

# Sea Battle of the Kings of Tamil Country with Special Reference from Tamil Literature

G.Malathi  
Guest Faculty,

Dept. of History and Tourism, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.

**Abstract - The land of Early Tamilakam was divided into five sectors namely: Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neidal and Palai. The people of these lands belonged to hilly, pastoral, agriculture, coastal, and desert. It was ruled by the famous 'Trios', such as the Chera, the Chola and the Pandiya along with them minor rulers or chieftains were also ruled early Tamilakam. The five-fold division of lands had plenty of resource and abounds in fertility. Each and every rulers controlled land had special features and residue of some objects. They made flourishing maritime contacts both Western side and Eastern side countries, such as Arabs, Egypt, Greek and Rome in Western side and China in Eastern side and south side with Sri Lanka, even though they made splendid contacts with Romans.**

**Keywords - Yavana, Muziri, Tondi, Kaviripoompattinam, Roman, Greek**

The study of the period of Early Tamilakam was attempted by various scholars on tinai concepts and they identified Tamil land, as not a developed society, but considered as lineage society due to the method of transactions, such as barter system, but it is not a confirm concept because the Early Tamilakam had done much of achievement by administration of popular kings of prominent dynasties, perfect manner of society and prosperous economic condition by the way of trade and commercial contacts with foreign countries.

The land of Early Tamilakam was divided into five sectors namely: Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neidal and Palai. The people of these lands belonged to hilly, pastoral, agriculture, coastal, and desert. Their attitudes, habits, customs, food and occupation were entirely distinguished from each other's and at the same time their regulations also varied from others, but the language and some kinds of traditions were same<sup>1</sup>. The social classes and tribal formation appeared in later phase of the early age before the society was formed<sup>2</sup>. On the basis of division separate clans or tribes formed, however they were generally called as 'Tamil race' due to the language spoken by those peoples<sup>3</sup>. According to Romila Thapar, there were so many factors led for state formation which was happened in North India, same causes and circumstance prevailed in Early Tamilakam and through these factors it changed as society from lineage. Rajan Gurukkal indicated about early Tamilakam, which had not a well developed society and its primary level of transaction but it is not a clear statement because the early literatures denoted about wide level of commercial contact of Tamils, its strengthen by excavation conducted in various prominent sites of Tamilakam<sup>4</sup>.

Early Tamilakam was ruled by the famous 'Trios', such as the Chera, the Chola and the Pandiya along with them minor rulers or chieftains were also ruled early Tamilakam. The five-fold division of lands had plenty of resource and abounds in fertility. Each and every rulers controlled land had special features and residue of some objects. The famous three rulers lands were popular for such products, those were: The Chera land was famous for pepper; it was called as 'Kari' in early literatures<sup>5</sup>. It was much liked by the Westerners, they were called as Yavana, and so pepper got the name 'Yavanapriya'<sup>6</sup>. Periplus called the Chera as Cerabothra<sup>7</sup>, their famous ports were Tondi and Muziri.

The Chola kingdom was famous for its muslin cloth. The Chola land was called as Camera by Periplus, its famous port was Kaviripoompattinam<sup>8</sup>. The Pandiya kingdom was famous for pearl. The famous port was Korkai and it was called as Colchi by Periplus<sup>9</sup>. The pearl fishery was done in Korkai by Pandiyan kingdom by uses of condemned criminals, because identifying and bring the pearls from the deep sea to the banks of the sea was not an easy job in those days<sup>10</sup>. The products of Tamilakam exported to foreign countries and traders of both inside and outside of India came and transacted their goods for satisfy their livelihood and needs of luxury products. The maritime trade gave fame and glory to each part of Tamilakam Kings and Chiefs who had specific commodities and exported to foreign countries; eagerness of foreigners for Tamilakam goods and desire of Tamil rulers for more wealth were focused in the points of flourishing in maritime trade contacts.

The Early Tamilagm made flourishing maritime contacts both Western side and Eastern side countries, such as Arabs, Egypt, Greek and Rome in Western side and China in Eastern side and south side with Sri Lanka, even though they made splendid contacts with Romans.

Romans established their its own republic and arose as maritime powers on 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE; The Romans learned ship building technology from Greeks, and their ships entered into Mediterranean ports and vicinity areas. During the regime of Augustus, Roman and Greek sea voyagers used their adept to find monsoon for develop the maritime commerce with India. India, Arabia and China were main three commercial partners and their products of black pepper, incense and silk were imported by Romans and the Roman's silver and gold coins were hoarded in India, Arabia and China<sup>11</sup>. The Roman made maritime trade contact with Tamilakam's three kingdoms and their commercial relationship strength giving by the embassy of Tamil lands reached the Augustus kingdom<sup>12</sup>. The Roman brought flax cloth, wine, lamp, vase, lead, copper, and tin along

with material things, they also brought slaves, and exchanges were done; this maritime trade contact was proved by the 'Papyrus' the agreement between Tamil traders and Greek traders, which is kept in Vienna museum<sup>13</sup>.

The Romans settled in Tamilakam particularly in Kaviripoompattinam, and they had separate quarters and made transaction, such as imported their home land products and export the commodities of Tamil regions.

Payan Arivu Ariya Yavanar Irukkaiyum

(Silampu: 5: 10)

This song shows the settlement of Yavana people and they engaged themselves in trade contact with Tamil traders, and miscellaneous traders from North India and other outside part of the countries were busy in commercial activities at Kaviripoompattinam, it is mentioned in Pattinapalai songs<sup>14</sup>.

The Yavana people were brave and courageous soldiers, they were appointed as body guard of Kings and as palace guard in Pandiya's capital city. They looked as terrible person and hold as sword in their hand<sup>15</sup>. Apart from the traders and soldier, skilled and equipped artisans and technological workers also lived in Tamil land. The Yavana carpenters were worked with Magadha artisans, Marata gold smith, and Avanthi black smith in Tamilakam and created huge hall<sup>16</sup>.

The Literatures were one of the evidence of Yavana's appearance in early Tamilakam. And this evidence was strengthened by Archaeological excavations such as coins, pottery and artifacts etc... The Potteries of heterogeneous types of Romans were come to Tamilakam while maritime trade contacts, and found in port city during excavations. The Amphorae types of fragments were found in Arikamedu excavation conducted by Wheeler and it revealed 116 sherds in first time and later preceded on 1990-91, it produced double in number<sup>17</sup>. These kinds of sherds were also found in Vasavasamudram<sup>18</sup>.

Yavanar Thantha Vinaimaan Nankalam

(Akam: 149:9)

and Puram poems also denoted that the Yavanar brought wine<sup>19</sup> and it was carried in jars.

The new person gave income or wealth to the land by the way of trade or business. Those kinds of income were mentioned as 'New income' and the word denoted for 'new income' in literature as 'Yaanaar'. The word 'Yaanaar' gave three meanings such as New income<sup>20</sup> (Puthuyavaruvaai), Novelty or Newness<sup>21</sup> (Puthumai), and Wealth<sup>22</sup> (selvam).

The word 'Yaanaar' was denoted in literature with lands of Kings and Chiefs; it gave New income, Novelty and Wealth to each land according to the nature of lands. The Puram songs denoted the 'Yaanaar' in most of the resourceful lands of Vel Paari<sup>23</sup>, KoperumCholan<sup>24</sup>, Pandiya<sup>25</sup> and Karikala land,

Nali iru Muneer Naavaai Otti  
Valitholil Aanda Uravon Maruga!  
Kaliru iyal Yanak Karikal Valava!  
Sendru, Amark Kadantha Aattral Thondra-  
Ventroi! Ninninum Nallan Andre-  
Kalkol Yaanaar Vennip Panranthalai

(Puram: 66:1-6)

This lines shown that 'Yaanaar', the new income was obtained by more resourceful land, because new person such as traders, business men and holder of commodity need to transact goods so they arrived on those lands.

The foreigners were called as 'Yavana'<sup>26</sup>; the 'Yavana' or 'Yavanar' came and settled in Kaviripoompattinam and Muziri which was famous and prominent port cities for trade contacts. So it were sounded by many languages, it was described as,

Mozhipala Perukiya Palither Theyethyp  
Pulampeyar Maakkal KalanthuInithu Uraiyum  
Muttach Chirappin Pattinam Perinum

(Pattinam: 216-218)

The Yaanaars brought their goods and sold in the marts of Muziri and Kaviripoompattinam. So the markets of two famous port cities were loaded by all regional and foreign countries goods.

Neerin Vantha Nimirpari Puraviyum  
Kaalini Vantha Karunkari Moodaiyum  
Vadamalai Pirantha Maniyum Ponnum  
Kudamali Pirantha Aaramum Agailum  
Thenkadai Muthum, Kunakadhil Thugirum  
Gangai Vaariyum Kavirip Payanum  
Elathu Unavum Kazhakathu Aakkamum  
Ariyavum Periyavum Neriya Endi  
Valanthalai Mayankiya Nananthalai Marukin

(Pattinam: 185-193)

Ponnodu Vanthu Kariyodu Peryarum  
Valamkezhu Muziri Aarppu ezha Valaiye

(Akam: 149:10-11)

Early literatures clearly indicated trade activities and commodities, through these poems traders of various land arrived and exchanged their goods and reloaded their ships, which were needs by their land people. The voyage was not an easy one, they have to face numerous natural hurdles, and such as storm<sup>27</sup>, weather conditions, and drawing were some of the natural barriers along with these, one more struggle was with shark. The shark was swallowing sun ships it was depicted in

literature<sup>28</sup> and Satavahana sculpture; removal or release from natural barriers in sea trade, one more was a manmade obstruction which was occurred in Early Historical Period. The disturbance was done by one group of men. This attitude led the Tamil rulers to form the naval force. The Naval force and battle were made fame and great noble to the Tamil rulers.

The glorious trade contact between the Tamilakam and Western countries was possible only by found of wind by Hippalus, the Greek pilot on 45 CE<sup>29</sup>. After the discovery of wind it was made easy for the voyage of traders, through Arabian Sea directly. The port was the entering point of foreigners for come and exchanged their goods. So every king concentrated to capture the port cities. The wars were in two terms about the ports: one was to remove the barriers and trouble from portside and another one was capture of important ports.

After the discovery of proper wind, arrival of Yanava made easy, and Yavana's arrival gave Yaanar which means innovative (Puthumai) in trade contacts, New income (Puthuvaruvaai) gave more money and the development of trade and finally made wealth (selvam) to the society. So the word 'Yaanar' opted for Tamilakam by 'Yavanar'. The ports were places of sea trade. It paved way for the foreigners, who travelled from Western countries to Eastern countries. The ports acted as center point to connect the traders of Tamilakam and foreign countries, they had loaded and reloaded their ships at ports.

The people fulfilled their needed goods by the trade. The barter system of exchange occurred among internal regions. But some other commodities were available only at market only. In market, the traders of local land and foreigners were mingling with each other, exchanged and sold their goods. There were miscellaneous commodities in different kinds such as ebony, teak, blackwood, sandal wood, bamboo, ivory, iron, spikenard, bdellium, costus, lyceum, saffron, pepper, malabathram, cinnabar, indigo, agate, jasper, carnelian and beryl were exported to foreign countries from West coastal line<sup>30</sup>. Some of the items were coral, wine, silk, metals; lead and copper were imported by Tamilakam and North India<sup>31</sup>.

The author of Periplus mentioned in his notes about ports of Western side and Eastern side of Tamilakam, such as Muziri, Tondi, Nelcynda, Korkai, kaberi, and Poducca<sup>32</sup>. The early literatures mentioned numerous kinds of boats and ship which were prevailed and used for transport the goods, those were Ambi and its kinds, Naavaai, and Vangam were main sea going vessels for heavy loads foreign trades along with these other types were Timil, Kalam, Thoni, Odam, Pinai and pandri. The arrivals of new persons from other part of region or countries were mentioned in literature as 'Aal vinai' which means 'New Visit'

Aalvinai Pirithalum Undo! Piriinum

(Akam: 353:1)

The Kadamba were one of the clan ruled in vicinity and adjacent part of Western Tamilakam, they were mentioned as

Thudiyam Paanan Paraiyan Kadamban Endru  
In Nangu Allathu Kudiyum Illai

(Puram: 335: 7-8)

The puram poems clearly described that, they were martial community people such as proceeding of three clans, and it also made sure that they were indicated in Tamil society's clan and marital community.

The Kadambas ruled in various regions such know as Konganam, Vanavasi, Kudanadu, Karnataka and Tulu region and they were classified themselves according their ruling regions and called themselves as Goa Kadamba, Vanavasi Kadamba, Payal Kadamba and Kalinga Kadamaba<sup>33</sup>, through their identification, they were resided in Western part of Tamil land. The West coast was prominent and integral part trade contact with Western countries of Arabs, Egypt, Greek and Rome.

The Kadambas main occupation was piracy. They had been often ransacking the ships of traders. The ship might have owned by Tamil traders or Yavana traders. Loot of either ships or goods, gave heavy loss to Tamilakam and Westerners, because both countries exchanged their commodities and containment. But the activities of Kadambas were palatable and it annoyed to the trade contacts. So the Tamil rulers formed navy force for resolve problems.

Imayavaramban Necheraladan, the Chera king, first formed the naval force for control and removing this piracy. It was mentioned in Padirrupattu poems<sup>34</sup>,

Kadampumuthal Thadintha kadunchina Munpin  
Nedunchra ladan! Vazhga Avan Kanni

(Padirru: 20:4-5)

Saalperun Thaanaich Chera Lathan  
Maalkadal Otti Kadamparuthu, Iyattriya

(Akam: 347:3-4)

These poems confirmed that Imayavaramban Neduncheralathan made sea battle to suppress the piracy of Kadambas.

The victory of Neduncheralathan was not tolerated by Northern Kings and vicinity of Tamilakam rulers, so that, they stimulated and supported the Kadambas against of Imayavaramban Neduncheralathan. So again one more time the Kadambas had done piracy and annoyed ship of traders continually, to suppress the Kadambas and defeated the conspiracy of Northerners, the King Neduncheralathan conducted one more sea battle and won the company of Kadamabas and Northerners Kings<sup>35</sup>.

Senguttuvan, son of Neducheralathan also made sea battle against of Kadamabas, who were not totally destroyed by Neduncheralathan. The Kadambas wanted to give revenge to Chera king and collapse their trade contacts by piracy. It was not tolerated by Senguttuvan. So he formed a huge navy force and defeated the Kadambas<sup>36</sup>.

Karkadam Porintha Kavala Nayinum  
Vidarchilai Poritha Viralo Nayinum

(Silampu: 27:135-136)

Karikalan was one of the famous Chola king. He formed naval force and waged a war against Sri Lanka, and brought twelve thousand people as prisoners and used them in embankment of River Kaviri, it was described in Rajavali, the chronicle of Sri Lanka<sup>37</sup>. Karikala waged a war against Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was a resourceful Island; it had natural and living things wealth, such as elephant, bird like a parrot and snakes were exported to Rome. After the battle the commodities of Sri Lanka, came to Tamilakam, especially in Kaviripoompattinam, which was fabulous and famous port city of Chola.

The early literature, Pattinapalai described the miscellaneous commodities, brought to Kaviripoompattinam from different distance land and it sold to internal and external part of Tamilakam<sup>38</sup>. Sri Lanka was famous for pearls, because the Northern part of Sri Lanka was slightly near to the Palk Strait. The southernmost trip of Tamilakam was touched with Palk Strait which was famous for pearl fishery. The Pandiya kingdom was famous for pearl, same way Sri Lanka also was famous and source of pearls, due to its geographical conditions<sup>39</sup>. The resource were plenty in Sri Lanka, to control that of resource movement, the Chola king Karikala had conquered the Sri Lanka, after his attempts, commodities came to Kaviripoompattinam and exported to other countries.

The Greek merchants got goods of Sri Lanka for their country from smarts, which were situated in West coast. It seems that, they had not gone to Sri Lanka for commodities; just they bought those items from Tamilakam, without taking voyage to Sri Lanka<sup>40</sup>. The cities Poompuhar and Muziri were important port cities and marts for heterogeneous commodities. The Yavana bought those commodities either from Kaviripoompattinam or from Muziri, and then exported to their countries. So Sri Lankan sent their commodities to Muziri, the port of Chera, from there itself Westerner took for their countries<sup>41</sup>.

The third division of sea battle was capture of the port which was path for foreigners to enter into the Tamilakam. Removals of barriers showed the development of smooth and attract trade contacts. Capture of ports were stressed the importance and popularity of the King.

The port of Muziri was located in West coast; it was prominent and comfortable entering path of Tamilakam by Westerners. So those, whom were, it may be Arabs, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, first touched Muziri and Tondi, then only enter into integral part of Tamilakam. The port Muziri was belonged to Chera kings and Chera land was fame for pepper, which was most liked pulse by the Westerner especially Romans.

The port Muziri was mart for all commodities and center point of traders. Traders brought their goods to this port from various place then those goods were exported to other part of countries. It was depicted as,

Mania KuvaiIya kari Mudaiyaal  
Kali Summaiya Karaikalak Kurunthu  
Kalam Thantha Por Parisam  
Kazhithoniyaan, Karaicherkkunthu  
Malaitharamum, kadaltharamum  
Thaippeyeithu, Varnarkku Iyum  
PunalAm kannin Polanthark Kuttuvan  
Muzhangu Kadl Muzharin Muziri Anna

**(Puram: 343:3-10)**

Pandiya's port was Korkai, it was famous for pearls, but he wanted to control the port Muziri and pepper to get more fame and wealth, because the Westerners come to Tamilakam, by entered into Muziri and purchased their favourite pepper, then only they turned their attention to other products and ports, so it gave second hand to pearl and muslin for this reason Pandiya king Neduncheralathan waged war against and captured port Muziri,

Koisuvar Puravi kodithat Cheliyan  
Muthuneer Munthurai Muziri Mutri

**(Akam: 57: 14-15)**

Poonnodu Vanthu kariyodu Peyearum  
Valamkezhu Muziri Arppuezha VailaiE  
Arunsuram kadanthu padimam Vavviya  
Nedunal Yaanai Adupoor Cheliyan

**(Akam: 149: 10-13)**

The Chera king Yanikkatsey Mantharan Cheral Irumporai, the ruler of the land Manthai. He wanted to annex Tondi with his land, so he waged war and captured Tondi and he got malice of Talaiyalanganathu Serevendra Neduncheliyan. The Pandiya king made conquest against Mantharan Cheral Irumporai for capture the port of Tondi which was one more famous port and first port of Chera's of foreigner's attention before Muziri<sup>42</sup>.

Chola's famous port city was Kaviripoompattinam, it was famous for muslin cloth and also local regions and foreign countries commodities were combined in one place. So the Westerner moved to Kaviripoompattinam and brought commodities to satisfaction of needs of their country. So the Chera kings made invasion against Kaviripoompattinam<sup>43</sup>. The Chera king Ilamcheral Irumporai made conquest against Kopperumchola, the Chola king, and defeated him, through this war Chera king made full control and expanded his authority till Chola land.

The Naval battles done by three dynasties Kings, but some of the famous Kings only maintained the naval force and could not find the reasons, about other kings who were not keep and maintain naval force. However, they made remarkable attempts in maritime trade. End of the Early Historical Period, Tamilakam had ruled by Kalabras, then the Pallavas,, came as

emerging power and ruled the Tamilakam, they had naval force, but the Later Chola made full attention in naval battle and expanded their rule over Southeastern countries, and it was glorious period of Cholas.

#### REFERENCE:

1. N.Subramaniyan, Sangam Polity, Ennes Publication, Udumalpet,-28, 1996, p.268.
2. M. Arokiaswami, The Classical age of the Tamils, University of Madras, 1988, p. 84.
3. K. Thangavel, Tamilaka Samuga Panpattu Varalaru, 2008, p.113.
4. Romila Thapar, From Lineage to State, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984, p.11.
5. Wilfred.H.Schoff, The Periplus of Erythraean Sea, Longmans, Greed and Co, New York, 1912, p. 42.
6. Mailai.Seeni. Venkataswamy, Pazhangaala Thamizhar Vaanigam, New Century Book House, 2011, p.146.
7. S.Suresh, Symbol of Trade, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi-02, 2004, p. 32.
8. Mullaipattu: 59-61, Silapathikaram: 14:66-67.
9. Wilfred.H.Schoff, loc.cit, p. 44.
10. Purananuru: 24:31-33, 54, 367:6-7, Maduraikanchi: 779-781
11. Wilfred.H.Schoff, loc.cit, p. 42.
12. Nedunalvadayi: 101-103, Mullaipattu: 85, Perumpanatrupadai: 316-317, Silapathikaram: 5:154, Mani: 1:45.
13. Akananuru: 149:9, 262:7, Kalithogai: 133:17, Perumpanatrupadai: 477, Purananuru: 56:19.
14. Pattinapaalai: 190
15. E.H. Warmington, The Commerce between The Roman Empire and India, Vikas Publishing House Pvt.Ltd, Delhi-06, 1974, p.63.
16. Pattinapaalai:191
17. Mailai. Seeni.Venkatasamy, op.cit, pp.83-84.
18. Xinru Liu, Ancient India and Ancient China, Oxford University Press, New Delhi-01, 1988, p. 54.
19. Mailai. Seeni.Venkatasamy, op.cit, p.38.
20. Kurunthogai: 24:1, 85-6; Aingurunuru: 1:4, Purananuru: 2:11, 7:12.
21. Purananuru: 326:11.
22. Ibid:260:8
23. Ibid: 116-14.
24. Ibid: 212-6.
25. Maduraikanchi: 330.
26. Perumpanatrupadai: 316; Mullaipattu: 61; Purananuru: 56:18; Akananuru: 149:9.
27. Silapathikaram: 11:109.
28. Nartrinai: 111:6-8, 207:7-8, Akananuru: 300:16-17.
29. Wilfred.H.Schoff, op.cit., P.45.
30. Himanshu Prabha Ray, Monastery and Guild, Commerce under Satavahanas, Oxford University Press, New Delhi-01, 1992, P.114
31. E.H.Warmington, op.cit, pp..263-268.
32. Wilfred.H.Schoff, op.cit, P.47.
33. Avvai.Su. Duraisamy Pillai, Chera Mannar Varalaru, Sri Shenbaga Pathippagam, Chennai-17 2008, P.61.
34. Padirrupattu: 11:12-14, 12:1-3, 17:4-5.
35. Akananuru: 127:3-4.
36. Padirrupattu: 41:25-27, 42:21-22, 45:20-23, Akam: 212:15-16
37. M.T. Rasu Kumar and R.Vasantha (Ed), Mailai.Seeni.Venkadasamy Thokuppu Noolkal thokuthi-1, Makkal Veliyeeddu, Chennai-600002., 2002.P.196.
38. Pattinapaalai: 191.
39. E.H.Warmington, op.cit, p.163.
40. Ibid: P.63.
41. Silapathikaram: 30:160
42. Purananuru:17:13
43. Pattinapaalai: 216-218