

# Flood Relief Measures under Vijayanagara Kings with Special Reference to Vazhuvur Temple Inscriptions - A Study

OPEN ACCESS

**R.Udaiachandran**

*Assistant Professor, Department of History*

*Annamalai Univeristy, Annamalai Nagar, Chidhabaram, Tamil Nadu, India*

Volume: 6

Issue: 3

Month: Januray

Year: 2019

ISSN: 2321-788X

Received: 01.01.2019

Accepted: 03.01.2019

Published: 30.01.2019

Citation:

Udaiachandran, R. "Flood Relief Measures under Vijayanagara Kings with Special Reference to Vazhuvur Temple Inscriptions - A Study." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2019, pp. 69–71.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2550025>

## Abstract

*The kingdom of Vijayanagar "the city of Victory" was established by Harihara I and Bukka I in 1336 A.D., on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra, with the blessings of Vidyaranya.1 Some years later Vijayanagar rulers extended their sway all over the Tamilnadu and ruled it continuously for about two centuries.2 An attempt is made in the following pages regarding a flood that occurred under the Vijayanagar rule in Kaveri the mother of humanity and the fiscal policy administered by them based on an inscription3 existing at Vazhuvur temple.*

**Keywords: Vijayanagar, Kaveri, Vazhuvur temple, Attavirattanams, Mayiladuturai, Harihara I**

## Introduction

The kingdom of Vijayanagar "the city of Victory" was established by Harihara I and Bukka I in 1336 A.D., on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra, with the blessings of Vidyaranya. Some years later Vijayanagar rulers extended their sway all over the Tamilnadu and ruled it continuously for about two centuries.

The kingdom of Vijayanagar not only offered protection to Hindu religion and culture in the country south of the Tungabhadra, from the annihilation of Muslim invaders, but also extended relief properly from natural calamities like flood, famine etc. Many records illustrate the solicitude of the government to affected ryots.

An attempt is made in the following pages regarding a flood that occurred under the Vijayanagar rule in Kaveri the mother of humanity and the fiscal policy administered by them based on an inscription existing at Vazhuvur temple.

Vazhuvur is situated at a distance of nearly 8 kms., south west of Mayiladuturai town, the head quarter of Mayiladuturai taluk in Nagapattinam District. In the heart of this village is situated the famous archaic temple dedicated to Thiruvirattanesvarar with the pride of one of the Attavirattanams refer to the heroic feats of Lord siva in eight different holy places. An interesting inscription belonging to the period of Vira Bokkanna Udaiyar known as Bukka II, coming from the Sangama dynasty is engraved on the south wall of the mandapa in front of the Central shrine of this temple, and is dated in Saka 1324 (1402 A.D).

According to that epigraph, Vazhuvur was once heavily affected by flood in Kaveri during the reign of Bukka II. The epigraph found at Vazhuvur temple accurately narrates the boundaries of the certain lands (parru) which had been submerged and lay waste with the topographical details. The affected lands comprised to the east of Thiruvazhundur highway, to the west of Thiruveedhi, to the south of Kadalazhi and to the north of Tandal. Kadalazhi and Tandal are the tributaries of Kaveri. The epigraph further says that the area affected by flood belonged to Vazhuvur in Thiruvazhundur nadu a sub-division of Elumuri parru.

This inscription not only reveals the area and nature of land but also the transformation of cultivable lands into sand dunes. Hence the lands were lying fallow since the time of the river Kaveri over flowing its banks and in consequence the tenants had abandoned the fields for a long period. To rehabilitate the lands and to make them fit for cultivation, and to strengthen the bunds of channels and rivers, the tenants were offered concessions on certain favourable conditions in the matter of paying taxes as stated below:

For the first year, half of the tax would be levied as due for collection on lands cultivated both for Kar and Pasaiiam. From the next year onwards three-fourths of the assessment was collected.

The assessment would be collected in half of the previous amount, in the taxes of Palavari, and Puduvari except Kudimai and Kanikkai. Further the government itself measured the lands and collected Kadamai or tax in kind according to produce which would be paid in local area with the measurement of local measure i.e. marakhal.

The tenants would be levied half of the tax to pay on kadamai, arasuperu, vasal panam, ayam, ottuvilai, vasanidhi, and pulvari. In the succeeding years they would be required to pay three-fourths of the total assessment of the above tax except in the case of pulvari which remained the same. Magamai and kanikkai would be also treated by the same systems. The same concessions would be applicable to the lands belonging to temples and brahmanas.

The chief responsibility of collecting the taxes, from all the tenants who cultivated land under his direction and remitting in the treasury of government and that of reclaiming the lands was entrusted to one

kambangudaiyar. He might be a revenue officer of Vazhuvur.

The above concession of charging half rates of assessment during the first year was accorded also to other waste lands which might be brought under cultivation year after year. The epigraph further reveals that all these arrangements would continue to be in force from the following year as long as the sun and the moon endure.

Since the village was in disaster, income derived to the treasury of the Thiruvirattanesvarar temple in the form of 2 varahans and 2 panams were also exempted. But from the next year i.e. from 1403 A.D., the same was collected regularly without fail.

It is also known through this inscription that whoever tried to commit criminal offences against this, will be liable for the punishment under the sins of Brahmahathi and Gohathlu considered as Rajadroham.

Thus the study of this inscription pertaining to flood relief measures during the Vijayanagar empire reflects the great care undertaken by the government for the welfare of the people. It is similar to the effective measures of the present government of Tamilnadu to rehabilitate the people who are badly often affected by massive floods.

## References

- A.R.E., 422 of 1912.
- Arasuperu: fee collected for the performance of public duties in the districts.
- Ayam: a custom tax.
- Brahmahathi: sin of killing brahmanas.
- Gohathi: sin of killing n cow.
- Kadamai: a tax paid to government for land revenue by the land owners for possession and cultivation of lands.
- Kanikkai: present or customary payment paid with reverence, as a token of gratitude to the king and other high officials.
- Kar: a variety of paddy harvested in the months of Aippasi and Karthigai.
- Kudimai : a tenancy tax denoting all the taxes except land revenue paid to government for the protection of the civil rights offered by it.
- Magamai; small portion of the income collected from the merchants for public purposes such

- as temple maintenance and public charities, according to the resolution passed by the local government on the regularity of every day or once in a week.
- Ottuvilai: mortgage
- Palavari: traditional tax.
- Panam: coin.
- Pasnnm: a kind of paddy harvested in the month of Chittinu,
- Puduvai: new tax.
- Pulvair: grazing tax paid to the government for grazing their cattle on pasture land owned by government.
- Sathianathaiyar, R. "A Political and Cultural History of India" Vol. 2, (S. Viswanathan Pvt, Ltd., Madras, 1952), pp. 129 - 134.
- Somalay, Tanjavur Mavattam, (Pan Nilayam, Madras, 1961), P.No. 233.
- Subramanian, S.V. & Perumaj A.N. (eds.), Heritage of the Tamils Art & Architecture, (International] Institute of Tamil Studies, Madras, 1983), P. No. 357.
- Varahan: a gold coin so named from its side bearing the figure of a boar, or boar avatara of vishnu, the signet of the Vijayanagar kings.
- Vasal panam: a tax collected at the entrance of a market from the merchants.
- Vasanidhi: a tax paid for staying