

# A Tamil Slab - Inscription at Nilāveli

This inscription was found within the premises of the Pillaiyār temple at Nilāveli, a village situated about nine miles to the north of Trincomalee. The present buildings of the temple which lies about two hundred yards from the Trincomalee-Mullaitīvu road are definitely of recent construction. They cannot, at the most, be more than a hundred years old. It is most likely that the inscribed stone, which is much older, was taken from ruins originally found at the present site or was brought from somewhere else when building materials were collected for the construction of the temple.

The discovery of the inscription was brought to the notice of the present writer on 12th July, 1972, by N. Thambirajah of Sāmpaltīvu. Both Professor K. Indrapala and the present writer prepared different sets of estampages of the record on 23rd July, 1972. The discovery of this inscription was announced to the public through two Tamil newspapers, i.e. the *Tiṅakaraṇ* and the *Virakēsari* on 30th July, 1972. A recent article by Indrapala on this inscription includes a photograph of the estampage, his reading of the inscription in both English and Tamil and an English translation of the text.<sup>1</sup>

The stone on which the inscription is incised serves at present as a step to a well in the temple premises. This well is situated very close to the *sanctum sanctorum* and is used for ritual purposes. Certain portions of this inscribed stone slab were covered with cement plaster which had to be removed before the estampage was taken. The stone, however, is only a part of what was evidently a larger slab. The initial portion of this inscription has, therefore, been lost. The remaining slab measures 2 ft. 9½ inchs. in length and 1 ft. 11 inches in width. The letters on the first six lines are crowded together while those in the concluding portion are relatively bigger and written with comparatively greater spaces being left between them.

The record consists of fourteen lines of writing and is indited in an admixture of Grantha and Tamil characters. The Grantha characters have been used in writing Sanskrit words. The initial portion of the text, of which only a few expressions have survived, seems to have been written entirely in Sanskrit.

The inscription records the grant of two hundred and fifty *vēli* of irrigated and unirrigated land to a temple called *Maccakēśvaram* at Tirukōnamalai in order to meet the daily expenses of the temple "as long as the sun and the moon endure". The land had as its boundaries the sea on the east, Ettakampe (a place name?) on the west, a stone carved with a figure of a trident on the north and another block of stone on the south.

It will be seen that the present reading of the text and the translation differ from the text and translation given by Indrapala. The points of difference are set out below. The chief reason for the difference between

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1. K. Indrapala, "A Tamil Inscription from Nilāveli, Trincomalee District", *James Thevathasan Rutnam Felicitation Volume*, Jaffna, 1975, pp. 64-69.



Inscription from Nilāveḷi

these two readings seems to arise from Indrapala's belief that parts of the stone at the sides have been chipped off. But a careful examination of the inscription does not support this view. It is clear that only the top of the inscription has been broken off while at the sides no part of the inscription has been lost through chipping off. On the left the inscription is preserved in its entirety. On the right side again there is no loss of any part of the inscription though the letters at this end have become less clear, probably due to wear or weathering. However, except for the final letters in lines 3 and 10, it is possible to restore the text.

In line 3, நிச்சலழிவு (niccalalivu) is an expression meaning daily expenses. The only letter restored by the present writer is the letter வு (vu). Indrapala has read ல (la) as ல (l) the ழி (li) as ம (ma) and has restored the expression as நிச்சலமலை which he transliterates as *niccalamaṭai*. The first interesting point about the transliteration is that the clearly read ல (l) of the Tamil transcript has been realised as a doubtfully read l and a clearly read a, thus giving the impression that the Tamil letter ல (la) is formed of two orthographic elements, one of which represents a consonant and the other a vowel, which, of course, is impossible. Secondly, the next letter ம (ma) which has been read clearly in the Tamil transcript is transliterated as *ma*, but with an expression of doubt. Thirdly, in Indrapala's translation, the term நிச்சல் (niccal) has not been provided with an equivalent. Moreover, it has to be pointed out that the term *kaṇukiri* in line 5 of Indrapala's transliteration should have transliterated the Tamil கணுகிரி, but that the Tamil reading given by Indrapala is instead கண்உகிரி. It is difficult to understand the variation between the transcript and the transliteration. Indrapala has admitted that the reading of this expression is tentative. The difference in this case between Indrapala's reading and the present edition is that a character which has been read here as ட (ṭa) (1.5) has been read by Indrapala as உ (u). Similarly, letters which have been read as ம (ma) (1.5) and து (tu) (1.5) in this edition have been read by Indrapala as து (tu) and ம (m) respectively. In this line again it should be pointed out that while, in the Tamil reading Indrapala marks as tentative the ம (m) of காடும் (kāṭum) and the நீர் (nīr) of the subsequent நீர்நிலழும் (nīrnilaṭum), his English transliteration is some what different. Though Indrapala gives the whole of the word *kāṭu* and the *ni* of *nīrnilaṭum* as doubtful readings in the English translation, his translation does not indicate this. He seems to have had no difficulty in reading the first expression of line 6 as ஊர்நிருக்கையம் (ūrirukkaiyum). But it is clear that there are definitely eleven letters here though it is not possible to decipher the expression, The characters which Indrapala reads as ஊ (ū) does not seem to be capable of being read as ū at all. The same applies to other letters also. In line 8, Indrapala gives a doubtful reading of four letters, but there is clearly a க (ka) and there is no space whatsoever in which the three other letters could have been placed. In the third word of line 10, Indrapala's transliteration is different from the Tamil transcript: the சா (cā) appears as a doubtful reading in the Tamil and the doubt disappears in the English transliteration. Further in the Tamil version க் (k) is given with simple brackets, implying that it is a doubtful reading, but the whole letter disappears in the transliteration. Indrapala's reading of the last character in the same line (10) combined with the ல (la) he reads at the beginning of line 11 gives him a லெ (le). The whole expression is read by him as கொணமாமலைலெ (kōṇamāmalailē) and translated into "at Kōṇamāmalai". But what Indrapala has taken to be a medial லெ (e) can be clearly seen to be a க (ta). There is another letter by the side of the ta at the end of line 10

which the present writer has tentatively read as னி (ṅi) and the whole phrase could be read as கொணமாமலைதனில் (koṇamāmalaitaṅil) which is much clearer in meaning, but Indrapala did not take any notice of this letter.

There are no chronological details in the surviving portion of the record. It is, therefore not very easy to determine its exact date. But there is no difficulty in fixing the lower limit of the period of this record as the commencement of Cōḷa rule in Sri Lanka on the basis of its palaeography and contents. The palaeography of our record very closely resembles that of the periods of Rājarāja I and Rājendra I. This conclusion is further supported by the occurrence of the expression *vēli* in this record. The system of *vēli* in the measurement of land was introduced in Sri Lanka when the island was a part of the Cōḷa empire.<sup>2</sup> The main problem regarding the date of the record is whether this was set up during the early part or towards the end of Cōḷa rule in Sri Lanka. A careful perusal of early Cōḷa inscriptions and a close comparison of them with those of the twelfth century which uniformly represent a later stage of palaeographical development would show that our inscription belongs to the early eleventh century. In determining the date of inscriptions on the basis of palaeographical considerations, one has to be cautious, since there is no uniformity in the formation of letters even among inscriptions issued under a single reign. They are subject to regional variations. An attempt is, therefore, being made here to overcome this problem by selecting inscriptions from the same region as the record under consideration: Trincomalee, Kantalāi, Pālamōṭṭai, Māṅṅāṅkēṅi and Māṅṅāṅāi.

The following letters are selected for detailed comparison since they are found in almost all inscriptions selected for our study. In the inscriptions of Rājarāja I (985—1014 A.D.) and Rājendra I (1012-1044 A.D.) found in the Trincomalee district, the letter *ka* is represented by a vertical stroke which bends at the top towards the left and a slightly slanted horizontal stroke which cuts the vertical line. At times the upper portion of the vertical stroke takes the shape of a hook. It should be noted that the formation of the letter in the Nilāvēḷi inscription is exactly like that in the other early Cōḷa records. The horizontal stroke cutting across the vertical line curves down, on either side whereas in the later Pālamōṭṭai inscription (11. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22) of Vijayabāhu I (1095/96 A.D.) and Kantalāi inscription (1.4) of Gajabāhu II (1132-1153 A.D.), *ka* is shown in a more developed form. The conspicuous developments are two: one, the hook itself is extended downwards somewhat; two, on the right, at the point at which the hook begins its leftward curve, a horizontal line is added which makes a single continuous line with the hook. Moreover, the curve of the horizontal line is more marked and slants downwards more sharply in the twelfth century inscriptions.

As in the Cōḷa records of the early eleventh century, the letter *ṭa* (ṭa) in the Nilāvēḷi inscription (11. 5, 9, 10, 12) is represented by two lines which are joined in the following manner. The upper line is represented by a short stroke which runs aslant from right to left and downwards, and it joins the lower line which is longer and runs towards the right upwards. In the twelfth century, however, the letter is formed by two lines which form a half rectangle. The lines are straight, the upper one is perpendicular and the lower one is horizontal. The lines meet in such a manner as to form a right angle between them.

2. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, Second edition, Madras University Historical series—9, Madras, 1955 p. 621.

The formation of the letter  $\text{ṣ}$  (ta) in the Nilāveli inscription (11. 2, 3, 4, 5) bears close similarity to that of the other early Cōḷa inscriptions found in the Trincomalee district. The letter *ta* in the Nilāveli inscription is written in the manner in which the letter *ka* is written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In the twelfth century inscriptions the middle stroke which is not as long as in the early Cōḷa records descends lower down and thereby becomes more conspicuous.

In the Nilāveli inscription (11. 3, 5, 7, 11, 12) and the Cōḷa inscriptions of the early eleventh century the dental  $\text{ṣ}$  (na) is represented by a figure which looks like an irregularly formed sign for the numeral three (3) whereas in the twelfth century the letter is much more evolved. It may be said to consist of two parts; a T-shaped figure, about half way along the vertical line, to which is attached a sign which is similar to a question mark and which extends below the end of the vertical line.

While the palaeographical considerations enable us to assign this record to the early Cōḷa period, prior to the twelfth century, it is certainly not possible to determine whether it belongs to the tenth or the eleventh century nor to identify the reign to which it belongs.

In his article mentioned above, Indrapala gives some reasons to support his conclusion that this inscription should be assigned to the 10th century A.D. He mentions the palaeographical considerations as one of the grounds for his conclusion that the record belongs to the 10th century. He goes on to further specify that the inscription cannot be later than the period of Rājārāja I.

The next consideration he relies on is concerned with the nature and format of the inscription. He holds that "the practice of inscribing records partly in Sanskrit and partly in Tamil generally belongs to the Pallava and early Cōḷa periods, although it is not uncommon in later times". But it may easily be seen that Indrapala's admission that the practice referred to was known even during later Cōḷa times nullifies this argument.

Thirdly, Indrapala believes that some of the phrases found in this record occur as a rule only in the Pallava and early Cōḷa periods. But, in fact, these phrases occur so commonly in later Cōḷa inscriptions that Indrapala's rule of inference can be dismissed as baseless.<sup>3</sup> Further, he argues that the invocatory ending, calling for the protection of the grant by all the *mahēśvaras* is also a peculiarity of the early inscriptions. But the evidence is to the contrary. The style of invocation of all the *mahēśvaras* to protect grants is lavishly employed in the later Cōḷa period and also in the Vijayanagar inscriptions.<sup>4</sup>

3. See *South Indian Inscriptions* (SII), Archaeological Survey of South India, Madras, 1924, Vol. IV, Nos. 370, 371, 415, 416, 427, 429, 512, 514, 522; Vol VIII Madras, 1937, Nos. 126, 128, 130, 148, 166, 176, 169, 177, 199 & 213.

4. *Ibid.*, III, Pt. III, Nos. 69, 71 & 72; IV, Madras, 1924, Nos. 152, 387 & 531; V, Madras, 1925, Nos. 237, 268, 270, 468, 479, 481, 673, 1380 & 1381.

Indrapala has also expressed the view that Maccakēśvaram, referred to in the present record, and Kōṇēśvaram are two different temples. There is, however, no doubt that both these names refer to the same temple and evidence for their identification together is available in the very works mentioned by him in this connection, namely, the *Dakṣiṇakailāsapurāṇam*<sup>5</sup> and the *Tirukōṇāsalapurāṇam*.<sup>6</sup>

The *Dakṣiṇakailāsapurāṇam* explains the name Maccakēśvaram as follows:

“Iranīyan, who had attained immense prowess through a boon from Lord Śiva, caused great hardship to the Dēvās. The latter who could not endure the sufferings inflicted by him approached Lord Śiva enshrined at Trincomalee and prayed for relief. The Lord summoned Viṣṇu and asked him to end the miseries of the Dēvās. Viṣṇu assumed the form of a fish, traversed the depths of the ocean, recovered the innumerable bracelets thrown there by Iranīyan and returned them to the Dēvās. The form of the fish assumed by Viṣṇu developed into a large mountain and merged with the peak Trikūṭa. Subsequently, it came to be known as Maccakēśvaram”.<sup>7</sup>

The myth is narrated here only to point out that the temple Kōṇēśvaram was definitely known as Maccakēśvaram at the time when the *Dakṣiṇakailāsapurāṇam* was written. However, the Māñāṅkēni inscription,<sup>8</sup> in which the reference to Maccakēśvaram occurs, and the present record make it clear that this name was in use even as early as the Cōḷa period.

Kōṇēśvaram is one of the most ancient śaiva shrines in the island. The origins of this shrine are obscure. Its location on the sea-port is of some significance. Trincomalee is known to have been a well-established harbour from very early times and this temple would have been constructed to serve the religious needs of the Hindu population at this centre. By the early centuries of the Christian era the temple was well-known in India. The *Vāyu Purāṇam*, which is generally assigned to the third century A.D. mentions the existence on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka of a great temple of Śiva known as Gōkarṇēśvaram.

“*Tisya dvīpasya vai pūrve tire  
nadana mahīpateh Gōkarṇanāmadheyasya  
samkarasyālayam mahat*”<sup>9</sup>

(On the eastern coast of this island was a splendid temple of Samkara named Gōkarṇa). This Gōkarṇēśvaram has been identified as Kōṇēśvaram.<sup>10</sup>

5. P. P. Vaidyalinga Desicar (ed.), *Dakṣiṇakailāsapurāṇam*, Jaffna, 1916, Tirunakaraccurukkam, vv. 31-34, p. 68.
6. A Sanmugaratna Ayyar ed., *Tirukōṇāsalapurāṇam*, Jaffna, 1909, Avaiyadakkam, p. 6.
7. P. P. Vaidyalinga Desicar, op. cit., p. 44.
8. S. Gunasingam, *Two Inscriptions of Cōḷa Ilaṅkēśvaradēva*, Trincomalee Inscription series—No. I, Peradeniya, 1974, P. 21...
9. H. N. Apte (editor), *Vāyupurāṇam*, Poona, 1929, Chapter, 48, vv. 20-30.
10. S. Gunasingam, *Kōṇēśvaram*, Peradeniya, 1973, pp. 55-63.

The *Mahāvamsa*, too, speaks of the existence of a Hindu temple on the eastern coast of the island during the reign of Mahāsēna in the third century A.D. According to the *Mahāvamsa* "Mahāsēna founded three monasteries, destroying temples of the (Brāhmanical) gods: The Gōkaṇṇa (monastery) (and another monastery) in Ērakāvilla, (and a third) in the village of the Brāhmaṇakalanda".<sup>11</sup> The *Mahāvamsa Tika*, the commentary on the *Mahāvamsa* says that the Gōkaṇṇa-vihara situated on the eastern coast of the island was constructed by Mahāsēna at the site of the śaiva temple which he had caused to be destroyed.<sup>12</sup> The śaiva temple of Gōkaṇṇa referred to by the *Mahāvamsa* could be identified with the Gōkaṇṇēśvaram mentioned in the *Vāyupurāṇam*.<sup>13</sup> Again, in the seventh century A.D., Kōṇēśvaram held a position of sufficient importance to draw the attention of Jñānasambandar, the celebrated śaiva Saint of South India, who sang an anthology of ten hymns in praise of it.<sup>14</sup>

The earliest epigraphic notices on Kōṇēśvaram, however, belong to the period of Cōḷa rule in the island. Apart from the present inscription which records a grant to the temple, the other reference occurs in the Mānānkēṇi inscription of the time of Cōḷa Ilankēśvaradēva, the representative in Sri Lanka of the Cōḷa emperor Rājēndra I.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the tradition claims that the king Kuḷakkōṭṭan who was reputedly of Cōḷa descent and was also known as Cōḷagaṅga, restored the buildings of Kōṇēśvaram on an elaborate scale and endowed the temple with large grants of land and other valuables. He is also said to have brought some families from the Cōḷa country to perform services at the temple and to have made arrangements for the management of its affairs.<sup>16</sup>

By the sixteenth century A.D., Kōṇēśvaram had attained a position of great eminence and was visited by a large number of pilgrims from many parts of India. Fr. Queyroz, a Catholic chronicler who lived in India during this period, attests to the importance of the temple in the following manner:

"The Pagoda of Triquillimile was at this time the Rome of the gentles of the Orient, and more frequented by pilgrims than that of Ramanacoir near the Shoals of Chilao, and that of Canjavarao, two days journey from S. Thome, and Tripiti and Tremel in Bisnaga and Jagarnati in Orixia, and Vixante in Bengal".<sup>17</sup>

11. *The Mahāvamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, tr. W. Geiger, Pali Text Society (PTS), London, 1934 pp. xxxvii, 40-41.
12. G. P. Malalasekara (ed.), *Vamsatthapakāsini*, Commentary on the Mahāvamsa, PTS, II, London, 1935, pp. xxxvii, 15-25.
13. S. Gunasingam, *Kōṇēśvaram*, pp. 55-63
14. Iramalinga Thampiran (ed.), *Thirugṇāṇasambanda Moorthy Nāyanār Aruḷicceya Tēvārath Thiruppadikaṅgal*, Third section, Darmapuram, 1955, pp. 592-95.
15. S. Gunasingam, *Two Inscriptions of Cōḷa Ilankēśvaradēva*, pp. 7-12
16. P. P. Vaidyalinga Desicar, *op. cit.*, p. 42; S. Pathmanathan, *The Kingdom of Jaffna (c. 1250-1450)*, Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1969, p. 124.
17. Fernao De Queyroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, tr. by S. G. Perera, Book I, Colombo, 1930, p. 236.



The first reference to the place name *Tirukōṇamalai* is to be found in the present inscription. It is noteworthy that the name *Tirukōṇamalai* by which Trincomalee is known among the Tamils to this day occurs in precisely the same form in this inscription. The persistence of this name over a period stretching for nearly a thousand years is strongly indicative of a remarkable continuity in the Tamil connection with Trincomalee. Considering the vicissitudes to which the names of some other centres seem to have been subject over relatively shorter periods of time, this may be indicative of the stability of the Tamil population in Trincomalee.

While the name *Tirukōṇamalai* appears for the first time in the present inscription, in his hymns Jñānasambandar refers to Trincomalee as *Kōṇamāmalai*. *Tirukōṇamala* has been derived from *Kōṇamāmalai* through the Tamil practice of adding 'tiru' a prefix roughly equivalent to the Sanskrit 'śri' to the names of places of religious sanctity. The name *Tirukōṇamalai* which was originally applied to the locality of the three peaks where the temple stood on later came to be the name of the town and eventually to the whole district. In the Kuḍumiyāmalai inscription of the thirteenth century A.D., too Virapāṇḍya claims that he hoisted the flag with the Pāṇḍyan emblem of the double carp at *Kōṇamāmalai*.<sup>18</sup> It may be gathered from this that the name was used indiscriminately with or without the prefix. In modern times, however, the prefix has become a part of the name.

According to the inscription the land which was granted to the temple was situated in *Urākirikāma-Kirikaṇṭakirikāma*. There is now no place by this name in the island. The other name which occurs in the inscription is *Ettakampe* which is given as the eastern boundary of the land granted. *Ettakampe* also could be a place name but this, too, is difficult to identify. *Urakirikāma-kirikaṇṭakirikāma*, however, seems to be not one name but a combination of the names of more than one place.

A district and a mountain, both named *Girikaṇṭa*, are mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa* in connection with the legends of Paṇḍukābhaya.<sup>19</sup> But the *Mahāvamsa* does not give any topographical details that might have enabled us to identify this district with the place *Kirikaṇṭa* referred to in our inscription. In his *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa refers among other *vihāras* to a *Girikaṇḍa-mahāvihāra*.<sup>20</sup> The *Cūlavamsa* includes *Girikaṇḍika-vihāra* in the list of monasteries repaired by Vijayabāhu I.<sup>21</sup> These works also do not provide us with any clue to identify the *Girikaṇḍa-vihāra* that they refer to. The *Tiriyāy* rock inscription,<sup>22</sup> which may be assigned to the eighth century A.D., says that there was a Buddhist temple known as *Girikaṇḍa Caitya* which may or may not be identified with one or all of the *vihāras*

18. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "The Ceylon Expedition of Jaṭavarman Virapāṇḍya", *Proceedings and Transactions of the Eighth All-India Oriental Conference*, Bangalore, 1937, p. 524.

19. *Mahāvamsa*, X, vv. 26-29, 83.

20. C. A. F. Rhys Davids (ed.), *The Visuddhi-magga of Buddhaghosa*, PTS, London, 1920, p. 143.

21. *Cūlavamsa*, Being the More Recent part of the *Mahāvamsa*, tr. W. Geiger, and from the German into English by Mrs. Mabel Rickmers, I, Colombo, 1953, 60, 60-61.

22. S. Paranavitana, "Tiriyāy Rock Inscription", *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, IV, pp. 158-59.



mentioned above. From the provenance of the Tiriyāy inscription it could safely be inferred that this *caitya* was in the vicinity of the rock on which the inscription has been engraved and that the *caitya* was named after the place where it was located. Kirikaṇṭa which forms a part of the name of the field mentioned in our inscription may, therefore, be identified with the Girikaṇṭa Caitya of the Tiriyāy inscription.

As regards Kirikāma, the *Thūpavaṃsa*, a Sinhalese work of the thirteenth century A.D. mentions a locality by the name Girigāma in its account of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's invasion.<sup>23</sup> It is said that Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's army on its march from Mahāgama to Mahiyangana halted at Girigāma. No reference to Girigāma is found in any other source. But it is not possible to identify Kirikāma, mentioned in our inscription with the Girigāma mentioned in the *Thūpavaṃsa*, as the latter was situated south of Mahiyangana, far away from Trincomalee. The Kirikāma of our inscription must have been the ancient name of a territorial division in the Trincomalee district. As it is mentioned along with Kirikaṇṭa, it could be inferred that it was adjacent to the division Kirikaṇṭa. It could even be suggested that both divisions merged together to form an administrative unit during the period of Cōla rule in the island. Since, according to the inscription, the land granted had the sea as its eastern boundary it is evident that the field was located along the eastern coast. The village of Nilāveli where the inscription was found is often mentioned in the *Kōṇēsar Kalvetṭu* (circa sixteenth century) among the grants made to the temple. Considering this, if our identification of Kirikaṇṭa in the Tiriyāy region is correct, it may now be suggested that the field in question was situated in the locality along the eastern coast stretching from Tiriyāy in the north to Nilāveli, or even further in the south.

The inscription ends with the expression *panmāhēśvarar rakśai* indicating that this (endowment) was to be under the protection of the *panmāhēśvarar*. In South Indian records, the reference to *mahēśvarar* denotes a group of Brahmins serving in the śaiva temples. These records also refer to *mahēśvarakkkaṅkaṇi seyyār* which could be interpreted as an expression denoting a group of individuals who supervised the *mahēśvaras*. *Panmāhēśvarar* appears to be an expression formed by adding the prefix *pan*, meaning 'many', to *mahēśvarar*. The expression may, therefore, literally mean a body consisting of a number of Brahmins attached to śaiva temples. Though references to them occur very frequently in South Indian inscriptions, the functions they carried out and the status and powers they enjoyed are not defined anywhere. It appears that they performed several important duties in śaiva temples as circumstances required.

The term *vēli* denoted the highest unit used in land measurement in South India. K. A. Nilakantaśāstri has said that the system of *vēli* in the land measurement which was well established in the Cōla country spread over the other parts of South India with the Cōla empire, and it apparently went out of use in the other areas with the disappearance of the Cōla empire<sup>24</sup> In Sri Lanka, however, where the Cōla system of land measurement was introduced when the island was a part of the Cōla empire, we know from the evidence of

23. H. C. Ray (ed), *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1959, vol. 1, pt. 1 p. 156.

24. K. A. Nilakanta Śāstri, *The Cōlas*, p. 621.

the Vēlaikkāra inscription of the period of Vijayabāhu I<sup>25</sup> (1055-1110 A.D.) and Moragahavela inscription of the period of Jayabāhu I<sup>26</sup> (1139 A.D.) that the practice of measuring land in *vēli* unit continued to be in vogue for sometime even after the disappearance of the Cōlja power from the island.

The exact extent of land denoted by the unit *vēli* seems to have varied from place to place in South India. In some places it seems to have denoted an area ranging from 2000 *kuli* to 6000 *kuli*<sup>27</sup>. If we take the lowest equivalence i.e., 2000 *kuli* = 1 *vēli*, the grant of two hundred and fifty *vēli* given to Kōṇēśvaram amounts to about 1700 acres. This inscription thus seems to confirm the claim made by the *Kōṇēśar Kalvēttu* that the temple owned large extents of fields in the Trincomalee district. According to the *Kōṇēśar Kalvēttu*, the whole village of Nilāvēļi where the inscription was found as well as Kaṭṭukūlam-paṛru, belonged to the temple. This work further claims that the vast extent of paddy lands irrigated with water from the Kantaļāi tank was granted to the temple by Kuļakkōṭṭan.<sup>28</sup> The following passage from Queyroz also testifies to the fact that the temple was richly endowed with fertile and extensive paddy lands:

“These lands of Triquilemale were so abundant in rice, that in two fields alone which are three leagues from the fortalice called Tambalagame and Gantaļe they showed in those days in each of them 1000 amanoes of nele, which corresponds to 4000 moyos and that twice a year. They are dedicated to the service of the pagoda, and after the Portuguese garrisoned that port there lived in each of them 15 to 20 farmers, for the rest left for Curtiar”.<sup>29</sup>

## TEXT

1. ....
2. .... śri Kōṇaparvatam Tirukkōṇa
3. malai Ma (t) syakēśvara muṭaiya mahātēvaṛku niccalaḷi (vu)
4. kku nivantamāka candrātittavaṛ, ceyta Urākirikāmakiri
5. kaṇṭā Kirikāma (tu) nīrnīlamum punceyyum (iṭankaļum)
6. .... tēvāļaiyamum mēṇōkkināma-
7. ramum kīlnōkkinākarum uṭpaṭa iṇṇilattu-
8. k kellaḷi kiḷakkuk kaḷi ellai ṭerkellaḷi ka
9. llu kuṭakku Ettakampe ellai vaṭakkell-
10. lai cūlakallākum cuṭarkkōṇamāmalai ta (u)
11. I nilakaṇṭarṅkunilam ivvicaintaperunān-
12. kellaḷiyilakappaṭṭa nilam irunūṛru
13. aiympatiṛu vēli itu paṇṇmāyē-
14. surarrakṣai.

25. *SII*, IV, No. 1396.

26. K. Kanapathipillai, “A Pillar Inscription from Moragahavela”, *University of Ceylon Review*, XVIII, Nos. 1 & 2, 1960, p. 49

27. A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in South India (1000-1500)*, I, Madras University Historical Series— No. 12, Madras, 1936, pp. 405-406.

28. P. P. Vaidyalinga Desicar, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

29. Fernao De Queyroz, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

**Translation**

The irrigated land and dry land of Urākirikāmakirikāntakirikāmam which have as their boundaries the sea on the east, the (block of) stone on the south, (the locality of) Ettakampe on the west and the stone carved with the trident on the north, including all objects (such as) . . . temple, trees growing up and wells sunk below within these (have been granted) to the Lord of Maccakeśvaram on Sri Kōṇaparvatam (otherwise called) Tirukōṇamalai to meet the daily expenses (in the temple) as long as the sun and the moon endure. The lands of two hundred and fifty vēli (in extent) within these four great boundaries (as described above) are the lands of the Blue-necked Lord (Śiva) enshrined at the illustrious (peak of) Kōṇamāmalai. This grant shall be under the protection of the Paṇmāhesvarar.\*

S. GUNASINGAM

\* While expressing a special obligation to Dr. S. Pathmanathan, the present writer wishes to also thank Drs. V. Kanapathipillai and A. Veluppillai for their comments on this paper. Further he wishes to thank Mr. V. Kasinathan, Drs. R. A. L. H. Gunawardena and T. Kandiah for help in preparing the final draft of this paper.