

A Symbol of Early Chola Excellence the Sayavaneswarar Temple

A. Agoramoorthy¹

Ph.D. Research Scholar (Full-Time)
Department of History., Annamalai University
Annamalai Nagar- 608002

Dr. T. Ravichandran²

Associate Professor & Dy.Co-Ordinator
Department of History., Annamalai University
Annamalai Nagar- 608002

Abstract

The Chola Empire ruled South India from approximately 850 to 1250 CE. During this time, Chola art and architecture underwent constant development and refinement. In a nearly entirely Hindu cultural environment, they used the money amassed during their enormous conquests to construct enduring stone temples and magnificent bronze statues. The Pallava dynasty, which was influenced by the Amaravati School of architecture, was the way the Cholas traditionally erected their temples. The Chola artists and craftspeople further drew inspiration from other modern architectural and aesthetic movements, raising the Chola temple architecture to new heights. The Sayavaneswarar Temple, also known as Sayangadu in Mayiladuthurai district of Tamil Nadu, is a symbol of early Chola architecture. It is a temple built by the Chola kings named Sayavaneswarar and is more than 1,500 years old. This temple is a very important evidence of early Chola architecture.

Key Words: Chola, Kaveripoompattinam. Sayavaneswarar, Sayangadu,

Introduction

The Chola dynasty, which came to prominence in Southern India in the middle of the 9th century CE and built one of the largest maritime empires in history, includes mediaeval Cholas and Imperial Cholas. Most likely a vassal of the Pallavas was Vijayalaya Chola. In 848, Vijayalaya conquered Thanjavur by taking advantage of a conflict between the Pandya and Pallava dynasties. In the north, the Pallavas were taken captive by the Cholas under Aditya I (about 869) while in the south, the Pandayas and Cheras were conquered (around 903). The Pandayas were driven out of their lands by Parantaka I. The main enemies of the developing Chola Empire were the Rashtrakutas and Gangas in the north, and Rajaditya, a Chola prince, perished in the battle of Thakkolam in 949. After a protracted reign, Parantaka passed away in 950, and his second son, Gandaraditya, succeeded him as ruler. Sundara Chola's rule saw a resurgence of Chola power.¹

The Chola army, led by crown prince Aaditha Karikala, overcame the Pandyas and advanced as far north as Tondaimandalam. In a political assassination thought to have been carried out by Uttama Chola, Aaditha Karikala was killed. In 970, Uttama assumed control after Sundara Chola was forced to name him as the heir apparent. In 985, Sundara Chola's son Raja Raja replaced Uttama. Raja Raja and his son Rajendra Chola ruled over much of South East Asia during their time in power. By eradicating the last of the Rashtrakutas, Rajaraja strengthened the Chola defences in the north. The Chalukyas, who were in continual conflict with the Cholas, took the place of the Rashtrakutas. Rajaraja quickly expanded his realm to include Lanka, and in 993 the Chola army took control of the northern part of the island. In order to give his nephew Saktivarman back the crown, Rajaraja also attacked Vengi.²

In 1018, Rajendra Chola completed the conquest of Sri Lanka, thus expanding the empire. In this context, it is possible to know through many mythological references that a Chola king named

Kochankannan was a great devotee of Shiva in medieval Chola history. Based on that, it can be known that before the beginning of most of this Chola history, this Kochankanna Chola, which is shown by the Sangha literature, built temples and worshiped Shiva in many parts of Tamil Nadu. They were the beginning of the great architectural achievements of Chola history. Rajaraja Chola built the great temple of Thanjavur and established a great historical landmark. His son Rajendra Cholan also established his historical contribution by building a temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram. Even before that, the Chola kings built early forms in areas like Trichy Pudukottai, especially in places like Moovar Temple, where the early Chola history can be seen. A part of it is a very ancient temple of more than 1500 years in Mayiladuthurai district Tamil Nadu named Sayangadu. It represents an important part of the early Chola art form.³

Kochchenganan

Early Chola Tamil monarchs Kochchenganan are recorded in Sangam literature. The fragmented Sangam poems included in the Purananuru poems are the sole information that has survived regarding his reign. Contemporary stories of Kochchenganan's life are sometimes mistaken with historical accounts. In the present-day Trichy, he is renowned for constructing the Jambukeshwarar Temple. The references in Sangam poetry are the only current sources we have on Kochchenganan.

The earliest record of the king's life is one song from Purananuru, along with the poet Poygaiyar's forty verses of Kalavazhi Narpathu. The hymns of Thirugnana Sambanthar, Thirumangai Aazhvaar, and Sundaramoorthy Nayanar that mention him are from a later time period that highlights Kochchenganan's religious side. Additionally, Kochchenganan is mentioned in the fabled pedigree of the tenth- and eleventh-century Chola copper-plate inscriptions. The version of the myth that a spider changed into the Chola king can be seen in subsequent literature as well as in the Periyapuram, the important collection of Shaiva saints.⁴

Sangam literature

Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish with any degree of confidence the time period covered by the literature of the Sangam that has survived. The poetry have come to us in the form of systematic anthologies, with the exception of the larger epics Silappatikaram and Manimekalai, which are generally agreed to date to an epoch later than the Sangam age. The name of the king or chieftain to whom the poem is related, as well as the circumstance that prompted the eulogy, are typically found in the colophon that is typically appended to each individual poem. learn the names of numerous monarchs and chieftains as well as the poets they supported from these colophons, rarely from the texts of the songs themselves. It has not been simple to condense these names into an orderly structure that allows the many generations of contemporaries to be distinguished from one another. Some historians have even criticized these colophons as later additions and unreliable historical records, which only serves to further the misunderstanding. The casual nature of these poems and the stark contrast between the goals of the anthologist who gathered them and the historian's attempts to arrive at a continuous history should be considered in any attempt to extract a systematic chronology and data from these poems.⁵

A Saivate Saint

The following account of Kochchenganan is found in the Periyapuram, which tells the tales of the 63 Shaiva Nayanmars: In the Chola nation, a Siva Lingam was located beneath a Jambul tree in a fruit plantation. Every day a white elephant would visit and offer adoration to the Lingam. A spider who was likewise devoted to Siva realized that the God was being covered in dried leaves and made a web above the Lingam to stop this from happening. The elephant discovered the web the following day while coming to pray and tore it because he believed someone had contaminated the area. He then offered his worship and left. After seeing that his web had been demolished, the spider arrived on the scene, apologized, created a new web, and then left. The spider that was there gave the elephant a sting the following day

as he was removing the web, and the elephant immediately succumbed to the poison. The spider also perished after becoming trapped in the elephant's trunk.⁶

The Chola king Suba Devan travelled to Chidambaram with his wife Kamalavati to fervently petition Lord Nataraja for a son. The spider was born as the Chola king's offspring when the Lord approved their request. The baby was soon conceived by Kamalavati. The delivery day finally came. Astrologers predicted that the child will dominate the three worlds if it could be born a few minutes later. The queen requested that a tight bandage be placed around her waist and that she be tied to the room's roof in an upside-down position. She was freed at the proper moment, and the baby was born.⁷

The spider had been born again! The child's eyes were crimson because he had spent a little more time inside his mother's womb. When she saw his flaming eyes, the mother exclaimed, "Kochekannano," and then she passed away. He was so given the name Kochengat Cholan. His father made him king when he was of legal age. Every morning Kochengannan used to darshan (worship) Ayyaarappan (Pancha nadheeshwar-Thiruvaiyaaru). But once he was unable to cross the river because of increased water flow in the Kaviri. As a result he was depressed. The pulikaal munivar (Viyaakra paathar) then made an appearance and requested that he construct a temple for Ayyaarappan. The Temple was constructed in Kurumbalur, a tiny town in the Perambalur Taluk. In the temple, Shiva is known by the same name, "Pancha nadheeswar," which is Tamil for "ayyaarappan."

Temple of Sayavaneswar

The Sayavaneswarar Temple, also known as Chaayaavaneswarar, is a Hindu temple located in the Tamil Nadu, India village of Thirusaikkadu (also spelt Thiruchaykkadu or Chaayavanam), close to Kaveripoompattinam or Puhar. The Hindu god Shiva is the reigning deity. The temple was built during the Chola era in mediaeval India. The temple has been mentioned in songs by the Saivite Nayanmars. The analogues of Kasi include Thiruvayyar, Mayiladuthurai, Thiruvidadimaruthur, Thiruvenkadu, Chayavanam, and Srivanchiyam. Similar to Kasi, where the Kashi Vishwanath Temple serves as the city's focal point, the temples in these towns along the Cauvery River's banks—the Aiyarappar, Mahalingeswar, Mayuranathaswamy, Chayavaneswar, Swetharanyeswar, and Srivanchinadhaswamy Koil—are the towns' main attractions.⁸

Literary mention

Tirugnanasambandar describes the feature of the deity as:

*Vēta nāviṇar veṇpaḷiṅ kiṅkuḷaik kātar ōta nañcaṇi
kaṇṭa rukanturai kōyil mātar vaṇṭutaṅ kātalvaṅ
ṭāṭiya punṇait tātu kaṇṭa poḷiṅmaṇṇain tūṭucāykkāṭē
Puyaṅkamañ ṅāṅkum pattu māyakoṅ ṭarakka ṅōṭic
civaṅriru malaiyaip pērkkat tirumalark kuḷali yañca
viyaṅpera veyti vīḷa viralciri tūṅri mīṅṭē cayampera
nāma mīntār cāykkāṭu mēvi ṅārē*

Sambandar, *Apper got the song.*

The site has the most ancient distinction - being within the boundaries of Poompukar.

'Nedungathirkalanithan Sayakanam (Aganaanuru 220)

'Annanthunjum of Sennelancheru

"Show me the picture of Pookekhu"

(Aganaanuru 73)

who have studied the Vedas highly mention this temple as a visual image where many beetles and insects can wander around and worship the Lord in love with them. Literature is mentioned in Sayavaneswarar temple at night. It is a historical feature and these references are said to be a literary source that suggests the period of Agananhun and Puranhund. This points to the ancient greatness of this temple.⁹

Greatness of the Temple

The roofed temple built by Sochengatcholan. Chai - canine. Green + Chai = Bainchai. (Bainchai) is known as the slope forest of Talamatdal, which was full of canines. This is one of the consolations which is said to be equivalent to Kasi. (Others are Thiruvengadu, Mayiladuthurai, Thiruvaidamarudur, Thiruvaiyaru, Sri Vanchiyam) It is history that Iyalpakai Nayanar brought his wife to this Thalathella and sent her on her way with the Lord. This place is located on the Sirkazhi-Boombukarch road. from Tiruvenkat Distance. A city bus from Mayiladuthurai is on the route to Poombukar. There is a name board on the road saying Chaikadudayar Thirukoil. The place where Sage Upamanyu, Indra, Airavatham and Iyalpakai Nayanar were worshiped and blessed
Lord - Sayavaneswarar, Ratnacha Sayavaneswarar
Goddess - Goshampal, Quillin is also auspicious
Thalamaram (Holy tree) – Bainchai.¹⁰

Historical features and spiritual features

This temple is Sampapati Amman temple, the guardian deity of Buddha. The temple is south of the temple pond with two idols in front of it. After passing the front gate there is no vine tree. There is only Ganesha in Kodimaratu. The Nandi of Matakolathal is on high. In the outer prakaram there are shrines of Surya, Indra and Nativ Nayanar with their consorts. In the next four shrines are the 'Moovarmadali'. After worshiping Vinayagar, Subramaniyar, Gajalakshmi, Bhairava on the highest pedestal, Navagraha sannidi etc., walk down the stairs and reach Nethi Mandapam by foot. The Villendhya Velavar Panchalokath Thirumeni placed here alone is excellent and worth completing the prayer. It is a great feast for the eyes of the beholders who are majestically flying with bows with four arms. These are said to have been found in the ocean long ago.¹¹

The gate of Swami Sannidhi has Talapathika inscriptions on both sides. On the top of the gate is written a picture of the scene that the Lord blessed Nayanar? If you go inside and pray, you will see the source directly. Sivalinga thirumeni with short panam in square dress. The inner courtyard is accessible to crawl. To the right of the moolah is the Natarasa Sabha. An inscription has been inscribed in the temple stating that the temple was established in 1964 for the Tiruppanandal Sri Kasi Math. The Indra festival starts on the full moon of Chitra and lasts for 21 days. Annamalippu in Aadi Amavasi, Kumaragurupar Gurupuja in Vaikasi in the name of Iyalpakhainayanar in Chitrai Vaikasi months. In Margazhi, a five-day festival is held for Iyalpagai Nayanar, in which special orders and ceremonies such as the appearance of the Lord at midnight on the fourth night are held.

Conclusion

This temple also kills many historical prides and cultural prides. This is a great evidence to understand the spiritual and artistic subtleties of the Cholas in the early period and more than that, they built more than 60 temples around the banks of Kaveri in the early period. It is the most important temple among the 60 temples and the site is very significant in Chola history because of the sea trade and maritime transport in the Bhoompur area and archaeological evidence such as basimani is found here. It emphasizes the loan business of the Chola period. Though it is an important place where the Chola period was held like Kaadvani, the Saivaneswarar temple located there bears many monumental landmarks and shows the history of the Cholas reaching great heights in architectural techniques and sculptural techniques. Although this temple is almost 1500 years old, it has seen various changes over time and finally the Marathas and the British have renovated this temple and more than thirty inscriptions glorify this temple in various ways. A Bhairava sculpture here in a form not seen anywhere else in Tamil Nadu is set up with a unique artistic style and a well near it symbolizes the well-cutting technique of the Chola period. And this temple is built in the form of a roof temple. The roof temple can be considered as the best symbol of early Chola architecture. This temple is a symbol of the first step in which the art of the Cholas has made Tamil Nadu history as culturally special and historically proud.

References

- ¹ Chopra, P.N; Ravindran, T.K; Subrahmanian, N (2003) [2003] History of South India; Ancient, Medieval and Modern New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd. ISBN 81-219-0153-7
- ² Harle, J.C (1994). The art and architecture of the Indian Subcontinent New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press. ISBN 0-300-06217-6
- ³ D., Devakunjari (1973). R., Nagaswamy (ed.). The Mahadeva temple of Tillaisthanam (PDF) Damilica (Report). Vol. II. The State Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu p. 44
- ⁴ S. Swaminathan (1998). The early Chōlas history, art, and culture. Sharada Pub. House. p. 65.
- ⁵ Ayyar, P. V. Jagadisa (1993). South Indian Shrines: Illustrated (2nd ed.). New Delhi: Asian Educational Service. p. 244 ISBN 81-206-0151-3
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 245
- ⁷ Venkatraman, Sekar (2019). Temples of Forgotten Glory: A Wide Angle Exposition. Notion Press p. 172 ISBN 9781645876250
- ⁸ Ibid p.174
- ⁹ S. Swaminathan (1998). Op.cit. p. 256
- ¹⁰ T. S. Subramanian (1 May 2006). Significance of Mayiladuthurai find" The Hindu Chennai, India, 17 June 2006
- ¹¹ "Sri Mayuranathar temple". Dinamalar. Retrieved 16 April 2011