CHAPTER - V
TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION

The management and control of the temple and administration of their endowments is one of the primary responsibilities of Tamil country. In early period, with a view to oversee the administration of the temple in a proper manner, king and Religious, spiritual leaders should be involved in the proper maintenance and administration of the Hindu and Jain temples\(^1\).

Almost all the Tamil rulers, considered the construction of the temples as part of their administration and donated wealth in the form of money or land. They considered it as a service to God and religion. The land donated to the temple was known as Devadhanam. In the temples, Brahmins were appointed to conduct regular religious ceremonies. The rulers spent the major portion of state income for the construction of temples. Moreover, they were provided with endowments for the regular functioning of the temple. It possessed hug wealth in the form of gold, gold ornaments, precious stones, vessels, idols etc. The revenue of the temple and temple lands was kept preserved in it\(^2\).

As a sacred centre of worship, the temple catered to the religious needs of the people of Tirupudaimarudur area. It was their conscience-keeper. For any good or bad, the people believed that it was the blessings or curse of God. In order to keep Him in merriment they conducted a large number of rituals and festivals. They invoked and

\(^1\) Report from the Tamil Nadu HRCE Department - 1991
\(^2\) Devanesan. A, op.cit, p.192.
propitiated Him with all paraphernalia. Piety being a major force of worship, a number of people flocked at the Narumpunather temple.\(^3\) The temple was built on *agamic* basis. Rituals and festivals were conducted in the temple according to *agamic* prescriptions.\(^4\) To perform these, priests and their sub-ordinates were appointed accommodated, remunerated and regulated in the temple.

As custodians of rituals and festivals, the priests found much work. They found their economic position safe in these celebrations. Therefore, the birth asterism of gods, kings\(^5\) and other devotees were celebrated with much eclat. Thus, daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly and annual festivals came into being. On these days, the presiding deity Narumpunather and Gomathi Amman were taken out in procession\(^6\) around the temple. To draw the temple car and to carry the palanquins,\(^7\) in which the deities were kept, the voluntary service of a mass of men was required.

The temple, enjoyed the privilege of huge tax-free lands,\(^8\) donated or endowed either by kings or by pious devotees. These lands were scattered sometimes over a large area. Even lands far-away from the temple were also donated to the temple for the conduct of worship. They were to be cultivated, their income accounted for and their expenses audited. Livestock, ornaments of various types and cash donated to the temple were to be protected. Cattle were to be bred; cash was to be utilized for sacred offering

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\(^3\) This is evident even today from the huge gatherings of the people during annual festivals or on specific occasions like Kumbabhishekam and Pankuni uthiram and Sivaratri festivals.


\(^5\) ARE 1949-50. No. 305

\(^6\) ARE 1927-28. No. 274

\(^7\) IA, Vol. XII, 1983, p. 317.

\(^8\) ARE 1929-30. No. 415
and other productive purposes; the required quantities of articles offered to the temple
were to be verified; the defaulted servants and devotee were to be interrogated and
punished; records mentioning these were to be maintained; temple treasury was to be
duly audited and to be protected.⁹

Various kinds of utensils were to be safeguarded; the temple granary was to be
checked and supervised; disbursement of salaries to the servants was to be regulated;
court of justice, library and educational institutions were to be maintained. Relief
measures to the Tirupudaimaruthur village were to be undertaken in times of famine,¹⁰
royal orders¹¹ were to be executed and recorded with much care and renovation and
repair works were to be undertaken. All these activities of the temple, no doubt,
necessitated the functioning of a well planned administrative machinery.

Further, the patronage of the kings¹² and their overall control also prompted an
efficient administration. The Pandyas were known for their piety and valour. Though
they tolerated all religions, they patronized and professed Saivism¹³ with certain political
designs. They knew that by patronizing temples, they could stabilize their political
supremacy over the people. To enjoy the loyalty of the people, to legitimatize their rule
and to expiate their political sins, they built innumerable edifices and endowed them
profusely with the wealth coveted from their enemy countries. To pillage and plunder a
vanquished country is an economic offence and a political sin. By sticking on to the

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¹⁰ ARE 1949-50. No. 291
¹¹ ARE 1929-30. No. 446
¹² ARE 1929-30. No. 444
¹³ Ramaswami A., opcit., p.138.
*devaraya cult*, they redeemed their sins. Their regular donations and endowments added to the wealth of the temple.\(^{14}\)

The temple was an awe-inspiring cultural centre. It was not only known for its architectural achievements but also for the recreations held in it. Dance, debate, musical concerts, dramatic performances and philosophical discourses were held in it.\(^{15}\) These were performed by certain artists who were appointed for this purpose.\(^{16}\) Sculptures, paintings and other forms of beauty were visual aids to the onlookers. The artists have brought art beauty in mute forms. In order to chistle and paint them, artists were to be appointed.\(^{17}\) To keep watch over their activities, official supervision was to be instituted. Overall supervision by the Tirupudaimaruthur village assembly was to be carried out.\(^{18}\) Complete protection of the temple from destruction was to be assured. Thus, there arose the need for the introduction of proper administration to the Sri Narumpunathar temple.

Sri Narumpunathar temple afforded ample an opportunity to the people of the locality to serve the temple in various capacities involving religious, administrative and other quasi-religious and manual work. The temple servants are referred to by many general terms such as Koil Üliakkarargal.\(^{19}\) An inscription of Rajaraja I, found on the westwall of Narumpunather shrine, we have a damaged and incomplete record of Rajaraja I\(^{20}\). There is another of the tenth year of the same ruler which mentions a gift of

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\(^{14}\) ARE 1929-30. No. 445  
\(^{15}\) ARE 1929-30. No. 444  
\(^{16}\) ARE 1929-30. No. 443  
\(^{17}\) ARE 1929-30. No. 445  
\(^{18}\) SII, Vol. XIV, No. 61, p. 43.  
\(^{19}\) SITI, Vol. I, No. 346.  
\(^{20}\) ARE 1905 No. 124
land and bears signatures of donees in Grantha and Vatteluthu. This is found on the north and east wall of this shrine. This is a record of the twentieth year of Sadaiyamaran on the east wall making a reference to a servant of Vira Pandya, and the village is therein called Tiruppudamarudil, in Pandimarttanda Valanadu. On grounds of style and epigraphical evidence, this temple (without the later accretions) could be a foundation of the time of Rajaraja I.

Another inscription of Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandya refers to the grant of lands and house-sites to the temple servants. Perhaps this was the general pattern followed by way of remunerating the temple servants. Unfortunately the record does not give the details of the various servants and their functions. However, the temple servants such as gardeners, dancers, priests and other administrative staff have been mentioned in the temple inscriptions.

In 740 A.D., inscription belongs to the period of Kochadaiyan Ranadhiran (710 – 740 A.D) found on the north wall of Narumpunathar temple describes Perumkanmis of Narumpunathar temple donated a land to the Devaradiyal namely Manikkathal. Sixth regnal year 914 A.D of Maran Sadaiyan @ Rajasimha II (909 – 946A.D) found on the steps situated at south west corner of first pirakara, describes twenty five sheeps were donated to the Narumpunathar temple to made light or it nantha lamps to poor the one

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21 ARE 1905 No. 123
22 ARE 1905 No. 122
23 Balasubramanian, Middle Chola Temple, Madras, 1977, P.198
26 ARE 1916, No. 419
alagu ghee per day by the madan viran Elini and his wife Muventhapai ngav\textsuperscript{27}. A Tamil vatteluthu inscription belong to the 18\textsuperscript{th} regnal year (924 – 925 A.D) of Rajasimha (909 – 946 A.D) alias Sadaiyamaran described. One servant of Virapandya of Malayamadevi puram in Pandimattondhu valanadu granted a gift to the Chandeswara of Tiruppudaimaruthur in Mullinadu. Sanskrit inscription in Grantha letter found on the east wall of Chandikesvara shrine partly in damaged mentions Virapandya (946 – 966 A.D)\textsuperscript{28}. Tenth regnal year 995 A.D of RajaRaja I (985 -1010 A.D) found on the east and north wall of Chandikeswara shrine describes, four patters namely Vivanisharupathi Pattan and his younger brother Parpanabhan, Kaviniyan Thavamban and Vempasaman of Eyalatu mangai Biramadeya in Raja Raja valanattu Pandiya Nadu sold a land to Ambalavanan of Bidavur in Chola country.\textsuperscript{29} Another inscription of RajaRaja I, found on the west wall of somes shrine damaged and destroyed.\textsuperscript{30}

Fourteenth regnal year 1204 A.D of Sadaiyvarma Kulasekhara I (1190 – 1205 A.D) found on the south wall of Gomathi amman shrine describes, one of the request from Mavali vanathirayan to the Sadaiyvarma Kulasekhara related to the Tiruppudaimaruthur swamy.\textsuperscript{31}

The functionaries of the temple can be studied under three broad categories. Those engaged in purely spiritual or religious services like the performance of puja\textsuperscript{s} or worship, chanting the sacred hymns etc; those engaged in rendering various kinds of quasi-religious, artistic and other manual work; and those appointed to do administrative

\textsuperscript{27} ARE 1905, No. 122, TNGAD Report – 2005, No.202
\textsuperscript{28} ARE 1905, No. 121
\textsuperscript{29} ARE 1905, No. 123
\textsuperscript{30} ARE 1905, No. 124
\textsuperscript{31} TNGAD Report – 2005, No.203
work pertaining to matters like the management, supervision over the staff, the maintenance of accounts etc.

**Spiritual Functionaries**

**Priests**

The officiating priests who conduct the worship in the inner shrines are called *archakas* or *Bhattacharyas*. The priests of the temple were provided with houses to live in and some lands for sustenance, besides a regular share in the daily food-offering.\(^{32}\) A record\(^{33}\) of Maravarman Sundara Pandya dated A.D. 1247 registers a grant of house-sites to the temple servants. Any donation for festival or offerings made special allotment of a share for the priests. The practice continues even today. But now no residential quarters are given. Money collected through the individual devotees and pilgrims by way of performing the archanas (special worship) goes to the priests.

**Paricharakas**

The Paricharakas were the attendants who render assistance to the officiating priests. They do various smaller duties like the supply of water for the holy bath to the deity and various other sundry items like incense, camphor etc; at regular intervals to the priests when the latter is engaged in performing the *puja*.

**Vinnappam-Seivar**

They were the temple singers and reciters. They used to sing the devotional hymns such as *Devaram* and *Thiruvasagam* in front of the deity in a particular musical

\(^{32}\) ARE 1929-30. No. 410  
\(^{33}\) ARE 1929-30. No. 470
note. A record\textsuperscript{34} of Tribhuvana Chakravartin Konerinmaikondan registers the royal order issued at the request of one \textit{Kalingarayar} remitting the taxes on the land granted to the temple by one \textit{Siviyan Pūvadi} for offerings to the deity and for the maintenance of the person reciting the \textit{Tirujnanam} in the temple.

\textbf{Tirumanjanam-Edukkiravar (Carriers of holy water)}

This is a class of Brahmin employees engaged in bringing water from the river for the holy bath. On festive occasions, they used to go in groups and carry water in decorated silver or brass vessels for the anointment. Each of them was paid one \textit{panam} per day as wage.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Functionaries For Quasi-Religious and Manual Work}

\textbf{Swayampakis (Cooks)}

An epigraph\textsuperscript{36} of the 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D refers to the construction of a kitchen (\textit{Mahana\textsuperscript{a}sa}) in the temple. It was meant to prepare \textit{taligai} or food of various kinds to be offered to the deity. An inscription\textsuperscript{37} of Maravarman Vikrama Chola Pandya dated A.D. 1045 records the gift of money made by one \textit{Kandan Ayyanar Mangalakkal} which was invested in the purchase of lands out of the yields of which the \textit{agana\textsuperscript{l}ilgai-Sivabrahmanas} agreed to provide \textit{milk-porridge} to the deity and feeding 15 \textit{Sivabrahmanas} in the temple on each New moon day.

\textsuperscript{34} ARE 1929-30. No. 463
\textsuperscript{35} SITI 583 and 373 of 1919.
\textsuperscript{36} SII, Vol. XIV, No. 191, pp. 105-06.
\textsuperscript{37} ARE 1929-30. No. 393
The cooks were the regular employees of the temple getting remuneration both in kind and cash. Their chief duties were, the preparation of food, making the cooked rice into blocks, and taking them to the various shrines from the kitchen. They are not hereditary servants, but are appointed from time to time. Another record dated A.D. 1591 mentions the share of food to the swaiyampākis from the offerings made by a donor. Apart from cooking the normal quota of food for the daily offerings, the cooks have to prepare special kinds of food during the festival times for which they would get extra allowance in kind and cash.

**Viniyogam-Seivar (Food-distributors)**

They were incharge of distributing the consecrated food to the customary claimants as well as the ordinary devotees who have gathered for a particular service. There was one head for this class called *Viniyogam-Seiyum Pārupatyakarar* who supervised the distribution and saw to it that it was made in accordance with the conditions in force. Probably he was responsible for making over the stipulated shares for various service-holders. Singan-murai (Suppliers of Fuel) were in charge of the supply of fuel to the kitchen. The fuel is frequently referred to in the epigraphs as *Erikarumbu*. Sri-Pādam Tāngiravar refers to the devotees who carry the processional deities within the precincts of the temple. This is not a fixed office, but it is often rendered as a voluntary service.

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Kodi-Karar

The Kodi-karar\textsuperscript{42} refers to the labourers who carry the deity mounted on the big vehicles or vahanas in the streets, outside the temple. Mostly the labourers did this difficult and strenuous work. The vahanas are very heavy and are usually fixed to a large flat wooden plank. Large and thick wooden poles about 100 ft. long are tied to the bottom and lifted by labourers who divide themselves into four groups for the four sides. The terms muntandu and pintandu refer to the pole in front and at the back of the deity. They were paid daily wages in cash besides food. Kodi-Kudai-āl\textsuperscript{43} (banner and umbrella-bearers) refers to the labours who carry the banners and the umbrellas. There are special colourful banners, with the Saiva symbols which are carried in front of the festival processions.

Ter-niminda-al (car-pullers)\textsuperscript{44} refers to the labourers who were engaged in directing and pulling the huge wooden car along the streets on the 10\textsuperscript{th} day of the Pankuni festival. The wheels are huge, about 10 feet in diameter. As it is difficult to pull the car straight away, persons were engaged in inserting long poles as an incline-lever behind the wheels and press it so that wheels would move and once they got moving, it was easy to pull the car. This term niminda perhaps refers to this initial operation in starting the car. The car-pullars were given wages which is mentioned as Vadampiditha Kūli, vadam means the thick ropes tied to the car for pulling.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} SITI 1919. No. 373
\textsuperscript{43} SITI 1919. No. 365
\textsuperscript{44} SITI 1919. No. 374
\textsuperscript{45} SITI 1919. No. 535
Tiruvidi-Pandam-Pidittavan\textsuperscript{46} (torch-bearers)

There were a number of torch-bearers in all processions both inside the temple and in the outer streets. A bundle of cotton rags tied around iron prongs at the end of a wooden handle and soaked in the gingelly or ground-nut oil and lighted usually served as the light or the \textit{pandam}. It is called \textit{Tivatti}. A long metal rod was also used as handle. This is called by an epigraph as \textit{Tirukkulai-pandam}.\textsuperscript{47} The wages for the light-bearers are described in an epigraph as \textit{Tivatti-Sumanda-Kuli}.\textsuperscript{48} Tiruvilakku-Karan\textsuperscript{49} was responsible for all the lighting arrangements in the various shrines entrances; outer precincts and the processions. A few persons were specially engaged in letting fire works and crackers during the festivals. On certain nights, there would be a splendid show of colourful lights and crackers. Such persons are mentioned as \textit{V\={a}nam Sudikkum-\={a}l}.\textsuperscript{50}

Now the sculptors or masons are not permanently on the rolls of the temple employees. But, formerly they seem to have been employed regularly to attend to various constructional and repair-activities and special grants of lands were given to them. There were also temple carpenters to attend to various duties like the making or repairing of the \textit{vahanas} or vehicles, preparing the wooden poles to carry them, wooden pedestals, wooden handles for umbrellas etc., which were needed from time to time. The making of the huge wooden car with exquisite ornamental work must have involved

\textsuperscript{46} SITI 1919. No. 373
\textsuperscript{47} SITI 1919. No. 584
\textsuperscript{48} SITI 1919. No. 535
\textsuperscript{49} ARE 1929-30. No. 414
\textsuperscript{50} SITI 1919. No. 535
considerable labour and ingenuity. From the latter epigraph we learn that on the eve of the car festival the carpenters were in charge of seeing that the car was put in 27 road-worthy condition and carry out any repairs, if necessary. Often, the carpenters were given lands named *Tacha-māniam*.

**Blacksmiths**

The record dated A.D. 1558, mentions this class of artisans as *karumārs*, engaged to do certain works in the preparation and maintenance of the wooden car and other vehicles with their vast network of bolts and nails. Besides, they had also to supply solid iron-blocks to be placed in front of the wheels of the car in order to stop it at various places from moving. This is specially mentioned in an epigraph as Tiruther *Irumbumutti*.

**Goldsmiths**

A number of epigraphs refers the donations of costly golden and other precious stone jewels to the deity Narumpunathar and Gomathi Amman in the Tirupudaimaruthur temple such as the golden *yajnopavita* (sacred thread), *golden krita* (headgear), *Sankha*, *chakra*, *abhaya-hasta* (a covering over the hand set in precious stones) and a gold aureola for lamp. All the deities in the temple were endowed with gold ornaments like necklaces, armlets etc. To make such jewels as well as renew and burnish the old ones

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51 ARE 1929-30. No. 470
52 SITI 1919. No. 535
53 SITI 1919. No. 380
54 SITI 1919. No. 430
55 SII, Vol. IV, No. 54, p.133.
56 ARE 1929-30. No. 405
from time to time, the services of the goldsmiths were required by the temple which perhaps allotted certain lands for the goldsmiths (Tattara manian) as it was done in Tirupudaimaruthil and other neighbouring villages.

**Bronze and bell-metal workers**

The metal workers made a number of bronze idols then and there. A variety of brass lamp-stands were presented to the Sri Narumpunatha swamy temple. Like sculptors, they must have also been in regular employment receiving fixed annual remuneration in kind and occasional cash rewards. They also prepared the bells and gongs in the temple used during the ceremonies and festivals. They also made the metal sheet coverings over the stone steps, *sikharas* and thresholds in the temple.

**Potters and Washermen**

Both the classes should have been on the regular rolls of the temple-employees. Potters supplied the necessary cooking vessels and pots for keeping the grains, cereals, sandal paste etc. Washermen cleaned the garments of the deities daily. Besides this, they had to supply the necessary waste-cotton or cloth for the processional torches. Probably, they were granted lands by the temple for their maintenance. Even now a special festival is held annually to honour the potters, washermen, barbers etc. serving in the temple.

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58 ARE 1929-30. No. 393
59 ARE 1929-30. No. 438
Pandal-erecters

Erection of Pandal or *shamianas* with the help of dried coconut leaves on a vast scale is a special feature of all festivals in South India. Rows of bamboo or other poles would be erected or planted in the ground over them. Cross poles would be fixed or tied and then plaited and dried coconut leaves, each about two metres long, would be spread and tied. This would provide the necessary shade around the temple for the pilgrims.\(^{60}\) The edges of the ceilings of the pandal would be decorated with festoons, pendants etc. Probably a special batch of men attended to this work who were paid daily wages. An epigraph dated AD 1553 mentions as *pandal Singarikka-al-küli*.\(^{61}\)

Garden-Keepers and Garland-Makers

Maintenance of gardens and supply of garlands and flowers to the temple was considered a pious duty. Many of the epigraphs in the temple contains much references about the maintenance of temple garden and the people who look after the same was called *Dāsa-nambis*. Much of the garden service was done by them in the Narumpunathar temple. The garden land is said to have been acquired by the donor’s ancestors and descended to him in succession from preceptor to discipline.

Another record\(^ {62}\) of Maravarman Kulasekhara I dated A.D. 1276 registers a gift of land by one Kesavan of *Pattina-Marudur* for burning a lamp in the *mandapa* built by him and for a flower-garden to the temple. Numerous are the grants of lands particularly

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\(^{60}\) SII, Vol. XIV, No. 230, pp. 133-34.


\(^{62}\) ARE 1929-30, No. 454
specified for rearing flower-garden for the supply of flowers to the temple.\textsuperscript{63} The services rendered by the class of Dasa-nambis considered to the temple are respectable and dedicated.

**Administrative Staff and History of Management**

Even from the days of Rajaraja I, a number of administrative and supervisory officers worked in this temple to manage its affairs. The earliest among them were the \textit{Vāriar} and the \textit{Karanattan}. The former is stated to be in charge of the management of the temple and the latter’s duties are not specified in the record. However, both are mentioned in connection with the responsible work of receiving and supervising the endowments made to the temple by the assemblies (sabhas) of \textit{Kiranur},\textsuperscript{64} \textit{ShadangaviKurichchi},\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Karuppu},\textsuperscript{66} and \textit{Tiruppudaimaruthil}.\textsuperscript{67} The great men of the \textit{variam} undertook the srikaryam or the management of the temple. It is quite clear that the Srikaryam was the office and the body of the people was called the \textit{Variapperumakkal} who were in charge of the temple administration. \textit{Variam} means a committee of selected men to execute certain works.

Medieval epigraphs replete with instances of the village assemblies appointing a number of \textit{variams} or committees to look after the special works such as the supervision of lakes, gardens, irrigations etc. Likewise, a committee of the village assembly\textsuperscript{68} was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{63} ARE 1929-30. No. 418
\item \textsuperscript{64} ARE 1929-30. No. 415
\item \textsuperscript{65} SII, Vol. XIV, No. 61, p. 43.
\item \textsuperscript{66} ARE 1929-30. No. 389
\item \textsuperscript{67} ARE 1929-30. No. 442
\item \textsuperscript{68} ARE 1929-30. No. 451
\end{itemize}
appointed to look after the management of the temple. Thus, the *variam* or the committee of elders appointed by the Tirupudaimaruthur village-people looked after the local affairs of the village as well as the temple which was closely linked together in multifarious ways. Later on, the stanattar were in charge of the temple-management. Perhaps the later people were the lineal descendents of the *Variapperumakkal* and were in charge of not only the affairs of the temple but also those of the village as a whole.

**Karanattan**

This is one of the important officers of the temple mentioned in the early records. He was evidently the accountant and the record-keeper. In fact, the word *karanam* means document and obviously therefore *karanattan* was in charge of the drafting of the documents and the proper upkeep of the accounts. In the two records of Cholas, he is mentioned along with the *variars* as the authorities with whose knowledge and acceptance the endowments are made. In one they are said to receive the cash endowments made for the temple. Probably, while the *variars* were the executive officials or managers, the *karanattan* was in-charge of the maintenance of the accounts of all transactions. Later on, the designation seems to have been slightly modified. In the later records, he is designated as *Koilkanakku* and invariably all the records of the Chola and Vijayanagar kings, registering the temple transactions, were written in his presence and signed and authenticated by him.

The accountants were probably not granted any lands because none of the inscriptions has any reference to that effect, but they were probably given remuneration.

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69 ARE 1919. No. 389
in kind, like paddy and also some cash.\textsuperscript{70} In addition, they were given a specific daily share in the cooked rice. Besides this in all endowments for festivals and other offerings, a special mention is made of the share of the \textit{prasadam} to the accountant.\textsuperscript{71} This shows that they enjoyed certain special duties and privileges during the festivals and ceremonies.

\textbf{Sri-Bhandarattar}

\textit{Sri-Bhandaram} was the temple treasury and those who were in charge of the treasury were known as the \textit{Sri-Bhandarattar}. The large amount of cash and gold that accrued to the temple’s credit through donations and income were deposited in the safe-vaults of the temple.\textsuperscript{72} Apparently, they were at first a merely receiving and distributing body; but later on came to possess also administrative powers like selling of the temple lands on suitable conditions. Thus while most of the transactions were approved of by the \textit{stanattar}, a few which involved cash-gifts, were done by \textit{Sri-Bhandarattar}, either all alone or along with the \textit{stanattar}.

\textbf{Stanattar}

By far the most important class of officers of the temple were the \textit{stanattars} who are variously called the \textit{tanattars} and the \textit{stalattars}. The earliest reference to them in the temple inscriptions dated A.D. 1234 and A.D. 1236.\textsuperscript{73} Unfortunately, there was not much information regarding the composition of this group, the mode of appointment etc. But,

\textsuperscript{70} SII, Vol. XIV, No. 230, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{71} ARE 1929-30. No. 443
\textsuperscript{72} ARE 1929-30. No. 411
\textsuperscript{73} SITI, Vol.I, Nos. 345 and 349.
as mentioned earlier, they were probably the prototypes or the lineal descendants of the variapperumakkal of the earlier times and as such, included among themselves the select and the best qualified elderly people of the locality.

Almost all the transactions of the temple like the receiving of the gifts from the chiefs, kings or private persons or institutions of special offerings or services, were done only on the approval of the stanattars. On behalf of the temple, they agreed to fulfil the purposes of an endowment. In the records of the 17th and 18th centuries, the stanattars are referred to as the stapattars. They continued to wield decisive powers not only in the administration of the temple but on allied matters also like the procedures of festivals, conferring of honours etc. The honours of “first tirtham and arulappadu” were conferred by them on select and deserving people of the locality. Thus, from the inscriptions as well as the later temple records, it is seen that the stalattars of the temple were a powerful body of temple trustees who were the supreme authorities in the temple administration.

Royal Control Over the Temple

The presence of the king’s representative in Tiruppudaimaruthil both in the Chola and Pandya times, possibly acted as a check over the trustees. But it is well known that even in medieval times, the Government did not interfere with the internal affairs of the temple. The general policy of the Hindu monarchs to the religious institutions was one of non-interference. They protected and maintained the institutions by their liberal grants and did not undertake the actual management of them or interference. They protected and maintained the institutions by their liberal grants and did not undertake the actual

74 SII, Vol. XIV, No. 61, p. 43.
75 ARE 1919. No. 423
management of them or interference in their internal administration, which was largely left to their own controlling bodies. But there was a general supervision by the local officers of the king, who were responsible for maintaining law and order. If the king or his officer did interfere, it was rarely and in order to correct some local error or irregularity or to arbitrate in a dispute and this was never taken a miss. The temple-lands and properties were subject to the usual taxation and other regulations, unless explicitly exempted. But the usual trend of the land donations of the temple effected tax exemption.

On the whole, the royal control over the temple was much less in the Chola period compared with the Pandya times due to the limited sources of income. But with the increase in its properties, landed interests and the enlargement of the temple’s role in the social and economic spheres, the royal control tended to become greater. Some indications to this effect are available in post-Chola and Vijayanagar records of the temple. Thus, except for such rare instances which called for the royal regulation, there is no reference to any unhappy or hostile relationship. Kings, viceroyys and officials were given due honour and they are often mentioned in the temple inscriptions with all their titles. Special offerings were made in honour and for the merit of the kings and their officers. Whenever the local royal agent misbehaved, the temple authority appealed to the king. The royal control over the temple was greater during the time of Pandyas.
The Rise of the Sri-Karyam

The 16th century witnessed the rise of a new officer named Sri-Karyam to a position of importance in the management of the temple. Either to honour men of outstanding abilities and services or as a check over the stalattar, this post of the manager was created. He was incharge of the feeding house attached to the temple.\(^80\) In addition to that, he was also the manager of the temple. In this case, evidently in recognition of the services he and his predecessor had rendered to the cause of Saivism. The stalattar themselves appointed him as the manager. They might have considered that his popularity and influence would attract greater royal favour and benefaction to the temple.\(^81\) In co-ordination with the stanattar he received certain gifts made to the temple and signed the agreement with the owner on behalf of the temple. It is worthy of note that there is not a single record in which the transaction is done exclusively in the name of SriKaryam. Always either the stanattar or in some cases the Sri-Bhandarattar are mentioned first.\(^82\) On the contrary there are quite a few records in which the latter two alone figure as signatories in the transactions.\(^83\) From this we can infer that the stanattar were still the ultimate authorities and the Sri-Karyam was at best a co-ordinate or executive authority.

Administration under the English

In A.D. 1796 the Court of Directors of the East India Company began to take a greater interest in the affairs of the religious institutions. The Board of Revenue which

\(^{80}\) SII, Vol. XIV, No. 191, p. 106.
\(^{81}\) ARE 1929-30. No. 410
\(^{82}\) SITI, Vol. I, No. 368.
was established in 1789 and which was in-change of the organization of collection of revenue also, managed the affairs relating to religious institutions. This was but natural as these institutions possessed properties yielding huge revenues. The Collectors were the agents in the district and were not only in-charge of the collection of revenue but also maintaining law and order, besides being magistrates. Thus, by assuming such executive and judicial responsibilities, the Government consolidated its hold. These increased responsibilities led to the framing of the Regulation VII of 1817 which gave legal clothing to the functions already assumed. It defined the functions and powers of the Board of Revenue, the Collectors of the Districts and the managerial staff or trustees of the temples.

The day-to-day administration was done by the Board of trustees or stanattar, as before. But above it, were the Collectors who were responsible for due appropriation of endowments for recording lost properties, for informing the Board of Revenue about the number of endowments and to arbitrate in the disputes. The Board of Revenue had an over all supreme voice in all matters listed above. Undoubtedly, this period of administration was on the whole beneficial to this temple and protected it from many abuses like alienation of temple lands etc. The ceremonies and rituals were allowed to be done as per established customs and the Government did not interfere in the religious practices.

But in 1841 the Court of Directors of the East India Company suddenly decided to sever all connections with the religious institutions and pursue a policy of disengagement. On 12\textsuperscript{th} June 1841, they ordered immediate withdrawal of all interference with the native
temples and places of religious resort. Their object was to leave the management of these institutions to a committee of the people of the locality, qualified to conduct the administration.

Thus, all the leading temples were handed over to the Mahants or Dharmakarthas or Trustees or, Committee of native gentlemen as the case may be.

From 1st January 1975, the temple was brought under the direct control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu by the Act of 1974. As per this Act, an Executive officer in the cadre of Assistant Commissioner was appointed by the Government for the proper administration of the temple. Apart to him, there is a Board (Advisory body) of five members to take necessary administrative decision and advice the Executive officer in his day-to-day temple administration. The term of office of this Advisory body is 3 years. One among the five members is to be selected as its chairman. He acts as a Double-Lock Officer of the temple and also he is in-charge of all bank transactions of the temple from various sources of income. The Board was last constituted in 1980 and after the expiry of the term no Board was constituted afresh. The chairman of the Board discharged the duties and exercised the powers of the Trust as Fit Person (Takkar) till 3rd September 1987. But in November 1987, the post of Fit Person too was abolished by the Government and the Executive officer was authorized to administer the temple. The salary of the Executive officer is drawn from the office of the Assistant Commissioner of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment department. Later on, the amount will be remitted to the

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84 Court of Directors Manifesto dated 12th June 1841.
Government form the temple treasury. The Executive officer takes care of the income and expenditure as well as the day-to-day administration of the temple.

The temple officials mainly serving at present are the two priests, a cook, a Paricharaka, one Pallikondaperumal temple priest, two musicians, a Kaniachi, a Tiruvilagu, a security, an Accountant, a Maniam and a miscellaneous servant.