

HINDUISM IN SRI LANKA (CIRCA A.D. 1000-1250); INDIAN INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAIVISM

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During the Polonnaruwa period which witnessed the last and perhaps the most remarkable phase of constructional and cultural activity in the north-central plain of the island, Hinduism and Hindu institutions were in a flourishing state. Political and military events in the island and the establishment of dynastic ties with the ruling families of Kalinga and the Tamil kingdoms of South India resulted in Hindu influence in the country on a scale and intensity never before known. The Hindu culture which developed in the island during this period was largely derived from South India.

In the Tamil country the process of the amalgamation of the elements of Sanskrit culture with the indigenous Tamil tradition which had commenced many centuries earlier reached its culmination under Chola rule. The synthetic religious tradition of the Chola period was a harmonious blend of the devotional theism of the Saivite Nāyanmār and Vaishnavite Ālvār with the philosophic and ritual tradition of the Vedas and Āgama. The temple became the focal point of religious and cultural expression and activity. It also became linked to the productive processes and the scheme of social organization. In monumental architecture and metal casting South Indian craftsmen attained a level of development which, in some ways, was never surpassed. Such developments led to the composition of treatises on temple architecture and iconography written in Sanskrit as they were intended for use beyond the confines of the Tamil country. The proliferation of images of deities under the influence of Hindu mythology and their consecration for worship in temples, the elevation of the Tamil saints and mystics to divine status, the installation of their images in shrines for worship, the provision made for the regular recital of Tamil devotional hymns to the accompaniment of instrumental music, the regular chanting of Vedic hymns and the performance of rituals by Brahmin functionaries and the organization of religious services and temple affairs on a more or less formal basis became established as the principal characteristics of the religious tradition centering round the temple. This development led to social attitudes and norms oriented towards the preservation of religious and cultural institutions. Elements of this religio-cultural tradition were introduced into the island in substantial measure among the Hindu communities which during this period grew in strength and numbers.

The period selected for discussion here comprise two sub-periods: the period of Chola rule which began around A. D. 993 and lasted until 1050 and that of the Sinhalese monarchy which was restored by Vijayabāhu I (1055-1110) who defeated the Cholas in 1070 and established himself at Polonnaruwa as the ruler of Lanka. Rajaraṭa, the northern part of the island, was overrun by the Cholas around the 8th year of Rājārāja I (985-1016), made a province of his empire, and named *Mummudiccholamaṇḍalam* after one of his numerous epithets. Another Chola expedition, in the reign of Rājendra I (1016-1044) resulted in the capture of Mahinda (982-1029) in the south-eastern principality of Rohaṇa. Polonnaruwa which had served as a military out-post in the earlier period became the principal seat of Chola administration and was renamed Jananāthamaṅgalam. The areas that come under Chola

rule were divided into units called *Vaḷanādu* and administered mostly by officials sent periodically from the Chola country. South Indian warriors who had been sent to the island in the Chola armies remained there in substantial numbers and were to become a significant element in the Tamil settlements. The Ayyāvōḷe and other organized groups of South Indian traders who secured for themselves a substantial share of the internal and foreign trade of the island established a number of commercial outposts and settlements in different localities of the north-central plain. The growth of the Dravidian elements in the population of towns and military outposts was accompanied by the establishment of Hindu religious and cultural institutions.

Inscriptions and architectural remains show that a number of Hindu temples were set up at Polonnaruwa, Mantai, Padaviya and other sites which served as administrative, military and commercial outposts. In Polonnaruwa, which was the principal seat of Chola administration, the remains of no less than sixteen Hindu temples have so far been brought to light.¹ Some of them were constructed during the period of Chola rule. Identification of Chola temples has been possible only in cases of architectural remains where inscriptions have been found. Siva Devalas No. 2 and 5 at Polonnaruwa have been easily identified as Chola monuments on the basis of epigraphic evidence.

Siva Devale No. 2 at Polonnaruwa, called *Vānavanmādevi-Īsvaram* after the queen mother of Rājendra I though of modest proportions is an elegant temple constructed with dressed slabs of granite boulders. It is the only architectural monument of stone construction at Polonnaruwa which has remained more or less in its original form up to our own times and the fact that it has withstood the effects of the tropical sun, winds and rain testifies to the high quality of its workmanship. The earliest inscription found in this temple is dated early in the reign of Rājendra I². A fairly long inscription dated in the reign of Adhirājendra found engraved on a wall of this temple records the arrangements made in connection with an endowment made to it. A certain Chola Pallavaraiyan, a dignitary of high rank, who hailed from Maṅkalappāḍi in Virpeḍḍu nāḍu endowed the temple with a lamp and five gold coins.³ The lamp had to be maintained from the interest on the money deposited. A number of temple functionaries such as *Panmahesvarak kaṅkāṇi*, *kramavittar*, *bhattar*, *sivabrāhmaṇar*, officiating priests, drummers and temple dancers are mentioned in connection with the endowment. All of such functionaries collectively accepted responsibility for the endowment. Such a procedure presupposes that the temple functionaries were closely bound together despite differences in social status and rank. The details found in this epigraph testify to the fact that the temple of *Vānavanmādevi-Īsvaram* was provided with adequate arrangements for regularly conducting rituals and religious services as well as for the management of its affairs. It may justifiably be assumed that the other important Hindu shrines established by the Cholas, about the administrative management of which details have not been preserved, were also provided with similar arrangements.

Another important Chola monument at Polonnaruwa Siva Devale No 5 which was designed as a large structure had a *mahāmaṇḍapa* in front in addition to the usual components, *garbhagr̥ha*, *antarāla*, *ardha maṇḍapa* and the *maṇḍapa*.⁴ The *garbhagr̥ha* of this temple which was constructed mainly of brick was surmounted by a massive *vimāna*. It was

found to have fallen on the ground when the architectural remains of this temple were recognized and identified by H. C. P. Bell. There are strong grounds for holding that the Siva Devale No. 5 was designed to be a sepulchral monument. Eight pots containing human bones were exhumed along with the walls both inside and outside the *mahāmaṇḍapa*⁵. In South India some of the early Chōla temples, Vijayālaya Cholesvaram, Ādītyesvaram and Arinjikai-isvaram were constructed as sepulchral monuments. Human skeletal remains have been found underneath the sanctum of such monuments which were generally referred, to as *pallippatai* in epigraphic records.⁶ The Siva Devale No. 5 at Polonnaruwa, presumably, was a similar monument - a *pallippatai*. A few short inscriptions recovered from the debris of its remains record the names of a few Chola dignitaries who were, presumably closely associated with the foundation and construction of this monument.⁷ Srī Mokaṇūruṭaiyān, Tiruppuvanatēvan, Tiyaḱacintāmaṇi mūventavēlan of Tillai, Pancanadivāṇan, Srī Nallūruṭaiyān, Maṅkalappāṭi vēlan and Chola Pallavaraiyan are the names of chieftains recorded in the inscriptions. Siva Deale No. 5 is most notable on account of the impressive number of bronzes and other statuary unearthed from its premises. In all, eight items of statuary in stone and nineteen bronzes have been found. They include the figures of Naṭarāja, Gaṇesa, Viṣṇu, Daksināmūrtti, Kāli, Sapta matris - the seven divine mothers, the seven Śaktis and the Nāyanmār.⁸ Some of these bronzes are of exceptionally high quality and on the basis of these and other similar finds it may be postulated that a provincial school of bronze casting which owed its origin and inspiration to Chola craftsmen flourished in the island since the eleventh century. Siva Devale No. 6 was yet another Chola monument within the city of Polonnaruwa as suggested by the palaeography of an engraving on a bronze bell recovered from its ruins. The name Srī Aṅpillai Perumaḷ is impressed on this item in characters which could be assigned to the late tenth or early eleventh century. Unless of course one could imagine that a bell produced during the period of Chola occupation and obtained elsewhere was installed for use in a monument established later, it may be assumed that this bell and temple amidst the remains of which it was found belong to the same period. There were probably other Hindu temples constructed by the Cholas at Polonnaruwa which could not be identified and precisely dated for want of adequate archaeological information.

Mātoṭṭam, renamed Rājarājapuram, was another Chola stronghold where temples were constructed during the period of Chola rule. Rājarāja-Īsvaram and Tiruvirām-Īsvaram are institutions about which some details have been recorded in donative inscriptions that have come to light. The first of these was established and endowed by a Chola dignitary, Tāḷikuran, the *Utaiyān* of Ciṟukurranallūr in Kṣatriyasikhāmaṇi Vaḷanaṭu which was a unit of Cholamaṅṭalam.⁹ The endowment in the form of a devadāna included lands to the east of the street of Rājarājapuram and to the south of the smiths' quarter with the stipulation that the house, mansion and garden belonging to a local resident named Kunran Tāman and situated within it were excluded from the grant. The transfer of government revenues to the temple as part of the endowment is of considerable significance. The grant was made so as to include the dues on looms of weavers collected at the rate of a quarter of an *akkam* per month, tolls levied at pathways, crossings and ferries at the rate of an *akkam* on each pack of commodities and market dues on traders levied at the rate of an *akkam* for each *kaḷaṅcu* of the total value of goods purchased and sold. From the incomes obtained from

this endowment festivals were to be conducted for seven days during the course of *Visākhham* in the month of *Vaikāci* (May-June). Besides, sacred meals were to be prepared and offered twice a day with six measures of rice daily and two Brahmins who prepared sacred meals were to be supplied a daily grant of eight measures of paddy. As the epigraph refers to a *maṭapati* it may be assumed that there was a charitable institution with facilities for pilgrims attached to the temple.¹⁰ As the inscription that records this institution was recovered from Tirukkētīsvaram it is suggested that the Cholas had erected a new temple at the site of the ancient temple at Mātoṭṭam and named it as Rājarājesvaram after the Chola king in whose reign the northern part of the island was occupied. Another temple that existed at the city of Mātoṭṭam, Tiruvirāmisvaram, is referred to in an inscription of Rājendra I from the same locality. It records an endowment made to this temple by a certain Ciṛukūḷattūruṭaiyān Tevan described as a *paṇimakān* belonging to the body called *Peruntanam* in the service of the king.¹¹ The endowment made for the purpose of burning a lamp daily at twilight consisted of four gold coins deposited with three groups of traders who were established, presumably, in the neighbourhood of the temple.

One of the towns that rose to prominence during this period and developed soon as a centre of Hindu religious and cultural activity was Padaviya also known as Padī and Padonnagara. The architectural remains of five Hindu temples have been recognized within the excavated portion of this medieval town which was abandoned by the early fourteenth century to be overgrown with and obscured by the jungle. The most prominent among the Hindu temples of Padaviya was Siva Devale No. 1 constructed in the reign of Rājarāja I as evident from an inscription of his reign that has been discovered from the debris of its ruins¹². The walls and super-structures of this and other Hindu shrines of this locality had collapsed and almost disappeared long before archaeological excavations were undertaken. The Chola inscriptions recovered from the premises of Siva Devale I provide some information about its foundation and arrangements made in connection with ritual and religious services. It was named Iravikulamanikka-īsvaram after one of the many epithets of Rājarāja. The inscriptions on the foundation stones of this temple record the names of persons by whom they were laid. Nārāyaṇan Tirucciṛrampalamuṭaiyān, Varutan Tirumāl, Alakan Vattarm-ārāsavan, Alakan Vattuman, who belonged to the Ayyāvole group of merchants and Tani Appan, described as a merchant of Padaviya are specifically mentioned in this connection¹³. The general descriptions of persons involved in the matter would suggest that the shrine was established with the support of persons belonging to the official and mercantile classes residing in the town. The inscription of Rājarāja while mentioning the name of the temple records the endowments made by a number of individuals belonging to official, military and mercantile classes. The donations recorded in this epigraph consisted of twelve bronze lamps of two categories, some gold and a number of cows. Maruṅkuruṭaiyān, Palaippakkam Uṭaiyān and the Nānādesi merchant Konnāvil Veṅkāṭan were among the principal donors.¹⁴

The recently discovered inscription from Kantaḷay dated in the reign of the prince Chola Lankesvaratēvar testifies that there was a brahmadeya settlement called Rājarāja Caturvedi maṅkalam at Kantaḷay during the early eleventh century. It is said to have been a unit of Rājendra Chola Vaḷanāṭu otherwise called Rājaviccātira Vaḷanāṭu.¹⁵ This brahmadeya, like the ones in South India, had an assembly for the regulation of its affairs as

suggested by the expression *peruñkuripperumakkal* occurring in the text of the epigraph. The members of the assembly had concerned themselves with an irrigation channel called *Vikrama Cholapperuvāykkāl* but the precise nature of their undertaking cannot be ascertained as the relevant portion of the text is lost. The epigraph makes mention of a temple of Kāḷi situated within the brahmadeya settlement about which no other information has hitherto surfaced. The general references to the brahmadeya and its activity suggests that it was a moderately sized settlement consisting of a number of brahmin families. As will be seen subsequently this brahmadeya continued to flourish until the end of the Polonnaruwa period. The Saivite temple of *Ten Kailasām* referred to in an inscription of the reign of Vijayabāhu as one situated within the brahmadeya of Kantalāy may have been constructed during the period of Chola rule. A few fragments of statuary and debris are the only architectural remains of this temple.

Uttamachola-śvaram and Paṇḍita Chola-śvaram are two other Saivite temples whose names have been preserved to posterity by inscriptions. A Tamil inscription at the entrance of a modern Buddhist monastery at Ātakada in the Kadavat Korale in the North Central Province dated in the twentieth year of a Chola King whose name is not mentioned records an endowment made by a certain Arankan Irāmesan to the temple of Uttamachola-śvaram¹⁶ The endowment consisted of a *veli* of land at Kallaiyil Teliyalperu, one *nontā viḷakku*, twenty cows, five *canti viḷakku* and a plot with fifty coconut palms. Uttama Chola-śvaram, like many similar monuments, has disappeared without leaving any trace even of its ground plan. There was at Mādirigiriya, which was renamed as *Nittavinotapuram* after one of the epithets of Rājarāja, a Saivite temple in the eleventh century. It was called Paṇḍita Chola-śvaram after one of the many titles of Rājendra Chola I. An inscription set up in the second year of Rājendra II records the endowment of a lamp by a certain Pi(ṭān Cara)van for the merit of his son Nārāyaṇan.¹⁷

The ancient temple of Konesvaram on the summit of the rock at Trincomalee received Chola support and patronage as suggested by two recently discovered inscriptions from Mānāñkēṇi and Nilāvēli. The fragmentary inscription from Mānāñkēṇi dated in a regnal year of the Chola prince Ilañkesvaratēvar who was consecrated as ruler of Lanka, mentions Maccakēsvaram which was another name for Konesvaram.¹⁸ The missing portion of this epigraph probably contained the details of some grant made by the Chola prince to this temple. The fragmentary epigraph from Nilāvēli which could be assigned to the Chola period on palaeographic and other considerations records a grant of 250 *vēli* of irrigable and non-irrigable land in the localities called Kirikāma and Kirikaṇṭa Kirikāma to Maccakesvaram, the temple of Mahādeva on the promontory of Tirukoṇamālai.¹⁹ The *Koṇēcar kalvēṭṭu* which records the traditions concerning the temple of Konesvaram seems to perpetuate in a confused manner, some of the Chola activities in relation to that temple.

Hinduism and Hindu institutions continued to make considerable progress even in the period that followed the restoration of Sinhalese monarchy under Vijayabāhu I in 1070. The support extended by the rulers, the growing strength of Hindu communities in the island facilitated by further migrations of Hindus from South India and the general prosperity

among the Tamil mercantile, military and artisan communities who held positions of considerable influence in society had contributed towards this development. The remarkable development of Hindu culture was also a reflection of the progress in constructional, artistic and cultural activity generated by agricultural prosperity in the north-central plain to an extent never before attained. Archaeological evidence reveals that society in this wide area, which was the most developed and favoured one in the island, was no longer homogeneous. Architectural and iconographic remains and inscriptions show that the population in important towns like Polonnaruwa, Padaviya, Kantalāy, Pānduvasnuvara and in some other localities in Rajarāṣa and in the northern part of *Dakṣiṇadesa* was a mixed one - Sinhalese and Tamil. The art and architecture of this period such as they appear to have been from extant remains, represent two cultures Buddhist and Hindu - which flourished together and in general harmony.

Hinduism and Buddhism as religious traditions, especially at a popular level, were not mutually exclusive or antagonistic, and generally could and did co-exist in harmony. Even a zealous Buddhist ruler could worship Hindu deities and support Hindu institutions and such action on his part would not be regarded as detrimental to Buddhist interests. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries court life at Polonnaruwa was saturated with Hindu influences. The dynastic marriages contracted with the Pāṇḍyas of South India and the ruling house of Kalinga further exposed the Sinhalese court to Hindu religious and cultural influences. Indian princes and princesses, especially the ones from Kalinga, who had been accommodated at the Sinhalese court continued to follow their traditional ways. Hindu practices were adopted at the court and ideas and conceptions expressed in Hindu treatises came to be accepted and assimilated into the corpus of Sinhalese tradition. The increasing exposure of the court to Hindu influences and their assimilation to some extent generated some degree of tension and a sense of conflict among the court circles. The manner in which they were resolved or exploited depended on the personality and outlook of individual rulers. An episode recored in the *Mahāvamsa* in connexion with the behaviour of Tilokasundari, the chief queen of Vijayabāhu I, suggests that influential members of the court had at times conflicting views and ways about religious observances which on occasion proved to be irreconcilable. She is said to have been publicly rebuked by the king on representations made by members of the Sangha for her ways were considered to have been inimical to Buddhist sentiment.²⁰ Although Vijayabāhu I is represented in traditional history as a great patron of Buddhism and espoused its cause with partisan zeal, Hinduism and Hindu institutions seem to have continued to flourish under his rule as suggested by epigraphic evidence. The Pālamottai inscription dated in his 42nd year records an endowment made by a Brahmin widow to the temple of Ten Kailasam otherwise called Vijayarāja-Īsvaram at Kantalāy which was known as Vijayarāja-Caturvedimangalam.²¹ Both the Saivite temple and the Brahmadeya within which it was situated were significantly named after Vijayabāhu. As this Brahmadeya had existed earlier with the name Rājarāja Caturvedimangalam it may be assumed that the temple of Ten Kailasam was a Chola monument which like the Brahmadeya was renamed after Vijayabāhu I during his reign.

The Brahmin lady, Nangaiccāṇi, made a substantial endowment to this temple for the merit of her deceased husband Yagña Kramavittan and the arrangements made in that connection brought to light some important details regarding the affairs of the temple. A crown

of the weight of six *kaḷancu* of gold and a gold chain of three *kaḷancu* were donated by her to the shrine. A gold coin of one *kācu* was deposited for the lighting of a lamp. Besides the compound interest on eight *kācu* deposited by her was to be used for maintaining a flower garden in the temple premises. She also deposited twenty-three *kācu* for the maintenance of seven *devadāsīs* who had to perform certain services in the temple. The endowments were placed under the custody of the *Vēlaikkārar* of the military unit called *Vikkirama Calāmekasterinta Valaṅkai* presumably named after *Vikramabāhu* the king's son.

Vikramabāhu II and his son *Gajabāhu* II who held authority over *Rājaraṭa* in succession for 43 years until 1153 had strong leanings towards Hinduism and so had *Mānābharaṇa* I, the nephew of *Vijayabāhu* I. The expressions *Pārvatī pati dattāśir vīra mahāvraṣa* 'the great bull of a hero to whom benediction has been granted by the husband of *Pārvati*' and *Rājanārāyana*, 'a king like unto *Vishnu*', applied to *Vikramabāhu* in the Sanskrit preamble of an inscription issued in his reign unmistakably shows that he was a devotee of *Siva*.²² It has been suggested with some degree of plausibility that he was, like his son *Gajabāhu*, denied the consecration as he was not a Buddhist.²³

A Saivite temple that was found during the time of *Vikramabāhu* at *Māgala* otherwise called *Vikkiramacālamekapuram* was *Vikkiramacālamēka-isvaram*. The temple and the town named apparently after this ruler were in the neighbourhood of the *Māgala* tank at *Nikawaratiya*. [*Cu*] *ntamalli ālvār*, the daughter of *Kulottunga Chola* and a consort of *Virabāhu* (another name of *Mānābharaṇa*) is said to have made a donation of a lamp and ten gold coins for burning a 'perpetual lamp' at this shrine.²⁴

Mānābharaṇa I, a cousin and contemporary of *Vikramabāhu*, who was ruling over the principality of *Dakṣiṇadesa*, had close associations with Hinduism. References to him in the *Pāli Chronicle* suggest that Hindu influences were dominant at his court. This was to be expected on account of his *Pāṇḍya* descent as well as the fact that one of his consorts was a *Chola* princess. He had at his court a *purohita* and many other brahmins versed in the *Vedas* and *Vedāngas* by whom the *homa* sacrifice and other Hindu rites were performed²⁵. Hindu ceremonies were conducted to mark important phases in the early life of his son *Parākramabāhu*. The birth rites and other connected ceremonies were performed for him according to the rules laid down in the *Veda*.²⁶ The infant prince's body marks were also examined and analysed by the *purohita* and other learned brahmins at the king's request. Later, the ceremony of *Upanayana* or initiation was also performed for the young prince.

Gajabāhu II, the son and successor of *Vikramabāhu*, is known to have extended much support for Hinduism on account of which he attained celebrity in traditional accounts centering on the ancient Saivite temple of *Konesvaram*. The charge made by the *Pāli Chronicle* that he 'brought heretical nobles from abroad and filled the land with the briers of heresy' may also suggest that *Gajabāhu* had strong leanings towards Hinduism.²⁷ One of the inscriptions issued by him unmistakably proves that he had propitiated Hindu deities and caused Hindu rituals to be performed. An artisan, a certain *Hinābi*, who made images and other representations of *Skanda* and other gods at the behest of the king for the performance

of a *lakṣapūjā* applied for and obtained a land grant as a reward for his services in this connection.²⁸ The Brahmadeya at Kantaḷāy which had existed from the days of Chola rule seems to have been the recipient of some benefits from this ruler. Two Tamil inscriptions which mention the name of this ruler record the setting up of boundary stones to mark the limits of the village.²⁹ As it was customary in South India, in this instance the boundary was delimited by marching an elephant along a defined strip of land. One of the epigraphs specifically records that the stone marking the eastern boundary of the village was set up by the general Kiḷivai Apimānarāman on the orders of the king. It is also noteworthy that Gajabāhu spent the last days of his life at Kantaḷāy.

In this connection it may be relevant to consider here the observations of Sirima Kiribamune. She writes:

“One other clue which suggests Gajabāhu’s leanings towards Hinduism is his retirement to Gangataḷāka (Kantaḷāy) after he had come to terms with ParākramabāhuAfter a period of long and bitter fighting, Gajabāhu had come to the end of the road as it were and whatever hopes and aspirations he entertained earlier had to be abandoned with the recognition of Parākramabāhu as heir. The choice of Gangataḷāka at this stage of his career might have been prompted by religious considerations . . . Thus it would seem that Gajabāhu II, bereft of all hope, chose to spend his last days in a Hindu atmosphere, where he could devote his time to religious activities”.³⁰

While endorsing, with some reservations, the views expressed in the above passage it may be added that considerations of moral and material support from Dravidian communities established at Kantaḷāy and other localities in the north eastern littoral rather than religious piety induced Gajabāhu to shift his court from Polonnaruwa to Kantaḷāy. It would appear that the Tamils and other Dravidians, both Buddhists and Hindus who were established in sufficient strength at these places had supported the cause of Vikramabāhu and his son. The recently discovered Tamil inscription dated in the 18th year of Jayabāhu from Mayilawewa records details which are of significance in this connection. The epigraph mentions that the *daṇḍanatha* named Kanavati summoned the four units of the Veḷaikkāra army (stationed) at Ututturai and placed under their protection the Buddhist temple named Vikkīrama Calāmekanperumpalli.³¹

The *Kōṇecar Kalveṭṭu* which records the traditions and legends relating to the temple of Koṇesvaram describes a certain Gajabāhu as a great patron of this shrine. The accounts of this ruler’s associations with Koṇesvaram as incorporated in this text suggest that the activities of Gajabāhu constituted an important and remarkable phase in the complex institutional development of Koṇesvaram. Only two kings of the island had the name Gajabāhu and of these the second ruler of that name who held sway from Polonnaruwa as shown earlier, had strong leanings towards Hinduism. In view of the developed and institutionalized character of Koṇesvaram with which Gajabāhu was associated and because of the reason that Gajabāhu II who is known to have strong leanings towards Hinduism had taken up residence at Kantaḷāy towards the end of his reign, Gajabāhu who is a great benefactor of Koṇesvaram may be identified as Gajabāhu II.

Traditions recorded in the *Koṇēcar Kalveṭṭu*, *Takṣiṇa kailācapurāṇam* and other works claim that Gajabāhu who was a great devotee of Siva, visited Kōṇesvaram at a time when religious services had been interrupted there as a result of a controversy between the Buddhists and the Saivites. The King is said to have summoned the *Vannipam*, the *tānattār* and the *Varippattu*, inquired about the affairs of the temple and had its institutions and religious services restored. On the King's initiative, it is said, brahmins were brought from abroad and appointed priests at the temple. The king is said to have made a gift of a thousand pieces of gold coins to the temple and endowed it with substantial revenues from land and other sources.³²

Parākramabāhu I, the events of whose reign have been chronicled in epic proportions, chiefly on account of his patronage of Buddhism is also known to have supported Hinduism. The *Cūlavamsa* credits him with having made gifts to brahmins at the celebrations held in honour of the successes achieved by his armies in the Pāṇḍya Kingdom.³³ It is further said in the same chronicle that he constructed thirteen temples for the gods and had restored seventynine (Hindu) temples which were in a state of disrepair.³⁴ In another instance the chronicle states that this king had caused to be renovated twenty-four temples of gods.³⁵ Although, regretfully, no Hindu temple the chronology of which could precisely be attributed to the reign of Parākramabāhu has hitherto been recognized among architectural remains, the statements made in traditional history about Parākramabāhu's construction and restoration of Hindu temples may be considered to be genuine.

Nissaṃkamalla was another ruler of Polonnaruwa who showed concern for the welfare of brahmins and Hindu institutions. A slab inscription found inside the Siva Devale 1 records that it was set up after Nissaṃkamalla had completed the function of lustral bathing in connection with the ceremony of (*navagraha sānti*) propitiating the nine planetary gods³⁶. As the inscription which records the performance of this ritual has been found in the Siva Devale No 1 it could be assumed that these ceremonies were performed at this particular shrine. At the Brahmadeya of Kantaḷāy, referred to as Caturveda Brahmapura in one of his inscriptions, there was in the reign of Nissaṃkamalla an alms hall called Pārvati-dāna-sāla.³⁷ This institution, as suggested by its name and its location, was one designed for Hindus, and is specifically stated that the king proceeded there to witness the distribution of alms. There he is said to have engaged himself in witnessing dancing, singing and other performances. The contents of the Kantaḷāy Gal Āsana inscription leave no doubt that the king proceeded to the brahmin settlement of Kantaḷāy to participate in a Hindu religious ceremony which included festivities. His concern for the welfare of brahmins is also suggested by his establishment of charitable institutions called Brāhmaṇa Satra as stated in one of his epigraphs³⁸.

Another locality where Hinduism flourished during this period was Padaviya where the architectural remains of many Hindu temples which may be assigned to the Polonnaruwa period have been found. Some of the Hindu institutions at Padaviya were supported and maintained by mercantile communities who formed an important element in the town. The Ayyāvoḷe of the Ayyampōḷil paṭṭinam in Padaviya are said, in one of their inscriptions, to have dedicated themselves to the service of (a temple of) Siva.³⁹ Another

inscription at the same locality refers to the gift of an image of a deity made to the temple by the merchants of the locality.⁴⁰ It also mentions a group called *Kāli kaṇam*, who were presumably the managers of trustees of a temple of *Kāli*. Yet another Tamil inscription, which could be assigned to the late twelfth century on palaeographic grounds, records a Tamil verse composed by a local poet in praise of a temple dedicated to Siva and referred to as *Valakaḷi*.⁴¹

The Sanskrit inscription on the seal recently discovered at Padaviya and which has been assigned to the thirteenth century on palaeographic considerations shows that there was a Brahmin settlement at Padaviya.⁴² The inscription states that it was issued by *Maheśa* who resided at Sri Padigrāma inhabited by Brahmins whose feet were adorned by the diadems of Indra and other gods. As *Maheśa* meaning 'The great god' is an epithet of Siva it may be assumed that the seal was issued by the authorities of a Saivite temple at Padaviya. The evidence from this inscription may perhaps show that Saivism and Saivite institutions continued to flourish at Padaviya during the thirteenth century. The issue of a seal in the name of the local temple may suggest that it had an institution to manage its affairs.

Another important development connected with the growth of Hindu institutions was the influence exerted by Vira Saivism which seems to have been introduced among the Tamil settlements during the period of Māgha's rule. The priestly functions in some of the Hindu temples in the eastern littoral have been and are still to a certain extent performed by the *Caṅkamar* who form a strong and influential element in some localities in the region. They continue to wear on their chests the Vira Saivite emblem, the lingam, encased in bronze caskets which have the figures of a recumbent bull and the trident carved upon them. Tradition claims that the ancestors of the *Caṅkamar* had come from the town of Mallikāryunapuram in India in the distant past. Their rituals and worship are still guided by manuscript texts expounding *Lingāyat* doctrines and beliefs.

It is significant that the *Tānroṅṅisvarar* temple at *Kokkaṭṭiccōlai*, the leading Saivite shrine in the entire eastern littoral to the south of *Kōṭṭiyāram*, was according to tradition, established during the period of Kālinga rule.⁴³ The architectural style of the *vimāna* of this temple, which was dominated by its massive *stupi* of brick construction and the *Pāṇḍya* style of architecture seems to suggest that the temple had been constructed on an elaborate scale during the thirteenth century.

Another famous shrine on the eastern littoral associated with Māgha by local tradition is the *Subrahmanya* temple at Tirukkivil. Among the buildings of this medieval shrine only the *vimāna* has remained intact while all other structures have collapsed. This gracefully designed *vimāna* has on account of its architectural style, been compared to the *Pāṇḍya* monuments in South India and has been assigned to the thirteenth century.⁴⁴ A Tamil inscription which could be assigned to the fourteenth century records the donation made to this shrine by a certain *Vijayabāhu*.⁴⁵

The ancient temple of Koṇṇesvaram on the eastern littoral developed into one of large proportions during the Polonnaruwa period. The Kuḷakkōṭṭan traditions recorded in the *Koṇṇecar Kalvetṭu* seem to reflect the nature and extent of this development. The account of Kuḷakkōṭṭan as found in the *Koṇṇecar kalvetṭu* may briefly be summarised here:

Vararāmatēvan, the son of Manuviti Kaṇṭha Cōḷan, and his son Kuḷakkōṭṭan came to Trincomalee with their retinue and army after hearing of the greatness of the sanctified site at Trincomalee. Later, Kuḷakkōṭṭan decided that the services at the shrine of Koṇṇecar should be revived and elaborated with the help from the Cōḷa country. He brought craftsmen including smiths from the royal mints (*akka cālaiyar*) and constructed a Saivite temple surrounded with many lofty gopuras, created the sacred springs and endowed the temple with fields and tanks which he had reclaimed and made elaborate arrangements for conducting religious services. He settled at Trincomalee six families selected from 'the best of the Chōlas' from Maruṅkūr, and granted them lands to be held in hereditary succession. He deposited treasures in the temple and ordained that the expenses incurred and the income obtained daily should be recorded by the *tānattār* who also had to ensure that the ceremony of *ālātti* and other services were duly performed.

Moreover, he settled at Trincomalee twenty-one families of Varippattar who had been brought from the Tamil country. They were to perform such services as gathering flowers, making garlands, cleaning and preserving silk garments used to decorate the images, carrying banners and umbrellas on festival occasions, singing to rhythm when dancing girls perform their dances, lighting lamps, distributing sandal powder, pounding rice and polishing the floor. People of the *tānam* and *varippattu* received rice fields at Pallaveḷi as remuneration for their services.

Kuḷakkōṭṭan brought Taniyuṅṅappūpālan from Madurai, raised him to the rank of a *Vannipam* and placed the administration of the 'town of Trincomalee' under his charge. Furthermore, he settled a chief of a *Karālar* family from Tinnevely at Kaṭṭukkuḷam and made him the ruler of the division of Kaṭṭukkuḷamparru. This chief was assigned lands in Nilaveḷi and endowed with the insignia of a *Vannipam*. Kuḷakkōṭṭan ordained that the accounts of the income for the Koṇṇecar temple should be in the custody of the Vanniyanār of Kaṭṭukkuḷamparru and his successors. The inhabitants of Kaṭṭukkuḷam were required to serve the temple. The people of Nilaveḷi were to conduct the festivals. Kuḷakkōṭṭan also proclaimed that the revenue in the form of *Aṭai Ayam*, *Tirvai* and other dues from the sea port should belong to the temple. On the orders of Kuḷakkōṭṭan Nilāvcōtaiyan and his armies diverted the waters of the Mahaveli and constructed a huge reservoir. Land to the sowing extent of 2,700 *avaṇam* was converted into fields and granted to the temple.⁴⁶

The value of the foregoing account as a source of historical information would depend on the historicity of Kuḷakkōṭṭan and the veracity of the details concerning his activities. It cannot be said of Kuḷakkōṭṭan, as it can be of Manuviti Kaṇṭha Chōlan and of Vararāmatēvan that he is a legendary figure. The *Takṣiṇakailāca* purāṇam states that Kuḷakkōṭṭan had the name Chōlakaṅkan.⁴⁷ As there were many princes and dignitaries who had the name

Cholakankan in Kalinga, South India and Sri Lanka, Kuḷakkōṭṭan Cholakaṅkan may be regarded as a historical personality. That he had close connections with Koṅesvaram and Trincomalee is suggested by persistent local traditions which credit him with the reconstruction of that temple. He could not have lived before the eleventh century because it was only after the rise of the Imperial Cholas that the name or title of Cholakaṅkan came into use.

There had been some princes or dignitaries who had the name Cōḍaganga in the island during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A prince called Cōḍaganga is known from the fragmentary Sanskrit inscription discovered at Fort Frederick, Trincomalee.⁴⁸ The epigraph states that he came to the island in Saka 1145 (A. D. 1223). This inscription was inscribed on a door jamb found among a set of images, and it may be assumed that the missing portion of the epigraph recorded certain benefactions of Cōḍaganga to the temple of Koṅesvaram. As there is some evidence to prove that Cōḍaganga who had come to the island in A. D. 1223 had some connections with Koṅesvaram, he may provisionally be identified as Kuḷakkoṭṭan Cholakankan who, as claimed by the local Tamil traditions, rebuilt Koṅesvaram and reorganized its services.

The Chōla descent attributed to Kuḷakkoṭṭan and the claim that he brought many settlers from the Chōla country may suggest that the account of Kuḷakkōṭṭan contains a substratum of traditions concerning the activities of a Chōla prince, presumably, Chōla Ilankesvara tevar, who exercised authority over Trincomalee and the localities adjacent to it and had some connection with Koṅesvaram. The *Konecar Kalvettu* which seeks to establish a close connection between the growth of Tamil settlements in the north eastern part of the island and the development of Koṅesvaram seems to record some traditions concerning the history of the temple of Koṅesvaram and the elaborate arrangements that had been made for conducting religious services at that temple.

The development of Hindu institutions and cultural traditions on an impressive scale during this period had an impact on Sinhalese kingship and court life. Members of the royal family and some of the high dignitaries of state became increasingly acquainted with leading Sanskrit texts on secular subjects through learned brahmins some of whom were appointed as functionaries at court. Dynastic marriages with some of the Indian ruling families also perhaps contributed towards the promotion of Sanskrit studies among court circles. As a result of this development the Sinhalese court was influenced by a variety of Indian literature on politics, warfare and administration outside the Buddhist tradition. It is only when we come to the Polonnaruwa period that the Pāli chronicle mentions such texts in relation to kingship and court life. The same chronicle credits Parākramabāhu I with having mastered the work of Kauṭalya and the *Yuddhārṇava*- a text dealing with military science.⁴⁹

Besides, the long account of Parākramabāhu, as recorded in the Pāli chronicle, bears clear traces of the influence of Kauṭalya's masterly work. The details relating to espionage as found in the *Cūlavamsa* and the *Arthaśāstra* are strikingly similar and such close similarity presupposes a familiarity with the Kauṭalyan treatise on the part of the author of the *Cūlavamsa*.

Another major Hindu text referred to in the Pali chronicle in relation to the rulers of this period is the *Manu Smṛti*. In Sri Lanka, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Manu's work was held in high esteem as an authority on politics, law and government. It was undoubtedly one of the texts consulted by the kings of the island. Vijayabāhu II (1186-1187) and Parākrama Pāṇḍya are said to have ruled in accordance with the laws of Manu.⁵⁰ Another ruler, Parākramabāhu II is described in traditional Sinhalese history as one who was well versed in the ordinances of Manu (*Manunūti vicārato*).⁵¹ It is remarkable that some of the ideas expressed in the *Manu Smṛti* are echoed in Sri Lankan inscriptions of this period.

Ideas from Hindu political thought which helped to extol royal authority were incorporated into the court ideology by the rulers of this period who continued to encourage the cult of the bodhisattva king. It was during the Polonnaruwa period that the concept of divinity of kingship found full expression in Sri Lankan inscriptions. The inscriptions of Nissamkamalla echo the *Manu Smṛti* when they assert:

“Though kings appear in human form, they are human divinities (*naradevatā*) and must therefore, be regarded as gods”.⁵²

It was owing to the influence of Hindu treatises like the *Manu Smṛti* that expressions describing the functional similarity of the king to the gods came to be included in Sinhalese inscriptions issued by Vijayabāhu I and his successors. The Ambagamuva inscription of Vijayabāhu I, for instance, describes the king in the following manner:

“He has surpassed the sun in the majesty inherent in him, Maheśvara (Siva) in prowess, Viṣṇu in haughty spirit, the chief of the gods (Indra) in kingly state, the lord of the riches (Kuvera) in inexhaustible wealth, Kitisuru in (bestowing) happiness to living beings, the preceptor of the gods (Bṛhaspati) in the fertility of wisdom, the the moon in gentleness, Kandarpa in the richness of his beauty and the Bodhisattva in the fulness of his benevolence.”⁵³

The same idea is expressed in connection with Parākramabāhu I in the Devanagala inscription in almost identical language.⁵⁴ The Miṇipe slab inscription uses a slightly different imagery to convey a similar idea in connection with the general Bhāma, who attained the rank of a local ruler when the Polonnaruwa kingdom had reached an advanced state of decline. It describes him as one who “is like unto Viṣṇu for Mahalakṣmi, like unto Brahma for Sarasvati and like unto Suryya for his pleasing appearance”.⁵⁵ The concept of the divinity of kingship became a major component of the ideology of the Sinhalese court since the twelfth century. It was further accentuated by the adoption of the royal epithet *Tribhuvana cakravartin* by some of the kings in the post-Polonnaruwa period.

In conclusion it may be stated that Hinduism and Hindu institutions flourished in the north central plain during the Polonnaruwa period in an unprecedented manner. As in contemporary South India the temple became the focal point of religious and cultural expression. The Chola style of temple architecture and bronze casting introduced into the island in the eleventh century became an integral part of the cultural heritage of the Hindu communities

which henceforth became an important element in Sri Lankan society. The construction of a large number of temples in the major towns and other localities was accompanied by the settlement of some Brahmin and artisan communities. Since the eleventh century Hinduism began to exert an ever increasing influence on Sinhalese society. Hindu ceremonies, rituals and even beliefs were adopted at the Sinhalese court in the twelfth century and in the subsequent centuries elements of Hindu culture were assimilated into Sinhalese Buddhism and this trend continued until recent times.

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