CHAPTER - III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TEMPLE
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A striking feature of the south Indian temples particularly in Tamil region is the preservation of number of inscriptions written on their walls which contain valuable data on the history of the temple and the place where they were located. During the course of renovation and reconstruction some inscriptions are either disturbed or destroyed, however a considerable number of inscriptions have come down to us. There are 101 inscriptions found in the Vilinathaswamy temple of Tiruvilimālai. These inscriptions belong to the Chōlā, Pāṇḍya, and Vijayanagar dynasties ranging from 910 A.D. (Parantakā I) to 1385 A.D. (Virupaṇṇa Udayār of Vijayanagar dynasty). They throw valuable light on the regions of different kings and the eventful charges that took place in the political scene of this area and their impact on the temple. Tiruvilimālai is situated in Tanjāvūr region.

The place, throughout history had to bear the brunt of invasions and political fluctuations that occurred in Tanjāvūr. The first important development seems to have taken place in 7th Century A.D., with the construction of temples in villages, coinciding with the spread of Bakti faith among the people. This continued until the middle of the chōlā period when it culminated in the grandiose political and cultural achievements symbolised by the conquest of northern part of Srilanka by the chōlās and the construction of imperial capital. The pāṇḍyās who came from south in the middle of 13th century ruled the region nearly for a century. In the latter half of 14th century another political power namely
Vijayanagar warriors invaded the region from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In and after 16th century the Nayaks who were intruding Vijayanagar rulers increased their power, strength and established their rule. The advent of British contributed to political changes in the region from 18th to 20th centuries.

This chapter explains the political implications of the temple epigraphs against the history of Tiruvilimilalai. In the midst of dynastic quarrels we find that religious institutions were not disturbed by the political rivalry, Each dynasty contributed to the enrichment of the Vilinathaswamy temple and it stands as a symbol of religious unity amidst political diversity and rivalry.

The region in the sangam period

The sangam literary works Silappathikaram and Pattinappalai and a few epigraphs such as Sinnamanur and Velevakkudi plates of Rajasimha II Pandyar king, Nedunchadayan Parantakan Pandyar king refer to the names of places like Puhar (kaveriumpattinam) and Thalayangananam which are near Tiruvilimilalai village.

Kalabrás

The kalabrás who ruled practically the whole of tamil country were a mysterious and ubiquitous enemy of civilisation had upset the established political order and hence no reference can be seen on the relevance of kalabrā rule to the temple or region.
The Pallavā rule

Literary references speak of the contribution of saivite saints Appar and Tiruṅṅañasambandar at the time of famine in the region (probably in 650 A.D.) by receiving the blessing of Śiva at the temple with coins (padikkāsu) to retrieve the famine sticken. These references highlight that the temple received the political patronage from the from the pallavās, however there is no inscription of the pallavas in the temple.

Tiruvilāmilalai under chōḷās

The Vīḷināṭhaswāmy temple has a total of 64 inscriptions of chōḷā rulers, which testify the royal patronage extended to the temple by the chola rulers.

The Imperial chōḷā line began with Vijayalaya (A.D. 850-871), Aditya the successor of Vijayalaya participated in the battle of Tirupurambiam as an ally of pallavā remained a subordinate to him for a while, but in a decisive battle he slew his suzerain Aparajita and thereby ended the Pallavā rule in tamiḻnādu. The temple of Vīḷināṭhaswāmy does not have any epigraph of Vijayalaya and Aditya.

Parāntaka I (907-955 A.D.)

Parāntaka succeeded Aditya. The Vīḷināṭhaswāmy temple has five inscriptions of this ruler. (dated 910 A.D., 913 A.D., 922 A.D., 941 A.D. and 945 A.D.). All epigraphs speak of endowments made to the temple. Parāntaka invaded the pāṇḍya country and bears the title Madurai konda. The kodumbālūr
chieftains the enemies of pāṇḍyās, assisted Parantakā in his southern campaigns and became an ally of chōlās thereafter. The defeated pāṇḍyan king took help of Sinhalese king, and left his crown in Ceylon. After his 37th regnal year, Parāntakā took up arms against Ceylon and had the title Maduravum Ilamum konda Parakesarivarman which is indicated in an inscription of the Viḍyānāthaswāmy temple. Towards the close of his reign Parāntakā I had received a threat to his victorious career from the Rashtrakūta King Krishna III who assumed the title "conqueror of Kanchi and Tanjai". The temple of Tiruvilimilalai does not have any inscription to this reference, but Alberuni a muslim historian refers to the invasion of Tanjāvūr by Krishna. A number of inscriptions of Krishna III found in Tondaimandalam mention, Krishna as the conqueror of Tanjāvūr9 K.A. Nilakanta Sāstri states that Krishna’s inscriptions are not found beyond Tiruvadhigai.10 But recent research has revealed that an inscription of Viridhagiriṣa temple at Vridāchalam gives details corresponding to 964 A.D., surmises that Krishna’s inscriptions taken as being most proximate to Tanjāvūr and it gives credibility to his claim of having overrun Tanjāvūr".11

Parāntakā I died in 955 A.D., and the next 30 years formed a period of turmoil. He was followed by Gandarāditya, Arinjavā, and Sundara Chōlā Parantakā II. Inscriptions of these rulers are not to be seen in the Viḍyānāthaswāmy temple. However, mention can be made of Sembian Mahādevi the illustrious queen of Gandarāditya. She led a religious life with absolute renunciation and spiritual dedication. She devoted nearly sixty years of her life and wealth for erecting
temples, renovated the old ones and enriching them with costly gifts. She contributed to temple construction and architecture with number of devagōshtās\textsuperscript{12} (niches). (Fig 1) Sundara chōlā was followed by Uttama chōlā (971-985 A.D.) in whose time the chōlās recovered a good part of northern territories.

Rājarājā I (985-1014 AD)

The temple of Vilināthasvāmy temple has six inscriptions of Rājarājā I in the third prakara. Rājarājā was the first tamil king who conceived the idea of formulating in set phrases an official record of the chief events of his reign which was to serve as an introduction to his stone inscription.\textsuperscript{13} A second form of introduction places the victory of ‘Sālai’ first among the achievements of his reign. The inscriptions of Rājarājā in the Vilināthasvāmy temple dated 993 A.D.\textsuperscript{14} on his 8th regnal year and 997 A.D. on 12th regnal year\textsuperscript{15} bear testimony to the above stated facts respectively. The term ‘Sālai kālamarutha’ as seen from the inscription supported by the Tiruvāḷangādu plates suggest the capture of Madurai and the subjugation of the Pāṇḍyā King Amarabhuyangā preceded the advance on the strong fortress of Vilurainā and on Sālai. It was also taken to be naval expedition to the West Coast as the meaning of Sālai was taken as roadstead kālam meaning ship and the term aruthu denoting destroyed. The term aruthu does not necessarily mean destruction, but mean ‘overcome’ and this is supported by a tamil literary work Kalingathupparaṇi which says Vilinam was destroyed and Sālai was captured.\textsuperscript{16} Further the term sālai is identified as Kāndalūr sālai a part of Tiruvananthapuram now
called as Valiya sālai. Perhaps Kāndalūr or Kāndalūr Sālai was near Vilinam and Kāndalūr sālai which is said to belong to the Chēra king in later inscriptions was probably held by the Pāṇḍyās when it was attacked by Rājdarājā.

Two epigraphs of Rājdarājā of his 22nd regnal year in the Vilināthasvāmy temple throw light on the other conquests of the ruler. They speak of his conquests of Vengai nādu, Gangapādi, Thadigaipādi, Nulambampādi, Kudamalai nādu, Kollam, Ėlam and Irattapādi. The epigraphs run thus:

"Kāndalūr Sālai Kalamrutharulīa Vangai nādum
Gangapādiyum, Nulanbampādiyum, Kudamalai nādum, Kollamum,
Kalingamum Erdisai pugal thara Ėla mandalamum
Irattaipādiyum Verri thandar konda."

After the victory at Sālai, Rājdarājā is said to have gained successes at Tattapādi or Tadigaipādi Nulambampādi Gangapādi and all of them are in Mysore country. The conquest of Tadigaipādi was probably undertaken from the side of Kongu country as a part of the campaign in Kudamalai nādu, Malai nādu or Kudamalai nādu the western hill country may be identified with Coorg. The expedition against Kollam led to the conquest of chērās substantiated in Tanjāvūr inscriptions. Kalingathupparaṇi a tamil literary work, by Ottakkūṭhar states that Rājdarājā's achievement of crossing the eighteen forests and the capture of Kalingam. Rājdarājā is said to have taken the Ėllamandalam (ceylon) owned by the fierce singalas. The naval expedition of Rājdarājā against ceylon must have taken place in the reign of Mahendra V who
came to the throne in 981 A.D., and as a result of the military rising had to take refuge in the inaccessible hill country in the south east of ceylon, called Rōhanā Rājarāja. He made himself the master of northern Ceylon which became a province (Mandalam) under the name Mummudi Chōla Mandalam.  

The epigraphs of Rājarāja in Tiruvilimilalai thus focus on the above conquests through the prasasti or royal introduction and also state donations, endowment, in the form of land, rice, jewels, precious gems to the temple which indicate the patronage by the king Rāja Rājā to the temple despite his hectic war activities.

Rājendrā I (1012-1944 A.D.)

The temple of Vilināthaswāmy has four inscriptions of Rājendrā I, who succeeded Rājarāja I. All the epigraphs are found on the pillars of the temple and are mutilated. Only one epigraph throws light on his Meikirti (prasasti or royal introduction) as Kopparakesari Rājendrā chōla. The imperial policy continued during his region witnessed victories that crossed seas and extended upto South east Asia. One epigraph talks of an individual's donation of paddy to the temple, another speaks of donation of gold for making jewellery to the deities. Yet another inscription states a close associate of the King Rājendrā I namely Pallavarayar whose mother Srīdēvi had made a donation to the deity. It is in the same way an endowment of 1500 kalam paddy being given by an individual called Sembiar for providing amudhu (holy food) to the deities for 3 times in the month of purattāsi (September - October) on
the star Revathi. The epigraphs of Rājendra I in the temple do not throw much light on his political expeditions but reveal the interest taken by the king and individuals to the pujas and festivals of the temple.

Rājadhirāja and his successors 1018 - 1120 A.D.

Rājendra I was succeeded by his three sons one after another namely Rājadhirāja (1018-1054 A.D.) Rājendra II (1052-1063 A.D.) and Vīra rājendra (1063-1070 A.D.).

Rājadhirāja's conquests and military achievements can be gleaned from the epigraphs found in the Vīlināthaswāmy temple. Rājadhirāja with a single unequalled army took the crown of large jewels of the lord of Lanka Vikrama pāṇḍyan. Rājadhirāja entered Elam with his country men, put on the crown, and had become the proud king of Elam. A war was undertaken by Rājadhirāja against Chālikyva, between 1044 and 1046 A.D. He defeated several subordinate chieftains of the Chālikyva forces and destroyed their palace in the town of Kampili. In another battle at Pundur on the left bank of Krishna river, he defeated Telugu chieftains including the brothers of Telinga Viccaya, his mother and son, vassals of Somesvara, were made prisoners of war. The Ceylonese expedition and Chalukya conquest of Rājadhirāja are attested in the epigraphs seen in the Vīlināthaswāmi temple, and run as follows: KadaliLangavar Kōmar Vikramabahuvin Mahudamum Mundra nakkudaintha therthamel mardala muluvathum Elangesa Vikrama pāṇḍia manimahudamum. The Chalukya conquest as seen in the epigraph is ...
"Māligai Chudarappavum, Angavar Manger Vengai midheludi
Jayasthan nathi vikian, villavar, mēravar, vallavar, Kongaiar
Sudhures mangu muddha Arasar Iduthiraigalem ugendhu". 30 The
second chalukya expedition of Rājādhīrājā against Ahavamallā
led to the flight of Ahavamallā, and Rājādhīrājā followed by
his forces took his herd of elephants for bathing them in the
three bathing ghats (thurai) namely sirunthurai, perunthurai
and daivabhimākarai and engraved the emblem of the fierce
tiger on hills marked by the boar sign of the enemy and
planted the sign of victory. 31 The same information is
attested in an epigraph is Vilināthaswāmy temple of
Rājādhīrājā dated 1049 AD which runs thus: Chakravarthi
perumpadai ... Ahavamallan Anjinenrum ... Angavar manger
Vengai Midheludi. 32 The inscriptions of Rājādhīrājā in the
temple speak of such conquests as royal introduction and
reveal that Rājādhīrājā styled himself as Vijayarājēndra and
performed vīrabhishēka. Two inscriptions of Rājādhīrājā of
Vilimilalai temple denote the grant of Dēvadana land to the
temple by the king. 33 Another epigraph of this ruler indicates
liberal donations made to the temple in the form of gold
jewellery, by Pattālinangai who was closely associated with
the king.

Rājādhīrājā was followed by Rājēndrā II who was the
second son of Rājēndrā I. Rājēndrā II invaded Rattamandalam
ravaged the chālukya country. Ahavamallā the chālukya king was
furious, marched out with his forces met the chōlā army in a
pitched battle at Koppam. Rājendrā II restored order in his
army and won a brilliant success at the battle and took number
of elephants and horses and wealth of Ahavamallā as captive
which has been noted as a prasasti in his epigraph of Vilinäthaswámi temple as follows:

Swasti Sri Erattapadi elâyíralakkanun kondu perarrangarai
Koppam Ahavamallanai anjuvithu avan ānayum kuthirayum pandir
pandáramum kondu vijayabishákaum seithu ViRasingásanathu
viriruntharulía kópparakésari Sri Rájendrá.34 Of the two
epigraphs of Rájendrá, one speaks of donation of land to
sivabrahamanás by Pattálinangai who was associated with him.35
(also) with Rajádhírājá) and another partly mutilated epigraph
speaks of donation of tax free land to Vilinäthaswámi
temple.36

Virarájendrá the third son of Rájendrá I succeeded
Rájendrá II in 1062 A.D. The temple has no inscriptions of
Virarájendrá.

Chálukya Chóläs:

The accession of Kulöttungá I marks the commencement of
a new era in the history of chólä empire. The wisdom of
Kulöttungás statesmanship lay in adjusting his aims to his
resources. The inscriptions of his long reign contain several
prasastis each with some variant forms. The two common forms
of the prasastis of his reign are the short introduction
commencing pugal mädí vilanga and the other pugal súlnđa
púpári 37 (found in an epigraph of Vilinäthaswámy temple)
appearing for the first time in the fifth regnal year.38 The
first few lines of the inscription beginning pugal súlnđa
púpári refer to early wars fought by Kulöttungá in his youth
("ilángö-paruvam") and add that by the strength of his arm he
routed an army of the king of Kuntala and thus donned the garland of victory. In the north before he turned his attention to the south. The inscriptions of Kulottunga agree with kalingattuparani (a tamil literary work) in stating that his advent to the south rescued the chola country from a state of anarchy and dissolution and restored unity and order.

Of the seven inscriptions of Kulottunga in Vīlināthaswāmi temple, three are mutilated. An epigraph denotes grant of tax freeland in the temple. Another indicates a note on the flood and consequent inadequacy of funds and the contribution of Sabhā both in the form of land and cash to the temple. Two of the epigraphs mention Kulottunga’s liberal donations in the form of articles to perform the Brahmothsava in the month of chittirai (april-may) in the name of Kalyāṇa utsavam. This contribution was made by the king in 1105 A.D. which was his 35th regnal year.

Vikrama chōla (1118 - 1135)

Vikramachōla inherited an empire confined to the tamil country proper and the seventeen years of his rule appear to have been on the whole a period of peace. The prasastis of Vikrama chōla’s inscriptions take two forms both dating from his second year and employed throughout the reign. The shorter form commences pu madu punara (found in the inscription of the ruler in Vīlināthaswāmy temple) and the longer on pu malai mēda vidanathar. These prasastis record specific political event the war against Kalingam waged by Vikramachōla in the early years of viceroyalty in Vengi.
The epigraphs of Vikrama chōla in Vilināthaswāmy temple date from 1120 to 1126 A.D. during which time lavish endowments were made to the temple. He was so pious that he decorated the vimāna of Natarāja temple at Chidambaram and to the shrine of Ranganātha temple at Srirangam.

Kulōttunga II (1113-1150 A.D.)

Kulōttunga II must have been chosen as heir apparent by his father Vikramachōla sometime in 1133 A.D. He was like his father religious minded. He was a staunch saivite and improved chidambaram the abode of Natarāja (śiva). The renovation of the temple and city of Chidambaram is in fact the best known event of the reign and is explicitly mentioned for the first time in an inscription.

The prasastis in his inscriptions take many forms, all of them purely rhetorical and is hyperbolical praise of the excellence of his rule. The chief forms of the prasastis were; Pū mannu pāvai, pū maruvia pāvai, puvi ēlum, pū mēya (mevi) valar, Pū mannu paduman, pu mēvu tirumagați, pū mannu vernar. The epigraph of Kulōttunga II in TiruvIlīlimilalai temple found on the eastern wall of third prākārā starts with the prasasti Pū mannu padumam and it speaks in detail the excellence of his rule not vouchsafing a single fact of the history of the reign. This highlights on his reign as a period of peace, good government with no record of warfare, with the exception of the removal of the shrine of Govindarāja (Vishnu) from its place in Chidambaram indicating the growth of sectarian intolerance.
Rājarāja II (1150 - 1173 A.D.)

The Viṭilīnāthaswāmi temple has a single epigraph of Rājarāja II attesting the extent of his kingdom and disclosing the names and position of a number of feudatories and it runs as follows:

"Villavar, Irattar, Minavar, Singalar, Pallavar, Telungar, parthuar pania"

The prasasti of the king 'pūmarivia thirumadhum' gives a high flown account of the benefits of Rājarājasā rule. Judging from the silence of the inscription on the military transaction of the reign, one may infer that like the reign of Kulōttungā II the period of Rājarāja II also was generally peaceful.

Kulōttungā III (1718 - 1218 A.D.)

The inscriptions of Kulōttungā III in Viṭilīnāthaswāmi temple are numerous. Eight inscriptions of the ruler are found on the wall of the third prākāra of the temple out of which three are mutilated. The epigraphs range from his 7th to 37th regnal years that is 1185 A.D. to 1215 A.D. The epigraphs of Kulōttungā III often exhibit descriptive titles of the monarch which are of great help in the study of his reign. The phrase "Maḍuraim Pāndian Mudi talavam kōndarulīa," meaning who was pleased to take Maḍurai and the crowned head of the Pāṇḍya is employed to distinguish the King from his earlier namesakes. The descriptive title quoted above is revised from time to time by the addition of Ālam (Ceylon) Karuvūr, and Kānchipuram.
The reign of Kulōttunaga III is a remarkable example of the triumph of the personal ability of the monarch against the forces of disruption that were steadily increasing in their number and in the intensity of their action. He lived long enough to experience the first shock of the new born imperialism of the Pandyas. All the energy and strength of Kulōttunaga was taken up in counteracting the actions of overgrown Vassals. The period of Kulōttunaga III marked the last great epoch in the history of chōla architecture and art and Kulōttunaga III himself must be counted as the last of the great chōla monarchs.

Rājarāja III (1216 - 1250 A.D.)

The most common prasasti of the reign is a relatively short description of the glories of chola rule under Rājarāja III. It begins "Sirumanni iru nāngu thisai viḷanga", which does not contain much historical facts. The reign of Rājarāja was a period of continuous trouble. It coincided with an epoch of great changes in the political map of the south and Rājarāja was obviously no great warrior or statesman. The chōlas were exposed to assaults from pāndyās in the south, hoysalas in the west, chālukyas in the north-west, telugu chōlas in north east. Despite such political turmoil the king contributed to the temples. The Viḷināṭhaswāmi temple has eleven inscriptions that forms the maximum number compared to the inscriptions of other rulers of chōla dynasty. These eleven inscriptions range from his 2nd regnal year to 31st regnal year that is from 1218 A.D. to 1247 A.D. These epigraphs throw light on land transaction, lard grants, and sale deeds signed
by the king, sabayār, temple official and by individuals all contributing to the temple pūjās and maintenance. These reveal the patronage received by the temple in the time of Rājarājā III. These epigraphs bear testimony that the temple had received greater patronage during the later chōla period.

Rājendrā III (1246 - 1279 A.D.)

Rājendrā III was an able monarch, warrior and diplomat than his predecessor Rājarājā III. There are different views regarding his relationship to Rājarājā III. H. Krishna Sastry says that they were brothers and that when sharp differences arose between them at a later date Rājendrā III murdered Rājarājā III. This view is rejected by K.A.N Sastri who says that he was remaining a co-ruler ever since 1246 A.D., he became the heir apparent and he dominated the scene as a more powerful warrior.54 Rājendrā III avenged the humiliation put upon the chōla power, plundered the pāṇḍya country gained success against the pāṇḍyās, claimed the pāṇḍyan crown, and enabled Rājarājā III (his predecessor) wear two crowns for three years55 stated in epigraphs as "iruvar mudithalai kondarulina". But by 1251 A.D. the pāṇḍyās (Jatavarman sundara pāṇḍya) of second empire attained great splendour, achieved signal success against the chōla and hōysāla by 1258 A.D. Rājendrā III and the hōysāla king Vira Ramanātha were drawn more closely together to face the common adversity. But they were both defeated in a battle about 1279 A.D., by pāṇḍya Maravarman kulasekara the successor of Sundara pāṇḍya leading to unquestioned mastery of the pāṇḍyās (of second empire) of both chōla country and Tondaimandalam.
The Vilināthaswāmi temple has five inscriptions of Rājendrā III not revealing much of his political expeditions but highlighting on endowments made to different religious maths namely Tirunāvukkarasar math56 (with land) Tiruthondathogayar Thiru math57 (20 kuli of tax free land) and Tiruchirrambalam math 58 (with 156 kuli of tax free land) during his 2nd, 18th and 23rd regnal years, respectively.

In a nutshell, though the period of Rājarāja III and Rājendrā III signalised the closing years of political glory of the chōḷās, their records in the Vilināthaswāmi temple reveal their active role in the temple management through endowments and their contribution to religious maths in the village of Tiruvilālimilalai.

The Pāṇḍyaś of the second empire

From the middle of the 12th century to almost the end of 13th century the power of the pāṇḍyaś attained great strength. A succession of able and distinguished rulers in the main line made the second empire a real power in the politics of south India in their age. Their success in war, their patronage of literature, arts, and methods of rule are borne by the numerous records which they have left behind. The pāṇḍya revival started in the time of Jatāvarman kulasēkhara (1190-1216 A.D.) continued under Māravarman Sundara pāṇḍya I (1215-1238 A.D.) and reached its zenith under Jatāvarman Sundara pāṇḍya who crushed the authority of the chōḷās. The end of the reigning period of Jatāvarman kulasēkhara I coincided with that of Kulottungā III. He did acts of royalty
and assumed sovereignty in so far as it did not interfere with the suzerainty of the cholas. It is known from inscriptions that in his 25th regnal year he created the Rāja gambīra chaturvedimangalam consisting of 1030 brahmadeyās perhaps he held the title Rājagambīra.59 He was followed by Māravarman sundara pāṇḍya I (1216-1238 A.D.). He was a contemporary of Rājarāja III. He remembered with shame the subordinate position to which his ancestors had been reduced by the Imperial chōḷās. He remembered their having to pay tribute to the chōḷā superiors and in his own life time had known the havoc and destruction caused to the Pāṇḍyan country by the armies of Kulōttunga III. Consequently he invaded the chōḷā country in 1219 A.D. defeated Rāja Rājā III set fire to Uraiyyūr and Tanjavūr the traditional capitals of the chōḷā kingdom. The defeated Rājarāja III returned to the old chōḷā capital Paḷayārai where again the Pāṇḍyan king reached and crowned himself. He ordered Rājarāja III to pay tribute to the Pāṇḍyas. Since Rājarāja III failed to pay the tribute the king sundara pāṇḍya was obliged to invade the chōḷā country in 1231 A.D., but no annexation was made. Māravarman Sundara pāṇḍya was succeeded by Jatāvarman kulasekara II and then by Māravarman Sundara pāṇḍya II. The next ruler was Jatāvarman sundara pāṇḍya I (1251-1268 A.D.). He was an unparalleled hero and conqueror. In his days the pāṇḍyan kingdom became a pāṇḍyan empire and the chōḷās practically disappeared from the tamil scene. He conquered and held Ceylon, made Hoysalas retreat, Kongūdēsa became a province of the pāṇḍya kingdom. He assumed the title "Emmandalamum kondarulīja Sundara pāṇḍya thevar."60 His warlike and peaceful achievements are mentioned
in an inscription at Srirangam and another at Thiruthuraipûndi in Tanjâvûr district. 41 Four inscriptions of Jatâvarman sundara pândya are seen in the second prâkârâ of Vîlinâthaswâmi temple. They speak of sale of land to the temple by an individual the king’s donation of land for the benefit of devotees of religious maths in the Vîlimiilalai village and his donation of gold and land for pûjâs and recital of hymns in the temple which runs thus: "Tirumenigallokkum, Tiruppâthiothuvârkkum Thiruthâla thoându seiyum tirumenikalukkkum...madam Udayâr pûjikkum". Mâravarman kulasëkhara succeeded Jatâvarman sundara pândya, His period is noted for the visit of Marco Polo to the tamil country, and we get an account of the social conditions of the tamil country during the period of kulasékara from the writings of Wassaf a muslim historian. The temple has no inscription of Mâravarman kulasëkhara. He had two sons namely Jatâvarman sundara pândya and Jatâvarman Virapândya the former by his wife and the latter by his mistress. When the king arranged Virapândya’s succession, the elder son got enraged, killed his father and captured the throne in 1310 A.D. Wassaf and Amir Khusru give an account of the struggle and the subsequent civil war. Virapândya rendered military assistance to the hoyasala king which annoyed Malikafur who marched towards Urayur Virapândya’s capital captured the same by defeating Virapândya. The temple has an inscription of Jatâvarman Virapândya which states about a land donation. 45 Malikafur’s invasion of Virapândya’s territory and that of Jatâvarman sundara pândya’s territory contributed to unprecedented confusion, loot and the Tamil country became impoverished leading to decline of pândya
power and established muslim power. The Muhammadan conquest contributed to decline of administration and tamil character of the various institutions. The pāṇḍyās were unable to resist the power of muslims. A hindu monarch Vīra Ballalā III a hoysala king tried to uproot the muslims from south India, and though he did not succeed himself yet he paved the way for the emperors of Vijayanagar to obtain splendid victory over the muslims.

Vijayanagar rulers

The foundation of a Hindu kingdom by the Sangama brothers on the banks of Tungabhadra in 1336 A.D. was an important event in the history of south India. It preserved the ancient tradition of the country in its polity, its learning, its arts, and the history of Vijayanagar is the last glorious chapter in the independent hindu south India. The kingdom soon spread far and wide in south India including whole of tamiḻagam. The Vijayanagar inscriptions have been found in all over south India though in our temple there is only one representing the dynasty. It is dated in Saka era and hence the date is determined precisely.

The Vijayanagar authority was well established by the brilliant victory gained by Kumara kampana over Rajanarāyana Sambuvarayā. In 1370 A.D., he defeated the forces of the Sultan at Samayavaram, restored Lord Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam temple and proved himself to be the champion of hindu faith. The southern part of Tamilnādu upto Ramesvaram came under the rule of Vijayanagar. The important rulers of
this period (1363-1463 A.D.) were Hariharā II, Virupaṇṇa Udaiyar, Dēvarāya I and Dēvarāya II. In the temple of Vīlimilalai there is an inscription of Virupaṇṇa Udaiyar dated 1385 (S 1307) which conveys a donation of 500 kuḷi of land and this inscription is seen on the south wall of mahāmandapa.66 The Saluvā dynasty (1486-1504 A.D.) tuluva dynasty, (1505-1570 A.D.) and Āravīdu dynasty (1570-1614 A.D.) witnessed gradual rise and fall of Vijayanagar power. In the reign of Venkata III the territorial jurisdiction became very limited. The Nāyaks of Madurai, Tanjavūr and Senjee freed themselves from the yoke of Vijayanagar authority.

Nāyakas of Tanjavūr

Timmappa Nāyaka a loyal doorkeeper of Krishnadēvarāya was elevated to the position of an Amara Nāyaka for Tondaimandalam. His son Sēvappa nāyakā (1532-1560 A.D.) was the founder of an independent nāyakdom of Tanjāvūr. He married Murtimanka sister in law of Achutarāya under whom he served as a personal attendant. His close association by marriage led him to get a post of governor of Tanjāvūr. He was followed by Achutappa (1560-1600 A.D.) who stood by the Vijayanagar emperor at the battle of Talaikotta, Achutā was succeeded by his younger son (1600-1634 A.D.) who defeated Muttu veerappa of Madurai and Krishnappa of Senjee. Vijayaraghava nāyaka (1634-1673 A.D.) the successor of Raganātha nāyaka was week and incompetent. He was unable to cope with the difficulties caused by other nāyaks, the muslims and europeans. He was the last of the Tanjāvūr nāyaks. He earned the displeasure of Tirumalai nāyakā of Madurai, who induced the Sultan of
Golkonda to attack and as a consequence Vijayarāghava was defeated, captured and lost Tanjavūr. The temple of Vilimilalai does not have any inscription of the nāyaka of Tanjavūr, yet the literary sources reveal the control of the area by the nāyaka and their contribution to the conduct of festivals in temples particularly the Chittirai festival.

Marathās of Tanjavūr

The fall of Tanjavūr in the hands of Sultan of Bijapur Golkonda led to appointment of Ekōji half brother of Sivāji to control the area and later usurpation. Ekōji established Maratha rule in Tanjavur. Ekōji was the son of Shāji and inherited the karnatic Jahīr from his father. Shivāji the elder half brother of Ekōji took an expedition against Ekōji, appointed Santōji, illegitimate son of his father to look after territories upto Chidambaram. The small state of Tanjavūr had many jealous neighbours namely Chokkanātha nāyaka of Madurai and Santōji of Senji. Shāji II (1685-1712 A.D.) the successor of Ekōji improved the forts of Tanjavūr area. Shāji was succeeded by Serfōji (1712-1728 A.D.), Tukkōji (1728-1736 A.D.), Tukkōji II (1736-1739 A.D.) and Pratap Singh (1739-1763 A.D.).

Hyder Ali, a muslim ruler of karnataka invaded Tanjavūr and received a ransom of Rs.4 lakhs, in the time of Tulāji (1763-1787 A.D.). In 1773 Tanjavūr was taken by the Nawab with the help of the British East India Company and the Kajā was imprisoned. For three years (1773-1776 A.D.) Tanjavūr was in the Muhammadan hands the only muslim interlude in the long
history of Tanjāvūr. They collected huge amount of taxes and the court of Directors ordered the restoration of the Rāja and justly condemned the second expedition. In the second Mysore War (1781 A.D.) Tanjāvūr was reduced to the sore condition. About 65,000 people in Tanjāvūr and all surrounding areas fled in fear of Tippu Sultan (son of Hyder Ali). Tulaji died and since his children pre-deceased him he adopted Serfoji from a collateral branch and agreed to his brother’s (Amarsingh) rule as regent. The English East India Company practically forced a treaty on Amar Singh by which two fifths of revenue of Tanjāvūr were to go to the military peace establishment for which territorial security was to be given by the company. In 1799 under pressure of Lord Wellesley Rāja Serfoji transferred to the British the administration of his kingdom in return for a pension of one lakh of star pagodas i.e. (3½ lakhs of rupees). The period of maratha rule in Tanjāvūr was marked on the whole by weakness, disputed successions and degradations of the rich district by invasions.

British rule

Under the British hegimony Tanjavur provided a heavy volume of trade. Towns like Kumbakōnam, Tanjāvūr, Mayladuthurai (35 KM, 80 KM and 30 KM respectively from Vilimalalai) and Nagappattinām formed centres of temple worship, education and administration and litigation. They brought together the more important landed families of the district and formed arenas for their social and political interaction. The nature of mirasidar elite with its history of education and administrative services going back to the chōla
age, meant that it was from this group that the new western educated class was drawn. Brahmin and high-sūdra families who were members of the landed aristocracy flocked to the schools and colleges of Kumbakōnām and Tanjavūr grasped the opportunities available in the law and administration. Between 1900 and 1920 A.D., the institutions of politics underwent momentous change. At the district level reforms in the bureaucracy, in temple affairs, and in local self government began to draw together the fragments of the Tanjavūr political system.

Freedom Movement

The area was disturbed by Khilafat movement, and non-co-operation movement. The village has shown special interest as a part of Tanjavūr district, in the village development activities of Gandhi. The salt satyagraha movement, of 1930 A.D., individual sathyagrapha of 1940 A.D., and Quit India movement of 1942 A.D., attracted people from the district, and from the village of Vilimilalai and a number of land lords participated in the movement and courted arrest. The Khadi movement and harijan welfare movement of Mahatma Gandhi had notable response in the village.

Post Independent period

The Administration of the area, village and the temple had undergone changes after 1947 A.D. The temple its land and the area are under the control of Tiruvāvaduthurai math, one of the largest saivite maths at Tiruvāvaduthurai near Mayilāduthurai in Tanjavūr district. It has large endowments
in the districts of Tirunelveli (25,000 acres), Madurai (1,000 acres), and Tanjāvūr (3,000 acres). The total annual income is estimated Rs.2.0 lakhs. The head of the math appoints the managers, priests of temple under its control and administers their funds. The Thiruvāvaduthurai math maintains sixteen temples fully and offers thirteen kattalai or endowments in temples located at Madurai, Tiruchendūr, Tirukkuṟṟalam and Srivaiṅkūṭam. The math also runs religious, and charitable institutions like Thēvara pādasalai, conducts annual religious conferences, provides medical care flood reliefs, conducts a correspondence course in saiva siddhanta, and maintains a press and brings out journals and books in the name of Ādina publications. The Vilināṭhasureshāmi temple is one of the sixteen temples under the Ādinaṇam management, and the accounts of the temple are maintained by the math and audited by Hindu religious and charitable endowments board of the Government of Tamilnadu.
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1. 66 inscriptions of the temple are recorded in Annual Report of Epigraphy and 101 inscriptions are recorded by the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology in a volume title "Tiruvilimilalai Kalvettugal".


3. Tiruṅnānasambandar, Ṭīṉvar thevār, (Ed.) V Mahadevan, Kumbakonam, p. 175. 1988

4. E.I. XIII 134, The battle of Tirupurambiam was fought between Pallavā (Aparājitha) and Pāṇḍyā (Varguna Varman) Aparājitha was supported in the battle.


6. ARE; 439 of 1908, TNSDA; 548 of 1977, SII Vol.XIX No.46
ARE; 436 of 1908, TNSDA; 550 of 1977, SII Vol.XIX No.163
ARE; 435 of 1908, TNSDA; 551 of 1977
ARE; 440 of 1908, TNSDA; 552 of 1977
ARE; 441 of 1908 TNSDA; 553 of 1977

7. ARE; 435 of 1908 TNSDA; 551 of 1977

8. ARE; 441 of 1908 TNSDA; 553 of 1977

9. ARE; 375 of 1909

10. K.A. Nilakanta sastri, *The Colas, Madras*, 1937, pp.130-

11. T.Chandrakumar, *Vridhagiriswarar Temple - A study*

12. S.R. Balasubramanian, classifies the Chōḷa temples into three periods: Early Chōḷa period (upto 985 A.D.). Middle Chōḷa period (985 of 1070 A.D.) Later Chōḷa period (1070 of 1270 A.D.) on stylistic ground. Temple construction with niches belonged to early Chōḷa period.

S.R. Balasubramanian, Chōḷar Kalaipani (Tamil) Madras, 1941, p.121.


14. ARE; 447 of 1908, TNSDA 559 of 1977

15. ARE; 445 of 1908, TNSDA 560 of 1977

16. Ottakkuttar, Kalingattupparani, verse 370


18.V. Venkayya, S11, ii. Introduction, p.2

19. ARE; 423 of 1908, TNSDA 535 of 1977

ARE; 449 of 1908, TNSDA 562 of 1977

20. E.I VII, 704

21.V. Venkayya, Opcit. p.4

22. Ottakkuttar, Opcit. verse 390. Also see S11 Vol.VIII, v.24

23. S11 ii.92, paragraph 12.

24. ARE; 443 of 1908 TNSDA; 558 of 1977

25. ARE; 421 of 1908 TNSDA; 537 of 1977
26. ARE; 444 of 1908 TNSDA; 557 of 1977

27. ARE; 443 of 1908 TNSDA; 558 of 1977

28. Vikrama pāṇḍya probably had a Sinhalese father and pāṇḍya mother and his early career in the pāṇḍya country is not accurately represented by Mahāvamsa. K.A. Nilakatasastri, The cōḷās, 1937, p. 373.

29. ARE; 393 of 1908 TNSDA; 528 of 1977

30. Ibid

31. Ottakkuttar _Opcit_ VIII, v.26

32. ARE; 393 of 1908 TNSDA; 528 of 1977

33. TNSDA 518 of 1977
   ARE; 393 of 1908, TNSDA; 528 of 1977

34. ARE; 235 of 1930-39, TNSDA; 519 of 1977

35. Ibid.

36. TNSDA; 520 of 1977

37. ARE; 383 of 1908, TNSDA; 510 of 1977

38. S11 iii. 68, 69

39. K.A. Nilakantasastri _Opcit_., p.303

40. ARE; 383 of 1908, TNSDA; 510 of 1977

41. ARE; 390 of 1908, TNSDA; 522 of 1977

42. TNSDA 523 of 1977
43. ARE; 388 of 1908, TNSDA; 512 of 1977


45. ARE; 387 of 1908 TNSDA; 511 of 1977
    ARE; 385 of 1908 TNSDA; 516 of 1977
    ARE; 388 of 1908 TNSDA; 512 of 1977
    ARE; 389 of 1908 TNSDA; 513 of 1977

46. ARE; 350 of 1927

47. ARE; 35 of 1913

48. ARE; 415 of 1908, TNSDA; 566 of 1977

49. ARE; 386 of 1908, TNSDA; 317 of 1977
    ARE; 434 of 1908. TNSDA; 600 of 1977
    TNSDA; 601 of 1977
    ARE; 418 of 1908. TNSDA 567 of 1977
    ARE; 416 of 1908. TNSDA 568 of 1977
    TNSDA; 544 of 1977
    ARE; 405 of 1908. TNSDA 578 of 1977
    TNSDA; 544 of 1977
    TNSDA; 602 of 1977

50. ARE; 418 OF 1908. TNSDA; 544 of 1977

51. The vassals were Bānāś, Gangās, Adigamāns, Malayamāns, Kaduvarayās and Cedirayās.

52. TNSDA; 527 of 1977.

53. ARE; 417 of 1908, TNSDA; 570 of 1977
    ARE; 419 of 1908, TNSDA; 571 of 1977
    TNSDA; 572 of 1977
    TNSDA; 573 of 1977
    TNSDA; 573 of 1977
    ARE; 409 of 1908, TNSDA; 579 of 1977
ARE; 407 of 1908, TNSDA; 580 of 1977
ARE; 408 of 1908, TNSDA; 581 of 1977
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ARE; 400 of 1908, TNSDA; 590 of 1977
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55. ARE; 246 of 1912

56. ARE; 402 of 1908, TNSDA; 592 of 1977
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57. ARE; 412 of 1908, TNSDA; 584 of 1977
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58. ARE; 392 of 1908, TNSDA; 586 of 1977

59. E.I. Vol. XXV 11

60. E.I. Vol. III 7-17

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67. C.J. Baker, D.A. Washbrook, South India, Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880 - 1940 A.D.
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