



The Study on the contextual of Economic, Political and Cultural services in South, Southeast Asian Countries with special reference to particular merchant Guilds.

Dr. Nayomi Dinuka Kekulawala

Senior Lecturer
Department of History
University of Kelaniya

In maintaining long distance trade from east to west in the Indian Ocean the Bengal Ocean occupies an important role. Trading ships that travel with the monsoon must cross the Indian Ocean during the relevant period. Not only had the height of the sea level but also the high pressure zones directly affected such travel. However, the fact that the Bengal bay is centred on countries in Southeast Asia such as India, Sri Lanka and the demand for the raw material of the tropical zone must be taken into account. Somehow, traders began to live in ports in adjacent areas under such conditions. There is adequate evidence that the ports in Bengal have been used as a resting place and a place for exchange of goods in long distance trade activities. There was severe competition among rulers to secure authority over these regions and ports. State rulers had tried to derive maximum benefit from the port by establishing their authority over the relevant areas. There is evidence that trade activities in the interior were done by merchant guilds.

Ainnurruvar

The itinerant merchants known as Ainnurruvar are a group who had come from regions where Tamil is spoken. There is information of individuals who belonged to this group in the Tirumalai *prasasti* of the Sivaganga District¹. Rulers of Tamil countries have kept these merchants as their helpers. It is mentioned that the commercial organisation of Ainnurruvar, Nanadesis and Manigramam were inspired by the Pallavas. During this time, the Pallavas had brought the internal and maritime commerce to various places. Relations between Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Indochina prospered under this Pallava group for which there is inscriptional evidence. As a period of expansion of the Ainnurruvars the time of the Cholas may be cited. Their expansion could be seen in regions where there was Chola power during the time of Rajaraja I (985-1012 AD) and Rajendra I (1054-1063 AD). Sri Lanka could also be cited as a region where they exerted their power. As

and Sumatra could be mentioned. The discovery of an inscription of Ainnurruvar from Barusⁱⁱ in Sumatra shows that by the 11th century they were engaged in trade in Southeast Asiaⁱⁱⁱ. Ainnurruvar were a group famous for the trade of camphor in Sumatra. The Ukkirankottai inscription of Ainnurruvar mentions that they were engaged in continuous trade. Their sense of justice is made clear by the Piranmalai inscription, namely the names of members of other castes are included in the same inscription^{iv}. Different names like *Setti*, *Seettiputra*, *Kavera*, *Kandali*, *Badraksha*, *Gaunda-Swami*, *Siripuli*, *Valatttukai*, *Variyan*, etc. are included (ibid). Establishing centres in the surrounding areas in the 12th and 13th centuries, this organisation had engaged in distributing goods. An example is the establishment of a centre in the 12th century AD in Desipattanam in the name of Ainnurruvar.

Ainnurruvar had been known in various names. In the inscription found at Kayal they are referred to as Padinenbhumi Nissaiyarattu Ainnurruvar.^v It is clear that Padinenbhumi is another name used for them. It is interpreted as 'eighteen countries.' Even Padinan Vishayam is similar to the word Ainnurruvar. They have made various endowments to various religious institutions. An example is the offering of a statue to Rajendrachola Perumpalli of Nagapattanam. Ainnurruvar had been quite active in Pudukottai and Ramnad regions. The inscription discovered at Pudukottai there mentions of Ainnurruvar of the Chola period. Ainnurruvars had been active in establishing trade centres in these regions. Two places where their trade took place had been identified at Kumudi and Piranmalai. There are records of various trade groups including Ainnurruvars gathering in these places and making offerings to gods.^{vi} According to inscriptions, 18 members from Pattanam, 32 from Velapuram and 64 from Kasigaitavalam had participated. This would show that they had expanded over a large area with authority and been known by various names.

Ainnurruvars are an exceptional merchant guild in Sri Lanka. Their economic and administrative activities had been maintained both as merchants and as military services. They had joined with other merchant guilds in places such as Mulavahalkada, Viharahinna, Padaviya, Ilakkattu Eba, Attanagalla and Anavulundewa. There is evidence that they have been categorised into quite minor services such as *Tavala Chetti*, *Chetta Pattiran*, *Kavarai*, *Kathripan*, *Kamundasvami*, Oxen (Messengers), Ulpaun Paikkaran, Ankanan (Commandant), Veeran (Commandant) Kaludai (riding oxen), etc. The Budumutteva inscription^{vii} had been written in the form of a *prasasti* and it refers to Ainnurruvar merchants.^{viii} Somehow, by the 10th century AD these merchants had been famous

in Sri Lanka both as a security organisation and a merchant guild. There is information that Ainnurruvars as a guild had done renovations of Buddhist and Hindu temples and built anew statues and resting places (*ambalam*).^{ix} As individuals or as collective groups, they had granted aid for Shiva, Buddhist, and Jain temples. The resting places they had built had been known as *ainnurruvan ambalam*.^x

Virakoti

Virakotiyar or Virakoti is a merchant and military organisation found in Sri Lanka in the 12th century AD. This is supported by the inscriptions in Budumuttewa,^{xi} Galtenpitiya^{xii} Padaviya^{xiii} and Vahalkada^{xiv}. According to the Vahalkada inscription they joined with Chettis for the protection of towns. The other Tamil inscription of Virakotis has been found at the Ilakatta Eba near Chilaw.^{xv} Reference is made there as *Patinenbumi Virakoti*. This name is found in several inscriptions of South India. According to Indrapala there is no information about a permanent merchant guild of theirs.^{xvi} Going on these inscriptions, Pathmanathan points out that it is a military organisation.^{xvii} According to the information in these inscriptions it is clear that they were military professionals connected to trade. The Samuttirapati inscription¹ in South India is an important one which gives information on Ainnurruvars. According to this inscription Virakotiyar is a name given to the state defence forces of Ainnurruvars. Similarly, Virakotiyars have earned respect in fighting with their opponents. Several facts to support this are available in Viharahinna inscription. The meaning of '*virar*' is 'courageous people.' Magala or the Budumutteva inscription refers to them as '*virakotiyom*'^{xviii} which means 'we are virakoti.'

Viramakalam

Inscriptions explain how the appellation '*viramakalam*' has been used for both military soldiers and viharas. Bell mentions that these are words used for gods^{xix}. Bell who had gone to the site where the inscriptions stood has identified the words *lokamatha* and *viramakalam* from the inscription which by the time was greatly damaged (ibid). Subsequently, Mr Piyatissa Senanayaka, an officer of the Archaeological Department had visited the site and conducted a preliminary investigation into the Budumutteva inscription. According to Karashima a virakoti military

¹ This belongs to 1050 AD and is located in Madurai District in South India.

organisation operated under *nakaram* and this *nakaram* or town was known as vikkiramacalamekapuram or Magala. Pathmanathan mentions that the temple of goddesses was known on the one hand as Parameshwari and the other as *viramakalam*.^{xx} Budumutteva inscription mentions about *viramakalam*.^{xxi} Symbols here show it both as a military organisation and a trade organisation. There were four symbols among them such as sword, sheath, quiver, long knife, etc. It is clear that it discloses information about a trade organisation. Another example for reference to virakoti and viramakalam appellations is the velaikkara inscription in Polonnaruva.^{xxii} The above information would suggest that they have functioned as a protective brigade for trade.

Valangiyar/Velaikkara

There is no consensus on the origin of the Valangiyars among the historians. Some historians suggest that Valangiyars have a connection to Valangi/Velaikkara. They are a military organisation that made exceptional recruitments. Nilakanta Sastri is of the view that they are a more loyal military organisation in the royal service with permanent employment.^{xxiii} They have always been a group engaged in the security of the king. Tamil dictionary defines the term '*velai*' as 'extremely loyal servants'.^{xxiv} Likewise, the term '*vaile*' means work, worker and servant (Madras Tamil Lexicon). The 'army of servants' is also a term used for it.^{xxv} Similarly, the term '*vel*' is used for 'the spear and lance' (Madras Tamil Lexicon). Valangiyar is a combative merchant organisation. Information on this itinerant merchant organisation is found in South Indian and Sri Lankan inscriptions. An example is the Kongunadu inscriptions. Along with the text in this, symbols of elephants, horses and weapons are included.^{xxvi} They engaged in trade with traders of countries. The Tittandatanapuram inscription in the Ramnad District mentions about the co-operation between Manigramams of south Sri Lanka and Valangiyar. There is mention about Manigramams and Anjuvannam and mentions about residents of large streets or immortal textile merchants (Chetti), Tennilannai Valangiyar (connected to Sri Lanka), tom-tom beaters, textile merchants, oil merchants and sea traders. Belonging to the 1269 AD, it contains important information about imports and exports of cotton textiles.^{xxvii} This confirms reactions of Valangiyars beyond the ocean. Valangiyars are considered to be an affiliated group of Ainnurruvars. They are a group who directly joined in trade in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka.

Valanciar or Velaikkara was a strong trade organisation. The Velaikkara inscription in Polonnaruva mentions about these merchant guilds.^{xxviii} The Vahalkada inscription mentions about a Valangiyar Senapati.^{xxix} This shows that they have been categorised by designations for an administrative reason. The Valnaci merchant guild was a group that joined with Velaikkaras. The Polonnaruva *sannasa* contains some very important information. Valanciar were leaders of Velaikkaras.^{xxx} They maintained close ties with Nanadesis and the army of the Nanadesi merchant guild supported the Velaikkaras.^{xxxi} They have provided security to Buddhist and Hindu temples. This shows their loyalty to the king. According to the Polonnaruva Velaikkara *sannasa* Valanciar have provided security to the Dalada Maligawa.^{xxxii} In this Velaikkara inscription they have referred to the Dalada Maligawa as ***Munru Kaittiru Dalada Perumpalli***^{xxxiii}. Wickremasinghe says that this means ‘three hands’ of Velaikkara’s.^{xxxiv} He has tried to interpret it as *trikaya* (triad) of Saivism. Perhaps, three units of Velaikkara force may have been known by that name because in the same inscription there is mention of another eight groups which served with them. There is evidence that Velaikkaras have patronized God Shiva. In the forty second year of Vijayabahu’s reign Velaikkaras have been put in charge as custodians of property donated to a Shiva temple^{xxxv}. As this temple located in Kantalai is named ***Vijayaraja Ishvaram***, it is doubtful whether it has a connection with Vijayabahu. The fact that the security of this temple and the custody of its property have been handed over to the Velaikkaras shows that it may have been an institution from which they have gained revenue. Valangiyar and Nagarattar merchant guilds are also dominant among them^{xxxvi}. Parnavitana refers to Valangiyars as the leaders of Velaikkaras^{xxxvii}. Similarly, Rasanayagam mentions that Valangiyars had been soldiers and counsellors of the administrative committee of Velaikkaras who had retired in reaching old age^{xxxviii}. It is clear that they not only worked as sentries in administrative matters but also provided security as trade groups and earned benefits from the provisions made to temples.

Information is found about them working closely with the Sri Lankan kings. Culavamsa mentions that King Vijayabahu sent two armies under two *senapatis* to Mattikavatittha and Mahatittha to invade the country of the Cholas and that the Velaikkara army rebelled against the invasion of Chola.^{xxxix} The article by Nilakanta Sastri published in the Royal Asiatic Society Journal is based on ideas expressed by Gopinath Rao. It describes Velaikkara as a group who had pledged to commit suicide whenever the king wears flowers inappropriate for the occasion or when the king dies in warfare^{xl}. It adds that a commentary on Tamil book Tiruvaimoli mentions that one must die like a

Velaikkar^{xli}. Pathmanathan mentions that their organisation may have been maintained with the knowledge of merchant guilds^{xlii}. Accordingly, it is clear this merchant guild must have provided the king with mercenaries and received various benefits.

ⁱ South Indian Inscription, Ed. by Aiyer, K.v. Subrahmanya, Publish in Government press, Madras, Vol.Viii, 401.

ⁱⁱ This inscription was found during a research done in Jakarta in Indonesia. This is now deposited in the present Jakarta National Museum.

ⁱⁱⁱ Noboru Karashima, 1997-2000. Trade and Urbanization in Medieval Sri Lanka: The Virakoti Inscription at Budumuttava, *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic Sherds*, Report of the Taisho University Research Project 1997- 2000, Taisho University, India: 62-71.

^{iv} South Indian Inscription, Publish in Government press, ed. K.A. Subrahmanya, Madras, 1932., Vol.Vii:442.

^v South Indian Inscription, Vol.Viii, *ibid.* 401.

^{vi} South Indian Inscription, Vol.Viii:442.

^{vii} This inscription is located in Nikaveratiya (Magala) in the Kurunegala District. Three inscriptions were found at this village. They are referred to as Rajamahavihara and Budumuttewa Buddhist temple. This has been dated to 1150 and had been read for the first time by Muller. Subsequently, by Bell and later Paranavitana has copied it and has been published in the Ceylon Journal of Science in Sri Lanka and journal of *Ephigraphia Zeylanica* (the Ceylon Journal of Science, Section G, and Vol. II:117 and *Ephigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II: 242-255).

^{viii} *Ephigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.II, 242-255.

^{ix} South Indian Inscription, Vol.IV, Bengal, 1923, No. 1415.

^x *ibid*: No. 1415.

^{xi} *Ephigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.II:242-255.

^{xii} Velupillai, 1971. *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions*, Part.II, Peradeniya,14. The Galtenpitiya inscription is located at the village of Mahanameriya in the Egodakorale of the Kurunegala District. It is considered to belong to the 13th century AD. It consists of 17 lines and is written in Tamil and Grantha characters.

^{xiii} Located at the junction of Vavuniya, Anuradhapura and Trincomalee. The inscription is subject to severe fading and has been dated to 12th and 13th centuries AD.

^{xiii} *Ibid*, 17; ET:Vol.I, Part I:No.8. Located at the junction of Vavuniya, Anuradhapura and Trincomalee. The inscription is subject to severe fading and has been dated to 12th and 13th centuries AD.

^{xiv} Velupillai, 1971 and 1972, *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions*, Peradeniya, Vol.1:53-54 and CTI Part II:7-9. This inscription was found near Yan Oya in Vahalkada in the Anuradhapura District. This long, incomplete inscription of 36 lines has been published by the Department of Archaeology under No. 2345. Certain lines are illegible. Somehow, the inscription which has been reconstructed to read from beginning to end has been published by Mr Velupillai in Part I of Ceylon Tamil Inscription in 1971. This has been again amended and published by S. Subbarayalu and P. Shanmugam.

^{xv} Karashima, N., (b)1997- 2000. South Indian and Sri Lankan Inscriptions Relating to the Merchant guilds, *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic Sherds* ed. Noboru Karashima, Report of the Taisho University Research Project 1997- 2000, Taisho University, India: 10- 18,250.

^{xvi} Indrapala, K., 1971. South Indian Mercantile Communities in Ceylon, *Journal of Historical and Social Studies* (New Series) Vol. I, No.2, 101-113.

^{xvii} Pathmanathan, 1997-2000. Trade and Urbanization in Medieval Sri Lanka: The Virakoti Inscription at Budumuttava, *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic Sherds*, ed. Noboru Karashima, Report of the Taisho University Research Project 1997- 2000, Taisho University, India: 62-71.

^{xviii} *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.II:242-255.

^{xix} Bell, H.C.P. 1915. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report*, 1911-12, Colombo, 115.

^{xx} Pathmanathan, 1995. "The Tamil Slab-Inscription of the Virakkoti At Budumuttava, Nikaweratiya: Urbanization At Magala", *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1&2, , 15- 30.

^{xxi} *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.II:242-255.

^{xxii} *Ibid.* Vol.II:242-245.

^{xxiii} Sastri, K.A.N., 1923. *South Indian Inscription*, Vol.IV, 495-497.

^{xxiv} *ibid.*

^{xxv} Hultzsch, E.A., 1991. *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. II, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi. No. 92.

^{xxvi} Champakalakshmi, K., 1996. *Trade Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 B.C. to 300 A.D.*, New Delhi, 314.

^{xxvii} ARE 598 of 1026-27.

^{xxviii} *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.XVIII:337.

^{xxix} Velupillai, 1971. *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions*, Peradeniya. CTI Vol.II:235-255.

^{xxx} *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.II:235-255 and EI Vol.XVIII:337.

^{xxx}i Indrapala,K.,1971. An Inscription of the time of Rajaraja Cola I from Padaviya, *Epigraphia Tamilca*, Vol. I, No. I, 32:36.

^{xxxii} *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.II:252.

^{xxxiii} *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II:242.

^{xxxiv} *ibid.*

^{xxxv} *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol.IV: No.20.

^{xxxvi} *ibid.*

^{xxxvii} Parnavitana,S.,1926. Pollonnaruva Inscription of Vijayabahu I, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVIII, No.38:330-338.

^{xxxviii} *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1924:278.

^{xxxix} Geiger, W., 1925.*Culavamsa*, Vol.I, Oxford University Press. Geiger, W., 1927.*Culavamsa*, Vol.II, Oxford University Press, 58. 36-39.

^{xl} *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, Vol.IV.,67.

^{xli} *ibid.*

^{xlii} Pathmanathan,S.,1976. The Velaikkarar in Medieval South India and Sri Lanka, *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*: 120-137.

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