



PERUNDRAM; THE EXECUTIVE OF THE CHOLAS, WHOSE ASSISTANCE WAS EARNEST GLEANED FROM EPIGRAPHS

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Abstract

Temples were the pivots of all human activities in ancient and mediaeval Tamilaham. Temples occupied a very important place in the social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Tamils. The members of the royal families including administrative officials also played a prominent role in temple constructions, renovations, enlargement, patronisation and development of the temple. Gifts were offered to irrespective of the temples from all sections of the administrative authority. The administration of the temple was on the pattern of political administrative institutions during the medieval period held responsible to keep law and order through the earnest assistance of the *Perundram* officials. This paper throws light on *Perundram* of *Udankuttatars*, the minister's role on their earnest patronage for development of the temples.

Key words: *Udankuttatars*, *Perundram*, *sirudaram*, *panchavara*, *devadana*, *devakanmis*, *ennalikkal* and *Choliyam*.

Introduction

Temples were the pivots of all human activities in ancient and mediaeval Tamilaham. Temples occupied a very important place in the social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Tamils. Like **KINGS**, chieftains, the *Udankuttatars*, the ministers which include *Perundram*, were corresponded to the contemporary cabinet ministers of India and *Sirudaram*, corresponded to the contemporary ministers of state were also made liberal contributions and endowments for the development of the temples. The Cholas, the ardent Saivites followed the art of erecting structural temples from eleventh century onwards. The members of the royal families including *Perundram* administrative officials also played a prominent role in temple constructions, renovations, enlargement, patronisation and development of the temple. Enormous gifts were offered to irrespective of the temples from *Perundram* of the administrative authority.

Endowments of Villages

Gift of Villages, lands were common gifts of ruler and higher officials particularly by the *Perundram* officials. These lands donated to the temples were either exempted from tax or made tax free by these officials. Epigraphs show the administrative officials particularly *Perundram* officials were endowed for the development of the temple through their liberal gifts and administrative supports. For illustration a Tamil, Pallava Inscription¹ found on the north wall of the mahamandapa in the Bilvanatheshwara temple at Thiruvallam of Pallava, VijayaNandivikramavarman is who none other than Nandivarman III Pallava in his seventeenth regnal year A.D. 863., states that request of MavaliVanarayan alias VikramaditaVanarayan, who may be identified with the Bana chief, BanaVidyadhara (c A.D. 850-95)., a gift of the village of VidaviduguVikramaditta *chaturvedimangalam*,² which was formed by clubbing together Amarunrimangalam, a *devadana*³ of the Paramesvara temple at Tikkalivallam the villages Aimbuni and Vilattur, was granted to the above temple, by the order of Kadupatti Tamil Apperarayan. Probably same as Vidavidugu Kadupatti AP-Praraiyan also mentioned in the Bahur plates of Nripatungavarman⁴. The *sabha* of the granted village was obliged to pay the 2,000 *kadi* of paddy and 20 *kalanju*⁵ of gold,

which had been paid by the village of Amarungimangalam formerly to God Paramesvara of Tikkalivallam. The paddy and gold were to be used for sacred food offerings, feeding the Sivabrahamanas beating the drummers, supplying flowers for the god, the flower suppliers and singing the *Tiruppadiyam*⁶, the singers., The inscription also furnishes the earliest mention of Tiruppadiam, the singers, burning of perpetual lamps, the employers, anointing the idol, the employers, burning incense, the employers, making repairs, the employers, etc., in the temple.

From this it is clear that the three villages and its revenue generation were given as salary to the temple employers namely the Sivabrahamanas,⁷ the drummers, the flower suppliers, the singers, the employers connected with ritualistic daily worship of the deity main of this temple. Further the temple has large number of ritualistic employers as well as administrative staff. All the three villages mentioned above and Tikkalivallam were situated in Miyagunadu, of Paduvurkkottam.⁸

Hence, temples proved to be the center of all sections of the society and employment platform. These activities namely landlord, employer and consumer of goods and services as bank, educational center, feeding center, museum, hospital and theatre through the endowments of *perundram*⁹ the higher administrative and executive officials

of the state. In short, as a nucleus, the endowments of the temple by *Perundram* made to gathered round by the public themselves all that was best in the arts of civilized existence, and regulated them with humanness borne of the spirit of Dharma.

Gift of Lands

Thus the *Perundram* was the hub of the contemporary administrative annuals of the state. In addition to village gifts, the gift of Land was common gifts of higher officials particularly by the *Perundram*¹⁰ officials. The lands donated to the temples were either exempted from tax or made tax free by these officials of hierarchy. The epigraphs show that the administrative officials were improved the development of the temple through their liberal endowments and administration. For illustration, an Tamil. Chola Inscription,¹¹ found on the north wall of the shrine, Rajakesarivarman, who destroyed the ships at Kandalur Salai is none other than Rajaraja I Chola in his tenth regnal year A.D. 995. Records a gift of land by Paraman Kunjaramallan alias Rajasikhamani Pallavaraiyan, the headman of Kurukadi after purchasing it from the residents of Vanapuram, modern Banavaram. The gift was to provide for the maintenance of the conductors and servants of the *sribali*¹² in the temple of Tiruttikkalialvar at Tikkalivallam in Miyagunadu, of Paduvurkottam. Another

Tamil, Chola Inscription,¹³ found on the south wall of the central shrine in the same temple of RajendraCholadeva is none other than Rajendra I Chola, in his twenty sixth regal year A.D.1038, refers to the gift of gold for the sacred string, the *rali*¹⁴ and the ear ornaments, the *mudravatarum*¹⁵ by the officer, Mandaikilar Marataman Nilaiyar alias Nittavinoda Muvendavelar to the image of the consort of Panmahesvara Vitankar set up or installed by him, and to the gift of land to the image of Pasupatamurti for *sribali*¹⁶ and for offerings. The record mentions the *kudinjaikkal*¹⁷ equal in fineness to the madurantakanadevan *madai*¹⁸ The inscription refers the irrigation of the contemporary period¹⁹

Another Tamil, much damaged Chola Inscription²⁰, found in the same place. Parakesarivarman alias Rajendra Chola deva is none other than Rajendra II Chola, in his tenth regnal year A.D. 1062., begins with the historical introduction Tirumaruviya, etc., records that a gift of land and certain special rights were given to a Sivabrahmana Gautaman Ramadeva Bhattan and his family by the Tiruvallam assembly for conducting the worship of the images of Cholakerala Vitankar alias Tribhuvana Sundara, his consort and the Pillaiyar set up or installed in the temple of Mahadeva of Tiruvallam by the assembly of Tiruvallam

in Karaivali, of Perumbanappadi in Jayangonda cholamandalam.²¹

Another Tamil, Chola Inscription²², found on the north wall of the central shrine in the same temple is none other than Rajendra II Chola, in his unknown regal year A.D., 1052. registers a gift of land by purchase by the officer Alatturudaiyar Divakaraninran Nambiyar alias Vanavan Muvendavelar. Since the officer Divakaran Nambiyar alias VagavanMuvendavejar of Alattor is also found mentioned in another record above dated in the 4th year of Rajendra II Chola, this record may be assigned to the same King for conducting a festival in Margali and another in PanguniUttiram and also for maintaining a feeding house for the devotees in the temple of Tiruvallam*Udaiyar*.²³

Another Tamil, damaged Chola Inscription²⁴, found on the east wall of the mandapa, right of entrance, in front of the central shrine in the same temple. KulottungaCholadeva, who abolished the tolls is none other than Kulottunga I Chola, in his fortieth renal year A.D., 1110., Seems to record a gift of land by previous purchase from the great assembly of Tiruvallam by Rajasekhara Mavendavelan for feeding worshippers, the *andargal*.²⁵

Ritualistic Services and Temple Servants

Perundram,²⁶ the important administrative officials also played a vital role to look after

the management of the temple, conducting religious ritualistic services, maintaining temple servants and managing temple property and these were common phenomenon existed in the contemporary period. Then there were any serious problems, the King along with *Perundram*²⁷ the advisory body, which consist of high officials interfered and settled the issues amicably. Thus, the *Perundram*²⁸ officials played a vital role not only in state administration but also in temple administration.

Maintenance of Law and Order

The King was more concerned about the welfare of his subjects. With the emergence of temple cities, the temples became a centre for brisk human activity. Hence, the administration of the temple was on the pattern of political administrative institutions during the medieval period held responsible to keep law and order through the earnest assistance of the *Perundram*²⁹ officials. Thus this paper also portrays light on *Perundram*³⁰ of *Udankuttatars*³¹, the minister's role on the earnest service for development of the temples Regarding Political Administration, the central administration was in the hands of the ruler and he ruled over an extensive empire. As the head of the state, the King enjoyed enormous powers, but he was a benevolent despot the people considered him the

representative of God on the earth. Thus, the Cholas rulers administered their extensive kingdoms with the assistance of his ministers. The ministry was an advisory body with hierarchical officials. In this connection the officials *Perundram*³² played a vital role in the administration of the state and the smallest unit of temple administration as well. This earnest assistance of the *Perundram*³³ supported the rulers and thus, the council of ministers and other high officials maintained a good administration. So, the ministers were called *Udankuttatars*,³⁴ the advisory body, which consisted of *Perundram*³⁵ and *Sirudaram*³⁶ officials.

Kings as Temporal Heads

The Chola rulers of Tamil Country built many temples throughout their domain and introduced systematic administrative machinery in them. The royal patronage and royal control helped the temples and its development establish them. They cherished that it was their pious duty to protect these religious edifices as these led them to heavenly abode. That was the reason, why the Kings as temporal heads of the state and the priestly class upon ritual heads including administrative hierarchy like *Perundram*³⁷ officials jointly undertook to develop the temples and propagates temple culture.

Autonomy to the Temple

As the Kings were patrons of temple culture, their control of temple affairs was assisted by *Perundram* officials more custodial rather than managerial. It was held that their policy was one of non-interference in the internal affairs of the temples.³⁸ It indicates that they granted more autonomy to temple administration. They interfered only, when their attention was drawn to certain problems, which needed royal intervention through the earnest administrative support rendered by *Perundram* officials.

The State acted as the Temple Custodian rather than as Manager

That was why, it is surmised that the powers and functions of the state were custodial rather than regulative, magi co-ritualistic rather than managerial.³⁹ Non-interference in the internal affairs means that the state acted as the custodian rather than as manager. In other words, the rulers appear to have enjoyed certain supervisory control over the temple affairs, that too in some peculiar situations.

Abiding the local Customs, Conventions and Traditions

Even then, the King was held responsible for whatever that happened in the realm,⁴⁰ without royal support, temples could not flourish on their own limited resources. Therefore, the Kings with the assistance of

Perundram officials were expected to have their supervisory control over the affairs of the temples for their smooth functioning and increasing the revenue sources in order to meet out the essential need, source of income to this temple. Royal patronage tended to increase in tune with the expansion of temples and developed the income sources through their multifarious activities and functions. Even if the *Perundram* officials had extended their influence over temples, it was by way of their hereditary right to protect the land and the peoples by abiding the local customs, conventions and traditions.

For illustration a Tamil, Inscription of Chola, found on the west and south walls of the central shrine in the Tiruvallam, Bilvanatheswara temple of Rajakesarivarman alias Rajarajadeva is none other than Rajaraja I Chola, in his twenty second regnal year A.D. 1007 refers to an increase of the *panchavara*, the relief measures of paddy by the assembly of Mandiram alias Jaymeru Srikanamangalam, as a *devadana*, the gift of land to the temple servants of Tuynadu and agreed to pay to the *devakanmis*, the servants of the temple at Tiruttikkalivallam in Miyaṟunadu, of Paduvurkottam.

The record also mentions one Irayiravan Pallavan alias Mummudichola Posar, on this officer, who was the Trustee of the Tiruvallam temple had managed to increase

the existing income of paddy, by careful audit, through additional income of paddy as measured by *ennalikkal*,⁴¹ the surveyors equal to the *Choliyam*,⁴² the assessment official and which was collected from the committee in charge of the *devadana* lands of Maniram, the lord of Araisur and officer belonging to the *Perundram*, the important administrative officers of the Cholas existed during the reign of Rajarajadeva, help to increase the *panchavara*⁴³, the revenue of the temple to meet out the requirements of the *devakanmis*⁴⁴, the temple other officials. From this it is clear that through the *Perundram* officials and their careful administration the temple empowers to increase the regular income through the audit by the surveyor and assessment officials. Thus, through their efficient administration the temple increased the revenue income source to meet the challenges of the contemporary times.⁴⁵

Revenue Generation through various Taxes

This is evident from the *Perundram* officials extensive land endowments, the generous tax concessions and other charitable activities that they had initiated. With the multiplicity of temple functionaries and the increase in their economic activities, with vast landed property and endowments For instance, a Tamil, Inscription of Chola, found on the north wall the of Nakulesvara shrine in the

Bilvanatheswara temple Parakesarivarman alias Sri RajendraCholadeva is none other than Rajendra I Chola, in his fourth regnal year A.D. 1016. records a sale of 2,000 *kuli*⁴⁶ of land made tax free by the *maha sabha*⁴⁷ of Tiyakkalivallam in Miyapunadu, of Paduvirkottam in Jayangonda cholamandalam in return for 50 *kasu*, the gold coins received from Irayiravan Pallavaraiyag, a *Perundram*, the administrative officer of the King, to God Rajarajitvaramudaiyar Chandesvaradevar is none other than Lord Chandikeshwar, whose image was installed by the same *Perundram* officer in the *pragara* of the temple premise.

Thus, the image of Lord Chandesvara was installed in the temple premise by the *Perundram* official denotes the development of the temple through the expansion of the small shrine temple premise was a common phenomenon existed during the time of Rajendra I Chola and it also regarded as *dharma* of the contemporary age. Besides several taxes were exempted from the temple lands by the afforded official to increase revenue source of the temple. Among the taxes exempted were *nirkkivilai*, the uncultivated barren tax, *ugappar pon*,⁴⁸ the land tax through random assessment and *urpodukudimai*, the village public tax. From this it is clear that the three taxes namely *nirkkivilai*,⁴⁹ *ugapparpon* and *urpadukudimai*,⁵⁰ were

existed during the time of Rajendra I Chola. With the multiplicity of temple functionaries and the increase in their economic activities, with vast landed property and endowments called *devadanas* and the grand of remuneration to the servants, there were occasions, when disputes arose *in temples*.⁵¹ These disputes were referred to the King as he was the supreme authority of the state and he amicably settled the disputes with the earnest assistance of *Perundram* officials.

The concluding part states that the Kings extended their supervisory control over temples through their ministers, including *Perundram* and *Sirudram officials*⁵² royal officials, village assemblies and temple staff to watch the activities of these autonomous institutions, the rulers made frequent tours.⁵³ During the royal tours, the rulers paid visits to the temples, held enquiries about their problems, if any and tried to solve them immediately. In policy making, they consulted their officials including *Perundram* and *Sirundram* officials and took decisions.⁵⁴ These shows that the Kings of medieval Tamil Country had not only custodial powers, but also supervisory powers in matters relating to temple administration. Thus, this Paper is made here about the development of the temple need for, the nature and the impact of royal control with earnest support of *Perundram* officials of Chola Kings on temple

administration. These *Perundram* officials were corresponded to the contemporary cabinet ministers of India.⁵⁵

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