

KONGU VELLALARS: RISE, MIGRATION AND SOCIAL LIFE

S. Valarmathi^a, Dr.G.Kasthuri Thilagam^b

^a Ph.D Research Scholar, PG and Research Department of History, Periyar EVR College(A),
Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India - 620023.

^b Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of History, Periyar EVR College(A), Tiruchirappalli-
620023.

ABSTRACT

Right from the beginning, Kongu Nadu was a part of ancient Tamil Nadu. They were also the sons of the soil. The ancient Kongu Country is well known as Kongu Nadu and had commercial contact with the western world during the first few centuries of the Christian era. To substantiate this, more than two thousand Roman Coins were unearthed from important places like Velanthavalam, Anaimalai, Pollachi, Vellalur, Karuvur and Kalyamuthur of Kongu Country ranging from 1st Century B.C to the 4th Century AD. There are many references in the Devaram, Periyapuram and Paripadal about the twenty highways connecting Kongu Country with Pandya Country facilitating the communication, commercial and military systems with the neighbour states, and so many Significances are there in Kongu Nadu. Though the Kongu Nadu is still populated by mostly agricultural communities, they are still politically and culturally very powerful communities. The Kongu leaders had so much freedom, reverence and respect during all three regions of Pandya, Cholas and Cheras. The people were efficient and had extensive internal as well as foreign contacts.

Key words: Ancestors, Kani, Variyedu, Feudal, Venavudaiyar

INTRODUCTION

Right from the beginning, Kongu Nadu was a part of ancient Tamil Nadu. They were also the sons of the soil. Though the people who practised agriculture are called vellalas, the word “Kongu Vellalar” refers to only Kongu Vellala Goundars who is a landowning and a feudal caste of Tamil Nadu. They are also known as Kongu Vellalars and are a subdivision of the Vellala caste. (The Kongu region covered Kaveri uplands on the borders of Tipu Sultan’s Mysore, from which it was ceded to the East India Company.) The distinctive ethnic character of Kongu Nadu appears in unique documentation and its unique economic history is dramatized today by the Kongu vellalars who are owning industry in and around Tiruppur. Though ethnic entities such as Kongu country were less visible in company times, the Nayaks and Maravars’ territories inside the Pandya country were acknowledged by district-level administration, and they kept their vibrant textual character.

Historical Background of Kongu Country

The name ‘Kongu’ literally, means honey and pollens. Kongu Nadu has a long stretch of mountains and so honey is collected in this region. Konganivarmann, a king from Ganga Vamsa, governed this territory, with 'Thalaikaadu' as his konagar. The name Kongu Nadu is thought to have come after the king's name. The Vettuvas were called the ‘*Aathikudigal*’ of the Kongu Nadu and so they were called as the ‘*Kongars*’ (Vettuvas). The Vettuvas were brave, generous and devoted. The Kongu Nadu is always known for its history and heritage. The present Coimbatore district, Namakkal district, Erode District, some parts of Dindugal district, almost the entire region of Karur and Salem districts were the regions of ancient Kongu Nadu. The history of Kongu Nadu begins from 3 C.E. itself. The ‘*Kongu Mandala Sathagam*’, ‘*Cholan Poorva Pattayam*’, ‘*Vettuvur Poorva Pattayam*’, ‘*Oothalar Kuravanji*’, ‘*Annamar Swamy Kathaigal*’, ‘Mackenzie’s manuscripts show the later history of Kongu Nadu.

The Sangam period Kongu Nadu's history is evident from the Sangam Tamil literatures which depicts the Vetuvars as the '*Poorvakudigal*' and '*Aathikudigal*' literally meaning the 'Early Society'. The Kongu Vellalas came to Kongu Nadu and settled here. The Vellalas have been identified as hard workers and great farmers as their name suggests. After 10 C.E. the Kongu Vellalas are mentioned in the "Kalvettukkal" (stone inscriptions). As they were the farmers of the Kongu region they were called as Kongu Vellalas. The Vettuva Gounders naturally the sons of soil and the latter settlers Kongu Vellalas settled here at the early stage during 10 C.E. and 11 C.E. But during 12 C.E and 13 C.E. the friction and the difference of opinion melted and both lived friendly. Lots of other communities and social sects also live in Kongu Nadu.

Pre Historic Period

The Kongu Nadu history may be traced right from the pre-historic period, since the archaeologists like Robert Bruce Foote and M. Walhouse opined that the Kongu country should have been the home of the early man. If this opinion has some truth, it could have been true that the early man lived in the border lands of Kongu and the slopes of the hills where he could have somehow managed to obtain water for his domestic purposes. But owing to non-conduct of intensive survey in this region the artefacts of the early man could not have been traced so far. Regarding the late Stone Age Microlithic culture also seems not to have thrived in the Western hilly part of Tamil Nadu and even in Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli. it was a characteristics product of the stimulus produced by climate and geography alike. Whatever may be the case with regard to the appearance of man in India and his racial identity, one thing is clear that Kongu Nadu did not see the early man of the Palaeolithic period, who seems to have preferred coastal and river tracts and avoided the jungle tracts.

The Neolithic Period

The next stage in the evolution of Stone Age culture is the Neolithic age. During this period man ceased to be a savage and began to lead a settled life. In this age they discovered a primitive form of agriculture, domesticated animals, made pottery and used polished stone

tools. Scholars consider the 'Fertile Crescent' (South West Asia) as the first place which saw the advent of Neolithism because of favourable climatic conditions, and it to 7000 B.C.E. Based on Carbon 14 dating, the Neolithic cultural phase, in South India, has been assigned to the period from 2400 to 1200 B.C.E. The lower Deccan was the pristine seat of the oldest Neolithic culture of the sub-continent as revealed in the ash mound sites like that of Utnur in Andhra Pradesh and was already in that stage when the Indus valley civilization of the North Western India was at its initial stages. It is obvious that the Indus culture and the Southern Neolithic culture reveal the presence of contemporary but unconnected, and mutually disparate patterns of semi-urban culture, separated by geographical and cultural barriers from each other.

The two were to come to contact, indirectly though, only in the close of the second millennium B.C.E. or little later. The Madras University Department of Archaeology has done a number of excavations in the Salem and Dharmapuri districts. It has plotted a number of sites yielding Neolithic settlement, in the places like Mallapadi on Dharmapuri. In these sites, the Department has found Neolithic implements in various stages of manufacture besides Neolithic pottery suggests the occupation by Neolithic folk. The findings of the Neolithic implements, in the Salem district have also helped us to link the Kongu country with the similar cultural complex in Karnataka which confirms the fact that a part of Karnataka was included in the Kongu country in the olden days. It got diffused through the Salem region from Karnataka. Foote has made discoveries of the Neolithic tools in the Salem region and this is said to have propinquity with the Deccan specimens.

It is also reported that it was a common practice to keep Neolithic tools under trees for worship in the Salem region. This practice still exists and thus many Neolithic Celts have been discovered by the researchers in Mattipalayam, Coimbatore district. This being one of the important findings and being the first of its kind discovered so far in the Coimbatore region.

Many have written about the history of Kongu Vellala Gounders. They have indicated the myths, fiction and lies. The Kongu farmers

are those who were born as Ganga Maiden from Thevar world and settled in Kanchipuram and went to Thanjavur and entered Poonthurai country. Veerachchi Mangalam Kandasamy Kavirayar has written in the Vellalar Puranam that they came in the traditional way. Kongu farmers are not from the Ganges. They appeared in North Arcot district and went to Thanjavur and identified as Kongu Vellala Gounders. These myths cannot be accepted. Kongu farmers were the first indigenous people of the Kongu country. The Sangam literature attests to this. Pathitru paththu and Puranaanuru are historical vaults. About the Kongu Vellala Gounders, Tholkappiar has devised a grammar for people's biographies.

N. Magalingam gives reference about Tholkappiyar which is believed to have existed seven thousand of years ago. The Sangam literature gives details about the Kongu Vellalas settlement biography, historical facts, labour, culture, science, medical- based rituals and characteristics.

Sangam Age and the Kongu Country

Kongu region had its glory from the ancient past though there are lot of 'ifs and buts' in the story of the origin of Kongu Vellalas and Kongu region. There are lot of evidences from Sangam literature to show that proof Kongu Vellalas were the first and foremost the clan of people in the society. Epigraphical sources show lots of copper plates and their origin. True efforts have been made to bring out the real history of the Kongu society.

Tholkappiar in his work said that the Kongu Vellalas originated in the Kongu region. Some of the Sangam literary works highlight the Vellalas life style, History, hard work, customs and culture, science and technology, their knowledge about medicines and their society. Kongu land is comprised of Kurinchi, Mullai and Marudham lands. Most of the Kongu regions are comprised of mountains, forest and fertile soils. Honey has been cultivated in abundance in Kongu Nadu. Honey, flowers and monkeys were the inseparable properties of Kurinchi region.

During Chera, Chola, Pandya period Kongu Nadu existed in Tamil Nadu in the name of Thondai Nadu. It was said most of the forest were converted to agricultural lands by Karikala

Cholan. It was also said that Kallanai was constructed with the help of the Kongu people. In Sangam period the country was known as Nadu and in Chola period, it was known as *Mandalam* (region) and now it is known as Kongu Mandalam. In Sangam age it was known as Kongu Nadu and the people who lived here were known as Kongar.

Inhabitation

The Kongu Vellalas inhabited the present Coimbatore, Periyar and Salem districts and the outer fringes of Tiruchirapalli and Madurai districts that comprised the ancient Kongu territory. They form the majority in the Tamil population and are scattered in the border districts too. In independent India, they migrated beyond the Kongu borders and settled in other parts of Tamil Nadu. They extended their migration to the states of Kerala, Karnāṭaka and Andhra. They also continued their agricultural occupation in their migrated region. This migration to adjoining states was a sequel to their entering into ties of matrimony with the natives. The Manradiyars of Vellangotra who migrated and settled around Palghat regions of Kerala during the Nayak period is an example.

In spite of their migration to far-off places from the ancient traditional habitats, a majority of them go over to this Kongu region for purposes of annual worship of titular deities. This exhibits their faith in ancient traditions and ardent desire to preserve them in all their pristine purity. By their industry, they are capable of changing the infertile soil into fertile one, notwithstanding the erratic monsoon and the barrenness of the soil. They cultivate cash crops unlike their forebears. Besides, many of them resort to trade in recent times for increasing the contents of their coffers.

Two Schools of Thought

There are two schools of thought regarding the antecedents of the Kongu Vellalas. One school refers to them as natives, while the other calls them migrants. The former lays stress on the regional and traditional aspects but the latter, on the lower and secondary status of the migratory settlers.

Pulavar Kulandai is an exponent of the native school. Reasons are adduced by him in support of his arguments in the Journal Kongu are, the regional names being used as prefixes by

the Vellalas, the use of clan names, and the unique customs and practices of the Kongu Vēḷḷaḷas. First, the regional names of the Vellalas belonging to other regions are based on the names of the areas wherein they lived. The medieval inscriptions of Tamil Nadu on Vellalas do not refer to them on the basis of their provinces. The Vellalas of Tondai, Chola and Pandya mandalams are simply called Vellalas in general without any reference to the areas. The Vellalas who occupy other regions of the Kongu country referred by Pulavar Kulandai are in fact those who had migrated to these places only in the recent past. The regional prefixes denoting the regions are for identifications - an innovation of the British. Pulavar Kulandai's classification of Tuluva Vellalas does not refer to those Vellalas who migrated from the Tulu country but a corrupt reference to Toluva Vellalas. Therefore, -the Kongu Vellalas cannot be classified as natives, merely on the basis of regional prefixes.

The second reason by Pulavar Kulandai is the peculiar customs of the Kongu Vellalas. These customs are due to the assimilation by the Kongu Vellalas after their migration, from the natives of the area. The Vellalas who migrated to the eastern part of the Kongu country had to struggle with the natives of the region for setting their foothold and they succeeded in the venture. The vanquished Vēṭṭuvas, as a sequel, abandoned their traditional avocation of hunting and robbery and took to agriculture.

The abandonment by the natives of their traditional occupation and adoption in its place of the occupation of the victors, led the victorious Vellalas to admit into their Vettuva community for amalgamation. In support of this argument similar caste names in the two communities may be cited. Both the communities, viz., Vellalas and Vettuvas, have certain common clan divisions like Antuvan, Katai, Manian, Kari, Mulan, Panaiyan, Pantyan, Pavalan, Puccandai, Vilaiyan, etc.

The practice of referring to a person by his clan name had its origin in the Cankan period. It was adopted by the Vellalas from the native Vettuva tribes. A later day copper plate ascribed to Vikrama Chola states that when the Vellalas first migrated to the Kongu country, they had no particular clan name for

identification. And that they were stopped at the outskirts by poet Kamban, who allowed them to emigrate to the Kongu country, after giving them their clan names, etc.

The peculiar customs of the Kongu Vellalas, ceased to have any relationship with the Vellalas of the rest of the Tamil country. Thus they maintained their separate identity. M. Srinivasa Iyengar opines that on the basis of the background of customs, the Kongu Vellalas do not come within the fold of Dravidians. This view was expressed at a time when Tamil historiography had not reached a mature stage.

Customs of exceptional singularity were derived from the native Vēṭṭuvas. Anthropologists generally agree that there began a process of give-and-take when the two communities began to live in harmony. It was a process of naturalisation when the Kongu Vellalas freely adopted into their usage certain tribal customs of the Vēṭṭuvas. The Vellalas while engaged in the occupation of converting forest lands into agricultural fields were confronted with native objections. Yet it led to an exchange of ideas. This trend was to be seen from the Pallava period.

Prior to the Chola conquest and during their earlier years, certain places were called without the appendage 'nadu'. Burton Stein graphically narrates the plight of the Kongu country and its social trend before the advent of the Cholas. According to him, prior to the Cholas, it was a sparsely settled region, only occasionally disturbed by marauding warriors. At such times, Kongu was a shatter zone and, like other such regions in India showed complex overlappings of peoples and cultures.

Cattle-breeding and shifting cultivation existed in forests. Though no direct evidence to that is forthcoming, internal references in literature emphasize it. Moreover the inscriptions of the Kongu country speak of places with the suffix 'Toluvu', as in Karattoluvu, Murunkaittoluvu, Arattoluvu, Peruntoluvu, etc. Places with the suffix 'Toluvu' are not to be found in the rest of the Tamil country, as it is an exclusive feature of the Kongu country.

Toluvu means cattlepens, the place where the cattle are herded together at night. This practice led to the direct manuring of the

earth by cattle excretion. In the beginning stages of shifting cultivation such a practice was in vogue. The word is in vogue in Malabar meaning the garden in the backyard of a house. Tradition establishes that certain villages had the suffix 'toluvu' to their names owing to the existence of cattle-pens. This view of C. M. R. Chettiar is applicable to villages in the Kongu country with the suffix 'Toluvu'.

Brahmi inscription

The recent discovery of a Brahmi inscription in Salem district mentions the village Kogur and its Kilar, the chieftain. This epigraph does not help in understanding the economic life of that period. The inscriptions of Pandya and Ganga kings from the fifth to ninth centuries A.D. describe the battle between kings and also their exploits. The villages mentioned in the Ganga charters are on the ancient highways of the Kongu country. Places like Ayiraveli, Ayilur, Perur, Pugaliyur, Tenur, Vanci, etc., are mentioned in Pandya charters. Ganga Durvinita copper plate mentions Alattur, Anderi and Pennadam. These places are situated on the northern highways of the Kongu country. Besides these, certain villages mentioned in the Patirrupattu were considered to be in the Kongu country. As the places mentioned above are on the highways, it goes without saying that these places were trade centres. Places of agrarian centres may be considered negligible or nil.

Ravikodai plates of Erode Vishnu temple call the cultivable land 'Nadu'. The nadu divisions are plenty in the Kongu country as evidenced from the epigraphs of the twelfth century A.D. The villages within the nadu division are sporadically distributed. A major portion of the nadu is forest-dominated area. Hence several divisions of nadus in the Kongu country were referred to with suffixes Ka and Kal and called Kanadu or Kalnadu, Kavadiikkanadu, Oduvanganadu, Pongalurkkanadu, Valuppurkkanadu, Vayaraikkanadu and Ventayurkal Virakerala Valanadu. Chudamani Nigandu says that 'Ka' or 'Kal' means a forest. So even in the Cola times forests dominated the region. Murton observes that by fourteenth century a considerable area of the scrubwood land characteristic of the landscape of the tenth century, had been cleared,

and much of the rest of it severely modified. The view of Murton can be accepted with certain modifications.

Migration in medieval India

Before a study of the migration of people into the Kongu country is taken up, it is necessary to study the characteristic features of migration in medieval India. A school of thought states that medieval Indian people did not have any right to migrate from one place to another. Decline in trade prevents artisans and traders migrating from one part of the land to another. The Medieval kings while promulgating grant of villages as endowments, the artisans of the villages were to carry out the orders of the donee of endowments.

Two spurious charters of Samudragupta request the artisans and peasants not to leave the villages and not to migrate to tax-free villages. In Deccan and South India, there are numerous instances when artisans were compelled to settle near temples and mutts. The colonisation of peasants, artisans and traders affiliated to a particular area led to the improvement of controlled and closed economy for the later emergence of regionalism. Their kings, priests and masters may change but no change was envisaged in the workers and peasant community. Whatever may happen to their masters, they are bound up with their soil. Peasants and artisans found it difficult to move from one place to another.

The situation in South India was quite different. People of all sorts participated in internal migration. These migrations though sporadic were predominantly rural in character.

Migrations in the medieval period are different. Brahmins of that period were the foremost immigrants. Next were the invaders and royal officials. Certain people migrated due to the non-payment of government dues and taxes. No specific research has been ventured about the migrations in the medieval period. The migration of the Vellalas is known by later-day folklores and charters, as inscriptional references are meagre. The population of the Kongu country before the tenth century A.D. was not appreciable. The region of Kongu was, however, perhaps the least populated among the then known regions of South India. This view of M. Arokiaswami has been accepted by Western

scholars like Burton Stein, Brenda E. F. Beck and Murton who further inquired into the socio-economic organisations of the Kongu region along that line. The results of their researches only confirm the reasoning of M. Arokiaswami.

Traditional folklore, inscriptions, copper plates, etc., help in studying the Vellala migrations as primary source materials of the charters. As several of them are new villages they are suffixed with the title 'Puttur'. All the migrants were enumerated. Eighteen different caste people like Kaikola Mudaliyar, Vellala, Cettiyar, migrated. While speaking of the process of migration mention is also made of the ancient tribes that peopled the area. Inscriptions of the Kongu country do not give direct evidence regarding the migration. Some of them record the clash between the migrated Vellalas and the native tribes. Singalandapuram, near Musiri was plundered in the reign of Rajendra Chola I by the natives.

Traditional songs

Traditional ballads contain historical evidences. The song prevalent among Kongu Vellala and sung after the Pongal festival Olaiyakka song is an instance. This song mentions the migration of Olaiyakkal in the western direction. She accompanies Nattars during the migration. Medieval epigraphs refer to Nattars as Vellalas. Hence this song may be taken to indicate the migration of the Vellalas from East to West.

Palayakars who settled here as royal officials and chieftains, had pattayams to their credit. These charters invariably emphasise the Vellala migration. The dates of the charters though not certain, point to certain valuable information regarding migration. While referring to their ancestral places, one group refers to Tondai mandalam and another group Chola mandalam. It is only to impress upon others and to think high of themselves. As the fifty and odd charters unanimously refer to migration of one particular community, its credentials are beyond doubt. A section of the Kongu Vellalas state that they migrated from Tondai mandalam. Kongu inscriptions adduce to it. The Palayapattu genealogies of British period record invariably these migrations. Kaifeits of Vanavaraya, Kalingaraya, Venavudaiyar, Pallavarayan etc., are some of the examples.

Tondaimandalam

The Vellalas of Tondaimandalam, who were well versed in cultivation, were elevated to high offices in the Kongu regions. Brahmiyam inscription, near Dharapuram mentions one Mavali Vanadhirayar in the twelfth century A.D. The present Vanavarayas of Samuthur are descendents of this Mavali Vanadhirayan. Kalingarayan migrated to the Kongu country in the twelfth century A.D. Sankarandampalayam

Pattakkarar alias Venavudaiyar belonged to Venadu of Tondaimandalam as their title indicates. In the Palayapattu genealogy, Pallavarayans are mentioned as those migrated from Tondaimandalam. Pallavarayans were called Kadaiyur Manradiyar in recent times. Pallavarayans are mentioned in Alangiyam, Dharapuram, Brahmiyam and Perur inscriptions.

The charters that describe these migrations are considered to belong to later periods. They are discarded as they contain more of fiction than of fact. The reasons adduced for discarding them are quite acceptable. But the four groups mentioned above do not belong to the Kongu country. Cankam literature while describing some of the groups mention them as belonging to Tondaimandalam prior to the tenth century A.D. The habitat of Banas were Tondaimandalam and Tagadur. Venavudaiyars are the original inhabitants of Venadu. Kalingaraya was a title enjoyed by Naralokavira, a feudatory century A.D. have not been evidenced. If they were the original inhabitants, then the Kongu literature and epigraphs must have referred to them.

Marriage

Civaka Cintamani vividly portray the marital relationships that obtained in Cholanadu and Konadu. The hero, Jeevaka of Cintamani married his uncle's daughter as one of his wives. The conflict, if any, is resolved easily on the basis of rightful matrimony among the kith and kin. Hence Jeevaka easily marries his uncle's daughter. This matrimonial right was prevalent among the Kongu Vellalas till recently. Considerations of age are bypassed in these types of marriages. This practice was brought into the Kongu country by the Cola and Konadu Vellalas. This is an evidence of Chola Vellalas' migration into the Kongu region. The two

ballads KEP Ammanai and AMS Katai refer to the migration of Pandya and Kōnadu Vellalas.

Appadurai who is the first to speak about migration divides migration into two categories-internal and external. According to him migration is due to five different causes, viz., religious, official duties, trade considerations, military expedition and colonisation. Besides these, migrations are due to certain other auxiliary causes like population explosion, tax burden and financial difficulties. As religious conditions have no economic background migrations due to religious causes are quite few in number. Those that did not evince interest in religious causes did not stay for long in a particular place. Hence migrations to the Kongu country due to religious causes are rare indeed. Even if there had been any, they belong to quite earlier periods.

Feudal Past

The land was divided into 24 regions. These 24 regions are often suffixed by the word “Nadu” such as Annamalai Nadu, Kangeya Nadu. The chieftains of the Kongu Vellalars belonged to the Mandradiar family. Under their organizational system, the chiefs of the 24 regions would get together and decide on various political and social issues of Kongu Nadu. The 24 Kongu regions are as follows:

- Poondurai Nadu (Erode, Tiruchengode region)
- Thenkarai Nadu (Darapuram, Karur region).
- Kangeya Nadu (Darapuram, Kangeyam).
- Pongalur Nadu (Palladam, Darapuram).
- Ariya Nadu (Coimbatore, Avinasi).
- Vaarakka Nadu (Palladam, Pollachi).
- Vaiyapuri Nadu (Palani, Udumalai).
- Mana Nadu (Karur).
- Thalaiyur Nadu (Southern and Western parts of Karur)
- Thattaiyur Nadu (Kulithalai).
- Poovaniya Nadu (Omalur, Dharmapuri region).
- Araya Nadu (Erode, Nammakal).
- Oduvanga Nadu (Gopichettipalayam).
- Vadakarai Nadu (Bhavani region).
- Kizhangu Nadu (Karur, Kulithalai region).
- Nalluruka Nadu (Udumalaipet).
- Valavanthi Nadu (North Namakkal, Karur).
- Andai Nadu (South of below Palani region).

- Vengaala Nadu (Eastern parts of Karur).
- Kavadika Nadu (Pollachi region).
- Aanaimalai Nadu (South Western Pollachi).
- Rasipura Nadu (Salem, Rasipuram, Kollimalai).
- Kanchi Kovil nadu (Gopichettipalayam, Bhavani regions).
- Kurumbu Nadu (Some parts of Erode).

Society

The study of seven saivite temples in Kongu Nadu played a multifaceted role in the Social and Religious life of the people. Social life of Kongu People is one of the interesting event in Tamil Nadu History. The Kongu Region is comprised of various Castes and Communities based on their occupations. They were efficient in Trading. They had Trading contacts with both Inland as well as Foreign Countries. So an analysis has been revealed on Caste, Community, Coins and taxes through the Inscriptions found from the seven saivite temples and these Inscriptions throw light on the Customs, Habits and Practices of the people. The records from the seven saivite temples also describes about different Communities such as Vettuvvars, Brahmanas, Siva Brahmanas, Vellalas, Kaikolars ect., on the whole, the Kongu society was good in all aspects.

Agriculture

From the advent of the Imperial cholas the economic condition of this region met with many changes. The introduction of new innovative measures and the improved irrigational facilities might have changed the face of the region. The vellalas succeeded in converting the uncultivated lands into cultivable lands. The Kongu cholas levied comparatively very low taxes in this region. Probably it induced the people to bring more lands under cultivation. The kongu cholas encouraged deforestation and also permitted some kind of land ownership to the natives.

Guild System

Guild system is an important organization for the occupational groups and it played a vital role in the economic, social and cultural life of the people. So it is necessary to highlight its active role in the cultural life of the Kongu Country.

It acted as a network among the various groups and strengthened its relations with the ruling authorities. The Guild did a lot for the betterment of the society. Guild system played a vital role in the life of the people and needs a special study. Guilds were an association of people created for mutual aid and for the pursuance of a common interest. In medieval period these associations were formed by craftsmen or merchants.

Women

Women in Kongu society held an important position. We can prove it Mahakavi Bharathi's poem.

"Kongu Mangaiyarai Pirappatharke Nalla Madhavam Seithida Vendumamma",

which means it is a blessing to be born as a Kongu Woman.

They received high education in the society, though they are soft obedient to elders and husbands, there are examples of being a Poet Scholars etc., and now a days they exhibit their talents and attitudes in different aspects such as Police, Military, Business and Politics etc., Family was the basic unit of the society and as a wife they were the house holders and they were the ultimate pivot of the society. The position of Kongu women as a girl, bride and widow, she occupied a respectable position in society as Mother. Mother is most honoured person in this world. Though they are good in all aspects there are some evil practices against them in this Society.

Conclusion

The Kongu Vellala and Kongu Nadu has its own age-old history with references and substantiations right from Sangam literature. Social life during Medieval period, literature and inscriptions, particular social groups like vettuvass and vellalas in Kongu Country had their own self identity. Vettuvass were the hunting tribes whereas vellalas were the agriculturists. Kongu Vellala had different clans namely Pidari Kulam, Kannan Kulam, Kadai Kulam, Mappuli Kulam etc., which have been traced out through inscriptional study. Further the agricultural expansion helped the traders to enhance both internal and external trade. The taxes were levied and collected without any major defaults. Various types of coins were in circulation. The

well defined economic Structure paved way for the emergence of urbanization.

References

1. Pillai, K.K. **A Social History of the Tamils, Vol-I.**, Mital Publications, Chennai, 1975.
2. Stein, Burton, **Peasant State and Society in the Medieval South India**, Mital Publications, Chennai, 1980.
3. A.R.E. No.625 of 1995
4. S.I.I, Vol. XXVI, NO. 185 of 1952
5. Champakalakshmi, K. **Urbanization in Medieval Tamil Nadu**, New Delhi, 1968
6. Vaidyanathan, K.S., **The Ancient Geography of the Kongu Country**, Institute of Kongu studies, Erode, 1983.
7. A.R.E. No. 96 A of 1915
8. Orr, C., Leslie, **Temple women in Medieval Tamil Nadu**, New Delhi, 2000
9. Pulavar Rasu, S, **Kongu Vellalar Kalvettum Kani Padalgalum**, Institute of Kongu Studies, Erode, 2007.
10. Ramachandra Chettiar, C.M., **Kongu Nattu Varalaru**, Pallavi Publications, Chidambaram, 1954.