

THE KANCHIPURAM INSCRIPTION OF
RAJA RAJA CHOLA YEAR 20
MISUNDERSTOOD AS TWO EASTERN GANGA INSCRIPTIONS



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TAMIL NADU

Twenty Second Annual Congress of
The Epigraphical Society of India
Held at Mysore
25 to 27th May 1996

Hosts

Directorate of Epigraphy Archaeological Survey of India, Mysore.
Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Karnataka, Mysore.
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THE KANCHIPURAM INSCRIPTION OF RAJARAJA CHOLA III YEAR 20 MISUNDERSTOOD AS TWO EASTERN GANGA INSCRIPTIONS

(N. Sethuraman, B.Sc., D.M.I.T.)

T.V. Mahalingam wrote the article "Two Eastern Ganga inscriptions at Kanchipuram" in the Epigraphia Indica Volume XXXI published in 1955. It is a long one and he made many surmises in accordance with his understanding of the record. In the same volume D.C. Sircar vehemently opposed Mahalingam and made drastic criticism. However he too believed that they were Eastern Ganga records. The object of this article is to prove that it is a single inscription, in two parts, engraved in the 20th Year of the reign of the Chola King Raja Raja III. It refers to two independent grants made on two occasions first by the queen and later by her husband the king of the Eastern Ganga kingdom. The title "Two Eastern Ganga Inscriptions" is not only wrong and a misnomer but will certainly mislead the present and the future historians unless a proper attempt is not made atleast now, to rectify the mistake. At the outset the Tamil text of the inscription and also the English translations as published in the Volume of Epigraphia Indica XXXI are reproduced below:

Inscription No. I *TEXT*

1. Svasti[*] Chatu [r*] ddasa-bhuvan-adhipati-sri-Purushottama-charan-adesa(sa)t
[*] Samaramukh-aneka-ripu-marddana-bhujabala-parakranma
2. ma-paramavaishnava-paramabhattacharaka-jaganmulakarana-sri-Purushottama-
putra-traivasundhara-samundha(ddha)rana-praba(cha)nda-do-
3. rddanda-[ma*]havaraha-srimad-ekadasi-vrataraja-samsevana-vidalita-Kalikala-
kahusha masi-spa[r*]sana-lesa-mahavaky-artha-pari-
4. charry-abhyas-aparokshi[kri]ta-paramabrahm-ananda-bhava-maharajadhiraja-
rajaparamesvara-Gang-anvay-avala[m]bana-sta[m*]bha-srimad-Ana-
5. ntava[r*]mma-rahutadevanudaiya prava[r*]ddhamana-vijaya-rajya-
samvat[s]aramgal pattonabada(da)vadile Mina-sukla-panchamiyum Budha-
6. n kilamaiyum perra Revati-nal Abhinava-Varanavasiyil irundu Antarudra-
vishayattil Udaiyakamam-engira[pe]-
7. yar-udaiya ur Allalanathanukku puja-naived[y-a] [r*]tthamaga Somaladevi-
mahadevi a-chandra(nda-r)ka-sthayiya-
8. ga dhara-purvvakamaga-kkudutten Somaladeviyen[*] Sri-Vishvakshenasya
likhanam

TRANSLATION

Hail! At the command of (the god) Purushottama, the lord of the fourteen worlds; in the 19th year of the increasingly victorious reign of Maharajadhiraja Rajaparamesvara Anantavarma-rahutadeva who has destroyed by the prowess of his arm the arrogance of the enemy in many a battle, who is a Paramavaishnava (and) Paramabhattacharaka, who is the son of (the god) Purushottama the original cause of the universe, who is the (veritable primeval) Great Boar that raised high the three worlds, who by his observance of ekadasi the best of the all the vratas is free from the slightest touch of the black evils of the Kali age, who has attained the supreme bliss of Brahman by constant devotion to and practice of the meaning of the Mahavakya, and who is the pillar supporting the family of the Gangas on Wednesday, Mina-sukla-panchami, Revati, while staying at Abhinava-Varanavasi, Somaladevi-mahadevi grants, with libation of water and for as long as the moon and sun endure, the village of Udaiyakamam in Antarudravishaya, for worship and offerings, to the god Allalanatha. (Thus) I, Somaladevi, (give). (This is) the writing of vishvakshena.

Inscription No. II

TEXT

8 Rajarajadevar-
9 kku(ku) yandu 20 Kalingesvaran-ayulla Aniyankabhimadeva-rahutanAdimasattu
12[n]tiyadi saptamiyumn Tinga[t]-kki(ki)la-
10 maiyum perra Asvati-nal Ppe(Pe)rumulukku vaitta tirunandavilakku nalukku
Ariyena valla-naliyal ney nalikku vi-
11 t[t]a pala-varggattu ppa-ppa(pa)su aru-pattu-nalum polimurai-nagumn-chinai-
ppasuvumuga uru-pattu-nalum aga uru 128 ri-
12 shabha-nalum-kaikkondu i-ttiru-nandavilakku nalum n chandir-adi[t*]tavarai
chelutta-kkadavom Perumal koyir(yil)-
13 sthanattom sri[*]

In the 20th year of Rajarajadeva, on Monday, Adi 12, saptami, Asvati, we, the sthanattar of the Perumal temple, agree to supply (daily) as long as the moon and sun endure, a nali of ghee measured by the Ariyenvalla-nali for burning four perpetual lamps before (the god) Perumal, for which purpose 128 cows made up of 64 milch cows and 64 heifers and pregnant cows and four bulls were given by Aniyankalnimadeva-rahuta.

T.V. Mahalingam says as follows:

"The two subjoined inscriptions are engraved, one in continuation of the other, on the south wall of the Arulala Perumal temple at Little Kanchipuram, Chingleput District, Madras State. They are edited here with the aid of their impressions kindly placed at my disposal by the Government Epigraphist for India.

The language as well as the script of both the records is Tamil. Wherever Sanskrit words or phrases occur, they are written in the Grantha script, the rest being in Tamil characters. The orthographical peculiarities do not call for any special remarks. The object of the first inscription is to record the gift of the village of Udaiyakamam in Antarudra-vishaya by Somaladevi-mahadevi, for offerings and worship, to the god Allalanatha while she was at Abhinava-Varanavasi (the modern Cuttack city in Orissa).

The inscription is dated in the 19th year of the reign of Maharajadhiraja Rajapamesvara Anantavarmarahutadeva who is stated to have belonged to the Ganga family. The king is further described as the son of [the god] Purushottama and a Paramavishnava who regularly observed the ekadasi-vrata and constantly meditated upon and practised the meaning of the mahavakya. The inscription quotes other details of the date, viz., Mina su.5, Wednesday, Revati. As the year of the commencement of this king's reign is known to be 1211 A.D., the particulars of the date given in the inscription seem to correspond to 1230 A.D., March 20, the tithi quoted having ended the following day at .02. The nakshatra Revati is misquoted for Rohini.

The second inscription records the gift of 128 cows and four bulls by Kalingeswara Aniyankabhmadeva-rahuta for four perpetual lamps to the Perumal. The sihanattar of the temple agreed to measure of the ghee required for the purpose. It is dated in the 20th year of the reign of the Chola king Rajaraja III and contains the following astronomical details. Adi 12, Saptami, Monday, Asvati, which correspond to 1235 A.D., July 8, the week day being Sunday and not Monday as quoted.

These two Eastern Ganga inscriptions are of more than ordinary interest for two reasons. Firstly on account of the fact that both of them are found engraved on the walls of a temple at Little Kanchipuram far away from Orissa and secondly for the reason that, while the first inscription in which the Ganga king's wife figures as the donor, is dated in the 19th regnal year of that king without reference to the contemporary Chola king Rajaraja III, the second is dated in the latter's 20th regnal year. It will be of interest to examine how the two Eastern Ganga inscriptions are found at Kanchipuram. It would appear that king Aniyankabhima III (1211-38) took

advantage of the political confusion that prevailed in South India during the reign of the Chola king Rajaraja III (1216-46 A.D.) and tried to fish in the troubled waters of South Indian politics about 1229-30 A.D. either by himself or more probably at the invitation of over-grown and disloyal Chola vasals like the Kadavaraya chieftain Kopperunjinga. The reign of Rajaraja III was marked by many political and economic troubles even from its beginning. Probably about 1229-30 A.D. he invited fresh trouble for himself and his kingdom by withholding the tribute he was to pay to Maravarman Sundarapandya I and despatched a large army against him. Rajaraja III, having been defeated by the Pandya king, abandoned his capital and proceeded to his relation and friend, the Hoysala king Narasimha II, along with his retinue. On his way he was suddenly overtaken by the Kadava chief with the help of a vanguard of forest and foreign (mlechchadesa) troops, taken captive after a fight and imprisoned in his capital Jayantamangalam (Sendamangalam). When Narasimha heard of these events, he defeated the Pandya king, carried destruction into the region under the Kadavaraya and restored Rajaraja to his throne.

It is very probable that the Eastern Ganga king Aniyankabhima III sent his army to the Tamil country apparently to help the Kadavaraya chieftain but really to take advantage of the political confusion in the Chola kingdom. Though there is no direct evidence as such to show that he either assisted the Kadavaraya chieftain or actually sent his army to the Chola country, it is indirectly suggested by two pieces of independent evidence."

Mahalingam's further discussions which are elaborate and irrelevant are not reproduced here. However I give below the gist of his arguments.

The Hoysala King Vira Narasimha defeated the Kadavaraya chief, released the Chola king from the prison and installed him on the Chola throne. The date of the event was the March-April 1230. Mahalingam says that in the troubled circumstances, the Eastern Ganga king invaded Tamilnadu and captured Kanchipuram. At that time the grant made by his queen to the Kanchipuram temple was engraved. That is why it is dated 20th March 1230. Mahalingam further says that at this exact time the Hoysalas defeated the Eastern Ganga king and drove him out from Kanchipuram. After winding up his discussions Mahalingam concluded thus:

"It is a point to be noted that though the grant was made to a celebrated Vaishnava temple in the heart of the Chola kingdom, the inscription is dated not in the regnal year of the then Chola king Rajaraja III, but in the 19th regnal year of the Eastern Ganga king. It is not easy to explain away the circumstance, though the document could have been prepared at the Eastern Ganga capital, unless we take

that Rajaraja III was then a prisoner at Sendamangalam with his vassal Kopperunjinga, and the Chola country was without a king. But the Eastern Ganga occupation of Kanchipuram was only temporary and it was put to an end by the Hoysala army which drove the hostile forces from the place and occupied the city. Though the Eastern Ganga army was dislodged from Kanchipuram in the course of 1230 A.D., Kalingesvara Aniyankabhima's devotion to the god Allalanatha of the place was so great that, according to the second inscription edited here, he made in 1235 A.D. a gift of 128 milch cows and 4 bulls for four perpetual lamps for the Perumal, for which the sthanattar of the temple agreed to measure a nali of ghee by the Ariyenavalla-nali. It is significant that this inscription is dated in the 20th year of the reign of Chola Rajaraja III. It suggests that, after Rajaraja's release from prison in 1230 A.D., Aniyankabhima III recognised him as the Chola king and did not interfere in the politics of the Chola country. No indication is available in the inscription as to whether the Kalinga king was at Kanchipuram at the time of this grant. Possibly he made the grant in absentia from Abhinava-Varanavasi itself in the same way as his wife Somaladevi had done five years earlier, unless it is assumed that he visited the place in 1235 A.D. as a pious pilgrim."

Note by D.C. Sircar

In the foregoing article, Dr. T.V. Mahalingam suggests that the Eastern Ganga monarch Anangabhima III (c. 1211-38 A.D.) took advantage of the chaotic condition prevailing in the Chola territory as a result of the temporary imprisonment, in 1230 A.D., of Chola Rajaraja III (1215-46 A.D.) by the Kadava king Kopperunjinga I and that for a time the Eastern Ganga army entered Kanchipuram to be driven out soon afterwards by the Chola king's Hoysala Narasimha II (c. 1220-35 A.D.). He further contends that, since one of the Kanchipuram inscriptions bears a date in the regnal reckoning of Anangabhima III, the locality must have been for the time being under the Ganga king. But the suggestions appear to be unwarranted in view of certain known facts of South Indian history during the period in question which Dr. Mahalingam has ignored totally.

In the first place, about a hundred inscriptions discovered in the Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Kurnool, Cuddapah and Nellore Districts prove that the entire tract lying to the north of the Chola dominions formed a part of the empire of the Kakatiya monarch Ganapati (1199-1261 A.D.), a contemporary of Chola Rajaraja III. That the Kakatiyas were expanding their power towards the south is proved by two of Ganapati's own inscriptions, dated 1250 A.D., at Kanchipuram itself. It is interesting to note that Kadava Kopperunjinga II, son of Kopperunjinga I, claims

in his Driksharama inscription, dated Saka 1184 (1261-62 A.D.), to have been the executor of the commands of Ganapati-maharaja, i.e. a subordinate of Kakatiya Ganapati. The Eastern Ganga may therefore could not have penetrated as far south as Kanchipuram without conquering thousands of square miles of Kakatiya territory and there is absolutely no proof to show that Anangabhima III was ever engaged in a successful war with Ganapati.

Sircar did not agree with Mahalingam. He said that the Eastern Ganga king did not invade Tamilnadu and hence no need for the Hoysalas to bother about it. Further arguments made by Sircar are not necessary here in view of the conclusion which I am going to arrive at the end. However the last paragraph of the article of Sircar evokes some interest, since it is not free from far fetched imagination. Sircar said that,

It has been suggested elsewhere (E1. XXXpp22) that Somaladevi, wife of Ganga Anangabhima III, was a sister or daughter of Rajaraja III, although her name may point to her birth from a Kannada princess. We know that the name of a queen of Hoysala Narasimha II was also Somaladevi and that the said Hoysala king gave one of his daughters in marriage to the Chola king Rajaraja III. As the practice of naming grandchildren after their grandparents was a popular one, it is not impossible to think that Somaladevi, wife of Anangabhima III, was a daughter of Rajaraja III by the daughter of Hoysala Narasimha II through his queen Somaladevi. If such was the case, the presence of the inscriptions, edited above by Dr. Mahalingam, at Kanchipuram can be easily explained.

Areas of agreement:

Mahalingam and Sircar agreed that these are two independent inscriptions. They assigned them to the Eastern Ganga king Aniyankabhima deva.

Areas of disagreement:

Mahalingam said that the Eastern Ganga king invaded Kanchipuram but was driven out by the Hoysalas. Sircar did not agree with this surmise. His contention was that Somaladevi was probably the daughter of Rajaraja Chola and was also probably the wife of the Eastern Ganga king and this explains the presence of the above records (This theory is only his imagination).

New Approach:

The question arises whether there are two records or only one inscription in two parts engraved one in continuation of the other. The answer is quite clear. It is a single inscription in two parts engraved by the same hand. The photograph of the record is also published here. There are 13 lines. The first transaction ends in the eighth line with a punctuation mark after which the second transaction proceeds. The second part begins simply as Raja Raja Devar Year 20 and so on. This clearly shows that the record was engraved in the 20th year of Raja Raja and while doing so the previous gift made in absentia from Abinava Varanavasi by the Eastern Ganga Queen was also recorded. Now we come to the most important issue. The exact Tamil text of the second part of the record is not properly translated. The English translation published in the volume is as follows.

"In the 20th year of Raja Raja Deva on Monday, Adi 22, Saptami Asvati, we the sthanattar of the perumal temple agree to supply (daily) as long as the moon and sun endure, a nali of ghee measured by the Ariyenavalla - nali for burning four perpetual lamps before the (God) perumal for which purpose 128 cows made up of 64 milch and 64 heifers and pregnant cows and four bulls were given by Aniyankabhimadeva-rahuta."

The above translation is totally wrong. It has misled the scholars to make unnecessary arguments and counter arguments concerning the Hoysalas and the Eastern Gangas. The above translation implies that the cows were given to burn four lamps which were already in existence in the temple for a long time. Actually it is not so. The exact English translation given below solves the whole issue.

"Raja Raja Devar's year 20 - Kalingeswaran (alias) Aniyaka behmadeva-rahutan-in the month Adi on 12th (solar day) Monday Saptami, Aswati day - for perumal (Vishnu) placed sacred perpetual lamps four (for which) to supply daily a nali of ghee by the measure Aniyavallan nali - 128 cows made up of 64 milch cows and 64 heifers and four bulls (rishabam) were received by us, the sthanattar of the Perumal temple, and we agree to light these sacred lamps so long as the moon and sun endure."

In the 20th year of Raja Raja the Eastern Ganga king placed (vaitta) four sacred lamps in the temple and the sthanathar agreed to light these four sacred lamps for which purpose they received 124 cows and four bulls. It means that the Eastern Ganga king was physically present in the temple on that day and made the grants in person. He came to Kanchipuram on a pilgrimage in the 20th year of the Chola King

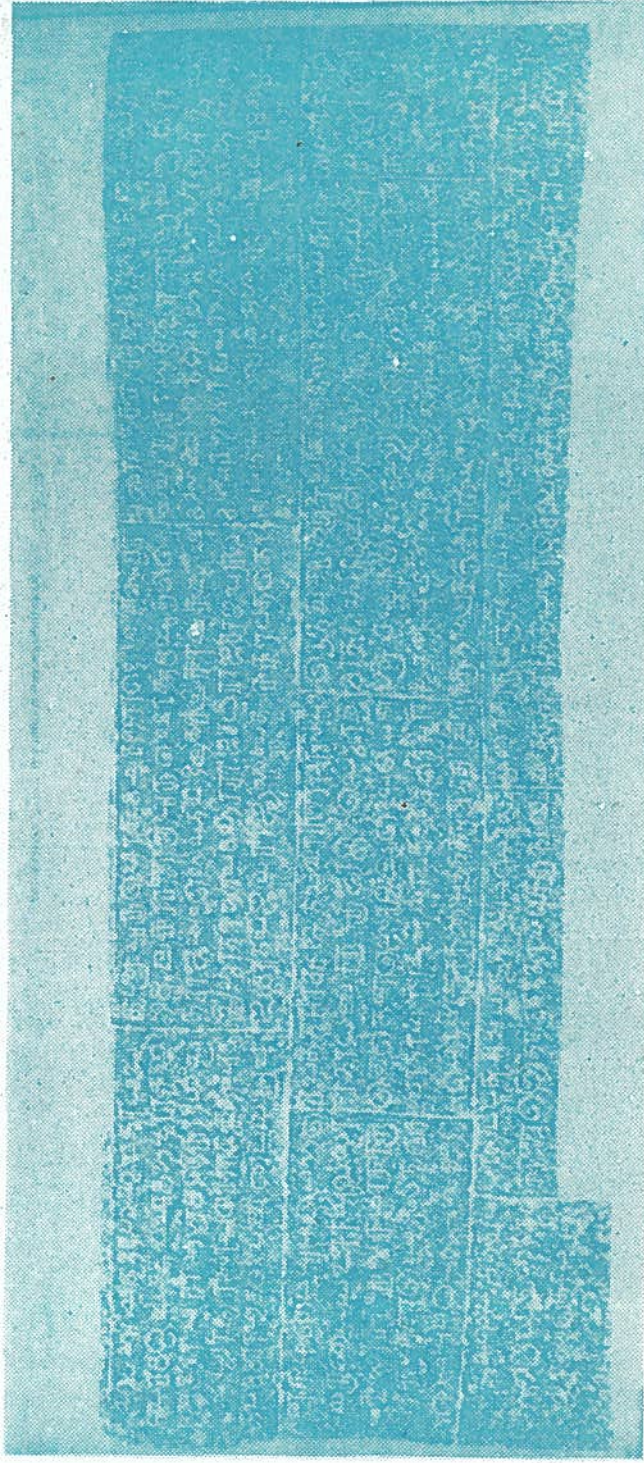
Raja Raja. Since the territory belongs to the Chola the record is naturally to be assigned to Raja Raja Chola III. It actually has his name and quotes the 20th year of his ruling.

Conclusion:

The Kanchipuram inscription belongs to the Chola King Raja Raja III. In his 20th year on the 12th solar day of the month Adi the Eastern Ganga king came to Kanchipuram on pilgrimage, gifted four lamps, 124 cows and four bulls. At the time of inscribing the transaction the previous grant made to the Kanchipuram temple in absentia from Abinava Varanavasi by the queen of Aniyangabhima in the latter's 19th year was also recorded. Since the grant by the queen was made earlier, and that too in absentia it is engraved in the first part stating that this is the writing of Vishvakseva (as per the Vaishnavite tradition) and the subsequent grant made by her husband after five years is recorded in the second part as a straight transaction. The entire engraving was inscribed in the 20th year of the Chola King. The title Two Eastern Ganga inscriptions at Kanchipuram is a misnomer. It is the Kanchipuram inscription of the Chola King Raja Raja III. It records the two independent grants made one by the queen of the Eastern Ganga king and the other by her husband five years later when he came to Kanchipuram on a pilgrimage.

Both Mahalingam and Sircar relied on the English translation of the second part. Had they read the Tamil texts - there would have been no need for the publication of such long articles.

[I am thankful to Dr. Madhav N. Katti Director of Epigraphy and M.D. Sampath the Chief Epigraphist, Archaeological Survey of India who were kind enough to send me the photograph of the Kanchipuram inscription.]



Kanchipuram inscription of Raja Raja Chola III year 20