

THE COINS OF ANCIENT JAFFNA



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Introduction

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500 BCE-995 CE**

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INTRODUCTION

THE COINS OF ANCIENT JAFFNA

Their chronological, economic and historical significance

The coins of Sri Lanka could be broadly divided into two categories (a). Indigenous and (b). Foreign. The most ancient coins discovered in Sri Lanka were foreign coins brought by merchants from India. Other foreign coins include Greco-Roman, Persian, Arabian, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch and British coins. Numerically enormous among the foreign coins are those from India, particularly from Tamil Nadu.

Excavations and explorations have revealed coins of various Indian dynasties such as the Maurya, Kusāna, Gupta, Satvāhana and those of the South Indian Saṅgam Age. These coins were gathered from places like Anuradhapura, Māntai, Kantarōdai, Vallipuram and Pūnakari (also from Akurugoda in the South) which were ancient metropolitan sites and commercial centres. Roman coins from the Republic of Rome as well as from Imperial Rome were found at the Jaffna sites and at Māntai. (Codrington 1924, Sivasamy 1974, Seyone 1998, Bopearachchi 1998, 1999, Pushparatnam 2001, 2002, Carswell 2013).

These early coins provided the models for the coins minted in the island. Among these the warped coins with symbols were produced in the models of the Sātvāhana and the Sangam coins. The earliest of such coins were the *Tisa*, *elephant-Svastica*, *horse-svastica*, *lion-svastica*, *fenced tree with Svastica* and so on (Codrington, H.W. 1924: 22). Mitchiner considers them as the outcome of Sangam Pāndyan inspiration (Mitchiner, M. 1998: 629). In fact, both Sangam and Sātvāhana sources are found on these coins (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 70).

Sri Lankan coins with figures of an elephant, a tree on a hillock of three summits and mattalam (drum) are repetitions of the *Pāndya Peruvaluthi* (Krishnamurthy, 1997: 47) type of coins. The Tisa type of coins includes a circle with a crescent upon it. These are considered to be representations of *Nandipada* or the head of a humped bull. These emblems appear in the warped and punch-marked coins of the Pāndyas and the Sātvāhanas (Gupta, P.L. 1965: 15). The fenced tree is a common feature of the Indian coins, with the boughs and leaves of varying patterns.

In the punch-marked coins of Andhradesa there are three slender leaves; in Sātvāhana coins the leaves are bushy. The punch-marked tradition had a greater impact on the early Sri Lankan coins. The lion figures in Sri Lankan coins mostly agree with those of Andhradesa. But the Svastica mounted on a pitha is typical of the island; this type of coin does not seem to have appeared in any part of India. Although the Indian coins inspired the genesis of coinage in Sri Lanka, the latter developed its own formats in course of time (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 71).

South Indian coins from Tamil Nadu, adhered to the practice of imprinting the insignia of the king or his dynasty. These hints help to identify the name of the king, his dynasty and fix the date. In Sri Lanka no such insignia is found on the coins issued before the 10th century. Even the names inscribed on these coins occasionally and the emblems could not be identified with particular kings for certain and no corroborative evidence is available.

Codrington (1924: 24-25) and earlier scholars were of opinion that the emblems are representative of Sinhalese Buddhism, hence they were issued by the Sinhala kings. At the same time coins bearing Tamil inscriptions were supposed to have been brought from Tamil Nadu due to political, commercial and cultural interactions. Only if they have bothered to probe it a little afar they would have realised that many of these Tamil coins were not issued in Tamil Nadu at all.

Several influential scholars in the past held the view that there was no Tamil kingdom in Sri Lanka prior to 13th century CE, and all the coins of Tamils discovered in Sri Lanka were classed under Sangam, Pallava, Chola, Pāndya, Vijayanagara, Nāyakka and Jaffna Kingdom coins. Coins which does not come under these categories were mis-identified or at its worst ignored.

* * *

In northern Sri Lanka coins from various periods ranging from the ancient punch-marked to the European period were discovered in various places like Vallipuram, Nākarkovil, Pulōli, Mattuvil, Mamipay, Pandattarippu, Tellippalai, Kantarōdai, Tolpuram, Chulipuram, Vaddukoddai, Allaipiddi, Mankumpān, Nāranthanai, Punkudutivu, Anaikkōddai, Nallūr, Pūnakari, Māntai, Varani, Kaccāy, Udutturai, Millaitivu and several other places. Kantarōdai, Pūnakari, Māntai and Vallipuram yielded the maximum number of coins (Pushparatnam 2002: 24-25).

Professor Pushparatnam (University of Jaffna), an authority on Jaffna coins, have collected thousands of coins found in Jaffna and the Vanni regions which he was able to arrange in a sequence by the date of their production; manufactured either locally or abroad. The presence of these coins at a particular site, at a particular stratified level along with a particular type of pottery provides a reliable chronology.

The coins found in Northern Sri Lanka are divisible into those which were minted locally and those which were received through commercial or cultural contacts with their trading partners. Foreign coins help to assess the political and commercial relations between the affiliated countries. Coins minted inland provide valuable evidence to trace the settlement pattern, language, script, religion and the cultural histories of a nation.

The coins on their own, unlike the radiocarbon or thermoluminescence methods provide a wide chronological dates sometimes up to 300-500 years. Hence the exact identification of the coin and its time of manufacture and circulation are of utmost importance. Arrival of a date needs to be done in conjunction with the associated potsherds and other artefacts and corroborative cross-matching with similar dated objects found elsewhere; a method employed by Sir John Marshall at Mohenjodaro.

THE COINS OF ANCIENT JAFFNA

Part I

COINS FROM KANTARODAI PERIOD

500 BCE - 995 CE

COINS FROM KANTARODAI PERIOD

The coins found in Northern Sri Lanka are divisible into those which were minted locally and those which were received through commercial or cultural contacts with their trading partners. Foreign coins help to assess the political and commercial relations between the affiliated countries. Coins minted inland provide valuable evidence to trace the settlement pattern, language, script, religion and the cultural histories of a nation.

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These coins are presented in a series according to the place of origin and the period of its production.

Series1

EARLY INDIAN PUNCH-MARKED SILVER COINS 600 - 300 BCE PUNCH-MARKED NAGA COINS 300 BCE

First identified by Paul Pieris at Kantarodai in 1917 there were several punch-marked silver coins of Indian origin produced between 600 and 300 BCE. The presence of these coins at Kantarodai suggested that these were used as tender for trade and other purposes (Pieris, Paul, E. 1917).

It appears that the punch-marked coins first appeared in North India around 600 BCE, found their way to South India and then to Sri Lanka. The South Indian punch-marked coins showing the dynastic emblems of fish or elephant (Pāndya), tiger (Chola) and bow (Cēra) belong to 300 BCE. Terracotta and metallic moulds to produce these coins were discovered at places like Kāncipuram and Karūr (Krishnamurthy 1991; Sethuraman 1994:14).



Early Indian Punch-marked silver coins produced between 600 and 500 BCE.



Punch-marked Silver *Karshapana* of the Maghada Janapada, 400 BCE.



An Indian punch-marked coin discovered at Kantarodai by Paul Pieris dated to 300 BCE. Courtesy: H.W. Codrington.

Punch-marked coins were manufactured at several sites in Sri Lanka. Terracotta moulds to manufacture these coins are identified at Anuradhapura (Deraniyagala, S. 1972: 150) and Akurugoda (Bopearachchi, O. 1999: plate 25). The early Sri Lankan Punch-marked coins are dated to 300 BCE as well (Parker, H. 1981: 463-474; Codrington, H.W. 1924: 11-17; Bopearachchi, O. 1999: 21).

Krishnarajah discovered four silver punch marked coins at Kantarodai (Krishnarajah, S. 1998: 65-72) which are of local origin. The snake motifs found on them suggest they were perhaps issued by the Naga chieftains of Nāgadipa. These emblems differ from those manufactured in North and South India. The figure of the sun in North Indian coins show sixteen rays, while the coins from South India show twelve rays. The Kantarodai coin also show twelve rays.



A locally manufactured punch-marked coin from Kantarodai showing a *naga* motif and a sun with twelve rays, datable to 300 BCE.

Courtesy: S.Krishnarajah 1998.



King Ashoka's Indian punch-marked *Karshapana* 273-232 BCE. By 300 BCE the rectangular punch-marked coins are replaced by oval shaped and circular coins in North India.

Series 2

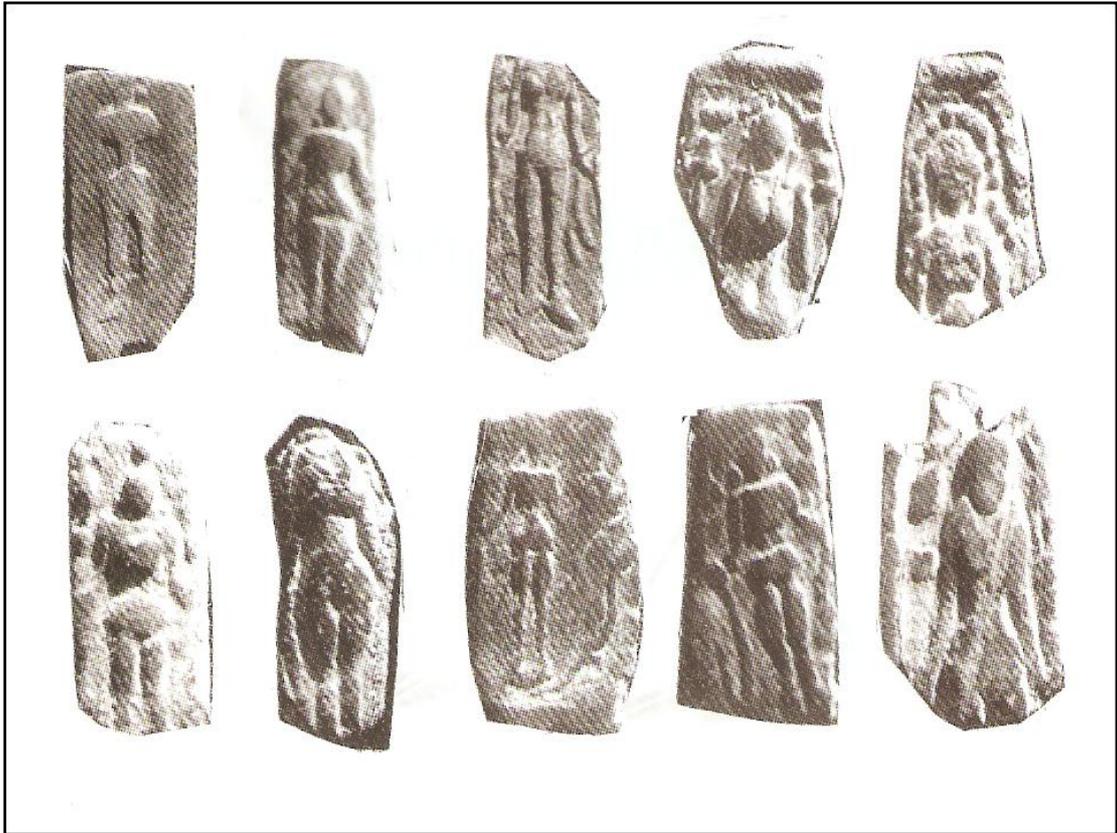
LAKSHMI COINS 300 BCE- 300 CE

First identified by Paul Pieris at Kantarodai in 1917, these locally manufactured coins were named by him as *Lakshmi* coins due to their resemblance to the deity of the same name. This name has been adopted by the numismatists and academics and have come to stay.

The Lakshmi coins in Sri Lanka are found in several types and are found in large quantities. These appear in very ancient human settlements of third century BCE, and in Jaffna sites are present along with the Roman coins belonging to 300 BCE- 300 CE. This attests to the minting and use of such coins over a long period of time. Several varieties of these coins in various metals such as copper, lead, silica, iron and nickel were found. Hoads of these coins were obtained in several parts of North and Southern Sri Lanka. In 1885 fifty-one coins were discovered at in a mud-pot at Mullaitivu. In 1917 Paul Pieris obtained hundreds of these coins from Kanterodai. Subsequently these coins were obtained from places like Nallūr, Vallipuram, Ānaikōttai, Pūnakari, Udutturai, Mātōtta (all in Northern Sri Lanka), Anuradhapura, Tissamaharama, Chilaw, Puttalam, Ninthāvur and Akurugoda (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 81, quoting Pieris 1917, Codrington 1924, Sivasamy 1974, Krishnarajah 1983, Pushparatnam 2001 and Bopearachchi 1998, 1999).

Although the female figure is identified with Lakshmi, all coins do not possess common iconographic features. Some coins show very young women while others show a mature female figure. In several coins a lady is seen standing on a lotus holding stalks of lotus in one or both hands, while in some coins instead of the lotus stalk she is seen holding *saktiāyudha*, trisūla and a traditional lamp, *kuthuvilakku*.

Considering the frequency of distribution, the Lakshmi coins although they are found all over Sri Lanka, are found in large numbers in Northern Sri Lanka being heavily concentrated in the Kantarodai region. These are rarely seen in southern Tamilnadu and never beyond it. This leads to the logical conclusion that Kantarodai was the point of origin of these Lakshmi coins.



Lakshmi coins from Kantarodai.

Courtesy: Dr P. Pushparatnam



Oblong Lakshmi coin with her holding a lotus stalk in the right hand. Reverse shows a svastika on a stand. Courtesy: Dr P.Pushpsratnam.

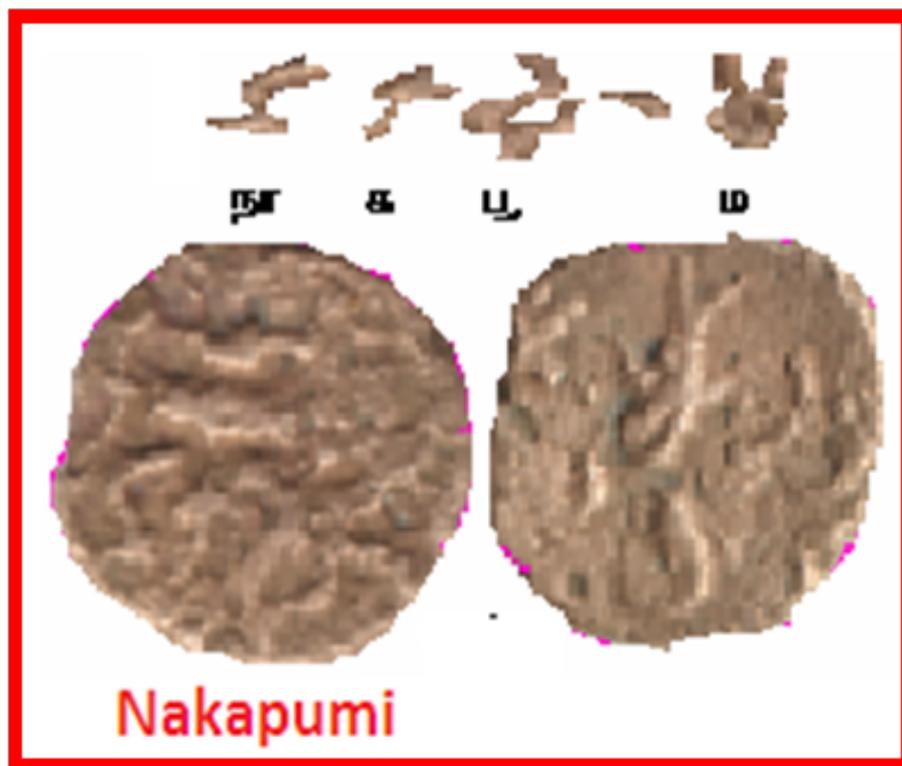
Series 3

EARLY JAFFNA COINS OF 300 BCE-300 CE

A. NAGA COINS

Square and rectangular shaped copper coins containing motifs of snakes believed to be of Naga origin are found during superficial surveys at Kantarodai and other places in Jaffna. A recently discovered circular copper coin at Udutturai in Jaffna has the legend *Nākapūmi* written in Tamil Brahmi on its obverse and the emblem of a fish on its reverse. (Pushparatnam, P. 201).

This coin is important for several reasons. It speaks about *Nākapūmi*, meaning 'the land of the Nagas'- implying that it is issued by an independent country of the Naga people. The fish emblem at the back of this coin indicates that like the Nagas of Jaffna, like the Pāndyans of Tamil Nādu have been using the fish emblem since the Sangam Age. The fish emblem unlike the linear-line drawings in the Pāndyan coins is zoomorphic.



A Naga coin belonging to the second century CE discovered at Udutturai in Jaffna has the legend *Nākapūmi* in Tamil Brahmi characters in the obverse and the emblem of a fish in the reverse. Like the Pāndyan coins the early Jaffna coins too were associated with the fish emblem. Courtesy: P.Pushparatnam



A locally manufactured Naga coin belonging to 200 BCE discovered at Kantarodai showing symbol of twin serpents on the obverse and the legend UTI(HA)PAN in Tamil Brahmi on the reverse. Courtesy: P.Pushparatnam

A coin discovered by Seyone (1998) at Kanterodai showing twin snakes with a deity in the middle was identified as a *Shrivasta* symbol. *Shrivasta* meaning beloved of Shri, refers to the goddess Laksmi. It is believed to be a mark on the chest of Vishnu, where his consort Laksmi resides. The presence of the snakes suggest it is issued by a Naga king or chieftain. The legend on the reverse of the coin in Tamil Brahmi characters is read as *Utipan* or *Utihan* as the penultimate character is rather defaced. Apart from the Brahmi characters the suffix *-an* confirms it is a Tamil name.

On the morphology of the Brahmi characters this coin was dated to 200 BCE Pushparatnam, P. 2001).

B. OTHER SANGAM-TYPE COINS 300 BCE- 300 CE

Several square shaped Sangam-type copper coins were found in Sri Lanka which show a Standing bull or some other animal which were unlike any of the coins discovered in Tamil Nadu or the whole of India for that matter. These are individual emblems of the animals without any accompaniments. Pushparatnam reckons these coins probably modelled on the Sangam coins of Tamil Nadu were issued by the Tamil chieftains of Sri Lanka (Pushparatnam 2002).



Sangam Type square coin found in Sri Lanka showing a standing deer is unlike any of the coins discovered in Tamil Nadu or the whole of India. Pushparatnam reckons coins like this issued in Sri Lanka provide the evidence for a state formation among the Sri Lankan Tamils contemporary to the Sangam Age.



**Early Sri lankan coins showing emblems of the humped bull reminding one of the pictures in the Mohenjo-daro seals. The Sinhalese kings of Sri Lanka never used the bull sign in their coins.
Courtesy: Henry Parker, 1909.**

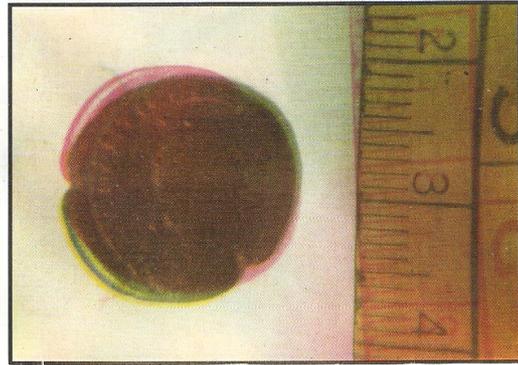
Series 4

ROMAN COINS 300 BCE- 500 CE



Roman coins collected at Kantarodai in one season before they were systematically cleaned up.

Courtesy: S. Krishnarajah



Imperial Roman coins from Kantarodai dated between 27 BCE and 300 CE.



Imperial Roman Solidus Gold Coins 450-500 CE.

Roman coins represented a guaranteed and widely recognised monetary worth which permitted an easy exchange value which in turn drove both commerce and technology development as all classes of people could work to own coins which could be spent on all manner of goods and services. Even more significantly large and identical payments could be made possible which opened up a whole new scale of commercial activity.

The first Roman coins were the Bronze and copper coins produced at Neapolis from 326 BCE. Images were imprinted on these coins by striking the coin by hand on to a pre-cut die. As Rome expanded and took ever more treasure from her enemies silver began to replace bronze as the most important material for coinage. This was especially so following the acquisition of the silver mines of Macedonia from 167 BCE, resulting in a huge boom in silver coins. During the Common Era the amount of gold and silver in the Roman coins were worth their coinage value and were easily accepted by their trading partners.

Pliny's Natural History, one of the principal Greco-Roman works dealing with trade records that "India, China and Arabian peninsula take one hundred million sesterces (an ancient Roman coin) from our empire per annum at a conservative estimate: that is what our luxuries and women cost us". Part of this wealth was spent on goods from Sri Lanka.

The Romans came to Sri Lanka in search of gemstones, silk, cotton, ivory, peacocks and spices especially pepper and cardamom. In return we obtained coral, wine, olive oil and metals such as gold and silver from Rome mostly in the form of coins and medals. The commercial, cultural and romantic links with the Romans lasted for about eight centuries without a break.



A Chera coin of the first century BCE showing the plumed headgear of a Roman general attesting to the relations the Romans had with the Chera country. The reverse of the coin showed a bow and arrow, the royal emblem of the Chera kings.
Courtesy: R. Krishnamurthy.

Series 5

SANGAM AGE PĀNDYAN COINS 300 BCE- 300 CE



Early Korkai Pandya coin belonging to c.300 BCE. This coins appears to have only the Elephant emblem on the obverse and no other mark on the reverse.



Around c.200 BCE the fish emblem was added to the reverse of the Elephant coin.

The earliest of the Pāndyan coins were the punch-marked coins and the rectangular or square *Elephant* coins in copper struck with a die issued from Korkai around 400-300 BCE. Korkai, situated at the mouth of the Tamraparni River was the capital of the first dynasty of the Pāndyan kings. It was a famous harbour-town (*pattinam*) described in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as *Pandya Kapataka*, meaning the gateway to the Pāndyan country. The Sangam work Kalitogai calls it Kapatapuram. The port-town *Korkai pattinam* was the capital, principal centre of trade and commerce, a centre of pearl fisheries and the most important port of the Early Pandyan Kingdom. Ptolemy refers to this capital as *Kolhai*; and the *Peripus* says that the Pandyan Kingdom extended from Comari towards the north, including Korkai, where the pearl fisheries prospered.

The following information could be gathered from the poetry of Paranar and others from *Purananūru*. 2300 years ago the Tamil country in addition to the three monarchies of Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas consisted of several other small kingdoms ruled over by independent chieftains. The kingdom of Kūdal was ruled by a minor king called Akutai. Pāndyan king Nedun Chelivan I, who ruled from the coastal town of Korkai in a bid to expand his territory invaded Kūdal, defeated Akutai and captured that town. He re-named Kūdal as **Madurai** (probably after *Madura* of North India). He made Madurai, the new capital of Pāndyan Kingdom and made the *fish* as the royal emblem of the Madurai Pandyans.

In the coins issued by the Pāndyan kings ruling from Madurai, the fish emblem was added to the elephant mark of their Korkai ancestry. The fish emblem is made up of four lines. Two long lines formed an acute angle, the apex being uppermost and two crossed lines beginning from the middle of the former running parallel to the sides which form the angle. These four lines represented the fish. This mark was called the *Chakram*. It appears that for more than two hundred years there were two lines of Pāndyan kings ruling from Korkai as well as Madurai.

An inscription from Meenakshipuram from near Madurai (dated to 200 BCE), refers to a gift to a Jaina saint, Nanda, by a Pandya ruler Nedunjelivan who is also called Panavan, Kadalan and Valuthi. This is perhaps the earliest epigraphical reference to a contemporary Pandya ruler, Nedunjelivan. There are two Pandya rulers with the name of Nedunjelivan, but this ruler on account of his early date (second century BC), may be a predecessor of both (Nilakanta Sastri, K.A. 2009:23).

King Nedunj Chelivan I defeated an invading army from the Deccan, hence praised in poetry as *Āariyap Padaikadantha Pāndyan*. He was succeeded by his son Putthappāndyan. Putthappāndyan expanded his kingdom by conquering Ollaiyur (near modern Pudukkoddai) and annexing it, an act that earned him the epithet *Ollaiyur thantha Putthappāndyan*. Many academics believe that this king was named Putthappāndyan because of his persuasion of the Buddhist faith.

Today Korkai is a small village in Srivaikuntam taluk of Thoothukudi district situated 3 km north of the Tamraparni River. Due to excessive sedimentation over the past 2000 years, the sea has receded and Korkai is well inland today about 6 km from the shore of Bay of Bengal. Palaeo-channels traced from satellite imagery all around Korkai indicate that the Tamraparni river has shifted its course progressively east and

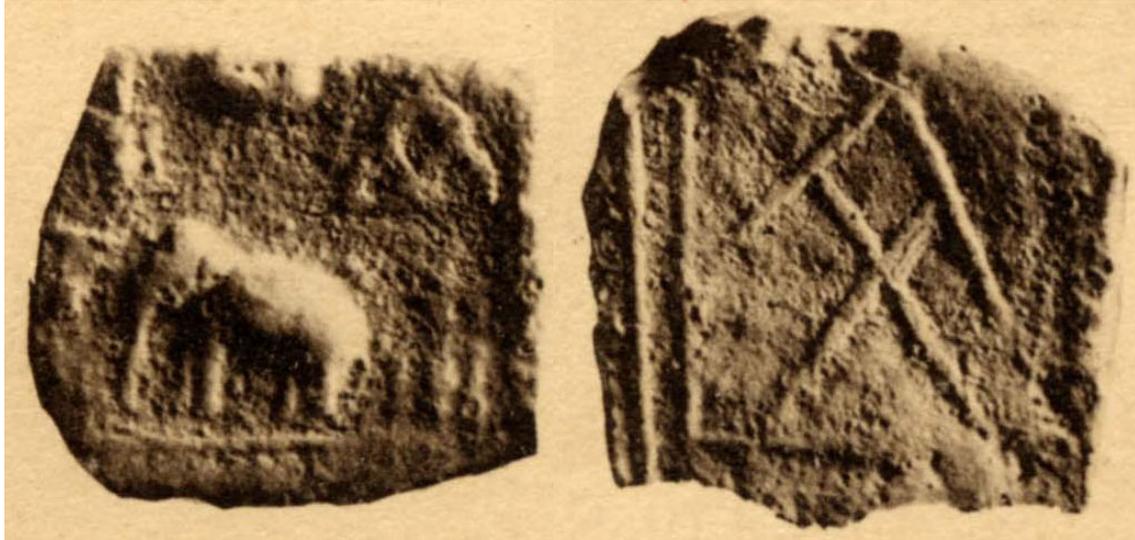
south over the years. Correct identification of Korkai in 1838 is a triumph of the archaeologists. The findings of concentrated megalithic burial urns at Korkai indicated it was well populated during megalithic times. The finds of Black and Red Ware; graffiti of the sun, fish, bow and arrow and several other artefacts discovered at deeper layers indicated an age of 785 BCE through Radio-carbon dating. The occurrence of Roman ware, Rouletted ware and Roman coins dated between 3rd century BC and 2nd century AD were found in the upper layers. Archaeologists have also found ruins of chanku cutting factories and centres for split-opening of pearl oysters at the site. At the village stands a *Vanni* tree estimated to be 2200 years old, perhaps standing there from the Korkai-Pandyan days!



Sangam Age Pandyan coin discovered in Ceylon, showing an elephant under a temple between two hillock symbols. c. 100 BCE. Courtesy: British Museum.

The following is a partial list of Pandyan emperors who ruled during the Sangam age. The lists of the Pandya kings are based on the authoritative *A History of South India from the Early Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* by K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, Oxford University Press, New Delhi (Reprinted 1998).

- Koon Pandiyan
- Nedunj Cheliyan I (Aariyap Padai Kadantha Nedunj Cheliyan)
- Puddappāndiyan
- Mudukudumi Peruvaludhi
- Nedunj Cheliyan II
- Nan Maran
- Nedunj Cheliyan III (Talaiyālanganathu Seruvendra Nedunj Cheliyan)
- Maran Valudi
- Kaldan valuthi
- Musiri Mutriya Cheliyan
- Ukkirap Peruvaludi



A Sangam Age Madurai Pandyan coin discovered at Kantarodai excavations by Paul E. Pieris in 1917. The obverse shows an elephant and a hill symbol. The reverse show the line mark of a fish, the insignia of the Madurai Pandyan kings. Courtesy: H.W. Codrington.

Some of the most conspicuous among the ancient Tamil coins of Sri Lanka are those bearing the fish emblem. These coins are recognised at several places in Sri Lanka (Codrington, H.W. 1924; Seyon, K.N.V. 1998; Bopearachchi, 1998:156, 1999, Pushparatnam, P. 2002).

During his excavations at Kantarodai during 1916-17 Paul Pieris discovered several such coins bearing the fish emblem which he identified as those of the Pāndyan kings (Pieris, P.E. 1917, 1919). R. Krishnamurthy who studied Paul Pieris's Kantarodai coins said that a few of them belonged to Pāndya Peruvalūdi. (Krishnamurthy, R. 1997: 36).

Rev. Loventhal of Tinnevely, was one of the earliest numismatists to study the early coins of the Pandyan kings. He observed that there were two types of Pandyan coins - one type with emblems of an Elephant on the obverse and a some other sign on the reverse; while other had a fish emblem on one side and an elephant or some other picture on the other. He concluded that the elephant was the royal insignia of the Pāndyans of Korkai, while the fish on its own was the emblem of the Pāndyan kings ruling from Madura. He also believed the hillock-with-three-peaks represented a Buddhist Caitya and the elephant, another Buddhist symbol - which meant to him the Buddhistic persuasion of the Korkai Pāndya kings. He called the linear fish mark a *Buddhist Cakram*. Although his theory has been refuted later, the term *Buddhist Cakram* has come to stay. (Loventhal, E. 1888).

All the Sangam Age coins were square or rectangular in shape. The fish emblem in the Pandyan coins of the Sangam Age has the fish drawn with four trapezoid lines as seen in these coins. It was only from the sixth century onwards a proper fish emblem is seen in their coins. The symbol of an elephant is a common feature in all three- Chera, Chola and Pāndya coins. The Sangam Age Pandyan coins figure prominently in the coins found in northern Sri Lanka, and large number of these coins have been found in Kantarodai and Anuradhapura.



Early Korkai Pandyan Coin with Elephant and other assorted symbols before they moved to Madurai and took up to fish as their royal insignia.



A Pandyan coin issued by the Pandyan king ruling from Madurai. The obverse of the coin shows an elephant, an emblem from the days of Korkai along with other symbols sacred lamp, crescent moon between two kumbhas and two tridents standing on pedestals. The reverse show the line drawing of a fish, which became the major symbol of the Pandyans of Madurai. c. 200-100 BCE. Similar coins were discovered by Paul E.Pieris at Kantarodai.

Courtesy: R. Krishnamurthy.

Series 6

SANGAM AGE CHÓLA AND CHERA COINS 300 BCE- 300 CE

Other Sangam Age coins, although not as frequently seen as the Pāndyan coins are occasionally seen at the Jaffna sites. The Tamil Nadu coins most frequently seen at the Jaffna sites are the Sangam Age Pāndyan coins and the medieval Chóla coins.



Top: Chola coin of Sangam Age 200 BCE - 100 CE. Elephant on the obverse is seen clearly; Tiger emblem on the reverse is defaced. Next two are Chera coins with an elephant and a bow and arrow on the obverse and reverse. c.100 BCE - 100 CE. Courtesy: R. Krishnamurthy.

Series 7

THE PALLAVA COINS

A. EARLY PALLAVA (Andhra Pallava) COINS 300 CE- 600 CE

Among the coins found at Jaffna sites are the Pallava coins belonging to 300-900 CE. Majority of the Pallava coins carry the bull emblem. During the later centuries the lion emblem was added to the bull or sometimes replaced it.

The Pallava kings of South India belonged to different dynastic lines. The early Pallavas from the 3rd-6th centuries CE ruled from South Andhra region, their capital was located at Pallavapuri (Bhavatri of Nellore in Andhra). They were a sect of "*thiraiyar*" and the region they ruled was called "Thondaimandalam". The later Pallavas from the 6th-9th centuries CE ruled from Kanchipuram over the northern Tamil region.

The earliest documented evidence on the Pallavas are the three copper-plate grants of Siva Skandavarman written in Prakrit and known as the *Mayidavolu*, *Hirahadagalli* and the *British Museum* plates. Skandavarman appear to be the first great ruler of the early Pallavas extending his dominions from the Krishna in the north to the Pennar in the south and to the Bellary district in the west. The kings who followed him and their reignal years are dated from about a dozen copper plates in Sanskrit. The chronology gathered from these charters is as follows:

Simhavarman I	275-300 CE
Siva Skandavarman	300-350 CE
Vishnugopa	350-355 CE
Kumaravishnu	355-370 CE
Skandavarman II	370-385 CE
Viravarman	385-400 CE
Skandavarman III	400-435 CE
Simhavarman II	436-460 CE
Skandavarman IV	460-480 CE
Nandivarman	480-510 CE
Kumaravishnu II	510-530 CE
Buddhavarman	530-540 CE
Kumaravishnu III	540-550 CE
Simhavarman III	550-560 CE

The early Pallavas issued coins in lead and copper and occasionally in Silver. Although these silver coins are not found in India, they are reported from Sri Lanka. The early Pallavas used the bull as their emblem in their coins. The bull emblem is used in combination with other symbols like the svastika, srivasta, chakra, kumbha, the sacred lamp,

trisula, the ship and the horse. The Pallavas during the later centuries changed their emblem to the lion.

Pallava coins were found all over the Jaffna sites - Kantarodai, Vallipuram, Punakari, Vanni regions as well as at Mantai. The place names of Pallavarayan (*The Pallava* king) and Pallavarayan Kaddu (anicut of Pallavarayan) are remnants of their invasions of northern Sri Lanka. (Some authorities claim that Pallavarayan Kaddu was built by the Pandyans).



Early Pallava coin showing the *Standing bull* emblem c.350 CE, probably issued by Siva Skandavarman .

B. THE LATER PALLAVA (Kanchi Pallava) COINS 600 CE- 900 CE

During the latter part of the sixth century CE, the Pallavas moved into Tamilnadu, captured Kanchipuram from the Cholas who were reduced to the state of minor kings at that time and established a powerful kingdom. They expanded their territories occupying as far and wide as northern Orissa, Tanjore and Trichi.



Seventh century Pallava coin. Courtesy: Aruns Collection.

King Simhavishnu founded the best-known line of Pallava rulers who ruled from Kānchi. His son Mahendravarman commenced work at the cave temples of Mahabalipuram. Chalukya Pulikesin II learnt about the riches of Kānchi, attacked the kingdom to defeat Mahendravarman (Māmalla) at Pullalur in 620 CE.



Coin with bull emblem of Kanchi Pallavas 600-675 CE.



Lion, the later royal insignia of the Kānchi Pallavas in coins.

It was a great insult to the Pallavas, and Mahendravarman's attempts to take revenge were futile. His son Narasimhavarman with immense courage and tact defeated Pulikesin II at the Battle of Manimangalam and burnt their capital Badami to the ground. Mahendravarman completed the cave temples began by his father. He changed the royal insignia to a lion and released coins with the lion emblem as well. Around 850 CE the Cholas defeated the Pallavas and regained Kānchi and their other lost territories.

Series 8

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL COINS OF NORTH LANKA 600 CE- 1000 CE.

Professor Pushparatnam's breakthrough with numismatic evidence came at the beginning of this century in 2001, when he demonstrated through the study of Early Sri Lankan coins that there was a state formation among the Sri Lankan Tamils during the period contemporary to the Cankam Age and from the study of Early Jaffna coins that a Tamil kingdom was established in the Northern Sri Lanka by the 7th century CE (Pushparatnam, P. 2002).

The Fish Coins



A Jaffna Square Fish Coin c.700-900 CE. A Pandyan Circular Fish Coin c.700-900 CE.

Coins of various epochs have been identified in northern Sri Lanka. One of the significant class of coins are those bearing the fish emblems. Biddulph (1966) and Mitchiner (1998) who studied these coins, on the basis of the fish marks on them considered them as Pāndyan coins of the Tamil country. But Pushparatnam (2001, 2002) who have studied the typology and symbols on these coins have arrived at different conclusions.

The first type of these coins were spotted at Kalmunai, Mattuvil Nādu and Pālāvi in the Pūnakari region. These coins are almost square shaped and melted in copper. Although the measurements vary the dimensions are 1.8 cms x 1.6 cms with an average weight of 2.8 grams. (Pushparatnam, 2002: 99). There is the emblem of a fish or two fishes between two *kuthuvilakku* lamps on the sides and two border lines above and below. These coins are provisionally dated to around 700-900 CE, but a TL dating should confirm this.

The fish as an emblem on these Jaffna coins were certainly taken from the Pāndyan coins which were used as a model, but the resemblance ends there. 1. After the Sangam Age the Pāndyans produced perfectly circular coins, while the Jaffna coins continued to be square during the early medieval period. 2. The Pāndyan fish emblem is linear (line drawn) in all the Sangam Age coins and early medieval coins; but they are zoomorphic in the Jaffna coins from the start. 3. The fish emblem is seen within the *kuthuvilakku* lamps in the Jaffna coins, while it is alone in the Pāndyan coins. 4. From the 9th century onwards the name of the king who put out these coins (like *Sri Avanibhasekara*) appeared on the reverse of these coins; no such names are seen on the Jaffna coins.

With passage of time the square coins of Jaffna became more and more circular. One of the innovations was to use three fishes as the emblem which one do not see in the coins of Tamil Nādu.



Fish coins from Jaffna with designs not seen in Tamil Nadu coins. The triple fish coin is exclusive to this region. Courtesy: P.Pushparatnam.

The Nandi Coins

The Nandi or couching bull coins are one of the most widespread coins all over Sri Lanka. These coins were found at Kantarodai, Vallipuram, Anuradhapura (Codrington 1924: 24); Kantarodai, Jaffna, Mātota (Seyone 1998: 26-30); Pūnakari (Pushparatnam 1998: 114-19) and Akurugoda (Bopearachchi 1999: 90-91). The early forms of these coins were square minted in lead or copper and had the emblem of a standing bull similar to the Pallava coins.

With passage of time, during the early medieval period (7th century) the coins became more and more circular and the bull was made to sit down. These bull marked coins were fashioned after the Tamil prototypes specially the Pallava coins. But unlike the Pallava coins where the bulls were left standing, in these coins the bulls were allowed to sit down. Usually the couching bull sits on a platform under a crescent moon with two *kuthuvilakku* lamps on either side. Although these *nandi* coins were found all over India, their accompanying symbols are different. These type of medieval Nandi coins are exclusively found only in Sri Lanka.

To the Saivite Tamils the bull as the vehicle of Siva is a sacred animal and is associated with their culture like the lion to the Sinhalese. During the early medieval period the Tamil rulers of the northern Sri Lanka adopted the bull as their royal insignia to be published in their coins (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 80).



A mix of medieval North Lankan coins with Horse, Fish, Elephant and Nandi emblems.
Courtesy: P.Pushparatnam.

Other Coins

There are also certain other types of early medieval coins discovered in Jaffna sites which are not found in India. Apart from the fish and bull emblems they have emblems of the horse and the elephant on their own without any associated symbols.

There is no evidence that the Sinhalese rulers of the island have issued coins bearing the emblems of the fish, bull, horse and the standing lamp, *kuthuvilakku*. Pushparatnam reckons these are coins of the Kathiramalai (Kantarodai) Kingdom, issued by the kings who ruled northern Lanka. With due reference to their typology he assigns these coins to the post-Sangam period, but anterior to tenth century CE. (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 99). Mitchner (1998: 137) assigns a date of seventh century which nearly tallies with this date.

Series 9

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PANDYA COINS 560 - 920 CE



A Pandya bull coin of South Arcot

Early medieval Pandya Fish coin

During the early part of the sixth century the Pāndyan kings wrested their kingdom back from the Kalabhras. The dynasty revived under King Kadungon, pushed the Kalabhras out of the Tamil country and ruled from Madurai.

The medieval Pandyan coins are circular issued in copper, brass and occasionally in silver and gold. The predominant image on these coins was one or two zoomorphic images of the fish and or the bull. Most of the copper coins have Tamil legends. The gold and silver coins also had inscriptions in Sanskrit.

There are North Lankan medieval coins carrying the emblem of twin fishes. But the accompaniments are different. In the North Lankan coins there are figures of *kuthuvilakku* lamps and in some coins a crescent moon on top. In the Pāndyan coins there is usually a border around the fish and legends written in Tamil or Sanskrit.

Series 10

THE MEDIEVAL CHOLA COINS 1000 - 1200 CE



Silver Coins of Raja Raja Chola released at the completion of the Rajarajesvara Siva Temple in Tanjore c. 1010.



A Raja Raja Chola (985-1014) coin first issued in Sri Lanka.



Medieval Chola Gold Coin of Rajendra Chola issued c. 1020 CE. Having conquered both Pandya and Kerala countries, his son as viceroy ruling from Madura called himself Chola-Pandya. The emblems of bow, seated tiger and twin fish in this coin denotes his regency over the *Mummudichola mandalam*. Some authors misinterpret this as a Virapandya coin.



Medieval Rajendra Chola silver coin depicting the bow, tiger and twin fishes. Reverse show legend in Tamil Grantha script.

Series 11

THE LATE MEDIEVAL PĀNDYA COINS 1200 CE - 1350 CE.



With the rise of the Cholas during the 9th century the Pāndyans went into decline and were in constant conflict with them. By early 11th century the Cholas conquered them and subjugated them. The Pāndyans allied themselves with the Sinhalese and the Cheras in harassing the Chola empire until they found an opportunity for reviving their fortunes during the 13th century. The Later Pāndyas (1225-1345) entered their golden age under three great kings Maravarman Sundara Pandyan, Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan and Jatavarman Vira Pāndyan. Sundara Pāndyan expanded the empire into Telugu country, conquered Kalinga (Orissa), invaded and conquered Sri Lanka. They also has extensive trade links with the Southeast Asian maritime empires of Sri Vijaya and their successors.

Between 1262-64 on an appeal for help from a minister of Sri Lanka Jatavarman Vira Pāndya invaded the island, defeated and killed a Sri Lankan prince and received the submission of the son of Chandrabhanu of the Malay peninsula who ruled over a principality of the north of Sri Lanka. Both the Pāndya invasions of the island fell in the reign of Parakramabahu II who appears never to have gained mastery over the northern half of the island but left its fate to be settled by local adventurers and foreign invaders (Nilakanta Sastri, K.A. 2009: 125).

During their history the Pāndyas were repeatedly in conflict with the Pallavas, Cholas, Hoysalas and finally the Muslim invaders from the Delhi Sultanate. The Pāndyan Kingdom finally became defunct in the 14th century after the establishment of the Madurai Sultanate.

THE COINS OF ANCIENT JAFFNA

Part I I

COINS OF THE CINKAI KINGDOM

995-1270 CE

Series 12

COINS OF THE CINKAI KINGDOM OF JAFFNA. 995 - 1270 CE.

The emblems and symbols carried in these coins themselves suggest that these coins are a continuation of the early medieval coins issued by the kings of North Lanka (series 8). This also reinforces the information supplied by the Jaffna literary tract, *The Yālpāna Vaipava Mālai* which says that the kings of Kathiramalai (Kantarodai) moved their capital to Cinkai Nakar by the end of ninth century.



Coin from Sri Lanka showing a couchant bull on the obverse and emblem of twin fish on the reverse. Wrongly identified as a Pandyan coin for some time, such coins found in large numbers in North Lanka, are rarely seen in India.



A second type of coin showing a standing horse on the obverse and three parallel fishes vertically placed on the reverse.

Recent researches in northern Sri Lanka have yielded several types of coins issued during the 11th-13th centuries CE. Such coins were studied by James Prinsep (1799-1840) more than a century-and-a-half ago during the very early stages of numismatic research (Prinsep, J. 1858: 419.23). He identified these coins were of Sri Lankan origin and were issued from Sri Lanka, but because of the fish emblems regarded them as issued by the Pāndyan kings in Sri Lanka. Incidentally James Prinsep who died young was best remembered for deciphering the Kharosthi and Brahmi scripts of ancient India.



James Prinsep (1799-1840)

Hubert Biddulph in 1966 and more recently Michael Mitchiner in 1998, while studying the coins of the Pāndyans in the Tamil country have worked on these coins elaborately. On the basis of the symbols two types of coins were identified.

1. On the obverse: A couching bull facing right and seated on a pedestal, standing lamps on either side and a crescent above. On the reverse two fishes either placed vertically or horizontally.

A variation of this coin is a single fish on the obverse in between two standing lamps and the reverse illustrates a bunch of flowers in the centre with two fishes on either side (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 109).

2. On the obverse: A standing horse facing left, a *balipitha* in front of it, a crescent is found along the brim line and a *sankha* in the centre are found. The reverse illustrates three fishes placed on a pedestal.



Coins of Sri Lanka showing variations of couchant bull and twin fishes. These coins of Sri Lankan origin were earlier believed to be issued by the Pandyan in Sri Lanka. But neither the Pandyan nor their representatives were known to issue coins in Sri Lanka.

Courtesy: TDM De Silva.

Different variations of these coins showing either three or two fishes facing in the same or opposite directions and being placed horizontally or vertically are met with. Recent researches in Anuradhapura have yielded coins with the bull in the obverse and two fishes in the reverse (Bopearachchi 1998: 157).

Seyon (1998:54-57) obtained these coins from Mannar, Matottam (Mantai) and Jaffna. 302 of these coins were collected by Mr Vadivelu in the Pūnakari region. Prof. Pushparatnam have obtained more than 600 of these coins from the mango grove of Mr Kumarasamy Utaiyar of Īlavur. Other areas where these coins were collected include Tenniyankulam, Pulacceri, Mattuvilnādu, Pallikudā, Mannitalai, Kalmunai, Nallūr, Udutturai and Kantarōdi. (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 110).

From a face-value of the coins Biddulph (1966) and later Mitchiner (1998) assigned the first two type of coins to a period prior to that of Parakramabahu-I (1167-1186 CE) to the 11th century CE.



An assortment of fish coins and couching-bull coins from Jaffna c.1000-1300CE.
Courtesy: P.Pushparatnam.

Discovery of large hoards of these coins in recent years, some of them with inscriptions help to fix the date of these coins. Two of the coins found in Mātotta were read by Iravatham Mahadevan who deciphered the words as *Srirajasekhara* and *Srirajasekhara* (Mahadevan, I. 1970: 111-20). These coins were presented at the Seminar of the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Society at Pondicherry held in 1990. On the available evidence these coins were assigned to the 11th-12th centuries C.E. Regarding the names of kings found on these coins no consensus of opinion was reached (Pushparatnam, p. 2002: 111).

While thousands of coins with the *Couchant bull on the obverse and the Twin fishes on the reverse* are discovered in northern Sri Lanka each year, none of these are spotted anywhere in Tamil Nadu; nor are they noted in any books on numismatics published so far (Pushparatnam 2002: 111). Prof Pushparatnam who has about 1200 of these coins in his possession has discussed these with the other numismatists of Tamil Nadu, and these coins are not found there (except among some collectors who obtained them from Sri Lanka).

An opinion forwarded was that the Pāndyan kings could have issued them in Sri Lanka to celebrate their victory over the island. This idea is not in keeping with the history and the nature of events.

1. The Pāndyans have invaded Sri Lanka several times over the centuries. They have scored a number of victories to impose their over-lordship and to extract tribute from the rulers of the island. But unlike the Cholas they did not usually impose a direct rule through their representative or a vassal. They came, won victories, got their tributes and went away.

There were only two occasions when a representative of the Pāndyan king ruled a Sri Lankan kingdom. The first time it occurred was when Parākrama Pāndyan II (1212-1215) was ruling the Polonnaruwa Kingdom and he was ousted by Māgha from Kalinga in 1215 CE. Parakrama Pandyan II held the kingdom for only three years and was not known to have issued any coins. The other occasion was when Chandrabhānu was allowed to remain on the throne of Jaffna as a tributary to the Pāndyas. He was allowed to issue his own coins in Jaffna.

2. The coins are mostly from the period from 1070 CE to 1215 CE. During this period, the Pāndyans were subjugated by the Cholas and would not have been able to issue coins in their own country, let alone in Sri Lanka. Coins issued in Tamil Nadu during this period was by the Cholas and had the emblems of bow, tiger and fishes in the same coin.

Considering these coins as Pāndyan contradicts the history of the time and undermines the historiography behind the numismatic assessment. Biddulph considered the bull as a common emblem of the Pāndyan kings as well as the kings of northern Sri Lanka who because of their political intercourse with the kings of Kalinga could have issued such a hybrid type (Biddulph, C.H. 1966). Pathmanathan (2011: 86) opines that to use the royal emblem of the Pāndyas at the beginning, it is possible that the early kings of Jaffna (Cinkai) have had a relationship with the Pāndya kings.

The final verdict as summarised by Pushparatnam is as follows: No individual or commercial guild in Sri Lanka or India could have put out these coins to be distributed in such large numbers over such a wide area. To such an effect no clue is available in either place. So the issuing authority should have been a ruling family of the island. The various typologies of the coins suggest their dates in different periods, issued by different rulers. The religious symbols of the coins indicate the indisputable Saivite affiliation of these rulers. Thus, these coins could not have been the outcome of the Sinhalese Buddhist rulers. Considering the concentration and pattern of distribution of these coins being confined to the northern Sri Lanka, the logical conclusion is that the Cinkai kings must have been the issuing authority of these coins (Pushparatnam, P. 2002: 107-113).

Series 13

COINS OF THE CĀVAKA KINGS OF JAFFNA. 1247-1270 CE.



In the year 1247 CE when Pārakramabāhu II (1236-70 CE) was the king ruling at Dambadeniya, Sri Lanka was invaded by the by the Cāvaka king Chandrabhānu, the King of Tambralinga (in present day Thailand). His intention was to acquire the Buddhist relics from the island and install it in a stupa he was building in his homeland.

When Parākramabāhu's forces defeated Chandrabhānu he fled to the Jaffna Kingdom which was then under the king Kalinga Māgha. There he succeeded in securing the throne for himself. How he did this is known for certain. During the time of Pāndyan invasion (Sundara Pāndyan I) he was the ruler of Jaffna.

This invasion stemmed from the Pāndyan rivalry with the Cholas who supported Māgha's regime in Sri Lanka. When, by the middle of the thirteenth century, the Pāndyas had established themselves as the dominant power in South India, they were inclined to support the Sinhalese kings against the kingdom in the north of the island. They invaded Jaffna (under Sundara Pāndyan I) and forced Chandrabhānu to submit to Pandya power. Chandrabhānu was allowed to remain on the throne at Jaffna as a tributary to the Pandyas. One of the limitations imposed on him was that there could be no disturbance to the balance of political power at the expense of the Sinhalese ruler (de Silva, K.M. 2005: 92).

Chandrabhānu embarked on a second invasion of the Sinhalese kingdom and when Parākramabāhu II appealed to the Pāndyas for help, another force invaded Jaffna in 1262 under Vira Pandyan I and Chandrabhānu was killed in the confrontation. When they left the Pandyas installed his son as the ruler of Jaffna. When the son in turn became a threat to the Sinhalese, the latter once more sought the help of the Pandyas who once again went in and Chandrabhanu's son was killed. Āryacakravarti, the leader of the Pāndyan army of invasion on this occasion was installed as the ruler of Jaffna under their overlordship. When the Pāndyan empire in turn collapsed as a result of the Muslim Invasion of South India, Jaffna under the Āryacakravartis became an independent kingdom.

The coins of the Jāvaka king are Nandi coins with a couchant bull under a crescent and two *kuthuvilakku* lamps on either side reminiscent of the earlier coins of the Cinkai kings. The reverse of these coins had the name *Sri Cāvaka* inscribed in Devanagari script.

THE COINS OF ANCIENT JAFFNA

Part I I I

COINS OF THE JAFFNA KINGDOM

1270-1621 CE

Series 14

A. SĒTU COINS OF THE KINGDOM OF JAFFNA: 1270- 1621 CE



SĒTU COINS issued by the Tamil rulers of Jaffna between 13th and 16th centuries CE. The obverse show the figure of a king and the reverse illustrates a reclining Nandi (bull vehicle of Siva) under a crescent moon. The legend *sethu* embosed below the Nandi.

Although there were kings ruling in the Jaffna region for a long time, what we commonly refer to as the 'Jaffna Kingdom' began in 1215 CE with the invasion of Māgha from Kalinga. He landed in Karainagar with a large army of 24,000 troops mostly recruited from Kalinga, Chola and Pandyan territories. He brought the Jaffna principality under his control and marched on to Polonnaruwa.

The Polonnaruwa Kingdom at that time was not under the Sinhalese rule but was ruled by Parākrama Pāndyan II, the Sinhalese having withdrawn to Dambadeniya. Māgha defeated the Pāndyan and established his kingdom there. His second-in-command Jayabahu ruled Jaffna. According to *Culavamsa* he ruled from Polonnaruwa for 21 years until 1236 CE, when he was defeated by Parākramabāhu II and withdrew to the north. The *Yalpana Vaipava Malai* too give similar dates, that he ruled from Polonnaruwa from 1215 until 1236 when he returned to Jaffna and was crowned as king there. (According to *Pujavaliya* he ruled from Polonnaruwa for 40 years until 1255, which does not tally with the date of the Cāvaka invasion). In 1247 the Kingdom of Jaffna was seized by the Cāvaka king Chandrabhanu.

Professor Pathmanathan have quoted inscriptions from the period of Māvarman Kulasekara Pāndya which mention the Āryacakravartis in the Pāndyan court. Some of them held chief positions in the palace while others were commanders in the army. Some of these Āryacakravartis have won the titles of *Thani-ninru Ventra Perumāl* and *Theiva Silaiyan* from the Pāndyan king (Pathmanathan, S. 2011: 109-110).

The first Āryacakravarti king of Jaffna was the leader of the Pāndyan invasion who brought an end to the Cāvaka rule in Jaffna. Around c.1270 CE when the Āryachakravartis began their rule in Jaffna their capital was at Cinkai Nagar. It stands to reason that the Cāvaka kings and the kings who ruled Jaffna before them during the medieval times after the fall of Kantarodai ruled from Cinkai Nagar.

The following records are worthy of note:



The 13th Century Kotagama Inscription in Tamil.

1. The 13th century *Kotagama inscription* refers to the Āryacakravartis as *Ponkolinār Cinkainakar Āryas*, meaning the Ārya kings of Cinkainagar-by-the-roaring-sea. The contemporary *Thiruppukal* and the *Tirumanikkuli Inscription* of 1435 refers to the Tamil capital as *Yalpana-nayan-pattinam* (Discussed in Chapter 4). This indicates that *Yalpana-nayan Pattinam* is the alternate name for Cinkainagar.
2. All the Tamil literary sources speak of the Āryacakravarti kings as Cinkai Āryas or as Cinkai Āryas of Nallur indicating the line of Āryacakravarti kings began at Cinkai first and moved to Nallur at a later stage.
3. Rajavaliya states that during the 14th century the Āryachakravarthi of *Yapa-patuna* (Yālpāna pattinam or Jaffna-port-town) was more powerful than either Parākramabāhu's nephew at Gampola or Alagakkonara at Rayigama. The king was ruling from *Yapa-patuna* and not Nallur.
4. According to the *Kokila Sandesaya*, during 1450 CE when Sapumal Kumaraya invaded the north, the King of Jaffna was ruling from Nallur.

These epigraphic records and contemporary writings indicate that Cinkai Nagar was the earlier name for Jaffna port-town and at some point before the invasion of Sapumal Kumaraya in 1450, the seat of the Jaffna kings was moved to Nallur. Cinkai Nagar was the earlier name for *Yalpanam* and it was not outside the peninsula as some investigators presume.

Thus we have two capitals for the Jaffna Kingdom:

1. Cinkai Nagar / Yālpana Pattinam 1215 CE - ?1400 CE
2. Nallur ?1400 CE - 1621 CE

The coins issued by the Āryacakravarti kings of Jaffna have the word *Sētu* inscribed in Tamil below a Nandi emblem under a crescent moon. Nandi was the royal emblem of the Jaffna kings and *Sētu* probably stands for *Sētukavalār*, the guardians of Rameswaram. According to Fr. Queyros when king Cañkiliyan's army fought the Portuguese the flags of couchant bulls and totemic banners bearing the words *Sētu* were held by the Jaffna soldiers (de Queyros 1930).

These coins produced in copper were found all over Sri Lanka and Tamil Nādu, but the bulk of the finds were from places in northern Lanka like Vallipuram, Nākarkovil, Puloli, Madduvil, Pandattarippu, Tellippalai, Kantardai, Ānaikoddai, Nallur, Tolpuram, Vaddukkoddai, Allaipitti, Mankumpān, Nārantanai, Punkudutīvu, Pūnakari, Mātotta, Varani, Kaccāy, Udutturai, Mullaitīvu and several other places (Gnanapragasar 1928, Rasanayagam 1928, Sivasamy 1974: 1-12, Pathmanathan 1980: 410, Krishnarajah 1983: 71-84, Pushparatnam 2001). These coins were all issued in copper; but Pathmanathan had seen a gold coin at the Museum of Boston issued by the kings of Jaffna (Pathmanathan (1980) and Pushparatnam have obtained some silver coins of the Jaffna kings (Pushparatnam, P. 2002:128).

It took a long time for the numismatists to associate the *Sētu* coin with the kings of Jaffna. Prinsep (1858: 419-24) thought they were from South India, while Rhys Davids in spite of the Tamil legend in the coin believed they were issued by the Sinhalese king Parakramabhahu. It was Mudaliyar Rasanayagam who first suggested that the *Sētu* coins were issued by the kings of Jaffna. Prof. Pathmanathan studied 80 different *Sētu* coins and have classified them chronologically and have tabulated them on the basis of weight, measurements, symbols, legends and craftsmanship (Pathmanathan, S. 1980: 414-17).

B. PEACOCK COINS OF THE NALLUR KINGS OF THE JAFFNA KINGDOM. 1467- 1621 CE

The Peacock Coins of the Āryacakravartis were issued from Nallur after the erection of the Nallur Kandaswamy temple and the worship of Kandan became very popular among the people. Initially the peacock emblem was placed along with the couchant bull with the legend *Sēthu* appearing at the bottom.



The first coin shows an animal like a dog sits facing the couchant Nandi bull. The peacock facing the Nandi in the second coin show their religious persuasion of God Skanda. The legend *sethu* appearing below the bull emblem denotes they are *Sethukavalar*, guardians of Rameswaram.

Their later coins show only the peacock holding a snake in its beak with the legend *Kan* in the reverse in some of the coins. The crescent and the sun appear on top. On palaeographical grounds the script in these coins are dated to 14th century and thereafter (Pushparatnam 2002: 136). These are the later issues of the Nallur kings.



Coin on the obverse shows the emblem of a peacock holding a snake in its beak, the crest of God Skanda. The reverse show a man standing.



Coin on the obverse illustrates the peacock emblem holding the snake under a crescent moon and sun. The reverse show in addition to the legend *kanth*, the emblem of vel (javelin) and the feet of a man. The peacock and the javelin emblems denote their devotion to God Skanda. The legend *Kanth* stands for Kanthan, the Tamil name for Skanda.

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