CHAPTER V.

SOCIETY
SOCIETY

The society of Thanjavur had some remarkable characteristics. The society was divided into a number of social groups practising their traditional trades. One can see here a mixed cultural stream with various degrees of assimilation of different local cultural elements. The Tamil society was gradually watered down by the intermingling of the people of different languages like Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada and Marathi. The impact of these linguistic units did not subdue the dominant nature of the Tamilians. The attempts of these linguistic social groups to dominate the local Tamils ended in failure. Assimilation of various cultural aspects, however, added strength and colour to the Tamil society of this region. This mixed nature of this society created certain problems without affecting the existing social and religious order of society. Here, even from very early times, people from various parts of India, migrated and settled in large numbers. The Brahmins of this region, according to M. Subrahmanian, migrated from the North at different times.¹ He suggests that the last group

¹. M. Subrahmanian, History of Tamilnad, pp. 36-37.
of people migrated to this fertile part some time in the 3rd-4th century A.D.

Conditions before the establishment of a strong Chola power facilitated the movement of people from other parts. Scholars suggest that there was a migration of the Paluvettaraiyars from Kerala\(^2\) as early as the 10th century A.D. who became the subordinates of the Cholas. Even to this day, the Malayala Archakas of the Kilapelur temple (near Ariyalur, Tiruchirappalli district) remind us of this tradition. However, this view needs further proof.

Due to the contact with Chalukya-Hoysalas, migrations of people from Telugu and Kannada regions took place\(^3\). Probably some pockets in the Thanjavur region were occupied by these people and government also patronised and encouraged such settlements. However, there is no correcting or supporting evidence from any other source.

The migration from Telugu and Kannada areas were encouraged by the royal authorities during the Vijayanagar rule\(^4\).

4. T.V. Mahalingam, South Indian Polity, p. 240.
The Vijayanagar Emperors spread their religion and culture in this region as well as in the whole of Tamil Nadu by conquests and otherwise. They granted Sarvamūya gifts of lands\(^5\) to the people drawn mostly from Telugu country and helped them to settle down. Under their active patronage movement of Telugu speaking people to South India was on large scale\(^6\). During the Nayak rule, the movement of Telugu and Kannada speaking people increased considerably. One can see a large number of villages established by the royal patronage in these parts. In these, communities of various groups were included. Traders, weavers, warriors and other occupational groups were among the recipients of these grants\(^7\). With the grant of independence to some of these villages, the migrations attained a new dimension of significance.

The Māruḍa period witnessed some colonization by communities from the Deccan\(^8\). A large number of Brahmans, mostly Chidbhavanas, were settled in this region to assist the administration and also to augment a social structure which

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8. 1471 A.D. - *ARE*, No. 120 of 1921., *ARE*, 1921, part ii, para. 49.

would be a source of strength to the alien royal family. This accounts for a large number of Marathi Brahmin Racs in the Thanjavur area. These Racs who entered British service in the 19th century dominated the lower and middle cadres of British bureaucracy in the Madras Presidency. Nevertheless, there was an element of non-Brahmin Marattas also. They originally formed part of the Maratta army here. In fact, invitations went out to certain families in Poona to come and settle down in Thanjavur for which a sum of Rs. 5,000/- was also sanctioned. This is evident from a correspondence between the British resident at Poona and his counterpart at Thanjavur.

The fertility and prosperity of Thanjavur coupled with the royal patronage of the Vijayanagar, the Nayak and the Maratta kings attracted people from different parts of the country. This migration had its impact on the social, economic and cultural aspects of the community. The royal patronage also extended to the spread of religious thought. The Vijayanagar and the Nayak kings were deeply interested in the promotion of Vaishnavism, while the Maratta patronised Saivism. It is but psychological that the various rulers encouraged the migration of their own kinsmen to safeguard against an attack or betrayal of the local population.

9. Ibid., p. 167
10. Ibid., p. 173
Right hand, left hand communities:

From the beginning of the Chola times, we hear of the Velaṅgai and the Idanagai classes. Tradition has many stories to tell about their origin, but it still remains an unsolved problem. The generally accepted and oft repeated theory revolves around a story in which two groups of people approached the king for a judgment. When the king delivered the judgement, one party stood to his right while the other was on the left. Hence they came to be called the right and left hand communities.

Yet another story is narrated in an inscription from Uṭṭattur (Viruchirapalli district) regarding the origin of the Idanagai class. Their origin is traced to the agnikundā (fire-pit) for the protection of the sacrifices of Kasyapa. They are alleged to have been settled in the Chola country in the time of emperor Arindama. The above inscriptions refers to the settlement of Brahmans by king Arindama, who were brought from Antarvedi. The Idanagai classes of people were the bearers of the slippers and umbrellas of these

11. ARE., Nos. 47 of 1921; 79 of 1929. T.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Čolaśa, p. 550


14. ARE., 1921, part II, para. 47.

15. ARE., No. 489 of 1912; ARE., 1913, part II, para 39.
Brahmins who were traditionally held as a privileged class. This casteism and communalism which has been the bane of Indian society for ages is fortunately fast disappearing in modern India.

It is rather peculiar that this differentiation of the Valangai and Idangai communities in the Chola society had deep repercussions calling for even royal interference. The Valangai and Idangai communities were subdivided into 98 sub-sects each. The composition of these communities are difficult to comprehend. The agricultural and artisan communities were included in these classes. There was a lack of harmony between these two communities who held extreme views. The conflicts between them became endless. In the days of Kulottunga III, he had to interfere in their disputes often for a satisfactory settlement to ensure that they did not suffer from any social discrimination or injustice.

Kulottunga III once decided that both the communities should enjoy identical privileges. These right-hand and left-hand communities are heard of as late as the beginning of the 19th century. Disputes were not confined to these two communities alone. Others too claimed precedence and privileges. The Chettis (traders) and the Pattumulakaraars (weavers) quarrelled over the question of precedence in

16. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Câlau, p. 53,
receiving betel and nut on marriage occasions. This is an usual source of dissension and wrangle among these communities. The quarrelling communities were punished by the imposition of a fine payable to the emperor. The epigraph which records this incident closes with a vow made at the feet of Raghunatha Nayaka of Thanjavur.

Hindu Dharmaśāstras classify and subclassify society into various social groups and assign them a hierarchy. To them the most objectionable parts of society were the offspring of inter-caste marriages. They were of two orders—Anuloma and Pratiloma. The Anuloma community consists of persons born of fathers of superior castes and mothers of inferior ones. The Pratilomas are the otherway about, and deemed inferior to Anulomas. An usual difficulty which arises in the case of these castes is the question of deciding the profession to be followed by their progeny. In the Tamil country, the Nathakāras or the chariot makers were the chief Anuloma community, but the fact that some of them took to weaving shows that there was no such veneration rigidity—again, a welcome trend towards modern concepts.

20. ARE, No. 479 of 1908; ARE, 1909, para 45.
Communities:

The dominant cultural group of this area is the peasant community. They form the single largest group. This community was known from the Sangam days as Velir. It is these people who cultivated the fields, and in fact, accounted for the material prosperity of this area. The village in this region was primarily a settlement of peasants and the village assembly, an association of landholders. Besides Velîlas, the Brahmins were the next largest group who possessed land. A group of agrarian labour supported these two wealthy communities in cultivating the soil. This state of affairs changed to a great extent under the Nayaks' rule. They granted certain endowments of land to their own people and had them settled. This naturally resulted in the Velîlas and the Brahmins being pushed aside, and the Telugu speaking Nayaks attaining greater significance.

Likewise, in the Marâṭṭa period, a good number of Marâṭṭa Brahmins, were placed in charge of vast tracts of land and the monopoly of the Velîlas and the other Brahmins was broken to some extent. During the British regime similar conditions prevailed.


Women in Hindu society have always had problems dissimilar to those in the Western world. The Thanjavur society being a conservative one, women held an essentially subordinate place though there was nothing like Purdah system or segregation. Rights and possession of property by women was never positively banned. In fact, in the absence of immediate male heirs, the wife of the deceased was entitled to enjoy his properties. Sati did not appear to have been practised as a religious ritual. Nevertheless, the bereavement was so acutely felt that some could not think of surviving their husbands. This finds an occasional mention in the inscriptions of the Chola period and persisted till the end of the Maratha period. History records a score of such glorious women who sacrificed themselves on the funeral pyre of their lords. Gangavaramiyar, the wife of Vira Chola Illangoval, is said to have endowed a lamp before she entered the fire. Vamanavarahadevi, the queen of Sundara Chola, and Viranadevi, the queen of Rajendra, committed sati after the death of their husbands. When Amar Singh died

24. ARE., No. 376 of 1905.
in 1802, two of his young widows burnt themselves on the
funeral pile inspite of the strong dissuasions by the
Residents agents and the relatives of the queens who pressed
them to relinquish their purpose.\textsuperscript{27}

**Chola inscriptions refer to the system of Devaradiyar,\textsuperscript{28}**
which literally means 'Lord's servant'. They were ordained to
dance in the temple before the deity. In the Great Temple at
Thanjavur there were more than 400 devaradiyar who lived in
rent free residences and held tax free lands.\textsuperscript{29} Instances are
there where individuals sold themselves as devaradiyar.\textsuperscript{30} At
Tiruvakkarakai in A.D. 1099\textsuperscript{31}, three Vellaiyas sold two women
and their descendants as devaradiyar. Epigraphs from
Tiruvallem (1119)\textsuperscript{32} and Tiruvallangadu (1175)\textsuperscript{33} also refer to
the sale of devaradiyar to the temple.

The privileges and the conditions enjoyed by the
devaramjyār are recorded in some of the epigraphs. Kalotturaja I
ordered in A.D. 1088 that some devaradiyar of the temple
Kalahasti, who had been wrongly appropriated to the palace

\textsuperscript{27} Tamior District Records

\textsuperscript{28} ARE., Nos. 80 of 1913; 409 of 1925.

\textsuperscript{29} SII, Vol. II, No.66.

\textsuperscript{30} ARE., No. 86 of 1911; ARE., 1911, part ii, para 29.

\textsuperscript{31} ARE., No. 183 of 1904.

\textsuperscript{32} ARE., No. 183 of 1921.

\textsuperscript{33} ARE., No. 80 of 1915.
service should be restored to the temple. These persons had been stamped with the King's seal which was erased and the trident stamped on their bodies as a sacred symbol of their dedication to the temple. At Tiruvallam, in 1119, one of the villikal (bow men) of Banapuram dedicated some women of his family as devaradiyar after stamping them with the trident. However, the devaradiyar were allowed to marry. This is evidence by the following two records, one from Tiruvōrriyūr (1049) and other from an inscription of the reign of Kulottunga III.

Polygamy and concubinage were very much in vogue during this period. Most men, particularly rulers, had more than one wife, and as many concubines as they chose. In royal families children of different spouses led to problems of succession to the throne which created internal feuds and civil wars.

Adoption is a prescribed procedure in Hindu law. An adopted son enjoyed in full all the rights and privileges of a begotten one. The former was on par with the latter in

34. **ARB.**, No. 141 of 1922.
35. **ARB.**, No. 230 of 1921.
36. **ARB.**, No. 147 of 1912.
37. **ARB.**, No. 411 of 1925.
regard to economic and religious rites. Succession to property and performance of religious rituals were equally bestowed. But during the British Raj, when a ruler adopted a son, succession to the throne was governed by different canons of law. When in 1855 Sivaji II died without a begotten son, the Doctrine of Lapse was rigidly enforced and Thanjavur was taken over by the British. 38

Despite a high level of formal education, society continued to be a victim of superstitious beliefs and practices. This is substantiated by the fact that an enlightened ruler like Serfûji II gifted four annas to a cowherd who brought milk when the Dewan Sâhib was initiating his official business. This, the credulous king construed as an auspicious omen.

Religion:

Even from pre-historic times religion has played a great role in shaping the history of India and specially so of the South. The exponents of various religions spread their religion and philosophy at various intervals leaving an important stamp on the religious, social and cultural life of the people. Though Buddhism and Jainism influenced a good number of people, yet they never outnumbered the Hindus at any time. Even though the kings were highly tolerant towards

38. K.R. Subramanian, The Maratha Rajas of Tanjore, p. '75. '
these religions, and were exponents of secularism these
religions never gained a stronghold. The signs of sur-
vival of these religions can be seen as late as the 13th century.
Another important religion gaining ground in this area
was Islam. Conversion to Islam, particularly of the people
on the sea coast, was made on a large scale. The establish-
ment of the Vijayanagar empire and the patronage of Hinduism
by its rulers cried a halt to this policy of conversion
to Islam. Again, in the early part of the 16th century,
the Christian missionaries were engaged on a large scale
conversion. Inspite of these divergent religious
movements the social harmony was never lost.

Saivism:

Saivism was a dominant religion of this region from
as early as the Sangam age. It suffered a setback probably
during the Kalabhra interregnum. A revival of this faith
can be seen in this area from the 6th century A.D. The
Saivite Nayamars preached this religion through hymns,

39. T.V. Mahalingam, Administration and Social Life under
Vijayanagar, pp. 319-320.

40. Ibid., pp. 317-320. R.L. Hardgrave, Madras of Tamil Nadu
pp. 43-44.

41. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, Development of Religion in South
India, p. 36.
mostly sung in the temple precincts. By their songs they inspired devotion and imparted the philosophy of Saivism. Due to these preachers, Saivism was restored to its former glory and prestige. This helped the Cholas to place Saivism on a better pedestal.  

Chola monarchs were, no doubt, staunch adherents of Saivism. They patronised these savants of Saivism and extended all facilities to them. While building a large number of new temples the Cholas renovated the old temples and added adjuncts to them. Land grants were made to these temples for their proper maintenance. Apart from architectural contributions, Saiva canons were collected by the famous Nambi Aṇḍar Nambi probably in the days of Rajaraja I and were codified by him. Gangaṇeditya, the priest-king, helped a lot for the propagation of this religion. Sekkilar collected a large number of stories of saints and compiled them in his renowned Perviyapuranam (or Tiruttomdar Puranam). By these the religious fervour

42. Ibid., pp. 120-121.
43. III., Vol. I, part 11, p. 64.
44. III., Vol. I, part 1, para 92.
46. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Cholas.
increased among the people. Śaivism was accepted as the state religion during this period. The Pāṇḍyaś who followed the Chōlaś also patronised this cult and munificently endowed for its propagation. The Vijayanagar rulers, though staunch adherents of Vaishnavism, made generous endowments for popularising Śaivism.47 There was no change in its status in the days of the Nayakaś and the Marāṭhās. Śaiva canons were universally respected. But the rift between Śaivism and Vaishnavism now widened creating two separate systems of philosophy.

**Vaishnavism:**

(The Pallava rule at time witnessed the revival of Vaishnavism. However, the Chōla rule in this area dimmed their prospects. The Chōlaś gave greater importance to Śaivism than any other religion. Though Vaishnavism was losing ground yet it was patronised by a fairly large group with raising of temples and creation of endowments and composition of devotional literature.) The removal of the idol of Viṣṇu from the Chidambaram temple is a strong pointer to the long drawn struggle that existed between these...

two religions. There seems to have been a lull in these religious dissensions during the 12th and 13th centuries. But this did not last long and the conquest by the Pandyas changed the situation. While there was internal amity between these two religions, the attack came from Islam—a foreign faith. The Vijayanagar empire countered this by strengthening Hinduism. While they were staunch adherents of Vaishnavism, they also supported the other Hindu sects. Vaishnava śāhāriyas were summoned to develop the religious beliefs among the Hindus. This was richly rewarded, and in due course, a number of religious institutions were built. Large number of adjuncts like kalyāna mandapams (marriage halls) were added to the temples. Choultries and rest-houses were erected for pilgrims. Vaishnāvite Ālvar (saints), śāhāriyas, and the people were given facilities to migrate for missionary work. The Nayak rulers too followed the same policy of religious expansion.

Minor Deities:

The vast rural population was least concerned either with royal patronage of Hinduism or with the aggressive

48. Ottakkuttar, Māyarakā, Kulettuṅgalakakāla, Ula, 11.76, 77, 78.
50. Ibid., p. 333.
conversion to Islam but continued to worship their traditional gods and goddesses. Political changes did not have any impact on them in regard to their religion. However, owing to economic needs some embraced Christianity. The major village deities in this region were Māriamman, Ugrakāli, the Saptamāthas, Iyānār (Haribaputtra), Piḍāri (Anāḷamman), Selliamma, Draupati and her spouse Dharaputtra. Māriamman is the deity of the smallpox and is worshipped by the people to save them from this pestilence. The Somayāṇuram Māriamman is singularly reputed as one who could cure mental disorders. It is but common for classical Hinduism to invent Purānic origins for these fierce deities. We have instances of European devotees too of Māriamman. Bondāripalayam, a suburb, half a mile to the north-west of Thanjavur, gained importance in Marāṭha days where a Yajā (religious sacrifice) was performed to Kāli. There is a temple about 5 miles from Thanjavur dedicated to Māriamman and, strangely enough, ministered by brahmin priests.

Ugrakāli is an aspect of Paṛvati - the goddess Sakthi (power) - the consort of Śiva. After his conquest of the Thanjavur region, Vijayālaya built a temple at Thanjavur, and dedicated

it to Mismumbhasūdini. Apart from these deities, boundary
gods were also worshipped in this region, the boundary
stone itself being treated as a deity.

Cult of Devaraja:

The custom of naming the temple as well as the presiding
deity after its ruler, is an old tradition dating back to the
Pallavas. This interesting custom was adopted by the
Cholas also. The unique concept of naming the deity after
the king was very much in vogue during this period and the
term Devaraja - 'God = King' - more than exemplifies this.
This idea spread overseas too and its influence is seen as
far as Indo-China and Indonesia. Vijayalayasoholēśvaram,
Rājarajēśwararam, Gangaikondachōlēśvararam and a majority of
the temples derived their names from the reigning king. The
occult phenomenon seems to be the recognition of a divine
spirit, linking the ruler with the deity. This concept was
extended later and in certain temples even shrines were dedi-
cated for kings and queens and their idols installed therein.
Worship of royal personages was instituted and it looked as
though that there was a distinction between the worship of an

54. ARE., No. 163 of 1927. H. Whitehead, The Village Gods of
South India, p. 36.
55. Ibid., p. 33.
icon and the idol of a ruler. During the rule of Rajaraja I the images of the Śaiva saints Tirunāvukkarasar, Gānanasambandar, Sundaramūrti with his two wives, Tiruttomdar and several others were set up in the Big Temple. This would suggest that towards the end of the 10th century along with kings the saints were also worshipped after their demise. According to the Tiruvāḷangāṉu plates, Vānavanmāhādevi committed satī. The images of this queen and her husband were installed in the Thanjavur temple by Kundavai, their daughter. Thus, there was the practice of worshipping the heroes who fell in battle and the heroines who committed satī.

**Jainism - Buddhism**

Jainism and Buddhism ceased to be important faiths after the 10th century in this region. In the later medieval period, the Jains became merchants and organised trade guilds. There was no discrimination against the Jains or the Buddhists by the Cholas. Perhaps one may be justifiably conservative in accepting the statement that "the Tamil kings were neither slow nor parsimonious in their benefactions to

57. *ARE*, 1903, p. 103.
59. *SITI*, part ii, p. 73.
their Jain subjects". History speaks of Kundavai (sister of Rājarāja I), a princess remarkable for learning and charity, building two Jain temples, one at Tirumalai and the other at Rājarājapuram. Virachōla, a vassal of Rājarāja I, remitted taxes payable by a Jainapalli. A perumpalli at Karandai was named after Virarājendrachōla and another at Kuhūr after Kulottunga I. The grants of lands to Jainapallis were considered sacred and irrevocable like Devasannas and Brahmadesvams. K.R. Venkatarama Iyer attributes the decadence of Jainism after the Chōla period, to the Muslims and Nāyaks. It may be surmised that the decline of Jainism and Buddhism was but natural and need not be attributed to persecution or negligence.

Buddhism:

Buddhism fared no better than Jainism after the 10th century A.D. A Buddhist scholar, Buddhāmitra, wrote a Tamil grammatical work, Virasāliyan in the reign of Virarājendra. Kundavai erected a temple for Buddha at Dēdāpuram. The building of the Chudāmani varma Vihāra at Nagapattīnām by Rājarāja I is well known. The existence of Buddhism during the days of Sēvappa Nāyaka is known from a temple for

62. ARE., No. 6 of 1919
63. ARE., No. 288 of 1917.
Buddha near Kumbakönam. But Buddhism appears to have declined after the Nayaks.

Islam:

An inscription of the period of SevappaNayaka registers a grant of seven velis of land made to the Pakirs of a mosque by some inhabitants of Nanjikkottai in 1550.

When the Nawab of Arcot and the English jointly attacked Thanjavur in 1771, the Nawab openly referred to his aim of eradicating idolatry in the Thanjavur country where, he regretted, it was very deeply rooted.

Christianity:

Christianity gained significant ground since the days of Serfoji and the entire credit for this must go to the support lent by the Rev. Schwarte. The helpful attitude of the British authorities, from the Board to the Collector, was also a significant factor in this regard. It is well known that the Queen's historic proclamation in A.D. 1858


69. K.R. Subramanian, The Maratha Rajas of Tanjore. 86.
relieved the British government of India of all responsibility in regard to the spread of Christianity. The continuous arrival of more and more missionaries did cause concern to the princes of India. A letter from Mr. Benjamin Torin (London), the British Resident at Thanjore, to king Serfoji in 1813 is interesting in this connection. He assures, 'There are many persons desirous of going to India not only as merchants but as missionaries in the cause of religion to follow in the path of Mr. Schwarts. The Raja need entertain no fears on account of the arrival of more missionaries for, by an act of Parliament His Majesty's government have determined that the 'religion of the natives of India shall not be violated but preserved to them as heretofore'. This would confirm that the British Parliament was never interested in missionary activities in India. In the earlier period the British allowed things to take their own course and did not interfere in the zealous missionary work of individuals. Later, they openly dissociated themselves from the forces of proselytisation and disowned responsibility for religious activities in the country, holding themselves responsible only for law and order. But Christian missionary work in the Thanjavur region was but imperfectly successful. This may be due to the well entrenched position of Hindu orthodoxy.

The number of converts to Christianity in the Thanjavur region was very much less\(^71\) than in places like Tirunelveli, Madras and Tiruchirapalli.

**Religious Tolerance:**

Intensive adherence to any particular religion has not precluded the tolerance of other religious faiths except in certain cases. The Cholas, who were devout Saivas like most of the early Pallavas, tolerated Vaishnavism. Raja Raja I is known to have permitted and helped the construction of a Buddhavihara in Nagapattinam\(^72\). But sharp religious persecution became a notorious feature of the reign of Kulottunga II when he gave a go-by to secularism. In his days Sri Ramanuja, the exponent of the Visishtadwaita philosophy of Vaishnavism and his followers were persecuted\(^73\). The same tendencies seem to have prevailed in the Nayan and the Maratha periods also.

Krishnadava Raya reflected the imperial religious policy by tolerating Christians especially in Goa. This perhaps is a reflection of his political sagacity rather than religious

\(^71\) R.L. Hardgrave, Madras in Tamil Nadu, p. 37.

\(^72\) Line 116 of Leyden Grant (Tamil), K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Colas, pp. 224 and 226.

\(^73\) Ibid., pp. 295-297.
tolerance. Commercially and politically the Portuguese, though converted Christians, were the favoured allies of Vijayanagar. Shahji, a Sativite Maratta, is accused by Manucci of persecution of the Christians and imposing a poll tax on them.\(^{74}\) Manucci represented the matter to Nawab Daud Khan, the Fanjdar of Carnatic. The latter wrote to Shahji condemning his attitude and asking him to stop such persecutions to which Shahji readily complied. While native Indian records do not speak of persecution of Christians by Indian princes, the accusation comes from the missionaries. This is seen in the case of the Satupatis of Ramesad as well as the Nayaks and Marattas of Thanjavur. Perhaps, the two parties had different definitions of persecution. Serfoji was pious and religious by temperament and was greatly influenced by the Rev. Schwarts. This imparted an element of modernity to his character. He combined in himself Hindu orthodoxy and a fair measure of modern scepticism with the 'superstition' peculiar to both. When Dr. Buchaman, Bishop Heber and Bishop Middleton visited Thanjavur, they were very much impressed with his catholicity of outlook.

Bishop Heber thanked the king for his uniform kindness towards his poor Christian subjects and their teachers as well whereupon the prince said that it was but his duty. The Bishop observed 'I have seen many crowned heads but not one whose

\(^{74}\) B.S. Baliga, Tanjore District Handbook, p. 67.
departure was more princely. With such an impression the Bishop composed a prayer to be translated into Tamil and used it in the Churches of the province. The British period is characterised by its keeping aloof from missionary propaganda. This was but in tune with the Queen's proclamation made earlier.

**Temples and Religious Institutions:**

The society of Thanjavur region is an integrated one, which reflects credit both on the rulers and the ruled. Religion, philosophy and culture are deeply ingrained in their national fabric. Building temples with an eminence in art and architecture provided a means of participation of the society in a project of sanctity.

**Temples:**

It is no exaggeration to say that the temple became the centre of all social activities in the Tamil country after the 9th century A.D. Religious, educational, economic and political factors contributed to the construction of temples and they in course of time, became museums of art and centres of learning, education and philosophy. The expansion of Chola imperialism, and consequently its augmented economy, paved the way for the construction of numerous temples in this region, there being not a village without a temple, big or small.

The tradition of building temples to gods and goddesses in the Tamil country dates back to a remote past. The Sangam literature refers to various temples worshipped by different groups of people. Chola Chengappan is considered to have built innumerable shrines for gods in the Chola country. This tradition of temple building could be traced to the great Vijayalaya, the founder of the Chola dynasty, who built a temple for the goddess Misesambhasudini, in commemoration of his victory over the Mutturaiyars.

Most of the temples of this region owe their origin to royal patronage. Aditya I, Gandaraditya, Rajaraja I, Rajendra I and Kulottunga I were famous as great builders of temples. Even the queens and ladies of the royal family were actively associated themselves with the construction of temples. Sambiyan Mahadevi, wife of Gandaraditya, Kundavaippirattiyar, sister of Rajaraja I could be cited as notable examples.

Architecturally the temples show a great development through the ages. The temple precincts increase in size, owing to the addition of sub-shrines and super-structures. The pillars,


77. As., Vol. XII, Nos. 292, 379 and 380.

78. As., No. 47 of 1918; As., Vol. XIII, No. 1.

79. As., No. 8 of 1919.
pillasters, niches and even the walls were transformed according to the adoption of new architectural devices. The ThāṭSESVARAM temple at Kumbakonam, the Natārāja temple at Chidambaram, the Arihadiśvara temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram, the Śiva temple at Sambhyamahādevi, the Thyanārājaswami temple at Tiruvarūr, the Nāgēśvarasvēnī and Sāranāvēnī temples both at Kumbakonam and the Śiva temple at Tārāsuras (Thanjavur district) may be cited as some of the outstanding temples of merit. It is surprising that the vandalism of three Muslim inroads from Śālik Kāfūr to Muhammad Tuglak 79 have not seriously damaged the numerous temples in this region.

The economic value of these temples to the contemporary society and to the future generation and their historical value through the numerous inscriptions to modern chroniclers are significant. Some of the major temples had a regular administrative hierarchy of religious officials. When the British came into the picture, they evinced keen interest in problems relating to temples. The administration of the temple was carefully studied by them and suitable changes effected without intrusion into the religious canons. Ways and means were devised to augment their economic resources.

79. H. Venkataramarayya, India, pp. 43-79.
In 1814 the Board of Revenue recorded that there were 993 Hindu temples in Thanjavur receiving an allowance from the Government and 1673 temples drawing no monitory grants. Early in 1812 an attempt was made to regulate the finances of the temples by appointing a suitable superintendnet etc. This is a measure which was anticipated by more than a century by a Department like the 'Hindu Religious Endowments Board' 80.

Jainism and Buddhism also flourished in secular South India up to the end of the 13th century. Jairallis were built in a few places; one such was put up by Kundavai, the sister of Rājarāja I at Dādapura 81. Buddhavallī was also built in this place by her 82. The most important Buddhavallī known as the Chudamanivaras vihāra was built at Nagapattinam by Rājarāja I, who endowed it liberally 83. Kulottuṅga I granted additional endowments for its proper maintenance 84.

Mathas:

Mathas became popular probably from the 10th century onwards. Some of them served as community feeding centres.

80.
81. ARÉ., No. 10 of 1919
82. ARÉ., No. 12 of 1919
83. HI., Vol. XXII, No. 34.
84. HI., Vol. XXII, No. 35.
and choultries while others functioned as centres of philosophical learning. They were founded either by religious chiefs or by royal proclamation or endowed by the community or private individuals. A matha named after Kulottunga was called Kulottunga Cholan Matha and was founded at Sivapura where arrangements were made for feeding Mahesvaras. Some communities also founded mathas and by private individuals of no particular importance also established and endowed properties to the mathas. It is significant that a Chola inscription from Tiruvanniyur even though outside the purview of this thesis speaks of the construction of a matha called Rajendra Chola matha by a lady admirer Ariyammai.

Sankaracharya founded many mathas to expound his Advaita philosophy, which also functioned as centres of Smarta religious following. It was during the Maratha period (A.D. 1739) that the Sankara matha in Kanchi was shifted to Kumbakonam. Such mathas could also be classified as the Brahminical mathas and (b) non-brahminical mathas. The Tiruvadururai, Thanjavur and Tiruppanadu are some of

85. ARB., Nos. 272 and 277 of 1927.
86. ARB., No. 505 of 1922.
87. ARB., No. 49 of 1911; ARB., No. 38 of 1912.
88. Copper Plate Inscription, I., T.V. Mahalingam, Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar, p. 300.
89. P.R. Hemingway, Tanjore District Gazetteer, pp. 222 and 218.
the important non-brahmanical ones. In Tiruvannaike near Tiruchirapalli there was a Ḍahratī mathā⁹⁰ which was intended for the benefit of Kālemukhas. A Vṛṣaraṇī Bikshā mathā⁹¹ was founded in Pandavaṇaḷūr. All these flourished in the days of Kalottunga III. In the Chōlā times there were six major mathās in Tiruppugalūr, Pattāsvarām, Tiruvilimīlāpkōṭa, Tiruvālūr, Koṭilūr and Kuttālam. These mathās were endowed with royal grants as well as tax free lands provided by village assemblies. In the Maratta period we hear of Gujaratics founding mathās in Thanjavur region. Even to-day we find a few of them in the West Main Street, Thanjavur. These were only communal rest houses and stood half way between monasteries and inns. There were Śaiva and Vaiśhṇava mathās and of other denominations as well.

Choultries:

During the days of Serfōji numerous choultries were built named Satrams. More than fifty Satrams lying between Thanjavur and Rameswaram stand to his credit. Some of them were in commemoration of his favourites. They were christened Raja Satrams. The most famous of them was the Muktāmbā Satram in Orthanād.⁹² Muktāmbā was a favourite of

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⁹⁰ ARE., Nos. 441 and 445 of 1914;

⁹¹ ARE., No. 72 of 1931.

⁹² ARE., 1924, p. 121; Genealogical account of Tonjavoor Rajas' race of Kāleśāṇē in Thanjore District;
ARE., No. D 716K of C.O.M.I. p. 89.
concubine of the king. Serfoji perhaps envisaged a welfare state, when he declared that the purpose of a Satra was to help orphans, aliens, the disabled, pilgrims, pedestrians, the blind, the crippled, children, old persons, etc. He warned that abuse of any of these avowed objects would be punished.\(^95\)

**Education:**

Education was imparted in semi-religious institutions like Ghatikas\(^94\), Nathas\(^95\), and Salas\(^96\) apart from the temples. Religious literature in main and a few secular subjects as ancillary were taught in these institutions. An inscription of Rajendra Chola\(^97\) makes provision for maintaining a teacher in a free school. Yet another inscription\(^98\) of this king records a gift of 45 veli\(^4\) of land in Rajarajamalur to a temple by the assembly of the free village for the maintenance of an educational institution in which the Vedas, Vyakarana, Mimamsa and Vedanta were taught. Enayiram, a village in South Arcot was the seat of a famous school attached to the local temple and endowed by Rajendra I.\(^99\)

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94. *ARPh.* No. 293 of 1908.
95. *Ibid.* p. 653
96. *ARPh.* No. 276 of 1923.
97. *ARPh.* No. 266 of 1913; *TAM.* I, p.10.
98. *ARPh.* 1918, part ii, pages 27-31; *ARPh.* No. 333 of 1917.
Education was dear to the heart of Rāja Serfōji. He founded the Nava Vidyā Kalamidhi Śāla in which disciplines like Medical science, Arts, Philosophy, Astronomy, Music, and sculpture were taught. It was multi-lingual inasmuch as it taught Persian, Arabic, Telugu, Sanskrit, Marathi, Hindi and English. The Rāja's College of Sanskrit and Tamil studies in Tiruvaiyaru later matured into the Oriental College affiliated to the Madras University in 1918\textsuperscript{100}. Be it said to the credit of Rāja Serfōji - a Marāṭṭa ruler - that he evaluated Sanskrit long before the famous encomium paid by Sir William Jones to it as "a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either".

The Christian missions also took great interest in the promotion of education even in those early days and this noble tradition continues to this day. They were quick to realize that "what a sculptor was to a piece of marble was education to the human soul." The society for the propagation of the Gospel, the Methodists, the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics all had missions in Thanjavur and each managed one or more educational institutions\textsuperscript{101}. The Roman Catholics

\textsuperscript{100} B.S. Baliga, Thanjore District Handbook, p. 286.

\textsuperscript{101} For Imperial Education in India, Vol. II, p. 245.
managed two schools at Mannargudi and Navapattinam, one each by SPC at Thanjavur and the Lutheran mission at Sirkali. The oldest institution, the St. Peter's College at Thanjavur\(^{102}\) which was opened by Rev. Schwartz in 1786, began as a provincial school for the teaching of English. In 1787 the East India Company made a special grant towards the upkeep of the school. In 1809 the amount was enhanced under the name of 'the Schwartz grant'\(^{103}\). It became a second grade college in 1864 and was further upgraded in 1874. The Findlay's College (1865) at Mannargudi and a Lower Secondary School by the Wesleyan Mission reflect credit to that altruistic role of missionaries in education. Even to this day India owes in no small measure its modern western education as a legacy of missionary enterprise.

In 1828 the government decided to establish 3 Tahsildari schools in three towns Kumbakonam, Pattukkottai and Mannargudi most suitable for the purpose\(^{104}\). When Hemingway prepared the Thanjavur Gazetteer the impression had gained ground that

103. Ibid., p. 164.
Thanjavur was exceptionally highly literate. 'The district comes first in the Presidency (excluding the exceptional cases of Madras and the Nilgiris) in the literacy of its total population. In the education of males it passes the Nilgiris and stands second only to Madras. In female education the district is backward ranking 7th'. This perhaps is an indication of the essentially conservative nature of the region. The towns of Thanjavur and Kumbakonam stand first and second in general education compared with all the towns in the Presidency, excelling even Madras. The liberty is taken to attribute this to the wealth as well as to the natural intelligence of the people. The Government College, Kumbakonam, housed in the holiday home of the Rajas and Ranas of Thanjavur, and hailed as the Cambridge of South India, claims among its alumni Ramanujam, the mathematical prodigy and the Right Hon'ble V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, the silver-tongued orator.

Though Persian had ceased to be the official language in most parts of South India by 1829 and the number of Muslims in Thanjavur was quite small, the Government appointed a teacher at Kumbakonam on Rs. 9/- per month for teaching

A petition from the Muslims of Nagore requesting that a Persian school be started was sent to the College Board, Government of Fort St. George and the Government acceded to this just request\textsuperscript{107}. In connection with the development of modern education in Thanjavur the yeoman Service rendered by Rev. Schwarts cannot be exaggerated. Writing in 1785, Schwarts said that it was his object to establish an English school at Thanjavur but the disturbed local conditions initially frustrated the realization of his ambition. Later with the timber supplied by the Resident and encouraged by the Raja's promise to contribute 40 Pagodas toward the maintenance of a school, he proceeded to construct a school building\textsuperscript{108}. His further appeal to the Governor in Fort St. George helped Schwarts in establishing this school.

Since Tamil and Marathi had been in language for official purposes, they were employed by the Collectors even after the formation of the Madras Presidency. Till the middle of the 19th century when English became the official language, Marathi was more commonly used than Tamil in public offices, an eye opener to trends in linguistic parochialism!

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., Vol. 4206 dated 27.5.1829, pp. 77-79
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., Vol. 5442 dated 7.3.1785, pp. 149-51.
Serfoji's devotion to the cause of education has already been noticed. A culmination of deep interest is seen in the famous Sarasvati Mahal Library, which is considered to be perhaps the largest and most important in the world. Dr. Buhler adds to say that it contains a great many useful and a number of very rare or nearly unique books, many of which are quite unknown or procurable only with great difficulty and expense. The earliest systematic beginning of the library was about the end of 16th century when Thanjavur was under the rule of the Telugu Kayaks who collected Telugu manuscripts. The Maratha rulers who succeeded them, slowly but systematically added to this nucleus till Serfoji almost perfected it. When the British took over the library, they threw it open to the public.

Serfoji was a pioneer in harnessing printing for the spread of knowledge. He set up a printing press in Thanjavur in 1805 and was proud of it as a rare acquisition to his court. Nevertheless, the first Tamil types were used


as early as 1575 when a Tamil-Portuguese dictionary was
brought out. The missionaries in South India spread their
gospel among the Tamils by printing and publishing Christian
literature in Tamil. While Serfōji was aware of this, his
ambition was to set up a printing press for publishing Sanskrit
works in Devangari script\textsuperscript{111}. In 1807 he imported types
from London and very soon the press became very active\textsuperscript{112}.

\textbf{Literature: Tamil:}

For ages Thanjavur has been the home of Tamil which
has been a medium of popular communication and also of high
literary expression. Thanjavur contributed in no small
measure to the Sangam works which are noted for their literary
eminence. Some Chōla kings of the Sangam age have themselves
contributed to Tamil literature. When the Chōlas resumed
power with Thanjavur as its capital, Tamil continued to be
the official as well as the literary language.

\textsuperscript{111} Ib\textit{id.}.
\begin{itemize}
  \item Vol. 3418 dated 5.10.1807, p. 105.
  \item Vol. 3419 dated 5.10.1807, p. 206.
\end{itemize}
\textsuperscript{112} V. Srinivasachari, 'Mahārāja Serfōji - The Scholar
Literary giants like Sēkkilēr, Kambār, Īēttakkūttar and Jayakundōr were patronised by the Imperial Chōlas. These were scholars among rulers like Gāndarāditya Chōla who composed the religious poem Tiruvīsippā. This period had many faceted developments of the Tamil literature and language. The epics like Rāmāyana, devotional literature like Thiruvānavar, philosophical treatises like the commentaries on the Śivagānanabōdan, literature like the Mūrakula, semi-historical poems like the Kalingattuparani, mystic literature like Pattinattupillai poems and grammatical works like the Virānoliyan were some of the great works of the period. The Imperial Chōla period has been rightly considered to be Silver Age of Tamil Literature, perhaps next only to the Saṅgam age deemed to be its Golden Age. The character of the literature of this period is in contrast to the preceding age of the Pallavas, considerable secular literature was also produced between the 11th and 13th centuries. This included panegyrics and eulogies like the Kaḷōttuṇṟu Pillaṟṟittai and the Uḷūṟṟu.

Sanskrit:

The encouragement to Sanskrit did not suffer as a result of the patronage to Tamil. The Chaturvedināṉaḷai were repositories of Sanskrit scholarship and in institutions like

113. A. Ayyadurai, Economic Conditions in South India (1000-1500 A.D.), p. 140.
114. V. Y. Mahalingam, Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar, p. 207.
the school at Ennayiram founded by Rajenira I. Sanskritic studies were a common feature. Sanskrit was preserved by the Agamas and Vedic lore in temples. While the Brahminical mathas promoted Sanskrit scholarship, yet the vast body of literature created in the region was in Tamil. This was particularly so when the ruler and the ruled spoke the same language. But when dynasties like the Nayak and the Maratta, speaking Telugu and Marathi respectively came to govern Thanjavur, the patronage to Tamil as may be expected was relegated to a third place. However, that the Imperial Cholas did not neglect Sanskrit is borne out by the fact that at the order of Rajaraja II, Kesavaeswara compiled a Sanskrit lexicon called Natartharnava Sansképa 114.

Telugu:

When the Nayaks came to rule in Thanjavur, patronage of literature was resumed after a short interval of neglect by the Vijayanagar rulers. Vedántadesíkā, a polyglot was an important exception to this. But he lived mostly in Srírangam. Arunagiri, the author of the famous devotional work Tiruppangal and a contemporary of Devaraja II belonged to Tondaimandalam:

I.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Cholas, p. 492.
There was a real dearth of literary activity in Thanjavur region during the post-Chöla-pre-Nayak age. Raghunātha Nayaka was to the Nayaka what Serfoji was to the Marāṭṭa. He was himself in the author of Periṣetapaharana, Mataḥbhudha, Rāmāyanasara Sangrata etc. Gōvinda Dīkṣita, the Scholar minister of this ruler wrote the Harvamasaava Charitra and the Saṅgīta Sudhā. Kumāratatācharya also in the court of Raghunātha wrote the Periṣetapaharana in which he praised Thanjavur and his king. Vēṅkatakrishṇa Dīkṣita and Ramachandra Dīkṣita wrote the Nāṭāṇa Viḍyav and the Jāna-kīparṇayam respectively. The latter is considered a giant among Sanskrit writers. Raghunāthabhyudayam was written in Telugu by Viṣṇuvārāhava Nayaka to Commemorate the Victories and achievements of his father Raghunātha Nayaka. Sahitvatmaka by Yagūnārāyana Dīkṣita, son of Gōvinda Dīkṣita also deals with the life and achievements of Raghunātha.

Marathi:

Among the Marāṭṭa rulers, Shāji was a good scholar, and he is known as the Bhōja of 16th century of the Marāṭṭas of Thanjavur 115. Rāja Serfoji patronised men of letters and was himself an author of six plays in Marathi. During the British period they too continued the literary patronage. Oriental scholars like U.V. Swaminātha Iyer, P. Narāyanaswamī Iyer, Sadagopa Rāmakṛṣṇa Chāriyar and Gopalakrishṇamachārī

not to mention of Nāgai Vedāchalam all of whom richly contributed to the continuity of Tamil scholarship in the region. Centres of Sanskrit learning like Tiruvaiyaru, Tiruvimēlur, Kumbakonam and Gōdadāraram continued to promote Sanskrit scholarship, aided partly by government and partly by private philanthropists from Nāṭṭukkōttai Chettīs.

With a tangled rule of the Pāḷḷavaś and Pāṇḍyaś about 3rd or 4th Century A.D., to the great Vijayalaya shooting like a meteor in the political sky of Imperial Chōlas, to the noteworthy Raghunātha Nāyaka of the Māraṭṭas and foreign invasions by the Muslims and the European powers, did not make any appreciable dent in its society with its avowed policy of national integration. Secularism and linguistic tolerance were so deeply ingrained in the cultural renaissance of this epoch, that it was feasible for royal patronage to be extended to all cults, communities and languages, inclusive of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Portuguese and English. Besides these music, art, science and literature were encouraged by the State. Serfoji, outstanding among the Māraṭṭas, with modern concepts, realized that an educated society, which is the arena where character is formed and great things are fashioned is the cradle of public opinion. He like Tennyson’s Ulysses "It was a great spirit yearning in desire to fellow knowledge like a sinking star, beyond the utmost bound of human thought".
Temple Architecture:

"Architecture is the printing press of all ages and gives a history of the state of society in which the structure was erected." - Lady Morgan.

South Indian Literature and Architecture, with their continuity over the centuries have been devoted all along to the promotion of religious themes. The architecture of Thanjavur region is singularly devoid of ancient secular structures. This is more than compensated by a plethora of religious edifices.

The Vijayālaya Gōlesvāram of Marthamalai is one of the earliest and grandest of the structural temples built during the time of Vijayālaya. Some of the architectural features met with in this edifice, clearly indicate that it was built on Pallava Style. This temple is noted for its circular shrine chamber enclosed within a square ambulatory. A circular shrine is rather unusual. The pillared mandapa, the pyramidal tower of the Vīśṇa, topped by the Stūpi and diversification of the external walls by pilasters and recesses are continued into Pallava Architecture.

Aditya's Architectural style of temple construction was not marked by originality but was merely a continuation of earlier pattern which was instituted by Rajaraja I for the
first time. Rājarāja I made a significant departure from
the earlier tradition by constructing majestic and imposing
temples. The Brihadīśvarar temple in Thanjavur built by
Rājarāja I and Gangaikondacholēśvarar in Gangaikondacholēapuram
(İruchirapalli district) by his son Rājendra I, may be
considered as two supreme creations of Dravidian style of
architecture. These two temples are said to be the
embodiment of the best in the Dravidian architecture. Of the
two, the earlier was the proto-type and in every way the
better. They represent the turning point at which the
evolution of Dravidian architecture took a sharp turn towards
the complicated Pāṇḍyan style. A noteworthy feature is
the construction of the massive tower immediately above the
sanctum. Dvārāsuram is yet another illustration of the Chōla
style. These monuments mark a turning point in the evolution
of Dravidian architecture towards the intricate Pāṇḍyan Patterns.
History records that "Athens adorned herself at the expense of
her allies". Similarly Thanjavur and its temples were
beautified by the enormous plundered bounty particularly
in the days of Rājarāja I.

The Maratta period is marked by important secular
structures with very few religious constructions. The Maratta
place in Thanjavur is partly an innovation and partly a
renovation of earlier Nayak buildings. The Maratta hall with
throne of the king is a majestic sight. This is raised by a couple of feet above the square courtyard which it faces. A fine effect is rendered by its many large pillars, that support the lofty roof. Circular in shape and smoothly surfaced, these tall columns are coloured with a deep tone of red, and are richly decorated with twining garlands of grapes and vine and white paint. The palace fort is a large enclosure with arched halls and tastefully plaster-coated galleries. The Durbar-hall and statue of Serfoji in peerless white marble, reminds one of the glories of the scholar-statesman, Ha ja Serfoji with his inexhaustible interest in arts, built choultries, erected a miniature minaret symbolic of secularism. He also built a castra at Sāluvanāyakanpatṭīnām in 1814 as a token of appreciation of the British to commemorate their triumph over Napoleon Bonapartes. This structure is named Nāmōra, meaning "the height of victory".

The palace of the king in Thanjavur has been rather unfairly and hastily treated by Ferguson, who remarked it as "a curious and tasteless jumble". The palace which is in the heart of the town within the fort, covers an extent of about 30 acres. The palace houses the beautiful artistic
Zenana called the Nanjala Vilas. The structure of the arsenal is like that of a gopura, i.e., the tower of the temple. Lord Valentia, when he visited Thanjavur observed that the two forts in this capital had gone to decay and needed repairs.

There are not many mosques in this region. A minaret in Nagore is 125 feet high and is of exquisite workmanship. This was constructed by the king of Thanjavur over the Darga (tomb) of the Muhammadan Saint Kiran Sahib, who is credited with many miracles, the king himself is said to be a beneficiary of such a divine cure. The mosque was built by the Maratha ruler Pratap Singh in A.D. 1757. He endowed 15 villages to the mosque. Count de Lally on his expedition to Thanjavur in 1758 plundered Nagore, famous for its wealth. In 1773 the Dutch obtained Nagore from the king of Thanjavur in return for the money they had advanced. This town, essentially Muslim in population, had a chequered history as it changed hands between the Marattas, the French, the Dutch, and the English.

117. Valentia, Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt. p.356.
118. AIEE, 293 of 1963-64, No.2.
Among the churches in the region, the Schwarts church or the Christ Church founded in A.D. 1779 by Schwarts in the northeast of the smaller fort is impressive and gratifying memorial to Christianity exemplifying 'Hindu gratitude and affection'.

**Sculptures**

Chola sculpture was unique in its composition and execution. The sculptures of the many Chola temples are not of the jeweller type but of the stone cutters. The time honoured Darasuran temple sculptures depict the religious theme to its very core. The north, west and the south walls of the main shrine contain a belt of sculptures representing scenes from the lives of Śiva devotees. Fortytwo of these in stone bear labels in Tamil characters. Writing of the Thanjavur temple Ferguson remarks, “One of the peculiarities of the Thanjavur temples is that all sculptures in the Cepures belong to the religion of Viṣṇu while everything in the courtyard belongs to that Śiva”. This illustrates the tolerance between the various sects and cults in Hinduism. All the religious art of the Thanjavur region, which can be classified as classical, ends with the Vijayanagar period.


Along with the artistic elegance of their sculpture, the Cholas earned for themselves the distinction of having created bronze images. The Chola bronze consisting of five precious and five semiprecious metals is rightly famous for its truly plastic life-like expressions. The icon of the eternal dancing Siva—seen in the Thanjavur temple—is a masterpiece. Ananda Coomaraswamy of Ceylon, the world-renowned art critic, in his "Dance of Siva" expounds his artistic excellence and philosophical subtleties. At this juncture it may be interesting to note that a bronze idol of Nataraja, stolen from Sivapuram, a Thanjavur village, fetched in New York a fabulous sum of Rs. 75 lakhs.

**Painting:**

The earliest painting in the Thanjavur region belongs to the period of Rajaraja I. On the inner walls around the Pradakshina (ambulatory passage) of the Brahadeishwara temple two layers of painting have been noticed; the first layer being Chola with saivite themes and the second, Nayak with Vaishnavite themes. The themes represented in the Chola frescoes have been taken from Saiva mythology and from the stories of the great Saiva Saints—the Nayars. The art of Cholas as seen in these frescoes is a continuation of the earlier art traditions of the Pallavas represented in Kanchipuram
and Panamalai. Vijayaraghava Nāyaka, a devout Vaishnava, painted Vaishnava themes over the already existing Saiva ones serving the twin purposes of art and religion. The painting in the Vijayalayacholéswaram compared with that of Thanjavur looks poor and immature. The Nāyak series of paintings i.e. of the 16th and 17th centuries are seen on the walls and ceilings of some of the chambers and these do not seem to cover any earlier painting.

Music:

The Tamil country is noted for its scientific tradition in music which goes back to the Sangam days. The theory and practice of music are mentioned in some detail in the Silappadhikārām. The Kadusiyamalai musical inscription carries the tradition further. The Tēvāram hymns of the Nāyansār and the Āḻvār Divyaprabhāgam of the Āḻvārs were set to music at least from the days of Parantaka I. Āḻvār singers, known as the 'ēḻvārs,' were appointed in the Saivite temples. The traditions of singing the Āḻvār pāsūram in Vaishnavaite temples had become established from the days of Tirumāṅgalai. Music which was secular as well as religious in the earlier periods came to serve the

122. R. Gopalan, History of the Pallavas of Kōṇānkalī, p. 93.
demands of the Bhakti cult later, and has remained so since then. Music, since the days of Nāyānāra and Ālvar śaivaśaivism appealing to the emotion and the devotion of the people has been a handmaid of religion. Naturally, in such a context, temples were the centres of religious performance in music and musical discourses on religious themes. The theory of music was codified and this codification had to be modified to keep pace with the evolving practice. The Silapadikāravam speaks of a native and an exotic style. Various exotic styles from the time to time influenced music in the Tamil country. Thanjavur region has been the cradle of music. Sambandar, a child prodigy divinely gifted with music was born in Sirkāli situated in the centre of the delta region. An inscription in the Brahmapurisvarar temple at Sirkāli records the gift of a land for instructors in Tiruvimāl (Sacred music). Gift of land to temple musicians was in vogue. Rajaraja I made endowment for a musician who was to play on the lute (the Vīnā)\textsuperscript{123}. Musicians were recruited from all walks of life, military not excluded. Eighteen of the musicians of the Rajarajēśvarar temple originally belonged to certain regiments and twelve of them came from Vēlaikkārā troops\textsuperscript{124}.

\textsuperscript{123} ARE., No. 149 of 1900.

\textsuperscript{124} ARE., No. 627 of 1908.
An element of freshness was added to the musical tradition of Thanjavur during the Nayak period. The Nayaka were Telugu speaking Karnaṭakas. The Karnāṭaka Saṅgīta, originated at least in some of its aspects in Karnāṭaka. Govinda Dīkshita, the minister of Raghunātha Nayaka, wrote the Saṅgīitasudha based largely on the Saṅgītasaṃvata of Viḍyārāṇa. Govinda Dīkshita and his son Venkatamakhi made significant contribution to the science of music. The latter was the author of Chaturdandiprakāśika and the creator of the modern ṛṛta system, and this family of Dīkshitās were Kannadigas. The Viṇa reached its most prestigious shape and form at the hands of Govinda Dīkshita.

Vijayarāghava Nayaka continued the tradition of his predecessor. Kebetrajha was a great court musician and he composed the famous Vijayarāghava Paṇḍharaṇas also known as Kebetrajha Paṇḍharaṇa.

While the Nayak period was famous for the creation of musical systems and the preparation of the scientific treatises on music, the Marāṭha period was an age of famous composers and concert players. Tulajāji II did well when

126. Ibid., p. 160.
he invited a Telugu Brahmin, Ramabrahman, to stay in Thanjavur and gave him lands in Pasupatikoil and a house in Tiruvaiyaru. Ramabrahman was the father of Thyagaraja and he bequeathed to his son not only musical talent but also an abiding devotion to Rama. Thyagaraja (1767-1847) spent much of his time in Tiruvaiyaru composing and he, more than anyone else, is responsible for elevating Carnatic music to its present eminence. He was also the contemporary of Serfoji II whose interest in and patronage of music is well known. He was also the contemporary of eminent musicians like Muthuswamy Dikshitar (1776-1855) and Shyama Sastri (1762-1857) who were responsible for making Thanjavur the cradle of musicians. These three luminaries made Thanjavur the brightest spot on the musical map of South India. They left a school of musicians each. This tradition was in no small measure responsible for Thanjavur instruments particularly the vina, the lute and the drone.

Dance and drama too attained a high level of excellence in Ramakrishna and Thanjavur, the home of these ancient allied arts. An inscription of Anlotunga records a sale of land to the temple at Tiruvaengutturai. This was executed by the assembly of Kottur, at a Brahmadeya meeting in the temple of Muttapadavinnagar for the maintenance of a theatre called Manuvita mantasala in the temple. A drama Rajarajesvara-nataka was staged in the month of Vaikasi to commemorate
the founding of the temple. Dance was practised and promoted by the numerous dancing girls attached to temples. More than 400 dancing girls were attached to the Great Temple Perum Udaiyar Koil and they lived in a colony founded by Rājarāja I. A number of dancing masters and musicians were also attached to the temple.

The object of dance as an art was to crystallise emotion into thought and then display it in graceful forms of movement. In the days of the pinnacle of Dravidian culture, dance as a religious service, was in the sacred presence of the Lord, dedicated unto the Lord. Its sanctity in the modern days is lost, in its too often being a dissipating amusement, for the devil. The far-seen, time honoured icon of Nāṭarāja in superb dancing pose of symphony is highly symbolic of the pantheon of Hindu Philosophy.

The Thanjavur region, from the days of the Uḻas, Nayaks to the Marāṭhas had been the home of literature, painting, music and dance, coupled with sculpture and architecture.

It is very significant that all these centered to a great extent round its temples and palaces. This mirrors the religious fervour, devotion and secularism of its rulers.

The ancient Sangam literature with its poetry and drama narrated events in time. The exquisite paintings of the Saivite and Vaishnavite, one over the other in layers depicted events in history in two dimensions while sculpture and architecture captured in three dimensions, the rhythm and beauty of the age. It is "frozen music" of Goethe, with devotion as its handmaid. In modern phraseology of Schaff, "A beautiful church is a sermon in stone and its spire a finger pointing to heaven".