

NEW LIGHT ON
TAMIL ART AND CULTURE



NEW LIGHT ON
TAMIL ART AND CULTURE

Author

K. DAMODARAN

Published by

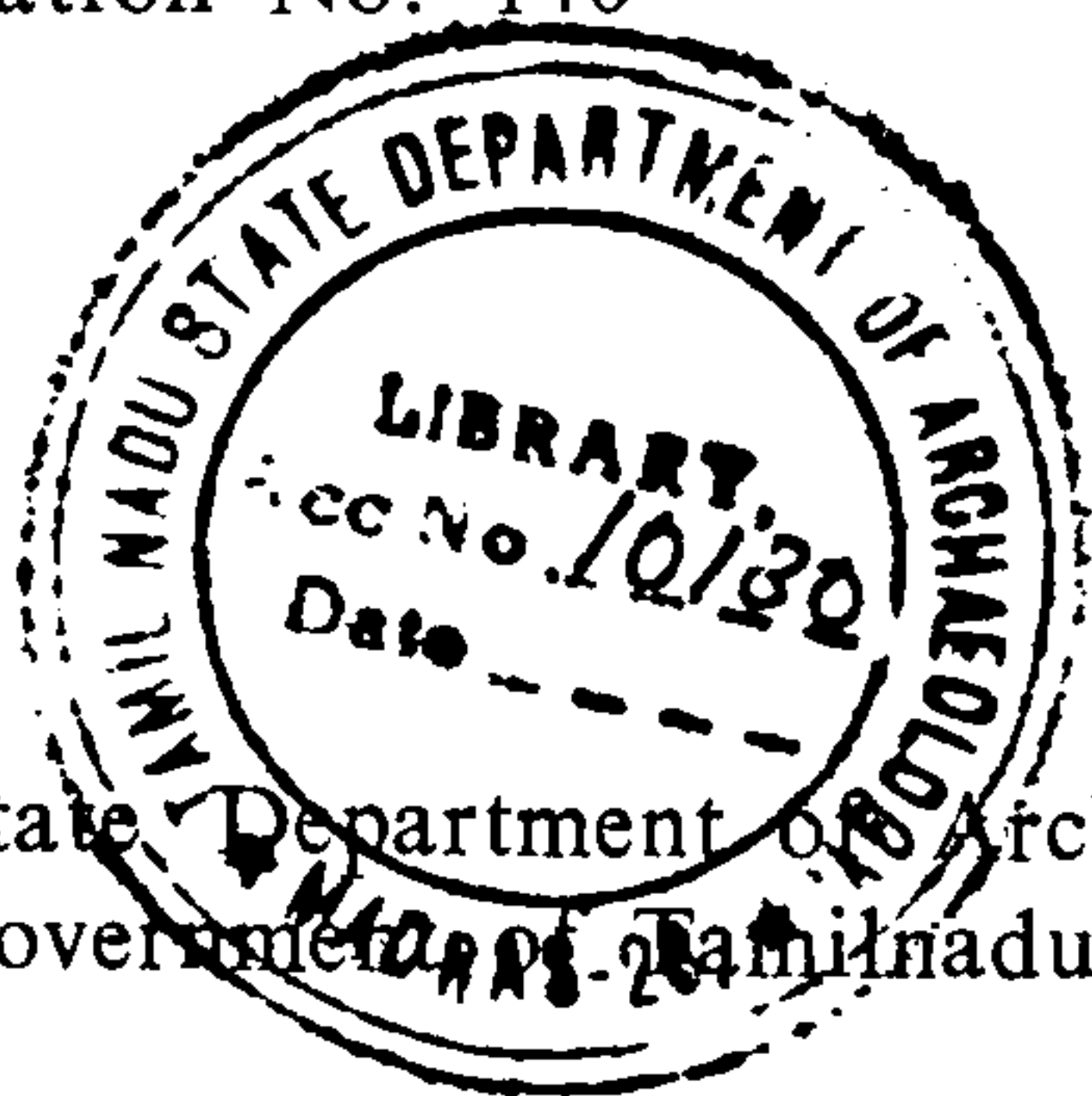
STATE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU

CHENNAI - 600 113

1999

First Edition 1999 - 500 Copies
Publication No. 140



© State Department of Archaeology
Government of Tamil Nadu

709.5482

DAR

NEW LIGHT ON TAMIL ART AND CULTURE

Author

K. DAMODARAN

Price : Rs.

Printed By

State Department of Archaeology

Government of Tamilnadu

Tharamani, Chennai - 600 113

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	
1. New Light on Thiruvankadu Nataraja Bronze	1
2. A Unique Chandikesvara Bronze	6
3. A Unique Rishabha Dakshinamurti from Tirunavalur	12
4. Kurungalisvarar Temple Bronzes - A Study	15
5. Four Chola Inscriptions from Tamaraippakkam	18

P R E F A C E

In this book titled “New Light on Tamil Art and Culture”, I have published, some interesting research papers on outstanding bronzes and sculptures of Tamilnadu. Among them an inscribed Nataraja bronze, now being in worship at Thiruvankadu temple is significant. This image was dug out as a treasure trove some years ago. It bears a rare inscription in its pedestal. The two line, Tamil inscription; in the characters of 10th century A.D. reads “*Swasti Sri Desi Abhayanithi yabharana Nayaka Sri*”. The term “*Desi*” denotes a Tamil classical dance form of yore.

The Art of metal casting played an important role in Tamilnadu, even in the period of 12-13th centuries A.D. In Kurungaliswarar temple at Koyambedu, in the heart of Chennai, I found some interesting and beautiful bronze images of Lord Ganesa, Parveta Chokkanathar and Goddessess Samathamman. Besides the above, I have also dealt with in this book about a unique and interesting bronze image of Chandikesvara, off Nadusalai in Dharmapuri District. The style and the form of the bronze is unfamiliar to Tamilnadu; and it reveals the influence of neighbouring Chalukya kingdom over Tamilnadu. These exquisite bronzes, and also the excellent Rishabha Dhakshinamurthy sculpture from Thirunavalur adds new dimension to the art of metal casting and image making. All the above said bronzes and sculptures are new additions to the pantheon of Tamil bronzes.

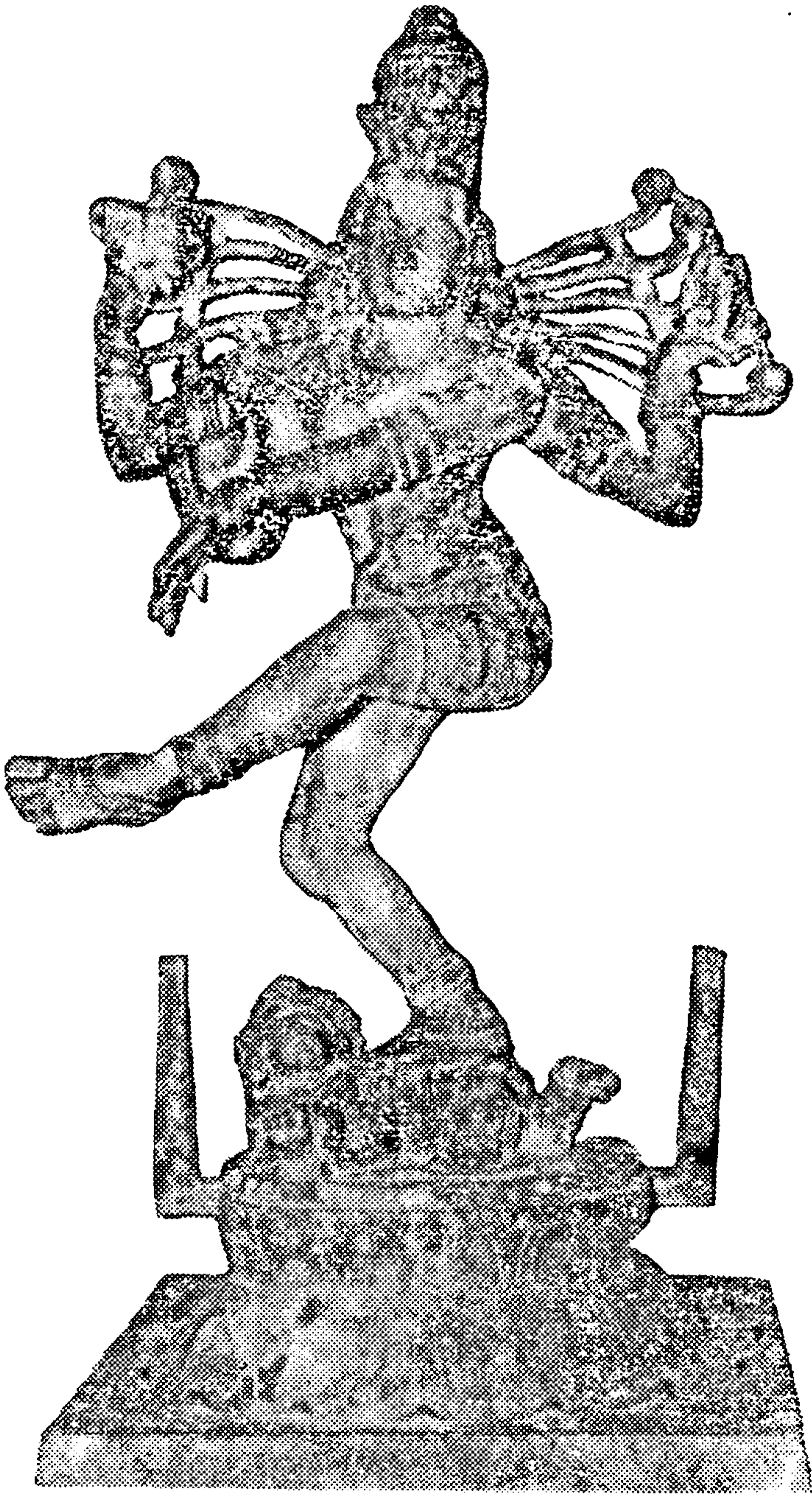
At the concluding part of this book, an article based on some interesting inscriptions belonging to the period of Rajaraja II. is also added. These inscriptions found at Thamaraiappakkam

village in Thiruvannamalai District gives a vivid picture about the adjudication of a rare case, and also the prevalence of Sati.

Thiru S. Chengalvarayan, Assistant Works Manager and his team of Printing Section Staff took keen interest in bringing out this publication. For their untiring and dedicated work I extend my profound thanks.

K. DAMODARAN

Director



Nataraja Bronze, Thiruvankadu,
10th Century A.D.

NEW LIGHT ON THIRUVENKADU NATARAJA BRONZE

The find of an inscription on the pedestal of Nataraja image now in Thiruvankadu, dug out as a Treasure Trove, along with the famous Ardhanarisvara (now in the Madras Museum) is significant and helps us in fixing the date of the Bronze very closely. When I published my article¹ on "New bronze finds from Thiruvankadu" I had no access to the image of Nataraja handed over to the temple for worship. Now that Thiru K. Damodaran has noticed this inscription, which is certainly in characters of Rajaraja's period, my earlier dating of the image seems to gain strength. I don't find any stylistic difference between the Nataraja and the accompanying Sivakami and would still assign it to the same period. However both the Nataraja and Sivakami, seem to be from a less accomplished hand than the one that produced the superlative Vrishavahana, Devi and Ardhanari. The bronzes of Subrahmanya with consorts, a portrait etc., found subsequently in the same village and now housed in Tanjore Art Gallery, probably belong to the same hand as the Nataraja group.

The inscription on the pedestal of Nataraja is interesting in many ways. The inscription refers to the Lord-Nataraja as "Desi abhayanidhi Yabharana Nayaka". There are four words in the compound. 1. Desi 2. Abhayanidhi 3. Abharana and 4. Nayaka.

The last word Nayaka denotes Lord. The other three words are significant.

1. T.A.S.S.I. 1959-60 pp. 108-122.

Desi, stands for a particular type of dance which is different from Suddha Nritha. The Tamil work, Silappathikaram¹ mentions Santikkuttu and Ahamarga. Santikkuttu consists of 108 Karanas expounded by Bharata and is also called Suddha Nritha. The, Ahamarga, also called Meykkuttu is divided into Desi, Vadugu and Singalam, Desi standing for local, Vadugu standing for the northern tradition and Singala standing for Ceylonese tradition. The Sangita Ratnakara, distinguishes two paddhatis² (1) Suddha paddhati also called marga and (2) Desi paddhati also called Gaundali paddhati. The Gaundali paddhati is said to have originated in Karnata desa.

Gaundalyah mandalam proktaṁ tadjnaih Karnata desajam Sa desi Paddhati it iukta.³

The Sage, Kohala is said to be a great exponent of desi dance. A work desinritha samudra is ascribed to Narada.⁴ The commentator on Sangitaratnakara states that Desi dance was not expounded by Bharata.

Etesham Bharatadyanuktadvat Suddha Karanavad lakshana niyanah na adriyate⁵

It is therefore evident that Desi is a school of dance, not included in Bharata's tradition. It is significant to note that the form of Nataraja, called Ananda Tandava is not one among the Karanas expounded by Bharata. The Saivite saints singing the greatness of the master dancer, say that he performs the dance not known to the exponents of classical dancers.

-
1. The Silappadhikaram Edited by U. V. Swaminatha Iyer - Madras - Commentary
 2. The Sangita Ratnakara Vol. IV, Edited by S. Subrahmanya Sastri Adayar - 1953.
 3. Ibid. 7-1277-8.
 4. Ibid. pp. 112.
 5. Ibid. pp. 240.

This is a clear reference to the non-Bharathan tradition of Ananda tandava. The word Desi found on the pedestal of the Nataraja (great dancer) is therefore of immense value and seems to point to the Desi nature of the dance.

The second word abhaya nidhi, is self explanatory that it stands for the very treasure of protection. Siva Nataraja is the greatest protector of the universe, afforded by the abhaya hand of the Master, and is rightly called abhaya nidhi. The third word, abharana *i.e.* jewel, is equally significant. Nataraja is the jewel among the Gods. This concept seems to have influenced the artist to heavily bedeck the image with jewellery, an unusual feature in early Nataraja images. He is really an abharana nayaka. The Editor (Dr. R. NAGASWAMY).

Thiruvankadu village has attained pre-eminence in the history of Indian art by yielding three groups of treasure trove icons, which include, such master-pieces as Vrshavahana, Devi, Bhikshatana, Kalyanasundarar, Kannappan and other bronzes now housed in the Tanjore art gallery and the superb Ardhanarisvara and Candikesvara now housed in the Madras Museum. The first group was found in the year which included the Vrshavahana and Devi, dated with the help of inscription by T. N. Ramachandran.¹ A second group of Bronzes, unearthed as Treasure Trove in the year 1960 included the Ardhanari and Candeesvara now in the Madras Museum. The other images found with them namely the Nataraja, Sivakami, Somaskanda, a seated Devi and a Bhogasakti, were retained in the temple for worship. A third group consisting of that superlative Kannappan² Subrahmanya with consorts etc, were found and these are now housed in the Tanjore Art Gallery. The second group of Treasure trove bronzes were published by R. Nagaswamy,³ who dated the Ardhanari bronze with the help of the inscriptions. The Nataraja now under

1. Lalit Kala No. 3.

2. Damilica Vol. II Part II.

3. T.A.S.S.I. 59-60.

discussion unearthed with the Ardhanari, were also assigned to the same period by R. Nagaswamy and the Nataraja was identified with Adavallar mentioned in an inscription of Raja Raja I, in his 28th year. Kuttanviraniyar, a queen of the king gifted gold to the image of Adavallar for worship.¹

T. N. Ramachandran writing earlier before the second group of bronzes were unearthed, identified the big Nataraja under worship in the temple with the Adavallar of the inscription. Douglas Barrett, in his book on Early Chola Bronzes, has not given any date to the small Nataraja unearthed, but held the accompanying Sivakami and the other two bronzes of Devi as later ones.²

Recently an inscription in Tamil characters has been noticed by me on the pedestal of the small Nataraja which is of great interest for the dating of the bronzes. The idol, four armed dancing on muyalaka is shown on a lotus pedestal over a rectangular pedestal. Nataraja resembles all the other Nataraja images, in that it carries the Damaruka in the right upper arm and fire in the left arm. The fire has a curl at the base a form of conventional representation. The head dress is elaborately and minutely worked and is proportionately taller. A balance is introduced by showing a flower on the right and a hooded snake on the left of the Jatamakuta. The front jewel on the makuta are tied by a chain of golden flowers at the back. The flowing jatas on either side-five on each side, are looped at the end. At the back, a sirascakra with a pendent hanging from the middle fastens the jatas. As in other figures the right ear has makara kundala and the left a prominent patrakundala. Karnapatras are seen over both the ears, an unusual features for a figure of this period. No Ganga is present in the jatas. A snake is shown coiling around the right arm holding abhaya hasta. The waist is elaborately decked with jewels but the usual side tassals flying across is absent. An unusual feature is that the image shows

1. T.A.S.S.I. 1959-60, pp. 119.

2. Early Chola Bronzes, Bombay - 1965, pp. 20.

comparatively more ornamentation in the neck, arms, waist and legs. The muyalaka lying trampled, is looking upto the lifted foot of his master. A separate prabha was inserted into the pedestal, but has not been recovered. The image, is 68 cm. in height including the pedestal but without it 53 cm. The inscription of great interest, is found on the plain face of the Bhadrapita. It reads Swasti Sri Desi Abhayanidhiyabharana Nayaka Sri. The writing in Tamil in two lines is in characters of 10-11th A.D and bear close resemblance to the inscriptions of Rajaraja. They cannot be dated later than Rajaraja I. The inscription means that this is "Lord, Abhayanidhiyabharana".

The accompanying figure of Sivakami, 48 cm. in height including the pedestal (32 cm. without the pedestal) is also shown in exactly the same type of pedestal a lotus pedestal over a plain bhadra pitha. Though it is somewhat heavy and lacks the elegance noticed in the Umadevi figure, the consort of Vrishavahana of Tanjore, it closely resembles the accompanying Nataraja bronze and does not seem to be far removed from it in point of time.

A UNIQUE CHANDIKESVARA BRONZE

The Puranic story of Candikesvara

Candikesvara, first among the devotees of Siva, was born at Ceynalur, near Kumbakonam (Tanjavur District) in a Brahmin family. His parents named him Vicarasarman, and duly initiated him into Vedic studies. Seeing the mistreatment of a cow, the boy secured permission from the elders to look after the village cows which he did so well that they began to yield greatly increased quantities of milk at the mere touch of the udder. Urged by an inner desire to worship Lord Siva, he used the milk to annoint a linga of sand that he had himself made. This activity was brought to the notice of the village which called the boy's father to account. Deciding to see matter for himself, the father followed Vicarasarman, and witnessing the annointment with milk, began to beat him with a stick. The boy continued his devotion unmoved but when the father kicked the milk pot, he was distributed enough to fling a stick at his father, the stick turning into an axe which cut off his legs. Unmindful of this boy continued his devotion, whereupon Lord Siva appeared in person to bless both him and his father, raising the boy to Candespada, the supreme state a devotee could reach. It was decreed that henceforth the food, the cloth, the flowers and all that were offered to Siva, were to be offered to Candesa (the new name of the boy) as well. Thus Candikesvara became the principal guardian of Siva's properties.

Types of Candikesvara Temples

In every Siva Temple a separate subsidiary shrine is dedicated to Candikesvara near the sanctum on the Northern side. Candikesvara image is set up in a shrine unattached to the main temple. He is one of the Parivara devatas or attendant daities in a Siva temple. The temple of Candikesvara is divided into two types. First type is called Svatantra temple and the second type is called Paratantra temple.

Svatantra Temples of Candikesvara

The Svatantra temple is situated in any of the eight directions or in the centre of towns and villages. This type of temple may range in size from a mere shrine of one cubit cube to a magnificent temple with a base of thirty cubits square. It is surmounted by a vimana of one to seven talas or storeys in height, ornamented with the figure of Candikesvara or any other deity on the corners of each tala or the figure of Nandi. Svatantra temple of Candikesvara faces any one of the directions except the North. This temple should have prakaras, mandapas etc., in proportion to the dimensions of the central shrine. The central shrine is surrounded by eight Parivara-murtis named Rudrabhakta, Rudrachanda, Chandma, Mahabala, Virya, Tankapani, Isasevaka and Rudrakopja. They should be white complexion, and big-bodied. They have four hands. Front hands held in the anjali pose and carrying the rankas in the back hands. They may be represented either as standing or seated in the Virasana attitude and draped in elephant skins and should have terrific countenances. At the main entrance of the temple there should be two gate-keepers named Chandamuga and Chandabhivitya. These two should be sculptured with two arms and carrying clubs in their hands.

Different types of Candikesvara images

The figure of Candikesvara should be fashioned according to the madhyama or adhama-dasa-tala vidhi as is given in piratimalakshana. Different descriptions are found in the agamas for making the image of Candikesvara.

In the first type it is stated that it might be sculptured as seated upon a padmasana and its look should be terrific and fire would burst out of its face. The colour of Candikesvara should be jet black and a sarpayajnopavita on the body and a jatamakuta adorned his head with the crescent of the moon. He has four faces, four arms and twelve eyes. In the right two hands holds the akshamala and the trisula and in the left hands the tanka and the Kamandala.

In the second type of Candikesvara image, the complexion is conch-white, three eyes and four arms and in the jata-makuta the crescent moon. Seated in the virasana posture. Front hands are in the varada and abhaya poses, and in its back hands the dhanus called the pinaka and the bana called the Amogha.

In third type Candikesvara is represented as either standing or sitting with two hands and three eyes. The colour of the body is inky-black and jata-makuta on the head. The left hand held in the varada pose or placed on the left thigh and in the right hand a tanka. Both hands may carry tankas or both hands folded on the chest in the anjali pose. The Candikesvara sculpture with the head slightly bowed down as in deep sorrow, but with a face full of peace.

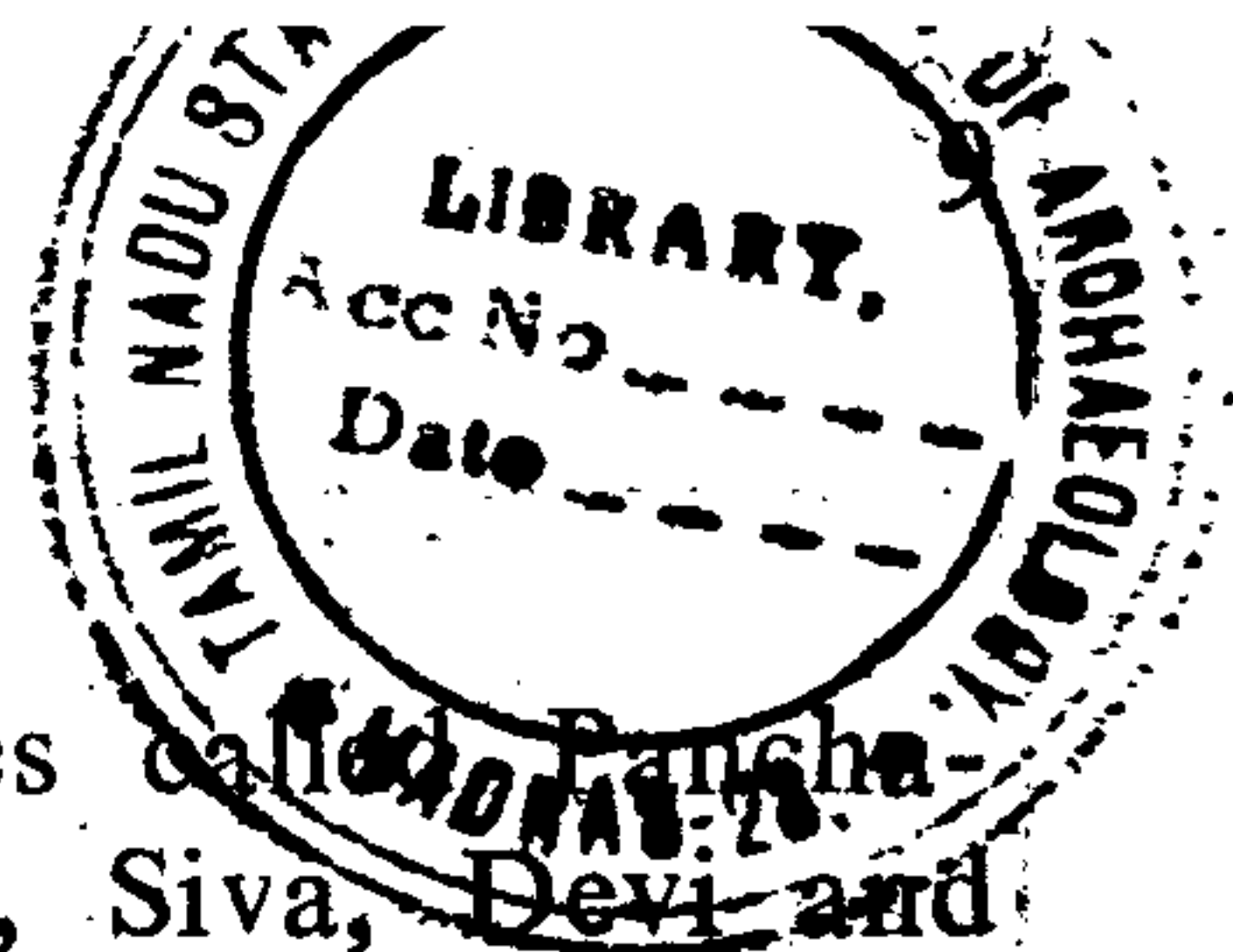
In the fourth type of Candikesvara sculptured has having four arms carrying tanka, pasa and sula and the remaining one held in the abhaya pose.

Candikesvara may be represented single or with his consort Dharmaniti of Chandikesvari. She is sculptured with all ornament and carry a nilotpala in her hands. Her colour is also to be black. Dharmaniti consort of Chandikesvara is represented in sculptures and bronzes in Tamil Nadu.

The Paratantra temple of Candikesvara

Should be facing the south. According to the Karanagama the paratantra Candikesvara may have three eyes, and four arms or only two eyes and two arms, be terrific in appearance and have a jata-makuta on the head. The front two hands are kept in the abhaya and Varada poses and the back hands carry the pasa and the parasu. If it is two hands one hand should be in the Varada pose and the other hand carry a tanka. He wears a white Yajnopavita on the body. Candikesvara may be represented either standing or sitting.

A UNIQUE CHANDIKESVARA BRONZE



Panchamurtis

In the great temple festivals five images called Panchamurtis namely those of Ganesa, Subramanya, Siva, Devi and Chandikesvara are carried out in procession. The image of Chandikesvara being placed at the end in order to emphasize his position as the general supervision. In this aspect he is always shown standing his presence in these processions being considered indispensable. He invariably appears as a resplendent youth adorned with a jata makuta appropriate jewellery and a short lower garment secured by a jewelled girdle.

Workship of Chandikesvara in Tamilnadu

The workship of Chandikesvara images began to appear from the Pallava period. Images of Chandikesvara were extremely popular in the Chola period. In his 29th regnal year Raja Raja I donated beautiful Chandikesvara bronzes in various heights and in various weights in solid castings to the Tanjore Big temple for worship.

During the Rajendra period remarkable sculptures were decorating in big niches on the walls of the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple. The greatest master piece of them all depicts Lord Siva as Chandesanugraha Murti on the Northern side wall of the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple.

Chandesanugrahamurti

Siva seated on a throne with four arms carries axe and antelope in his upper arms; with the lower the Lord is seen crowning Chandesa with a garland of flowers, a symbol of affection and stewardship. Chandesa is seen seated in front and with folded arms receiving the pride of place bestowed on him by his Lord. Chandesa is the embodiment of devotion and piety and the place he attained is considered the highest; a devotee of Siva is privileged with. It is called the Chandesapadam, the abode of deliverance. According to Saiva Siddhanta Siva bestows this grace in the company of Sakti, His consort. In the sculpture under reference, Parvati or Uma Parameswari as she is often described is seated by the side of Her Lord. The treatment of

ornaments, the portrayal of limbs and affection with which Siva is seen taking the garland around the head of Chandesa are suggestive and truly convey the supreme message of Saiva Siddhanta, the image seeks to depict. In the figure of Chandesa, Rajendra Chola has carved his own image. Sri. C. Sivaramamurti in his work the Chola temples states that "The most remarkable carving here, the Chandesanugrahamurti panel is almost a suggestion of the laurels won by Rajendra through the grace of Siva and he humbly presents himself as a devotee of Lord, who blessed Chandesa.

On the side walls is shown the story of Chandesa; Chandesa worshipping Siva as a Linga; the cows standing by the side, his father watching the happenings hiding himself behind the branches of a tree, disturbing Chandesa's worship, perturbed Chandesa throwing his axe at his father and Siva bestowing grace on both.

Metal images of Chandikesvara date from early Chola times and they are in standing and seated postures. Seated Chandikesvara resembles the bronze images of the shrines with two arms and holding the axe. As a standing figure Chandikesvara holds a small garland pressed between the palms of his hands that are folded in adoration at the chest.

Unique Chandikesvara

Nadusalai is a small village in Krishnagiri Taluk in Dharmapuri District. In this village a temple was built to Lord Nataraja. In the temple Mahamandapa, bronzes are kept on a brick platform. They belong to 13-14th Century A.D.

In this group of bronzes Chandikesvara is a unique one. He is standing on the padmapita. With legs apart, right leg is little forward and left leg straight, the body bent forward gently in an attitude of submissiveness the palms delicately closed in salutation and he appears gentle and lovable devotee. On the feet wearing padachangili and Kazhal on the fore leg. The two legs knee cup portion is prominent. He is wearing a short lower garment secured by a jewelled 'pa' type girdle (Kachchu). On

the two sides of the thigh garments are hanging in between the two thighs also garments is shown.

The body is slim and elongated. Lower portion of the body is cylindrical in shape. Upper portion that is above the udarapandha the body is broad and shoulders strongly represented. The broad Yagnobavita is running through the chest and turns backward. The udarabandha on the stomach is also shown broad and thick.

Chandikesvara face is clearly represented. Eyes are fully opened with a smile. The two hands are in anjali hasta. Inside the two palms a small garland is shown. On the left arm the axe is lying. It is a short one and seems to be a gadha and the bottom portion rest on the left hand forearm.

On the neck portion two necklaces are shown. In one of the necklaces Chenpak flower is represented. Rudraksha Kundala on the ears. Elongated jatamaghuta on the head. The jata turns backward and divided into six curls. The Sira cakkara is absent. On the two sides of the neck Vakumalai is seen. Vanki is shown on the shoulders and gadakam on the hands knee portion. On the two fore arms he wears four bangles.

This Chandikesvara bronze was wrongly identified as portrait of Rajaraja I by one local scholar in the year 1979.

The Nadusalai Chandikesvara bronze is unique and this style and form of the bronze is not familiar in Tamilnadu. The influence of the art of neighbour kingdom is reflected in the bronze. Probably the Chalukyas, who once ruled in this area.

References

1. Master-pieces of Early South Indian Bronzes. Dr. R. Nagaswamy.
2. Gangaikonda Cholapuram - Dr. R. Nagaswamy.
3. Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. II - Part II - Thiru T. A. Gopinatha Rao,
4. The Hindu - Friday. April 20, 1979.
5. Published in the Magazine Nunkalai.

A UNIQUE RISHABHA DAKSHINAMŪRTI FROM TIRUNAVVALUR

Thirunamanallur or Tirunavalur¹ is situated on the northern bank of the river Gadilam in Tirukkoilur taluk in Villupuram District. This place is of great importance in the history of Saivism and the birth place of Sundaramoorthy Nayanar and is extolled in Devaram hymns.² Inscriptions refers this village as Tirumunaippadi Tirunavalur.³

In the ancient past there were three Siva Temples and a Vishnu temple at Tirunavalur. Two Siva Temples namely Kalinarisvaram⁴ and Agastyesvaram⁵ are the ancient temples whose remains are not traceable now. The two temples which survives are the Tiruttondeeswaram⁶ and the Varadarajaperumal Temples.

Tiruttondeeswaram Temple is modest in scale and simple in Plan. The Garbhagraha is a square plan. The general plan is uniform throughout the early Chola period and comprises a rectangular flat roofed nave called Ardhamandapa, leading into a square flat roofed sanctum. The Superstructure (Vimana) which raises above the Garbhagraha rests on a high base of Adhistana. The basement of the Garbhagraha has plain mouldings with lotus and Yalifrezes below and above the Kumuda mouldings respectively. The Vimana over the Garbhagraha has the Nagara type having four sides. Above the Vimana Stupi is placed.

-
1. ARE. 379 of 1902.
 2. Sundaramurtinayanar Devaram.
 3. ARE Bi, 332 of 1902.
 4. ARE. 365 of 1902.
 5. ARE 347 of 1902.
 6. ARE. 379 of 1902.

Rishaba Dakshinamurti

On the southern side of the Garbhagraha Devakoshta Dakshinamurti is shown. As a teacher of Yoga, music and other sciences he is known by the name of Dakshinamurti. According to Agamas Dakshinamurti is viewed in four different aspects namely as a teacher of Yoga, of Vina, of Gnana and he also an expounder of other Sastras (Vyakhyanamurti). Of these the last form is the one which is most frequently met within temples¹. The Vyakhyana Dakshinamurti, Gnana Dakshinamurti, Yoga-Dakshinamurti are represented in sitting posture. But the Vinadhara-Dakshinamurti is represented in standing posture. The Dakshinamurti sculpture from Tirunavalur is different from the above mentioned three types. It is a unique and beautiful but rare form of Dakshinamurti is standing against Rishaba. Usually Dakshinamurti is represented in sitting posture but here it is in standing posture. He has four hands. His lower left hand is carrying palm leaf as usual and the lower right hand rests on Rishaba. The upper left hand holding fire or flower and upper right hand holding akshamala. Jatabhara adores the head. The right ear is elongated without ornament and in the left ear patrakundala is shown. His sight is fixed up on the tip of the nose.

On the neck portion necklace and muthumalai are shown. In each hand three bangles are represented. Ribbon like Yajnopavita and thread like Udarabhandha is also represented. On the two legs Padasara are shown. In front of the thigh portion lower garment is hanging. Here the Apasmarapurasha figure is absent.

The above mentioned four types of Dakshinamurti are described in Agamas. Other than the Agamas the Chola Artist created some new forms. One among them is Rishaba Dakshi-

1. Elements of Hindu Iconography
Vol. II Part I - Dakshinamurti-Page 273.

namurti. Generally the front right hand of Dakshinamurti is kept in the Chinmudra pose. Here it is different. The lower right hand rests on Rishaba.

On the ornamentation and the stylistical grounds the figure of Dakshinamurti can be dated to Parantaka I period.

Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri Centenary Celebrations Seminar on
Chola History, Art and culture
5th and 6th September 1992
Govt. Museum, Egmore, Chennai-600 008
Abstracts - Dept. of Ancient History and Archaeology
University of Madras, Chennai-600 005.

KURUNGALISVARAR TEMPLE BRONZES -A STUDY

The village Koyambedu is situated on the Madras-Poonthamalli High Road near Arumbakkam. It is evident from the inscription of Kulottunga III that Koyambedu was included in Mangattu Nadu, a sub division of Kulottunga Chola Valanadu alias Puliyurkottam in Jayamkonda Chola Mandalam. The inscription also refers the Lord of this Temple as "Koyambedu Udaiya Kurungalandar." In this village, there are three temples constructed for Kurungalisvarar, Vaikundavasapperumal and Samathamman. Among the three temples, Kurungalisvarar temple is very important for its beautiful bronzes and sculptures. On the basis of the Architecture and styles of the sculptures, this temple can be dated to Kulottunga III. This temple mandapas and Kuthirai Mandapa were built during the Vijayanagar period. In the Koshta of the temple Vinayagar, Brahma, Dakshinamoorthy, Vishnu and Durga sculptures are installed. These sculptures belong to the period of Kulottunga III. Totally 25 bronzes are housed in this temple. Among these bronzes, Ganesa, Pradhoshanayagar, Somaskandar, Natarajar, Sivakami, Chokkar and Samathamman are most important.

Ganesa

Most of the Ganesa images are in standing posture, though seated images are also known. The present metal image of Ganesa is a good example for the artistic feature of the Kulottunga III period.

Ganesa is standing on a lotus placed over a square pedestal. On the two sides of the pedestal 'L' type nail provided for Thiruvachchi. Pathasara on the foreleg, and above this, anklet is provided. On the waist portion dress is shown. Over this, the waist band falling into small 'U' in between the thighs. This Ganesa image may be compared with the Ganesa image of Nedungudi, Kailasanatha temple, in Thanjavur District (now kept in Thyagaraja temple, Thiruvarur, A.D. 1200).

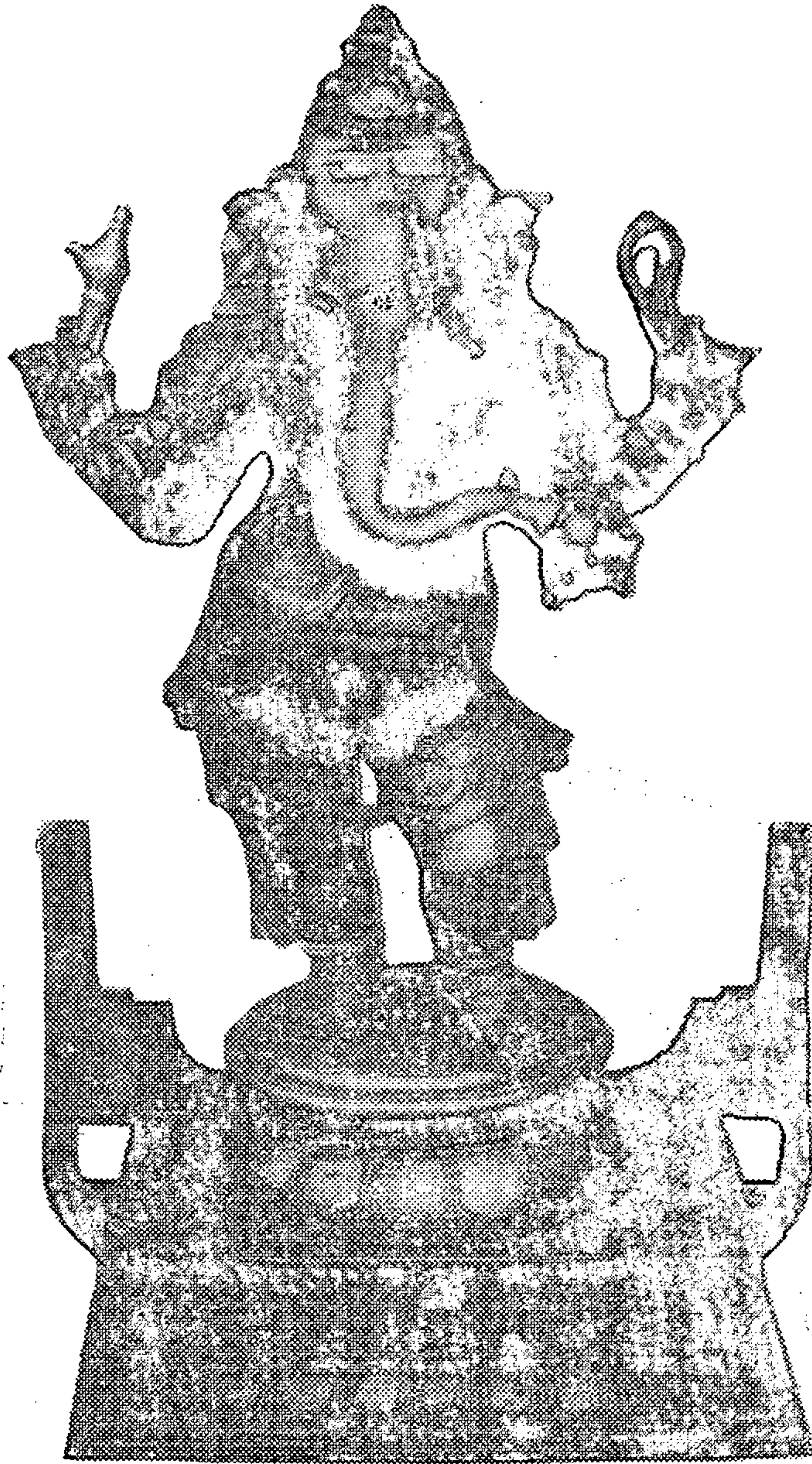
Thick udarabhandha is represented. Above this yagnopavita is running in three division. 'Brahma knot' is shown on the left chest. Two necklaces are adorning his neck. On the shoulders Vahumalai is running. The four arms carry the axe and the broken tusk in the upper and lower right, pasa and a laddu in the upper and lower left. Single bangle is represented in each forearm. The trunk is fairly long and turned to the left into 'V' shape. Karantamakuta, above the two ears, flowers is shown. On the back of the head sinachakkara is represented. It measures 40 cms. height and 25cm. breadth. This may be dated to 13th Century A.D.

Samathamman

Samathamman is seated on Vrithapita in the royal pose. This magnificent figure of Kali represents both quietitude and anger, blessing with her lower right hand (abhaya pose), holding cup in her lower left hand and with the upper right hand holding sula and with the upper left hand holding pasa. She wears two necklaces and tali on her neck. Her upavita is made of skulls running from her left side shoulder to right side waist. On her left ear patrakundala and narakundala on her right. The eyebrows are raised and the oval shaped eyes contribute to the general fierceness of impression, further enhanced by a swelling at the root of the nose and closed lips with protruding teeth. Her flaming hair stands erect at the back of the head. On the flaming hair, crescent moon and snake are shown. On the head, kabala and snake are represented. Pathasaram on her legs and garment on her waist. Breast band is not shown. It measures 42 cm. height and 28 cm. breadth. It may be dated to 14th Century A.D.

Parveta Chokkanathar

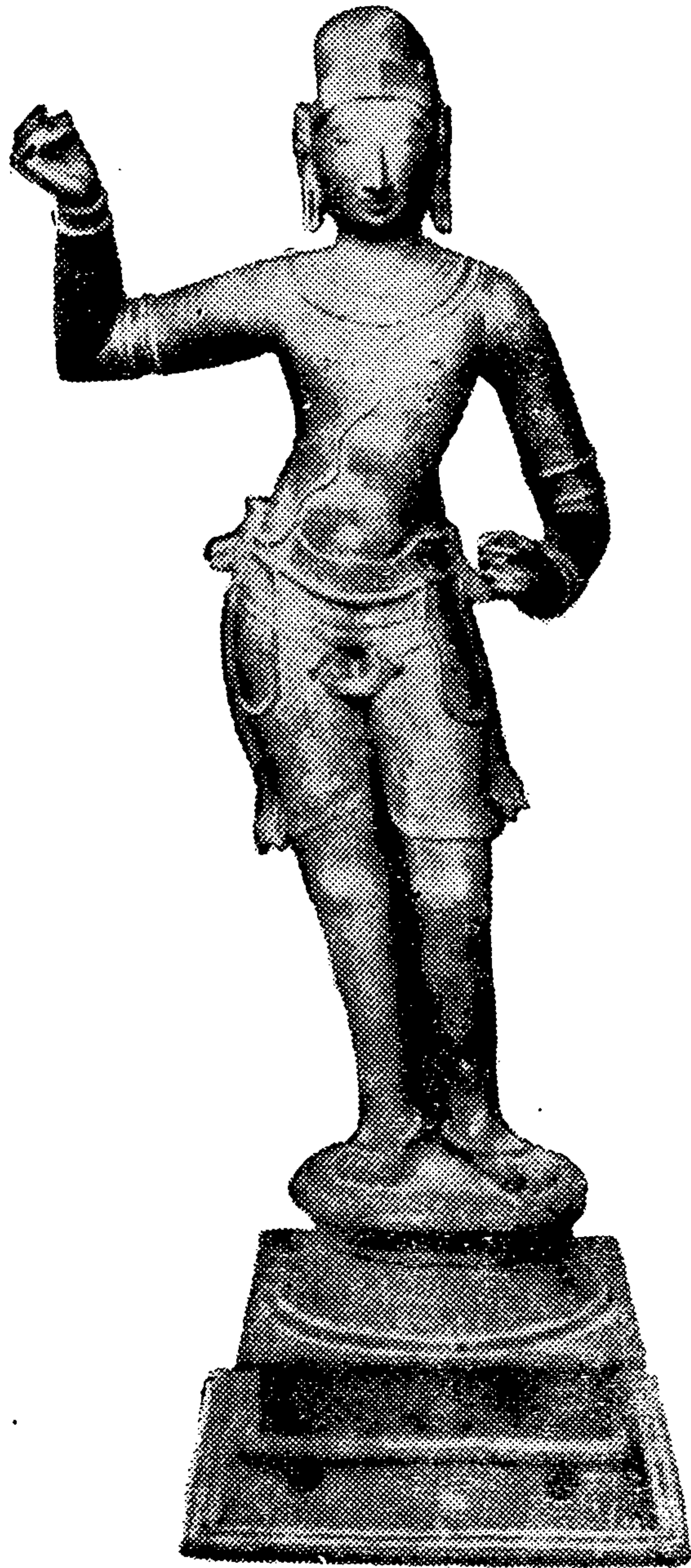
This kind of bronzes are very rare in temple worship. Chokkar is generally represented seated on horse back. But here Chokkanather is standing on the Vrithapita, with his left leg little forward. Pathasaram is shown on the legs and the garment is worn from waist to thigh. The waist bands fall into a small 'pa' in between the thigh. The left hand bend



Ganesa Bronze, Kurungalisvarar Temple,
Koyambedu, 12-13th Century A.D.



Samathamman Bronze, Kurungalisvarar Temple,
Koyambedu, 12-13 Century A.D.



Parveta Chokkanathar Bronze
Kurungalisvarar Temple
Koyambedu, 12-13 Century A.D.

slightly on the elbow portion, right hand is raised above the shoulders, representing the riding pose on a horse back. But horse is not shown. Two necklaces on his neck portion and the two ears are elongated. On the head, hairs are bundled and represented as 'Kondai'. On the two hands, two bangles are shown. Eyebrows are clearly shown and the ornaments on the forehead are shown. It measures 60 cm. height and 30 cm. breadth. Dated to 14th Century A.D.

-
1. Purananuru: 55: lines 1 to 3
 2. Kalittogai: 2:4
 3. Silappadikaram:6:39, 55
 4. Sundarar Tevaram : 93-3
 5. Appar Tevaram : Tirugokarnam Verse. 5

Published : A SOUVENIR

Released on the Occasion of the Exhibition on South Indian
Bronzes

Government Museum, Chennai, 1992

FOUR CHOLA INSCRIPTIONS FROM TAMARAIPPAKKAM

Temple

Tamaraippakkam is a small village in Chengam Taluk, North Arcot District, situated three kilo-metres south of Kadaladi on the Chengam-Polur trunk road. It lies in Putanalpadi Nadu in Kanthalur kurram a sub-division of Palkunrakkottam in Jayangonda Cholamandalam.¹ In inscriptions it is referred to as "Thiru Tamaraippakkam".² Adjacent to the village near the southern bank of the river Cheyyar, stands a beautiful temple, dedicated to Thiru Agnisvara Mahadeva, constructed in or probably even before the time of the Chola king Parantaka I. It is a good example of Chola architecture. Beautiful sculptures decorate the outer walls of the temple.

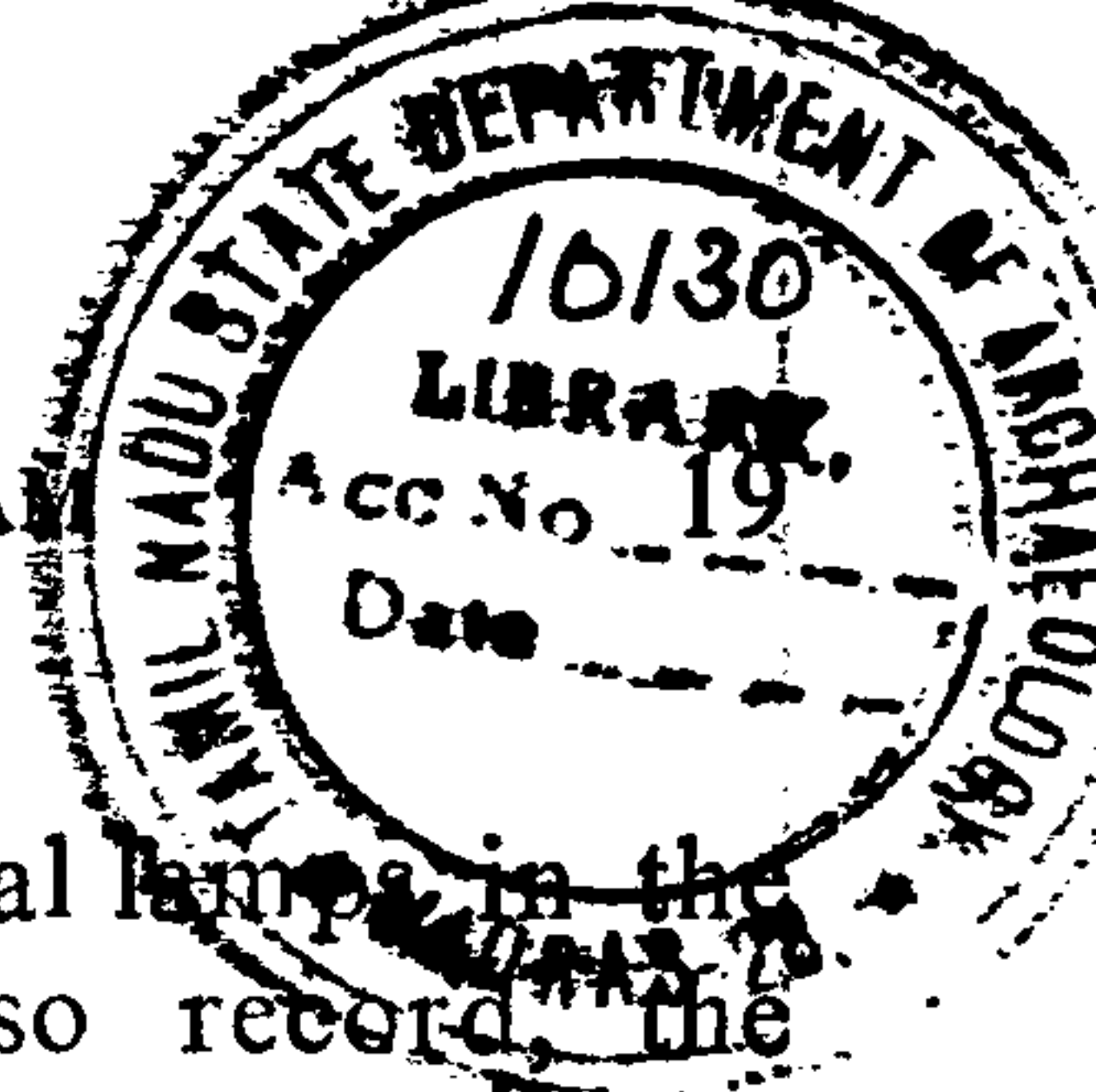
Inscriptions

About thirty inscriptions, all in Tamil characters, have been newly copied from this temple, by the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology. These inscriptions pertain to three different periods viz., Chola, Pandya and Pallava. Of these barring the inscriptions of the reign of Kopperunjinga Pallava and Kulasekhara Pandya the rest belong to the Chola period ranging from Parantaka I to Kulottunga III.

The temple seems to have undergone renovation during the time of Kulottunga III and the inscriptions of the earlier kings, Parantaka I, Rajendra I, Rajadhiraja I and Rajendra II seems to have been reengraved on the walls of the temple. On palaeographical grounds the inscriptions of Kulottunga III and of the other earlier kings look alike.

Among the thirty inscriptions twenty-five belong to the Chola period. The earliest of the Chola inscriptions belong to the 13th regnal year of Parantaka I.³ The inscriptions of Parantaka I, Rajaraja I, Rajendra I and Rajadhiraja I, record

FOUR CHOLA INSCRIPTIONS FROM TAMARAIPPAKKAM



the gifts of gold, sheep and lands to burn perpetual lamps in the temple of Thiru Agnisvara Mahadeva and also record the endowment made by those holding Devadana lands, Jenmakhani and Thiru Mugakkani to the same deity for daily offerings.⁴

Of the twenty five inscriptions of Cholas, four inscriptions, two of Rajendra II and two of Kulottunga III are very important and give a graphic picture of the social and legal conditions that prevailed in those days.

Chitrameli Perukkalar

The first inscription dated in the 5th regnal year of Rajendra II (A D. 1052-1063) records an interesting case that came up for judgement before the Assembly of 'Chitrameli Perukkalar'.⁵

In medieval periods, agriculturists formed guilds under the title 'Chitrameli Nattar'. To identify this guild from the other assemblies a separate prasasti was in vogue. They claimed themselves as sons of the soil, Bhumiputra. In the inscription concerned they are referred to as upholders of righteousness and Chitrameli code of conduct. The social structure comprising solely of this community is called Nadu and those having membership in it are called Nattar. A congregation of several Nadus is called Periya Nadu and those taking part in the proceedings are called Periya Nattar and Perrukkalar.⁶

The agriculturists guild that sat in judgement over the present case must have belonged to such a set up. This assembly was named after Rajendra Chola as "Rajendra Chola Chitramelip Periya Nadu."⁷

The Assembly of 'Chitrameli Perukkalar' heard from Tarupperudaiyan Talikon, a heart rending case of murder. He had two sons by name Sankathadiyan and Periyar respectively. A quarrel arose between the two brothers and harsh words led to nasty blows. As a result, the elder brother succumbed to the blows of his younger brother. The assembly

of Pêrukkalar, then enquired the old Vellala whether he had, any other son to protect the family apart from the younger brother who stands charged with murder, and the old man replied in the negative. To another question he replied that he had no property worth the name to support his family. Weighing these factors against the younger brother's crime, the assembly decreed that the younger brother need not be sentenced to death but instead to atone for his sin should burn a perpetual lamp in the temple of Thiru Agnisvaram Udaiyar in Tamaraippakkam. From the inscription it comes to light that though death sentence was usually pronounced for acts of murder, extraneous circumstances like poverty and family background are taken into consideration before pronouncing the verdict. In this case the younger brother was let off with admonition to atone for his sin in view of the peculiar circumstances of the case.

Nattar

The 'Nadu' was the basic unit of the agrarian society and those having membership in it are called 'Nattar'. The Nattar were the representatives of the Vellanvagai Villages. The assembly of the Nattars functioned to safeguard the Vellala community and work for the well being of the farmers.

The second inscription dated in the 10th regnal year of Rajendra II records that the Nattars of Palkunrakkottam, Venkunrakkottam, Panaiyurnadu, Thirumunaippadinadu, Miladu alias Jananathavalanadu, Kudalilaippadinadu, Pangalanadu Uttamacholavalanadu, in Jayangonda Cholamandalam assembled at the temple of Thiru Agnisvara Mahadeva to discuss the various problems of the Vellala community such as fixing the land taxes. The following resolutions were passed by the Nattar for execution. If it was a wet land of one veli (20 ma) measured by Padinarusankol the sixteen span measure, the farmer was to pay a tax of fifty kalams of paddy measured by Arumolidevan marakkal. If it was a kar land of one veli, the farmer was to pay a tax of forty kalams of paddy. If it was a dry land of one veli, a tax of three kasu was to be paid by the farmer. The taxes paid by the

farmers were to be collected by the treasury. This resolution is mentioned in inscription as 'Thiruvanai'. The 'Thiruvanai' was written by one Bhattan of 'Chitrameli Nadu'⁸.

Practice of Sati

The two inscriptions dated in the 10th regnal year of Kulottunga III (A.D. 1178-1218) records self-immolation by two individuals.⁹

The first inscription mentions a deed by one Soman Prithigangan. The father of Soman Prithigangan, by name Prithigangan seems to have been a dancer in the temple of Thiru Agnisvara Mahadeva. He was accompanied in the recital by a lady musician. When the dancer Prithigangan expired, the lady musician too, out of affection to him, entered sati. It is referred as "Udan pallikonda" in inscription. In order to look after the bereaved family of the lady musician, Soman Prithigangan executed an endowment by donating one veli of land measured by the Padinaru sankol. The gift was to be enjoyed to the very last member of the musician's family.¹⁰

The second inscription records that a co-dancer by name Alvar also entered sati on the death of Prithigangan, father of Soman Prithigangan. Here also Soman Prithigangan executed an endowment by donating one Veli of land measured by the Padinaru sankol to protect the bereaved family.¹¹

1. T.N.E. - Year 1972 - North Arcot District - Tamaraippakkam - Village Inscription Serial Nos. 9; 18, 19, 20.
 2. Ibid. No. 11, 15, 16.
 3. Ibid. No. 24.
 4. Ibid. No. 8.
 5. Ibid. No. 7.
 6. Kalvettile Valakku - R. Nagaswamy-Tamil Arasu, August 1972, Page-55
 7. T.N.E. - Year 1972 - North Arcot District Tamaraippakkam - Village Inscription Serial No. 7
 8. Ibid. No. 27.
 9. Kalvettu Kurum Ceythi - K. Damodaran, Tamil Arasu, August 1972. Page 26.
 10. T.N.E. - Year 1972 - North Arcot District - Tamaraippakkam - Village Inscription Serial No. 1
 11. Ibid. No. 2.
- Published in DAMILICA

SITES IN AND AROUND POOMPUHAR

Puhar or Kaveripoompattinam was the capital and port city of Sangam Cholas. Silappathikaram mentions that the city of Poompuhar was covering an area of four Kavatham (Approx. 30 sq.miles). It extended upto the present Karuvendanathapuram and Kadarankondan on the west, Thirukadavur on the south, Kalikamur on the north and Bay of Bengal on the east. The villages within the above four boundaries formed part of the ancient Kaveripoompattinam. About 30 villages flourished in those days with Poompuhar as its nucleus. It is learnt from Silappathikaram that about 60,000 families lived in Kaveripoompattinam and the total population was about 3 lakhs.

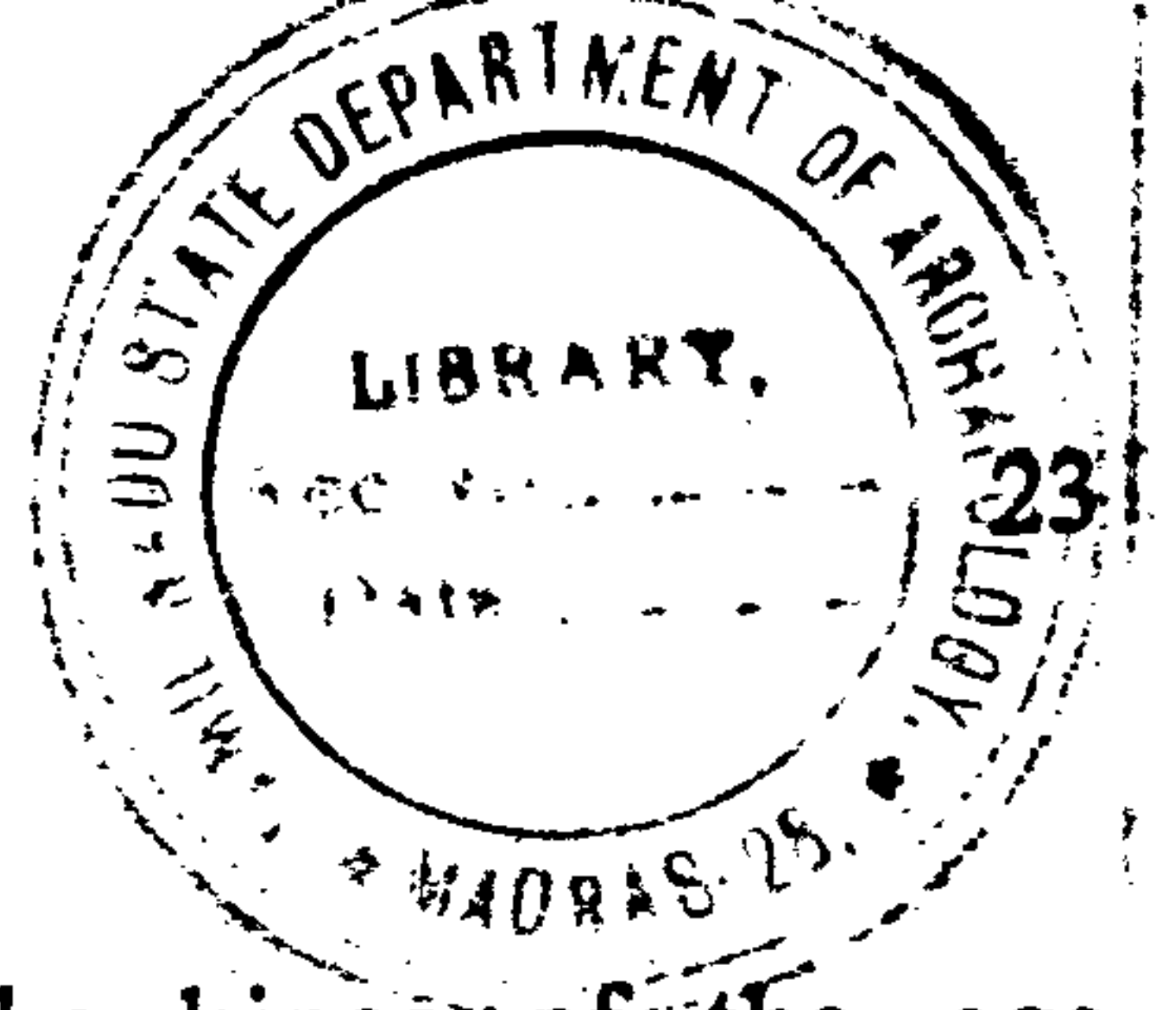
Silappathikaram also describes about the general plan of the town of Poompuhar. The town was located on both the banks of Kaveri. It was divided into three parts, Pattinappakkam on the western side and Maruvurpakkam on the eastern side while Nalangadi at the centre.

The Tamil classic Manimekalai tells us that Puhar was submerged into sea due to non-performance of the annual festival to Indira during the period of Killivalavan. However only the eastern part of Poompuhar forming the Maruvurpakkam must have been submerged and not the entire Poompuhar.

Maruvurpakkam

A portion of Puhar lying on the sea shore was called Maruvurpakkam. It had several streets exclusively earmarked for traders specialising in colouring materials, white wash fragrance and other incense materials, flower bazaars, traders dealing with the silken cloth and experts dealing with gems and gold.

SITES IN AND AROUND POOMPUHAR



Pattinappakkam

This was the place where from the kings of the age ruled and was situated to the west of Nalangadi. According to Silappathikaram this area consisted of several temples dedicated to Lord Siva, Shanmuga, Vishnu and Baladeva. Apart from the residential complexes of the Commander-in-Chief and other royal officials the merchant community and agricultural people, the residences of artists who excelled in fine arts were also located there.

Nalangadi

It was guarded by the deity called Sathukkabutham. This guardian deity did all the good to the people of the place. This area was abounded by many gardens. The five kind of Mandrams supposed to have been created by Indira were deemed to have been located here.

A study of suburbs around Poompuhar leads us to many valuable details and historical evidences.

Kazhaar Munturai

It lies on the south bank of the river Kaveri. Presently it is called by the corrupted name 'Kazhudakkaran Thurai. It was the bathing ghat of Puhar during the Indira Festival. The highway leading to this place was known as 'Thanpatha Peruvithi' according to Ilangovadigal.

Saikadu

This place on the south bank of the river Kaveri has been eulogized by the Sangam classic Agananuru and also by Sambandar's Thirupathigam. The Sambapathi temple lies south of Saikadu. This ancient place is presently called by the name Sayavanam.

Vanagiri

It also lies on the southern bank of the river Kaveri. The excavation conducted here by the Archaeological Survey of India has brought to light a small water reservoir fed by brick - built inlet - channel from the river Kaveri.

Manigramam

It lies on the northern bank of the river Kaveri. It is noted for its colony of foreign trade merchants. The trial excavation at this place has yielded the rouletted ware in grey pink and black fabrics, the megalithic black and red ware, terracotta figurines, coloured beads etc. They are suggestive of the occupation of the sites in the beginning of the christian era.

Kappakarappu

The fishermen of the area call the place where the confluence of the river Kaveri takes place into the sea as Kappakarappu. Perhaps in ancient days this place must have been a sea port and ship must have sunk near here due to a big storm.

Neidavasal

It lies on the sea shore to the north of Kaveripoom pattinam. The Sangam Classic Purananuru notifies it as belonging to Ilanchetchenni. Ilangovadigal too praised this place. This place had within its bounds sacred tanks such as Somakundam, Suriyakundam, and also the temple dedicated to Manmatha. The present day Neithavasal must have formed a part of the ancient Maruvurpakkam.

Kariappar

It is believed that this is the place that contains the submerged portions of the eastern part of Poompuhar and also Kamavel Kottam. A few years ago the fishermen stumbled upon a Kalyanasundara bronze and a deity of Parvathi under sea and recovered them to the shore.

Velliyaniruppu

It is adjacent to Saikadu. It was here the temple of Baladeva located. The copper coin of Roman king Augustus has been collected from this place. Broken pieces of Roman pottery are other important finds. Perhaps this place should have been a Roman settlement in Puhar.

(Published in the Marine Archaeology Seminar).