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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HUZAR OFFICE COPPER PLATES AND SALAIS IN TRAVANCORE

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Abstract

Salas are Vedic teaching institutes that centered on some temples, Parthivapuram Salai was one such institute that flourished during the period of Ay king Karunandadakkan. Reference to it occurs in the Huzur office copper plates assigned to this king. Since, most of the recorded early Salas were located in the Ay Chera territory it can be assumed that the functioning of Salas recorded in the Huzur office plates was generally applicable to all Salais This article attempts give an insight of the organisation and conduct of Parthivapuram Salai and other salais and the disappearance of salais.

Key words: Parthivapuram Salai, Cattar, Ko Karunandadakkan, Huzur Office Copper Plates, Epigraphy, Inscription, Deva danam, Kalanju, kolamaruppu, Ay kings, Perumallals.

Introduction

The educational scenario in Kerala is far advanced than other states of India. The Kerala model of development owes its success to the achievements in the area of education. The importance and antiquity of education in Kerala is underscored by the state's ranking as among the most literate in the country. The local dynastic predecessors of modern-day Kerala primarily the Travancore Royal Family, and religious institutions like the Christian missionaries, The Nair Service Society. Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana

Yogam (SNDP Yogam) and Muslim Educational Society (MES) have made significant contributions to the progress on education in Kerala.

Salais institution

The base of modern education in Kerala traces its history back to Sangam age. Sangam works give glimpses of educational scene in ancient Kerala. All the people irrespective of caste, sex or sectarian affiliations were entitled to get benefits of full education. The Ay rulers of southern Kerala in 9 and 10 centuries also

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made their contribution in the field. Temples came to be built in large scale in different part of Kerala during this period which also served as centres of cultural and educational activities. Many educational institutions called as Sallai came to be established centered on temples.

Orgin of salais institution

Salai was a type of residential institution of advanced studies prevalent in Kerala generally for Brahmin youths. The essential feature of this institution was that it offered courses of study in Vedic literature, politics and public administration and so on. The system of education evolved in Salais aimed at the moral, intellectual and physical well-being of pupil. The students of the Salai were known as cattar and the teachers or elders cattaperumakkal. Rulers envisaged keen interest in maintenance and development of Salais.

Important Salais

Epigraphic evidences of the period gives information regarding the arrangements made for the maintenance of Salai. The most important Salais were Kandallur Salai, Parthivapuram Salai, Srivalabhaperumsalai Rajarajaperumsalai, Salais of Thiruvalla and Muzhikkulam. Of these Kandallur, Parthivapuram and Srivallabhapperumsalai trace their origins to Ay period (788 AD-925 AD) and Thiruvalla and Muzhikkulam Salai to the Kulasekhara period (800 AD-1102 AD). The Huzur copper plates explains the important role of the salais.

Thiruvalla copper plates

Early inscriptions of various dynasties mentions about Salais that prevailed during times (Tanjore inscription of Rajaraja mentions of Kandallur Salai of the Ay-Cheras, Thirumulikkalam inscription of Bhaskara Ravi Varman mentions Muzhikkalam Salai Thiruvalla copper plates mentions Thiruvalla Salai etc) and arrangements made for the maintenance of Salais. None of these records mentioned about the day to day activities, mode of study etc.

Huzur copper plates

The Huzur office plates of Ay king Karunandadakkan is the only one of its type which gives detailed account of organisation of Parthivapuram Salai (Rao 1908 vol.1.15-33). Since, most of Salais mentioned above were in the territory of the Ay - Chera rulers we can assume that what is the functioning of Salais recorded in the Huzur office plates was generally applied for all Sālais. These plates were found in the Huzur office (secretariat) in a disturbed stage. There are five copper plates and it is assumed that few plates from the set are missing.

Kokarundakkar inscription

The inscription starts with the inscription of Ko Karunandadakkar. The first three plates mentions of general administration of the temple. The fourth plate gives details of various nadus or countries obligated to protect the Salais. The remaining plates lay down the rules of conduct of cattars (students) and the mode in which they had to proceed with their studies. From the subject matter of the passages contained in another plate it can be easily asserted that they all belong to one record and are of the same period. On the whole, the writing on the five copper plates though obviously belonging to the same record its contents are fragmentary. All the plates are engraved on both sides and the language and script used is Tamil.

Parthivapuram Salai

Huzur office plates of Karunandadakkan are the authentic record which deals with all the activities of Parthivapuram temple and Parthivapuram Salai. Huzur office plates are one of its kinds which give detailed account of administration, educational system, rules and regulations prevailed in Parthivapuram Salai. The plates informs that the king purchased a plot of land known as Ulakkudivilai from Munchirai temple coralar sabha by giving them an equal extent of paddy field and erected a Vishnu temple and named the village Parthivapuram, around 8km southeast of Kuzhithurai, Vilavancode taluk, Kanyakumari district Tamil Nadu. The temple was constructed in 866 AD as evidenced from the date in the copper plate.

Kandallur salai

Along with the temple he also established a Salai modelling Kandallur Salai in which arrangements were made to feed 95 cattars (students). The second plate describes the duties of the temple servants and of the persons employed to supply flowers and burning perpetual lamps. The third plate contains the list of lands granted to the temple and Salai to meet their daily needs and pay of temple servants. The fourth plate enumerates on various nadues or countries and the duty of protecting the institution Silla. The remaining plates lay down the rules for conduct of the cattars and mode by which they have to proceed with their studies.

Salabhogam and devadanam

Since donations, donors, land revenues etc., are common in all most epigraphs let's focus on educational institution (Salai) mentioned in this copper plates. The first plate itself mentions about Parthivapuram Salai. It says that Karunandadakkam after erecting the temple established a Salai in conformity with the rules of Kandallur Salai and made arrangements for feeding of 95 cattars. The mentioning of Kandallur Salai indicates that the fame and status of the Sillai well received. Kandallur Salai otherwise known as 'Southern Nalanda' was a famous learning centre of South India under the prevalence of Ay kings. The third plate contains the details of land that was gifted to Salai. The land donated for subsistence and maintenance of Salai was known as Salabhogam and Decadanam (gift for god). These may be agricultural land or paddy field give out on lease or rent. Omayanadu, Singulunadu, Mudalanadu, Padaippanadu and Valluvanadu are the names of the villages from which Parthivapuram Salai received its. In case of defaulting of the payments three cattars representing three charanas were authorized to refrain the holders of the leased or rented property and its cultivation and it also mentions that cattars shall not estrange salabhogam without royal orders.

Huzur plates and Education

The Huzur office plates throw some light of the educational module that prevailed in Parthivapuram Salai. As already mentioned Parthivapuram Salai was modelled in dormitory with roles i Kanallar S, it can be assumed that educational system conformity with rules

of Kandallur Salai, it can be assumed that educational system mentioned in Huzur office plate was practiced in Kandallur salai and karunandadakkan must have assimilated the same to Parthivapuram salai. Daily routine of Vedic education imparted to the students is mentioned in Huzur office plates. Most of the terms used in this section are unacquainted and hence only a tentative meaning is taken here. Inscription states that mode of study is by varam the tentative meaning of baram means parts or chapter Hence, it can be inferred that lessons were divided into different parts and studied. The terms Sutras mentioned in the text may mean formulas. One portion says that two params in Agattuaham have to be studied alternately.

Discipline in the Salais

Huzur office plates mentions of strict rules which prevailed in Parthivapuram Salai for cattars and other employees in Salai, Cattars were not supposed to speak abusive languages to each other. If one cattar strikes/hits another a fine of one kasu was to be levied from the cattar. If a cattar causes injuries to another with weapons he would be dismissed from the Salai, Cattars were barred from going to meeting places or congregation with offensive weapons and no kind of deceit was allowed within the precincts of the temple. Cattars was not supposed to appoint any maid servants in matha where he resides. No one on any account was allowed to stop daily routine of central shrine and the Salai, those who attempted such activities were debarred from eating from Sale and was allowed to continue only after paying a fine daily of a kalanju to Perumakkals. The servants who speak insultingly to cattars were subjected to fine of one kasu. The copper plates ends mentioning name of ajnapti and writer Sattan Murugan alias Tenganadu kilavan and Kunrappolan alias Tiraiyan Omayanadu kilavan of Pappigikkodu.

Conclusion

From the Huzur office copper plate inscriptions it is clear that Parthivapuram Silai had played a vital role in educational and cultural scenarios of Ay period. In the view of strict enforcement of discipline Parthivapuram Salai became an ideal education institution of the age. There are many views about the

sudden discontinuation of Silais. Some scholars are of the opinion that the Chera-Chola war of 11 century CE caused social upheavals which appears to have led to the decline of Salai. Most of the Salais was possibly destroyed by Cholas as is evidenced from Kalemarruppu incident invoked by Rajaraja Chola at Kandallur Silai. One of the causes of disappearance of Silais might also be due to the decline in character and caliber of pupils and lack of donors during turbulent times.

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