CHAPTER-I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Salem region was ruled by various dynasties. The borders of Gangavadi and Kongunādu lay in the Salem region. The Attur region belonged to the Magada mandalam. Therefore, this region was a meeting point of various kingdoms at different points of time. For better understanding of this, a study of the political history is necessary.

PREHISTORY

Salem is a region of notable culture and antiquity. The pre-history of Salem begins with Neolithic age. Many Neolithic tools have been found in Salem, and Dharmapuri districts. Even to this day it is a practice among many tribes to keep Neolithic tools under the trees and worship them. The report of Robert Bruce Foote about the Neoliths of the Salem region mentions “The workmanship of average Celts on Shervaroys is much better than that observable in the average Deccan specimen, that it is impossible not to be struck by it and to speculate on the cause of the great difference observable is that the southern Neolithic people lived in much more peaceful times and had the leisure to finish off their implements much more completely. The types of Neolithic weapons and tools occurring in the Salem district and Deccan agree so closely and can only conclude that the people in both region were, if not actually members of the same tribe, at any rate of exactly on same level of civilization”. According to Allchins, the third phase of Neolithic period covered the entire peninsular India except Kerala. According to him, this culture flourished between 1390 to 200 B C (Carbon-14 dating)

There are references to the existence of Megalithic burials here. These are called pandu kuli, padu kuli, vader kudi, kurumba kudi etc. Varieties of simple
cists and Dolmenoid cists are found in this region. Adhiyamankottai of Dharmapuri district has some good specimen of Megalithic burials.

**SANGAM AGE**

In the Sangam literature, many references are found about Kongu. Though the names of chiefs or rulers are not mentioned, it tells about some Kongarkō i.e. ruler of Kongu people, who was defeated by Cheias. The early polity of this region is not clear. It can be ascertained from Sangam literature that this region was rich in natural resources and the three kingly powers, i.e., Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas, wanted to establish their supremacy over this region. There were frequent wars between the three powers and Cheras seem to have succeeded in establishing their supremacy over the region.

The Kosaras, Kongars and the Malavars are the three tribes mentioned in the Sangam literature as inhabitants of this region. These three tribes seem to have maintained friendly relationship with the three powers, i.e., Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas and must have assisted them in their warfare. It is observed that "Kongar" is referred always in plural. This probably means that it was a tribe and not a lineage. These Kongars seemed to have fought battles against the Cholas, Pandyas and Adhiagamans. They had conflicts with minor chiefs like Ay-andhiran and Palayan. But there are no references of Kongars having fought against Cheras. Cheras had the epithets such as Kongarkō and Kongarnādagapadutta, showing their supremacy over Kongars. References to Kongars rejoicing over the death of an Adhiagaman ruler is also found in Sangam literature. Pasumpon Pandya claims to have won over this Kongars and captured their territories. Kongars seem to have supported Cheras in their battles against Adhiagamans. Kongars also had a good command over the maritime trade of those days, which instigated the Cheras to ally themselves with Kongars. A mention has to be made of Ori of Kollihills. He has been praised in works like Puram and Nannirai of Sangam age. He had the titles of Valvilvethunan and Kolliporunan.
Vavilvethunan means a person who wields the powerful bow. He was a tribal chief of Kollihills. Ori is said to have been killed by Kari of Malayaman chiefdom. The only dynasty that is mentioned in the Sangam literature for which epigraphical evidence is available is the Adhiyaman dynasty of Tagadur.

Before discussing the history of the region in detail, a note on the boundaries which formed the region of the present study is identified. Salem region, as indicated earlier, comprises the modern districts of Salem, Dharmapuri, Namakkal and Krishnagiri. The modern district of Salem except Attur taluk and parts of Namakkal were part of Kongunādu. About twenty Nādus like Selanādu, Partipallinādu, etc., of Kongu kingdom have been identified in these districts. Tiruchengode and Rasipuram have maximum number of inscriptions pertaining to Kongu dynasty in this region. Attur was part of Cholanādu. The Magadanādu which was ruled by later Banas, was in the Attur region with their capital at Aragalur. This was later included in to the Chola territory. The Pandyas also established their supremacy for a short period. Rule of these dynasties will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Dharmapuri region comprising of Puramalai nādu, Tagadur nādu and Masinda nādu was under the rule of Banas till the Gangas established supremacy over the region in 9th century. The Nolambas ruled this region on behalf of the Gangas. Later the Nolambas ruled this region till about 980 A.D. After this the Cholas under Raja Raja I led an expedition up to Talakadu and brought the entire Gangavadi and Nolambavadi under his control. Chola supremacy over this region continued till Hoysala Vishnuvardhana won over the Cholas. Vishnuvardhana not only drove away the Chola power but advanced till the heartland of Salem region. An inscription at Modur dated 1116 A.D., mentions about Vishuvardhana’s Dandanayaka who was equal to his master in prowess. From this date Hoysalas had complete control over this region and during the time of Narasimha I it was extended up to Tiruchinapalli. After the partition of Hoysala kingdom in 1252 A.D., this region came under the control of
Ramanatha. By 1272 A.D., southern portions of Salem region were conquered by Jatavarman Sundarapandya and for nearly about a quarter century, these parts were under the control of Pandyas. Thus, it is observed that the boundaries of Nolambavadi, Kongunādu, Gangavadi, met in this region. This region was subjected to the rule of all these Dynasties. With the shift of power, this region was included in the boundaries of the respective kingdoms of Karnata and Tamil powers.

NāDU DIVISIONS FOUND IN SALEM REGION

The region was divided into nādus for the convenience of administration. It is observed that even smaller divisions which formed a part of the nādu were also called a nādu, eg: Nadalvanādu was a major division in Kongunādu, which comprised of Parthipallinādu, Elurnādu and Selanādu. By 13th century, epigraphical records mentioning Parthipallinādu as a division of Selanādu are found. Major nādu divisions found in epigraphs have been mentioned here. Elurnādu was a division comprising of Kolli hills. Selanādu included Rasipuranādu, Parthipallinādu (Tiruchengode taluk), and Vallavariyarnādu. Puvaniyanādu was a division comprising of Omalur, Shankagiri and parts of Tiruchengode taluk. Tiruchengodenādu is the present day Tiruchengode town. Valarpurnādu was situated in the Kolli range. The above-mentioned Nādus formed a part of Kongunādu.

Nādu divisions mentioned in the epigraphs of Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts were Kadathurnādu, Virvinādu, Tagadurnādu, Puramalainādu, Masandinādu and others formed a part of Ganganādu. It is notable even to this day many places have retained these original names. When Cholas conquered this region it came to be known as Nigirili Cholamandalam.

HISTORICAL PERIOD

After the Sangam age till the commencement of Pallava rule in about 5th century A.D., a vacuum is noticed in the history of Tamilnādu. Likewise, tracing
the history of Salem region from 3rd century A.D., till 7th century A.D., is very
difficult. Lack of epigraphical sources and contemporary literary sources has
made this study controversial and confusing. The history of this region has been
formulated by early scholars in the Kongu studies on the basis of a literary work
of 16th century ‘Kongudesha Rajakkal’. As this work is of a very late period it is
very vague while describing the early rulers. Arokiaswamy in his work The
Kongu Country relies upon this chronicle and tries to form the history of Kongu
country from 3rd century A.D. to 7th century A.D. He mentions that this region
was ruled by Rattas between 250 A.D. and 405 A.D., He gives a genealogy of
kings from Veeraraya Chakravarthy to Trivikrama. But the Saka era mentioned
in ‘Kongudesha Rajakkal’ as Saka 4 for Govinda and Saka 100 for Trivikrama is
highly unbelievable. Moreover, the capital of this dynasty was supposed to be
Vijayaskandapuram which is yet to be identified while many places have
retained their original names. For instance, the reference of Tagadur is found in
Sangam literature and the same name can be found in the inscriptions of 12th and
13th centuries too. Whereas, the name Vijayaskandapuram or its derivative giving
nearer meaning is not noticed at all. Moreover the claim made by Kongu
historians regarding the Gangas ruling from 405 A.D. from the same capital is
also unconvincing. The Kongu historians further try to trace the origin of
Rashtrakutas to Rattas. This again is controversial. As history cannot be formed
based on just a literary work of a very late period, these views have been
dismissed.

If the Ratta rule is totally dismissed it can be inferred that the region also
might have been controlled by Kalabhras for a short period. Many references to
these Kalabhras are found in the inscriptions of Pallavas and Pandyas of 5th
century AD. Scholars equate the Kalabhoras mentioned in the Halmidi
inscription to these Kalabhras. By this, a conclusion can be drawn that they
dominated the political scenario during 3rd and 4th centuries.
Earliest known ruling Dynasty of this region through epigraphs is Adhigaman dynasty. The Sheshashayi cave of Namakkal has four major inscriptions and nine single line inscription of titles of Adhigaman kings. The word ‘Athiya’ occurs five times in four Inscriptions as Athiyanatha vishnu griham, Athiakula, Athiyendranam, Athianvaya, Athiyendra vishnu griham. ‘Athiya’ is Sanskritised form of Tamil word ‘Adhigaman’ or ‘Adhiyaman’ according to K.R. Srinivasan and P.R. Srinivasan. Paleographically the grantha script used in this inscription co-relates to the inscriptions of Pallava Narasimhavaran II and has been dated to 7\textsuperscript{th} century. According to K.R. Srinivasan and P.R. Srinivasan the name of the king is Gunasheela. Even the titles carved over the pillars resemble the Pallava titles very closely. But these inscriptions do not mention their capital as Tagadur. This is known only through literature. Sesha Iyer asserts that Adhiyaman chiefs are to be equated with Satyaputras of Ashokan inscriptions. K.A. Neelakanta Shastry also agrees with Sesha Iyer. Nagaswamy mentions about a Brahmi epigraph from Jambai near Tirukkovilur that reads “Satyāptō Atiyan nidumān anji itta pali”.

**BANAS**

The region was also ruled by Banas, Gangas and Nolambas. Banas are one of the earliest ruling dynasties of the south. Their reference as early as 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} century AD can be found. They were the subordinates of Pallavas. Even Halmidi inscription mentions these Banas. According to T.V. Mahalingam, Banas started their career in about 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. from Kolar and they were the subordinates of Shatavahanas, after whose decline they turned to (allegiance) the Pallavas. They seem to have ruled over the Magada Mandalam comprising the areas of Anantapur, Chittor, Kolar, Harur in Dharmapuri and Attur in Salem. Their Capital was Aragalur, which is situated in Attur. They ruled the region under the name Perumbanappadi. They had continuous conflicts with Gangas. Gangas, with the assistance of Nolambas, seem to have overpowered Banas. The Gangas allowed the Nolambas to rule over the Bana region. The references of Banas as
feudatories can be seen in the inscriptions of Ganga Sripurusa. The notable and frequently mentioned names of these rulers are Mahavali Vanarayar and Perumbana Mutraisars. These Banas were completely rooted out by Mahendra, scion of Nolamba dynasty.

GANGAS

As observed earlier, modern Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts belonged to Gangavadi. Many inscriptions of 7th and 8th centuries mention that Tagadurnādu and Puramalainādu were sub-divisions of Gangavadi 6000. This establishes the fact of Ganga suzerainty over this region. Gangas, during the rule of Durvinita extended their empire southwards winning over the regions of modern Salem and Tiruchengode which formed a part of the Kongu country. By 7th century A.D., Gangas had control over Kongunādu. Scholars like Arokiaswamy and Vishvanatha trace the origin of Gangas to Kongu country. Again the sources for their conclusion are ‘Kongudesha Rajakkal’. Arokiaswamy mentions that Rattas were succeeded by Gangas who later shifted their capital to Talakadu. There is no epigraphical evidence for this. Even the dates given by this scholar are incorrect. He opines that Durvinita was a contemporary of Pulakeshi II and ruled between 610A.D. to 655A.D. as against the dates 585A.D. to 600A.D, which has been drawn on epigraphical evidences. Vishvanatha argues that Gangas originally belonged to Kongu region on two grounds. He opines that the name Kongunivarma, which was an epithet of Ganga rulers, was used to show their affiliation with Kongu ruler and Gangas were the continuation of Kongu dynasty. B. Sheik Ali observes that this epithet Kongunivarma has been variously used as Konginivarma, Kongunivarma and Konkanivarma. He states that this epithet was used to denote their victory over Konkan region. But it has to be mainly observed that the indigenous Kongu rulers used the epithet like Rajakesarivarman, Parakesarivarman, etc., which were the epithets used by Pallavas or Cholas who held supremacy over the region. Therefore it is difficult to believe that when the indigenous rulers themselves did not use the epithets of
their nativity how could a clan which had branched out from the main stream carry such epithets. Vishvanatha further argues that Talaghat which belonged to Kongu region got its name because it was the lower region of ghats. Likewise, he feels that Gangas were inspired by this and named their capital Talakadu. M.V.Krishna rao mentions that the Kongu country was the southern boundary of Gangavadi 96000. Therefore it can be inferred that for a short period, the Gangas extended their empire southwards and ruled it. Further, Arokiaswamy mentions about a clan called ‘Kongu Gangas’ who ruled this region after Kongunivarman III. As there are no epigraphical records supporting this view, the idea becomes invalid.

Though copper plate inscriptions of Durvinita mentions that he won over Kongu region, epigraphical references pertaining to Ganga rule over the region can be seen only from the period of Shivamara I (679A.D. to 725 A.D.). The inscriptions found in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri acknowledge Shivamara I as the ruler of the region. There are innumerable inscriptions belonging to Sripurusha (725A.D. to 788 A.D.), grandson and successor of Shivamara.

After Sripurusha’s time, there was a feud between the brothers Shivamara II and Duggamara for the Ganga throne. In this period, the Rashtrakutas who were emerging as an imperial power were ambitious to extend their power on all sides. Again, even in the Rashtrakuta kingdom there was a fight for supremacy over the thrown between Govinda II and Dhruva. Eventually, the Gangas were involved with Rashtrakuta polity, which ended in Shivamara’s imprisonment by the Rashtrakutas. Hence, it is difficult to ascertain Ganga power during this time in Salem region. After the restoration of Ganga power to Shivamara, he seems to have ruled quite effectively. After this, confusion appears to have developed in Ganga polity which resulted in the formation of a collateral branch of Gangas. Pritvipathi I who branched out from the main line also had an eye over Kongu region of Ganga kingdom. But the Gangas of the main line continued to have hold over Kongu region. Though Pritvipathi was assisted by Banas and
Vaidumbas, it is not clear from where he planned his moves. Between 817 A.D. and 869 A.D., two rulers from the main line of Ganga dynasty have ruled this region. During this period, there was a matrimonial alliance with their feudatories, Nolambas. During the rule of Rachamalla II, Nolambas under Mahendra I, had gained supremacy over Dharmapuri region. Rachamalla’s rule ended in 907 A.D., but there is a scarcity of Ganga inscriptions in this region which makes it difficult to ascertain about the Ganga rule at this period. When Cholas, during the period of Raja Raja I, defeated Gangas and won over the entire region, the Salem region was merged into “Nigirili Cholamandalam”.

NOLAMBAS

Nolambas who traced their origin to Pallavas were ruling Nolambavadi with their capital at Hemavathi in the modern Ananthapur district. Noalambas Ruled from about 750AD to 1054AD over province called Nolambavadi-32000. Ganga-6000 or Gangavadi, which extended over the Dharmapuri and Salem districts was a part of Nolambavadi province. By about 850AD the Nolambas, as the feudatories of the Gangas, ruled over Ganga-6000 province. From then on this province was a bone of contention between the Nolambas and the Banas. Nolamba king Mahendra, after defeating the Banas, even obtained the title ‘Mahablikula Vidvamsaka’. Mahendra I, taking advantage of his relationship with Gangas, seems to have ruled independently. Like his father, Mahendra I also had married Ganga princesses by name Gamabbe. Nolambas have also contributed culturally in this region. Apart from Kamakshiamman and Mallikarjuna temples which retain original forms to some extent, there are various examples of Nolamba sculptures in this region. The friendly terms between Gangas and Nolambas turned in to hostility when Mahendra tried to become independent and extended the boundaries of Nolambavadi. Though there seems to have been no misunderstanding between Rachamalla II and Mahendra I, the rivalry between Rachamalla’s brother Butuga and his son Nitimarga Ereyappa with Nolambas seems to have persisted. Nolambadhiraja Mahendra
seems to have been killed by Nitimarga Ereyappa who had obtained the title Mahendrantaka. After this defeat, though it can be assumed that Gangavadi was reoccupied by Rachamalla, Nolambas still continued to have control over Dharmapuri region. During last decade of 10th century, Raja Raja I, invaded Nolambavadi.

From the date of Raja Raja’s victory, Nolambas became the feudatories of Cholas. They seem to have continued feudatories of Hoysalas too and assisted them in the administration of Tagadurnādu. An inscription from Kambainallur mentions Madurantakaveera Nolamba who was the feudatory of Veera Viswanatha. This shows that even during 13th century, Nolambas administered the Tagadurnādu as feudal chiefs.

CHOLAS

The last decade of 10th century faced a period of confusion in the history of south India. This confusion had direct and indirect influence over this buffer region. In Tondaimandalam the Pallava power was declining while Cholas were trying to establish their supremacy. Both Pandyas and Cholas were trying to gain hold over the Kongu region. The Rashtrakutas power in Karnataka had declined. The Ganga power had reached its zenith under the able rule of Marasihma II had also collapsed due to the death of Marasihma. At this point of time, the fringe of Kongunādu which was under the control of Gangas was taken over by Cholas.

Though some scholars opine that Chola Aditya I had won over the Kongu region, the Chola rule in Salem region can be traced from Parantaka I rule. Epigraphs from Bommasamudram (Namakkal taluk) mention Parakesarivarman Parantaka I and dates of these inscriptions are from his 10th reignal year to 40th reignal year. This corresponds to 917A.D. to 947A.D. Parakesarivarman Parantaka I inscriptions of Salem Shukavaneshwara temple are issued between his 2nd and 6th reignal years corresponding to 909A.D. to 913A.D. Some of the
Gandaraditya was succeeded by his brother Arinjaya who was succeeded in turn by his son Parantaka II Sundarachola. An epigraph from Bommasamudram of his 17th regnal year refers to him as Arinjaya Parantaka alias Raajasekaravarman. Aditya II Karikala, the elder son of Parantaka II Sundara Chola took active part in the Chola campaigns and during the 5th year of Parantaka II Sundara Chola’s reign, he was coronated as Yuvarāja. It is interesting to note that an inscription from Belur (Salem district) mentions this prince.

After the untimely death of Aditya II Karikala, Madurantaka Uttama Chola, son of Gandaraditya and uncle of Sundara Chola ascended the Chola throne. Uttama Chola was a devout person and not interested in campaigns and administration. Due to circumstances he took charge of Chola kingdom till Rajaraja I came of age. The Arrapallishwarar temple has inscriptions issued by Uttama Chola and his mother Sembiyam Mahadevi between the regnal years 10 to 16 corresponding to 980 A.D. to 986 A.D.

Rajaraja I was the greatest among the Chola rulers. He was the second son of Parantaka II Sundara Chola and the brother of Aditya II Karikala. He ascended the throne in 985 A.D., and took the Chola glory to its pinnacle. In the words of Neelakantha Shastri, “We enter upon a century of grandeur and glory of the dynasty of the Cholas”. He had the title Rajakesari Varma which is frequently referred to in his inscriptions. The inscriptions in the Shukavaneshwara temple of Salem were issued from his 3rd to 5th regnal years i.e. 988 A.D. to 990 A.D. This confirms that Rajaraja I continued to possess control over the region over which his father had established supremacy. The Tiruchengode Copper Plate grant issued in his 13th ruling year mentions the Nādu divisions and the regions under his control. The same is furnished by yet another grant from Tiruchengodu issued
in his 16\textsuperscript{th} regnal year. By this, it can be known that by 1001 A.D., Rajaraja Chola had complete control over the Kongu region and he had also gained control over the region which was previously held by the Gangas.

The Cholas won over the Gangas during the reign of Rakkasa Ganga (985 A.D. - 1022 A.D.). After winning over Gangavadi-96000, initially, Rajaraja I allowed Rakkasa Ganga to continue as a feudatory king but the provincial governors were replaced by Chola viceroys. An inscription in Kolaramma temple, Kolar dated 992 A.D. corroborates this fact. It can be inferred that one of the routes taken by the Cholas in their campaign must have been Harur in Dharmapuri district. Inscriptions of Rajaraja I seem to be concentrated in the Harur taluk. Inscription from Mallapuram dated to his 14\textsuperscript{th} regnal year and inscriptions from Mottupatti and Pattukanampatti of his 25\textsuperscript{th} regnal year i.e. 1010 A.D. establish Chola supremacy over this region.

Rajaraja I's son, Rajendra Chola started his career as a Yuvarāja and assisted his father very efficiently till his accession as an imperial monarch in 1014 A.D. As many as 20 inscriptions issued during his reign can be found in Salem region. He is referred to as Parakesarivarmana. Inscriptions at Mallasamudram and Uttamacholapuram were issued when he was a Yuvarāja, which mentions his 2\textsuperscript{nd} regnal year as a Yuvarāja and the 29\textsuperscript{th} regnal year of Rajaraja I. About five inscriptions from Thirthagirishwara temple at Thirthamalai (Harur taluk) were issued in his 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} regnal years. Inscriptions at Nenjai Edaiyar which were issued between his 7\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} regnal years (A.D. 1019-A.D. 1029) and inscriptions from Paruthhipalli issued in his 16\textsuperscript{th} regnal year establish his control over the parts of Salem which belonged to Kongunādu. There are a few hero stones in Harur taluk, which mention his 12\textsuperscript{th}, 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} regnal years from Menasi, Parikaram and Kerekodahalli respectively. The Papparapatti inscription mentions his 22\textsuperscript{nd} regnal year (A.D.1034).
After the rule of Rajendra, till the accession of Kulotthunga I in 1070 A.D., there seem to have been some confusion in Chola polity. There are one or two inscriptions which mention Rajadhiraja I who succeeded Rajendra Chola. From the period of Kulotthunga I, Chola rule is again found in Salem region. There are nearly twelve inscriptions assignable to Kulotthunga I’s rule issued between his 3rd and 34th regnal years. These inscriptions are spread over in the region between Kokkarayanpet in Namakkal district and Hosur in present Krishnagiri district. Inscriptions from Devarkunadani (Vepanapalli taluk, Krishnagiri district) were issued in his 3rd regnal year. This shows he had control over this region from the early years of his rule.

Some parts of Chola kingdom were lost to the Hoysalas during Kulotthunga I’s rule. Vishnuvardhana, who took over Gangavadi in 1115 A.D. after driving away the Cholas, seems to have chased the Cholas till the heartland of Salem region. This is the reason for the absence of Kulotthunga’s inscriptions after his 34th regnal year. His successor Parakesari Vikrama Chola tried to revive the lost Gangavadi and seems to have had supremacy over Ganagavadi 6,000 for a very short period. Two epigraphs issued in his 13th regnal year, that is, i.e. 1131 A.D., are found in Sukkampatti (Salem district) and Kambainallur (Harur taluk, Dharmapuri district). Not much is known about his successor Kulotthunga II’s rule in this region except for his two epigraphs found in Shivaneeshwara temple at Chinthalpadi (regnal year-1=1131 A.D.) and Kamakshiamman temple at Dharmapuri (regnal year-12=1145 A.D.).

Kulotthunga III, who ascended the Chola throne in 1178 A.D., put great efforts to reconsolidate Chola power in its lost dominions. There are as many as 30 inscriptions of this ruler in this region. The earliest inscription issued in his 5th regnal year (1183 A.D) is found in the Ekamranatha temple at Tadavur (Attur taluk-Salem district). Last, dated inscription of Kulotthunga III from this region is found in Kamanatheshwara temple at Aragalur (Attur taluk-Salem district) issued in his 35th regnal year corresponding to 1213 A.D.
The last known Chola ruler in this region is Rajaraja III. There are inscriptions issued between his regnal years four i.e. 1220 A.D. till his 26th regnal year i.e. 1241 A.D. But he was more or less controlled by the Hoysala monarchs. From the period of Kulotthunga I, till Rajaraja III, there was a frequent shift of power between the Hoysalas and Cholas in this region. This was the period when Hoysalas interfered and actively participated in Chola and Pandya politics. They maintained a balance of power in this region.

**HOYSALAS**

The Hoysalas, who started their carrier at Soseyur, came to dominance during the period of Vishnuvardhana. Vishnuvardhana’s career as a monarch started in 1106 A.D. This was the period the Chalukyan king Vikramaditya VI was ruling the northern part of Karnataka. Whether it was the respect for the Imperial king, or fear, Vishnuvardhana neither challenged Kalyani Chalukyas nor tried to extend his kingdom northwards. He was humble enough to call himself a “mahāmandalēśwara” and did not carry any epithets like “cakravarti”. It was he who made Hoysala power recognizable. He was a great warrior and lead campaigns towards south. He has the glory of re-establishing the Karnata power over Gangavadi-96000, which was under Chola control for more than a century. Inscriptions of Vishnuvardhana praise him as having won over Kongalvas and refers to him as “Talakadugonda”. This shows that Vishnuvardhana had not only defeated the Cholas but had extended his supremacy over some parts of Konagunad. There is not much of evidence to show Vishnuvardhana’s rule in Salem region. An inscription from Modur, Dharmapuri district, speaks about a viceroy of Vishnuvardhana who sets taxes for marriage and other rituals as ordered by the King.

Vishnuvardhana was succeeded by his son Narasimha I, whose period was quite uneventful. But he claims to have won over Rajendracholamandalam i.e. Salem and Coimbatore districts. Probably after the death of Vishnuvardhana
some feudatories must have rebelled and tried to become independent. Narasimha I must have put down these rebellions with the help of his loyal Samanthas and able Dandanayakas.

The glory of Hoysalas reached its zenith during the rule of Veera Ballala II who ruled between 1173 A.D. and 1220 A.D. he declared independence and called himself "cakravarti". As he was busy in wars with the Yadavas and Kalyani Chalukyas he probably did not concentrate much on Chola dominions. It was during this period that Kulotthunga III's rule in Salem region can be noticed. During his last years of rule, in almost 1217 A.D., Ballala engaged his son Narasimha II to check the Chola power and instigated him to take the Hoysala army into Tamilnādu.

Narasimha II, who came to power in 1220 A.D., was a valiant warrior and able ruler. It was during his period that the Hoysalas actively participated in Tamil politics. When Kulotthunga III appealed for Hoysala help against the Pandyas, the Hoysalas not only assisted them in military but also had a matrimonial alliance. Narasimha’s sister Somala Devi was married to Kulotthunga III. Later Narasimha gave his daughter to Rajaraja III, son of Kulotthunga III. This alliance made it easy for the Hoysalas to establish supremacy in Tamil region. He also assumed titles like "cōḷarājya-pratisthapānācārya". Narasimha II won over the Banas of Magada kingdom, who had their capital at Aragalur, Attur taluk of Salem district. He also won over Adhiyamans and the Kadavas. He extended his kingdom as far as Srirangam. Narasimha II bifurcated the Tamil territory from Taramangalam in Salem district to Tirumanjeri and appointed his son Someshwara as provincial governor. Two epigraphs of Veera Narasimha II are found in Salem region. One inscription is found at Penneshwara temple at Penneshwaramadam issued in his 15th regnal year i.e. 1235 A.D. The second one is from Adhiyaman Kottai issued in his 17th regnal year corresponding to 1237 A.D.
Veera Someshwara ascended the throne in 1235 A.D., but his career started as *Yuvarāja* by 1233 A.D. itself. Someshwara's rule over the Tamil country is very significant. He built a capital named Vikramapura (modern Kannanur in Tiruchirapalli district) and started ruling from there. Even after the death of Narasimha II he continued to rule from Vikramapura. Though Dwarasamudra continued to be the main capital, he continued to govern from Vikramapura as it was convenient for him to participate in Tamil politics. But for a short period he seems to have ruled from Dwarasamudra also. Dr. Settar opines that his period marked the decline of Hoysala dynasty. The Hoysala kingdom's width had reached its maximum during Narasimha II's rule, which had to be taken care of by Veerasomeshwara. He, with the assistance of loyal and able dandanayakas, governed the kingdom. He built the Hoysaleshwara temple at Kannanur. There are about a dozen of Veera Someshwara's inscriptions in Salem region. Earliest of them is from Mallanur issued in his 2nd regnal year i.e. 1235 A.D. The later part of Someshwara's life seems to be a bit unpleasant. There was a dispute between his sons Narasimha III and Veera Ramanatha regarding the accession of the throne. Veera Someshwara also seems to have been ailing from some disease. Inscriptions of Someshwara found in Penneshwaramadam and Chinthalpadi mentions that donations were made by his dandanayakas for the health and longevity of the King. Someshwara had continuous conflicts with the Pandyan Kings who were trying to establish their supremacy over Konguṇādu. Some Pandyan inscriptions can be found during regnal years of Someshwara. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya was the contemporary of Veera Someshwara. Another important event that took place in Someshwara's reign was the partition of the Hoysala kingdom in 1252 A.D. The homeland of Hoysalas with Dwarasamudra as its capital was taken over by Narasimha III and the Tamil regions of Kolar, Salem, Coimbatore and others came to be controlled by Ramanatha. Even after the partition of the kingdom Someshwara survived till 1254 A.D.
Though there were not many achievements, Ramanatha’s rule was very significant. His rule lasted for almost 45 years till 1299 A.D. He was a close ally of Rajendra Chola III. He had the title “rajakkal nayan”. Ramanatha lost some portions of his kingdom to the Pandyas, who won over the entire Kongu. During Ramanatha’s rule, Vikramapura got considerable importance as commercial centre. Many weaver families migrated from the Hoysala homeland to this region. An inscription at Kargudi Kailasanatha temple issued in his 11th regnal year corresponding to 1266 A.D. mentions that the temple was built by a guild of merchants with the permission of Ramanatha. The Kailasanatha temple at Taramangalam is another important temple consecrated during his rule. Ramanatha used to fight against his brother to gain some portions of the Hoysala mainland to compensate the loss he incurred in the southern region. More than twenty inscriptions mentioning Ramanatha’s rule in Salem are available. He established another provincial capital at Devarkundani (Vepanapalli Taluk, Krishnagiri Dist.). Remains of the old fort and a few dilapidated temples can be seen even today. He was a staunch Shaiva and patronised and generously donated for many Shaivite temples in Salem region. Though Ramanatha’s inscriptions are found in 1298 A.D., there are also inscriptions of his son Vira Vishwanatha dated 1297 A.D. It can be inferred that he, like his predecessors, ruled along with his son.

Ramanatha’s son Veera Vishwanatha had a very insignificant rule. He ruled only for two years from 1297 A.D. to 1299 A.D. Only five inscriptions of Vira Vishwanatha from Hosur, Devarakunadani, Barur and Kambainallur issued in 1297-98 A.D are noticed.

Veera Ballala III was the last ruler of Hoysala dynasty, who was an able and efficient ruler. He ruled for more than half a century. He ascended the throne in 1291 A.D. and by 1299 A.D., he consolidated the divided kingdom. He went as far as Tiruvannamalai and frequently visited Kanchi for religious purposes. Records of Veera Ballala III can be found in Hosur and other parts of Salem. The
most unfortunate incident in Veera Ballala’s rule was the Muslim invasion. When he was busy dealing with the Pandyas in Kongu region, his capital Dwarasamudra was ransacked by Mallik-Kafur. This blow over the last emperor of the Hoysalas was too much to bear. Ballala III lived till 1342 A.D., till he was brutally murdered by the Muslims. Thus, the Hoysala rule ended. Veera Ballala III coronated his son Ballala IV in 1340 A.D., at Tiruvannamalai. He seems to have lingered on till 1346 A.D., by which time the Hoysala Empire was absorbed into Vijayanagara Empire.

A mention has to be made of Mahamandaleshwara Purvadhirajar. During the periods of confusion in Hoysala politics, some feudatories had gained importance. Purvadhirajar were one such family of feudatories who controlled parts of Bangalore, Malur, Hosakote, Anekal and Hosur. Their inscriptions are found in Hosur, Melsudapuram, Nedusal, Thirtham, Penneshwaramadam and even in Devarkundani, the provincial capital of the Hoysalas. The frequently mentioned names of these kings are Tamattalvar and Atti Alvar. These inscriptions date between Saka 1183 and 1201 corresponding to 1261 A.D. and 1275 A.D. These Kings have issued their inscriptions independently without acknowledging the Emperor who ruled at that point of time. Attimugam, a village situated in Hosur must have been their seat of power. An inscription from Chandrachudeshwara temple at Hosur mentions that the Devi shrine of the temple was consecrated by Tamattalvar in Saka 1183, i.e., 1201 A.D.

PANDYAS

The Pandyas established supremacy over a fringe of Salem region for a short period. When the Pandyas won over the Kongu region the parts of Kongunādu which were in the Salem region came under their control. Pandyas also established supremacy over Magada Mandalam of which Attur was a part. Inscriptions of Pandyas are not found in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts, as these regions were under the control of the Hoysalas at that point of time.
Earliest inscription of the Pandyas in this region is found in Aragalur (Attur Taluk), which was the headquarter of Magada Mandalam. This is found in the Karivardaraja temple at Aragalur, which was issued by Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I during his 9th regnal year corresponding to 1259-60 A.D. Inscriptions till his 18th regnal year, i.e., 1269 can be found in Aragalur. (An inscription of Hoysala Ramanathadeva issued in his 13th regnal year i.e. 1267 A.D. is found in Aragalur). An inscription in Ekamranatha temple in Tadavur (Attur Taluk) mentions the 17th regnal years of Jatavarman Sunadara Pandya I corresponding to 1268 A.D.

Inscriptions of Jatavarman Sunadara Pandya II are found in Ilamishwara temple at Taramangalam (Omalur Taluk) issued between his regnal years 6 and 27 corresponding to 1281 to 1303 A.D. he had the title “Konerimaikkondan”. In the temples of Soundararaja Perumal and Shukavaneshwara in Salem inscriptions of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya are found which were issued in his 26th and 29th regnal years. It has not been identified whether it is Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I or Jatavarman Sundara Pandya II. Such inscriptions are found in Paruttipalli and Tiruchengodu also.

KONGUS

Some parts of Namakkal and Tiruchengodu and the entire Rasipuram taluk belonged to the Kongunad. About thirty five inscriptions of Kongu kings have been found in these regions. But it is very difficult to establish the Kongu chronology in this region. The rule of the Kongu rulers seems to have never been extant. They were always the feudatories of the Imperial powers of Tamilnādu. More over their names and epithets have always been as those of the Imperial rules. The epithets like Rājakēsarivarman and Parakēsarivarman used by the Cholas were used by these rulers and the names were also very near to those of the overlords. Names like Rajadhiraja Uttamachola, Parakesari Uttamachola, Rajadhiraja Virachola etc. are noticed in the inscriptions ascribed to the Kongu
rulers. Therefore, it is quite confusing regarding the rule of the Kongu rulers over this region independently. But the inscriptions are mainly concentrated in the Southern parts of Salem region.

**VIJAYANAGARA RULE**

After the fall of the Hoysalas the entire south India came under the political control the Vijayanagara rulers. Thus Salem was also included in to the kingdom. Many feudatory Nayakas under the Vijayanagara crown have governed the various parts of this Salem region. But the inscriptions found of this period are mainly in the name of the Emperor it self. Inscriptions from the period of Bukkaraya I are found in the region. This was during this period that inscriptions in Telugu begin to appear. Till 1565 A.D. i.e. the fall of Vijayanagara Empire it was controlled by them. After the fall of the Vijayanagara some local chief came to power. Very few inscriptions of these rulers are found. Of them the Getti Mudalis seemed to be powerful. The temple patronage under these Nayakas continued for a few decades after the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire. But by the first quarter of the 17th century there seems to be stagnation in the rich patronage for this art. There is deterioration in the temple art forms of this period.

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