

**HISTORY OF NAMAPUREESWARAR TEMPLE AT ALANGUDI TALUK IN PUDUKKOTTAI
DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Alangudi lies mainly to the east of the Thanjavur-Pudukkottai-Madurai road. It is founded by Tiruayam taluk on the south-west, by Kolattur taluk on the west and north-west, and by Thanjavur district on the north, east and south east. Four streams pass through the Alangudi taluk –the Kundar, the Agnavimochani, the Uyyakondan, and the Ambuliyar. The old name of the place was Kidarankonda Cholapuram. The Siva temple, the idol in which is named Namapureesvarar in Sanskrit and perudaiya Nayanar in Tamil, was probably built in the 13th century. The temple and the tank attached to it is the gifts largely of Silaya Chettiyars and other merchants of Kalasamangalam, who built the mantapams and walls and, at different periods, consecrated the different idols in the temple.

INTRODUCTION

In Pudukkottai district, Alangudi is a taluk, its head quarters located at a 20 km distance from Pudukkottai town. The name of the village is based on a fig tree and kudi suffix denotes the ancient settlement. There is Siva temple established named is Namapurisvara called in Sanskrit but in Tamil language Perudaiyanayanar. Namam is the Sanskrit term which means *name* in English. The old name of this village is known as Kidarankonta Cholapuram¹ Kidarankonta Chola is an epithet of Rajendra Chola I (1012 to 1044 CE) who conquered Kadaram, the present keda in Malaysia, after his victory over kadaram, he got the name Kidaram Konda Cholan. There are some other villages in the same name Kidaram. For example one village near Sayalkudi is Ramanathapuram district is known as Kidaram. There are 30 inscriptions engraved on the walls of the Namapurisvara temple starting from 13th century CE to 18th century C.E. The earliest inscription dates back to the 2nd regnal year of Maravarman Sundara Pandya. So the origin of this stone temple may be built to early 13th century C.E according to the inscription. Other records belong to Maranveera Pandya, Sri Vallabha Pandya, and then Vijayanagara rulers. Madurai Nayaks and other Native leaders. By studying all these records in details the six hundred years continuous history of this temple and the region can be traced. This paper attempts to draw a complete picture on the history of the temple and the village.²

INSCRIPTIONS OF PANDYAS

The first record is engraved on the southern wall of the siva temple dated to the 2nd regnal year of Maravarman Sundara Pandya.³ Since the name of the king is simply known as Maravarman Sundara Pandya without any special title one can not accurate apt whether he was Maravarman Sundara Pandya I or II. Any how it can be safely dated to the early 13th century record. In this record the geographical division Rajaraja Valanadu and subdivision Thenkaninadu. Karikala Chola statue, the donor of Chetti family of Kalasamangalam, a village included in Thenkavinadu has donated certain lands to built a sacred tank to the temple of Perurudaiya Nayanar. The donors name is Ponnampalakkuththan Periyar. The end portion of the record is damaged and so the location and boundaries of the donated lands are not able to trace. The term Chetti denote one group of merchants most probably engaged in cloth merchandise.

The next inscription belongs to the 23rd regnal year of the Pandya king Maravarman Veera Pandya.⁴ It is not possible to identify this Veera Pandya and his ruling period. Jatavarman Veera Pandyan is well known ruler after the assassination of Maravarman Kulasekara. His records are found in Thiruppethur region. But no records are available to identify Maravarman Veera Pandya, according to this inscription he ruled atleast 23 years and onwards.

In this record first time Alangudi, the name of the village is referred to and was a part of Punirkurram a sub division of Raja raja Valanadu. According to this record one asylum was created by the Nadalvarkudi, Punravatharayar Kudi, and some other kudi people for one barber (ambatta). These people have given 29 kalam Paddy every year to this ambattan who was settled at that asylum. This arrangement was supervised by the urars of Alangudi and Kilai Arrur. The measuring kel was named as Therrarai Kandankal. This document was engraved and signed by one stone mason Uththama Chola Achari.

Pandya king Sri Vallabha Deva's inscription dated to the 27th regnal year⁵ is also found in this temple. In this record people belong to various kudis (clans) jointly taken a decision and engraved on the walls. According to this the people of Ulakudi, Ukantharaiyarkudi, Visaiyapalar kudi, Panriyur nadalvar kudi and Pillaiyarakudi have collected makamai (certain cess-tax) from urars (residents) of Alangudi and leaders of Vanatharayar. These makamai

amount collected has been spent for the food offerings of the lord of Alandudi Peruranda Nayanar. Since the record is damaged here and there at the end complete details and purpose of the record are not traceable. The other records found heredo not furnish the names of the kings but only the Saka years.

RECORDS OF LATER PANDYA PERIOD

The next record belongs to the Saka year 1226 which corresponds the common Era 1304.⁶ this was the period when Pandya country was in turmoil regarding the power struggle between Sundara Pandya was legitimate son and Veera Pandya was an illegitimate son of Mara varman Kulasekara Pandya (1268-1311 CE). So the king's name is not mentioned in the record. This record reveals a donation made to Perur Andanayanar temple of Alangudi by one Thirualai Kunrandan, a native a Kalasamangalam. Because of the mutility of the record some portions are not traceable.

The successive inscription also dated to 1305 C.E engraved on the southern wall of the temple. It is a donator record given by Ananthakuththan Vathiyar a resident of Kalasamangalam. The donation was made on behalf of a lady Avudaiyal. This record reveals that one irrigation tank of Devadanaland was broken and left unearned with inundation with dense forest. The donar renovated the tank and cleared shrubs and thorns and made caunal on both sides and purchased some lands and given as catehment area of the tank. The revenue from the donated land is made use of food offerings of the Lord. It the water body is damaged in future provisions also made for its renovation and utility. This donated water body was named as 'Ananthakuththan' after the name of the donar. At the end portion of the record imprecatory verses are also is engraved.⁷

The other record dated to 1383 CE is also not furnisging the name of the king. Probably this period was the beginning of Vijayanagar rule in Pandya region. It is a donator record by a chief Sethirayan family Adaikkalan Kaththar by name, a resident of Ullur in Thukavur Kurram a sub-division of Pandi Mandalam. This donar has endowed Rs 30 rupees of every year for the renovation work in the temple.⁸

The next inscription dated to 1391 CE is ended ubruptedly and so the purpose of the record is not able to know⁹ for the temple of Perurandar of Alangudi village an Araiyyar family had donated something for some purpose. They belong Vanatherayakottai village included in Vallanadu a part of Rajaraja Valanadu. Periyar Chala Sinkara paraiyan and his sons Adiyar Kunallan Ankarayan and his younger brothers Irakuththan, Kuppan, Saththan alias Chola Sinkara Paraiyan had jointly made some donations to the temple.

During the year 1400 CE the northern compound wall of Alangudi Siva temple has been built by Inbandar Athiccha deva, a resident of Kalasamangalam.¹⁰ His native place is mentioned as Desa Kulamanickapuram in Kavinadu. In the imprecatory verse it is mentioned that Virtue is the only support name other.

One more damaged record belongs to 1428 CE but the details are not known because of Mulilation. The other damaged record dated to 1467 C,¹¹ reveals some Sarvamanya donation given to the Siva temple of Alangudi by the urars of Thanava nadu and temple administrators¹² In the year 1473 CE, at Alangudi Siva temple one new shrine for Murugan and his two consorts in the temple complex (Ilayanayanar with Valli and Devasena). This new shrine was constructed by the nagaraththar Vathiyar a native of Seraiyur. The Nagaraththar have settled at Alangudi village itself.¹³

In the Namapurisvara Siva temple almost 10 days festival might have been conducted during 1506 C.E. In this year, the eighth day festival the Lord and his consort (Periya Muthali and his Nacchiyar) have taken into procession on the streets. This eight day festival was done by the Southern street Nagaraththars of Alangudi till the sun and moon endure.¹⁴

During the year 1523 CE festivals on the days of Thiruvathirai and Thai pusam astarism and on that day the Lord and his consort were taken out for procession on the main streets of Alangudi. The expenses for this festival was borne by one Seraiurudaiyan Vathiyar Mahadevan who was Nagaraththar, resident of Alangudi.¹⁵

Another inscription dated to 1578 CE, reveals that residents of Pundaragill kurrum had donated 20 Panam every year for some work. The temple officials (Maniyakarar) had been requested to adhere this donations and conduct the purpose without failure.¹⁶

LATER PERIOD RECORDS

From the year 1700 onwards no rulers served as a stable ruler and the records are not bearing any names of the kings. In this category one record dated to 1747 CE found engraved on the southern wall of this temple. It is somewhat a damaged record which furnish the other name of Alangudi as Kitaram Konda Cholapuram.¹⁷ This record reveals that one resident of Alangudi Adiyarkku nallar by name who may be a member of Nagarathar community has donated something to the temple. The details of the donation are not known because of the damage of the record. For this donation the donar Adiyarkku nallan had received first respect from the same temple.

DATE LESS INSCRIPTIONS

The other fifteen inscriptions found on the walls of the temple are dateless but almost belong to 18th century. All the development works of the temple were under taken by some philonthoraphists. One record mentions the name of the goddess as Thirukkamakottamudaiya Nacchiyar. This bronze image was donated by one Munnanaipperumal, a resident of Thiruverviyur. For the expenses of the pujas of the goddess 5 ma extent of land was donated by the some donar.¹⁸

The other inscription is in a verse form. It is written as a prayer song by one Vanan Vennenjar. He worships the God with flowers and other offerings. It is mentioned in that verse.¹⁹

Next inscription mentions that one stone window was made by one Chockanar Veethiyar Karnankudaiyan,²⁰ a merchant from Vikirama Chola Pattinam included in Jeyasimha Kulakala Valanadu. One new shrine and a stone figure of Thiruvathavur Nayanar (Manickavasakar) was made by one Kunram Udappirappaum Chakaravathi, a Paqrasiva (Sivachariya) who had the Puja reghts in this temple for thirty days.²¹

One Palliyarai Mandapam was newly constructed in this temple by one Inakkunallar Periya Muthaliyar, a native of Maththur.²² the Plinth (floor) area of one stone mantapa of this temple was paved with stone by one Alagiyan Kunich Chandan, a resident of Kottru, who was a member of trade guild Aliyanilai in Nithth Vinothapuram in north Vellaru region.²³

The urars of Alangudi and a chief Vanavarayar jointly endowed certain lands for the expenses of food offerings for the Nachchiyar Punrunattammai. The donated land was donated at Pidari Vayakkal on the western side of the Ur.²⁴

One Vishnu image was installed in the western Devakotta (niche) of the temple by one Valvandar Ulagu thozhaninar, who was a member Solai Udaiyar kudi (clan) of Kalasamangalam.²⁵ Kunran Sankantan of Kalasamangalam has donated two door jamb stones. The ower and upper steping stones and stones of inner and outer edges and the door for the Muhamantapa of the temple.²⁶ For the constructions of this mantapa, stone pillars are donated by various individuals Viz, Manikkan Piriyaipillai a resident of Kunavayal, Kunran Ananthakkuththan of Kalaiyamangalam, Kuththar Avvayapperumal of Alangudi, Nannan Vanarayakkon Kuththaduvan and one Ethirilathathan Chola Muththaraiyan of Alangudi etc. One Vinayaka image was installed on the southern niche (Devakottam of this temple by Namabikkuththaduvar of Alandugi Araiya family. From the above said records it is very clear that new additions of mantapas, installation of idols on the niches are all made during 18th century CE.

IMPORTANCE OF THE TEMPLE

The Structural temple of Namapuriswarar and his consort of Sri Darmasamvarthini at Alangudi is a later Pandiya period. It is famous temple and often visited by pilgrims. In this temple, the shrine of Lord Vishnu and the shrine of Goddess Mahalakshmi are set facing each other. The Mahalakshmi image is set apart and the elephants are not display. The Pirathosam that comes on Wednesdays is more special in this temple. People come to the temple on Pradosa days on Wednesdays to receive the grace of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

The Namapurisvarar temple is built during the early quarter of later Pandya (13th CE) period and Patronized by then Pandya rulers. After the end of the Pandya rule Native leaders and especially merchant of these nearby villages have made donations for the development and festivals of their temple. So from 13th century to 18th century, this temple well flourished and local people have actively participated in the well being of the temple.

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