil Nadu, hence it had importance in administration. There are varieties of inscriptions which attest to its importance. Here I will quote a Pandyan inscription for an example.

An Agattiyampalli inscription (*SII* 17-549: Tj, 1299) records a land grant to a temple and its tax remission made by *nāṭṭavar* (same as *nāṭṭar*) of Kunrur-nadu for the health of the king. Taxes consisting of *kaḍamai* and *kuḍimai*, including *nel-kaḍamai*, *kaśu-kaḍamai*, *kuḍimai*, *mēr-pāḍikāval*, *āyavargam*, *nāṭṭuvari*, and *ūrvari*, were to be borne by the *nāṭṭavar*, who seem to have tried to show their fidelity to the new Pandyan ruler¹⁹ by this charitable deed.

Nobody can deny the importance of *nāḍu* in the agrarian society of the ancient and medieval periods, but I do not accept the understanding of *nāḍu* as composing a segment of the so-called segmentary state, which was proclaimed by Burton Stein. Though he considered *nāḍu* to have continually constituted a segment from the Pallava period to the Vijayanagar period without change, it actually changed its character around the 13th century.²⁰

Lastly, let me explain the study of *jāti* issue based on inscriptions. Of course, the area of a *jāti* group also exceeds a village, and in this relation, I will show you an inscription which defines the area of the Palli people who frequently appeared in the 12th and 13th century inscriptions in Tiruchirapalli, South and North Arcot, and Chingleput Districts. An Aduturai inscription (*ARE*. 1913, 35: Tp, 1315? CE) records the resolution made by the Palli people in their assembly as follows (in an abridged form).

The *pannaṭṭar* (also called *palli-nāṭṭavar*) from the *nāḍu* and *nagaram* of all *maṇḍalams* met at the garden called *Periyanāṭṭan-ka* in a large assembly and decided to collect one *paṇam* (a coin) per bow held by members, etc., for worship in the local temple. The decision was made to revive an old arrangement made by their ancestors and recorded in an inscription of Vikramachola (AD 1122). According to that inscription a large assembly of the *palli-nāṭṭavar*, including all the Pallis living within the area bounded by the Pachchai hills in the west, the tank Viranarayana-pereri in the east, the Pennai river in the north, and the Kaveri river in the south, had decided to contribute 50 *kaśu* and one *kuruni* of rice from each family to the temple at Iraiyanpunchai Kurangadu[turai] on the happy occasion of the reconsecration of images recovered from Dorasamudram, the Hoysala capital where they had been taken during a Hoysala invasion. At that time the king also permitted them to

¹⁹ The Chola dynasty demised in 1279 and its central and southern parts became under the rule of the Pandyas.

²⁰ Karashima, "Emergence of medieval state and social formation", p. 12. and Karashima, "Nāṭṭavars in Tamilnadu during the Pandya and Vijayanagar Period".

carry their banner with the words *pannaṭṭār tampirān* (the god of *pannaṭṭār*) on festival processions.

The Palli people described here composed the bowmen regiment of the Chola army and this regiment seems to have recovered the images by attacking the Hoysala capital under the command of Vikramachola. The area of their habitation defined in this inscription covers a hilly and dry area extending roughly a hundred kilometers from north to south and eighty kilometers from east to west in Tiruchirapalli and South Arcot Districts. During the 13th centuries many of the ex-hill-tribes seem to have descended to the plain and became agriculturists acquiring land. We have many more inscriptions recording activities of some ex-hill-tribes including Pallis, Surudimans, and Malaiyamans, who increased their strength during the 12th and 13th centuries. Some of their families grew into local chiefs such as Kadavarayas in South Arcot District and Sambuvarayas in Chingleput District.

Though I am not going to introduce and discuss the issue here, we have many inscriptions recording the activities of supra-local assemblies called *chitramēli-periyanaḍu* of agriculturists, *valarṅgai* (right hand) and *iḍarṅgai* (left hand) of lower *jāti* people composed of artisans and others, *ainūrruvar* of merchants, etc. revealing many names of their composing groups.²¹ For village studies, these pieces of information on the locality like *nāḍu*, which functioned as the areal (supra-village level) production unit, and on the *jātis*, which increased their number during the 13th and 14th centuries, are indispensable. Tamil inscriptions, which can afford such information, await more intensive studies.

²¹ For these supra-local organisations, see Karashima and Subbarayalu, "Emergence of periyanaḍu assembly", and Karashima (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean*.

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