



THE ROLE OF DEVAKANMIS AND MISCELLANEOUS GRANTS IN TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION OF CHOLA PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

Mayiladuthurai formerly known as **Mayavaram** or **Mayuram** is a town and district headquarter of Mayiladuthurai district in Tamil Nadu, India. The town is located at a distance of 281 km (175 mi) from the state capital, Chennai. Mayiladuthurai is known for its ancient temples, some of them are the famous Mayuranathaswami Temple, a prominent Shaivite shrine and Parimala Renganathar Temple, a Vaishnavite shrine which are located in the city. All the prominent Navagraha temples are located around Mayiladuthurai. Mayiladuthurai was ruled by Medieval Cholas and subsequently ruled by various dynasties, including the Vijayanagar Empire, Delhi Sultanate, Thanjavur Nayaks, Thanjavur Marathas and the British Empire. Mayiladuthurai was a part of the erstwhile Tanjore district until India's independence in 1947 and Thanjavur district until 1991 and subsequently a part of the newly formed Nagapattinam district. The town is known for agriculture, and weaving. As Mayiladuthurai is situated in East Coast, fishing plays a vital role on generating its revenue. From the inscriptions, some rare information is obtained about the administration of the Mayiladuthurai temple.

Introduction

Mayiladuthurai is a Taluk of Mayiladuthurai district in Tamilnadu. The headquarters of the district in the Mayiladuthurai Mozhaiyur is of 125 villages in the district of Mayiladuthurai. According of the 2011 census the taluk of Mayiladuthurai had a population of 259,446 with 128,169 males and 131,277 females. There were 1.024 women for every 1000 men.

Mayiladuthurai is known for its ancient temples, same of them are the famous Mayuranathaswami temple a prominent saivite shrine and Parimala Ranganathar temple a Vaishnavite shrine which are located in the city. Mayiladuthurai is a small town but having all facilities of city. It has classical legacy of Chola dynasty. Mayiladuthurai is situated in East Coast of fishing play a vital role on generating its revenue. From north side Chidambaram, west side Pandanallur and south side Rajagopalapuram is located on Tharangabadi.

Mayuranathar temple located at Mayiladuthurai has properties worth several lakhs by way of munificent donation by philanthropists. These properties help the temple to maintain itself properly and efficiently. The endowments have been properly supervised and maintained over the years. The income is recovered duly so that the daily puja and the annual festivals performed are properly.

From the inscriptions, some rare information is obtained about the administration of the Mayiladuthurai temple. Devakanmis¹ Sri Mahesvarar Kanmanigal², Sri Mahesvarar Kankani³, Seyvargal Koyil Kanakkar⁴ and Sri Karyam seyvargal⁵ safeguarded the properties of the temple, maintained the temple accounts, received donations in cash and kind, and served the temple by executing their

function properly. The staff of the temple looked after the several endowments and articles kept in the koyil bandaram for the various activities of this temple. The lamps were directly entrusted to the care of the priests and the daily worship was regulated.⁶

During monarchy period the temple was under the administration of the rulers. Later it came with in the control of the Devasthanam committee as it is done at Mayiladuthurai. A scheme was framed in C.E. 1927 and from then on, this temple come under the direct control of the Hindu religious and charitable endowment Department Government of Tamilnadu presently the H.R. and C.E. is added to the Tamil Culture Board.⁷ Whenever the temple fell into despair the administration of the temple attended to it then and there and got it repaired. This temple has been duly renovated from time to time.

Devakanmis

The land which was directly endowed to the temple was placed under the charge of temple administrations that were virtually enjoying the proprietary rights on it, In this case also generally the lands were distributed to tenancy or cultivated directly by temple under the supervision of its administrators. The *Devakanmis* of the temple received the donated gold and allotted certain lands probably owned, by the temple for the charitable to have been leased out to somebody and after deducting some quantity of paddy for the lease charges (adaippadi) the rest was utilised for the purpose of the above charity.⁸

The inscriptions of later periods preserve some clues about the terms and conditions on which leases were made by temple to the tenants. If a family took a lease, its members could continue to be the tenants on that land for generations by regularly paying to the temple.

On the east wall of the Gomukkthiwarar temple Chola Parakesarivarman, who took Madurai and Illam Parantaka - I regnal year 39th 946 C.E. register the provision made by

Karrali Pichchan and the Devakanmis of the temple for meeting the expenses of sacred offerings

to the deity on all the Sankranti days and for special bath on the two Ayana - Sankrantis by purchase of 3 ma of land to 8 kalanju received by them from a certain Kannipuliyur - Nakkan of takkadambur in Kar-nadu on the northern bank.⁹

Miscellaneous Grants

Under the category fall the grants of paddy or rice utensils, ornament, images lamps stands, musical instrument, house sites and various other sundry things. The donation of paddy and rice to the temple was popular among the people in the early period. They are donated to temple mainly for sacred food offering, for maintaining perpetual lamps, for feeding the brahmans and devotees, for sacred bathing of deity, and other charitable purposes. In majority of cases the paddy and rice were donated to temple on the condition that only the interest from these items had to be used for the charity specialized by the donor.

Pan Mahesvarar

In most of the donatory inscriptions of the Siva temples we find the phrase *Mahesvarar Rakshai* meaning this shall be protected the Mahesvarar. In the case of grants of Vaisnava temples the phrase would be *idu Srivoaisnavar*. But it is not clear whether the Mahesvarars sects or regularity concern with the management of the properties of the temple. Generally it is believed that they were not regularly organised bodies for the administration of the temple, though their protection was invoked for safeguarding the gift made to be temple and recorded in inscriptions.¹⁰

There is also the possibility that the Mahesvarar was a regularly constituted body with full responsibility over the temple. This suggestion is based on the fact that the object of the grants referred to in most of the inscriptions has to be fulfilled daily or at specific occasions,

not for a fixed number of years only, but perpetually as long as moon and the sun endure so, it can be said that the recipient who under took to effect that could not have been a chance collection of individuals but could only have been responsible members of regularly constituted bodies whose duties were to accept such gifts and to execute the will of the donors. But an analysis of the inscriptions clearly show that in most of the cases though the charities were left under the protection of the Mahesvaras, the actual receiver¹¹ and executor of the charity is some other person or body so it is not wrong to take that the Mahesvaras held only the honorary responsibility where are the real responsibility of the charities is placed on the body.

The Mahesvaras or saiva devotees occupied respectable position in the early society. The Mahesvaras puja i.e. worship of the devotees (adiyar) was very much praised in earlier days. The respectable and divine inspired nature of the Mahesvaras made in the donors to leave their donations pertaining to Siva temple under their custody. The earliest epigraphical reference in which the donation to temple was left under the protection of Mahesvaras came from Mayiladuthurai region inscriptions. Sometimes the charities were also placed under the joint protection of the Mahesvaras and some bodies like the sabha Sivayogis and Sivabrahma.

Donated of Pan Mahesvara

Records gift of a dish a trumpet a hanging lamp, a bell and an image of worship used during the Sribali offering to the temple by Mundan. Araigan alias Narppattennayira pan Mahesvara Majilutti. It is said that the stone on which this inscription was engraved, was also his gift.¹²

Another inscriptions Chola Parakesari Varman Parantaka - I regnal year 36th Common Era 943 on the north wall of the same shrine in the same time Register a gift of land by a

certain *Tayankadan* of Viramangadi after purchasing it tax-free from the assemblies of Sirupuliyur and Sirvanaichchur, for the maintenance of two hymners, two gardeners and two maid servants for gathering flower for garlands, for offering in the temple and for feeding, under the supervision of donor's descendants, the Sivayogins and the Mahesvaras on the seven festivals days beginning with the asterism Mula.¹³

Another inscription on the south wall of the mandapa in front of the central shrine in the same temple long age Tamil. The chola king Rajakesari Varman alias Tribh Srikulottunga Choladeva regnal year 40. In 1110 C.E. gift of land by the assembly of Pavaikkudi alias Nittavinoda Chaturvedimangalam, for feeding the Mahesvara in the temple at Tirunalam. Another record in continuation which is incomplete at the right end contains portions of the historical introduction on the inscription of Vikramachola and provides for the bathing and offerings for the god.

Royal Camps

Being the held of the administration the king himself undertook tours of inspection to gain first-hand knowledge about the condition of the people and the working of the local administrative bodies.¹⁴

Assets of the Temple

The recorded donations to the Mayiladuthurai region temples begin with C.E. 904 and practically cease with C.E. 1194. Nearly 90 donations are on record which provide for lamps mainly food offering and other services, ornaments in gold utensils in silver, money and land. It is possible to make some statistics with the available figures regarding the total assets of the temple as it could have been around the fag end of the chola period. Totally inscriptions talk of

gift of kasu to the temple. These amount to 1,532 excluding the vara has which Krishnadeva Raja exempted from payment to the state by the temple with due reference to the kasus record of the temple treasury (i.e. 1532) it may be understood that the temple need not have to pay 10,000 varahas as tax.¹⁵

Officers of the Temple

The temple had its own officers and servant we hear of servants to bring water from the raven for temple services. Brahmanas proficient in the sculptures were appointed to recite them in the temples inscriptions in other places note those proficient the dravida veda, the Tamil bhakti hymns such as the Tevaram and Nalayiram Dhivyaprabandam, being appointed by the kings to sing them. They came to be known as 'Otuvar' those who sing or recite.

The donations gifted to the Mayiladuthurai regions temples being very rich a number of official are noted who were placed in-charge of the administration of the funds so obtained. The following among them are note worthy. Srimahesvara and Devakanmis¹⁶ and Panmaheswarar most of these names take their root from kanam (gana) meaning weigh kanavan being a man of social standing by virtue of this noble status. Perumak would stand for the big boss. So, it seems the name was applied to any officer in charge of the administration of the house of the lord. This basic idea is perhaps further pointed out by the association of Chandikesvara. So, they come to be called Alunkanam the ruling lord. Then we hear of Srikaryam Seyvar, those engaged in temple work. Panmaheswarar, those engaged in temple work. Devakanmis and Danmahesvara would mean one looking after the services in the lord's temple. Ultimately, the works merge in (Koyirkanakku) Panmakesvaras and Devakanmis the accountant of the temple. Others associated with temple administration are

Mahesvaras Panmaheswarars and Brahmadirayar. These are likely to bearing group of heads of established institutions such as the Matha looking after charity and other temple services. Besides the head of villages such as Sabhaiyar Ur Variyam and Kutumpu came into the picture. Those dedicated to work in temple construction such as Devarkanmikal and Ampattam also emerge into the picture at one stage. All these would suggest the increasing resources of the temple which needed effective machinery for its proper administration. The system seems to have functioned on a democratic model.

Administrative Staff

A number of administrative and supervisory officers worked in the temple to manage the temple affairs. They maintained the account of the temple. It was also the chief work of the administrative staff to maintain the various donation without any hindrance some of the administrative staff known from the inscription of chola from Mayiladuthurai region are Sri Mahesvara Kankani Sri - Karyam Koyil Nayagam Devarkanmi, Kanakkar.

Sri Kankani

He seems to be the chief official of the administration. In all the transaction he figures first among the other officials. According to K.A. Nilakanda Sastri he was the superintendent of the temple and all the work of the temple work carried out under his guidance and by his order. He at rested the various document of the temple, which is known from the land transaction records carried out by the temple. He is held with the responsible work of receiving and supervising the huge endowments of the temple.

Sri Karyam

He is the governing body or the manager of the temple, occupying the next place to that of the superintendent. He conducted all the sacred duties inside the temple complex. He also appeared in all the transactions of the temple.

Koyil Nayagam

He is also a supervisory staff of the temple. He managed the affairs of gardens, groves, ponds and lands attached to the temple.

Devakanmis

He is the temple worker and carried out all the orders issued by his highest authorities.

Kanakkar

He is the temple accountant maintained temple accounts. He has to keep the record of the various income and expenses of the temple. All the temple accounts were written in his presence signed and authorized by him.

The temple of Mayiladuthurai region temple was an important entity during chola period 900 C.E to 1200 C.E a time from an analysis of the function of various officer, the part played by them can be analysed. Unfortunately we got only the names of the administrative staff and their duties are not clearly known. The wages of some of the functionaries are described in detail. The aspects covered in the previous pages have not been studied fully. The result of the study pertaining to a well demarcated area and a particular period have to be correlated with similar studies in other areas only then the Deva Kanmis Role of Chola period.

Endnotes

1. A.R.E. No. 419, 421 of 1912.
2. A.R.E. No. 419 of 1912.

3. A.R.E. No. 427 of 1912.
4. A.R.E. No. 427 of 429 of 1912.
5. A.R.E. No. 9 of 1914.
6. A.R.E. No. 485 of 1926.
7. D. Dayalan, *Early Temples of South India*, p. 12.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
9. A.R.E. No. 140 of 1925.
10. D. Dayalan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 18.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.
12. S.I.I. Vols. XIX, No. 94.
13. A.R.E. No. 14 of 1914.
14. A.R.E. No. 140 of 1925.
15. K. Sivaramalingam, *Sivayokananthar Temple at Thiruviyalur*, p. 184.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

