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A NOTE ON ANCIENT WEIGHT MEASURES FROM TEMPLE INSCRIPTIONS OF TAMILNADU THAT PERTAIN TO THE RATE OF INTEREST IN TERMS OF GOLD

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Abstract

The main objective of the paper is to through light on the ancient weight measures that are being inscribed in the Tamil inscription which help in calculating the rate of interest in terms of gold. A special interest is given on the names of the weighing stones that are mentioned.

Keywords: Kuṉṟimaṇi, Gadayāna, Kaḷañju, Mañjāḍi, Varāhan, Kōvai, Māṟu, Kal, Āḍavallāṉ, Viḍelviḍugu, etc.

Introduction

The metals such as gold, silver etc., which are used for making ornaments and utensils, are weighted using the balance. These measurements of gold were small like Kuṉṟimaṇi, is the seed of a plant. The fineness of these metals and the composition of them with copper and other metals has a significant role in those days. The commodities like sugar, salt and turmeric are sometimes measured by weighing them using the weighing balances. The inscriptions give us only very little information regarding the weight measure and their relationships with other measures.

Weighing Balances

Weighing balance that was used to measure gold, silver, bronze etc., and items like sugar, turmeric is termed as kōl. The weighing balance that is used in the temple to weigh various objects that were used for the god is called Tiruparikalam. The other weighing balances were termed as kōl. Few examples are stated below.

Tiruparikalam; vaṭṭi

An inscription from Aṉṉavāśal in Kuḷattūr taluk, refer to 2 types of weighing balance namely Tiruparikalam and vaṭṭi. It states as follows:

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எட்ட திருப்பபக்கலாம் ஒன்றின்னல் எடை 232 பலம் வட்டி லினால் எடை 38 பலம் Mகா எடை270 கஞ்சும்

yeṭṭa tiruparikalam Oṉṟiṉṉal eḍai 232 palam vaṭṭi liṉāl eḍai 38 palam āga eḍai 270 kaḻañjum

It means 232 palam was weighed using Tiruparikalam and 38 palam was weighed using vaṭṭil. The weighing balance Tiruparikalam is also mentioned in yet another inscription from Kachchapēśvara temple, in Chiṅgleput district.

Navalūr kōl

An inscription from Bakthajanēśvara temple, Tirukoiylūr, South Ārcot district belonging to Rājarājā I and dated in his 21st regnal year (1006 A.D.) records a gift of 1150 palam, of gold being measured using Navalūr kōl. Here kōl means the weighing balance that is used to weigh gold.

Āyiravaṉ Tilak kōl

An inscription of Rājēndra Chōḻa I dated 1021 A.D. from Viraṭṭānēśvara temple, at Tirukoyilūr in South Ārcot district mentions a kōl named Āyiravaṉ Tilak kōl.

Tirumāl Tirupāda kōl

An inscription of Tribh. Vikrama Chōḻa deva dated 1130 A.D. from Vyāghrapadēśvara temple, Siddhaliṅgamaḍam, in South Ārcot district, mentions a weighing balance named Tirumāḷ Tirupāda kōl for weighing 80 palam of metal, by Tirumāḷ Tirupāḍa kōl.

Ratio between gold and silver

An inscription of Kulottuṅga I from Chingleput district dated in his 10th regnal year gives the ratio between the standard kāśu and kaḻañju of silver formed the equivalent of 100 kāśu, so that 1 kaḻañju of gold, probably of the standard fineness of 9 ½ maṟṟu, was equal to 8.66 kaḻañju of silver.

Rate of Interest

Gold was donated to the temple and the interest due to it is utilized for various purposes required in the temple. The interest was paid in the form of gold or paddy or ghee. For the purpose of calculation of rate, the interest paid in terms of gold has been taken into consideration. The calculated values are tabulated below.

Table 5.1: Rate of Interest: Mode = 12.5%

S.no.	Date	District	Rate of Interest
1.	905	Chitoor	20
2.	936	Chiṅgleput	15
3.	937	Chiṅgleput	15
4.	939	Madura	40
5.	985	Chiṅgleput	15
6.	992	North Ārcot	12.5
7.	1013	Tañjāvūr	12.5
8.	1014	Tañjāvūr	12.5
9.	1014	Tañjāvūr	12.5
10.	1014	Tañjāvūr	12.5
11.	1017	hiṅgleput	15

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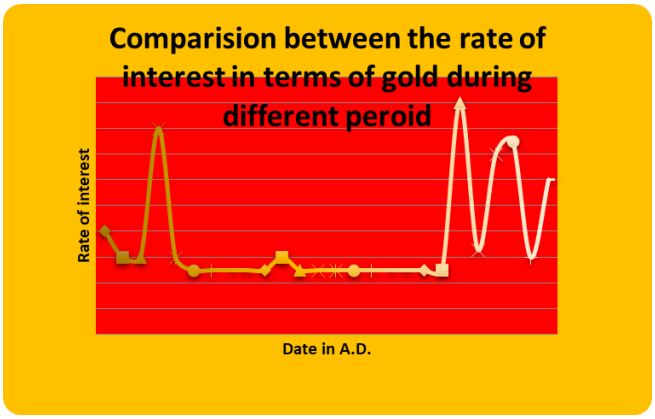
12.	1020	Tañjāvūr	12.5
13.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
14.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
15.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
16.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
17.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
18.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
19.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
20.	1024	Tañjāvūr	12.5
21.	1039	North Ārcot	45
22.	1053	North Ārcot	162/5
23.	1054	North Ārcot	35
24.	1101	Chitoor	180
25.	1170	Tañjāvūr	37.5
26.	1200	Chiṅgleput	15
27.	1234	Cimbatore	30



From the above table and the graph we could find that 12.5% has the highest frequency found during the 10th century. The rate of interest is found high during the 1039 A.D. and find a decrease thereafter. Also, we can find that 12.5% is found in the Tañjāvūr district. It is found to be high in North Arcot district.

Conclusion:

The weighing balance used for the purpose is also named. The weighing balance used in the temple is named as Tiruparikalam. It may be suggested that maintaining these weighing stones at the temple, court or at granary might be for standardization and also for accuracy. The gold reserve in country plays major role in the economic stability of the country. Thus the weight measure needs to be handled properly in order to maintain a country's prosperity.

The rate of interest which is calculated from the available data is found to be 12.5%. Though there are variations in the rate of interest through Tamilnadu 12.5% remains the same through decades. There was thus no uniformity either in the actual units of gold currency in circulation or in the standard of weight and fineness adopted in different areas for the regulation of local transactions.

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