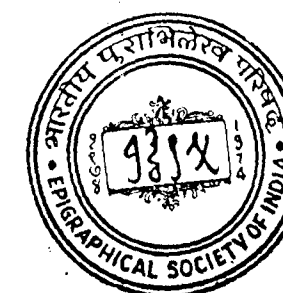
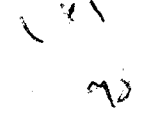


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DATE OF THE EARLY PANDYAS

(6th to 10th Century)

N. Sethuraman

The extreme south of the Indian Peninsula was the Pāṇḍyan kingdom. The boundaries of this ancient kingdom of approximately 20,000 square miles were Cape Kanyakumari and the Indian ocean in the south, strait of Mannar (Bay of Bengal) in the east and the western ghats (running along the longitude 78°E) in the west. The northern boundary extended upto (the latitude 10.25° N.) the southern limits of the Koṅgu-maṇḍalam and the Chōḷa country. The modern city Madurai was its capital. The Pāṇḍyan royal house was one of the ancient dynasties of India. The Pāṇḍyas existed from before the beginning of the Christian era upto the middle of the 17th century. The earliest epigraphical reference to the Pāṇḍyas is found in the inscriptions of Aśoka the great.

In the middle of the 4th century A.D. (?) the Kaḷabhras invaded the Pāṇḍya country and occupied the capital city Madurai. In the middle of the 6th century A.D. the Pāṇḍyas emerged victorious, rose to power and overthrew the Kaḷabhras. In the written down history this is the starting point of the Pāṇḍyan dynasty which flourished without break for more than thousand years leaving behind thousands of inscriptions with which we, the epigraphists are very much concerned. The Pāṇḍyas who existed from the middle of the 6th century A.D. up to the end of the 10th century A.D. are called early Pāṇḍyas. In this paper an attempt is made in reconstructing

the dates of early Pāṇḍyas.

The ancient Tamil classics mention many Pāṇḍya kings who existed prior to the coming of the Kaḷabhras. Scarcity of epigraphical evidence stands in the way of identifying them and we have to wait till some new discoveries come up in the future. I make this statement with confidence because the recent discovery of a coin throws light in this direction. On the obverse the coin bears the name *Peruvaḷudi* in Brāhmī letters and the figure of a horse representing the performance of the Aśvamēdha-yāga by the king and on the reverse the fish emblem of the Pāṇḍyas appears.¹ The king is to be identified with "Palyākaśālai Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḷudi" (Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḷudi who performed many yāgas) who is referred to in the ancient Tamil poems. The Vēlvikuḍi copper-plates of Neḷunśaḍaiyaṇ Parāntaka alias Varaguṇa I (of accession 768 A.D.) year 3 dated 771 A.D. state that Peruvaḷudi and his descendants existed prior to the coming of the Kaḷabhras.² The newly discovered coin which bears the name Peruvaḷudi in Brāhmī letters was no doubt issued by the same king. The date of the coin could be suggested on the basis of palaeographic features of the Brāhmī letters. There are only five letters and the experts in this field could suggest convincingly either the 2nd or the 3rd century A.D. The discovery of the coin is one step forward in identifying a Pāṇḍya king who

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existed sometime after the beginning of the Christian era.

The Tamil poems *Tēvāram hymns* of the 7th and 8th centuries and *Tiruvāchakam* by Māṇikkavāchakar of the 9th century are essentially religious in character and they emphasise the *bhakti* cult in the Saivite faith. The poems refer to some historical events connected to religious affairs and such information, though limited, enables us to some extent in identifying some of the early Pāṇḍya kings.

Panchavan

Literature and inscriptions call the Pāṇḍya king *Tēṇṇavaṇ* and *Pañchavaṇ*. *Tēṇṇavaṇ* means southerner and the title fittingly suits him in view of his position in the extreme south of the Indian Peninsula. *Pañchavaṇ* means "The five". Swamikannu Pillai said that at a time there were five Pāṇḍya kings and so they were called the *Pañchavaṇ*.³ Robert Sewell refuted this theory on valid grounds and said that at a time many princes could have existed and the word *Pañchavaṇ* was probably a title.⁴ The title *Pañchavaṇ* confused many scholars and it stood in the way of constructing the chronology. Some even tried

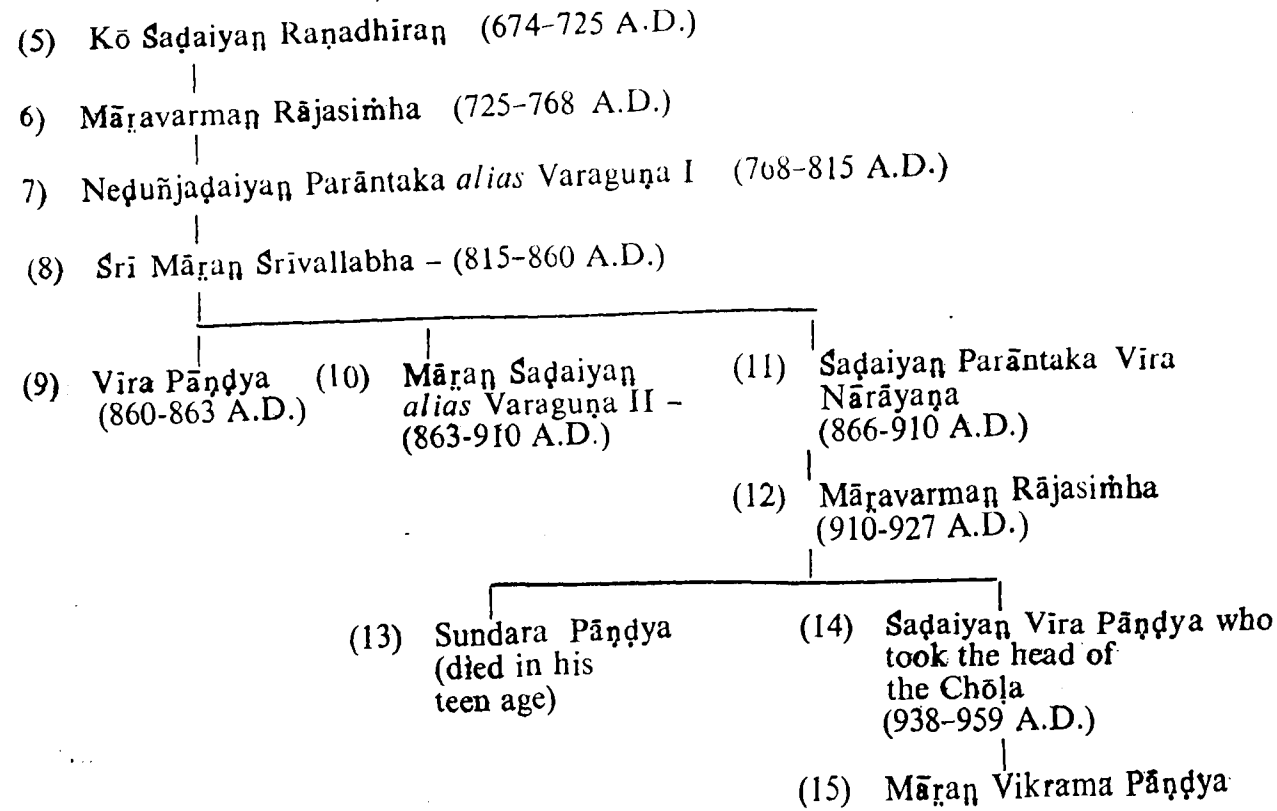
to see five Pāṇḍyas at a time but in vain.

What is the meaning of *Pañchavaṇ*? Why should the Pāṇḍya king be called by that title? These questions prompted me to consult the records of the Pāṇḍyas, Chōḷas, Kēraḷa kings and also the Kākaṭiyas. I found that *Pañchavaṇ* means the lord of the five lands namely *Kuriñchi* (mountains), *Mullai* (forest), *Marudam* (plains), *Neiydal* (sea shore) and *Pālai* (desert). These are the territorial divisions of the Tamil country and they are graphically described in classical Tamil grammar. The Tamil poem *Tiruvilaiyāḍal-purāṇam* by Selli Nagar Nambi (13th century) explicitly states that *Pañchavaṇ*, the Pāṇḍya was the lord of the five lands and his capital was Madurai. The title *Pañchavaṇ* has no bearing on the chronology. Thus having removed the obstacle 'Five Pāṇḍya theory' the chronologist is able to proceed freely.

Early Pandyas 6th to 10th Century

The discovery of the six copper-plates issued by four early Pāṇḍya kings is a landmark in the history of the Pāṇḍyas.⁵ The following genealogy is furnished by the charters (The dates are discussed below).

- (1) Kaḍuṅgōṇ who overthrew the Kaḷabhras (existed around 550 A.D.)
- (2) Māṇavarman Avaniśūlāmaṇi
- (3) Śēndaṇ
- (4) Māṇavarman Arikēśari (624-674 A.D.)



Approximately 150 stone records of these kings are available in the traditional Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam⁷. Most of them are in Tamil Vaṭṭeḷuttu characters. A few records engraved in the period 863 to 888 A.D. are available in Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur districts, the traditional Chōḷa-maṇḍalam where the Pāṇḍyas extended their authority for a brief span of 15 years. Otherwise the records engraved between 600 and 1000 A.D. are found in Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam only including the areas lying south of Trivandrum. Earlier records

introduce the kings as Māṇaṇ Sēndaṇ or Sēndaṇ Māṇaṇ. Later records (from 8th century) introduce the kings as Māṇaṇ Saḍaiyaṇ or Saḍaiyaṇ Māṇaṇ. These names create serious difficulties in identifying the kings, their records and dates. Sēndaṇ and Māṇaṇ are the dynastic titles of the Pāṇḍyas. Later they took the modified form Saḍaiyaṇ and Māṇaṇ or Māṇavarmaṇ. Still later they become Jaṭilavarmaṇ and Māṇavarmaṇ. When the father is a Sēndaṇ or Saḍaiyaṇ or Jaṭilavarmaṇ the son would be a Māṇaṇ or Māṇavarmaṇ. Evidently,

- 1) Māṇaṇ Sēndaṇ means Sēndaṇ, son of Māṇaṇ or Māṇavarmaṇ.
- 2) Sēndaṇ Māṇaṇ means Māṇaṇ or Māṇavarmaṇ, son of Sēndaṇ.
- 3) Māṇaṇ Saḍaiyaṇ means Saḍaiyaṇ, son of Māṇaṇ or Māṇavarmaṇ.
- 4) Saḍaiyaṇ Māṇaṇ means Māṇaṇ, son of Saḍaiyaṇ.

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These names indicating the titles of the father and son appear in all the stone records of the early Pāṇḍya kings. Internal evidence and the copper plates help us in identifying some of the records and the kings who caused them to be engraved. However, most of the records are still unidentified and probably they may remain so for ever. The records of Vira Pāṇḍya (No. 14) furnish the full name of the king but unfortunately his dynastic title is absent in those records. The copper-plates state that he was a Saḍaiyaṇ. As I have already stated there are approximately 150 early Pāṇḍyan records engraved in the course of four hundred years and among them only seven records supply astronomical data. Others quote the regnal years only.

1) Two records which come from Tirupparaṅkuṇṇam and Āṇaimalai belong to Neḍuṇḍaiyaṇ Parāntaka *alias* Varaguṇa I (No. 7). They supply the Kaliyuga year. Out of these two only one gives the regnal year, month, star and the week day Sunday⁸. The data confirm his accession in 768 A.D. Incidentally this is the earliest Pāṇḍyan record which quotes the week day in Sanskrit (and not in Tamil).

2) A record which comes from Aivarmalai belongs to Varaguṇa II (No. 10) and supplies the Śaka year expired 792 coupled with the regnal year eight⁹. The data confirm the commencement of his reign from 863 A.D.

3) Three records in Tamil script coming from three villages in the Tiruchirappalli district (Chōḷa-maṇḍalam) belong to Māṇaṇ Saḍaiyaṇ *alias* Varaguṇa II and

they furnish the regnal year, month, star and week day¹⁰. The data agree with the initial year 863. Incidentally these are the earliest Pāṇḍyan records which quote the week days in Tamil and they are found in Chōḷa-maṇḍalam.

4) A record coming from Ambāsamudram belongs to Vira Pāṇḍya (No. 14) who took the head of the Chōḷa. It quotes year 12, month Mithuṇa and solar eclipse. The star and weekday are absent.¹¹

All the other records quote the regnal years only. Here also we come across some curious peculiarities. Most of the records which bear the name Māṇaṇ Saḍaiyaṇ and in which the regnal years are more than 4, quote the same as 4+ some year. For example, year seven is quoted as year 3 opposite to 4 i.e., 4+3. Similarly the records of Saḍaiyaṇ Māṇaṇ quote the regnal years as 2+ some year. The Sanskrit portion of the Daḷavāy-puram copper-plates¹² of Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa quote the regnal year as the year which is current after the expiry of four ten (40) plus one and plus 3. It means that 44 years have passed and the 45th year is running. The Tamil portion states year forty plus three plus two evidently 45 (regnal year is always a current year)

There were many Māṇaṇs and Saḍaiyaṇs. Naturally their records should bear the name either Māṇaṇ Saḍaiyaṇ or Saḍaiyaṇ Māṇaṇ. Curiously, records bearing the name Māṇaṇ Saḍaiyaṇ alone freely quote 4 plus some year. Similarly records bearing the name Saḍaiyaṇ Māṇaṇ quote 2 plus some year. Why should they quote like that? Till

date we have no answer. This much is certain that since a known Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ quotes 4 plus, it does not mean that all Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ records which quote 4 plus should be assigned to that known king only. They may belong to several Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇs. The same theory also holds good for Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇs who freely quote 2 plus. In stray cases Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ also quotes 2 plus (see T.A.S. Vol. IV, No. 24). Against this background of oddities and strange phenomenon, the chronologist has to extract the maximum possibility or at least the probability. Let us see how it is done.

Neḍuṇjaḍaiyaṇ Parāntaka *alias* Varaguṇa I (No. 7) came to the throne in 768 A.D. and this is confirmed by stone records¹³. The Vēlvikuḍi copper-plates state that his father Māḡavarmaṇ Rājasimha (No. 6) defeated Pallavamalla (the Pallava king Nandivarman) whose rule between 730 and 795 A.D., is known from the accounts given in the Pallava charters¹⁴. Rājasimha contemplated matrimonial alliance with the Gaṅga dynasty and his son married the daughter of the Western Gaṅga king. The contemporary Gaṅga king was Śripurusha who ruled from 725 to 788 A.D. These information place Rājasimha in the second quarter of the 8th century A.D.; but we have no means of knowing his accession date and also of how many years he ruled. External evidence prompts us to allot him the probable period 725 to 768 A.D. This is purely a reasonable guess and the initial year is subject to alteration by a few years plus or minus.

The copper plates state that Kō-Saḍaiyaṇ Raṇadhīra (No. 5) father of Rājasimha defeated the Chalukyas at Maṅgalapuram¹⁵

which city as we shall see below was founded by his father Māḡavarmaṇ Arikēsari. The Chalukyan expedition in the Pāṇḍya country could be in 674 A.D. when the Chalukyan emperor Vikramāditya I was camping at Uṇaiyūr, the ancient Chōḷa capital, on the banks of the river Cauvery, a hamlet of the modern city Tiruchirappally. Dr. K. V. Ramesh, after consulting the Chalukyan records, points out that during this expedition Vikramāditya was ably assisted by his son Prince Vinayāditya. The Chalukyan charters explicitly state that making light of his father Vikramāditya's order, Prince Vinayāditya set out southward and vanquished by force the powerful brave and resisting Pāṇḍya king and captured his capital city Madurai. He further occupied the Kumari Dvīpa (Kanyakumari) took the ruler prisoner and thus made his father Vikramāditya happy¹⁶.

It is evident that in 674 A.D. the Chalukyas penetrated deep into the Pāṇḍyan country and the Pāṇḍyan charters state that Kō-Saḍaiyaṇ Raṇadhīra defeated the Chalukyas at Maṅgalapuram. We are not concerned with who defeated whom. We are not concerned with the source materials which point out the existence of the Pāṇḍya king Kō-Saḍaiyaṇ Raṇadhīra in 674 A.D. We can safely allot the period 674 to 725 A.D. to this king and as usual it is subject to alteration this or that way.

The Tamil epic Periyapurāṇam written by saint Śēkkiḷār (1139 A.D.) helps us in identifying Māḡavarmaṇ Arikēsari (No. 4) and his date. The poem states that Paranjyōti, the general of the Pallava king Narasimhavarman participated in the Vātāpi

campaign of 642 A.D. After the war the general retired from the army services, settled down at Tirucheṅgāṭṭāṅkuḍi in Thanjavār district and became a Śaivite devotee. He was called Tiru Toṇḍār (humble servant). He married Tiruveṅkāṭṭu Naṅgai and had a son. When the son was of school going age (five), the young saint Tiruṇāṇa Sambandar met the happy family at Tirucheṅgāṭṭāṅkuḍi. We can roughly place this event around 650 A.D.

Periyapurāṇam further states that saint Tiruṇāṇa Sambandar left Tirucheṅgāṭṭāṅkuḍi, visited many sacred places and finally came to Madurai. The then Pāṇḍya king was a staunch Jainā. At the request of the Pāṇḍya queen Maṅgayarkaraṣi and the minister Kulachiraiyar, saint Sambandar made the Pāṇḍya king accept the Śaivite canon. The king lost his faith in Jainism and became a staunch devotee of Lord Śiva. Periyapurāṇam calls this king "Neḍuṇjaḍaiyaṇ who was victorious at Nelvēli". He is to be identified with Māḡavarmaṇ Arikēsari (No. 4) who is referred to in the Vēlvikuḍi copper plates as the victor at Nelvēli and Puliyūr and who performed many Tulābhāras and Hiraṇyagarbhas. The course of events confirms the existence of this king in 650 A.D.

The Vaikai river bed inscription of Sēndaṇ Māraṇ, year 50, is to be assigned to this king¹⁷. The record states that the king performed many Tulābhāras and Hiraṇyagarbhas, founded the city Maṅgalapuram and built a sluice called Arikēsariyāṇ probably in his name. The recent inscription discovered at Enati also belongs to this king¹⁸. It is in chaste

Tamil verses and states that he was Sēndaṇ Māraṇ Arikēsari, the king of Kūḍal (Madurai), the victor at Nelvēli and Puliyūr and that he performed many Tulābhāras and Hiraṇyagarbhas. In the records the king figures as a pious Hindu devotee and not as a Jainā. Evidently these records were engraved after his conversion from Jainism to Śaivite faith. Periyapurāṇam states¹⁹ that the king ruled for a long time (araṣu-uṇmai - neḍuṅkālam), and this statement agrees with the high regnal year 50 quoted in the Vaikai river bed inscription. We can safely allot the period 624 to 674 A.D. to this king subject to minor adjustment depending upon future discoveries.

Pandikkovai

Pāṇḍikkōvai (the commentary on Iraiyaṇār Ahapporū) is an ancient Tamil poem. Three hundred and fifty verses of this poem are available. The hero of this poem is the Pāṇḍya king who was the victor at Nelvēli and Puliyūr, evidently Māḡavarmaṇ Arikēsari²⁰. From the poem it can be inferred that the author of the poem and the king were contemporaries. The author of this poem is not known.

Sundaramurthy Nayaṇār, one of the 63 Tamil Śaivite Nāyaṇmārs, existed in the first quarter of the 8th century. He mentions the other 62 Nāyaṇmārs some of whom were his contemporaries and the rest existed several years or centuries earlier. In his poem Tiruttoṇḍattōkai Sundaramūrti Nāyaṇār mentions Kāri Nayaṇār who existed several years earlier. The poet Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi (11th century A.D.) states that Kāri Nāyaṇār hailed

from Tirukkaḍavūr in Tanjore district. Kāri Nāyaṇār was a poet and he used to compose poems praising the kings. Śēkkiḷār, the author of the Tamil epic Periyapurāṇam (1139 A.D.), narrates in detail the story of Kāri Nāyaṇār. He says the Kāri Nāyaṇār who hailed from Tirukkaḍavūr in Tanjore district was a great poet and he used to compose Tamil poems called Kōvai praising the three Tamil kings Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍya. This shows that Kāri Nāyaṇār existed after 550 A.D. Śēkkiḷār further states that after hearing the Tamil Kōvai poems the three Tamil kings gifted to the poet Kāri Nāyaṇār money, treasures and wealth. Kāri Nāyaṇār utilised the entire proceeds for feeding the Śaivite devotees and also for constructing temples dedicated to Lord Śiva.

From the above statement we get some important information. As far as Tamil literature is concerned we find that Kāri Nāyaṇār was the earliest known poet who composed Kōvai poems in Tamil. He existed prior to the time of Sundaramūrti Nāyaṇār, i.e., prior to 8th century but later than 550 A.D. The earliest known Kōvai poem in Tamil is *Pāṇḍikkōvai* whose hero is Māṇavarmaṇ Arikēśari and who ruled from 624 to 724 A.D. According to the poem the poet and the hero were contemporaries. These facts prompt us to surmise that most probably Kāri Nāyaṇār was the author of the Tamil poem *Pāṇḍikkōvai*. We also get corroboration to this surmise from the words of Śēkkiḷār himself. Before narrating the story of Neḍumāraṇ (Māṇavarmaṇ Arikēśari) Śēkkiḷār says that he proceeds to write the story of Neḍumāraṇ with the kindness gifted to him by

saint Kāri Nāyaṇār²¹. This statement prompts us to surmise that Kāri Nāyaṇār was probably the author of *Pāṇḍikkōvai*. (Probably in the 12th century all the verses of the poem *Pāṇḍikkōvai* and the name of the author were available to Śēkkiḷār).

In the stone records Māṇavarmaṇ Arikēśari is called Sēndaṇ Māraṇ which means Māraṇ son of Sēndaṇ. In the genealogical table his father (No. 3) figures as a Sēndaṇ. The grandfather is a Māraṇ (Māṇavarmaṇ). Naturally in the stone records we can expect Sēndaṇ the father of Arikēśari as Māraṇ Sēndaṇ (Sēndaṇ son of Māṇavarmaṇ). A record which comes from Malaiyaḍikuṇichi belongs to Māraṇ Sēndaṇ, year 17, and it is assigned to him²². The records of his predecessors are not found and for want of source materials we are unable to suggest their probable dates. The position occupied by Māṇavarmaṇ Arikēśari, whose existence in 650 A.D. is confirmed, prompts us to infer that his great grandfather Kaḍuṅgōṇ who overthrew the Kaḷabhras existed probably around 550 A.D.

Śrī Māraṇ Śrīvallabha (No. 8) was the son of Varaguṇa I of accession 768 A.D. The Ceylon chronicle *Mahāvamsa* states that a prince of this family, more probably the son of Śrīvallabha, appealed to the then Ceylon king Sēna II (of accession 851) to invade the Pāṇḍya country. The Ceylonese readily obliged. In the 9th year of Sēna II the Ceylon army captured Madurai, killed Śrīvallabha and installed his son on the Madurai throne. In view of this achievement the Ceylon king Sēna adopted the title Madhurā Dunu²³.

DATES OF THE EARLY PANDYAS

According to *Mahāvamsa* this happened in 860 A.D.

Śrīvallabha was a Māraṇ, son of Saḍaiyaṇ Parāntaka *alias* Varaguṇa I. Naturally in the stone records we can expect him as a Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ. This is confirmed by a record coming from Erukkaṇkuḍi in Ramanathapuram district. The record is in the 18th year of Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ and it explicitly states that the king is Neḍu Māraṇ Śrīvallabha²⁴.

The interval between 768, the accession date of Varaguṇa I, and 860 the last date of his son Śrīvallabha is 92 years. Among the several Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇs, Śrīvallabha is the only Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ who could have ruled maximum number of years. A record which comes from Siṇṇamaṇūr belongs to Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ and it is in his 46th year²⁵. In view of the high regnal year it is assigned to him. Evidently he should have come to the throne around 815 A.D. and this date is tentatively taken as his accession date subject to minor adjustment depending upon future discoveries.

Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ *alias* Varaguṇa II (No. 10) and Saḍaiyaṇ Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa (No. 11) were the sons of Śrīvallabha by his two queens. Varaguṇa counts his reign from 863 A.D. In the *Daḍavāyapuram* copper plates, year 45, Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa accepts his elder brother Varaguṇa as his overlord²⁶. He states that he issued that charter when Varaguṇa, his overlord, the devotee of Lord Śiva, was protecting the world. He further states that in the Seṇṇilam battle he

defeated the prince who was born prior to him. That elder brother could not be Varaguṇa because in the charter itself Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa accepts Varaguṇa as his overlord. In the circumstances we have to infer that there should have been another prince either younger or elder to Varaguṇa and he should have been supported by the Ceylonese.

The Sanskrit poem *Pāṇḍyakulōdaya* states that Varaguṇa was driven out by his brother and he was wandering in the forest²⁷. There he met Saint Māṇikkavāchakar with whose blessings he drove out his brother from Madura and got back his kingdom. This information satisfactorily fits into the accounts of *Mahāvamsa* which states that the prince (son) of the Pāṇḍya king was installed on the throne in 860. This prince should have ruled from 860 to 863 A.D. Most probably he was Vira Pāṇḍya (No. 9) whom the contemporary Koḍumbāḷūr chief Pūdi Vikramakēśari claims to have defeated²⁸.

Varaguṇa was not crowned by his father. He got the kingdom by his valour. This is confirmed by a record which comes from Perumbullī²⁹. It states that the chief Paḷlivēḷāṇ Nakkaṇ Pullaṇ defeated Simhaḷa Rājar at Seṇṇilam and helped his overlord Varaguṇa Mahārājar in many ways. The date of this battle should be around 863 A.D. when Varaguṇa defeated his brother and the Ceylon king and mounted the Madurai throne.

A record which comes from Aivar-malai³⁰ belongs to Varaguṇa II. It quotes śaka year 792 expired and the regnal year 8.

The data indicate the commencement of his reign from 863 A.D. Three records which come from the villages Lālgudi, Tiruveḷḷarai and Javantināthapuram introduce the king as Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ. They state that the Pāṇḍya king Varaguṇa gave money in the hands of the officer Aṇḍanāṭṭu

Vēḷāṇ for burning perpetual lamps in the temples. In all the records the regnal year is quoted as 4+9. They also supply astronomical data. The records are tabulated below. The dates confirm the accession year as 863. A.D.

TABLE I

Serial Number	Record No., Village	King, year and data	Date
1.	S.I.I., XIV, No. 12 Tiruveḷḷarai	Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ, year 4+9, month Viṇchika, Monday and star Aśvati.	14th November, 875 A.D.
2.	E.I., XXXIII, No. 6 Javantināthapuram	Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ, year 4+9, month Dhanus, Monday and star Aviṭṭam	5th December, 875 A.D.
3.	S.I.I., XIV, 12B Lālgudi	Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ, year 4+9, month Dhanus, Tuesday and star Saḍayam.	6th December, 875 A.D.

A record which comes from Tillaiśthānam in Thanjavur district (Chōḷa-maṇḍalam) is in the fourth year of Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ¹. In the record Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ states that his queen (Nampirāṭṭiyār) and Kōṇ-Parāntakaṇār gifted money for burning a sacred lamp called Varaguṇa Mahārājār. The record evidently belongs to Varaguṇa II and it is dated 866-67 A.D. Kōṇ-Parāntakaṇār is no doubt Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa, the younger brother of Varaguṇa, and he is called 'Kōṇ' which means 'king'. This clearly shows that Varaguṇa himself crowned his younger brother. This is the earliest record in which the younger brother figures as a prince. In the circumstances we can safely surmise that Parāntaka Vira

Nārāyaṇa was crowned probably in 866 A.D.

We have already seen that in 860 A.D. the Ceylonese killed Srivallabha and installed his son Vira Pāṇḍya on the Madurai throne. Varaguṇa by his strength and valour drove out his elder brother from Madurai and got his kingdom. The Perumbulli record states that the chief Paḷḷivēḷān defeated the Simhaḷa Rājar at Seṇṇilam and helped his overlord Varaguṇa in many ways. The Ceylon king was defeated in the Pāṇḍya country. Probably, he should have been there helping Vira Pāṇḍya but Varaguṇa was victorious. The date of the Seṇṇilam battle should be around 863 A.D. from

which date Varaguṇa counts his reign. His younger brother Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa helped Varaguṇa in this crucial battle. This is evident from the Daḷavāyapuram copper plates in which Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa states that in the Seṇṇilam battle he defeated the king (Vēl-vēndan) who was born prior to him. Probably in view of this help Varaguṇa crowned his younger brother Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa in 866 A.D.

Before proceeding further we should know why the first son of Srivallabha sought the help of the Ceylon king. In the present state of our knowledge of the source materials we have no means of knowing the reason for the internal trouble in the royal family. We can only make a reasonable surmise. In the Daḷavāyapuram copper plates, after referring to his elder brother Varaguṇa as his overlord, Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa introduces his own mother Akkaḷa Nimmaḍi and her parents belonging to the family of the Pottappi Chōḷas. After mentioning his mother, Vira Nārāyaṇa states that he defeated the king who was born prior to him. From these statements we can infer that probably Srimāra Srivallabha had three queens. Vira Pāṇḍya was probably the eldest son by the second queen and Varaguṇa was the son of the chief-queen. Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa was the son of the last queen. As per the custom Srimāra Srivallabha probably wished to crown Varaguṇa the son of the chief-queen. Being enraged at the supersession the eldest son Vira (by the second queen) should have turned to Ceylon for help. Even though he was successful in his initial move, ultimately Varaguṇa became victorious. The fate of Vira is not known.

Varaguṇa became the master of Pāṇḍi-maṇḍalam. He extended his authority in Chōḷa-maṇḍalam also. Records of Varaguṇa are available in Thanjavur district the seat of the traditional Chōḷa-maṇḍalam. In the year 888 A.D., in the Tiruppuṇampiyam battle, the Chōḷa king Āditya and the Pāḷlava king Aparājita defeated Varaguṇa. This was a major set back in the life of Varaguṇa. He retired from active politics and entrusted the administration of the kingdom with his younger brother Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa whose descendants also ruled in the later period. The Daḷavāyapuram copper plates of Vira Nārāyaṇa were issued in his 45th year when his elder brother Varaguṇa was also alive. Probably 910 A.D. was the last date of the brothers.

In the stone records of this period Varaguṇa is called Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ *alias* Varaguṇa Mahārāja. Certain records of this period quote the name of the king as Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ only. This prompts the epigraphists to assign these records to Varaguṇa. We must remember here that his younger brother Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa is also a Saḍaiyaṇ as evidenced by the Siṅṅamaṇūr copper plates. Naturally he should also be a Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ. Therefore the records of this period which bear the name Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ only may belong either to Varaguṇa or his younger brother Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa. Internal evidence alone can help us in identifying the king who caused the inscription to be engraved. For example the Kaḷugumalai rock inscription belongs to Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ year 35 plus 7. (S.I.I., vol. XIV, 42). It states that a brāhmaṇa gifted gold for burning lamps in the temple. The record

states that the charity should be under the protection of the soldiers of Parāntaka and the sacred rock (*Parāntaka virarum tirumalai virarum*). Evidently the record is to be assigned to Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa and it is dated 908 A.D. Where the king is not identified we can simply state that the record belongs to either Varaguṇa of accession 863 or Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa of accession 866. Since the difference in the accession years is only four, it will not do any harm in the investigation of the records concerning religion, social, cultural and other aspects of the studies of this period.

In the Daḷavāyapuram copper plates Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa states that Varaguṇa was a staunch devotee of Lord Śiva. He says that Varaguṇa, who in his heart made Lord Śiva Pinākapāṇi (who has the Pināka bow in hand) to reside happily, is protecting the world. Māṇikkavāchakar served as a minister under Varaguṇa. Later he became a Śaivite saint. In his poem *Tirukkōvaiyār* the saint Māṇikkavāchakar praises Varaguṇa as a worshipper of Lord Natarāja of Chidambaram. Saint Paṭṭinattār (10th century) states that Varaguṇa gifted his queen to Lord Śiva of the Tiruviḍaimarudūr temple. He says that Varaguṇa of laudable compassion willingly gifted his dēvi who had beautiful curled hair to Lord Śiva of the Tiruviḍaimarudūr temple (*puri kuḷal dēviyai parivudāṇ koḷutta periya aṇbin Varaguṇa dēvar*). Could it be the reason for the absence of a heir apparent (son) to Varaguṇa? Again could it be the reason for entrusting the administration of the kingdom with his younger brother Parāntaka

Vira Nārāyaṇa whose descendants alone figure in the later period?

In the words of saint Paṭṭinattār, Varaguṇa willingly gifted his wife to Lord Śiva (of the temple). This reminds us the story of Iyar-pakai-Nāyanār of the Tamil epic *Periyapurāṇam*. It states that one day Lord Śiva in the guise of a Śaivite devotee, came to Iyar-pakai-Nāyanār and demanded the latter's wife. Iyar-pakai-Nāyanār did not know that He was Lord Śiva. He thought that a gift to a Śaivite devotee was a service to Śiva. Therefore he willingly gifted his wife to the Śaivite devotee Could it be a *Kāpālīka* cult? If this was so, was Varaguṇa a follower of *Kāpālīka* school? It needs deep study.

Māḍavarman Rājasimha (No. 12) was the son of Parāntaka Vira Nārāyaṇa. In the stone records he figures as Śaḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ and some of his records are identified. Rājasimha was also called Mānābharaṇa. This is evident from three records of Parāntaka Chōḷa I of accession 907. The records come from three villages Tiruchatturai, Tillaisthānam and Tiruppaḷanāṁ situated in Thanjavur district, the traditional Chōḷa-maṇḍalam³. The records are in the 5th, 8th and 9th years of Parāntaka Chōḷa and they are dated 911-12, 914-15, and 915-16 A.D. They state that the servant of the queen of the Pāṇḍya king Mānābharaṇar son of Parāntakan (Pāṇḍyanār Parāntakan Mānābharaṇanār) gifted gold to the temple for burning lamps. The dates indicate that Rājasimha *alias* Mānābharaṇa commenced his reign from 910 A.D. which was the last date of his father. The three records also

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indicate that at the time of writing these records there was cordial relationship between the Pāṇḍyas and the Chōḷas. This did not last long. In the year 919, Parāntaka Chōḷa defeated the combined forces of the Pāṇḍya and the Ceylonese⁴. Later Parāntaka Chōḷa invaded the Pāṇḍya country and defeated Rājasimha who fled to Ceylon⁵. The event is to be placed in 927 A.D. from which year the records of Parāntaka Chōḷa ranging from his 20th to 40th regnal year are freely available in the southern most part of the Pāṇḍya country⁶. The Siṅṅamaṇūr plates of Rājasimha were issued in his 16th year and this fits into his reign 910 to 927 A.D. The Ceylon chronicle *Mahāvamsa* states that Rājasimha left Ceylon went to Kerala

and died there after sometime.

The records of Vira Pāṇḍya (No. 14) the son of Rājasimha are available. In the stone records he bears the epithet *sōḷan talai koṇḍa* which means "he who took the head of the Chōḷa". The earliest record in which the epithet appears is in year 6 and the last⁷ is in year 20. Vira Pāṇḍya killed Uttamaśīli the last son of Parāntaka Chōḷa and adopted this title⁸. He was also called Chōḷāntaka (god of death to the Chōḷa). A comparative study of the records tabulated below reveals that in the stone records, upto the middle of the 6th year, he was a Māraṇ Śaḍaiyaṇ and in the later records he appears as Vira Pāṇḍya who took the head of the Chōḷa.

TABLE No. 2

Serial Number	Reference	Name of the king	Regnal year	Internal evidence
1	Sivakāśi copper plates	Śaḍaiyaṇ Vira Pāṇḍya	3	The minister Iyyakkum Selvan Kanaiyar Paḷḷi Tennavan Uttaramandiri figures.
2	S.I.I., vol. XIV, 80, footnote 2	Vira Pāṇḍya 'who took the head of the Chōḷa'	8	The above minister figures.
3	T.A.S., vol. IV, No. 24	Māraṇ Śaḍaiyaṇ	2+1	-do-
4	S.I.I., vol. XIV, 4	Māraṇ Śaḍaiyaṇ	4	Officer Poliyūr Nāṭṭu Araiyan Māraṇ Āchaṇ figures
5	S.I.I., vol. XIV, 5	Māraṇ Śaḍaiyaṇ	Year 5 day 593	-do-
6	S.I.I., vol. XIV, 79	Vira Pāṇḍya who took the head of the Chōḷa	7	called Chōḷāntaka Pallavaraiyan
7	T.A.S., vol. III No 24	-do-	13+1	-do-

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In the first three records the same minister figures. The officer who figures in 4 and 5 also figures in 6 and 7 in which he borrows the title *Chōlantaka* of Vira Pāṇḍya. The table clearly shows that.

- 1) Vira Pāṇḍya of Sivakāśi copper plates is to be identified with Vira Pāṇḍya 'who took the head of the Chōla'
- 2) Up to the middle of the 6th year, the stone records introduce him as Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ. In the later part of his sixth year he killed the Chōla prince Uttamaśīli and adopted the title 'who took the head of the Chōla'.

The Sivakāśi copper plates state that Vira Pāṇḍya was a Saḍaiyaṇ and Mānābharaṇa was his father. We have already seen that Rājasimha (910-927 A.D.) was called Mānābharaṇa and evidently he was the father of Vira Pāṇḍya. Rājasimha was a Mājavarmaṇ. Vira is a Saḍaiyaṇ. Naturally his stone records introduce him as Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ. The copper plates further state that Śrīvallabha was the great grandfather of Vira. This Śrīvallabha figures as No. 8 in the genealogical table.

It is a known fact that Vira Pāṇḍya was killed by the Chōla king Āditya Karikāla and the latter adopted the title "*Vira Pāṇḍyan talai koṇḍa*" i.e. who took the head of Vira Pāṇḍya. The Tiruvālaṅgāḍu copper plates of Rājendra Chōla state that the young prince Āditya Karikāla killed Vira Pāṇḍya. The inference is that the Chōla prince prior to his accession took active part in the battle and killed Vira

Pāṇḍya. Āditya Karikāla came to the throne in 960 A.D. and he should have killed Vira sometime prior to this date³³. The records of Vira Pāṇḍya upto year 20 are available. His 20th year should be prior to 960. A record which comes from Ambāsamudram belongs³⁴ to Vira Pāṇḍya and it is in year 12. The record quotes month Mithuna and solar eclipse. A solar eclipse in Mithuna in the 12th year of Vira Pāṇḍya could be expected prior to 952 A.D. It did occur on 18th June 950 A.D. Applying the Indian calendar system we get the equation.

12th year = Mithuna 950 A.D.

10th year = Mithuna 938 A.D.

1st year = Mithuna 939 A.D.

Vira Pāṇḍya came to the throne between Mithuna 938 A.D. and Mithuna 939 A.D. Record No. 3 of the table No. 2 above bears the name Māraṇ Saḍaiyaṇ and it no doubt belongs to Vira Pāṇḍya. The record quotes the date as year 2 plus 1, month Karkaṭaka. This statement clearly shows that the accession month of Vira Pāṇḍya was Karkaṭaka. Between Mithuna 938 A.D. and Mithuna 939 A.D. Karkaṭaka falls in 938 A.D. only. Vira Pāṇḍya came to the throne in the month Karkaṭaka in the year 938 A.D. In other words he came to the throne between the 25th June and the 25th July 938 A.D.

Two records which come from Ukkirankōṭṭai belong to Rājasimha dated 11th and 15th year. The records state that the village Karavandapuram is situated in Kaḷakkuḍi-nāḍu³⁵. Another record which

comes from the same village belongs to Vira Pāṇḍya who took the head of the Chōla and it is in his 15th year. The record states that the village Karavandapuram is situated in Pāṇḍimārttāṇḍa-vaḷa-nāḍu³⁶. Evidently Pāṇḍimārttāṇḍa was the title of Vira Pāṇḍya. This is confirmed by another record of Vira Pāṇḍya and it comes from Peruṅkuḷam³⁷. Vira Pāṇḍya was also called Vira Kēraḷan. This is evident from his Āṇaiyūr record, year 10, dated 943 A.D. The record mentions the royal seat called 'Vira Kēraḷan' put up in the palace called 'Mānābharaṇan Tirumāḷigai' in Maṅgalāpuram³⁸. (The palace is called in the surname of the father of Vira Pāṇḍya). Sivakāśi copper plates state that the mother of Vira Pāṇḍya was the daughter of a Kēraḷa king. Naturally Vira Pāṇḍya adopted the title *Vira Kēraḷan* from his mother's side. The city Chōlāntaka-Chaturvēdimaṅgalam in the surname of Vira Pāṇḍya existed near Madurai. A Vishṇu temple called Vira Kēraḷa dēvar in the surname of Vira Pāṇḍya also existed in the village Chōlāntaka-Chaturvēdimaṅgalam. (Today the village is called Sōḷa-vandān).

The Sivakāśi copper plates state that the Sundara Pāṇḍya was the elder brother of Vira Pāṇḍya. Sundara died in his teen age. After his death a sepulchre temple was built over his mortal remains by Vira Pāṇḍya and it was under the management of the Pāśupata Saivites called "Mahā Vratins." The temple is situated at Paḷḷimaḍam. The records engraved on the bases and the walls of the central shrine belong to Vira Pāṇḍya and they contain his epithet. In the records the temple is called *Paḷḷippaḍai*

temple (sepulchral) Sundara Pāṇḍya Īśvaram. A lone record³⁹ which comes from the north wall belongs to Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ year 2. It mentions the temple as Sundara Pāṇḍya Īśvaram. The name *Paḷḷippaḍai* is absent. Evidently Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ of this record was a successor to Vira Pāṇḍya. Recently, a record of Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ year 2 is found at Tiruppūvaṇam⁴⁰. It mentions Rājasimhaḷam which was constructed by Rājasimha. The record mentions an officer called Viraṇārāyaṇa Vira Pāṇḍya Vinai Māraṇ. Viraṇārāyaṇa was the surname of Vira Pāṇḍya⁴¹. This officer served under Vira Pāṇḍya and also his successor Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ. A record which comes from Tiruppuḍaimarudūr is in the 2+18th (20th) year of Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ⁴². It mentions the headman of the village called Vira Pāṇḍya ...kkam, a hamlet of Malaiya Mādēvipuram in Pāṇḍimārttāṇḍa-vaḷanāḍu. Pāṇḍimārttāṇḍa was the surname of Vira Pāṇḍya. Evidently Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ of this record was a later king.

The above records show that the successor of Vira Pāṇḍya was a Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ. Vira Pāṇḍya is a Saḍaiyaṇ. Naturally his son should be a Māraṇ and in the above records his son figures with the name Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ. In the Ambāsamudram record of Vira Pāṇḍya year 12 an officer called Vikrama Pāṇḍya Mūvēndavēḷān figures. A record which comes from Kuttālam belongs to Rāja Rāja Chōla I, year 20, corresponding to 1005 A.D. The record mentions a village called Vikrama Pāṇḍyanallūr⁴³. Probably Vikrama Pāṇḍya was the son of Vira Pāṇḍya and in the records he figures as a Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ. His accession and terminal dates are not known.

Successors of Vira Pandya

We surmised that Saḍaiyaṇ Māraṇ Vikrama Pāṇḍya was the son of Vira Pāṇḍya. Saḍaiyavarman Śrīvallabha of 'tirumagaḷ jayamagaḷ' Tamil *prasasti* ruled from 1014 to 1031 A.D. In the year 1021 A.D., Rājendra Chōḷa drove out Śrīvallabha from Madurai and installed his second son Sundara Chōḷa Pāṇḍya on the Madurai throne. Śrīvallabha was ruling in the Tirunelveli area⁹⁰. His Tiruvāliśvaram record⁹¹ is in the year 17 corresponding to 1031 A.D. It is said that the record was engraved by the stone engraver Parākrama Pāṇḍya-peruntachchan. Probably a Parākrama Pāṇḍya existed prior to the time of Śrīvallabha, A record of Rāja Rāja the

great coming from Sēvūr in North Arcot district⁹² is in the year 20, corresponding to 1005 A.D. The Tamil *prasasti* of the record states that the king defeated the Pāṇḍyas, destroyed Madurai and had the epithets *Tenna Parākrama* and *Kirti Parākrama Chōḷa*. These facts prompt us to surmise that Parākrama Pāṇḍya was the contemporary of Rāja Rāja. Probably Parākrama Pāṇḍya was the father of Śrīvallabha. The position occupied by Parākrama Pāṇḍya makes him a Māḍavarmaṇ. If this understanding is correct and since the dates are also very close we may not be far wrong if we surmise that Parākrama Pāṇḍya was probably the grandson of Vikrama Pāṇḍya. On the basis of this surmise the tentative genealogy is given below.

- (14) Vira Pāṇḍya 'who took the head of the Chōḷa' (938-959 A.D.)
- |
- (15) Māraṇ Vikrama Pāṇḍya
- |
- (16) Saḍaiyaṇ (not identified)
- |
- (17) Māraṇ Parākrama Pāṇḍya
- |
- (18) Saḍaiyaṇ Śrīvallabha Pāṇḍya (1014-1031 A.D.)
(*tirumagaḷ jayamagaḷ* Tamil *Prasasti*)

Notes :

- 1) Thanjavur Tamil University News Bulletin No. 10 dated 16th February 1985.
- 2) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XVII, pp. 291 - 309.
- 3) *Ind. Ant.*, 1913, p. 166.
- 4) *Ibid.*, 1915, p. 172.
- 5) N. Sethuraman, Paṇchavan the Pāṇḍya - *Studies in Indian Place Names*, Vol. VII, p. 124 ff.
- 6) *Ten Pāṇḍya Copper Plates*-Published by the Tamil Varalāṅḡu Kaḷagam-1967; *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XVII No. 16; *Ind. Ant.*, vol. XXII 1893; *A.R. Ep.*, 1907. Part II, pp. 62 - 69; *S.I.I.*, vol. III, p. IV, No. 206; *A.R. Ep.*, 1960-61, p. 15.

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- 7) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV
- 8) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XXXVI, No. 15.
- 9) *Ibid.*, vol. XXXII, No. 41.
- 10) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV, Nos. 6, 12 and 12B.
- 11) *Ibid.*, vol. XIV, No. 95.
- 12) *Ten Pandya Copper Plates* - The Tamil Varalāṅḡu Kaḷagam - 1967.
- 13) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XXXVI, No. 15.
- 14) *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, No. 11 and *Ibid.*, vol. XXXII, No. 9
- 15) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XVII, p. 301, lines 66-67; *Ibid.*, vol. XXXVIII, p. 80.
- 16) K. V. Ramesh - *Chāḷukyas of Vātāpi* - p. 112.
- 17) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XXXVIII, No. 4; See footnote 7 in page 32. Sri K. G. Krishnan ignores the inscribed stroke and reads Sēndan mārḡu; others read Sēndan Māraṇ which seems to be quite convincing.
- 18) Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology.
- 19) *Periyapurāṇam* - Niṅṅasīr Neḍumāra Nāyanār *Purāṇam*, verse 9
- 20) T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *T.A.S.* vol. VI p. 156; K. V. Subramanya Iyer - *Historical Sketches of Ancient Deccan*, p. 123.
- 21) *Periyapurāṇam*, Kari Nāyanār *Purāṇam*, verse, 5.
- 22) *A. R. Ep.*, 1959-60, No. B 358
- 23) *South Indian Temple Inscriptions* vol. III, Part I, pp. XXXVI and XXXVII
- 24) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV, No. 14
- 25) *Ibid.*, vol. XIV, No. 78
- 26) *Ten Pandya Copper Plates*
- 27) *Pāṇḍyakulōdayam* - Published by The Punjab University edited by K. V. Sarma.
- 28) *S. I. I.*, vol. XXIII, No. 129; K. V. Soundararajan - *Inscriptions of Mūvarkōil Koḷumbāḷūr Tamil Nadu* - page 231 of *Indian Epigraphy and its bearing on the history of art* - American Institute of Indian studies.
- 29) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XXXII No. 31
- 30) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV No. 22
- 31) *Ibid.*, vol. V No. 608
- 32) *Ibid.*, vol. XIX No. 149 and 239; *Ibid.*, vol. V, No. 583
- 33) *S. I. I.*, vol. III No. 99; Kīḷappaḷuvūr *A. R. Ep.*, 1926 No. B. 231 of Parāntaka year 12.
- 34) K. A. N. Sastri - *The Cōḷas*

- 35) Tiruttāṅgal *A.R. Ep.*, 1922 No. B 157 year 20 ; *A.R. Ep.*, 1931 No. B 142 year 20 ;
Kuttālam *A.R. Ep.*, 1917 No. B 444 year 20 ; Kuttālam *A.R. Ep.*, 1917 Nos. B 438, 439, 441, 442,
443 and 445 ranging from year 24 to 36.
- 36) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV
- 37) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XXIII p. 90
- 38) N. Sethuraman, *Early Cholas* - p. 64
- 39) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV No. 95
- 40) *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XXIII p. 45
- 41) *A.R. Ep.*, 1935-36 No. B. 197 ; *Ep. Ind.*, vol. XXIII p. 284 f.n. 6
- 42) *S. I. I.* vol. XIV No. 93
- 43) *A.R. Ep.*, 1961-62 No. 336
- 44) N. Sethuraman - *The Medieval Pandyas* - see the chapter - Sōlavandān Complex
- 45) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV No. 46
- 46) Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology - *Kalveṭṭu Magazine* 20 - The surmise made therein
is not convincing.
- 47) *T. A. S.*, vol. III part I No. 22
- 48) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV No. 68
- 49) *A. R. Ep.*, 1917 No. B 454
- 50) N. Sethuraman - *Medieval Pandyas*.
- 51) *S. I. I.*, vol. XIV, No. 239
- 52) *A.R. Ep.*, 1911 No. B 394 ; Rangachari, North Arcot District 328.

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