CHAPTER VIII

TEMPLES OF TIRUKKÖYILUR

The Hindu temples in Tamil Nadu have been a great force in the cultural and art history of the region. The antiquity of temple as a religious institution in Tamil Nadu can be traced to the Sangam age, i.e., to the early centuries of the Christian era. The movement of erecting temples of stone which started during the early seventh century A.D. by the Pallavas in the northern regions and subsequently by the Pandyas in southern regions was given a fillip during the period of the Cholas. Thus Tamil Nadu came to be studded with temples, great and small in all the holy places hallowed by association with the lives of the Alvars and Nayanars of the earlier age.

The town of Tirukköyilur is no exception. There are two major temples viz., the Trivikrama temple situated on the western part of the town and the
Vīraṭṭanāḍava temple in the eastern part. These two temples have preserved valuable inscriptions on the basis of which this thesis is written.

It may be stated that the account given here of these two temples is more historical than aesthetic. Both the temples are rich in legends, glorifying the origin of the presiding deities in them. However, we have to treat these legends as, "Products of imagination and not of reason, the legends are intended to appeal to the faith and not to conviction". Both of them are known for their association with the saints of the respective faiths.

The Trivikrama Temple

The place of the Tirvikrama temple at Tirukkoilūr is second only to the famous centres of Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati or Kasihipuram in the history of Vaishnavism in Tamil Nādu. Besides being one of the 108 sacred places of Vaishnava faith, the town and the Trivikrama temple occupy a revered status due to
the association with the first three Ālvārs. Interestingly one of the inscriptions in the temple refers to the town as Mudalvar divyakshētra.

Apart from the recent booklets Tirukkēvilur Divyadēsa Vaibhavam (Tamil) and the History of Śrī Trivikramaśāyī Temple, there are three manuscripts in the Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras. All of them conform to the general style of the other Śrādaṇḍesas of different centres in Tamil Nadu and no historical material could be culled out from them.

Origin of the Trivikrama temple

Traditions associate sage Mrikanḍu with the origin of the Trivikrama temple. Mrikanḍu was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. Mrikanḍu along with his wife established a hermitage on the southern bank of the river Peṉṉār and prayed to the Lord Krishna enshrined at the Krishnakṣētra, i.e., Tirukkēvilur to get a glimpse of the god in his Trivikrama form or manifestation. He performed severe penance
which lasted for years. The Lord was pleased and manifested himself to the sage in His Trivikrama form. Having rejoiced His manifestation the sage requested the Lord to bless the devotees for ever in this form at Tirukkōyilūr. This was readily agreed. Miṅgaṇṇu continued to live in his hermitage for many more years extolling the glory of Lord Vāṣudēva.

Association of the Mūdalāḷvārśa

The traditions make the first three alvars (mūdalāḷvārśa) viz., Poygai Ḍvār, Būdatt Ḍvār and Pēy Ḍvār as contemporaries. All the three hailed from Tondaimandalam and they were not normal children born in the ordinary way. Poygai Ḍvār is said to have been born out of a lotus in Kāṭchūpūram, Būdatt Ḍvār of a Mādhavī flower in Māmālēpūram and Pēy Ḍvār of Kāṭivēḷa flower at Mylepore. They appear to be seyyāsins who were always on the move and never stationed at one place. In the course of their sojourn through the length
and breadth of the country they are said to have met, once, at Tirukkōyilur on a stormy night. According to the tradition, Poygal Āyār arrived early at the hermitage of sage Mrikēṇḍu. Mrikēṇḍu offered some space to Poygal Āyār in the vestibule of his Ārāma. The place was quite narrow and could allow only one man to lie down or two men to sit or three men to stand. When Bairētt Āyār took shelter, there was room for two to sit down. Lastly Pēy Āyār also joined and all the three had to stand and no one could be accommodated further. Nevertheless all the three felt the presence of yet another person and were surprised. They were delighted to learn the truth when the Lord revealed himself. The rejoiced saints are said to have composed hundred poems each on the Lord. The three hundred verses sung at this place by these Āyārs formed the basis of the literature which grew to four thousand verses and acquired the popular name Nālāyīra Divaya Prabandham in later times. Since the Āyārs were free from sectarian outlook and employed venba metre in their songs they are assigned to fifth or sixth century A.D. By K.A. Nilakantha Sastri.
Even though the first three Alvars are said to have met at Tirukkanikoyilur, only Poygai Alvar and Budatt Alvar have mentioned Tirukkanikoyilur in their hymns. There is no reference to Tirukkanikoyilur in the hymns of Pey Alvar. The image of the Poygai Alvar, Budatt Alvar and Pey Alvar occupy the sanctum of the Trivikrama shrine and worshipped even today. The images of sage Mrikantha and his wife are also kept in the sanctum, as the whole episode took place in the vestibule of the āśrama of this sage who earlier did penance for the vision of Vishnu in his Trivikrama form. Since the three Alvars are supposed to have took shelter in the āśrama of Mrikantha’s hermitage the lord himself came to be called as Āstikali Perumān. The epigraphs refer to the deity as Tiruvīdaikali Alvar, Tiruvīdaikali Nāyakar, Tiruvīdaikali Emperoran, Tiruvīdaikali Minnarulila Perumāl and Tiruvīdaikali Alvar.

Tirumāngai Alvar

Tirumāngai, one of the most celebrated Alvars is associated with Tirukkanikoyilur and the Trivikrama temple. He was a chieftain of Alinadu in the
EhaS̱a̱u̱ district and is said to have become a Vaishnava and a highway man. According to a legend, he is supposed to have plundered the Buddhist vihāra at Māgapeṭṭiṇam and carried the solid golden image of the Buddha in order to pay for the renovation of the Śrīraṅga temple. In his hymn to the Ashtapujāgaraṇa temple at Kāṇchipuram he refers to a Vaikēmēga identified with Pallava king Antivarman. Based on this evidence the date of Tirumēṅgai is placed in 6th century. Nearly nineteen verses sung by him refer to Tirukkoṭiyilur. He is the author of Tiruṅguṭtiṇāgaram. In one of the verses he refers to the virgin who guards Tirukkoṭiyilur and it may be interpreted to refer to the Durga image installed at the Trivikrama temple. Tirumēṅgai was also deified and we find even today an image of him in the sanctum of the Trivikrama temple.

The Trivikrama temple — Architecture

The entire temple complex of Trivikrama temple (see ground plan facing this page) consisting of three prākāra covers an extensive area of 5 acres.
The temple faces east and it has three prakāras. The Vimāna and ardhamandapa of the Trivikrama shrine is rectangular (śrṣṭa) in plan. The width of the ardhamandapa is lesser than the Vimāna and it is marked off from the latter by a construction in between.

The Vimāna and ardhamandapa stand of a short mohana type of upaśīta. The upaśīta rests on the padmadala base. The vertical is offset about a foot carrying short plain pilasters with projection of plain course on top. The adishṭanā proper rests on top of the above and consists of padmadala base or iagati, a plain vertical upāna and semi-circular kūmuda. The mouldings above the kūmuda consist of rows of vyālas with makara heads, commonly described as vyālavari.

The walls of the Vimāna and ardhamandapa have tetragonal pilasters with large square palagai. Over the level of palagai a short virakantam carries carbels of the bevel and tenon type. The uttīra above the carbels carry the design of bhūtas, parrots, vyālas, lions etc.
The *vimāna* have six pilasters each on northern, western and southern sides. The two sides of the devakōṣṭhas have short tetragonal pilasters. While the devakōṣṭha on the northern side of the *vimāna* have the figure of Sankarśan, the other two on western and southern sides have the figures of Viṣṇu with abheya and ārada-hasta for the lower arms and sankha and chakra in the upper arm. The ardhamandapa walls on the north and the south have four pilasters on each side. They are placed equally. The devakōṣṭha comes in between the two central pilasters. The northern devakōṣṭha of the ardhamandapa, contains Lākṣmī. The southern one is empty. The sanctum has no prāṇāla to drain out abhishekā water.

The adhishṭhāna mouldings are noticed on the eastern side at the entrance into the ardhamandapa. They provide for the door frame and is shown as internally sliced pilaster and have the usual components of the pillar raising up to the uttira. A central uttira transversely placed upon the two
free standing pillars divide the ardhamandapa into two parts. The pillars have lower and upper sásānams and an intermediate octagonal shaft surmounted with a bevel carbel. The cloister all round the sanctum have circular pillars with carbels of the bevel and tenon type. A small shrine for Vāmana is seen in the centre of the western side cloister and is facing the western wall of the Vimāna.

The superstructure over the Vimāna is of brick and mortar and is that of an śrādhaśāla with rectangular grīva consistent with the rectangular dela and a large Sāla sīkāra carrying five stupas.

Date of the Vimāna

The date of the Vimāna and the ardhamandapa may be fixed with evidence of the epigraphs copied from this temple. All the early inscriptions are found on top course of the upālītha, the upāna and the Kumuda.
An epigraph\textsuperscript{23} of Rājendrā II dated A.D. 1058 states that Narasiṁhavarman \textit{alias} Rāmakēsari Rāma having noticed the dilapidated nature of the brick structure of the central shrine of the Tiruviḍaikei Āyār temple at Tirukkōvalūr pulled down the temple, rebuilt it along with the mandapa with granite placed five gold pitchers on the Vimāna, built a surrounding wall and a mandapa in front and gave a canopy of pearls. He also made all the old records to be reengraved on the walls of the new structures and donated two lamps. Nārāyanān Mitten \textit{alias} Chōleşundara Nāvēndevēlaṇ of Chembangudi is said\textsuperscript{24} to have caused the Śrīvimāna to be constructed on behalf of Narasiṁhavarman. Narasiṁhavarman is said to have been crowned under that name and ruled the Milēṇu two thousand country.

It is evident from the above that the original structure was made of brick and the present structure was constructed in stone around A.D. 1058. To this same period we may assign the cloister round the sanctum.
As observed earlier, the shape of the Vimanam is rectangular in plan. This is evidently due to the fact that the sanctum have to accommodate the large image of Trivikrama with one foot raised and also other images of Keshava, Prabhuladeva, Poygai, Murdutt Arvar, Pey Arvar, Tirumangai Arvar, Mrikananda and his wife all arranged lengthwise. For example, the Parthasarathi temple at Triplicane in Madras is rectangular in size since the sanctum consists of Krishna, Balarama, Anrutha, Pradyumna and Samba or Satyaki and Subhadra besides the main deity. The introduction of upasita in the design is evidently to accommodate the huge standing figure of Trivikrama. The absence of the pranala to drain out water is definitely due to the fact that the main deity is made of dāru (wood) and abhisheka is not performed. Wooden image of Vasuki and Ananta are placed in the ardhamandapa.

A fairly large size image of Durgā is found on the south-eastern corner of the mahāmālam before the Trivikrama shrine. We also find an image of
Hanumān in the second prākāra. It is well known that the worship of Hanumān was very popular during Vijayānagar period. There is a separate shrine for the Tāyār (Goddess) in the third prākāra. There are two ālūnāthas in the temple one in the second and the other in the third prākāra near the dvajastambha. The latter one is fairly large and has induced some to suggest that the original temple may have belonged to Saiva sect. There is no other evidence to support this view. Based on the similarity of the Garuda-stambha in front of the temple with mānastambha of the Jainas it is said that the temple may have, originally, belonged to that sect. It may be pointed out that we come across a similar garuda-stambha at Śrīmushnam in South Arcot district. The outermost gopura in the east is one of the tallest in the Tamil country and has eleven storeys like the one at Tiruva-nāmāleī.

Temple rituals

One of the aspects of the daily worship in most of the temples is sacred food offerings made to
the deity. It is interesting to note that the devotees came forward to make endowments for the above purpose and epigraphs from Tirukkoilur mention the occasion on which the food offerings are to be made, the quantity of provisions to be used and the number of items to be offered. The study of such inscriptions throws light on the Vaishnava rituals of the period under study. A record of Chola Keralaeveda dated A.D.1015 mentions the arrangement made by a devotee for offering 100 appam, 100 Aseqkoyamada and 6 Parnu of betel leaves to the deity on the occasion of Tiruvonam Tiruvettainal in the month of Appasi.

An epigraph of Kottunga I dated A.D.1102 mentions the provision made by a donor for food offerings to the deities which included Uppamudu, Milagamudu, Neyyamudu, Payiramudu, Aseqkoyamudu and Ilaivamudu. We also learn from a record of a Pandya king referred to as Konerrinhaiikken that he gave as gift the entire village of Ariyur for the expenses of the sacred food offerings and worship of the deity.
The local chiefs also took interest in such endowments and exempted the tax due to them from the lands, so that money due as tax could be used for providing food offerings to the deity. A record of Kalottunga I dated A.D.1101 mentions that the chief Rājendrachēla Chēdiyarēyaśa Malaiyarēva Nāmāyyu-vaṇ Attimellēn of Kilīyūr gave as gift the Perumbādi-kēval tax due to him on 2 vēli of the Tiruvigaiyattam land of the temple to provide for the food offerings to the deity Tiruvigaiyākoli Ayyār at Tirukkēyilūr for services during midnight.

The recitation of Tamil hymns of the Āvāras and Ācharyās is a feature noticed in some of the Veindo-śeva temples of the Tamil country. Epigraphs from Trivikrama temple suggest that the devotees considered it very important and made provisions for reciting the hymns in the temple.

An epigraph dated A.D.1015 states that one kāsu was given to the person singing Tirunāgundūn-đakam composed by Tirumāngai Ayyār.
The record\textsuperscript{31} of Rājādhīraja II dated A.D. 1174 informs us that a lady donated gold and made arrangements for recitation of the Tiruvellai daily in the temple. It is also learnt from record\textsuperscript{32} of Kulottuṅga III dated A.D. 1203 that Tirunellai hymns were recited in the temple.

In addition to the Tamil hymns vēdas were also recited. An inscription\textsuperscript{33} of Pāṇḍya king referred to as Kōneriṇ̄maikōṇḍaṇ in the epigraph records the confirmation by the king of a gift of land previously made by Sundara Pāṇḍya Deva to certain brāhmaṇas for the recitation of vēdas by three persons daily in front of the image Ellāmtelayāma Perumāl set up by Sundara Pāṇḍya Deva in his name in the temple at Tirukkōyilūr.

When the ruling king established some special service or Śandra in the temple, he took care to provide for the expenses connected with the service. A record\textsuperscript{34} of a Pāṇḍya ruler Kōneriṇ̄maikōṇḍaṇ states that he gave the village of Aṇiyūr for the expenses of sacred food offerings at the service called Sundara
Psadyan ṣeṇāki and that of another image called Ellēntalayāna Perumal set up in the same temple in the name of his elder brother (saṇāvī).

Temple festivals

The epigraphs from Trivikrama temple at Tirukkōyilur refers to the endowments made by devotees to meet the requirements of some important festivals conducted. They indicate that the important festivals took place in the month of Vaikēśi (May), Aippasi (October-November) and Mārgali (December-January).

It is learnt from an epigraph dated A.D.1015 that the saṇhē of Tirukkōyilur sold some land to one Amāvēn Trivikrama of Manalūr for providing offerings to the deity on the occasion of Trimvēnem Tiruvēṭtairē in the month of Aippasi.

A record of Rājāhirāja II dated A.D.1174 refers to the gift made by a lady for conducting festivals in the month of Vaikēśi and Aippasi. A brahma
lady is said to have given 60 kasu for reclaiming some unsalable waste land belonging to the temple with a stipulation that out of the income from the land provision must be made for the bath and offerings to the god and goddess on the āvādaśī day in the month of Mārgalī. The above record37 is dated in the fourteenth year of one Rājarāja. The identity of the king is not known.

Feeding of Śrī Vaishnava brāhmaṇas

It appears that feeding Śrī Vaishnava brāhmaṇas living in the mathaś at Tirukkōyilūr and also the devotees who came to worship the god on festival days was considered as a pious act by individuals and the chiefs. We come across references to such acts from epigraphs at Tirukkōyilūr. We learn from a record38 of Rājendra I dated A.D.1036 that the sabhā of Tirukkōyilūr sold some lands to the Tiruvīdaikāli Śivār temple for feeding Śrī Vaishnavas during the festival in Aippāli for 9 days.
An individual is said to have given as gift 10 cows for supply of curd for feeding certain Śrī Vaishnava brāhmaṇas in the Aroṭṭimukṣattādān tirumālīgal madam. The above detail contained in the epigraph of Kulattunga I dated A.D. 1102 further states that the temple committee of Tiruvidākai Ālvār came to know about it from an old entry in the temple treasury (Śrī bhangaṇistribbagaṇa). Probably the descendant of the individual to whom the cows were entrusted failed to supply the curd. We are informed that the cows were recovered from the grandson of the person entrusted with responsibility of supplying curd to the Śrī Vaishnavas and added to the temple (tiruchchurab) herd.

We come to know from a record of Vilrama Chōla dated A.D. 1133 that one Appattēn alisa Pridāgāyina of Mādalampādi in Pāgalaṇāmeda a gift of 1 vēṭā of land for feeding the Śrī Vaishnavas of the Tirumāḷiśal Ālvār tirumālīgal matha attached the temple of Tiruvidākai Ālvār and authorised the brāhmaṇas of the village assembly to supervise the charity. The
local chief Vikramachola Chediyarayan exempted this land from payment of taxes due to him.

Yet another epigraph dated A.D. 1140 states that the land given as gift for feeding Sri Vaishnava pilgrims was declared tax free probably by the king at the request of Periya Udaiyan alias Kulottungachola Chediyarayan, the local chief.

An instance where the temple servants took interest in the welfare of a Sri Vaishnava brahma is recorded in an epigraph of Kulottunga III dated A.D. 1197. The epigraph refers to the gift of paddy by the Vaishnavas and other temple servants from their respective incomes from the temple for the maintenance of Rajamahendra Nambi of Idavai, a Sri Vaishnava brahma of Tiruvazhengam who was tending a flower garden called Kovilalagan at Sri Rangam for supplying flowers to the god Sri Ranganatha.

_Gardens of the temple_

Vishnu is always considered to be fond of alankara, as Siva of abhisheka and Surya of namaskara. Flowers are even today used profusely to adorn the
Tsishpava deities. Besides, the need for flowers for conducting puja is well known. Keeping this important need in mind the devotees made endowments of land and money for rearing flower gardens. It is also necessary to make provision for the existence of gardeners who arranged for the supply of flowers to meet the requirements of the temple. From the epigraphs of Trivikrama temple we come to know about the endowments made for the purpose mentioned above.

A record of Vikrama Chōla dated A.D. 1130 states that the temple priests (vaikhānas) who took from an individual 16 kāśa in the eighteenth year of Kulottuṅgasūla I for buying 1000 kuli of land for the maintenance of two gardeners who tend the flower garden of the temple. The temple priests were unable to do so then and hence they allotted certain other temple lands now for this purpose and arranged for daily supply of flowers and garlands to the god during the three services (śraddhā).
An epigraph of Kulottunga II dated A.D. 1136 registers a gift of 633 kulı of land for the maintenance of Tiruverēngatamudānēr of Mūṅgın-kuḍī for cultivating a flower garden called Katjangntukkandān. The above individual is identified with Tiruverēngatamudānēr who served as arahaka in the temple of Raṅgāṇātha at Śrīraṅgam and was at variance with the great Rāmānuja and subsequently became his disciple. The Rāmānuja Nirṛtendhādi, a poem of one hundred verses sung in praise of Rāmānuja by Tiruverēngatamudānēr is recited in most of the Vishṇava temples in the Tamil country even today.

It is stated in a record of Rājarāja II dated A.D. 1165 that the local chief Iraiyūrān āliya Rājarāja Chēdiyarāvēn of Kiliyūr gave 3/4 vēli of land and exempted the taxes on those lands for rearing a garden called Chirukkudān Tirumalēvenam for growing flowers. As stated elsewhere, Sērrukkuḍān is one of the titles of the chief Iraiyūrān āliya Rājarāja
Chëdiyarayan mentioned above and ShjBasuKteaani.an may be a mistake for SarruIdcudMah. She chief is also said to have made provisions for the maintenance of two gardeners required for this purpose.

An epigraph of Kulöttuwa III dated A.D. 1206 refers to the gift of 165 kali of land and a house by the trustees of Tiruvidoikali Emberumān temple at Tirukköyilūr to a private individual for rearing a flower garden for the temple.

A record of Rajarajya II dated in his second regnal year states that a private individual gave money for raising a flower garden for daily supply of flowers to the deity in the Viraśekhara Vistagram shrine in the third prakāra of Tiruvidoikali Emberumān temple.

Yet another individual is stated to have bought 1000 kali of dry land from the village assembly and presented it for rearing a garden called Schrungan-đen Tirunandavanam for growing flowers for use of Tiruvidoikali Emberumān as indicated by a record dated in the thirteenth year of Rējarāja whose identity is not known.
Mathas and Jiyars

Literary works like Koil Olugu and the Tirumalaisai Olugu indicate that Jiyars were considered spiritual heads of the temples and looked after the modes and procedures of the ceremonies connected with the worship. They were ascetics with the knowledge of scriptures and character. They also functioned as the head of the matha attached to the temple.

An epigraph53 of Vikrampal Vala dated A.D.1135 records a gift of land for feeding Sri Veishyas of the Tirumalaisai Ayar Tirumaligai matha and the exemption of tax on the land gifted for the above purpose by Vikrampal Vala Chedivay, a chief belonging to the family of Malaivan of Kiliyur. We are unable to define the role played by this matha at Tirukkoiyur for want of details. Tirumalaisai Ayar is regarded as a junior contemporary of the first three Ayars and he hailed from a place called Tirumalissai.
We learn from a record of the king referred to as Kōneripālmakōndan that he remitted taxes on 18 ma of land granted for offerings and worship of Nachchiyar Nāyakattāviyar set up by Tirumalīsai Jiyar in the name of Ayyamānūnā Pallavarayan in the temple. The identity and the date of Tirumalīsai Jiyar is not known.

It is not clear whether the Tirumalīsai Jiyar mentioned above functioned as the superintendents of the Tirivikrama temple in those days. A study of the records in the Tirivikrama temple reveals that a matha named after one Eberumānār Jiyar was established at Tirukkoṭiyūr around A.D. 1521. It is said that the successors of Eberumānār Jiyar A.D. (1521-1569) were celebrated and were nominated to the post. However, it is learnt, that the tradition was broken by Śrīnivāsa Rāmānuja Jiyar (A.D. 1769-1781) who got married and his descendants have come to occupy the post in the later period. The present Jiyar Śrī Tiruvēṅkaṭa Rāmānujaśeṣaṛiyr (accession A.D. 1943) is 24th in the line of Jiyars of Eberumānār Jiyar matha. The list of successive
Jiyars of this matha culled out from the records of Tiruvikrama temple is given below.

An epigraph of Sadāśiva, the Vijayanagara king, dated A.D. 1552 records that a number of villages and lands which already belonged to the temple and had been assessed were lying uncultivated and they were now made tax free by Emberumāṇar Jiyar. It is not clear whether the taxes were exempted by the king at the request of the Jiyar or the latter himself had the power to exempt the taxes on the temple lands as indicated by the summary of the epigraph. We have no other evidence to suggest that the temple lands were outside the preview of the state authority. The details about Aṣṭāmuktaṭakāṇa Tirumōligai madam mentioned in an epigraph of Kulattuwa I dated A.D. 1102 is not known.

List of successive Jiyars of Emberumāṇar Jiyar matha

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<th>Name</th>
<th>From A.D.</th>
<th>Number of years</th>
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<td>1. Emberumāṇar Jiyar</td>
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<td>2. Tirunelai Nambi Jiyar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>15. Neyaanar Acharya Swamy Jiyaar</td>
<td>1793 - 1808</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Amberumanaar Acharya Jiyaar</td>
<td>1809 - 1824</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Venkatacharyya Swamy Jiyaar</td>
<td>1824 - 1828</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Viraaraghava Charyyaswamy Jiyaar</td>
<td>1828 - 1842</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Neyaanar Acharya Jiyaan</td>
<td>1842 - 1853</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Srinivasa Charyya Jiyaan</td>
<td>1853 - 1871</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Tiruvennakada Ramanujacharyar Jiyaar</td>
<td>1871-1892</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Srinivasa Ramanujacharyar Jiyaar</td>
<td>1892-1920</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Viraaraghava Ramanujacharyar Jiyaar</td>
<td>1920-1943</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Tiruvennakada Ramanujacharyar Jiyaar (from) 1943</td>
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</tbody>
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The Virattanismēvara temple

Tirukkōyilur is regarded as a special place of worship by the Śāivas in the Tamil country and is considered as one among the eight Virattanēs (ashtavirattanēs) where Śiva is said to have encountered and destroyed evil forces and protected His devotees. The Virattanēśvara temple at Tirukkōyilur, thus has a traditional halo. The Sthalapurāṇa states that Śiva defeated the demon called Andhaka at Tirukkōyilur.

The temple has also acquired importance on account of its association with the two of the three Neyanār viz. Tirunāvukkarasar and Tirukkoṇanambadhar. They have sung in praise of the Virattanēśvara shrine. Besides, Ṣeypporul Neyanār said to be a chief of Tirukkōyilur was deified as a Neyanār.

The Virattanēśvara Devaṣṭhāṇam has brought out a Sthalapurāṇa on the eve of Kumbābhishākam in 1954. Besides this there is a Tamil manuscript Klayur telamahātmiyam in the oriental manuscript library, Madras.
The story of Andhaka as stated in the Sthalapurana is as follows. Once Parvati sportingly closed the eyes of her consort, Śiva in Kailāsa. It is said that she wanted to test the veracity of the Vedic dictum that His eyes represent Sun, Moon and Fire. Suddenly the entire universe became dark and misery befell on the inhabitants. Later, Śiva opened his eyes at the request of the Devas and the darkness thus dispelled personified into a demon called Andhaka (one who was born from darkness). He was given a boon of eternal life by the Lord. However, it proved fatal to the Devas, as Andhaka along with his followers began to trouble them. Subsequently Śiva Himself encountered and defeated him. When Andhaka repented for his acts he was forgiven and given a place among the Shivaganas. The episode is said to have taken place at Tirukkoilūr, a virothēm or víratāna.

The Sthalapurana of the temple associates with the temple a galaxy of gods, demons, saints and some historical names also. They include Muruga (Skanda) Krishna, Indra, Parvati, Sūrya, Rāma, Parāṣurāma,
Gejamukha, Misēsha, Kubera, Yama, Kappege tree, Kāmadēnu cow, Vēnasura, Kapira, Romasa, Mrikanḍa, Gurū, Kapila, Aṇvaiyēr etc.

Even a perusal of these would show that they are nothing but figment of imagination. However the story of Deivika in the Sthalapurāṇa seems to be interesting since most of the characters in it are historical figures known to us but flourished in different periods. This only illustrates the eagerness of the writer of the Sthalapurāṇa to associate all the names known to him with Tirukkōyilur.

Meypporul Nāyaṉēr

Tirukkōyilur is associated with Meypporul Nāyaṉēr one of the 63 celebrated Śaiva saints. This saint is said to be a chief ruling over the region with Tirukkōyilur as his capital. He was in the habit of entertaining Śaiva saints and devotees. He is further said to have defeated another chief named Muttinētha in several battles. Having foiled in the battle field Muttinētha resorted to a clever stratagem.
Knowing Meypporul Nayanar's known reverence for Saiva devotee he disguised himself as a Saiva devotee and managed to gain entry into former's private chambers and stabbed him.

An epigraph of Rajakesarivarman dated his second year states that the Perumegoritthar constructed a verandah round the temple (palli) of Miladudaiyar, built a gopura for it and assigned a portion of their income for keeping up these structures in proper repairs and maintaining some flower gardens. The epigraph is assigned to Aditya I period. It is suggested that Miladudaiyar palli refers to a schettler monastery built in honour of the Saiva saint Miladudaiyar. The Miladudaiyar mentioned in the above epigraph is identified with Meypporul Nayanar.

A record of Rajendra Chola I dated A.D.1015 states that a bronze image was installed in that year in the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjavur. The above mentioned image is identified with bronze with the lable inscription 'Miladudaiyar' found in the same temple.
It is beyond question that a chief of Miladu was associated with the pali. However as for as epigraphical evidence goes the earliest known chief with the title Milaṇḍuśiṣyār figures in Parantaka’s period only. We also do not come across any epigraph which refers to Meypporuḷ Nāyanār. Hence the identification of Milaṇḍuśiṣyār with Meypporuḷ Nāyanār is to be treated as a conjuncture until we have further evidence.

Temple rituals

We have already referred to the record of Kṛṣṇa III which refers to the gift given by the Vaidumbo queen for the abhisheka of the god at every Sankrānti. An inscription of Pāṇḍuṣa I states that the sabha of Tirukkōvalūr, Chirrīṅgūr and Akkalamalle Chatuṛvēdimeḻiḷam and the āru of Marudur and the umnāligai sabha of the temple of Viraṭṭāna were entrusted with the responsibility of performing the abhisheka of the deity with milk for which 150 cows were donated by an individual.
We are informed by an epigraph\textsuperscript{73} that gifts were given for services like \textit{Tirum\^{e}r\textsuperscript{p}uch\textsuperscript{c}ha} and \textit{Tirumperis\textsuperscript{y}attam} at Viratt\textsuperscript{\textae}vara shrine. Pop- perappine V\textsuperscript{a}np\textsuperscript{k}\textsuperscript{o}v\textsuperscript{e}r\textsuperscript{i}ya\textsuperscript{\textae} alias Megad\textsuperscript{o}san R\textsuperscript{\textae}jara\text-superscript{\textae}d\textsuperscript{\textae}ven of Ar\textsuperscript{o}gal\textsuperscript{\textae}r is said to have exempted taxes from the temple and \textit{Tirum\textsuperscript{\textae}c\textsuperscript{\textae}viv\textsuperscript{\textae}lam} during the 33rd regnal year of Kulottunga III (A.D.\textsuperscript{1211}) to meet the above mentioned services in the temple.

We hear about provision made for drumming service also from an epigraph at Tiruk\text-superscript{k}\textsuperscript{\textae}y\textsuperscript{l}\textsuperscript{l}\textsuperscript{\textae}l. An inscription\textsuperscript{74} of K\textsuperscript{r}\textsuperscript{i}\textsuperscript{\textae}na III dated A.D.\textsuperscript{960} states that one Ch\textsuperscript{\textae}tt\textsuperscript{\textae}r\textsuperscript{\textae}d\textsuperscript{\textae}vi donated some lands are \textit{Uv\textsuperscript{\textae}sch\textsuperscript{\textae}cha-kalan} (drumming service) indicating that the devotees paid attention even to such minor needs of the temple and made provision for it.

It is learnt from the epigraphs from Viratt\textsuperscript{\textae}vara temple that arrangements were made for sacred food offerings to the deity. A record\textsuperscript{75} of Param\textsuperscript{\textae}ntaka I dated A.D.\textsuperscript{920} states that 7 \textit{kala\textsuperscript{n}ja} of gold was given for food offerings to the deity of the Tiruviratt\textsuperscript{\textae}t\textsuperscript{\textae}ram temple at Tiruk\textsuperscript{k}\textsuperscript{\textae}y\text-superscript{l}\textsuperscript{\textae}l on the occasion of the
Chittirai festival. An epigraph of Krishna III dated A.D.960 records that Vaidamba Mahārāja Śan-
drayaṇ Tiruvāyaṇ purchased some lands for gold from the sabhā of Tirukkōyilūr and making them tax free donated the same to the temple of Tiruvirattanam for food offerings thrice daily. An inscription of Rājarāja I dated A.D.1003 refers to the gift of 10 mā of land as iruvili to the deity Kēvalviṣaṅgar for food offerings by the sabhā of Tirukkēvalūr. A merchant is stated to have given some lands as ācādāna for supplying rice, offerings vegetables and curd to the images of Kēyanaṅr and Nāchehiyāṅ set up by him in the temple.

An inscription of Kulottunga II mentions the gift of 1½ vēl of lands by the Tirukkēvalūr sabhā to meet the expenses of procession of the deity on every Sunday.

Temple festivals

We are told that arrangements were made to feed 50 devotees in the temple on the occasion of Chittirai festival. The above information is furni-
shed by an epigraph of Parāntaka I dated A.D.920. A damaged record of Krishna III states that Virarāṇa, the queen of Vaidumba Mahārāja, gave a gift to 20 kalanjū of gold for bathing the god Aśvar of the Viroṭṭēṇa temple at every samkārantī. An epigraph of Pāṇḍya king Mūravaṁma Sundara Pāṇḍya dated in his 10th regnal year records a gift of land for supply of cloth and flag on the festival days.

An epigraph of Rājendra I dated A.D.1021 records a gift of 5 kalanjū of gold from the interest of which a fixed quantity of turmeric was to be supplied for smearing the deity Mahādeva with turmeric paste (mājalakappu).

Temple servants

We learn from an epigraph of Rājārāja I dated A.D.1001 that arrangements were made by the royal officers to provide for the temple servants every year two persons as pandāri to be supplied by the sabhā of Tirukkovālur, one stravan, two meykanu and a kānaikkalayu to be supplied by four other villages.
Dancing girls of the temple

The custom of providing dancing girls to the temples is well known. We learn from a record\(^85\) of Rājarāja I dated A.D.1012 that a gift of land was made for supplying 32 well equipped dancing girls to the Vīrattanāsāvara temple.

Gardens of the temple

An epigraph\(^86\) of Kripatunga dated A.D.987 states that 32 kalāni of gold was given as gift for maintaining a flower garden. It is interesting to know from the above epigraph\(^87\) that the money entrusted to nagaram of Tirukkōyilūr was also to cover the expenses incurred for providing the wages and dress for the three labourers engaged for the work in the garden. A record\(^88\) of Rājendra I dated A.D.1018 refers to the arrangement made for supplying garland of flowers. It is stated that with the money donated by the donor 7 mē of land was purchased by the temple and given to 3 gardeners for supply of flower garland to the deity.
The Virattanesvara shrine - Architecture

The Virattanesvara shrine (see ground plan facing this page) at Tirukkoilur has two members namely, the shrine proper and the ardhamandapa and they have a recession in between as a ardhamandapa.

The adhisthāna of the garbhagṛha and the ardhamandapa rests on a padmadala base and is not provided with a uponitha like Trivikrama shrine since it is raising sufficiently high. It consists of a vertical upāna, semi circular kumuda and a vyālakṣa with projecting makara heads at the corners. The vādika comes over this. The wall of the garbhagṛha and the ardhamandapa have tetrogonal pilasters with the usual components above. The śādi is plain and not drawn out into petals. The palagai is thick and square. A square vīrakanta rests over this. The corbel over this is of tereśha type with median band and carries an uttīra. Over and above the uttīra comes the bhāsyaśāci with human heads within.

The devakōsthās are flanked by shorter pilasters and they carry a lintel and a tarama arch. While
the tūrana arch at the Trivikrama temple is plain, the one at Virattānēśvara shrine has received some attention. The Ṛṣvakōshṭha in the garbhagrāha have the figures of Brahma, Lingodbhava and Daksinānūmārti on the northern, western and southern sides respectively. The Ṛṣvakōshṭhas on the northern and the southern sides of the śāhanḍana are empty. However, a stele slab of Durga Mahishāsura-mardini is seen just below the Ṛṣvakōshṭha on the northern side. The fully draped lower body, the heavy bangled forearms, the peculiar virāsa and the slender character of the figure indicate that the image is not Chōla and can be assigned probably to late Palla-
va period. It is also noteworthy that the Ṛṣvakōshṭha above the image is too small to hold it.

In one respect the abhisṭhāna at the Viratta-
ṭānēśvara shrine appears to be non-conventional type. The nāla at the northern side for the discharge of the abhisheka water is at the upāna level suggesting that the linga-pītha inside the garbhagrāha is at the same level. In fact it is so on physical verification. Hence it may not be far wrong if we suggest that the original temple would have been of brick.
The linga in the centre of garbhagrha is mounted on a linga-pitha of circular section of the padma-pitha type. The decoration of the circular pitha is almost equal to the width of the door frame. The door frame is fairly large compared to the Trivikrama shrine. The two armed dvārapālas in front of the ardhamandapa are huge.

The superstructure is entirely in brick and stucco and raises in dvitila stature with vītta gāri va sikhara. Considering the dimensions of the ground ākāśa from its plinth up to the kapāta the superstructure is comparatively subdued and thus not commensurate with the dvitila character.

The proportions of the vimāna as well as the plinth suggest an early tenth century construction for it, eventhough the plinth mouldings reflect the practice of the previous century. While S.R.Belsubrameniyam assigns the structure to the period of Parantaka I, Douglas Barrett narrows it down to the twentieth year of Rashtrakuta Krishna III (A.D.940). The cloister surrounding the garbhagrha and the ardhamandapa is of very recent construction and has shrines.
FOOTNOTES

1. In the Śāṅgīn age, the temples were called Nagesh, (Puṣṭiṇāṇūrya, v.55) "The use of the term Kōil in the sense of a temple seems to be relatively late" (T.V. Mahalingam, The South Indian Temple Complex, (General ed: P.B. Desai, Karnada Research Institute, Karnāṭak University, Dharwar, 1970) p.6 Sileppadikaram, a relatively later work of the Śāṅgīn age mentions the temples for Tirumāl in Vēṇkatam and at Nāgarmalai (Sileppadikaram, vv.41,91)

2. K.R. Srinivasan., Cave Temples of the Pallavas (Archaeological Survey of India, Delhi, 1964) p.47.


4. ARE., 1921-22, no.312.

5. Written and published by T.R. Rehavachariyar, Devarathanam Agent, Tirukkōyilūr (year of Publication not mentioned).


8. T.R. Rehavachariyar., op.cit, pp.4-5.


19. \textit{ibid}.

20. \textit{ibid}.


24. \textit{ibid.}, no. 20(M).


25. \textit{ibid}.


27. \textit{ibid}., no. 143.


30. \textit{ibid.}, no. 139.


32. \textit{ibid.}, no. 354.
33. ibid., no.339.
34. ibid., no.328.
35. SIT., VII, no.139.
36. ARE., 1921-22, no.343.
37. ibid., no.339.
38. SIT., VII, no.141.
39. ARE., 1921, no.327.
40. ibid., no.349.
41. SIT., VII, no.136.
42. ARE., 1921, no.346.
43. ibid., no.348.
44. ARE., 1921-22, no.315.
45. ibid., part II, para 23.
46. ibid., no.342.
47. Supra. p.
48. ARE., 1921-22, no.342.
49. ibid., no.353.
50. ibid., no.340.
51. ibid., no.342.
52. K.V. Ramam, Sri Varadarajswamy temple -
Kanchi, (Abhinav Publications, Delhi, 197) p.
53. ARE., 1921-22, no.349.
54. ibid., no.331.
55. ibid., no.312.
56. ibid., no.327.
57. Vadivel Murugiyar, Koval - Vairattanam (Kilattyur)
Sri Brahmayaki Sametha Sri Vairattanagavara Devas-
thana Sthalamurum (Vairattanagavara Devasthanam,
58. ibid., pp.16-17.
59. ibid., pp.17-18.
60. ibid., p.14.
61. ibid.
64. ibid., p.14.
65. STI., III, no.91.
66. ibid., XII, no. 13.
67. ARE., 1912-13, part II, para. 12.
68. ibid.
69. Ibid., II, no. 40.
70. Ibid., VII, no. 900.
71. Ibid., VII, no. 20(H).
72. Ibid., VII, no. 880.
73. ibid., no. 912.
74. Ibid., VII, no. 20(G).
75. Ibid., VII, no. 927.
76. Ibid., VII, no. 20(G).
77. Ibid., VII, no. 878.
78. Ibid., no. 911.
79. Ibid., no. 913.
80. Ibid., no. 927.
81. Ibid., VII, no. 20(H).
82. Ibid., VII, no. 901.
83. Ibid., no. 870.
84. ibid., no. 258.
85. ibid., no. 263.
86. ibid., no. 266.
87. ibid.
88. ibid., no. 289.