

## TEMPLES AND INSCRIPTIONS IN SHOOLAGIRI REGION - A STUDY

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### Abstract

Krishnagiri district is carved out of Dharmapuri district on 09-02-2004 as 30<sup>th</sup> district of Tamil Nadu. It is bounded by Vellore and Thiruvannamalai districts in the East, Karnataka state in the west, State of Andhra Pradesh in the North and Dharmapuri District in the south. Its total area is 5143 Sq. Kms. This district is elevated from 300m to 1400m above the means of sea level. It is located between 11° 12'N to 12° 49'N Latitude, 77° 27'E to 78° 38'E Longitude.<sup>1</sup> Soolagiri taluk is one of the newly formed taluks of Krishnagiri by bifurcation of Hosur and Denkanikkotta taluks. Soolagiri taluk came in to existence from February 2016. The taluk is bounded by Krishnagiri taluk in East, Hosur taluk in West, Karnataka State in North and Denkanikkotta taluk in South. Head Quarters of the taluk is Shoolagiri town. It is located 31 KM towards west from District head quarters Krishnagiri, 288 KM from State capital Chennai towards East. It is located between 11° 12' 66" N Latitude, 78° 01' E Longitude. When Krishnagiri district is carved out of Dharmapuri district on 09- 02-2004 has only five taluks namely Krishnagiri, Hosur, Denkanikottai, Pachampaalli and Utthangarai.<sup>2</sup>

**Keywords:** Sancturium, Microlithic period, Paleolithic period, Neolithic period, Bronze Age, Iron Age

"Sula" means "Shoolam or Trisul", "Giri" means "Hill". As the peaks of the hill looks like he Trisul, it is named "Shoolagiri". Some claims that "Sula" means the Sun. Because of the sun rays directly penetrate in to the Sanctum Sancturium of Varadarajasamy Temple situated on the hill, the hill is called Sulagiri or Shoolagiri.<sup>3</sup>

The period before writing is called "Pre-Historical period". Archaeologist have classified this pre-historical period as Paleolithic period, Microlithic period, Neolithic period, Bronze Age and Iron Age. As far as Tamil Nadu is concern a clear Bronze Age never exists; instead direct Iron Age developed after the Neolithic period. Iron Age was otherwise termed as Megalithic period. The Megalithic culture was highly flourished in Shoolagiri taluk. The famous Megalithic site Mallachandran is situated in this taluk. Besides Megalithic monuments many rock art paintings of this age also are found here.

During the beginning of historical period when the Sangam Age classical work is composed Adiyaman clan ruled this region. Then Thagadoor Nadu was extended up to Mysore. The Ankusagiri situated near Shoolagiri was ruled by "Kandiracko Nalli" of Thotimalai, another philanthropist of Sangam age.<sup>4</sup>

After Sangam age this region was ruled by the Gangas and Nulambas as feudatories to the Pallavas. Gangas called their country as "Gangapadi or the Gangavadi". From 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century parts of Krishnagiri district was called as "Eyl Nadu"; Hosur and Shoolagiri regions are called as "Kovur Nadu".<sup>5</sup> The Nulambas, the feudatories to Pallavas ruled part in

the of "Nulambapadi". During the imperial Cholas, great Rajaraja I, concurred both Gangapadi and Nulambapadi and these regions are falls in the "Nigarili Cholamandam", one of the Mandalas of Chola country.<sup>6</sup>

After the fall of Cholas the Hysolas established their rule; then it was followed by the Vijanagarar rulers, Bijapore Sultans, Mysore Udaiyars, and the Madurai Nayakas. During the Hysolas rule "Kundanai alias Dever Kundani" now known as "Chinna Gothur" is the Capital of Vira Ramanathan fraction. Jagadevarayan clan ruled this region under their country named as "Bhramahal. When they extended their power up to Chennapatna, now in Mandia district near Mysore they were identified as the rulers of Chennapatna. Then, Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan established their superiority over the Mysore Udaiyars and ruled this region. The fall of Tippu in the wars with British has witnessed the establishment of rule Of British.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Sri Iravatheswar Temple, Athimugam**

Sri Iravatheswar Temple is located in Athimugam in Shoolagiri Taluk in Krishnagiri District. Sri Iravatheswar Temple in Athimugam, Hosur, is believed to be 1800 yrs old Temple.

This is the Temple where Indiran (King of Devas) and his Vahana Iravadham got relieved of Brahmahati dosham. As the Iravadham elephant (Vahana of Indiran) worshipped in this Temple and got relieved of Brahmahathi dosham, the face of Iravadham could be seen on the Shiva lingam. Hasthi means Elephant in Sanskrit and mugam means face. The village is also known as Hasthimugam which later got changed to Athimugam. Mother Kamakshi Amman is gracing devotees in a standing form behind the Iravatheswar lingam within the same sanctum's sanctorum (Garba Grahah).<sup>8</sup>

Lord Sri Ganapathi graces with an Akshara mala in his hand facing north in the outer pragram (corridor) of the Temple. Sri Dakshinamurthy graces by destroying the ignorance and arrogance of devotees. He is known as Samhara (destroyer) Dakshinamurthy blessing the devotee's wit and wisdom and humility.

The temple has two presiding deities. Besides the one mentioned above, Lord Shiva in the form of Sri Alageshwara Swamy graces with Mother Akilandeshwari in a different sanctum in this temple.

There is an ancient athill (generally called Pambu Puttru as snakes in them) in the southwest corner of this temple. This was of sand in these ancient days and later became too solid as a rock.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Speciality of this Temple**

This temple is an Irratai sannithi temple ie. There are two moolavars. The Iravatheswar Shrine has Appar and Thirugnana Sambandar statues. So it is believed that this temple should have been visited by them.

This is also a temple of Sun Worship. Nandhini (Vahanam of Lord Shiva) is seated slightly away in front of Lord Iravatheswar leaving way for the Surya puja. The rays of Sun fall on the Lord during the first week of Tamil month of Thai (mid January to mid February). As Nandhini is on a side to facilitate Surya puja, other planets (navagrahas) are also in calm and sitting form. The Navagrahas in this temple are in a calm and seated position.<sup>10</sup>

As the Iravadham elephant worshipped the Lord in this temple, the Shivalinga has that image on the face.

There is a pancha lingam sannidhi with 5 Shiva Lingam in 5 sanctums in a row with Nandhi in front of each Shiva linga.

The Sthala viruksham is Vilva tree. Vilva tree in this temple is about 1800 years old and it is said to be very oldest, tallest and biggest in the world. The tree is still very lively and majestic.

Lord Murugan is seen with his consorts Valli and Deivanai. Lord Murugan's vahanam peacock is seen facing the left side of Lord Murugan and it is a rare thing to see.

The temple is specially beneficial for education and career growth. All the devotees who are thronging the temple now are beneficiaries of the lord by way of career growth and industrial growth. It is believed that praying to the Lord in this temple continuously for 5 pradasha will bring out huge change in one's career. People pray for removal of obstacles in marriage, for child boon, achievements in education and career growth.

The temple is almost 7 feet below the village and further more the suyambu lingam is 3 feet below the ground level of the temple.<sup>11</sup>

### **Sri Thimmarayaswamy Temple (Muzarayi)**

#### **History**

Lord Thimmaraya Swamy temple is situated in Sahadevapura Kshetra of erstwhile Gajashila Pura, now popularly known as Anekal. The temple was built by the local Palegar, Sri Thimme Gowda. The deity in the Garbha griha is not an idol but a mound, resembling a Snake Pit (Ant Hill). According to folk lore the Palegar had a dream of a cow standing on the Ant Hill (Snake Pit) with milk flowing from its udder. When the dream was repeated every night, on one morning he set foot in search of the place he dreamt. To his astonishment he found it to be reality. To find out the truth he ordered his soldiers to dig the ant hill and to his surprise found the Lord Srinivasa doing penance. Thus, he decided to build an abode for the Lord at the same place.

In the year 1913, the temple was renovated by Sri Gopal Raj Urs, the then Tahasildar of Anekal Province. The temple has acquired prominence for its simplicity and bounty of nature. People from all walks of life, in and around Anekal, visit the place and worship the lord. The Car Festival (Rathotsava) for Lord Thimmaraya Swamy is held every year and devotees throng to pull the Chariot.<sup>12</sup>

## Inscriptions

Shoolagiri does not support with many inscriptions.

The inscription found at the field on the southern part of Berigai village records about donation of a land for welfare and the victory of Virabellala during the reign of Hysola king Viraramanathan to the year Kaliyga 4426 ad Sagam age 1242 representing the BCE 1320.<sup>13</sup>

The inscription found at the Eastern bank of Berigai Lake of Berigai village is inscribed on both side of the slab, as erected adjacent to the wall of the lake, leads inability to read fully. It records the 41<sup>st</sup> regnal year of Viravallava and some grants to the temple Tiruvaiteswaramudaiya Nayanar. It mentions Versagayam village in Masathai Nadu. Further it records names of Perumal Kulasegara Thevar, Semanatha Thevarana Sellappillai son-in-law of Singarayar.<sup>14</sup>

The Maniankal (Manekal) inscription found on a boulder in the northern side of Muniyappa's field; mostly ruined. The readable part record the 41<sup>th</sup> regnal year, the name of the king is shattered. In the year Nandana land of two Kandaga Paddy sowing was donated to Suryadevar.<sup>15</sup>

## New Inscriptions

This researcher has identified few new inscriptions. They are yet to be read.

1. In Athimugam, a new inscriptions is found at the entrance. Besides this, two more inscriptions are found on the southern side of Temple. In all three inscriptions are identified.
2. In Korakuruki, an inscribed slab is found in front of a tea shop. A small temple structure is build for this inscribed slab. Local people worship the slab as Mariamman.
3. A blurred (damaged) inscriptions is found in foot hill of B.G.Durgam alias Balakondarayan Duram hill.
4. In the Tatchina Thirupathi temple a Gopachandram found a Telugu inscription on western side of the temple. It measures 15 to 45 cm.
5. Kallu is a village situated 18 km from Berigai. On the western side of village is found an inscribed slab. Locals say, earlier it was found at the southern side of village, in Mariyamma's land.
6. Maiyoppalli village is situated at 7 km distance from Shoolagiri. One Tamil inscription is found in field of Siddappa on the way to Sigarle about 100 feet away. It measures 120 cm and 90 cm.
7. A Telugu inscription is found on the southern side of ChinnaKoththur in Pappanna's field.<sup>16</sup>

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