

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL HISTORY

The Kongu Nadu witnessed the rule of tribal chieftains during the Sangam period. '*Kongudesarajakkal Charitai*' mentions some dynasties which ruled this region from 4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. onwards. The representatives of the Imperial Cholas who were noted as the Kongu Cholas by modern historians ruled the North Kongu for a long period. The Hoysalas also ruled this region. Later on the Kongu Nadu witnessed the Vijayanagar rule. A detailed study of the political conditions of the Kongu Nadu would give a clear picture of the political background of the North Kongu.

Chera kings brought the Kongu country under their sway during the Sangam period itself and their rule continued until the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Chera dominance of the Kongu country began with the rule of the Palyanai Selkelu Kuttuvan<sup>1</sup>. The successive Chera kings are extolled in Padirrupattu and had Karur as the capital of the Kongu country. The location of Karur assumed military significance. It enabled them to thwart the ascendancy of the Cholas from Uraiyur and also to prevent the Cholas and Pandyas from laying their hands on the mineral wealth of the Kongu Country<sup>2</sup>. Pugalur inscription testifies to the stable rule of Cheras in the Kongu country.

After the Cheras, Rattas had their sway over the area<sup>3</sup>. Then Gangas gained ascendancy after the Rattas<sup>4</sup>. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards, the conquest of the Kongu country had been the constant bone of contention between the Gangas and Pandyas. Their copper plates mention the conquest of the Kongu country. Pandyan Seliyan, Sendan Termaran and Parantaka Nedunchadaiyan boast of their conquest of the Kongu kings. The sway of Pandyas over the Kongu country was not permanent, so was the sovereignty of the Gangas over the Kongu country<sup>5</sup>.

Recently Kasinathan had codified the history of the Kalabhras with certain new evidences<sup>6</sup>. According to him the inscriptions from Ponnivadi in Periyar district refer to *Kokandan Ravi*<sup>7</sup> and the inscription refers to the king as '*Kalvanayina Kali Nirupan*'<sup>8</sup>. He opines that the king is Kalabhra. Since the king of *Konadu* had conquered them, he adorned himself with the title, *Kalimurkan*.

Till the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Kongu politics was in fluid state. But with the ascendancy of the Imperial Cholas the politics became stable. The researcher mainly concentrates on the importance of seven Saivaite centres situated in northern part of Kongu region and the focus on the political background of this particular region became important. The researcher has described the political conditions of North Kongu by referring the inscriptions found from the seven Saivaite temples.

## **The Kongu country under the Imperial Cholas**

In the last quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D, Kongu was subjected to an invasion by the Imperial Cholas of Tanjavur<sup>9</sup>. The stone inscriptions of Parantaka I (907- 955 A.D.) the son and successor of Aditya I discovered in the northern part of the Kongu country do not mention that he had conquered the Kongu country. So it would be quite reasonable to suppose that Kongu was brought under the Chola rule by Aditya I<sup>10</sup>.

Talakkadu, a part of the Kongu country is situated in the Southern bank of river Kaveri in Karnataka. It was the capital of the collateral western Ganga rulers of Prithivi Pathi line. The Northern part of Kongu was under the sway of these western Ganga rulers of Talakkadu whereas the southern Kongu was partly under the Chera rulers and the Pandyas<sup>11</sup>. Further the *Anbil plates* of Sundara Chola states that Aditya built rows of tall stone temples on both the banks of river Kaveri from Western Ghats to the sea, that is from *Coorg* to *Kavrippoompattinam (Poompuhar)*<sup>12</sup>. This could have only been possible if Aditya held possession over the parts of the entire course of the river Kaveri upto Puhar. Initially Aditya should have conquered his contemporary Ganga ruler of Talakkadu and ought to have taken possession of Northern Kongu<sup>13</sup>.

### **Parantaka I (907 A.D. - 953 A.D.)**

A record mentions that Adityavarman son of Vijayalaya (Vijayadarayan) of the Cholas had his coronation at Tanjavur. He marched against Kongu country, defeated its king and annexed Talakkadu and made several *agraharas* and bestowed them as *Sarvamanya* grants<sup>14</sup>. The discovery of the stone inscriptions of Aditya's successor Parantaka I in the Kongu country, mentions that he does not claim to have conquered Kongu clearly establish Aditya's achievement<sup>15</sup>. Parantaka's period may be said to have formed the formative period of Chola rule in Kongu.

Eleven inscriptions of Parantaka I found at Ardhanariswarar temple in Tiruchchengodu belonging to the period between 916 A.D.- 944 A.D. explains the establishment of the executive bodies like *Tiruvona Ganaperummakkal*, *Sonattup Perumakkal*, *Tiruvadirai Ganaperummakkal*, *Duvadasi Ganapperumakkal* and *Pannirandunattu Perumakkal*<sup>16</sup>.

In one of the inscription of Parantaka I (933A.D.) the donor *Kadan Pudimanikam* is mentioned which reminds about the Pudi (Bhuti) family<sup>17</sup>. The Kodumbalur chiefs were allies of the Chola family. The inscriptions mention that Parakesari Parantaka was assisted in his war against the Pandyas by the Velir chiefs of Kodumbalur family. It is mentioned in a record of Parantaka that prince Arikulakesari, one of the sons of Parantaka had married Pudi Adichcha Pidari daughter of Tennavan Ilangovellar of the

Kodumbalur chiefs. Pudi or Bhuti represents the family of the chiefs from Kodumbalur.

### **Raja Raja I (985 A.D. - 1014 A.D.)**

Raja Raja I came to the throne in 985 A.D. and was known as Rajakesari Arulmolivarman in the early years of his reign. During his 4<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Raja Raja I, he defeated the Cheras at Kandalursalai and then proceeded against the Pandyas<sup>18</sup>. Later the Tiruvalangadu plates mentions that the Pandyas and Cheras combined once more and met the Cholas in the Malai Nadu<sup>19</sup>. This Malai Nadu here is generally in reference to the hill country and naturally implies the region of modern Coorg, Mysore and Kongu and the hills surrounding them. During the conquest of Talakkadu by Raja Raja I (990 A.D.) the Kongu region seems to have been peaceful<sup>20</sup>. Kongu helped Raja Raja I during his attack on the Canarese country particularly Talakkad and Tadigaipadi. Further *Kongudesra Rajakkal* gives useful information that, the Chola king in order to get popular support gave the towns of Keriya (named as Rajarajapuram) in the Talakkad district in the northern part of Kongudesra to the merchants of Talavanapuram and made agraharas for the Brahmanas<sup>21</sup>.

Further a stone inscription of Raja Raja I dated in his 28<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1012 A.D.) from Balmuri in Mysore mentioning his conquests as comprising Gangavadi, Malenad, Nolamba, Andhra, Kongu, Kalinga and

Pandya all becoming Chola Nadu, neatly indicates the area of the Raja Raja I empire in the last years of his rule<sup>22</sup>. Moreover copper plates recording a gift of land in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Rajakesarivarman have been found at Tiruchchengodu and it was assigned to Raja Raja I<sup>23</sup>. Another copper plate recorded in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Rajakesarivarman has been found at Tiruchchengodu and it mentions the name of a chief, Mala Araiyan Sundara Solan who also got titles like Piradigandan, Kollimalavan and Orriyuran Piradigandan Varman<sup>24</sup>. The donor's father is stated to have died at Ilam (i.e. Ceylon). He was a military officer of Raja Raja I or one of his predecessors.

#### **Rajendra I (1012 A.D. - 1044 A.D.)**

Rajendra I, the son and successor of Raja Raja I proved himself as a distinguished prince<sup>25</sup>. Rajendra conquered the Cheras in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. During the 27<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Rajendra a serious battle was fought in Kerala, for which the Chola army passed through Kongu Nadu to reach the Chera country<sup>26</sup>. The mention of the northern part of Kongu as Vira Chola Mandalam after the Imperial Chola ruler Parantaka I alias Vira Chola Adhirajaraja Mandalam in the days of Rajendra I and Vira Rajendra and Chola Keralamandalam in the times of Kulottunga III make it clear that this region was under the direct control of the Imperial Chola rule<sup>27</sup>. To prove this, the record of Rajendra I and his successor Rajendra II are found at Tiruchchengodu and Karuvur.

A record in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Rajendra found at Tiruchchengodu (1032 A.D.) commences with the *Parasiti Tirumanni Valara* and registers the gift of 8 *kalanju* of gold to the deity *Tirumalayil-elundaruliya Udaiyar* at Tiruchchengodu for various offerings during Uttarayana–Sankaranti festivals<sup>28</sup>. Another record from Karuvur in his twenty fourth regnal year (1036 A.D.) mentions the tax–free gift as Iraiylili Devadana tirunamattukkani of the village Sanappiratti in Tattaiyur Nadu, a division of Adhirajaraja Mandalam by the king to meet the expenses of worship, repair and other expenditures of the temple of Tiruanilaimahadeva at Karuvur<sup>29</sup>.

### **Rajendra II (1052 A.D. - 1064 A.D.)**

Two records from Karuvur during the 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Rajendra II (1061 A.D.) mentions the grant of village of Nelvayppalli in Vengala Nadu in Adhirajaraja Mandalam to provide for the worship, for repair and other required expenses to god Mahadeva of the temple of Tiruanilai<sup>30</sup>. The income from this village in the form of taxes like *Iraivari*, *Sirrayam*, *Elavai*, *Ugavai*, *Manrupadu*, *Dendam* and *Kurram* were also offered to the temple<sup>31</sup>. The royal order was executed by *Tirumandiraolai Nayakam*, *Udan Kuttam* and other officers of the king<sup>32</sup>. The mentioning of Adhirajaraja Mandalam and the officers like *Tirumandiraolai Nayakam* and *Udan Kuttam* proves that till Rajendra II, North Kongu was directly under the control of the Imperial Cholas.

## Origin of the Kongu Cholas

There are different views about the origin of the Kongu Cholas. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri says that the celebrated Chola monarch Raja Raja's general named, Kalimurka Vikrama was the founder of the dynasty and bore the title *Konattar*<sup>33</sup>. T.N.Subramaniam views that they were the Chola stocks as they adopted Chola names<sup>34</sup>. K.V.Subrahmanya Aiyer a pioneer in the field identified the Kongu Cholas as Irungovel of Konadu origin<sup>35</sup>. This is agreeable to many scholars. He says that *Konattar* had alliance with Aditya I of the Imperial Chola line and ruled it as a tributary with the title and surnames of their overlords. He stresses the point that it would be better and more appropriate to call this family of rulers of Kongu Nadu by the name of *Konattar* than by any other title<sup>36</sup>. Among the different views about the origin of the Kongu Cholas, their origin from Konadu is possibly agreeable. The rulers of the '*Konattar*' line adopted Chola titles and surnames. So in order to differentiate these rulers of the Kongu Nadu from the rulers of the Imperial Cholas of Tanjore, these kings might have been named as Kongu Cholas. As per the Annual reports of the South Indian Epigraphy<sup>37</sup>, the term Kongu Chola is not an ancient one. It was given by a Kongu historian K.V.Subrahmanya Aiyer, who has called them as '*Konattar*' probably identifying them with their native land<sup>38</sup>. So there are different

opinions among the scholars regarding the origin of the Kongu Cholas which is still an enigma.

**Abhimana Chola Rajadhiraja (1080 A.D. - 1100 A.D.)**

In the Kongu Chola line an inscription has been found from Tirumuruganpundi during the 12<sup>th</sup> regnal year of the ruler Abhimana Chola Rajadhiraja<sup>39</sup> (1100 A.D.). This record seems to register the conferment of some privileges to the *Siva Brahmanas* in the temple of Tirumuruganpundi Mahadeva; a person by name Kasyapanvenkadan Bhavadasan Narayanan alias Abhimana Solabhattan; the temple servants residing in the Tirumadaivalagam of the temple which includes the *Devaradiyars*, *Ugaichchar*, *Nimandakkarar* on the upper side and on the lower side the *Drummers*, *Kudiraiberigai* and *Sekandi*<sup>40</sup>. It is stated that the second tier of their houses and the second *talaikkedai* are raised for which the coating is given<sup>41</sup>.

Moreover the Vijayamangalam record of Abhimana Chola Raja Raja suggests the Saka date 1022 A.D. and the regnal year 12 equivalent to 1100 A.D.<sup>42</sup>. Since the title Parakesari was also assumed by Kalimurkka Vikramachola, the father of Rajadhiraja was also called Vikrama Chola Abhimana. His son naturally assumed the title *Parakesari*. So it can be said that Rajadhiraja ruled over the Kongu country in all probability between 1088 A.D. and 1100 A.D. The title *Abhimana Chola* is set to have been

assumed by Rajadhiraja according to the *Annur record*<sup>43</sup>. Thus the Kongu country came under the control of Vikrama Chola and Rajadhiraja, the two Kongu rulers who served as the later junior most contemporaries of the Imperial Chola king Rajendra I and Kulottunga I, who ruled between 1070 A.D. and 1120 A.D. So it may be said that the latest date of Abimana Chola Rajadhiraja can be fixed around 1100 A.D. From the above records it is clear that the ruler had extended his power both in North and South Kongu. Further they were very much interested in the renovation of temples and also made donations for temple worship<sup>44</sup>.

#### **Rajadhiraja Uttama Chola (1110 A.D. - 1117 A.D.)**

Rajadhiraja Uttama Chola was the ruler who granted special privileges to the temple priest, dancing girls, drummers and pipers. He built a temple at Perumanallur which is situated on the highway between Erode and Coimbatore<sup>45</sup>. The villages Uttama Chola Nallur near Dharapuram and Uttama Chola Chaturvedimangalam were established by him<sup>46</sup>. From the records found in Tirumuruganpundi during the reigning period of Rajadhiraja Uttama Chola, in the third year (1103 A.D.) registers the gift of land in Vikramasola Vala Nadu for the food offerings to be made to the deity Tirumuruganpundi Mahadevar. The gift was made by a person from the place Karaivali in Vada Parisara Nadu<sup>47</sup>.

### **Viranarayana (1135 A.D. - 1149 A.D.)**

An inscription of Viranarayana (1140A.D. - 1141A.D.) during his second year is found in the south wall of the *mandapa* of the Amman shrine in Avinasi. It registers the gift of the village of Tanavasi alias Vira Chola Nallur in Kilpa Nadu by the king, on the occasion of his coronation to the Goddess Perunkarunaichchelviyar of the Tirukkamakottam in the temple of the Lord Avinasiyaludaiyar for the purpose of carrying out 32 *aram* (donation) and the worship of the deity<sup>48</sup>. The gift is stated to have been made to a certain Madevandar. The income from the taxes on the lands was to be collected. The taxes levied from the villages should be received only by the *devakanmis* of the Nacchiyar shrine. The officials like the *Samantas* and others under the king were not allowed to enter the village. The record further states that in regard to the colonization of the village, the aforesaid Madevandar would decide on which families could be brought into the village. He also decided that the inhabitants of the village should deposit Kanan, Kalak-kanappu, Tulaikalpponum and two nali of oil etc in the store of the Nacchiyar shrine. Iladadaraiyan Chendiriyan, Munaiyadaraiyan, Kaduvetti and others figure as signatories of the order<sup>49</sup>.

### **Kulottunga I (1149 A.D. - 1183 A.D.)**

Kulottunga I came to power in 1149 A.D. and bore the title *Tiribhuvana Chakravarthi*, meaning the ruler of the three worlds. This was

originally an Imperial Chola title borne for the first time by Kulottunga I (1070 A.D. - 1122 A.D).The reign of Kulottunga I was an eventful one<sup>50</sup>. Four inscriptions of Kulottunga I at Tirumuruganpundi and four at Avinasi were found, which furnish a lot of information about his reign over Kongu region. Inscriptions found at Tirumuruganpundi records during the reigning period of the ruler in 1151 A.D., 1156 A.D. and 1157 A.D. gives information about the gift of paddy for feeding the tapasvins daily, the gift of one palanjalai for burning a sandhi lamp to Lord Aludaiyar Tirukkurakuttaliyandar, by Marudan Malayan alias Kulottunga Sola Vikkiramaditta Devan, a Samanta of the king. There is another record that registers the gift of 20 kalanju (a unit for measuring weight of gold) of gold for the food offering to be made to the deity of Kuttadudevar in the temple of Tirumuruganpundi Nayanar<sup>51</sup>.

Other records from Avinasi dated 1152 A.D. - 1153 A.D., 1160 A.D. and from 1163 A.D. - 1164 A.D., information can be obtained about the gift of coin Palanjalai-achchu (an old coin) to maintain sandhi lamp, the tax called Kudikanam etc<sup>52</sup>. In one of the inscription from Kodumudi found in the name of Vira Narayana Ravivarman, one of the chief's of Kulottunga I in his 27<sup>th</sup> year (1165 A.D.) registers the tax free gift of the village Unjalur in Melkarai Araiya Nadu of Adhirajaraja Mandalam. The income from the same in gold and paddy was offered to Lord Tirumuruganpundi Mahadeva at

Karaiyur in Kaveri Nadu, a sub division of Adhirajaraja Mandalam to meet the expenses of offerings, worship etc<sup>53</sup>.

### **Vira Chola (1182 A.D. - 1205 A.D.)**

Vira Chola was an outstanding ruler and he put an end to the rule of the Virakeralas in the south by defeating them finally near Kolumam and bore the significant title Irukongum Andavan. He was the conqueror of the Cheras and an inscription from Kolumam calls him as '*Cheranai merkonda Cholan*<sup>54</sup> (the conqueror of the Cheras). Kulottunga III of the Imperial Chola line was his contemporary ruler who invaded the Kongu country. A record at Tirumuruganpundi belonging to Vira Chola (1182 A.D.) registers the gift of tax in the form of *Corn* (Kambu) measured by Rajakesari, raised from the village Palladam alias Adhiradirajanallur in Vayaraikka Nadu by the Andar who was rearing Virasolan Nandavanam for Lord Aludaiya Tirumuruganpundi Nayanar<sup>55</sup>. Another record from Avinasi during his second regnal year (1184 A.D. -1185 A.D.) records that a person by name Avinasi Silaisetti alias Kandiyadevan Vandutotti caused the setting up of a stone pillar to the Ishabha mandapa in the temple of Avinasiyaludayar<sup>56</sup>. It is stated that the cost of labour for one pillar worked out to one and a half achchu of palanjalagai. One more record from Avinasi found in the north wall of the main shrine, during the 4<sup>th</sup> regnal year of the ruler (1186-87 A.D.) registers the gift of taxes to provide for certain services like tirumer-

pucchu to the deity Avinasiyandar<sup>57</sup>. It is stated that the gift was entrusted to the Siva Brahmanas and the Devaradiyar of the villages which remained as devadana to the Lord.

### **Kulottunga III (1196 A.D. -1230 A.D.)**

Three of the inscriptions of Kulottunga III found at Karuvur records the grant of 50 *veli* of land in the village of Mannarai and Keralappalli in Thattaiyur Nadu as Iraiylil Devadana for the various expenses to Lord Mahadeva in the temple of Tiruanilai<sup>58</sup>. Another record from Karuvur during his 24<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1220 A.D.) registers the tax free gifts as Iraiylil Devadana of the village Adhichchanallur in Thattaiyur Nadu by the king to the Lord Tiruanilai Mahadeva in Tiruvanjinanagaram alias Mudivalangu Solapuram in Vengala Nadu, a division of Vira Kerala Mandalam to meet the expenses of worship, services, repairs and special festival on the day of Tiru-k-Karthigai<sup>59</sup>. One more record of the same ruler during his 25<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1221 A.D.) records that Urom of Tevanampalli in Thattaiyur Nadu in Sola Kerala Mandalam sold the lands to the temple for three kalanju of gold.

### **Vira Rajendra Chola (1207 A.D. - 1252 A.D.)**

Vira Rajendra was the son and successor of Vira Chola II and accredited with the title ' ruler of two Kongus '. He bore the title *Tiribhuvana Chakravarti*, *Ulagudayaperumal*, *Konerimaikondan*, *Irukongumandavan* and *Rajakesarivarman*<sup>60</sup>. He was an able and gifted monarch under whom

the Kongu Chola administration enjoyed unparalleled peace and prosperity. Nearly three hundred inscriptions of his rule were found all over the Kongu Nadu. More than eighteen inscriptions were found belonging to the Vira Rajendra Chola from the places like Tirumuruganpundi, Avinasi and Venjamankudalur<sup>61</sup>.

The Tirumuruganpundi inscription of Vira Rajendra found during his 10<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> regnal year mentions about the gift by the *puravai* officers, food offerings and also mentions various kinds of taxes like *Irai Puravu*, *Sirrayam*, *Elavai*, *Ugavai*, *Dandakurram*, *Vendukol*, *Eruttirai*, *Sumai*, *Sungai Charigai*. There is also a mention of various social groups like *Uralmai*, *Puluvar*, *Vettuvar*, *Kiran Kanam*, *Kanam Pandavadarayan* and *Kovankallai* and also of different types of coins like *Anai Achchu*, *Sriyakki* and *Palanjalagai achchu*. It also talks about *Devaradiyar*, setting up of a pillar mentioning of *Akkasaliyar*, a gift for the procession of the deity. From the records vivid information about the various types of offerings, settlements, social groups and the uses of coins are found<sup>62</sup>.

From the Avinasi records of Vira Rajendra in his 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> regnal year mentions the privileges given to the Siva Brahmanas to burn the sandhi lamps; money for food offerings like Pudu Chalagai and also about various taxes<sup>63</sup>. The record of Venjamankudalur

dated in his 41<sup>st</sup> regnal year (1247 A.D.) registers the gift of kalanju of gold for maintaining a sandhi lamp by Marupasanap Pallavaraiyan, a Karadi Vettuvar before God Vikrita at Venjamankudalur<sup>64</sup>. The Siva Brahmanas received the gold and undertook to maintain the endowment specified.

### **Vikrama Chola II (1255 A.D. - 1263 A.D.)**

Vikrama Chola II was known as *Parakesarivarman Tiribhuvana Chakkaravarthi Vikrama Devan*. An inscription from Kariamanikka Perumal temple at Vijayamangalam refers to the period 1255A.D. - 1256 A.D. as the second year of his reign. Another inscription at the same place tells that his seventh regnal year might have been the last regnal year of his rule<sup>65</sup> (1263 A.D. - 1264 A.D.).

Five records belonging to the period of Vikarama Chola were found in Tirumuruganpundi. One of his record states that during his 3<sup>rd</sup> (1258 A.D.), 4<sup>th</sup> (1259 A.D.) and 11<sup>th</sup> year (1266 A.D.) mentions the gift of achchu deposited in the treasury for maintaining sandhi (a lamp lit in the evening) lamp; gift of palanjalagai achchu for conducting spring festivals, food, offerings; the privileges to the Siva Brahmanas and the existence of group of Vellalar Mappuli division. Another record from Avinasi during his 11<sup>th</sup> year (1265A.D.) records an order issued to the devakanmis of the temple of Avinasiyaludaiyar granting the lands from the village Alampallinallur along

with the taxes and income from it for providing food offerings during all the three *sandhis* to this deity<sup>66</sup>.

### **Vikrama Chola III (1213 A.D. -1303 A.D.)**

Vikrama Chola III was the last ruler of the Kongu Chola line. During his time major parts of the Kongu region were under the Pandyas. But he was able to control some areas in Kongu before the annexation of the Kongu by the Hoysalas. Six records from Tirumuruganpundi and one record from Venjamankudalur mentions about the contribution made to the temples in the form of *Achchu*, *Sriyakki* and *Palanjalagai Achchu* to feed the Siva Brahmanas and also for the food-offerings<sup>67</sup>. The records do not provide information about the successor of the Vikarama Chola III and from this it can be inferred that with the death of Vikarama Chola III, Kongu Chola dynasty might have come to a natural end<sup>68</sup>.

The above evidences enable one to assume that Vikarama Chola III ruled both the North and South Kongu. During his time a major part of the Kongu Nadu was under the Imperial Pandyas.

### **Second Pandya Rule**

From the 13th century A.D., particularly after the death of Vikarama Chola II the Pandyas tried to dominate the Kongu region. They annexed some parts of Kongu Nadu. Epigraphical records speak of the prominent Pandya rulers like Jatavarman Sundara Pandya, Jatavarman Vira Pandya and

Kulasekara Pandya<sup>69</sup>. There is a reference to the civil war between Parakrama Pandya and Kulasekara Pandya in which the Kongu Cholas interfered<sup>70</sup>. The Pandya ruler Maravarman Sundara Pandya I was asked to settle some political disputes during the time of Vira Rajendra in the Kongu Nadu<sup>71</sup>. The young prince Vikrama Chola II was invited to stay for some years in the Pandya kingdom before he became the ruler of Kongu Nadu.

Enmity seemed to have prevailed between the Cheras and the Kongu Cholas. An inscription at Kolumum refers to a highway bearing the name of '*Cheranai Merkonda Chola Peruvazhi*' which helps to assume that there was a prolonged struggle over South Kongu between them. There is a view among the scholars that the Pandya king Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I appointed his viceroys to rule the region that he had conquered in the Kongu country<sup>72</sup>.

### **Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251 A.D. - 1283 A.D.)**

Inscription in the Srirangam temple speaks of the Victory of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya over the Kongu Nadu. Taking advantage of this, the Kongu Cholas formed a relationship with the Pandyas which gives a clue to his valour and victorious activities. A record of his 29<sup>th</sup> year available at Palani may be ascertained that he had ruled for about 29<sup>th</sup> years in this area<sup>73</sup>. His records were found at Kodumudi, Tirumuruganpundi, Venjamankudalur, Tiruchchengodu and Avinasi. An inscription from Kodumudi in his second

year (1252 A.D.) reveals the grant of the village Vemburi alias Kandiyadevanallur as Kudininga devadana to Lord Tirupandikkodumudi Aludaiyanayanar by the nattavar of Pundurai Nadu<sup>74</sup>.

Another inscription from Kodumudi mentions the gift of the villages of Karaiyur, Tiruchchirrambalanallur, Tiruvanchalur, Vallipuram, Vadivudaiyamangai, Ayyagaram and Tirukattutturai to Lord Aludaiyanayanar and Periya Tiruvadi Nayanar of Tirupandikkodumudi to provide for the Masi Magham festival, sacred bath, food offerings, anointment and other services on auspicious occasions<sup>75</sup>.

One record from Tirumuruganpundi dated in his 4<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1254 A.D.) refers to the paving of the floor of the ardhmandapa of the shrine of goddess Irugu Nunnidai Mangaiyar in the temple of Tirumuruganpundi-aludaiyanayanar was made by an individual named Udaiyan. At the end of the inscription there is another separate record of the same king registering of grant of four and a half velis and four ma of land in Ulinda Kurichchi alias Mudikandadevan in Vengala Nadu<sup>76</sup>.

One record from Venjamankudalur dated to his 6<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1256 A.D.) speaks about the gift of *nattam* lands, tank, wet and dry lands along with the income from taxes as *devadana* by Araiyyar, Pulappar and Ilamadattar belonging to Talaiyur Nadu in Tenkarai Manalur Nadu to the *devakanmis* of the temple of Venjamankudalur Aludaiyanayanar for the

services, daily offerings and for the worship of Kannappa Nayanar. The taxes include *Kadamai Vargam*, *Uppayam*, *Tiruvasal Viniyogam*, *Tirumuga Sambandam*, *Erkadamai*, *Kurruvari*, *Periyerudu*, *Kurradandam* etc<sup>77</sup>.

Three records found at *Tiruchchengodu* record a gift of land in his 7<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1257 A.D.) by the people of Kilkarai Pundurai Nadu in Kongu alias *Vira Solamandalam*. This record also mentions about the creation of *Chaturvedimangalam*, bringing the fallow lands into the cultivable lands and also the breaching of a tank in his 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year<sup>78</sup> (1259 A.D.). An inscription from Avinasi (1265 A.D.) registers the gift of stone door jamb and 200 *Panam* for the maintenance of perpetual lamp in the temple of *Avinasialudaiyanayanar* by a person from Pariyur<sup>79</sup>.

One more record from Tirumuruganpundi dated in his 25<sup>th</sup> regnal year (1275 A.D.) refers to the assembly of *Adikkilttalam*<sup>80</sup>. Two records from Avinasi in his 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> year speaks of gift of ten *Panam* to meet the expenses of stone *phalaka* of the door jamb and also about the gift of 220 *Panam* by Perumal Alagiya Nayan alias Alagiya Pandiyadevar, a merchant of Araniyur otherwise known as *Sivallapuram* in Karavalli Nadu to provide food offerings to the deity *Sundara Nayanar*. The temple was constructed in honour of *Sundara Nayanar* on the embankment of the tank at Pukkoliyur by the same merchant<sup>81</sup>.

### **Vira Pandya Deva (1253 A.D. - 1283 A.D.)**

Following the tradition of the Kongu Cholas Vira Pandya titled himself as Rajakesari, and ruled some parts of the Kongu Nadu. He assumed the title like *Tiribhuvana Chakkaravarthi*, *Konerimaikondan*, *Korajakesarivarman* and *Komaravarman*. The records of his period mostly refer to the gifts made by him to the temples and the reforms brought about for the people. The inscriptions belonging to Vira Pandya are found at the temples of Tirumuruganpundi, Venjamankudalur and Avinasi<sup>82</sup>. Inscriptions found at Tirumuruganpundi records the gift of land towards food offerings; gift of dry and wet lands; gift of 6 manradu to a devotee Alvan Annamalaiyan and to the temple tanattar for conducting the repairs of the Tirumuruganpundi Aludainayanar temple; gold of 200 Pon to the temple and for maintenance of a tank called *Aliyavirangondan-kulam*<sup>83</sup>.

Venjamankudalur records dated to his 3<sup>rd</sup> regnal year states that Sundara Pandya alias Kandiyadevan made additions like ardhmandapa, uttaram, elutagam, and kapotam and vyalavari shrine of the goddess Pannermoliyar, Nambirattiyar in the temple of Venjamankudalur Aludaiya Nayanar. It also records the paving of the floor with pakkal, tiruvandi, tattodu and roofing the shrine of the Goddess<sup>84</sup>.

From Avinasi an inscription belonging to the 7<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Vira Pandya, it is observed that the gift of land as kudininga-devadana and the

gift of paddy to provide for food offerings and procession of the deity to the deity Avinasialudaiya Nayanar<sup>85</sup>. Two more records from the same place in his 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year mention about the colonization of the village Sevar alias Sembian-kilanadi Nallur as Devadana to the deity Avinasialudayar which was under the control of Ur and Uralis<sup>86</sup>. One more record from Avinasi in his 14<sup>th</sup> regnal year mention about the gift of 12 *Kalam* of paddy measured by *Kongal* to provide for food-offerings to be made to the deity *Sundara Nayanar* at Tenpalli<sup>87</sup>.

### **Kulasekara Pandya (1268 A.D. - 1318A.D.)**

Kulasekara Pandya inscriptions which were found at Avinasi dated to his 5<sup>th</sup> regnal year records a gift of one achchu by a certain Satiyanyakkan and a sandhi lamp by a Vellalan Kasi of Arangur in Kilkarai Pundurai Nadu<sup>88</sup>. Due to the civil war the glorious rule of the Pandyas came to an end with the death of Kulasekara Pandya. After the downfall of the Pandya Empire the Hoysalas of Mysore conquered the Kongu Nadu and extended their rule. As in the case of Kongu Nadu both the rule of Kongu Cholas and Pandyas came to an end. The Hoysalas, who were waiting for a long period of time annexed Kongu with their territory.

### **Hoysalas**

Some inscriptions found in Kongu Nadu confirm that the Hoysalas ruled the Kongu Nadu<sup>89</sup>. A record of Bhujabala Vira Ganga Vishnuvarthana

states that he conquered Kongu Nadu and had built a temple in commemoration of his victory<sup>90</sup>. The Hoysala king Vira Someswara besides assuming the title Magara Raja Nirmulana Chola Rajya Pratishta Charaya had matrimonial alliance with both Pandyas and Cholas<sup>91</sup>. A record of Sundara Pandya at Alagarkoil near Madurai refers to the Hoysala ruler Someswara as mamadi<sup>92</sup> (uncle). His successor was Vira Ballala III and his records are found in Kongu Nadu in Avinasi. The record registers the gift of the village of Tenpallinattam alias Sitakarakandan Nallur to provide food offerings, puchchupadi and for conducting the Vaikasi Visakham festival as well as for doing repairs to the temple<sup>93</sup>.

### **The rulers of Vijayanagar and Umattur Chiefs**

After the decline of the Hoysalas the Kongu region came under the control of the Muslims. The Vijayanagar rulers in the course of a series of campaigns succeeded in overthrowing the Muslims, and they held the title *Mahamandaleswar* and ruled the whole of South India. Their rule extended in this area from 1358 A.D. to 1667 A.D.<sup>94</sup>. In the Vijayanagar line, kings of various dynasties such as Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva and Aravidu had their rule over this region. Inscriptions of Harihara II, Devaraya I and Devaraya II found in the country simply testify to the existence of the rule of the Vijayanagar kings in this region. It was at this time that the Ummattur chieftains who were apparently governing the dominion of Vijayanagar in

Karnataka and Kongu found time to make themselves potent and strong<sup>95</sup>. It was during the period of the weakness of Vijayanagar that the chieftain of Ummattur seemed to have gained strength in Kongu. As far as Kongu is concerned, inscriptions reveal the rule of only three chieftains Vira Nanjaraya, Vira Chikkaraya and Pratapa Harihara Raya. It is clear from this that from 1489 to 1520 A.D. there was a continuous rule of Ummattur chiefs over Kongu.

The four records of the Ummattur chief Nanjaraya Udaiyar found at Tirumuruganpundi and Avinasi attest the fact of their rule over these places. In one of the records of Tirumuruganpundi of Nanjaraya Udaiyar (1497 A.D.), it is stated that Onnakkalach Chettiar, a merchant of Emmarkal in Tinaikkanambai Nadu made an endowment of 15 Pon towards food-offering *services for Lord Murugaudaiyar-tambirana*<sup>96</sup>. Another record in 1499 A.D. registers the gift of land with a saving capacity of 30 *marakkal* (a unit of measurement) of paddy in lieu of the amount of 6 *Pon* deposited into the treasury by Onnakkalach Chettiar, son of Nandagana Chettiar of Emmarkal in Tinaikkanambai Nadu, who was the Sivapradhani of Nanjaraya Udaiyar to meet the expenses of anga-ranga bhoga of the deity Tirumuruganpundi Aludaiya Nayanar<sup>97</sup>. Two other records from Avinasi of the same ruler dated in 1499 A.D. records a gift of 3 *Panam* made by Onnakkalach Chettiar to meet the expenses for food offerings during the mid-day worship of the deity

Avinasiligam in Dhakshina Varanasi. Another inscription of the same period records a gift of land to Lord Avinasilingam by the same person<sup>98</sup>. The Umattur chieftains seem to have ruled over the Kongu country from 1446 to 1520 A.D. more or less peacefully rebuilding ruined temples and rehabilitating ruined towns. They seem to have also evinced considerable interest in agriculture, irrigation and trade and by all this, did much to repair the damage done by the Muslim rule. This rule however existed for a brief duration. It was extinguished by Krishnadeva Raya (1509 A.D -1529 A.D.).

#### **Krishnadeva Raya (1509 A.D. - 1529 A.D.)**

When Krishnadeva Raya of Tuluva dynasty emerged as a powerful ruler, the Ummattur Udaiyars lost their importance. A lot of inscriptional evidences testify the conquest of Kongu by Krishnadeva. The first record comes from *Kokkarayapet* (Salem district) which describes him as Rajakkal Tambirana<sup>99</sup>. This record dated in 1518 A.D. makes definite the revival of Vijayanagar influence in this region<sup>100</sup>. Twelve stone records of the ruler found in Sevur, Agaram, Tadikombu, Tiruchchengodu, Palani and Attur throw some light on the nature of his rule in this region. In one of the records of Krishnadeva Maharaya found at Tiruchchengodu during the year 1522 A.D., mentions about Kunrattur-durgam in Kongu alias Vira SolaMandalam and also records the gift of market tolls for conducting certain festivals in the temple<sup>101</sup>.

Another record of the same ruler from the same place states that Samanayinar, son of Manikkanayinar established a quarter called Samasamudram at Tiruchchengodu and had fixed the taxes payable by the cultivators and merchants who had settled in it. In this record Tiruchchengodu is referred to as padaividu of (Subrahmanya or Kumara) the son of Ardhanaris-varam-udaiya-tambiranar and was situated in Kilkarai Pundurai Nadu in Elukarai Nadu<sup>102</sup>. The record of Sadasiva Deva (1561 A.D.) at Tiruchchengodu records the setting up of a stone pillar for Lord Kailasanatha by Avanta-bhupa, the lord of Devagiri to commemorate his fame forever<sup>103</sup>.

The Nayaks record found in Kongu from Coimbatore is dated 1620 A.D. The record speaks of a grant made by Raghunatha Deva Maharaya described as the son of the agent of Virappa Nayaka, who resided at Uraiur. The next record is dated in Tirumala's reign (1623-59 A.D.) granting a village for the merit of Kumaramuthu Tirumala. The first record indeed pays homage to the Nayak supremacy in the region. We know from other records of Nayak history, that Kumaramuttu, the younger brother of Tirumala was engaged in wars and conquests in the Kongu region towards the end of Tirumala's reign<sup>104</sup>. To prove this fact one of the inscription of Tirumala Nayaka in his reigning period (1659 A.D.) found at Tiruchchengodu registers the gift of the village of Kolagandai in Paruthipalli Nadu for the

merit of Kumara Muttu Tirumala Nayaka<sup>105</sup>. One more record from Tiruchchengodu (1666 A.D.) states that Chokanatha Nayaka was the son of Visvanatha Nayaka and records the grant of land<sup>106</sup>. During the Vijayanagara period in Kongu, Visvanatha Nayaka of Madurai divided the country into 72 palayams, each under a chief, who were called as Palayakar. The Palayakarars were bound to render military aid to the king whenever called upon.

### **Mysore Rulers**

In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Rajahs of Mysore conquered Kongu. Four kings figure in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were Rajaudaiyar, Kantirava Narasaraj, Chikkadeva and Krishnadeva respectively<sup>107</sup>. The records from Bhavani during the period of Krishnadeva (Chief of Mysore) mention that the northern mandapa of the Amman shrine was constructed by Kudalisishayan, a vassal of Dalavay Devarajayya and Nanjaraya Udaiyar. The construction work of this mandapa was carried out by Seshachari, the younger brother of Viraragavachari<sup>108</sup>. Another record from Tiruchchengodu mentions an agreement among the *gounders* of the 18 villages quoted for meeting the expenses of the Karthigai festival and mid-day worships of gods Ardhanariswara and Subrahmanya<sup>109</sup>.

One more record from Avinasi states that Sankarayya was the son of Madanayya and the grandson of Virayya. Sankarayya, who was an officer

and a Karyakarta of Dalavay Devarajayya, is stated to have carried out the renovation of the temples at Avinasi including the mandapas, the gopura, the prakara walls, nelakattu and the tank for the floating festival (Teppa utsava). He is stated to have set up a panchalinga called Sanikareswara in the south east corner of the prakara of Avinasiswara temple. It also registers that a land purchased to the above deity for the maintenance of lamp and worship<sup>110</sup>.

Then the Gettimudaliyars of Taramangalam were very powerful chiefs who ruled not only Umattur and Tiruchchengodu taluks of Salem district but also a greater part Bhavani. In one of the inscriptions found in the ceiling of the Mahamandapa in front of the central shrine of Sangameswara temple at Bhavani, states that Immudi Gettimudaliyar constructed the procession-path round the shrine (Tirunadai-maligai); Niritta-mandapa; the Sikhara of Lord Nannavudaiyasvami; the central shrine; the ardha mandapa and the maha mandapa of the Goddess Pannermoliyammai<sup>111</sup>. In another record from the same temple states that Gettimudaliyar also constructed the shrine of Kumara (Subrahmanya), a Yagasalai, a Vasantha mandapa, gopura and installed a linga in it<sup>112</sup>.

Thus North Kongu became a cocktail to the rulers of South India and so it witnessed many political vicissitudes. As a result it was ruled by a

various dynasties like the Imperial Cholas, Kongu Cholas, Pandyas, Hoysalas, Nayaks, Mysore rulers and Mohammedans before it finally passed on to the English and entered the national stream of political history. K.K.Pillai has epitomized this position thus: "The Kongu country constantly fell to a victim of periodic invasions to one or the other Imperial powers of South India."

The political background of the North Kongu possesses a peculiar style of its own. All through the ages it became a cockpit to the warriors, which ultimately turned into a scene of a buffer state. The other regions of the Tamil country were ruled by a particular dynasty for a particular period but this region was ruled by different dynasties at the same time. The topography of the Kongu country and its fertility with the rich mineral resources were covetable causes for invasion. Kongu Nadu was a part of Chera Nadu during Sangam period. Karur inscriptions attest and confirm the fact that the Chera capital was Karur. It was first conquered by Aditya I and his son Parantaka I in the historical period. The inscriptions found at Ardhanariswarar temple at Tiruchchengodu attest this fact. Inscriptions of Raja Raja I, Rajendra I and Rajendra II found elsewhere in Kongu region are traced and by that the existence of their rule in this region is confirmed. A new dynasty called Kongu Chola dynasty emerged in this particular area is

an interesting fact. They came from the Konadu region (Pudukkottai) and ruled as a branch of Tanjore Cholas but were named as Kongu Cholas. The rule of Kongu Cholas came to an end at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and then later that the Pandya rule existed some time is also understood. Hoysalas, Vijayanagara rulers, Madurai Nayaks, Mysore Udaiyars and Ummattur chiefs also made some inroads in the political history of Kongu Nadu. These are all studied chronologically in the proper perspective.

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