

## **The Genesis Of Perumukkal Mukyachalesvara Temple Gleaned From Ephigraphs**

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Perumukkal is located 12 kilometres (7.5 miles) east of Tindivanam and situated in Villupuram District. Perumukkal is a small hamlet and prominent ancient Saivite center which is enshrined with the Mukyachalesvara temple. From time immemorial Perumukkal is a place of attraction to various devotees and archaeologists.<sup>1</sup> Perumukkal, was a part of *Oymanadu*, which is a jewel of *Thondaimandalam* region.<sup>2</sup> The tiny village occupies by huge hillock and the Mukyachalesvara Temple, located atop of the Perumukkal hillock. Etymologically, the expression Perumukkal is derived from the combination of words namely Peru + Mukkiya + Kal "Peru" means "Gigantic" or "Big." "Mukkiya" means "Important" or Significant "Kal" connotes a "hillock" or "Mountainous region". Therefore the place name Perumukkal meaning a significant Saivite centre on huge hillock. The name Mukyachalesvarar of the main deity is derived from the combination of words Mukya + Asalam + Isvarar. The expression "Mukya" means "Important" or "Significant" "Asalam" means "Hillock" or "Immovable mountainous Region" "Isvarar" connotes "Lord Siva". Therefore the principal deity name Mukyachalesvarar meaning Lord Siva a significant deity enshrined in huge hillock.

Besides, from the *Sangam* age, the village came to be known in different names such as "Perumukkal" and "Gankaikondacholanallur".<sup>3</sup> The *Sthalapurana* of Perumukkal says that the worship of Mukyachalesvara at Perumukkal is equal to the worship of Lord Siva in Kailasa. This Perumukkal temple is a treasure house of inscriptions. The

inscriptions of the Cholas, the Kadavarayas, the Pandyas, the Sambuvarayas and the Vijayanagar are found in the temple of Perumukkal.<sup>4</sup> These inscriptions are the primary sources of information to reconstruct the history of Perumukkal village and Mukyachalesvara temple. Most of the epigraphs mention the munificent endowments and lavish gifts made over to the temple in the form of lands by auction,<sup>5</sup> villages,<sup>6</sup> gold,<sup>7</sup> sheep,<sup>8</sup> cows,<sup>9</sup> lamp<sup>10</sup> and various other articles<sup>11</sup> for its upkeep and maintenance.

The donors mentioned in the inscriptions are mainly the rulers,<sup>12</sup> the officials,<sup>13</sup> the village headmen, the common men from various communities, women, royal women, *devaradiyars* and some individuals from various surrounding villages including Perumukkal.<sup>14</sup> The various names of the presiding deity of the temple referred to in the inscriptions are Tiruvanmigai Isvaramudaiyar,<sup>15</sup> and Tiruvanmigai Isvaramudaiya Mahadevar.<sup>16</sup> Aludai Thiruvanmisvaramudaiyar, Aludaiyar Thiruvamisvaramudaiya Mahadevar and Thiruvanmisvaramudaiyar, whereas the present name Mukyachalesvarar. Though the temple located as a tiny part of *Oymanadu* under a jewel of *Thondaimandalam* among the prominent dynasties of Tamil Country, the Cholas, especially the later Cholas, rendered meritorious service not only to maintain the divinity of the temple but also for its maintenance.<sup>17</sup> This paper portrays to trace the origin of the temple construction by stone gleaned from the lithic records.

Vijayalaya Chola (846-881 C.E.) vanquished the chieftain Muttaraiyar and laid the foundation of the later Chola dynasty at Tanjore<sup>18</sup> during the middle of the 9th century C.E. Aditya I Chola succeeded Vijayalaya Chola in 871 C.E.<sup>19</sup> After the death of Aditya I Chola, his son Parantaka I Chola ascended the throne<sup>20</sup> Parantaka I Chola was succeeded by Gandaraditya Chola.<sup>21</sup> Until Sembian Mahadevi gave birth

to a son, Gandaraditya had no issue for a long time, Madurantaka Uttama Chola. Gandaraditya Chola died in 957 C.E. when Madurantaka Uttama Chola was a child. Sembian Mahadevi, who had immense love and affection for her son, declined the throne for him. Sembian Mahadevi decided to bring up her son Madurantaka Uttama Chola.<sup>22</sup> Gandaraditya's younger brother Arinjayan ( 957 C.E.) succeeded Gandaradityan and became the ruler of Chola Country.<sup>23</sup> Arinjayan also died in the same year.<sup>24</sup> After Arinjayan his son Parantaka II alias Sundara Chola ascended the Chola throne from 957 to 970 C.E. No inscription of his period is available at Perumukkal temple. Thereafter Uttama Chola ruled over the Chola Country from 970 to 985 C.E.<sup>25</sup>

The Chola Empire, thus expanded, was later ruled by the celebrated Chola Kings up to the end of the 13th century C.E. among them Uttama Chola (970-985 C.E.), Kulottunga I (1070- 1122 C.E.), Vikrama Chola (1118- 1135 C.E.), Kulottunga II, (1133-1150 C.E.), Rajaraja II (1146-1173 C.E.), Rajadhiraja II (1163-1178 C.E.) and Kulottunga III (1178-1218 C.E.) deserve special mention Perumukkal Mukyachalesvara temple has inscriptions of these rulers. An inscription of Uttama Chola is found in Mukyachalesvara temple at Perumukkal and it is the earliest available lithic record of this temple.

This most ancient inscription found in this Anjaneya temple is issued during the time of Uttama Chola in his sixteenth regnal year 985 C.E. This inscription is copied by the State Archaeology from the separate Anjaneya temple which is housed on the southern outer side of the main shrine premise. This most interesting inscription gives valuable information regarding the date of the temple construction with stone by one Ambalavan Gandaradittan who may be the higher Administrative official or Regent of the Cholas in Oymanadu region.

From this lithic record it is infer that it is an authentic information pertaining to the genesis of this Mukyachalesvara temple in particular. From this it is surmise that the Mukyachalesvara temple might have been existed as brick structure upto the period of Uttama Chola. Uttama Chola, after ascended the Chola throne, in his 16<sup>th</sup> regnal year dated 985 C.E. might have been changed this Mukthiyachalesvara temple into stone structure and it is was done by his Chola Administrative Regent of Oymanadu region viz., by Ambalavan Gandaradittan.

In the concluding part of this paper it is surmise that Sembian Mahadevi the Chola queen after the death of Gandaraditya was associated and dedicated her life with spiritual activities. She renovated several old brick temples and changed into new stone structure. In this context one Ambalavanan Gandaradityan who is identified as a Chola Regent of *Oymanadu* region perhaps changed this brick structure into stone structure by the instigation of the Chola Queen Sembian Mahadevi, who is the Patron of Medieval Saivites temples. This small stone structure of this temple might have enlarged in the subsequent period. Moreover this earliest available lithic record of this temple found copied and published by State Archaeology in their publication mentioned that this unique lithic record placed in the Anjaneya temple of the same premise and stood as a testimonial regarding the spiritual activities of Sembian Mahadevi.<sup>26</sup>

In fine this paper clearly reveals the fact that this Mukyachalesvara temple might have been changed into stone structure during the sixteenth regnal year 985 C.E. of Uttama Chola by Ambalavanan Gandaradityan the Chola regent of *Oymanadu* by the efforts of the Sembian Mahadevi. Thus the Chola queen was responsible for the transition of brick temple into stone structure during the medieval *Thamizhagam*.

**References**

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