

Important Commercial Centers of the Later Pandyas

Dr.P.Ganesan

Assistant Professor, Department of Ancient History, School of Historical Studies, Madurai Kamaraj University,
Madurai-625021, Tamil Nadu. India.

Abstract: It is evident that the economic condition of the period was greatly shaped by the traders. Evidences are also available to denote the existence of both internal and external trade under the Later Pandyas. The existence of Port Cities like Korkai, Kayal, Tuthukkudi, Periya Pattinam substantiates this fact. From the accounts of foreign travelers such as Macro Polo and Wassaf, the Tamil country enjoyed a flourishing trade with China, the Middle Eastern and European countries and also with North India. The merchant communities had their own corporations which functioned for the promotion of the traders and merchandise in the country. They were held in high esteem in society and awarded titles too. They had their merchant guilds from the early times and they helped to safeguard the merchants and their trading goods. Commodities of daily use and luxury items of merchandise were marketed. They indicate the amount of trade in the commodities and movement from one area to the other. The agricultural products like eighteen kinds of cereals, paddy (*nel*) and rice (*arisi*) were frequently found in the transactions. Millets (*samai, Varaku, ragi, bajra*), grass (*pul*) and pulses (*avarai, kadalai, ulundu, payaru, tuvarai* and *kollu*) were the other commodities sold. Among the oil seeds, the coconuts, castor seeds (*amanakku*), sesamum and mustard (*Kadugu*) were the commodities sold by the members of the guild. Betel leaves was another commodity sold in the markets. Other agrarian products like green ginger, dry ginger, turmeric, garlic and cumin were also sold in the market. Butter, jaggary, vegetables, tamarind (*puli*), salt, honey, wax (*meluku*) wood, flowers, herbs and drugs were other items sold by the merchants.

Introduction

The Later Pandyas trade seems to have flourished and this was supported by some of the studies of scholars, inscriptions and accounts of foreign travelers. It is evident that the economic condition of the period was greatly shaped by the traders. Evidences are also available to denote the existence of both internal and external trade under the Later Pandyas. The existence of Port cities like Korkai, Kayal, Tuthukkudi, Periya Pattinam. From the accounts of foreign travellers such as Macro Polo and Wassaf, the Tamil country enjoyed a flourishing trade with China, the Middle Eastern and European countries and also with North India. The Pandya kings patronised the trade and encouraged merchants of both orient and foreign and all the ships from the west used to touch the Pandya region. These trading activities were looked after by the Merchant guilds.