Karikala and His Times.

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Reprinted from the "Indian Antiquary."
Vol. XLII, Part DXX, June, 1912.

35368

Bombay:
PRINTED AT THE
BRITISH INDIA PRESS, MAZGAON.

1912
One of the oldest cities of Southern India is Kāvirippāmpatiṇam. It is situated on the sea coast, 12 miles south-east of Shiyali in the Tanjore district. In ancient times it also bore the name Pugār. That it was near the mouth of the river Kāvērī and had in it the temples of Sāyyāvanam and Pallavanśarima are recorded in the Dēdram songs. Ancient Tamil literature abounds in references to this old city and these show that it was a place of considerable size and importance in early times. Excluding the authors of the Dēdram, the poets that give a glowing description of the place, the wealth of the town, the pleasures and pastimes of its inhabitants and the busy trade which it kept up with the outside world and the inland countries, are not few. Chief among them may be mentioned the Chēra prince Iļaṅgōvādigala, the author of Silappadikārām; Sillāla Sittanār who composed the Māsimēgalai; Budhakānanaṅgara and Nappūdanaṅgar, the authors of three of the poems in the collection known as Pattuparai. There are evidences in these writings to show that some of the authors visited the place which they described, while others were its inhabitants.

Not long after the time of the Saiva saints, Nānasambandar and Appar, who are assigned to the middle of the 7th century A.D., the sea washed away the whole town with its boasted splendour and glory. It was about this time that the Chinese pilgrim, Huen Tsang, visited many of the important places of Southern India. This town should certainly have been one of them if it had then been in existence, but its identity with the southern Charitrapura, as some take it, is doubtful. There are grounds to suppose that even in earlier times, there was an encroachment of the sea on this portion of the east coast, when other places seem to have been submerged in the ocean. We may perhaps trace an allusion to such any inundation in the name Tūniparum by which the town of Shiyali was known in early times. In their hymns on Tirakkalumalam, Nānasambandar and Appar state in clear terms that it once floated like a boat in the water of the sea. Several villages were destroyed, but Tūniparum is said to have survived the effects of the event. The foundations of the original city of Kāvirippāmpatiṇam must have been laid long after the first inundation but when it was founded, how long it thrived as the principal town of the Chōla empire and who the sovereigns were that ruled over it, are facts yet to be ascertained. The Greek geographer, Ptolemy, who flourished in the second century A.D. speaks of Chabaros Emporion and this has been taken to refer to the port of Kāvirippāmpatiṇam. After the destruction of the city by the encroachment of the sea perhaps at the close of the 7th century A.D., it seems to have been refounded and been again

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1 Swell's Lists of Antiquities, I. p. 273.

2 The references that 'Poneśi śāgaramisū mukākkā, i.e. Šīykkāṣa (Śāyāvanam) at the place where the Poneśi (Kāvērī) joins the sea; 'Vṛīottā mālīgi Śaṭṭarwam-Pugār-madī ṣeṣe śandu ṣeṣe maṭā, i.e. 'Śīykkāṣa' and 'Pugār-Pallavanśarima' occurring in Nānasambandar's hymns and Pām-Pugār/Occhōykkāṣa and Kāvirippāmpatiṇatū-Śīyākkāṣa found in the hymns of Appar make it clear that both Šīyākkāṣa and Pallavanśarima were in Kāvirippāmpatiṇam and that the town was near the sea. It is worthy of note that Šīyākkāṣa and Šāyāvanam are synonymous. It may also be pointed out that Sundaramurthi-Nāyanaṅg who is later than the other two Saiva saints has not contributed any hymn on the temples at Kāvirippāmpatiṇam, though he has visited places near it and composed hymns on them.

3 The expression 'Kōjumai sāda kaḷal-tigai midikkaṃ Kamakal-maṇgar' occurring in one of the hymns of Nānasambandar, 'caśiṣṣam puruvaḷ极大地śe māṇḍaṃ Tūniparum' and 'muṇikāṛ midendadā' found in the verses of Appar and 'Kōl-bhārya māṇḍadā kaṇkāla vulaṅgar' in the songs of Sundaramurthi furnish evidence to the point. One other reference in Appar's Dēdram which says that four or five birds are supposed to have borne the burden of the feet of god at Shiyali on the day when the sea encroached on the land is also of interest.
a place of importance till the 16th century A.D. Then it ceased to be such, partly owing
to the siltling up of the Kaveri 4 and partly also to some other causes. The sandy mounds
found scattered over several places near the villages of Talicherangaden, Shiyali and
Medaiperrumpallam amply testify to the inundations of the sea. The fragments of brick and
tile strewn over the fields near the now insignificant villages round the ruins of Kaverippa-
ṭṭaṇam indicate the remains of the town founded in later times. Colonel Yule identifies
Paṭṭinam with Fatam of the Muhammadan historian Rashdüddin. If anything like the
remains of the original city referred to by Ptolemy in the 2nd century A.D. and said to have
been destroyed five centuries later, is to be traced at all, it must be by the axe and spade. In
other words, it is only excavation on a large scale conducted in a scientific and systematic
method, a thing much to be desired, that would enable us to have a peep into the past great-
ness of the city.

The name Pallavanīśvaram, by which one of the temples at Kaverippaṭṭaṇam was
called in the middle of the 7th century A.D., suggests that it should have been either built
by a Pallava king or that it came into existence during the time of a Pallava, whose sway was
acknowledged in that part of the country where the village was situated. It is even probable
that the temple was founded sometime earlier, and in this case, it may have existed
in an insignificant form before its construction on a grander scale was undertaken by the
Pallava king. We do not know to which of the Pallavas the construction of the temple of
Pallavanīśvaram should be ascribed, but we can assign it with a good deal of probability
to Narasimhavarman I., the contemporary of Nānasambandar, because excepting him none
other of the line claims to have conquered the Chójas.

Such have been the fortunes of the city, which, at the time of Karikāla, one of the greatest
sovereigns of the Chója dynasty, became the principal town of the empire. This king was not
unaware of its advantageous position for trade. Accordingly, he appears to have improved it
to a considerable extent by building warehouses and appointing officers to collect the dues to
government on the articles exported from and imported into the country.5 It is not unlikely
that the seat of Government was removed by Karikāla to this place from Uraiya, which he is
said to have abandoned, finding perhaps that it was not a central place and had not so much in
its favour to be the capital of the empire as the flourishing port of Kaverippaṭṭaṇam.
Karikāla was certainly one of the most powerful Chója kings that ruled from the city and his
name is even to the present day known throughout the Tamil country, and even in the Telugu
districts that of a great monarch who looked to the welfare of the subjects entrusted to his
care and as a patron of letters.

Inscriptions that mention him are indeed very few, but certainly not fewer than those
that refer to the other great kings of the line. Except for the mere mention of him, Chója
inscriptions do not throw much light on the events connected with his reign. This is because
we have not as yet obtained any copper-plate grant relating to the dynasty to which
Karikāla belonged, all the charters discovered hitherto being only those of the revived Chója
line started by Vijayālaya in about the 9th century A.D. Nor are we in possession of the facts
which brought an end to the earlier line. It is not even known who the last great sovereign
was. But there is not much doubt, however, that the Pallava expansion in the south and the
establishment of the Chálukayas were some of the causes which might have contributed to this
end, not to say the effeminacy and weakness of some of the Chója kings, who do not appear to
have persisted in maintaining their ground against the advancing northern powers. The
Udayendiraram plates of the Gaṅga-Bāṇa king Prithivipati II. Hastimalla place Karikāla

4 Above, Vol. VII. p. 40.
5 See Paṭṭippadāti.
between Kīlī and Kōchehegaśγaṇ, while the Leyden plates mention him prior to Kōchehegaśγaṇ and Kīlī. Both the Eastern Chālukya and Telugu Chōlas, whose copperplate charters are not few, claim descent from Karikāla and the importance of these will be discussed later on. Though the materials furnished by inscriptions regarding his reign are scanty, yet there is no room for complete disappointment, for the literature of the early Tamils has on record many a reference, which could be of use to the students of history.

The exact time when this king flourished is not given either in the copper-plates which mention him or in the Tamil works which describe his times. Scanty as the materials are for settling the question of his date, the approximate period to which this king should be ascribed can fairly be made out by a consideration of certain facts and events connected with his reign. These are:

(1) The battle at Vennil, where Karikāla defeated the Chēra and the Pāṇḍya kings.
(2) Karikāla ruled from Kānci, which he made new with gold.
(3) The fight with Trilōchana-Pallava, whom he is said to have defeated.
(4) He brought a number of families from the Ganges valley and settled them in the several districts of Toṣdai-māṇḍalam.
(5) Karikāla was an ally of Avanti and an overlord of Vajra and Maghada.
(6) He figures among the early ancestors of the Telugu-Chōla chiefs and the Chōlas.

Copper-plate charters of the Telugu-Chōla chiefs attribute to Karikāla the building of high banks to the Kaveri river and the conquest of Trilōchana-Pallava. It may be stated that the former of these events is mentioned in the Tiruvālaṅgaṇu grant. The statement that Karikāla ruled from Kānci making it new with gold might be taken to show either that the Pallavas had not settled themselves yet at Kānci, or that the Chōla king’s conquest of them gave him its possession. The conquest of Trilōchana-Pallava attributed to Karikāla suggests that the latter is more probable. It is not known, however, which king among the Pallavas bore the surname Trilōchana. Whoever he was, he is also said to have been defeated by the Western Chālukya Vijayāditya, who, in spite of the victory, is reported to have lost his life in the encounter. As Vijayāditya, with whom the Pallava contemporary of Karikāla had to fight, is considered to be the immediate predecessor of Pulakēśin I, and as the initial date of Pulakēśin is fixed at A.D. 550, Vijayāditya has to be assigned to the earlier half of the 6th century A.D. And this must also be the time, when the Chōla king Karikāla flourished. It may be noted that Vijayāditya was a king of northern India and came from Ayodhya in quest of a dominion in the south. We are not informed if Trilōchana-Pallava met his two opponents in the same battle or in different encounters. If the Tamil work Toṣdai-māṇḍalam can be relied upon, we may perhaps infer that Karikāla had something to do with the kings of northern India, whereas Vijayāditya also came. Here we find that Karikāla brought a number of Sādra families from the Ganges valley (and on that account said to belong to the Gaṅghata), settled them in the 24 districts (kōṭam) of Toṣdai-māṇḍalam, and bestowed on them rich gifts. This fact and the subsequent settlement of the Western Chālukyas in southern India on a more or less firm footing might perhaps be adduced to show that Trilōchana-Pallava had to meet the combined forces of Karikāla and Vijayāditya, and that the two last were on some terms of alliance, which are not quite plain. It is not unlikely, that some of the northern powers joined one side or the other. In connection it is worthy of note that Karikāla is represented in the Tamil work Siṭappadiṭrām as an ally of Avanti, which is Ujjain in Malwa, and as the overlord of Vajra and Maghada. It looks as if Karikāla was

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12 agada denotes Southern Bihar in Lower Bengal.
instrumental in permanently settling the Western Chalukyas in southern India. The defeat of the Chëra and the Pâṇḍya on the plains of Vëppil, and the confederacy of nine potentates and the Pallavas in some unnamed places should have left Karikâla as the undisputed lord of the Deccan. The Chëra king defeated by him was Sëranâ Perûnchêral Áth-an. He received a wound on his back and is said to have sought a voluntary death rather than being a monument of disgrace to his family. That even the people of the Telugu districts acknowledged his sway is gathered from the fact that Karikâla figures among the early ancestors of the Telugu Chöja chiefs and the Chôlas. Inscriptions of the Chôlas are found in the Cuddapah and Bellary districts.

If the date we have now arrived at for Karikâla prove correct, it will be seen that Kanakasaihal Pillai was wrong in identifying him with Kilii who died at Kurâppalil. His identification was based on taking Perumâralavan as a surname both of Karikâla and Kilii. Perumâralavan means the great Chöja and as such it might be applied to any monarch of the Chöja line. To show the incorrectness of the identification, we have only to point out that Kurâppalil-tutiljîna-Kilii was a contemporary of the Pâṇḍya kings Nejuñjelîya and Ugra-Perrâvaljûdji, who died at Madura and appears to have lived nearly a century later. It is also worthy of note that none of the poets who were contemporaries of Karikâla figures among the contemporaries of Kurâppalil-tutiljîna-Kilii, Ugra-Perrâvaljûdji or Nejuñjelîya.

A word about Karikâla’s parctago, which deserves to be mentioned here. He was the son of Ilañjêchenni calling also Ilañjênya or Ilaiyôn. This name means “the young Chöja” or “the young prince.” He was perhaps the heir apparent to the Chöja throne and hence was known by that appellation. It may be noted that Ilañjêchenni or Ilaiyôn is something similar to Ilaiy, guerâda or Ilañaravû. There is nothing to warrant our presuming that Ilañjêchenni was a king of the Chöja dominions. He seems to have distinguished himself in the wars undertaken by the reigning king who, we might suppose, was his elder brother. The title Urupappala, which we find prefixed to his name, shows that he resembled a lion in prowess. Sometimes the name Ilañjêchenni is connected with Nejuñdalaâd which perhaps denotes that the tract of country over which he was the lord, bordered on the sea and it was, most probably, near the mouth of the Kâvëri river. He married a daughter of Alundûr-vel. Alandûr is perhaps identical with Tër or Tiruv-Alundûr near Mâyâveram. He is credited with having defeated in battle the Chëra king of his day and taken from him a place called Pâmañjûr. Kudakkâ-Nejuñjelîral Áth-an might be the person vanquished by him as we know that he was his contemporary.

From what has been said above, it will be evident that the accession of Karikâla to the Chöja throne is not quite regular, as he had no claims to it, if the reigning king had any issue. There are also grounds for inferring that on the death of Karikâla’s predecessor, there were several claimants to the Chöja throne and Karikâla succeeded in getting it through the aid of his uncle Irumbiçar Talaiyûr. The story that an elephant from Tirukkulamalám put a garland on Karikâla’s neck, carried him on its back and placed him on the Chöja throne when he was stationed at Karuvûr perhaps tells the same fact. It is worthy of note that this story is quite similar to another recorded about Mûrti-Nâyanâr, one of the Saiva devotees who was raised to the rank of a Pâṇḍya king, when the Pâṇḍya country had no sovereign. If the interpretation of the name Karikâla is ‘soreched leg,’ it is not unlikely that in this endeavor to get the kingdom, Karikâla happened to meet with an accident in which one of his legs was scorchted. Karikâla married the daughter of a Veḻir chief of Nâgûr. A village of this name is celebrated in the Vaishnava work Nâlâyiraprabandham. Inscriptions state that it was

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12 The poets Kalittalaiyar and Veppi-Kyanattiyar refer to this king in Puranâgâra, stanzas 65 and 66.
14 Puran, stanzas 10 and 263.
15 Another way of interpreting the name is ‘he (who is) death to the elephants (of his enemies).’ In this case the name shows how powerful he was. If Kalikâla is the name, it means ‘the destroyer (of the evils) of the Kali (age).’
the headquarters of a subdivision in ancient times. Tiruvengaṉ and Kāvirippūmpaṭṭīnām were places situated in it. It seems, therefore certain, that Kil-Nāṅgūr in the Shiyali ilūka is identical with it. It is, therefore, no wonder that Karikāla had a special liking for Kāvirippūmpaṭṭīnām, that it was only three or four miles from Nāṅgūr whence his queen hailed.

He might probably have witnessed the annual destruction which the Kāverī river caused when it overflowed its banks during high floods and it may have led him to undertake the stupendous work of constructing high banks to the river to prevent the recurrence of the evil. By the way, it may be said that the irrigation of the Kāverī delta had engaged the attention of early Chōla kings. Of the several branches which this river has, the Venṉāru and the Araṉil date back to times earlier than Karikāla and most of the others are attributable to some of the members of the Chōla dynasty whose names they bear even at the present day. The course of the river seems to have changed at an early date giving rise to a new source of irrigation to the country. Palāñkāverī was the name by which the original river was known to distinguish it from the new, but it is not known if this diversion of the river was due to natural causes, or if it was the work of any particular person. Palāñkāverī and Koḷḷīdām were in existence prior to the 7th century A. D. In spite of the diversion of water in these branches, the Kāverī seems to have carried much water and caused damage to the country during floods. Karikāla's services to the country in undertaking to build high banks and in opening new channels to improve the irrigation of the land, cannot be over estimated. The banks are said to measure 1,060 feet in length, 40 to 60 feet in width, and 15 to 18 feet in height. They successfully prevented annual destruction for nearly fifteen centuries by the mere inertia of the storage of materials. It is not unlikely that the bunds constructed by him were improved periodically. In all probability the ancient custom of parcelling out a few acres of land irrigated by the source among a few families who were required to take out fixed quantities of mud or sand from the bed and throw them on the bund every year, was followed in the case of the Kāverī also.

We have already referred to the impetus given by Karikāla to commerce and trade and this will appear in better light from the translation of Paṭṭinappālai appended below. The poem was composed by Kaṭiyāḷūr Radraṅkaṇṭāgar, who is reported to have received the munificent gift of sixteen lakhs of gold pieces as reward for his composition. We have also mentioned that Karikāla's contact with the northern powers gave him an opportunity for settling a number of people in the south. The growth of civilisation during this period seems to have assumed a different turn. The impulse given to art and trade is specially noteworthy. The condition of the people improved to a considerable extent and every effort was made to increase their happiness and prosperity.

Extract from Paṭṭinappālai.

The Chōla country was irrigated by the Kāverī river which never failed in its supply even when there was no rain. The fields yielded sugarcane from the juice of which jaggery was prepared; big bunches of plantains, cocoanuts and arecanuts. Mango and palm trees abounded. There were also flower gardens covering large areas. The tanks of the country had high bunds resembling the form of the constellation Makha. Fragrant flowers of a variety of colours were produced near them.

The villages in the country adjoined each other and the houses had large compounds in front where they dried paddy. Here children amused themselves by dragging three-wheeled little cars. The doors of the houses bore tiger marks. The royal palaces were white but soiled by the dust raised by cars and horses which were ever moving in the streets.

16 The names Venṉi-kuyattiyār and Arišīkīḷār assumed by persons indicate the existence of the two branches of the Kāverī.
17 It may be remarked that Viraṉolai, Kṛțimārṭhāṅalai (Kṛțimāl), Uyyakkopāḷai and Marṇigōḍalai are the surnames of some of the Chōla kings of the 10th and 11th centuries.
18 Several inscriptions mention Palāñkāverī. This and Koḷḷīdām are referred to in the Devaram songs of the 7th century A. D.
There were big alms houses where large quantities of rice were cooked and served to people resorting to them. Also places where small tanks were made and grass served for cattle. Jaina and Buddhist temples were found in one quarter of the town while in another the Brahmans with plaited hair performed sacrifices and raised volumes of smoke. The Paradavar living near the sea-coast ate śal fish and boiled flesh of tortoises, wore the flowers of adumbu and dmabai and indulged in setting goats to fight in the open and spacious court-yards. In the purachchēri, i.e. the quarter outside the town low-class people reared pigs and fowls.

On holidays the Paradavar of Půgār abstained from going over the sea to catch fish, allowed their nets to dry on the white sand in front of their low-roofed houses which were built on the sea-shore. They wore the tālai flowers and garlands, drank toddy drawn from the palm trees, and paddy and amused themselves in dancing around a post in which they invoked the presence of god. Accompanied by their wives they bathed in the high waves of the sea to expiate their sins, then in the fresh water of the river to remove the salt, made images and had other enjoyments throughout the day. And in the night they abstained from drinking, stayed in their high palaces, heard music and witnessed dramatic performances, spent some time in the moonlight and retired with their wives to rest, removing the silk cloths which they wore and putting on thin white robes. Just before the dawn of day they slept on the sands of the shore.

Near the wide streets of the Paradavar and on the sea-shore where the tālai flowers abounded there were warehouses with good guards. Things poured in here from all quarters for being stored eventually to be shipped. These, when removed from the warehouse, were stamped with tiger-marks and issued out on payment of a duty. Things landing from ships were similarly stamped with tiger-marks and duty charged. The officers who raised taxes on exports and imports were ever busy in their work.

In the upper stories of their houses, ladies of great beauty gathered near the windows with folded hands and joined palms to witness the festivities made for gods like muruga, etc., which passed in the streets of the bazaars, to the accompaniment of music sounded by the kūjav, yālī, mudam, muraśu, etc. Their houses were storied, had raised piaus and large court-yards where cattle played freely. At the gates and on the tops of buildings flags were put up. Men of learning and reputation also put up flags inviting combatants to challenge their skill. Attached to the masts of ships, in the port of Pūgār, there were other banners. In the toddy shops in front of which fish and flesh were spread out to dry, there were flags seen hoisting.

To the city were imported horses of good gait, in ships which were propelled by the wind; diamond and gold from Mount Mēru; sandalwood and agil from Cōorg; pearls from the southern ocean, coral from the eastern sea; the wealth of the Gangetic region; food-stuffs from Ceylon; etcables from Burma and incense from other places. Thus, the streets of Pūgār literally bore the burden of rich merchandise which were imported from several quarters. Here were also streets inhabited by people of various creeds and tongues who had abandoned their towns and settled in this city where they formed new acquaintances and relations. The eellōlar who cultivated the land and who were the source of prosperity to all classes of people, lived in great numbers.

Not satisfied with the wealth of his own country and what was paid to him as tribute by the feudatory chiefs, the great Chōlā i.e. Karikāla whose kula touching the crowns of other kings made them bright, and in whose chest the sandal paste was rubbed out by the embrace of his wife and children, started on a tour of conquest with his elephants, horses, etc., destroyed his enemies’ regions and killed their army in great numbers. He made the aruellar obey his commands and the northern kings wither, caused trouble to the kuḍavar, cut away the progeny of podurvar and destroyed the Iruṅgōvēḷ. He destroyed the forests in the Chōlā country, inhabited them, converting them into habitable lands, increased the wealth, abandoned Urandai with its brilliant palaces, built temples, set up families, opened small and large gates in the huge walls of the city, stored bows and arrows and showed his anger against the Pāṇḍya who was powerful in arms.
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