

## The Temple Services Of Later Pandyas With Special Reference To Sennelkudi Inscriptions

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### Abstract

The four dynasties that ruled the southern regions of India, the Cheras, the Cholas, the Pandyas, and the Pallavas, have been ruling as powerful rulers since the Sangam period, as can be well known through literary references, Ashoka's second rock inscriptions, and the notes of foreign travellers such as Megasthenes. All over the country, she has created many temples. By keeping them, we can know that they all have excelled in religious work. And among them, Pandyas, who ruled the south for a long time, are worth mentioning. From the Pandyas of the Sangam period to the later Pandyas, their remains can be known through the temple constructions found in every town as evidence that they have excelled in temple work. This work examines the temple works of later Pandyas based on the inscription of the Shiva Temple in Sennelkudi, Virudhunagar district.

**Keyword:** *Pandyas, Temple, Later Pandyas, Service, Inscription.*

### Introduction

Among the rulers of Tamil Nadu, Pandyas and Pallavas have been doing temple work excellently during the same period. They initially started the work by making umbrellas on the hillocks. Among them are the sanctum sanctorum and Artha Mandapam. The Pandyas are opposed to the Pallavas in carving the temple structure with the mandapam on a single rock without any damage. The Pandyas initially built temples like Rock Cave (Pillayar Patti, Sevalpatti, Aanaimalai, Tiruparangunram etc.), Monolithic Temples (Kalugumalai-Vetuvan Temple) and Stone Temple (Katrali). In that sense, a stone temple structure called Chennelgudi is near Palavanantham in the Virudhunagar district. We will have a detailed look at the temple work of the later Pandyas through the dilapidated stone cuttings found in the Shiva temple in the town. The **Sennelkudi Inscriptions** refer to epigraphs found in temples, notably Siva temples, in Sennelkudi, Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu, India. These inscriptions, usually in Tamil or Sanskrit, document historical, social, and religious events from medieval South India. They provide valuable insights into the local kings, administrative structures, and donations to temples, land grants, and prevalent rituals in the region.

### Pandyas

The Pandyas ruled Tamil Nadu from the Sangam period until the end of the seventeenth century. After the Sangam period till the 9th century, the earlier Pandyas under the rule of the Cholas appointed rulers like "SadayaVarman Sundara Chola Pandyan" and became prosperous rulers under them. Then, the rise of Pandyas begins in the Kulothungan period. According to an inscription of 1101 A.D., "Sadayavarman Srivallabha Pandiyan" got permission from Kulothunga Chola and started ruling in the 12th century. K.A.Nilakanda Sastri did this, and historians like K.V. Raman also confirmed this. We have the 23rd regnal year inscription of Maravarman Parakrama Pandyan to suggest that he was a contemporary of Kulothunga Chola - I. Accordingly, as the 40th regnal year inscription of Kulothunga Chola I is also found together, it is inevitable that "Maravarman Parakrama Pandyan" ruled before Srivallabha Pandyan. Also, the names of Parakrama Pandyan appear in Srivallabhan's stone carvings, Ensuring the universe. Analysts classify their rule as medieval Pandya. The Second Pandyan Empire

lasted from 1190-1310 A.D. Among them, Sadayavarman Kulasekaran till Maravarman Kulasekaran ruled with distinction. All of them have excelled in building temples and donating for temple maintenance in the Pandya country, as can be seen from the inscriptions published by them, Sivakasi Copper Plate (Seppedu), Thalavaipuram Copper Plate, stone temples, and stone sculptures.

#### Later Pandya's Temple Works

The later Pandya Kings were mostly Shiva devotees, but religious reconciliation was also dealt with. They have established Shiva temples, Perumal temples and Jain schools. They have set up stone temples in various towns in Tamil Nadu. Among them are Enjar, Thirutangal, Settikurichi, Aruppukottai Fort, Murukkankulam, Narikudi, Manur, Cholaipuram, Palavanatham, Mudugudi, Kovilankulam, Mettupatti, Kallumadai, Vagaikulam, It can be known from the Tamil inscriptions of later Pandyas found in Aviyur, Mallanginaru, Sengunrapuram, Vellur, Sennelkudi Porai and also for setting up these temples and maintaining them. It can be known from the inscriptions found in the above towns that they appointed people to light the "Nanda lamp" daily and that the temple worked effectively.

#### Sennelkudi

Historically, Sennelkudi has been a name in use since thousands of years ago this name is found in the inscription in the "Pallipatai" temple built by the early Pandya King Veerapandyan for his brother Sundara Pandyan in the village called "Kalai Natha Swamy Temple" in the town near Thiruchulial and reads as "Paruthikudi Nathu Peru Sennilakudi". The name Sennilakudi has probably been changed to Sennelkudi. This town is a village located near Palavanantham in Virudhunagar district. There is also a town named after this town in Sivagangai district. There is also a village called Senstanigudi near Thiruchuzhi in Virudhunagar district. Sennelkudi near Palavanantham is a cultural element of the Perungal Age civilization, where the dead are buried in Talis. The remnants of habitation are found in the forests of this town. More here, the potsherds are found to be damaged. Judging by their thickness and the highly eroded mouths of the ancient depressions, the area may have been inhabited as early as 2,000 years ago; it can be assumed.

#### Sennelkudi Shiva Temple

In Sennelgudi village, a Shiva temple is seen in ruins. This temple is a stone temple built by layering. The temple is built with black stones and has a basic temple structure, such as Sanctum Sanctorum, Arthamandapam, and vestibule. Currently, no worship is being performed in this temple. The whole plane of this temple has been destroyed. No stone sculpture is found at the back of the temple except for a sculpture of Vinayaka. Animal figures like elephants, horses, and monkeys are carved on the walls to worship Lord Shiva. The mother was not found in the womb. The Shivalinga of this temple is found at a distance of 500 meters from this temple. There is a Nandi and Ganesha sculpture. Also, there is a Shivalingam and Nandi in the eastern direction of the town. These sculptures may have been moved for security reasons due to fear of foreign invasion.

#### Shiva Temple Inscriptions

The 13th-century Tamil inscription is behind the sanctum sanctorum in the stone Temple at Sennelkudi. It contains the town's name and the king's name in this temple. Tamil stone carvings are also found on the pillars of the Siva Temple and the pillars of the front hall.

#### Inscription of Maravarman Parakrama Pandyan

On the north side of the Sanctum Sanctorum of this temple, an inscription is found in Athitanam in the 7<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Maravarman Parakrama Pandya, which starts with the praise of the king Maravarman Parakrama Pandya "Thirumagal Poomagal Vilanga On Vikrama On Jayamagal On Porpuya On Thirumpa On" On. The complete message could not be understood due to some lines being distorted. The Temple may have been built during the Pandyan era of Maravarman Parakrama due to the prehistoric inscription found in the temple. The Pandyas have been continuously engaged in Temple work.

#### Front Hall Pillar Inscriptions

The front hall is seen to have twelve pillars. Inscriptions are found on the six inner pillars. There are only 27 lines of Tamil characters in one pillar. In them, the name SonattuMullaiSudinan Rasa ManikkaNallur also appears. The name of the person who engraved this inscription is also there. Similarly, all the pillars located inside have inscriptions. Apart from these, the inscriptions of later Pandya kings are also found in this temple.

#### Inscription Lines

"Swasti Sri Komara Panma

RanaTribhuvana Chakkaravarthi  
Kal Sonadu Vazhangiyarulia  
Sundara Pandya Devarkku  
Yandu 10 vathu ... Sonattu  
Mullai Sootinan Rasamanikka  
Nallur Soma”

According to this Inscription, Maravarman was the 10<sup>th</sup> of SundaraPandyen. The regnal year is mentioned. The name "Sonattu Mullai Sudinan Rasamanika Nallur" is found there, which indicates that Sennelkudi had the name Rasa Manika Nallur. This inscription also indicates that Maravaman Sundara Pandya performed Tirupati at the Siva Temple.

#### Check Inscription

A stone check has been provided to light the lamp daily in the Sennelkudi Shiva temple. A one-line Tamil inscription is engraved on the top of this read as: 'Sonattu Mullai Sudinan Rasamanikka Nallur'. This shows that they have arranged to burn the "Nanda Lamp" to prevent the temple from sinking into darkness.

#### Conclusion

From the above Shiva temple inscriptions, it is clear that the later Pandyas did temple-related work, such as establishing places of worship for the citizens and appointing people to maintain them, providing checkstones to burn the "Nanda lamp"(Anaiya Vilakku) to keep the temple from falling into darkness, and donating land for the development of the temple.

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