

# Historical Significance Of Darasuram Through The Ages (South India)

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**Abstract:** Darasuram is a town located five Kilometers from Kumbakonam in Thanjavur District, Tamilnadu, India. From all available evidence Palayarai appears to have been ruled by the cholas and their capital Palayarai is known as Melaiyur Patiswaram, Solamaligai, Ariyappadaiyur, Sundaraperumalkoil, Nathan Koil and Darasuram. These are mentioned in many early Tamil works.

Darasuram became a prominent town only from the days of SundaraChola. He lived in Darasuram and presented vahanas to Indra and Surya in the Darasuram temple. The eastern part of Darasuram known as Sundara Perumal Koil was christened only during the days of SundaraChola from these references one can surmise that Chola king SundaraChola lived in Darasuram and ruled the Kingdom for some time.

Darasuram was the heart of Chola greatness, where from flowed all the accessories of their civilization. The Thiruchengodu plates of Rajaraja vassals as Mallavarayan Sundara Cholan. He followed some tax rules which existed in Darasuram and this shows the prominence of Darasuram. Rajendra I resided sometimes in Darasuram (Palayarai) and ruled the Kingdom from there.

The Nayaks of Thanjavur were succeeded by the Marathas of Thanjavur. The Marathas ruled the Thanjavur region including Darasuram continuously for some years. Hyder Ali Defeated Maratha king Tuljaji and his country was looted by him. The area of Kumbakonam and Darasuram was severely damaged due. This invasion.

After the declaration of India's Independence Darasuram became a Taluk of Kumbakonam in Thanjavur District.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Darasuram a well place as an artistic centre today is one of the oldest town in Tamil Nadu. For it has been a great centre of south Indian Culture and civilization. The cholas had capitals at various places, the most ancient of them, Darasuram for merly known as Palayarai is now only a village.

The present Darasuram which is about five kilometers to the west of Kumbakonam and forty kilometers east of Thanjavur is located in latitude 10 57 north and longitude 79 22 east. Excavations conducted by the Archaeological survey of India and the University of Chennai in places called Nathanmedu and Solamaligai which are parts of ancient Palayarai yielded good number of black and red ware pieces

were discovered about third Century B.C to the fifth century A.D. in Palayarai<sup>1</sup>.

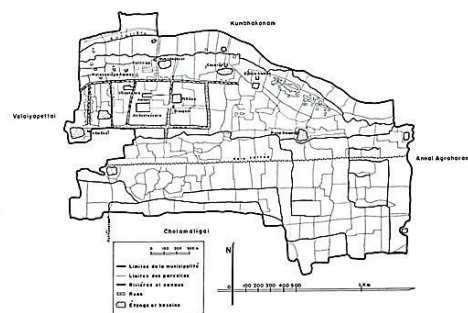


Figure 1: Darasuram - Map

## II. VARIOUS NAMES OF DARASURAM (PALAYARAI)

From all available evidence Palayarai appears to have been ruled by the Cholas and their Capital Palayarai is now known as Melaiyur Patiswaram, Tiruchatimutram, Tirumatadi, Solamaligai, Ariyappadaiyur, Pamrippadaiyur, Puduppadaiyur, Manappadaiyur, Sundaraperumalkoil, Darasuram and Nathankoil. These are mentioned in many early Tamil works.

## III. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DARASURAM

According to a Chidambaranar, the Famous Idumbavanam battle between the Chera ruler Sengutuvan and the Chola rulers took place in and around Palayarai in 150 A.D probably, after the sea erosion of Kaveripoompatinam, then the capital of the Cholas. The Cholas of the time could have ruled Karul, Alundur, Palayari and Chenchalur. This view appears to be the same as that of T.P. Meenakshisundarnar. He remarks that the Cholas those days changed their capital from Kaveripoompattanam, when Puhar was engulfed by the sea. The shifting of the capital of Cholas from the sea port town Palayarai is strengthened by the following statement. Kudavayil Kirathanar, a Sangam poetsstates in his poem that the Cholas of those days kept the treasuries safely guarded at Kudavayil<sup>2</sup>. The present Kudavasal there was every possibility. That Palayarai could have been the capital of the Cholas during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D.

From about the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D the Kalabhars seem to have been overthrown by the various South Indian dynasties. After the over through of the Kalabharas and the restoration of the Chola dynasty by Koccenganan, there were a number of Chola rulers who ruled the region. Koccenganan, one of the greatest and most renowned of the pre – vijayalaya line, is celebrated in literature and inscriptions. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Siva. Seventy temples in the Chola Country including one at Palayarai, which had known no other sovereign, except the Chola kings, experienced, for the first time perhaps, a change when it came under the way of the Pallavas early in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D<sup>3</sup>.

Soon after his accession, the Pallava king Simhavaram invaded the Chola country with help of his son Simhavishnu as early as 600 A.D. This is supported by the fact that Kanjanur on the banks of Kaveri near Narasingapetti Kumbakonam Taluk was known in early days as Simhavishnu Chaturvedimangalam evidently named after the king. As Palayarai is sited nearer kumbakonam there was every possibility that palayarai might have been under his control. Simhavishnu's son Mahendrarvarman I (610-630 A.D) subdued the Cholas and established the Pallava power in the Cholamandalam his empire extended up to Pudukkottai in the South. He is considered a contemporary of Saint Appar and Thiruganansambandar whose age is also accepted as the first quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D<sup>4</sup>.

Nandivaram II Pallavamalla was a powerful ruler. Soon after his accession Nandivarman II Pallavamalla had to face a

hostile combination, organized by the Pandyas. Nandivarman was besieged nu Rajasimha at Nandipuram (Palayarai) but was released by his general Udayachandra who killed Citramaya and claimed several victories in the Thanjavur District, where the two parties seem to have fought many battles. During his time Nandipuram or Palayarai was his southern capital. He built a temple for Lord Thirumal which was known as Nandipuravinnagaram The Town of Palayarai was named as Nandipuram evidently after the town of Palayarai was named as Nandipuram evidently after the accession of Nandivarman Pallavamalla.

The struggle was continued during his grandson, Nandivarman III time. He got victory in the Tellaru battle. This is refer to in a Tamil historical poem called Nandhikkalambagam of which he is the hero. This work also mentions several other battles where Nandivarman III won victories over his enemies at Palayarai, Vellaru, Nalluru Kurukkottai, Kadambur, Veriyalur and Tondi Palayarai was also called Avaninarayanapuram when Nandivarman III was in power. The title Avaninarayana possessed by Nandivarman III might have led one to call this place Avaninarayanapuam. Nandivaraman III was succeeded by Nirupaunga, who defeated a Pandya confederation on the bank of the river Arisil. This battle was obviously fought near Playarai. After this battle, Palayarai came under the direct control of the Pallavas.

Aparajita succeeded his brother Nirupatunga. The famous battle of Sripurambiyam took place during his reign. Aparajita became a victim of the Chola ambition and was killed in the battle, when Aditya chola invaded Thondaimandalam. After his conquest Palayarai, the old capital of the Cholas once again came under the direct rule of the later Cholas. Then Palayarai became the subsidiary capital of the Cholas.

Parantaka I was the son and successor of Aditya I in the 14<sup>th</sup> regional year of Parantaka I one merchant who lived at Palayarai and called Chammunangifted his land to the temple at Karugavur near Kumbakonam. During Parantaka I period Palayarai was kept situated under the local division of kilakurram<sup>5</sup>.

Palayarai became a prominent town only from the days of Sundara Chola. He lived in Palayarai and presented vahanas to Indra and Surya in the Palayarai temple<sup>13</sup>. The eastern part of Palayrai known as Sundaraperumalkoil was christened only during the days of Sundarachola from these references one can surmise that Chola king Sundarachola lived in Palayarai and ruled the kingdom for some time.

Uttama Chola also called Madurantaka, son of kandaraditya and Sembian Mahadevi hatched a conspiracy in 973 A.D. by which he crowned himself as king after the death of Sundarachola, In his early days, he resided at Palayarai. during the time of Uttama chola palayarai acted as a subsidiary capital and the royal ladies resided in the Palayarai palace. Uttama Chola was succeeded by Rajaraja I in the year 985 A.D. it was a period of all the Vijayalaya Chola Rajaraja I laid the foundation of a vast empire. The thirty years of Rajaraja, reign constitutes the formative period in the history of Chola imperialism. He made Thanjavur his capital but he did not neglect the importance of Palayarai, which continued,

to be as renowned as ever before, an inscription of Rajaraja I places Palayarai in the Thirumaraiyurnadu a subdivision of Kshatriya Sikhamani Valanadu Kahatriya Sikhamani was one of the titles of Rajaraja I and therefore by naming the division itself him, he had unmistakably expressed his great interest in the area in and around Palayarai. Another inscription of Rajaraja I in the Thanjavur temple refers to two names of places as Ayrattali and Nigamathu. Ayrattali to the differentiate the one from the other. That the name Ayrattali refers to the place Palayarai is attested by a number of texts in Tamil. The other name Nigamathu Ayrattali denotes a place Thanjavur, which were the head quarters of Nigamathu Nadu<sup>6</sup>.



Figure 2: World Heritage Site - Darasuram

Palayarai was the heart of Chola greatness, where from flowed all the accessories of their civilization. The Thiruchengodu plates of Rajaraja Vassals as Mallavarayan Sundara Cholan. He followed some tax rules which existed in Palayarai and this shows the prominence of Palayarai. Rajendra I resided some times in Palayarai and ruled the kingdom from there. In 1015 A.D. he issued an order for the survey of the lands of Uyyakkodan Thirumalai from his Palayarai Palace. In 1017 A.D. he issued another order from the same palace. In 1019 A.D. again he issued the famous Thiruvallangadu plate which is preserved in the Chennai Museum. It mentions that the grants were given by Rajaraja I while he was staying at Mudikondasolapuram or Palayarai, Rajendra I title Mudikondacholam perhaps gave the name Mudikondasolapuram to Palayarai.

Rajendra I built a Pallipadai temple at Palayarai in honour of the Chola queen Panchavanmahadevi. He erected another temple at Palayarai in the name of his father, the Arulmolidevesvaram. Alwar Parantkan Kundavaipirattiyar was the eldest and the affectionate sister of Rajaraja I and had a separate place constructed for her in Palayarai. The south eastern border of the city was known as Rajendran Pettai. In this place, a royal mint also functioned Rajendran pettai apparently named after the great emperor Rajendra I was intimately associated with Palayarai and it could have housed the Chola capital.

Rajendra I was succeeded by three sons one after another namely Rajadhiraja I (1018-1054) who died fighting in battle of Koppam against the western Chalukyas, Rajendra II (1054-1064) and Vira Rajendra (1063-1070 A.D.). The Tirukalathi inscription of Rajadhiraja I issued in his fifth regnal year

mentions that Rajadhiraja I abolished the tax to the temple lands (Iraiyeli) at Palayarai. During Rajendra I period also Palayarai was considered an important city.

Vira Rajendra was a great warrior. He defeated the western Chalukyan ruler Someswara I Ahavamalla three times. After the victory he assumed the victorious title Ahavamalla Kulakalandaka. Kulothunga I (1070-1120 A.D) who succeeded Vira Rajendra did not belong to the district line of imperial Chola. He was an Eastern Chalukya prince. His accession is of great importance in the annals of South Indian. He was the great grandson of Rajendra I. He honoured the place Palayarai by living in a Palace there. In 1012 Kulothunga I issued an order to the Ambermakalam temple (Palace) seated on the throne named Vanathiraya in the hall renowned as Rajendra Cholamandapa within his place at Mudikondacholapuram. The hall was probably built by Rajendra<sup>7</sup>.

The Leyden grants of Kulothunga I dated 1090 A.D. record the arrival of two ambassadors from Sri Vijayam (Kandaram) Rajavidyadhara and Abhimanottunga to Kulothunga I's court at Palayarai. His parasasti mentions that at the gate of his Palayarai Palace stood rows of elephants showing jewels sent as tribute from one island kingdom of the wide ocean. During Kulothunga I period Palayarai rose to greater prominence. Vikrama Chola fourth son of Kulothunga I was crowned in 1120 A.D. and had title Parakesari. He made Palayarai, his second capital and resided periodically at Palayarai and issued orders from this town. Vikrama Cholas issued an order from his Palace at Palayarai to the Elayanasur temple in South Arcot district. This also shows the prominence of Palayarai in the later Chola period.

Vikrama Chola was succeeded by his son Kulothunga II. His reign enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity. Some of the best Tamil works produced in this period. During his period also Palayarai played an important role. Sekkilar one of the court poets of Kulothunga II praised the beauty of the town Palayarai in his famous work Periyappuranam<sup>8</sup>. Kulothunga II was succeeded by Rajaraja II who ruled the Chola country from 1143 to 1173 A. D. In his early days appears to have stayed mostly in the famous city Palayarai in his later part of his life Rajaraja II changed his residence from Gangaikondacholapuram to Darasuram.

Towards the end of his reign, when he was ill, he apprehended difficulties over the succession. On the advice of his chief minister and general, Pallavarayan, he nominated a nephew of his in preference to his own sons because at that time they were only one and two years old respectively. Rajaraja II selected his nephew Rajadhiraja II as heir apparent. After Rajaraja II he came to power and ruled the Chola Nadu.

In 1178 A. D. Rajadhiraja II was succeeded by Kulothunga III. He averted the disintegration of the empire for one more generation. His reign also marks the last epoch in the history of Chola art and architecture. In his early days, he resided in Rajarajapuram he granted gifts to the temple at Darasuram. Kulothunga III gave more importance to the town Darasuram and the temple. Rajaraja II was an important ruler under whom, confusion increased and the disintegration of the

Chola kingdom was hastened. Besides, he was put to trouble by his vassals.

Rajendra III was much abler than Rajaraja III. He was the last king to sit on the Chola throne. His reign witnessed the final collapse of the Chola Empire. He however made some last minute attempts to receive the power but he could not succeed against the rising tide of the Pandyan power.

During the time of Rajaraja II and Rajendra III the Pandyas were a formidable power in the extreme South. Maravarman Sundara Pandya I led an expedition in the Chola country, looted Thanjavur and Uraiyur and captured Palayarai. After that the Pandya seems to have established their hold over the Chola country including Darasuram. Which the fall of the Chola kingdom and its annexation to the Pandyan Empire by about 1279 A.D. the glory to the city of Rajarajapuram, faded<sup>9</sup>.

Maravarman Sundara Pandya invaded the Chola country two times. In the first time, he defeated the Chola ruler Rajaraja III and assumed the title Sonadu Kondarulinga. He performed the virabhishekam in a hall named Chola valavan in the Palace at Palayarai. After that he returned the Chola country to Rajaraja III and adopted the title Solanadu Valangi Arulinga. Once again in 1231 A.D. he captured Chola power from the hands of Rajaraja III and celebrated the Vijayabhishekam in the same Palace at Palayarai.

After the invasion of South India by Malik Kafur, instability and confusion prevailed for quite some years in the Darasuram region along with the decline of the Pandya power. Kumarakampana, the ruler of Vijayanagar, captured this area probably from the hands of the Muslims in 1358 A.D. with the expansion of the Vijayanagar empire. In the Tamil country in the source of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, this area became an integral part of the new born empire.

The rule of the Nayaks of Thanjavur, which comprises a roughly a period of about a hundred and fifty years from the second quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century down to the third quarter of the century, has but received sufficient attention at the hands of the historian. The Nayak rulers of Thanjavur bestowed attention on the temples and made gifts for worship and services in them. During the Nayak period, many temples were improved in the Kumbakonam region including Darasuram temple. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Govinda Dikshita, a well known Saiva devotee and a minister to Achutha and Raghunatha, the Nayak of Thanjavur, is said to have lived in Pattiswaram (part of Palayarai) and he made improvements to the temple there. He and his wife stand in effigy in the Devi's shrine. During the Nayak period, the Kumbakonam region including Darasuram was considered as an important area. In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, availing of the internal feuds between the Nayaks of Thanjavur<sup>10</sup>.

The Nayaks of Thanjavur were succeeded by the Marathas of Thanjavur. The Marathas ruled the Thanjavur region including Darasuram continuously for some years. Hyder Ali defeated Maratha king Tuljaji and his country was looted by him. The area of Kumbakonam and Darasuram was severely damaged due to this invasion.



Figure 3: Darasuram Temple

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Therefore, after the lapse of some years, Serfoji came to power. As Serfoji did not get sufficient training to rule the country, he wrote a letter requesting the Governor General Wellesley to relieve him from the official duty. Accordingly, Lord Wellesley ordered to annex Thanjavur into the Chennai province in A.D. 1799. According to an agreement, he surrendered all his civil and military powers to the British, except his Palace in which he lived with rights over certain temples. Temples that remained directly under the Maratha rulers by treaty of 1799 numbered 102, including Darasuram temple. But the place Darasuram was under direct administration of the British East India Company. After the declaration of India's independence, Darasuram became a Taluk of Kumbakonam in Thanjavur District. Now this temple was undertaken by the archaeological department because of its antiquity and beautification; this temple was taken by the UNESCO.

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