

RAJARAJA
THE GREAT

**A GARLAND OF
TRIBUTES**

Rajaraja the Great

A Garland of Tributes

Compiled by

Selvi T. POONGOTHAI

&

Dr. K. D. THIRUNAVUKKARASU

International Institute of Tamil Studies

Madras-113

Department of Museums

Government Museum, Madras

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PREFACE

This compilation of tributes to one of the greatest monarchs of history, Raja Raja Chola, is being brought out on the occasion of the celebration of the thousandth year of his coronation. This would be a useful reference book, and the authors, Selvi T. Poongothai and Dr. K. D. Thirunavukkarasu, have done yeoman service in compiling it.

Our thanks are due to Dr. Avvai Natarajan, Secretary of the Tamil Development-Culture Department, for his suggestion to bring out the book and his constant encouragement.

The staff of the Government Museum, Madras—in particular, the staff of the Printing Section of the Museum—spared no pains to get the book through the press in record time, and they deserve all appreciation.

Government Museum, Madras
September 15, 1984

N. Harinarayana
Director of Museums

RAJA RAJA THE GREAT

(A. D. 985 - 1017)

Rajakesari Arulmozhi Varman as he was known in the early years of his reign, came to the throne after a long apprenticeship of Yuvaraja in the month of July, 985 A. D. He was the son of Parantaka II (alias Sundara Chola) by Vanavan Madevi, and the joyous occasion of his birth is described in great detail in the Tiruvalangadu plates.

With the accession of the Rajaraja, the Great, "we enter upon a century of grandeur and glory for the dynasty of the Cholas". The personal ability of Rajaraja in some respects seems to be the greatest of all great Chola emperors of the Vijayalaya line. He laid the foundation for the splendid achievements of his son and successor Rajendra I, under whom the empire attained its greatest extant and carried its arms beyond the seas.

Man of Many-facets

The thirty-two years of Rajaraja's (985 A. D. to 1017 A. D.) reign constitute the formative period in the history of Chola monarchy. In the organisation of the Civil Service and the army, in art and architecture, in religion and literature, we see the work of a powerful force newly liberated by the progressive imperialism of the time. A relatively small state at his accession that had hardly recovered from the disasters of the Rashtrakuta invasion, by the end of Rajaraja's rule, the Chola kingdom had become an extensive and well-knit empire. It was efficiently organised and administered, which was rich in resources. The empire was guarded by powerful and well trained army.

More wonderful than the work of this great monarch must have been his personality. No contemporary records are available to understand and appreciate the nuances of his conduct and character.

The affection, he lavished on his elder sister Kunthavai, after whom he named one of his daughters and the privileged position accorded to his grand-aunt Sembiyan Mahadevi, the mother of Uttama Chola, indicates that he was a far-sighted ruler.

Military Exploits

Very early in his reign, Rajaraja assumed his title "Mummudi Chola Deva" i.e., the Lord who have adorned with three crowns (Chola, Chera and Pandya rulers) and one who destroyed the fleet of the Cheras at Kanthalur.

Almost, the first military achievement of his reign was the campaign in the Kerala Country. The result was summed up in the Meykkirtti, "Kanthalur Salai Kalasaruththa" i.e., one who destroyed the fleet at Kanthalur which precedes the name of the king, in several of his inscriptions. Though this title appears from the 4th year of his reign, no inscription of Rajaraja has been found in the Kerala and Pandya countries bearing a date earlier than the 8th year. Some years of fighting were apparently necessary before the conquest could be completed and the conquered country become sufficiently settled for his administration with proper organisation.

The Chola Meykkirtti

Rajaraja was the first Tamil King who conceived the idea of formulating in set phrases an official record of the chief events of his reign. This Meykkirtti has served as an introduction to his stone inscriptions. This type of recording achievements was followed by almost every one of his successors on the Chola throne.

Southern Campaigns

The Thiruvallangadu plates and the last Meykkirtti seem to suggest that the capture of Madurai and the subjection of the Pandya King *Amarabujanga*, precede the advance and the storming of the strong fortress of *Vizhignam* and destroying the fleet at *Salai*. This expedition resulted in sterilising the naval power of the Cheras. It is clear from his inscriptions that Rajaraja sent more than one expedition against the Pandya and his ally the Chera. One of them seems to have directed specially against Kollam. The campaign in which Rajaraja claims to have conquered the Chera Nadu and the Pandyas in the Malainadu was quite obviously different from and later than that in which Kanthalur and Vizhignam were attacked.

The chief events of this expedition which took place some time before the year 1008 A.D. was apparently the storming and capture of the strong fortress *Udagai* in Malainadu (the Western hill country) may be identified with Coorg.

Conquest of Sri Lanka

The *Izham* (northern part of Sri Lanka) is included among the conquests of Rajaraja, from the first Meykkirtti, beginning with the phrase "*Tirumagal*". The king is said to have taken Izhamandalam owned by the fierce Singhalese and included it in the Chola empire. In his 29th year (1014 A.D.), Rajaraja made a grant of several villages in Sri Lanka, for various purposes to the celebrated temple at Thanjavur.

The naval expedition of Rajaraja against Sri Lanka, must have taken place in the reign of Mahinda V, who came to the throne in 981 A.D. who was still ruling Sri Lanka at the time of Rajaraja's invasion. Rajaraja had driven Mahinda into the forest, made himself the Lord of the most of Northern Sri Lanka, which became a province under the name of : "*Mummudi Chola Mandalam*".

From his inscriptions, it is probable that Rajaraja signalised the Chola occupation of Sri Lanka by the construction of a stone temple to Siva at Polanaruva.

Conquest of Kongu Mandalam

Turning to his conquest in other directions, Gangapadi, Nulambapadi, Thadigaipadi, all of them in the Karnataka State, have been annexed to the Chola Kingdom in the Rajaraja's reign. The campaign against Nulambapadi and Gangapadi was no doubt facilitated by the fact that the Cholas had never lost their hold on the Kongu country.

Conquest of the Rattapadi of Western Chalukyas

Later inscriptions of Rajaraj's reign state that he fought a successful war against Satyasria and captured some of his treasures, part of which went to the enrichment of the great temple at Thanjavur. The Western Chalukyas were also handpressed in the North by the hostility of the Paramaras of Malva and must have found it hard to sustain against the two powerful enemies attacking them from opposite directions.

The inscriptions of Rajaraja from about 1005 A. D. assert that he captured the Rattapadi. The campaigns in the north-west resulted the annexation to the Chola empire, of practically all the territories that had ever been held by Gangas, Nulambas of Karnataka and nearly the whole region of modern district of Bellary. So that, the Tungabhadra became the boundary between the two empires.

Vengi Affairs

Rajaraja's intercession in the Vengi affairs was direct and natural result of the political development of the early of his reign, rather than of any diplomatic design to disassociate the Eastern Chalukyas from the Western cousins. If Rajaraja and his successor found it easier to extend their supremacy over the

east coast across the Tungabhadra, it was partly due to the different conditions in which the Eastern and Western Chalukyas found themselves. He gave his daughter Kunthavai in marriage to Vimaladitya, the Prince of Vengi and thus brought Vengi in close connection with the Cholas.

The marriage alliance of the Cholas with the Eastern Chalukyas brought a fresh-blood to the Vengi royal family and became the source of strength to this declining dynasty which sustained nearly a century more.

Conquest of Maldives

The last of the conquests mentioned in the inscriptions of the 29th regnal year of Rajaraja, is that of "the old islands of the sea numbering twelve thousands" i. e. Maldives. This naval conquest of which, we have no details, but there is sufficient indication that the navy was well organised under this great ruler.

ADMINISTRATION

Rajaraja was not only a great soldier and general, but also a sound administrator. His title to fame in this respect rests on the accurate land survey and assessment of the country for the purpose of land revenue.

Secretariat

He created a strong and centralised bureaucratic machinery similar to the 'secretariat' in modern governments, to look after the day to day administration of the country. He appointed higher officials as representatives of the Central Government in suitable localities such as district head-quarters.

Audit-Bureau

He introduced a system of audit bureau to check and streamline the affairs of the village assemblies (*Sabhas* and *Urs*), Municipal Councils (*Nagarams*) and the Councils of Nadus. These were the

quasi-public corporations and they were asked to produce their accounts and records for audit without curtailing their initiative for autonomy.

Standing Army

Rajaraja established a powerful standing army and a considerable navy which have achieved even greater success under Rajendra than under his own reign. These achievements placed Rajaraja on a high pedestal as the greatest among the empire builders of South India.

Connoisseur of Arts

Rajaraja had a great fascination for the Fine Arts. He was a patron of Arts and Letters. He spared no pains to encourage the artists and admire their artistic talents. He showered presents and grants of land to the musicians and dancers. Special attention was given to the promotion of painting by this emperor. He brought together the various Fine Arts into a well-knit unit. He made them thrive in the precincts of the temples by innumerable grants. The graceful paintings on the walls of the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Peruvudaiyar temple at Thanjavur and number of inscriptions that were carved on walls of this temple bear ample testimony to this fact.

Nitya Vinodha

One of his titles, reveals that he was an ardent lover and connoisseur of arts.

The Great Temple

Rajaraja's great reign has been commemorated by the magnificent Siva temple which he built at Thanjavur viz., Rajarajeswaram, which stands today as "the finest monument of a splendid period of South Indian History and the most beautiful specimen of Tamil architecture at its best".

The temple is remarkable alike for its stupenduous proportions and for the simplicity of its design.

Religious Policy

Himself as an ardent follower of Siva, Rajaraja, like all the great statesman of India, was tolerant in matters of religion. He patronized all the creeds with equal favour. The decorative sculptures on the walls of Thanjavur temple and the construction of a Vishnu temple by him at Karnataka and his gifts to other Vishnu temples recorded in his inscriptions are unfailing examples to his liberal religious policy.

The celebrated Leyden Grant records how he encouraged the erection of the Chudamani Vihara at Nagapattinam by the Sailendra King, Sri Mara Vijayottunga Varman, the Lord of Sri Vijaya and Kataha (Empire of Java, Sumatra and Malaysia) across the sea. This Vihara which was built in the 21st year of Rajaraja, was dedicated to Lord Buddha. His son Rajendra confirmed the grant of the village called Anaimangalam after his father's death and caused it to be engraved on the copper plates.

Other aspects of Greatness

"If names are music of history, this noble King greatly indulged his taste for this music" and took a number of titles to commemorate his various achievements.

He was the first King of South India to introduce a record of his achievements in his inscriptions and thus made them to bear ample testimony to some of the important events of his reign.

Thus Rajaraja was one of the great rulers of India and his reign of two and thirty heralds a new era of peace and prosperity in the history of the Tamilnadu.

His splendid success in the various fields of Royal activity enabled his greater son to score off more success.

Rajaraja had a clear vision and vigour in implementing his

ideals and aspirations. As master-mind of his age, he gave a new orientation to the worn out administrative machinery and infused a new blood to work with vigour.

His greatness lies in the innovation that he had introduced, in his originality of approach in accomplishing the up-hill tasks and a sense of imagination, which had endowed him with a foresight and insight to solve the intricate problems that had cropped in the warfare as well as in the day to day administration.

As we have noticed earlier, he was a pace-setter and forerunner in several spheres of statecraft and statesmanship without any equals in the political arena of South India.

Besides these significant features, Rajaraja had a kind of democratic spirit. So, he used to call himself as *Jananatha*, the Lord of the common man. This spirit appears to have radiated throughout his life which enhanced the greatness of Rajaraja as a noble and benevolent ruler.

To highlight the various aspects of Rajaraja's greatness, an attempt is made to include some of the striking observations of eminent scholars and historians in the following pages. The tributes, the balanced statements and the respectful homage of the researchers are arranged under various headings in the following pages, in order to enable an easy access to the wealth of materials that are available for the students of Tamilology.

Supremacy of the Cholas

Supremacy of the Cholas

The four hundred years of Chola authority in the South constitute a period of extraordinary political, literary and artistic achievements. The Cholas were the first Indian rulers to appreciate the value of naval power and to undertake an oceanic policy. They not only controlled the Bay of Bengal effectively, but for nearly a hundred years maintained their imperial authority in Malaya, thus making the Bay of Bengal, a Chola lake. It is interesting to note that the South Indian empire successfully carried on an oceanic policy and maintained its conquests across the seas and over the island of Ceylon for a considerable period.

K. M. Panikkar

A Survey of Indian History p. 150

The Cholas were one of the greatest and most gifted of the dynasties which ruled in India, they held sway for a continuous period of about 430 years (A.D. 850-1280) In comparison, the Mauryas of about 140 years (B.C. 322 - 185), and, the Guptas for about 220 years (A. D. 320 - 543). The Vijayanagar empire lasted for about 340 years (A. D. 1336 - 1676) which claim to greatness only for the first 200 years thereof, i.e., till A.D. 1565.

S. R. Balasubramanyam

Middle Chola Temples p. 1

Cholas were famous as conquering heroes, as upholders and promoters of Tamil Culture, especially the Tamil literature, Saivite religion, and temple architecture and managers of polity in which the village assemblies were encouraged to play an important part in India, to found and administer for however

a short period an overseas empire and such an empire was established on the strength of a navy which was an unusual feature of Indian military tradition.

N. Subrahmanian

History of Tamilnad p. 256.

Chola Empire

South India, at that time and later, was dominated by the powerful Chola Empire which controlled the sea-routes and had reached as far as Srivijaya in Java and Sumatra. The Indian Colonies in the eastern seas were also flourishing and strong. Sea power was shared between them and South India. *But this did not save North India from a land invasion (of Muslims).*

Jawaharlal Nehru

The Discovery of India p. 229.

The Imperial Cholas

The ascendancy of the south was due not solely to the power of the Cholas but also to the fact that this period saw the crystallisation of the Tamil Culture. In whatever sphere, whether of social institutions, religion or the fine arts, the standards established during this period were regarded as Classical.

Romila Thapar

A History of India Vol. 1; p. 194.

The Greatness of Cholas

Again during the period of Chola greatness, South India looked across the sea for its political activities. A hundred years of overseas expansion and naval warfare by the Cholas are striking features of South Indian History which has no parallel even in the imperial traditions of North India.

K. M. Panikkar

Geographical Factors in Indian History pp. 42-43.

Founder of the Chola Empire

Rajaraja was the real founder of the Chola Empire, a great soldier and statesman who welded the entire Tamil country into a single lasting political unit and organised an efficient bureaucratic administrative system.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Culture and the History of the Tamils p. 28.

Tamil Civilization reached its peak during the two centuries and a half that followed the accession of Rajaraja-I.

Ibid., p. 55.

Founder of the Chola Imperialism

Arunmoli, on ascending the throne, assumed the title Rajaraja. He had talents and training. His rule marks a turning point in the history of the Cholas as well as of South India. He extended the Chola sway to touch sea to sea in the east and west. In the north, he penetrated deep into the Deccan. Hence he is regarded as the real founder of the Chola imperialism.

V. T. Chellam

A Short Survey of the History of Tamilnad p. 103.

Greatest Ruler of South India

The accession of Rajaraja I, the son of Sundara Chola, in 985 A.D. marks the beginning of the most brilliant period in the history of the Cholas. He set on foot a new fashion of adding a detailed list of conquests by the king at the beginning of his official records, and this enables us to trace the rapid growth of the Chola empire.

Rajaraja was one of the greatest rulers of South India, and fully deserved the title "the Great" that is usually applied to him. He was a great conqueror and laid the foundation of the mighty Chola Empire. He also made excellent arrangement for the administration of his vast dominions.

R. C. Majumdar

Ancient India p. 406-

The Greatness of Rajaraja

Rajaraja restored the Chola fortunes. This was near the end of the 10th century, just about the time when Muslim invasions were taking place in Northern India. Rajaraja was, of course, little affected by what was happening in the far north, and he carried his imperialistic ventures.

Jawaharlal Nehru

Glimpses of World History p. 127.

In the south, the Cholas came into prominence about the middle or the 9th century, in succession to the Pallavas. Rajaraja-deva the Great I (985-1018 A.D.) made himself paramount lord of the south, ruling over almost the whole of the present Madras Presidency including on the north Krishna-Godavari delta and part of Orissa, part of the Calukya domain on the west, the Pandya Kingdom of Madura in the south, and a great part of Ceylon. Rajaraja was a great builder constructing in particular the great temple at Tanjore.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

History of Indian and Indonesian Art p. 106.

The Cholas, who succeeded the Pallavas as the paramount power in the south may be said to have filled the principal places in the Tamil countries with their edifices, religious and secular, all richly sculptured. Rajaraja the Great (985-1018), the most famous king of a capable dynasty extended his power over nearly the whole of the Madras Presidency (Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, South-west part of Karnataka and the north-east portions of Kerala), Ceylon and a large part of Mysore, while his navy ranged as far as the Laccadives and Maldive islands. A king, so powerful and wealthy naturally spent freely on building, and the world owes to him the temple at Tanjore, his capital, the best design of all the great South Indian temples.

Vincent A. Smith

History of Fine Art in Indian and Ceylon p. 120.

The Greatness of Rajaraja
* The Cult of Devaraja
† Village Administration

Rajaraja has been considered to be the greatest Chola ruler, i. e., what Karikala was to the Sangam Cholas, he is considered to be for the Imperial Cholas. His greatness could not have attained fruition but for his son Rajendra's complementary achievements. Perhaps the substantial nature of Rajaraja's imperialism will not be assessed truly if Rajendra had not built on it.

N. Subrahmanian

History of Tamilnad p. 179.

The Greatness of Rajaraja I

Only a year before the first invasion of Sabuktigin, the Chola ruler Rajaraja the Great began his reign at Tanjore. Under him the Tamil Empire of the Cholas reached its peak.

During this period, Dravidian culture was vigorous and unfettered, blending the secular and the religious, the abstract and the lyrical in a happy synthesis.

Radhakamal Mukherjee

The Culture and Art of India p. 311.

Rajaraja was a remarkable ruler, great in military triumph, in organisation of the empire, in patronage of art and literature and in religious tolerance. In the 26th year of his reign, a magnificent temple of Siva, named after the King, Rajarajeswaram Udaiyar was completed. Rajaraja's intensive devotion to Siva has earned him the title *Sivapadasekara* (Crown adorned by Siva's feet) and his taste for art, the epithet *Nityavinoda* (always rejoicing in art).

C. Sivaramamurti

South Indian Paintings p. 79.

".....the noble Rajaraja was the greatest of the Chola emperors. His military triumphs, organisation of the empire, patronage of art and literature, and religious tolerance are nearly equalled by his son Rajendra who was an extra ordinary military strategist. Rajaraja was a great general and statesman.

C. Sivaramamurti

The Art of India pp. 265-266.

The great and solid work of Rajaraja was the foundation upon which Rajendra built; the work of his son is the most authentic testimony to the work of the father.

R. Sathianathier

The Struggle for the Empire p. 234.
(*The History & Culture of the Indian People* Vol. 5).

Conquest of the North

Under Rajaraja I, the real founder of the Chola empire, and his talented son Rajendra I, the usual line of conquest, which was from North to South, had been reversed, and the victorious tiger-banner carried far into the north.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Colas p. 245.

Titles of Fame

If names are the music of history, this noble king greatly indulged his taste for this music; and what is more he sought to make these names current coin by attaching new foundations or substituting them for old ones. Besides Rajaraja, Mummudicola; Jayangonda and Arulmoli, which became part of the names of cities (*puram*), *Valanadu* and *Mandalams*, the king also called himself *Colendrasimha*, *Sivapadasekhara*, *Ksatriyasikhamani*, *Jananatha*, *Nigarili-sola*, *Rajendrasimha*, *Colamartanda*, *Rajasraya*, *Rajamartanda*, *Nityavinoda*, *Pandya-kulasini*, *Keralantaka*, *Singalantaka*, *Ravikulamanikya*, *Telinga-kulakala* and so on.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Colas p. 186.

Poems of Achievements (*Meykkirtti*)

Rajaraja was the first Tamil King who conceived the idea of formulating in set phrases an official record of the chief events

of his reign which was to serve an introduction to his stone inscriptions.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Colas p. 170.

Philip of Macedon

Rajaraja stands in many ways in the same relation to Rajendra as Philip of Macedon to Alexander the Great.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Colas p. 183.

Alexander, Caesar and Hannibal of Tamil Nadu

Rajaraja I can legitimately claim to have laid the real foundation for the glory and longevity of the Chola Empire He was a great soldier and general like Alexander of Macedon, Julius Caesar and Hannibal.

S. R. Balasubramanyam

Middle Chola Temples p. 1.

The Priest and the Princely Axis of Feudallism

That the Chola monarchs were staunch Saivas in their religious persuasion is a well established fact. There must have been in existence a succession of *Raja-gurus* during the whole period of the Chola rule. The names of Isana Siva and Sarva Siva stand out from the incriptions of the reigns of Rajaraja I and Rajendra and bear testimony to the North Indian connections of the Saivism of the Chola Court.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Colas p. 452.

Byzantine Royalty

Though monarchy was still the form of government, there was little in common between the rather primitive tribal chieftaincy of an earlier time; and the almost Byzantine royalty of

Rajaraja and his successors with its numerous palaces, officials and ceremonials and its majestic display of the concentrated resources of an extensive empire.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Culture and the History of the Tamils p. 55

Rajaraja's Contribution to Tamil Culture

The period from Parantaka to Rajaraja I saw the vigorous expansion of temple building art and all its concomitant minor arts, not to mention bronze-casting for ritual *Ustavabhera* images, which becomes the most outstanding craft achievement of Tamilnadu's past, so that when it ultimately met a patron of the calibre of Rajaraja possessing imagination and a spirit of adoration which laterally took him to the heights beyond, even texts could not prescribe any grade as in his Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur. Rajaraja was indeed the high priest of the art of the day and his construction, harmonized art, cult and skill, not seen in such integration, in the succeeding periods.

K. V. Soundara Rajan

The Splendour of Tamilnadu p. 62.

Several temples of the period, and often also the chief icons in them, were called after the ruling kings who established them. The worship accorded to idols called sometimes after living monarchs seems to have been connected with the apotheosis of royal personages after their demise the prevalence in the Chola country of the notion that gives rise to the cult of *Devaraja* is attested by inscriptions which mention the construction of sepulchral temples over the remains of kings and princes.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Colas p. 453.

The unobtrusive titles used by the early Chola kings were reflected with high sounding titles, such as *Chakravartiga* (the

emperor). The cult of 'god-king' was encouraged through the worship of images of the deceased rulers and building of temples which were also monuments to dead kings.

Romila Thapar

A History of India Vol. 1; p. 200.

A royal Siva cult was begun by Rajaraja Chola I and was continued by his son and successor, Rajendra I. Later Cholas appear not to have maintained this institution. The cult combined the conspicuous worship of Vedic gods in forms and the 'God-king' cult as found in Khmer (Cambodia) country.

Burton Stein

*The Segmentary State in South Indian History
in Realm and Region in Traditional India p. 24.*

The Village Communities

The Village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves; and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities (Ur, Sabha and Nagaram), each one forming a separate little state in itself.....it is in a high degree conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence.

Sir Charles Metcalfe

*The Life and Correspondence of Lord Charles Metcalfe
Vol. II; pp. 191-192.*

Certain long inscriptions of Parantaka I are of especial interest to the student of village institutions by reason of the full details which they give of the manner in which local affairs were administered by well-organized local communities or Panchayats, exercising their extensive administrative and judicial power under royal sanction.

Vincent A. Smith

The Early History of India p. 484.

Local Self-Government

All the available sources of information (the inscriptions of the Cholas) indicate that the villages were allowed a free hand in the discharge of their functions. Both in the case of *Sabha* and *Ur*, there appears to have occurred little interference from the Central Government and that is what made these bodies really powerful. Even when the government officials appeared on the scene, it was only for regulating the constitutional arrangements of the assemblies in order to help their proper working for collecting the royal revenues.

Though the royal dues were fixed by Government, every village was given complete freedom as to the nature and rate of taxes it levied for local needs. The virtual autonomy enjoyed by the villages is particularly from the supreme powers they exercised in the matter of granting exemption from local taxation. Numerous instances are found of assemblies granting remissions and assignments of dues without any references to the king's government (M.E.R. 41 of 1898 and 321 of 1910).

K. K. Pillay

*History of Local Self-Government in the
Madras Presidency p.5.*

Village Administration

The importance attached to the lowest tier of the administrative structure was an important contribution of the Cholas.

R. N. Puri

*History of Indian Administration
Vol. I, Ancient Period p. 273.*

The administrative unit was the village and to that extent there was significant difference between Chola administration and that of the Guptas. However, the nature of village administration was certainly of a very different order. The degree of autonomy at village level was something quite remarkable for

the times. Chola officials participated in village affairs more as advisers and observers than as administrators. This permitted a certain continuity in local growth and development without too much interference from political changes at the upper level and may in part account for the general cultural continuity which is among the more noticeable feature of the Tamil region as compared with the other parts of the sub-continent.

Romila Thapar

A History of India Vol. I, pp. 200-201.

This form of autonomous village was rare outside of South India and even in the region, they ceased to exist as self-governing settlements after the fourteenth century.

Burton Stein

*The Segmentary State in South Indian History
in Realm and Region in Traditional India p. 14.*

Local Autonomy of the Villages : Re-examined

In conclusion, examination of 40 villages of Tanjore inscriptions and Gangaikondacholapuram inscriptions show that in respect to the process of social reproduction, the villages of Chola mandalam in the middle period of the Chola rule did not have an independent nature as has been presumed by historians following the view taken by Maine and Marx.

Although the importance of the village as an administrative unit cannot be ignored, social reproduction must have maintained in an area larger than that of the village.

Noboru Karashima

*South Indian History and Society (A.D. 850-1800)
pp. 55-56.*

Survey of Lands

Survey of Lands

The revenue survey which began in the year A.D. 1001, formed one of the most original and important administrative achievements of the reign and furnished the basis for the revenue policy for many years.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri

The Cholas p. 189.

We learn that the lands under cultivation were carefully surveyed and holdings registered at least a century before the famous Domesday (1086 A.D.) of William the Conqueror. The inscriptions of Rajaraja which refer occasionally to the book show that the survey was correct to $\frac{1}{52,428,800,000}$ of veli of land which would approximately be equivalent to $\frac{1}{50,000}$ of a sq. inch.

S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar

Hindu Administrative Institutions in South India p. 141.

The first systematic survey of cultivable land in the Chola Empire for purposes of assessment appears to have been undertaken in A.D. 1002 during the reign of Rajaraja.

T. V. Mahalingam

South Indian Polity p. 161.

Contact with the Cultivators

The Cholas alone were able to ignore these feudatories to a significant extent. The Chola political system was the only one which still maintained contact with the cultivator on a wider scale and retained the characteristics of a centrally organized

administration. The political status of Rajaraja I was certainly different from that of Amoghavarsha, the Rashtrakuta ruler, or Vishnuvardhana, the Hoysala.

Romila Thapar

A History of India Vol. I, p. 200.

Irrigation Works

Irrigation Works

Irrigation has always attracted the particular attention of the early kings. The branches of the Kaveri river which bear the names Mudikondan, Kirttimarttandan, Solachulamani and Uyak-kondan which irrigate thousands of acres of land as well as several other canals of which many do not exist at present owe their origin to Rajaraja I.

K. V. Subramanya Iyer

Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan p. 245.

Construction of Dams and Irrigation canals

The Cholas, however, were not merely builders of magnificent architectural masterpieces. Their claim to greatness is based on works of public utility. Great works of irrigation were undertaken by successive kings which made the Kaveri delta a granary of the empire. The Chola monarchs conceived the idea of controlling a river at the head of its delta and thus securing the regular watering of lands.

K. M. Panikkar

A Survey of Indian History pp. 150-151

Rajaraja and Sri Lanka

Rajaraja and Sri Lanka

The Cholas also maintained a strong fleet with which they not only invaded and subjugated Ceylon frequently but also undertook overseas expeditions...Among the conquests of Rajaraja, Ceylon was one and his invasion of that island finds expression in the Tiruvalangadu Plates, where it is described as follows:

‘Rama built, with the aid of the monkeys, a causeway over the sea and then slew with great difficulty the king of Lanka by means of sharp edged arrows. But Rama was excelled by this (king) whose powerful army crossed the ocean in ships and burnt the king of Lanka’.

Rajaraja also sent an expedition against the Twelve Thousand Islands, obviously a reference to the Laccadives and Maldives. Friendly embassies were also sent by the Chola King to China.

V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar

War in Ancient India p. 293

Rajaraja, the great attacked and subdued Sri Lanka. Though the exact date of the invasion is not known, there is epigraphic evidence to show that it must have occurred before A.D. 993. During the reign of Rajaraja, Mahinda V was in a sad plight on account of the rebellion among the fighting forces and had betaken himself to Rohana, the hilly country in the South-east of Sri Lanka. No wonder that when Raja Raja's troops landed in Sri Lanka's there was little resistance; and the Cholas easily acquired sovereignty over northern Sri Lanka. Anuradhapura, the capital was destroyed and Polonnaruva, situated to the south-east Anuradhapura, was made the new capital. Polonnaruva was located in a more central place than Anuradhapura, Raja

raja apparently aimed at establishing the Chola supremacy over the whole island and that was probably the reason why this central place was pitched upon as the capital. Polonnaruwa was rechristened as Jananathamangalam, obviously after the title Jananatha which name Rajaraja had assumed earlier. Probably on account of his preoccupations nearer home, he had to leave the complete conquest of the Island to his successor.

K. K. Pillay

South India and Sri Lanka pp. 63-64.

Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola's conquest of Ceylon, seems to have been complete enough to bring the whole of the island under the dominion of the Cholas. Ceylon was made a province of the Chola Empire. It was called Mummudi Chola Mandalam, after one of the well known birudas of Rajaraja. Polonnaruwa, the capital was called Jananathapuram or Jananathamangalam.

Mudaliyar C. Rasanayagam

Ancient Jaffna p. 262.

The Cholas in Sri Lanka (993 A.D.-1070 A.D.)

The decline of Anuradhapura coincided with the rise of Chola power in South India. During the early years of his reign the Chola King, Rajaraja I (985 A.D.-1016 A.D.) conquered the kingdoms of the Pandyas, Cheras, Gangas and Nulambas and brought them under his direct rule. After these initial conquests of Rajaraja, Chola power became supreme in South India. After the Pandya dynasty, which at times was supported by the Sinhalese rulers was overthrown by the Chola armies Sri Lanka became more exposed then ever to Chola attack.

When the Chola armies invaded Rajarata, there was no organised government and therefore its conquest was achieved with relative ease around 993 A.D. Rajarata, the northern portion of the island, soon became an integral part of the Chola empire, its government being placed under the charge of officials sent out from the Tamil country. In the central and southern

parts of the island Mahinda continued to rule until 1017, when he was captured and taken to the Chola country by the expeditionary force . Mayarata and an additional stretch of the eastern, littoral came under the Chola control...Besides, the Cholas secured a position of unchallenged supremacy for a period of nearly five decades over the North and Central plain which was then the most prosperous and populous part of the island.

S. Pathmanathan

Kingdom of Jaffna pp. 33-34.

Maritime Enterprises

Maritime Trade

Apart from their success in war, the Cholas were long famous for their sea-trade. Their fine cotton goods were more sought after, and their port, Kaviripaddinam, was a busy place with ships carrying merchandise coming from and going to distant places.

Jawaharlal Nehru

Glimpses of World History p. 127.

The naval activity of the Chola emperors was not, however, confined within the limits of the Bay of Bengal. They appear to have carried on their intercourse of Farther-east as far as China.

Radha Kumud Mookerji

Indian Shipping p. 177.

Rajaraja's Envoys at the Court of the Chinese Emperor

"The Account of Chola" in "The History of the Sung Dynasty" gives a graphic account about the embassy sent by Rajaraja. Under the steward-ship of Soli Samudra (Chola-samudra), envoys have visited the court of the emperor of China.

The embassy led by Soli Samudra consisted of 52 members; they brought with them a great deal of pearls, the precious stones, gums, spices and medical herbs. Their mission, it seems, was twofold: diplomatic as well as commercial.

Soli Samudra and his company spent only a year or so in China and their official mission was to pay tribute to the Emperor Chen Chung (From 16th day of October of A.D. 1015 to 18th day of January A.D. 1016).

Wen-Hisung-Fei

A History of Overseas Chinese in South Seas
(Ch. 7), p. 112.

Overseas Expansion

Powerful Navy

Rajaraja possessed a powerful navy of which he made full use, and his martial exploit was the acquisition of a large number of unspecified islands, meaning, perhaps, the Laccadives and Maldives in his twenty-ninth year.

Vincent A. Smith

The Early History of India p. 486.

Sea Power

The only Indian state which had a proper appreciation of sea-power was the Chola empire. The oceanic policy of the Chola emperors, led to the establishment of bases in Nicobar and territorial authority over the coastal areas of Malaya, Java and Sumatra.

K. M. Panikkar

A Survey of Indian History p. 197.

Overseas Expansion

In South India, the Cholas were dreaming of establishing themselves overseas and in order to fulfil this dream, they, as a first step, subdued the eastern seacoast of India. The Sailendras maintained good relations with the Cholas in the beginning, but the imperial policy of the Cholas resulted in strained relations between the two empires. Within a short time Rajendra-Chola conquered the ruler of Java and brought within his control Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula.

Moti Chandra

Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India p. 213.

Maritime Empire

The Cholas are also noteworthy as the one dynasty of India, which, if only for a while adopted a maritime policy, expanding their power by sea. Under the great Chola emperor Rajaraja I (985-1014) and Rajendra I (1012-1044), first Ceylon was conquered and then the whole eastern seaboard of India as far as Ganga. Finally under Rajendra, a great naval expedition sailed across the Bay of Bengal and occupied strategic points in Sumatra, Malaya and Burma. This Chola maritime empire, the only instance of an Indian Overseas expansion by force of arms, was not an enduring one.

A. L. Basham

A Cultural History of India p. 57.

This connection between both sides of the Bay of Bengal was so important that, in the eleventh century A.D., it induced the Chola kings Rajaraja and Rajendra to undertake demonstrations of their sea-power to the direction of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, with the probable objective of securing a commercial monopoly rather than the acquisition of territory. It is not difficult, therefore to find explanation for the presence of a Chola element in many South-East Asian Arts and Architecture.

Alastair Lamb

History of Indian Culture p. 450.

chola Lake

The naval achievements of the Cholas reached its climax during the reign of Rajaraja, the great and his successor. Not only were the Coromandel and Malabar coasts controlled by them but the Bay of Bengal became a Chola lake.

R. Sathianathier

The Struggle for Empire p. 251.

Coins of Rajaraja

Coins of Rajaraja

The Cholas issued coins in four metals. They are made out of gold (Madai), silver (Vellikkasu), Copper (seppukkasu) and Brass or alloy (Ezhakkasu).

Madais (Gold)

There are Madais of Raja Raja-I, of almost pure gold which are usually found in South India and the island of Ceylon and resemble Kahavanuva corns. The gold coins of Raja Raja found in India are of inferior gold, but are of better workmanship.

Another type of gold coins are known as Pon (Gold). Some of them are called Madurantaka-Deva-Madai and is mentioned in the thirty first year (A.D. 1016) of Raja Raja-I and it has to be inferred it must have been issued originally by his predecessor Madurantaka Uttama Chola.

Half of this Madai was Raja Raja kasu, issued apparently by Raja Raja-I.

Kasus (Silver)

A silver kasu of Raja Raja-I with the standing king obverse and seated king with a seated tiger under his left arm. was also issued in Ceylon. It occurs either inferior silver or copper, silver plated.

Seppukkasu

Copper kasus in the name of Raja Raja-I are found both in India as well as in Ceylon which are struck with dies of better workmanship. They are on broader and more uniformly circular flans. They can be distinguished without much difficulty as the tall temple lamp (kuttuvilakku) usually seen on the side of the standing king, on the obverse, beyond the fire altar on

which he is making an offering with his right hand, is a fish figured in a vertical position with head uppermost.

Ezhakkasu

Kasus in brass or an alloy resembles brass, are quite often found. The name of the coin has been interpreted as the coin that was in currency in the Chola realm of Ezham i.e., Ceylon.

The Nagari (script) legend on the Chola coins seem to appear first under Raja Raja-I replacing Grantha (script) legends of the earlier period of the woodcut of Uttama Chola's gold coin may be the result of North Indian Saiva influences beginning to operate in the Chola court.

The coins bearing the name Raja Raja very considerable as some are on flans with both faces flat while others are of smaller diameter with both faces convex. The designs appear to deteriorate in the later coins and there is a possibility that coins bearing the name of Raja Raia were struck over a long period by many of the rajas.

C. H. Biddulph

Coins of the Cholas, pp. 17-20.

Art and Architecture of
the Cholas

Dravidian Architecture

The Southern developments of Indian architecture may be called as the Dravidian style of architecture.

Jas Burgess

*India Its Epigraphy. Antiquities. Archaeology.
Numismatics and Architecture, p. 170.*

Dravidian Style of Architecture

The classic examples are the great *Vimanas* at Tanjore built by Rajarajadeva Cola about 1000 A.D., and at Gangaikondapuram, built by his son Rajendra Cola about 1025. The former consists of the temple proper, two gopurams and another small shrine; everything else, and particular the Subrahmaniya temple, is later. The *Vimana* is actually as well as relatively to the temple adjuncts, of enormous size: grandeur is achieved with very little loss of simplicity. The straight sided square pyramid of the tower rises in fourteen storeys, each decorated with pancarams, and the whole is surmounted by a *demo*: the lower storeys and the body of the temple are almost equal in elevation. All the decoration is subordinate to the outline of the main form.

Peculiarities characteristic of this stage in the Dravidian evolution include to very large abacus of the capital, the simple angular form of the bracket, the decorative pilaster between the niches, the development of the old niche-reliefs into full-round statues, and the development of the *makara-torana* (the *makaras* still with pendent foliated tails) towards the later circular glory (Tiruvasi).

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

History of Indian and Indonesian Art p. 122.

Dravidian Architecture

The Dravidian art presents to us a very interesting and very rare picture of an architecture which remained isolated for more than thirteen centuries, which borrowed nothing from the foreign arts, but which varied continually by the path of natural evolution in such a way that one could follow its modifications from one country to another.

On the whole in the South of India, every epoch has been marked by a definite style, which is explained by the style of the preceding epoch and which serves to explain the style of the following epoch.

Jouveau Dubreuil

Dravidian Architecture, p. 5.

Architectural Features

The accession of Rajaraja I, crucial no doubt politically, seems to mark no clear division in the history of Chola art. The monuments of his reign are an integral part of the Phase III style; they are, indeed, its final expression. Even the great Rajarajeswara Temple itself, for all its scale and majesty introduces no new architectural feature, except the corbel with tenon-like projection, a dull thing compared with the earlier involuted angular corbel. The sculptural style also of Rajaraja I's reign retains the taut forms and inner tension of the Sembiyan Mahadevi image. This is clear on the Rajarajeswara Temple and even more on what is perhaps the finest monument of the reign sculpturally, the Uttara Kailasa shrine in the Panchanadisvara temple at Tiruvaliyaru.

Douglas Barrett

Early Cola Bronzes, p. 17.

The Chola Art

The Chola Art is characterised by a massive grandeur. The huge structures were decorated with minute sculptures involving immense labour and infinite pains. Fergusson very aptly

remarked that the Chola artists conceived like giants and finished like jewellers. A new development which modified Dravidian architecture in later times, was gradually taking place in Chola art. It was the addition of a huge gateway, called *Gopuram*, to the enclosure of the temple

B. Luniya

Evolution of Indian Culture, p. 272.

Chola Architecture

The best known examples of Chola architecture are the huge temples of Tanjore and Gangaikondacholapuram. Their design pleases the eye because, the lofty tower over the shrine dominates the whole composition.

Vincent A. Smith

The Oxford History of India, p. 227.

Cholas. The Great Builders

The Chola power reached its zenith under Rajaraja, the great (A.D. 985-1014) and his son Rajendra Chola (A.D. 1012-1044) and it is to these two monarchs that we owe two supreme creations of the *Dravida* temple style. Conscious of their unrivalled supremacy and vast resources, these two monarchs set about erecting two stupenduous monuments as lithic testimonies, so to say, to their religious devotion and dignified majesty. The first of these was built at Tanjore, the seat of Chola sovereignty, by Rajaraja the great, and is known as the Brihadisvara, other-wise called Rajarajeswara after its royal builder. According to the temple records the construction was begun some time about A.D. 1003 and completed in A.D. 1010.

The Brihadisvara temple at Tanjore is one of the boldest and most daring conceptions of *Dravida* architecture. No less impressive is the architectural treatment of the whole. There is a clarity in the disposition of its parts, each organically related to the other. This coupled with a correct sense of decorative

scheme, leads to the creation of a superb monument distinguished alike for its rhythm, poise and dignity.

S. K. Saraswathi

The Struggle for the Empire, pp. 618-619

In these two eminent productions of the two greatest monarchs of the Chola dynasty, the *Dravida* temple style reaches its supreme expression. In the mighty sweep of the Tanjore *vimana* there has been achieved a complete balance between stupenduous architectural mass and aspiring verticality. Here the form dominates the composition, all ornament, however exuberant, being subordinated and complementary to it.

Ibid, p. 621.

Raja Rajeswaram Temple
at Thanjavur

Temples of the Chola Emperors

The highest expression of this new style was the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjore which echoes the earlier features.

The strong masculine force of the rectangular contours of the Tanjore temple of Brihadisvara and the martial figures of men and gods that make up its reliefs contrast with the feminine grace of the rounded contours of the huge Brihadisvara temple by Rajendra I at Gangaikonda Cholapuram.

(Ed.) Marie Bussagli

Encyclopaedia of World Art, Vol. 2,
Dravidian Art p. 450.

Symbols of Supremacy

The temples had their secular symbolism in that they were monuments of royal grandeur. The Chola temples certainly could claim to be such symbols.

Romila Thapar

A History of India Vol. I, p. 220.

Temple at Tanjore

Of this period, there is a beautiful temple at Tanjore built by Rajaraja, the Chola Ruler.

Jawaharlal Nehru

Glimpses of World History, p. 127

In Southern India, the most important of the earlier Mediaeval temples is the great Saiva shrine at Tanjore, an imposing

and consistently planned building, with a high pyramidal tower rising over the main shrine.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

Introduction to Indian Art, p. 60.

The Great Temple

The magnificent temple at his (Rajaraja's) capital Tanjore, built by his command, the walls of which are engraved with the story of his victories, as recorded in the 26th Year of his reign, stands to this day as a memorial of Rajaraja's brilliant career.

Vincent A. Smith

The Early History of India, p. 480.

Touch-Stone of Dravidian Intelligence

The Great Temple at Tanjore is the touch-stone of Dravidian intelligence and the marvellous work of Engineering skill.

Ency. of Britannica

Vol 4, p. 436; (2nd ed.)

The Tamil races were perhaps the greatest temple builders in the world...the great Pagoda in Tanjore...by far the grandest temple in India.

Ency. Britannica,

Vol. 2, p. 396 (9th ed.)

The Temple at Tanjore

Unquestionably the Rajarajeswaram is the finest single creation of the Dravidian craftsmen; the Tanjore *vimana* is also a touchstone of Indian architecture as a whole.

There is voluptuousness in the later structure (Temple at Gangaikondacholapuram), the beauty of ripe femininity in contrast to the masculine strength of the earlier (Temple at Tanjore).

type. But in comparing these the two architectural productions, they present much more than a difference in kind. Stately and formal as an epic may epitomise, the Tanjore *vimana*, while the later example has all the sensuous passion of an eastern lyric, but it seems to go even deeper than that. Each is the final and absolute vision of its creator made manifest through the medium of structural form, the one symbolizing conscious might, the other sub-conscious grace, but both dictated by that "divinity which has seized the soul".

Percy Brown

Indian Architecture Vol. I, Buddhist and Hindu Periods, p. 86.

Perhaps, the greatest phase of Dravidian sculpture, both in stone and bronze was under the choias. One of the greatest architectural achievements, from the point of view of sheer size was realised during the reign of the Chola King Rajaraja the Great (King of Kings). In A. D. 1000 he erected a temple to the God Siva at Tanjore. This temple, the Rajarajeswara, was 180 feet long and had a tower which rose to 190 feet into the air. The height was achieved by a pyramidal structure, on a base 50 feet square. The top of spire was capped by a large stone, weighing 80 tons! This, surely, can be ranked amongst the greatest of the megalithic achievements. It required a ramp four miles from four miles long to get the stone into position, a gradient of approximately one in 35 feet. This, I think, gives some idea of the determination of both Chola artists and technicians in the realisation of perfection.

Michael Ridley

Oriental Art of India, p. 130

Rajarajeswara Temple

According to the Tamil inscription on its base, this stately edifice was erected C. 1000 A.D. There is evident in its regular structure a kind of orderly military genius, which has subdued

its massive vitality. It excels in its clarity of design and harmony of proportion. A completely static, solemn monumentality was intended, in contrast to the soaring uprush and overflowing ornamental energy that were to characterize the works of the periods to come.

H. Zimmer

The Art of Indian Asia p. 279

Brihadesvara Temple

In fact the Brihadesvara temple may be looked upon as creation of a particular genius, based, no doubt, on earliest proto-types, but in a sense a sole and best representative, almost of a pyramidal spire, ending in a domical roof.

Charles Fabri

An Introduction to Indian Architecture p. 32.

The marked development in Dravidian architecture that took place under the Cholas can best be appreciated from such brilliant achievements as the great Siva Temple at Tanjore and the Gangai-kondacholapuram, which was intended to outrival the Tanjore one. Both were ambitious and daring projects and magnificent achievements. The Dravidian *sikhara* is now fully evolved as may be seen from the *vimana* as the Tanjore temple which rises to an imposing height of 190 feet conveying a sense of solid strength, balance and grace. It is unquestionably, the finest single creation of Dravidian craftsman.

K. Bharatha Iyer

Indian Art : A short Introduction, p. 56

Under the immensely powerful Chola Dynasty, the eastern coast of the peninsula became the site of yet another flowering art. About A. D. 1000 at Thanjavur, the greatest of the early Chola temple was built, a stupendous pyramidal shrine, erected to Siva its tower nearly 200 feet high and crowned by an eighty-ton ornate dome-capstone.

P. S. Rawlinson

A Cultural History of India, p. 203

Undoubtedly, the most honoured place among the Chola monuments should be given to Rajarajesvara temple at Tanjore, which is a veritable treasure house of early Chola art, built in heroic proportions about A. D. 1000. It has a most stately *vimana* that rears its head high above everything that surrounds it, including the *gopuras* that are still dwarfish. Here there is a stress on the warlike and heroic aspects of Siva, e. g. as Tripurantaka, Kalantaka and Kirata.

C. Sivaramamurti

5000 Years of the Art of India, p. 251.

The size of the temple doubtless gave rise to tremendous technical problems in its execution, which have, however been met and solved with ingenuity. Only lavish expenditure (combined with the control of extravagance) by an emperor like Rajaraja could have made such an achievement possible.

K. R. Srinivasan

*Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture,
South India Lower Dravidadesa, pp. 240.*

Rajarajeswaram

This great temple, the grandest of the Chola monuments, was named Rajarajeswaram, after its builder, Rajaraja-I as the earliest inscriptions on its *Srivimana* testify.

The Rajarajeswaram, not only was a temple meant for public worship, but also served as the chapel-novel for the use of the royal family whose palace was in its vicinity. Hence, perhaps the works of fortification were added to the temple.

The Rajarajeswaram is unique in many respects. It has a well conceived unitary plan and its execution is perfect. Its plinth—*upapitham* and *adishthanam*—is high and strong and has fine mouldings which give dignity and grandeur to the whole edifice...

It is a rare feat, considering the limited technology of the age. With great engineering skill, the downward thrust of the heavy stone superstructure has been well distributed. The *Linga* is huge and it is housed in a double storeyed *garbhagraha*, supporting the upper part of the *Sri vimana*. All the members of the structure are well proportioned and there is harmony in assemblage. The steep upward sweep of the *Sri vimana* resembling *Meru*, with the needle-like stupa seems to point the devotees the path of the lap of the Lord of the Universe.

S. R. Balasubramanyam

Middle Chola Temples, pp. 14, 24 & 36

Rajaraja, the Great (985-1014) was the greatest of all the Chola emperors. Befitting his magnificent personality, he built, entirely in granite the Great Temple of Tanjore, rising about 200 feet in height. This is the tallest and the greatest stone temple of Tamil Nadu, lucidly well preserved. This seems to have been modelled on the line of Virattanesvara Temple at Thiruvadigai. But the great temple of Tanjore has been built entirely of granite, in a place where stone is very scarce. The massive superstructure of the temple is supported by two solid granite walls and the stupendous height has been achieved by corbelling an incredible feat on the part of the architecture and craftsmen of that period. The sanctum tower of the Tanjore temple was the tallest and the most magnificent piece of architecture ever built in India.

R. Nagaswamy

The Art of Tamil Nadu, p. 6.

It is the largest, highest and most ambitious production of its kind, and is a landmark of the building art in Southern India.

Edith Tomory

*Introduction to the History of Fine Arts
in India and West, p. 27.*

Rajarajeswaram

Rajaraja had many peaceful achievements to his credit also. He built the Rajeswaram, the great temple of Tanjore. It is according to experts on architecture, the most beautiful monument of Hindu architecture...It was not slave labour that created this monument.

N. Subrahmanian

History of Tamilnad, p. 184.

Forced Labour for constructing the Tanjore Temple

At Tanjore, south of Madras, the Chola King Rajaraja the great, after conquering all southern India and Ceylon, shared his spoils with Shiva by raising to him a stately temple designed to represent the generative symbol of the God.*

* ... The summit of the temple is a single block of stone twenty-five feet square and weighing some eighty tons. According to Hindu tradition it was raised into place by being drawn up an incline four miles long. Forced labour was probably employed in such works, instead of "man - enslaving machinery".

Will Durant

*The story of Civilization, Vol. I,
Our Oriental Heritage, p. 602.*

Sculptures of the Cholas

Sculptures of the Cholas

The walls of temples were covered with sculptures, first very sparingly, but increasing in number from century to century. Those of the early Chola times have the same quaint charm of a transition period as the *korai* of the Acropolis at Athens, a decadent fragility combined with a native youthfulness. For with the reign of Rajaraja-I, the Great, a revolution had set in. The divine states on the temples of Tanjur and Gangaikondacholapuram are gigantic and powerful, but also coarse and often enough dull.

Hermann Goetz

India-Five Thousand Years of Indian Art, p. 184

The stone sculpture of these Chola temples is typical of creative vitality of this last great (Chola) period of South Indian Civilization. Although parts of a vast iconographic scheme, the images on the temple facades are still worthy of analysis of individual works of arts.

As on the gateway of the Great Temple at Tanjore, we find the gods set in niches framed in engaged columns that repeat the order of the Rajarajesvara temple. The individual figures, like the Dancing Siva, are characteristically Dravidian in the suggestion of the dynamic movement and passion of Siva's Dance but even in this stone figures which is actually a high relief there is a suggestion of the boundless, whirling energy of the cosmic measure.

Benjamin Rowland

The Art and Architecture of India, p. 190.

It achieves an evanescent earthliness of lasting dignity during the Chola period. The relation of body to the garments and jewellery is wholly organic and supple.

Stella Kramrisch

Indian Sculpture, p. 119.

All Chola sculptures of the tenth and eleventh centuries are endowed with a tough vitality and are modelled vigorously, but leave the surface as if in a state of animated flexibility. Plastically they have relation with contemporary Deccanese sculptures, but reach a much higher level which is maintained throughout successive centuries. The Pallava idiom is here given a new interpretation in tougher and more dignified rendering of plastic mass, treated in full roundness of form and arranged in graded relief.

.. Chola stone sculptures reach the highest level of 'classical' form in an age when 'classical' values everywhere else in India were rather at a very low ebb.

Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray

The Struggle for the Empire, p. 670.

Chola Bronzes

Chola Bronzes

The real impetus to the bronzes was given by the Chola Kings in the 9th Century. This period of about five hundred years extending to the 14th Century was the heyday of these images.

“Chola” is indeed, a hall-mark of South Indian bronzes. Most of the connoisseur will agree that whereas a Pallava bronze is the rarest and the most valuable, it is the Chola figure that excels in aesthetic beauty and grace.

In the images of the Chola period, the facial expression becomes softer and more pleasant. There is a slightly more distinct modelling of the nose. The eyes are less artificially formed but the face is still round; and the lower lip rather thick and prominent. The body is somewhat slender, and more natural with broader shoulders and a slimmer waist line. The plasticity of the figure improve with more artistic curves and graceful folds of drapery which, although hanging freely does not protrude, but clings closely to the limbs.

D. R. Thapar

Icons in Bronzes, p. 131

Tamilnadu has made some superb contribution to the art of bronze-making. Nowhere has there been a more continuous production, sustained at a high level than in the present Thanjavur and Tiruchirapalli Districts, the ancient centres of Cola dynasty.

It is however becoming increasingly clear that the classical moment both in bronze and stone sculptures, the period of most

original achievement, lasted little more than a century and a half, from about 850 A.D. to the early decades of the 11th century A.D.

Douglas Barrett

Early Cola Bronzes, p. 7.

Chola Bronzes

It was however, in bronze sculptures that the Chola craftsmen excelled, producing images rivalling those produced anywhere in the world. These images, more than anything else, indicate the sculptural genius of the southern craftsmen.

Romila Thapar

A History of India Vol. I, p. 219.

Chola Bronzes

The most brilliance of the Chola School was the perfecting of bronze sculptures...The highest point reached by this school is of course the Nataraja with its balance, rhythm and the superb movements of the arms and the legs. The highly conventionalised language of gesture in which the south rapidly excelled and which earned the admiration of the great French Sculptor Auguste Rodin.

K. M. Munshi

Saga of Indian Sculpture, p. 28.

Nataraja Bronzes

A feature of all the bronze Natarajas hitherto mentioned with the exception of the Vridhachalam image, is the absence of Goddess Ganga in the locks. This is surprising, since she appears in the locks of atleast three of the Phase-III stone images and as early as Uma Mahesvara Temple at Konerajapuram. It is perhaps even more surprising in the light of the famous inscription in the Rajarajeswara temple at Thanjavur, which mentions a small bronze Nataraja dedicated in or before the 29th

year of Rajaraja-I (1014 A. D.) "One solid image of Adavallar, having four divine arms, the Goddess Gangabhatarikai on the braided hair, nine braids of hair, and seven *pumalai* (flower garland" etc.

Douglas Barrett

Early Cola Bronzes. p. 31.

The Cholas, great builders of lithic monumets, produced metal images of worthy of these shrines. A flawless and most pleasing early Nataraja dated about 1000 A. D., was acquired by the Dick Fund of the Metropolitan Museum is noteworthy. The sculptor Rodin stated that the Tiruvalangadu Nataraja is the most perfect representation of rhythmic movement in the world.

C. Sivaramamurti

The Art of India, p. 268.

The image of Nataraja can well contest for superiority in gracefulness with the gestures of *Venus de Medici*, which defends its charms by the arm, whilst Siva does the same by an ingenious gesture.

Auguste Rodin

*Ars Asiatica, Vol. III, Tr. in English
by Kalidas Nag, Rupam, 1921. p. 12.*

In the Chola period (10th to 13th centuries) the same power of symbolism yielded the magnificent bronze image of Nataraja; the dancing Shiva. An intense dynamism pulsates through the whole figure. Nevertheless, it is almost still in its classical balance, stable like the world with its gyrating galaxies and island Universe. In this great metaphor, the Indian mind accepted becoming as real an aspect of God as withdrawn, transcendental being.

Krishna Chaitanya

A profile of Indian Culture, p. 179.

...The Cholas are perhaps more artistically remarkable for the the extraordinary school of bronze sculpture which they patronized, and which has continued and evolved down to the present day. It produced icon, ranging from almost life-size to a few inches high, of Hindu deities. The largest and most important of them were sometimes dedicated as 'portraits' of members of the royal family, in the guise of Gods. Many were meant to be carried in procession, so they are modelled completely in three dimensions, with slender, elegantly rounded backs in fluid postures...This whole bronze are deeply influenced the arts of areas of South-East Asia, where south Indian culture made its impact, especially Ceylon, Thailand and the Kingdom of Modern Java.

P. S. Rawson

A Cultural History of Indian, p. 208-209.

Like many warlike peoples, they (Cholas) were patrons of the arts. They built large temples and palaces and and commissioned numerous sculptures in metal and stone. During the reign of Kulottunga Chola in the 11th Century, many fine bronze sculptures were cast. A number of these masterpieces are known today and provide us with some of the finest examples of Indian metal sculpture.

Michael Ridley

Oriental Art, p. 32.

Paintings in the Rajarajeswaram

The Chola paintings reveal to us the life, the grandeur and the culture of the Chola times. Special stress is laid on Nataraja in his Sabha or hall of dance as a favourite deity of the Cholas. The military vision and the ideals of the Cholas in general, and of Rajaraja in particular are symbolised in the great master-piece of Tirupurantaka.

C. Sivaramamurti

South Indian Paintings p. 88.

If expression has to be taken as the criterion, by which a great art has to be judged, it is here in abundance in their Chola paintings. The sentiment of heroism - *Vira rasa* - is clearly seen in Tripurantaka's face and form; the the figures and attitude of the Rakshasas determined to fight Siva and the wailing tear-stained faces of their women clining to them in despair, suggest an emotion of pity, karuna - and terror, Raudra; Siva as Dakshnamurti seated calm and serene, is the mirror of peace. Thus the Chola painting attained a classic grandeur in the hands of the artists.

C. Sivaramamurti

South Indian Paintings p. 89.

Chola paintings at Tanjore exchange the serenity of Ajanta for an astonishing dynamic power.

Krishna Chaitanya

A Profile of Indian Culture, p. 108.

The Thanjavr temple is an architectural marvel. The splendour of its architecture overwhelms any visitor. The sculptures, so delicately carved, are completely dwarfed, restricted by their

niches and are lost in the grandeur of the architecture. All that one sees is the harmony and the rhythm of the great construction. The paintings of Saint Sundara are something unique. Though portrayed on a wall inside with the onlooker having very little space, the whole paintings emerges from the wall and seems to encompass the entire earth and sky and at the same time ascend towards the heaven.

Raja Raja and Karur Devar, the court poet are depicted in another panel is one of the rare portraits in Tamil Nadu Art. This painting pictures Raja Raja Chola and his poet laureate Karur Devar. It is an important document of the eleventh century. The King is portrayed obviously visiting the temple with his senior Court poet, his eyes filled with wonder at the achievements of the painters and builders. The characterization of the King as a dreamer, and yet an activist, shows the talent of the painter for recreation of inner mood, through clever brushwork.

R. Nagaswamy

The Splendour of Tamil Nadu, p. 112.

Had Tamil been encouraged to a greater extent in the centres of higher education, by the Chola monarchs it would have assisted in producing a far more vigorous intellectual tradition.

Romila Thapar

A History of India, p. 213.



