
Research Article

Recently Discovered Ruins of Civaṇ Temple with Tamil Inscriptions at Tirumañkalāi Area in Trincomalai District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

During the Chōla rule for 77 years (from 993 A.D. to --1077 A.D) with Polanaruwa as capital in Sri Lanka, Hindu temples built outside of Polanaruwa outnumbered the temples within Polanaruwa. Yet, most of these temples have not been identified, studied and documented so far. Recently discovered ruins of Civaṇ temple in Tirumañkalāi forest area in Trincomalai District stand testimony to this fact. This temple was constructed with granite stones and bricks with the adoption of Chōla art tradition. Presently all portions of the temple except the Antarālam right in front of the Karpakirakam (Antechamber to the inner sanctuary of a Hindu temple) are in a state of ruin. The granite pillars with artistic workmanship, bricks, Āvuṭai (where in the Linga is placed), pedestals, shrines for Minor Gods and Tamil inscriptions found among the ruins are evident of the fact that this temple has been bigger than the second Civaṇ temple in Polanaruwa.

So far, five Tamil inscriptions have been discovered among the temple ruins. Three inscriptions among them belong to 10 and 11 century A.D. These inscriptional evidences conform that this temple was influential during the Chōla period. The other two inscriptions state about the donations offered to this temple in 15th and 16th century A.D. These evidences make us ascertain that this temple continued its influence even after the Chōla period.

It is learnt that Bronze images of God, Statues and Sculptures from ruins of this temple were removed to other places by people. In support of this belief, temple bell with the name "Tirumañkalāi Civaṇ temple" inscribed on it was found at Kañkuvēly in Trincomalai district. Hence, it is hopeful that more details about the Tirumañkalāi Civaṇ temple could be brought into light if further excavation is carried out in the location of this temple.

Keywords: Civaṇ temple, Tirumañkalāi, Kiḷiveiveṭṭy Kañkuvēly, Chōlas, Dravidian art tradition, Agamic and Non-Agamic.

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