CHAPTER II
**Historical Background of the Temple**

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- A brief history of Thiruppugalūr and its surroundings
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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TEMPLE

In ancient times, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were the only organised religions. In the early stages of their growth they spread south of the Vindhyan barriers of mountains and forests into the Southern Peninsula. Their vitality in successive waves merging into the religions of the south made viable cultures, social patterns, traditions and religious beliefs of their own, not to speak of a language that could blossom into their own literature independent of every other factor.¹

In Tamilnādu, Nānnilam taluk in Quaid-E-Millat (Thaṅjāvūr) District is famous for its temples (fig. 1). They were patronised by the Pallavās, the Early Pāṇḍyās, the Chōḷās, the Later Pāṇḍyās, the Vijayanagar and the Marātha rulers.

A historical study of the district reveals that it must have been a centre of great importance in the sphere of religion and culture. As said earlier, Thiruppugalūr was situated in the "Pupaiyūrṇādu" or "Kurumbūrṇādu," a sub-division of Mummudi Chōḷa or Kshatriya Sigāmaṇi or Kulottunga Chōḷa Valanādu during the Chōḷā period.² The strategic location of this village drew great attention from the rulers of the various dynasties who held sway in Tamilnādu as is
evident from the epigraphic records located in the Agneeswarar temple of Thiruppugalur.

There are 77 inscriptions in this temple belonging to various dynasties dated between 985 A.D. and 1751 A.D. (See Appendix III).

SECTION - A

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THIRUPPALULUR AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Obscurity surrounds the early history of Thiruppugalur and its surrounding areas during the Pre-Sangam Age, since no systematic exploration and excavations have been done in this region.

However, vestiges of the Iron Age culture have been noticed in the vicinity of the village. For instance, places like Pittachcheri and Kandahai of Nannilam Taluk, which are close to the Agneeswarar Temple contain an Iron Age burial complex. Besides, many places like Thirakundur, Mayiladuthurai, Perunkadambalur, Naga pattinam, Akkur, Sirkali, Kilvelur, Thillaiyadi, Thirumalairayan Pattinam, Vanagiri, Manigraman, Kilaperumballam, Melaperumballam and Viramaitiruppu, located within a range of about 30 kms. from Thiruppugalur, reveal the existence of Pre-historic sites of the Pre-Sangam Age which can be dated from 6th Century B.C. to 1st Century A.D.
SECTION - B

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND UPTO THE PALLAVAS

The Saṅgam Age

During the Saṅgam Age the region lying in the Cauvēry basin was variously known as "Punalnādu"6 or "Cauvērynādu"5 or Chōlanādu and the boundaries of the Chōlās of the Saṅgam Age were as follows:

The Bay of Bengal in the East, Kuḻittalai in the West, Trichy in the North and Vellūr in the South.

At first, the Saṅgam Chōlās controlled the administration from Uṟaiyūr (Trichy District).7 Later on, political importance centred around the places viz., Uṟaiyūr and Puhār.8 As mentioned earlier, Thiruppugalūr is hardly 40 kms from Puhār.

We do not get direct references to the village of Thiruppugalūr in the Saṅgam Works. But the construction of 70 Sivā Temples by Kōcheṅgaṉār, a Saṅgam Chōḻa King had been mentioned in Thirumaṅgal Āḻwār's Peria Thirumoli.9 Out of these 70 temples one each at Arzer, Vaigal and Nāṉnilam are said to have been built by him. These three temples lie within a range of 5 kms from Agneeśwarar Temple.10 Therefore, it may be suggested that the Saṅgam Chōlās could have held some control over the Thiruppugalūr region.
Kalabhrās

After the fall of Saṅgam rulers, Kaḷabhrās held sway over the Chōḷa territory and Thiruppugalūr too formed a part of it. The origin and names of Kalabhrā rulers are still obscure due to lack of sources and hence the period was considered as the "Dark Period" in the history of Tamiḻnādu.

Vēlvikkudi Copper plates of the Pāṇḍyā Jatila Parāntakā Neṉuñchaḍayān (762 - 790 A.D.) record that the Kalabhrās defeated and imprisoned Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍyā rulers in the post-Saṅgam period. After defeating the Chērās, Chōḷās and Pāṇḍyās, the Kalabhrā ruler, whose name is not known, is said to have asked each of them to compose a verse in praise of him.

Yēppuruṅkala Vēṅbā, a Tamil work of 10th century A.D., contains the venbās of Kaḷabhrā period also. One of the venbās explains the strength and valour of the Kalabhrās. It reiterates the fame of the Kalabhrās. This venbā was said to have sung by a Chōḷa ruler who was the same person defeated by the Kalabhrā ruler as mentioned earlier.

The venbā verse runs as follows.

ARASARKULA THILAKAṆ ACHCHUTAN MUTTRATHIL ARASAR
AVADARITTA VANNAL : MURASADIRAKKOTTIVIDU MŌSALEMMU
KÖVENDAN KĀṬTRALAYAI VETTIVIDU ŐSAIMICUM 12
This fact suggests that the Kaḷabhrās could have brought the Chōḷā territory under their control for some time. Since Thiruppugalur was within the Chōḷā territory it could be said that this area was likely to have been under the influence of the Kaḷabhrās.

The literature of the Later Chōḷās such as "The Periya Purāṇam" and "Thiruvanathāthi" also mention that a famous Kaḷabhrā ruler by name "Kūṟṟuvaṇāyanār" a staunch devotee of Sivā was controlling the Chōḷā territory.

Another work of the same period "The Kūṟṟuvaṇāyanār Purāṇam" by Sundaramūrthy Nāyanār refers to the Kaḷabhrā rule in the Chōḷā country as:

"Āar konda vēr kūṟṟan
Kalanthai kōn Aṭiyane"

According to Thiruthondar Thiruvanathāthi, Chidambaram, Uṟaiyūr and Puhār (Poompuhār) seemed to have served as Capitals of the Kaḷabhrās. Since Thiruppugalur lies at a distance of about 40 kms from Puhār, it can be said that Thiruppugalur might have been within the sphere and influence of the Kaḷabhrās. However, there is no adequate evidence to pursue this.

**The Early Pāṇḍyās**

After the Kaḷabhrās, the Early Pāṇḍyās took over:
the Chōḷā territory and ruled from their capital Madurai. They were the contemporary of Pallavās. The hymns of Sambandar and Sundarar corroborate the fact that this temple existed during the first Pāndya period. Sambandar and Sundarar visited this temple at different times. These two Nāyaṇmārs visited Pāṇḍya court and were contemporary to the Pāṇḍya Māravarman Arikēsari₁⁶ (640-670 A.D.) and Kōchchāḍayān Raṅadhīrān₁⁷ (670 - 710 A.D.) respectively. Further, Pāṇḍya inscriptions from Āduthurai₁⁸ and Kumbakōṇam₁⁹ confirm the fact that the Pāṇḍya rule had existed in and around Thiruppugalūr.

The Pallavās

The Pallavās ruled the Thondaimandalam region with Kaṅchīpuram as the capital. The inscription of Nandi Varma Pallava Mallā located in Seṅgālipuram, (near Thiruppugalūr) Nāṇgilam Taluk suggests that Thiruppugalūr might have formed a part of the Pallavā region at that time.²⁰

The fact that Appar and Sundarar had visited this temple and sang hymns in praise of Agneśwarar is a proof that this temple is likely to have existed during the time of the Pallava. It was a well established fact that Appar and Sundarar were contemporaries of the Pallava rulers Mahēndra Varman I²¹ and Narasimha Varman I respectively.²²
Though the temple does not contain any insciptional evidence to prove the existence of this temple during the Pallavā period, there are some vestiges of the Pallavā architecture located in the precints of the temple; loose pillars of Pallavā style are located in the pillared verandah around the main shrine and in the small verandah behind the Chandrasēkharā, Subramanyā and Natarāja shrines in South, West and Northern prakārās. It is not known whether these pillars are the remnants of an original Pallavā structure built in this temple or collected from nearby places.

SECTION - C

THE TEMPLE UNDER THE IMPERIAL CHŌLĀS OF VIJAYĀLAYĀ LINE

The early Chōḷās prior to Vijayālayā held the post of subordinate Chieftains under the Early Pāṇḍyās and Pallavās for sometime ruling from Palayārai, a place near Kumbakōṅam, Thāṅjavūr district. Vijayālayā had to be praised for capturing Thāṅjavur from Mutharaiyar, but the Thiruvālaṅgādu plates of Rājēndrā I corroborate this fact that Vijayālayā's son Ādityā I was responsible for having brought the whole of Thondaimandalam under the hegemony of the Chōḷās by defeating Aparājithā Pallavā in Srīperumpuyam battle. Parāntakā Rājāditya and Ariṅjayā were the rulers of Chōḷā kingdom during the time between Āditya and Uttama Chōḷā.
There are 64 Chōḷā inscriptions found in the Agneśwarar temple which reveal the continued patronage of the Chōḷā kings to this temple from the later half of the 10th Century A.D. to the middle of 13th Century A.D., a period of nearly 300 years.

Amongst the Chōḷā rulers mentioned in the inscriptions, Rājarājā I and Kulottuṅga I deserve special mention.

**Uttama Chōḷā (970 - 985 A.D.)**

There are two inscriptions dated 984 A.D. and 986 A.D. of Uttama Chōḷā. The earlier one records the registration of the sale deed effected by one of the queens of Uttama Chōḷā by name Uttama Chōḷā Dēviyar alias "Gōpan Śākappu" in the name of Agneśwarar of Thiruppugalūr. The other merely refers to provision made for lighting lamps to the Lord of Kurumbūrṇādu namely Kōṇappērumāḷ of Agneśwarar temple.

**Rājarājā I (985 - 1014 A.D.)**

Rājarājā's empire included the present States of Tamilnādu and parts of Āndhrā, Kēralā, Kārnātakā and Śrī Lāṅkā. He showed special interest in the promotion of religious and temple building activities. There are 17 inscriptions of this ruler noticed on the north, south, west and north-western walls of the central shrine of
this temple dating from 992 A.D. to 1012 A.D.

Of these, 8 inscriptions relate to the donations both in cash and kind for lighting lamps at Agneeśwarar temple.\(^{29}\)

There are three inscriptions which record the gift of paddy for the conduct of evening pūjās and Sadayam festivals.\(^{30}\) One inscription relates to the gift of land.\(^{31}\) Another inscription relates to the gift of silver vessel to the temple.\(^{32}\) Two other inscriptions pertain to the gift of gold flower to the temple.\(^{33}\) The gift of paddy and cash to the temple was mentioned in one of the inscriptions of this temple.\(^{34}\)

Besides these, another record speaks about an entrance to the temple from the South named after Rājarājā I. It is described as "Rājarājan Thiruvāsal"\(^{35}\) (vāsal in Tamil means entrance). Even today this entrance is existing in the same place. It is a two storeyed small tower. The architectural style is quiet different from that of the other two gopurams.

Besides these, there are seven inscriptions referring to the various conquests of Rājarājā I.\(^{36}\)

The invasion of the Pāndyañ territory by
Rājarājā I, though spoken of in detail in South Indian inscriptions, the epigraph of Agnēśwarar temple do not mention the same.

After the conquest of the Pāṇḍyan territory Rājarājā I set his sight on the Chera country. This fact is proved by the "Prāṣṭṭhi" that begins with "Kāndalur Sālai Kalamarutta" in the inscriptions of this temple.38

The translation : "Kāndalur sālai Kalamaruttaruliyā" forms a subject of discussion amongst scholars. Though there are many meanings for the word 'sālai', in most of the inscriptions it is referred as a feeding house either attached to a temple or as an independent place carrying out the task of feeding Brāhmaṇās, students and servants of the temple.39

In many of his inscriptions Rājarājā I assumes the title "Kāndalur sālai Kalamarutta" or even merely "Sālai Kalamarutta arulia". The title was assumed not only by Rājarājā I, but also by his successors Rājēndrā I, Rājādhirājā I, Kulōttuṅgā I and the Pāṇḍya King Jaṭā Varma Parāntaka Pāṇḍya which clearly indicates that Rājarājā I surely achieved some victory or done something notorious, at this place, the nature of which is not known. Scholars differ in interpreting the phrase and put forward many explanations.40
"Kándalūr Salai Kalamāruttaruliya" has been the
title used only for Rājarājā I in Agnee'swarar temple.
The original translation of this phrase was that the
king was pleased to build a jewel like hall for feeding
at Kándalūr and later on modified by some scholars to
mean the king was pleased to destroy the ships at the
roadstead of Kándalūr.41

It was also explained that the phrase may also
refer to the feeding house at Kándalūr and held that
Rājarājā I discontinued the feeding at this place.42

There is one more explanation offered by K.K.
Pillai according to which it was an institute of
learning wherefrom free food was provided to scholars.
He says the "Kalam Aruttal" does not refer to the
destruction of a fleet but the provision for the feeding
of a fixed number of persons (scholars). He further
argues that "Kalam" stands for "Un Kalam" figuratively
plates.

The inscriptions of Rājarājā I also mention the
conquest of places like Kollam, Kudamalainādu,
Gaṅgapādi, Nulambapādi, Rattappādi, Veṅgi, Kaliṅgam and
Sri Lanka that bear testimony to the political
domination of Rājarājā I in the above places.43
Rājendra I (1014 - 1044 A.D.)

Rājendra I was yuvrajā from 1012 - 1014 A.D. He continued the imperial policy of his father. There are three inscriptions in the temple belonging to his period. His "Meykeerthi" commences with the introduction of "Thirumanni Valara." His two inscriptions mention the places of Idaithurainādu, Bāṇavāsi, Kolippakkai and Māṇnaikkadakkam. From these inscriptions we can understand that the Chōlā territory extended up to Idaithurainādu (in between the rivers Krishna and Thuṅgabhadhra), Bāṇavāsi (North West of Karnatākā), Kolippakkai (North Eastern part of Hyderabad) and Māṇnaikkadakkam (the capital of Rāśtrakūṭas) in the north. These territories were conquered by Rājendra I during his Viceroyalty under his father.

In the same inscription the next portion records the conquest of Sri Laṅkā. The inscription runs as follows:

"KADAL EEZHATHARIAR THENNAVAN VALITHA SUNDARA MUḌIYUM, INDRAN ĀRAMUM THENTHIRAI EEZHUM MANDAL MULUDUM."

He has also conquered Kēralā and Saintimattivu. It is mentioned as "ERIPĀḌAI KĒRALAM ..., KĀVALPAL PALANTHEEVU." 47

The third inscription is a damaged record dated to
the 9th regnal year (1023 A.D.). It contains the word Iraṭṭaipādi. From this we can infer the occupation of Iraṭṭaipādi by Rājēndrā I. This fact is elaborately mentioned in his Thiruvālaṅgādu copper plates. It says that Iraṭṭaipādi had been acquired by him even earlier than the 9th regnal year of Rājēndrā I. From this we note that our temple inscription relating to the conquest comes at a later period. But the inscriptions reported from other places are earlier than this i.e., his 8th regnal year (624 of 1920).

Rājādhirājā I (1044 - 1054 A.D.)

Rajādhirājā I, the eldest son of Rājēndrā I who was yuvarājā from 1018 to 1044 A.D., succeeded his father. Four inscriptions found on the northern wall of the central shrine of this temple belong to this period. Of the four, two simply mention the gift and the sale of land to the temple. The other two inscriptions mention the invasions against Mānābaranān Vīra Kēralaṅgap (Pāndyās) and Āhavamallān (Chālukyā) and the ruler of Pāmakudanādu in the various wars. He drew away Sundara Pāndyā Vikkiyān, Vijayarāditan (Chālukyā) and his general Saṅgama in the battle field. He killed the ruler of Viṇā (Chērā) and Kandappaiyān and Gaṅgādharaṇ, the army generals of the Chālukyās, in the battle field. He also fired Kolliippākkai. The text of the two inscriptions runs as follow:
The inscription of this ruler reported from other places record the conquest of Sri Lanka by him at a later date i.e., 29th regnal year (1047 A.D.). But the inscription of our temple records the conquest in his 28th regnal year (1046 A.D.). In this respect this inscription deserves special mention. This fact is further confirmed by other sources.

Rājēndrā II (1054 - 1064 A.D.)

Rājēndrā II succeeded his brother Rājādhīrajā. Five inscriptions belonging to his period are found in the Central shrine on the lion pillars in the inner Prakārā and on the southern side wall of the inner gopura. Mevkeerthis like "Thirumagai Maruviya" and
Irattaipādi are seen in his inscriptions.

Of these, four inscriptions explain his conquest of Irattaipādi, Ėlarai Ilakkam, Kollāpuram and the success against the Chālukya ruler Āhavamallā in the battle field at Koppam.54

One of the inscriptions records the Coronation ceremony of this ruler at the Koppam battle field itself.55 This is corroborated by other inscrptional evidences56 as well as from the literary data in Kaliṅgathu Parani57 and in Ottakkūtthar's Three Ulās.58

The inscription with the Prasasti "Thirumagai Maruviya" (dated 1056 A.D.) registers the agreement made by the assembly of Pugalūr to pay ten 'kāsūs' lent to them from the sum given by an Individual in Puliyūr nādu to meet the expenses for the "Nūlūru Ceremony"59 (flag hoisting ceremony).

The fifth inscription dated 1055 A.D. registers the remission of taxes on some lands belonging to the temple.60

Kulōttuṅga I (1070 - 1119 A.D.)

After the rule of Rāja Mahēndrā, Vīra Rājēndrā and Ādi Rājēndrā, Kulōttuṅgā I came to the throne. It is
well known that Kulōttuṅga I does not belong to the direct line of the imperial Chōḷās.

There are 17 inscriptions of this ruler available in this temple. All these are found on the northern and southern walls of the inner āṭpuram entrance facing the outer prakāra.

Of these, fourteen inscriptions describe his various conquests and the regnal years vary from 4th to 49th year. All the inscriptions except two contain the Prasasthi "PUGAL MĀDHU VILĀNGA JAYA MĀDHU." The other two inscriptions (dated 1118 and 1119 A.D.) begin without any Prasasthi. The information provided by these inscriptions relate to his invasions against the Chērā and the Pāṇḍyā kingdoms and Śrī Laṅkā. It is recorded as follows:

"MĪNAVAR NILAIKEDA VILLAVAR KULAIITHARA SINÇALAR MĒLKADAL PĀYA THIKKANIITHUM SAKKARA NADĀTHI"

From the above text it is proved that he conquered all territories except Śrī Laṅkā. The remaining three inscriptions register the gift of sheep and some tax free lands to the temple.

Vikrama Chōḷā (1119 - 1135 A.D.)

Vikrama Chōḷā was appointed as representative in
Veṇgi by his father up to 1118 A.D. and after his demise, he came to rule in the year 1119 A.D. There is only one inscription of this ruler found in this temple and it is located on the northern wall of the outer Prakārā. It is dated 1120 A.D. It begins with the Meykeerthi "Swasthi Śrī Kōparakēsari Paṇ Maruyiya." This inscription conveys that a registration for remission of taxes had been granted by the Assembly of Kshatriyanātha Chaturvēdi Maṅgalam which met in the Naralōkavīra maṇḍapā.

Kulōttuṅgā II (1135 - 1150 A.D.)

Kulōttuṅgā II, the son of Vikrama Chōla, ascended the throne in the year 1135 A.D. as Rājakēsari Varmaṇa. There are two inscriptions of this ruler on the southern wall of the outer prakārā of the temple beginning with the Praṅāsthī "Pūmanu Padumām." One of the inscriptions dated 1142 A.D. describes the political conditions of this time. It refers to his supremacy over the territories of other rulers and mentions the tributes received from the rulers of Pallavā, Telugu, Mālavā, Kaliṅga, Kōsalā, Kannadā, Kēralā, Simhalā and Koṅgu countries. The text of the inscription runs as follows:

NIRAIPERUM SELVAMOṆDVANI VALAPPALLAVAR THELUNGAR,
MĀLAVAR, KALINGAR, KŪSALAR, KANNAṆAR, KAṆḌĀRAR,
THENNAR, KĒRALAR, SHINGALAR, KOṆGAṆAR, SĒTHIAR.
THRIKÄRTHAR, VANGARANGAR, MATTHIRA ........
SÕNÄKAR, KAIYAMAR ŠEENARADÎRAIKÄLHAL MANÎTHARUM,
ELØÄVÎNDARUM MURAIMAYIL VAGUNTHI THIPAI KONÄRNADU
IRAÑJA VAMPON MALARKODI.

The supremacy of Kulōttungā II over the other rulers has been clearly established by this inscription. In that respect it is an important record of Kulōttungā II. Another inscription is incomplete and the year and its purpose are not known.65

Rājarāja II (1150 - 1163 A.D.)

Rājarāja II succeeded his father Kulōttungā II. Three inscriptions of this king are found on the eastern wall of the outer prakārā of the temple. The first one is dated 1163 A.D. commencing with the Praśāsthī "Thirubhuvanā Chakravarthi."66 The second dated 1165 A.D. begins with the Praśāsthī "Pūmaruviya Thirumālum Puvimādum Jayamādum".67 The third record dated 1149 A.D. beginning with the Praśāsthī "Pūmaruviya Thirumālum"68 mentions the subordinate position of the Chērās, Rāśhtrakūtās, Pāṇḍyās, Sīṅgalar and Pallavar under him. This fact is mentioned in the text as "..... Villavār (Chērās), Ittavār (Rāśhtrakūtās), Minavār (Pāṇḍyās), Sīṅgalar (Sīṅgalēse), Pallavar (Pallavā chieftains), Mudaliār, Pārthivar, Pania Ênārum Kappam."69 The same inscription registers that at the request of an ascetic
named Chēramāṇ Chōlā, a monastery (Guhai) was built on the north-eastern corner of the premises of the temple of Thiruppugalūr Udaiyar and the provision made for conducting worship in it for the merit and benefit of the king.

Kulōttuṅgā III (1178 - 1218 A.D.)

In 1178 A.D. Kulōttuṅgā III succeeded Rājādhirājā II (1163 - 1178 A.D.). He averted the disruption of the empire for one or more generations. There are four inscriptions of this king in this temple recorded on the inner wall adjoining the inner copuram facing the outer prakārā.

All these inscriptions speak about the glory of the king or places like Madurai, Elam and Karūr. These two inscriptions dated 1188 A.D. and 1178 - 1218 A.D. only mention the conquest of Pāṇḍyā territory. They commence with the Meykeerthi "Swasthi Sri Puyal Vaiithu Vaḷam Peruga."

From the inscriptions it is clear that Kulōttuṅgā III was involved in the Pāṇḍyā civil war and supported the cause of Vikrama Pāṇḍyā against Vīra Pāṇḍyā. He invaded the Pāṇḍyā kingdom, defeated the Pāṇḍyā and his ally, the Siṅhalēse. In this battle the son of Vīrapāṇḍyā died and Vīrapāṇḍyā went into exile.
Then Vikrama Pândyā was installed on the throne of Madurai. Vīrapândyā secured the alliance of the ruler of Vēnāḍ and made another effort but was defeated. Then Kulōttunga III celebrated his Virābhisekam at Pândyā territory. The text of the inscriptions describing the conquests runs as follows:

A. PUVI KĀPPA POPA MĀINTHA MUDI PUNĀINDHU VIKRAMA PĀNDYAN VĒNDĀ VITTA THANDAL VĪRA (PĀNDYAN MĀKKA)
PADA EDI KAMA PADA MARAP PADAI PADA SINGALAPPADAI
MUKAMKARUPPŪNDU MĒLAI KADAL PUGA MANA VĪRA PĀNDYAN
MUDHUKIDUM PADI THĀKKI JEYASTH THAMBAM NĀTTINĀ
MADURAIYUM ARASUM NĀDUM ADAINTHA PĀNDYARUKKARULI
MEY MALARRNTHA

B. VĪRA PĀNDYAN THAN MAHANAI (MUKHA)
RINDU .......... KONDU VIKRAMA PĀNDYARUKKU KODAL
MĀNAGAR KUDUTHU PORUKHODI EDUTHTHAVAN ..........
PAKKAL SERU VĪRA PĀNDYANAI
MUDITHALAIKKONDU .......... MUDINDHU MUḌIVIL
JEYASTHAMBANĀ NĀTTINAYAR

The inscription dated 1190 A.D. mentions the invasion against Madurai, Elam, Karuvūr as MADURAIYUM ELAMUM KARUVŪRUM PĀNDYAN MUDITHALAIYUM KONDARULIYA SRI KULŌTTUNGA CHŌLADĒVARKKU.

The above mentioned Madurai invasion is further
confirmed by another inscription dated 1193 A.D. which runs as *MADURAIYUM PANDYAN MUDITHALAIYUM KONGARULIYA*. It also describes the title of Kulottunga III as "Suñgam Thavirtha Chōlā" as follows

"THĒM PANNIYA SUÑGAMILLATTHA CHŌLANADU" and records the donation of land for singing the sacred hymns in the temple was conferred on one Chūlēndra Simha Pētchchar of Thiruvennainallūr. 73

During his 10th regnal year (1188 A.D.) a new street called "Rājakka Thambirān Thiruvīdhī" was laid in the village.

Rājarāja III (1218 - 1256 A.D.)

Rājarāja III was an incompetent ruler under whom confusion increased. There are two inscriptions of this ruler in this temple. He was crowned as Yuvarāja two years prior to the death of Kulottunga III.

The inscriptions of Rājarāja III do not give any references about the conquests of the ruler. But the first inscription located in the Siddhar temple dated 12th or 13th Century A.D. 75 mentions the donations of the land to the temple by the people of Perumālpuram. The second inscription dated 1221 A.D. registers the sale of some land by the Assembly of Rājarāja Chaturvedimangalam for providing red lily to the God Rishabha Vāhana Dēvā. 76
Down fall of the Chōla Empire

During the reign of Rājarāja III the Chōla country lost its dignity. The Chōlas, who used to go to the rescue of other kings, now sought the help of the Hoysalas of Mysore.

The Thiruvanthipuram records of Rājarāja III refers to the capture of the Chōla capital Gahgaikonda Cholapuram by Mara Varma Sundara Pandyan, the imprisonment of Rājarāja III by Kopperunjinga, the Kadava chief at Sendamangalam and the recapture of Chōla throne and further lease given to Chōla by the Hoysalas. The Chōla country became virtually a protectorate of the Hoysalas for the Hoysalas supported the weak Chōla rulers whenever they were hard pressed by the powerful Pandyas and by their other enemies.

Rājendrā III (1256 - 1279 A.D.)

The last king to sit on the Chōla throne who witnessed the final collapse of the Chōla empire was Rājendrā III. There is no inscription belonging to his reign in this temple. One of the reasons for this may be the confusions prevailing in and around the capital of the Chōla kingdom at that time. But we find the last record of Rājendrā III in Vādāranyam, a neighbouring village and after which the Chōla supremacy had
completely disappeared from Tamilagam

SECTION - D

THE TEMPLE UNDER LATER PANDYAS

During the 13th century A.D. Pandyar became prominent in Thanjavur region. The temple has five inscriptions belonging to the second Pandyar period. From early 13th century onwards nearly 410 years Pandy kept up their rule in the Chola territory. Though the region was ruled by them (later Pandyas) we come across only the records of the following rulers in this temple:

Jatavarma Sundara Pandya I (1251 - 1268 A.D.)

There are three inscriptions of Jatavarma Sundara Pandya in the Agneeswarar temple. The first inscription is an incomplete one and it mentions the names of Valanguai and Idangai classes (rightist and leftist) only. The other two inscriptions record the service called "Kodanda Rama Sandhi" instituted in the temple. The name of a king. Of these two inscriptions, one refers to the right given to Thiruppugazh Udaiyan, a Sivabrahmana for conducting the service and the other inscription refers to the land granted for the expenses.82

Jatavarma Vira Pandya (1253 - 1281 A.D.)

Jatavarma Vira Pandya II is represented by one
inscription belonging to his fifth regnal year (1258 A.D.). It is located on the southern wall of the verandah inside the first prakārā. It registers the royal remission of the taxes on ten vēllis of land situated between the rivers Arisilāru and Muḍikōṅgānāru granted by one Śāmi Dēvan for the celebration and offerings during the Vīra Pāṇḍyā Sandā, instituted here in the name of the king.

Māra Varman Kulasekara Pāṇḍyā (1268 - 1310 A.D.)

There is only one inscription of this ruler available in this temple. It is dated 1287 A.D. It registers the sale of one hundred vēllis of land to a person of Ambar in Ambarnādu by certain persons of Mulaiyūrnādu. This Ambarnādu was situated near Thiruppugalūr; one of the boundaries of the donated land was near Arisilāru. We have to infer from this record that the Pāṇḍyās were in sole control of the Chōlā country during the reign of Kulasekara Pāṇḍyā.

Civil war broke out between the two sons of Māra Varman Kulasekara Pāṇḍyā. During this period three invasions of Muslims had taken place in Tamilagam. The confusion and uncertainty that prevailed in the region following the Muslim invasion from Delhi Sultanate was perhaps the reason for the paucity of inscriptions of this period in Agneeswarar temple. The atrocities
committed by the Muslim rulers of Delhi in the South paved the way for the rise of the Vijayanagar Empire in the South.

SECTION - E

THE TEMPLE UNDER VIJAYANAGAR AND POST VIJAYANAGAR RULERS

The Vijayanagar Empire was founded on the banks of the river Thuṅgabhadrā by Hariharā I and Bukkā I in 1375 A.D. to prevent the Muslim invasion into South India. The kingdoms soon spread far and wide in South India including Tamilagam. It preserved the ancient tradition of the country in the polity, its learning and its arts. The history of Vijayanagar is the last glorious chapter in the independent Hindu South India. The Vijayanagar inscriptions have been found all over South India. In this temple there are only two inscriptions representing the Tuḷuvā dynasty. They belong to Sadāsiva Rāya.

Sadāsiva Rāya (1542 - 1576 A.D.)

Sadāsiva Rāya of the Tuḷuvā dynasty became the ruler of Vijayanagar in the year 1542. He functioned only as a ruler in name leaving all the powers to his minister Rāma Rāya. In a decisive battle at Talaikottā, Vijayanagar had to face stiff and combined resistance from their traditional rivals, the Sultans of the Deccan. The disastrous battle almost marked the end of the Vijayanagar supremacy in the South.
The inscriptions\textsuperscript{86} of Sadāsiva Rāyā are found in
the ardhamandapa and the Central shrine of the temple
and both are dated 1557 A.D. (Śaka era 1479). They
contain details of the weight of the various precious
stones and jewels stored in the temple during that time.

Thiruppugalūr in post Vijayanagar period

The post Vijayanagar period brought the
implantation of the Nāyak rule (1532 - 1674 A.D.) and
the Thanjavūr Marāthā rule (1676 - 1856 A.D.) in and
around Thiruppugalūr. But the temple does not bear any
evidence for the contribution of the Nāyaks and Marāthās
to this temple. Finally, the holy place had lost the
political patronage and its importance after the fall of
Thanjavūr Nāyaks. Later the history of Thiruppugalūr had
become a part of the history of the British rule in
Tamilagam.

There is an inscription dated 1751 A.D.\textsuperscript{89}
mentioning the replacement of the outer brick wall of
the temple by the stone. This work was undertaken by the
villagers during the middle of the 18th century A.D.

Thus, the epigraphical evidences collected from the
temple throw valuable light on the historical background
of the place and the various dynasties that held sway in
the region in and around Thiruppugalūr from the
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