

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANT TOWNS OF KONGU NADU

Dr.G.MALATHI,  
Guest Lecturer,  
Dept of History &  
Tourism,  
Bharathiar University,  
Coimbatore.

## Abstract

The history of maritime trade contact Kongu Nadu played a vital role, through its resource and trade routes; it's attracted by people of foreign countries especially Western side countries such as Roman, Greek and Arabians. This attraction turned into trade contact exchanged and their goods and coins with Kongu Nadu, products, it were evidencing by archaeological excavations. This paper deals about archaeological important sites in Kongu Nadu. Ancient Kongu had included modern towns of Coimbatore, Erode, Karur, Salem (excluding Rasipuram and Attur Taluk) and Palani. Beryl hoards was popularized by the common people of local region, and the highway and trade route also engaged in the tanning of mineral wealth. Beryl, Amethyst, Carnelian, Agate, Lapis Lazuli, Ruby and Jasper were produced in the urban centres of Kongu. So the Kongu has been positioned a unique place in trade contact with entire India and foreign countries.

**Keywords: Trade, Highways, Beads, Maritime, Resource**

The civilized man had formed society and social bonds, and followed different customs and cultures. Peoples were engaging in various occupations and improved their economic status. The socio-economic conditions of early historic period showed that, the ancient people's adepts in every occupations and how did they used their knowledge for their development and also increase the economy of the state. The people of early historic period focused their attentions in various fields but keenly concentrated in maritime trade contacts and improved their status. In the history of maritime trade contact Kongu Nadu played a vital role, through its resource and trade routes, it's attracted by people of foreign countries especially Western side countries such as Roman, Greek and Arabians. This attraction turned into trade contact exchanged and their goods and coins with Kongu Nadu, products, it were evidencing by archaeological excavations. This paper deals about archaeological important sites in Kongu Nadu.

Kongu Nadu was blessed with enormous wealth, pleasant climate and distinct features. The poems of the Sangam age refer about Kongu country as a separate unit<sup>1</sup>. The history of the Kongu Country was an

integral saga and it had great value for the compilation of the history of Tamil Nadu. Ancient Kongu had included modern towns of Coimbatore, Erode, Karur, Salem (excluding Rasipuram and Attur Taluk) and Palani. It covered with mountains as boundaries but except in south eastern direction. Kongu Mountains and plains had full of mineral wealth, such as, Beryl, quated, cateye and amethyst were unearthed even in 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Beryl hoards was popularized by the common people of local region, and the highway and trade route also engaged in the tanning of mineral wealth. Beryl, Amethyst, Carnelian, Agate, Lapis Lazuli, Ruby and Jasper were produced in the urban centres of Kongu<sup>2</sup>. So the Kongu has been positioned a unique place in trade contact with entire India and foreign countries.

### **Important Archaeological Sites in Kongu:**

As Tamilakam played a major role in trade during early historic period, it includes, Kongu Nadu. State Department of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu, conducted excavations in different part of Kongu Nadu; this article mentioned only about some of the popular towns of Kongu Nadu such as, Karur, Kodumanal, Perur and Vellalore, which has most popular and prominent role in trade contacts with foreign countries.

#### **Kodumanal:**

Kodumanal (Latitude 11°6' N Longitude 30°5'E) is situated in Perundurai taluk of Erode district. It lies in southern bank of river Noyyal, which is tributary of river Kaveri. It is located 40 km south east of Erode, 45 km eastern side of Coimbatore and 15 km west of Chennimalai<sup>3</sup>. Early literatures denoted it as 'Kodumanam' and this place is famous for beads making<sup>4</sup>, on the basis of geographical structure, Kodumanal lies near to Kangayam region which is surrounded by raw materials of semi precious stones, Padiyur famous for beryl, Sinnamalai for sapphire, Vengamedu and Arasampalayam for quartz; so that in ancient times, Kodumanal exported rare and precious stones to western countries<sup>5</sup>. Karur and Kodumanal are also famous for iron and steel production and exported to Rome through the port, Muziri which on the Western Coast or the port Kaveripoompattinam of Eastern Coast<sup>6</sup>.

Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology had conducted excavation at Kodumanal on 1999-2000. There were two cultural sequence found through excavation, those were 300 BCE to 100 CE and 100 CE to 300 CE, the entire objects from excavation belonged to two cultural periods. Potteries like Black and red ware, Red slipped ware, Russet coated ware, Red ware, Black slipped ware, 99 graffiti marks and Megalithic pit, main cist, port hole, passage, subsidiary cist, urn burial, buttress wall, circles grave goods also found<sup>7</sup>. Antiquities like metal objects, terracotta objects, arrow head, swords, beads like quartz, soap stone, jasper, agate, carnelian, beryl etc., with deer horn, shell bangles, conch and bangle pieces; these objects confirmed that Kodumanal was famous for beads as mentioned in early literatures<sup>8</sup>.

Different varieties of terra sigillita were collected, indigenous craftsmen was worked in Kodumanal<sup>9</sup>. On the basis of these facts Kodumanal played important role in export of beads on those days which were very much liked by Romans.

**Karur:**

Karur (Latitude 10° 58'1N Longitude 78°05'1 E) is located 77 km away from Trichy town, it situated on the bank of the River Amaravathi. It also called as, Adipuram, Karuvaipathi, Vancularanyam, Garbhapuram, Bhashkarapuram, Viracholapuram, and Shanmangala Kshetram. Ptolemy called it 'Karura'<sup>10</sup>. The Karuvur was calling as 'Vanji' in ancient period. It was the capital of Chera kingdom, the early literatures indicates as Vanji and Vanji murrum in the most of the poems. The Silapatikaram mentioned Vanji and it has one canto, in this same name, to describing about Kannaki's last life, after burnt of Madurai, she had entered into Chera land. So that whenever, the lyrics of Silapatikaram mentioned about Senkuttvan, king of land of Vanji, automatically it also denoted the gloriousness of Vanji<sup>11</sup>.

It strengthened by inscriptions and copper plate also, the Pugalur was small village situated at the middle from Karuvur to Salem. Tamil-Brahmi inscription found in this village, it is indicating that, the message of made of residence for Senkayapan, the Jain monk; it had been donated by Ilankadunko son of Perumkadunko and grandson of Sellirumpurai. Through this inscription administration of the Chera kings in Karuvur and adjacent areas is proved<sup>12</sup>. Karur played vital role in trade contact with Romans, it had highway which started from Perur to Karur<sup>13</sup>. Coins found in Karur on the basin of Amaravathi river, it were examining by experts and it belonged to Romans, Poneshians, Schelucus<sup>14</sup> and some more coins like punch mark coins, Roman coins, inscribed coins of Kollilppurai and Makkotai and square copper coins made up of gold, silver, and rarely copper found<sup>15</sup>. Chola's copper coins of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> BCE, and 1<sup>st</sup> CE; Pandiya's silver and copper coins of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> BCE also collected from this site<sup>16</sup>. Signet with figures like man and woman, chariot, Roman God, elephant, horse, man on lion, girl, conch, lion, and cock were made of gold found through field work<sup>17</sup>.

Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology conducted excavation in four times, 1973-74, 1977, 1979, and 1996. Excavations revealed, potteries like Amphorae, Arretine ware, Rouletted ware, Black and red ware and Russet coated ware, buff ware, and incised ware; Beads like terracotta, glass, agate, shell, paste, stone, copper and steatite<sup>18</sup>. Chinna Dharapuram, west of Karur, agate and sun stone were available at Chinadharapuram and Periya Dharapuram available. Iron and steel industries of Karur, exported to Rome, either form Muziri or Kaverippoompattinam<sup>19</sup>.

**Perur:**

Perur (Latitude 10°58' 30" N and Longitude 70°54' 54" E) lied 6 km away from west side of Coimbatore on the south bank river Noyyal. In Early period, people, those who entered through Palghat gap they first reached Perur and highway which reached Karur, starts from Perur<sup>20</sup>.

State Department of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu did excavation in Perur on 1970-71. It revealed mostly beads like agate, carnelian, quartz, soapstone, lac, terracotta, shell, glass and objects made of stone, lac, metal objects arrow head, axe, sickle, terracotta lamps, gamesmen; potteries like Black and red ware, Russet coated painted ware, Red slipped ware, Red ware (coarse variety), with graffiti marks, spindle whorl, smoking pipes, seals of Chera's royal insignia were found<sup>21</sup>. On the basis of excavation finds, Perur was important town for trade and it touched highways so that it played a part of roll in Roman trade as path for enter the country.

### **Vellalore:**

Vellalore (Latitude 10\*58'2" N Longitude 77\*1'40"E), a small village 15 km away from Coimbatore urban limits and come under suburb of Coimbatore district. In early age it is called as Velilur, maybe it was capital of Velir chiefs. It was referred as 'Velilur', this name can be divided into 'Velil' and 'Ur', the first syllable means the settlements of Vel (chief ), Ur was added to Velil, hence Velilur<sup>22</sup>. Vellalore sasana mentioned this place name as 'Vallalore' or 'Annathana Sivapuri'<sup>23</sup>.

In early age, this village contributed for development of trade, the Westerners who were entering into Palghat gap and wanted to reach inner part of Kongu Nadu or other region they mostly crossed Vellalore<sup>24</sup>. It was a treasure of Roman coins and State Department of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu found Roman coins hoard, such as, Augustus coins hoard found on 1931, aurei hoard found was on 1939, two denari hoard excavated on 1841,1891<sup>25</sup>. Archaeological finds proved that Vellalore had gem stone and bead make industries <sup>26</sup>. Apart from Roman coins, it had signet ring, jewel with the figure of a dwarf and seamonster, two gold rings with images of tiger and fish emblem & amulet were found<sup>27</sup>. Vellalore situated on way of highways so that it highly linked with Roman trade contact.

The different kinds of commodities occupied important place by transaction. Ancient people used both land and sea transports for transact their goods. Traders made possible that, maritime trade contacts by the way of highways and ports. These are the archaeological main centers of Tamilakam, which made flourish trade contact with foreign countries. The remaining of objects of foreigners showed their keen interest for Kongu Nadu products. It proved adept and knowledge of early Tamil people. Some place needs much more attention to protect the remains and people of those regions and media should concentrate in their region's monuments and keep it safe.

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