
Kollam Pillar Inscription of Rama Kulasekhara: The Last Chera Record of a Jain Perumal of Makothai

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Abstract: *This paper is an attempt to shed fresh light into the dark corners of the history of Jainism in the modern state of Kerala through the analysis of a medieval Malayalam Vatteluttu inscription popularly known as Kollam Pillar Inscription. Although this record was published in the 1920's, thus far no Jainologist in Kerala took note of it. This 12th Century CE record helps us to establish the Jaina affiliation of the last known Chera Perumal Rama Kulasekhara. Together with some native and non-native inscriptional evidences, it also enlightens us that Rama Kulasekhara's Jain faith was one of the reasons that ultimately led to the disintegration of the Second Chera Empire. This inscription further divulges the Keralaputras' close association with Trikunavay Jain Palli, the ancient/medieval Jain pivot of Kerala. Rama Kulasekhara's shadow force called 'Ayiram' alias 'Trikunavay Ayiram' can further be identified as the precursor of the present 'Onnu Kure Ayiram' organization associated with the Kodungallur region, the historic capital territory of the Cheras. This study also hints at the Jain affiliation of the present-day Nair community of Kerala. More than anything else, this inscriptional analysis can be termed as a landmark in the history of Jainism in Kerala, for establishing the Jaina association with the Cheras, the native ruling family of Ancient and Medieval Kerala.*

Keywords: Inscriptional Sources, Jainism, Medieval Kerala, Hoysala Ascendancy, Perumals of Kerala, Religious Assimilation, Cultural Legacy

Introduction

Jainism is one of the oldest and non-theistic religions in the world. The historical penetration of Jainism into Peninsular India before the Common Era is an established fact (Desai 1957: 1-3, 32). A large number of Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions speak about the flourishing existence of Jainism in the ancient *Tamilakam* and some of them shed light on the presence of Jains in the present geographical context of modern Kerala as well (IAR 1973-74. No. 38: 40; Mahadevan 2003. No. 1-6, 8-13, 15, 20, 25-28, 30-32, 36-50, 52-53, 55-56, 59-70, 72, 74-77, 80, 82, 85-89: 315-324, 327-336, 339, 345, 353-357, 359-362, 369-387, 389-391, 393-395, 399-410, 419, 421, 425-429, 433, 435, 441-447). The medieval Cheras, also known as the Perumals, emerged as the dominant power in the Kerala region from 9th Century onwards. The inscriptional sources prove that the ancient and the medieval Cheras belong to the same line of ruling family and the latter was the continuation of

the former. The capital of the medieval Cheras was at Makotha, also known as Mahodayapuram or Muyirikkodu, which is identified as the present Kodungallur region (Narayanan 2013: 15-16, 48, 102,151,153,158,170).

Most of the medieval Chera rulers were the patrons of Hinduism especially Vaishnavism and Saivism. But in the light of some inscriptional evidences, we have to rethink about the religious affiliation of Rama Kulasekhara alias Kulasekhara Chakravartikal (c.1089-1122 CE), the last Chera Perumal of Mahodayapuram (Narayanan2013: 73-74). His Kollam Pillar inscription (*TAS*, Vol.V. Part. I. 1924. No. 13: 40-46; Narayanan 2013. Index. A71: 469-470) is a crucial one to understand the position of Jainism in Kerala in the early part of the 12th Century CE. This is the last epigraphic record of a Chera ruler reigned from Makothai. This record is inscribed in 151 lines on the four sides of a granite pillar in old Malayalam in *Vatteluttu* and *Grantha* script. Being in a highly weathered condition it is difficult to read the full content of the record. The important portions of the inscription, related to Jainism in Kerala were translated with minor corrections by the present researcher from the published Tamil transcript (*TAS*, Vol.V.Part.I.1924.No.13: 40-46). The English transcript of the inscription is as given below.

First Face

(L1)swasthi-sri{I}-(2)kollamtho-(3)ndri-irunu(4)rrezhupath(5)thettaman-(6)daik-kanniyi-(7)vi
yazham-puk(8)ka-[singgana]-yiru(9)onpadhu-sen(10)ra-nal-iranda(11)mandaik-kedhi(12)r-pat
hi-[nora]-mandai(13)[yi]-ramar-Thiruva(14)di-koyiladhika(15)rigalayina-sri-ku(16)lasekarach-
chakki(17)ravarththigal-ku(18)rakkenik-kola(19)ththu-panangavi(20)n-koyilagathi(21)runnarula
la{I}-ariya(22)rodu-vanna-virodha(23)ththinu-prayachchith(24)thithathinu-puthan-a(25)raiya
l-padhinazhi(26)kkollum-parayal-(27)niyatham-oropa(28)raich-seidhu-nel...

Second Face

(L29)ramech(30)chubarathu.....(31).....(32).....(33).....
ari(34)ya-brahmana(35)rungkudi(36)yirunnada(37)ththu.....pakka(38)l.....(39)yakkin
g-gai(40)yilth-thi(41)rukka-na(42)naicharula-(43)nangu-tha(44)liyu-ma(45)yi-[rama]-(46)ru-
nurru(47)varum-[yin]-(48)nadu-vazhk(49)kaiyan-vik(50)kiramanana(51).....(52)kkan-
mudha(53)layulla-(54)samantharu(55)ndh-thirukkai(56)kkizhk-ku(57)diyirukka(58)th-thirukka
i-(59)nanaichcha-[ru]-(60)liyavidhu{I}-(61)achcheri(62)kkal-kara(63)nmai-se(64)tha-venat(65)t
u-ku mara(66)nudhaiyava(67)amman.....

Third Face

(L68)i.....(69).....(70)anjazhi-kollu-(71)midangazhiyil-mup(72)paththarukala-nel-
li(73)ramesurathu-manda(74)bathil-[kuttang](75)kudi-yirunnadhil(76)i-[vvanandu]-mudhal-(77)
thiru-[kkuna]-vaikku(78)m-thirukkuththung-(79)kudich-ch[lvadhu]{I}-(80)kittradichchubarath
(81)thu-melodiththi.....(82)lu-sennel-mu(83)ppaththarukalam(84).....lippadi-
(85)padhineng-kala(86)m-nellal-se(87)laviduvithu{I}-vaichcha(88)nel-padhinaingkala(89)ththal-
thollayira(90)nazhi-palakkattu-k(91)nnth-thevan-sela(92)viduvithu{I}-tholla(93)yiranazhi-mel-
io(94)vur-[vur]-sakthibrama(95)nj-selaviduvithu{I}-(96)selavu-muttigindrey(97).....

.....mayalanjna(98)zhi-ari-thandapattu-(99)selaviduwithu{I}-karala(100)r-muvarung-kudi-serik
(101)kal.....karalarum-thiru(102)kkunvathevar-thiruna(103)daiyil-kondu-annazhi(104)kku-
okku-mida-[ng]-kazhi(105)nanuru-nazhi-nelat(106)tai-kalaru-serikkal-ko(107)duppathu{I}-iv
vann-[am]-mai(108)chchamaikku.....[m-thiruk]-ku(109)navayiranum-ikkadai-

Fourth Face

(L110)kadamaiya(111)l.....(112)thindruma(113)thichchu-o(114)kku.....
(115)n-runazhi-(116)uriyal(117).....(118)irunazhi-(119)akkiram-(120)pathinazhi-
(121)ipperuma(122)l-nadai-sila(123)virkku-ava(124)rrirku-na(125)zhuri-kirra(126)dichurathu
(127)molodik(128)ku-azhuri(129).....kuduk(130)thu.....ka.....nn(131)ra-
mangga(132)lath-thiravi(133)yirayan-134)kaiyehhuthu{I}(135).....na.....(136)la.....(137)
khalung(138)yum.....(139).....(140).....(141)michanang(142)gaiyadivar-(143)arikkku
.....(144)ichchnezhuthu{I}-(145)araichur-asa(146)ri-kaiyehhuth(147)thu{I}-thirupe(148)
rur-marai(149)ka.....kandachcha(150)n-kaiye(151)zhuththu-sri{II}.

It is a royal order in four parts illustrating certain crucial socio-political conditions of the Chera country. The first two parts talk about the atonement made by the king himself to the Arya Brahmins by rectifying the wrong doings of himself or his predecessors. The king is stated to have conducted a meeting with the Brahmins, *Nalu Thali*, *Ayiram* (*Ayiravar*-The Thousand), *Arunurruvar* (The Six Hundred), along with the feudatories including governors of Eranadu and Venadu in the *mandapa* (temple hall) of the Kolam Rameswaram temple. *Nalu Thali* was the council of the Brahmin members belonging to four Brahmin settlements situated close to the Chera capital (Narayanan 2013: 20, 54, 73, 88-89). The atonement is in the form of a donation of certain quantity of paddy for daily feeding of Brahmins, for which the king conferred the *Karanmai* (tenancy) right on the *Cherikkal* land (king's own land) to one *Kumaran Udaya Varman*, probably the junior prince of *Venadu* principality. The third and the fourth parts of the inscription are concerned with *Trikunavay*, the well-known Jain establishment of ancient/medieval Kerala. According to the record, the council met at the *mandapa* of the Rameswaram temple and decided that "from the current year onwards certain quantity (36 *kalam*) of paddy, additionally, will go to the *Trikunavay Tevar* (God of *Trikunavay*) for the conduct of *Thirukkoothu* festival' ('anjazhi-kollu-midangazhiyil-mupaththarukala-nel-li-ramesurathu-manda-bathil-[kuttang]-kudi-yiru-nnadhil-i-[vvandu]-mudhal-thiru-[kkuna]-vaikku-m-thirukkuththung-kudichch-[lvadh]-{I}'. Lines: 70-79)¹. Another 36 *kalam* paddy will go for the worship at *Kirradichchuvaram* (*Kittradichchuvaram*) temple ('kittradichchuvath-thu-melodiththi.....lu-sennel-mu-ppaththaru-kalam...'. Lines:80-81)². The last mentioned donation probably endowed for conduct temple orchestra (*Melam*) at *Kirradichchuvaram* temple³. This inscription further says that three tenants (*Karalar*) of the *Trikunavay Thevar's* land along with the *Karalar* of the crown's land should deposit certain measure of paddy to the king's office (*Cherikkal*) for the worship of *Trikunavay Thevar* (*karalar-muvarung-kudi-serik-kal.....karalarum-thirukkunva-thevar-thiruna-daiyil-kondu-annazhi-kku-okku-mida-[ng]-kazhi-nanuru-nazhi-nelat-tai-kalaru-serikkal-ko-duppathu-{I}*' Lines:99-107)⁴. The king's order then convey that, 'this is the collective responsibility of the minister's council (*Amaichar Sabha*) and the

Trikunavayiran (The head of the *Trikunavay* Thousand Organisation) ('*ivvann-[am]-mai-chchamaikku-[m-thiruk]-ku-navayiranum-ikkadai-kadamaiya-i.....*' Lines: 107-111)⁵.

Many interesting historical facts emerge from this inscription. The record itself says that either the king or his ancestors committed some mistakes to the Arya Brahmins of Kerala and lists out certain measures for the atonement from them. The subsequent portion of the record largely speaks about *Trikunavay* and the grant of certain amount of paddy by the king to the temple specifically for the conduct *Koothu* festival. It is difficult to identify *Kirradichchuvaram* temple mentioned in the record which also received certain donation along with the *Trikunavay* temple. It could be a Jain basti dedicated to Adinatha alias Rishabha Deva, the first Tirthankara. The name *Kittra-Adishwaram* indicates the presiding deity Adinatha.

Another interesting peculiarity of this inscription is the reference to the practice of collecting the paddy from the tenants, for the worship in the *Trikunavay* temple directly by the king's court. There is a reason to suppose that the king Rama Kulasekhara was a follower of Jainism and that the worship in the temple of *Trikunavay* was conducted under the direct supervision of the king and his subordinates. The location of the *Trikunavay* must be near to the Chera capital. On the basis of it, the identification of *Trikunavay* alias *Kunavayir Kottam* alias *Thrikanamathilakam* as the present Mathilakam near Kodungallur can be confirmed.

Here we have to remember that Ilango Adigal, the brother of ancient Chera king Chenguttuvan spent his ascetic life at *Thrikanamathilakam* near the Chera capital Vanji, from where he authored the famous Jain epic *Silappadikaram* (1939.Pathgam.1-9.Canto.xxx: 77, 343-344; Kanakasabhai 1979: 208; Narayanan 1972: 17). The Tirumalai inscription of Vidugadalagiya Perumal (*EI*, Vol.VI.1900-1901: 331-332; *SII*, Vol.I.1890. No. 75-76: 106-107; Ekambaranathan & Sivaprakasam 1987. No. 338: 269-270.), mentions one *Elini* alias *Yavanika*, the Chera ruler of Vanji, who installed *Yaksha* and *Yakshi* images there, can be identified as the Chera Chenguttuvan who also patronised Jainism⁶.

It is remarkable that the suffix '*Athan*' in a number of ancient Tamil-Brahmi records (Mahadevan 2003.No.12-13, 36, 40, 46, 56, 61-62, 70, 74, 82: 334-335, 369, 373, 381, 395, 405-407, 419, 425, 435) from *Tamilakam* indicate them as patrons of Jainism; because all the records mentioning *Athan* are discovered from the Jain caves and moreover these are either directly or indirectly related to Jainism. The above observation lead us to reach a reasonable conclusion that the suffix '*Athan*' attached with most of the ancient Chera king's names found in the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions as well as in the literary sources have Jaina affiliation. The Kongar Puliyankulam Tamil-Brahmi record (c.2nd Century BCE) refers to one *Chera Athan* who donated a cavern for Jain monks (Mahadevan 2003.No.12: 334). A Muttupatti record (c.1st Century BCE) mentions that one *Ko Athan* (King *Athan*), the *Elamakan* (junior prince) of *Muziri* donated a cave shelter there for Jain monks (Mahadevan 2003.No.56: 395). Two Chera records (c.2nd

Century CE) from Pugalur Jain cave also refers to 'Ko Athan' (Mahadevan 2003.No.61-62: 122,405-407). Another short Tamil-Brahmi record (c.3rd Century CE) from Edakkal cave in Wayanad similarly refers to *Ko Athan* (Mahadevan 2003.No.82: 122, 435). The term *Athan* suffixed to most of the ancient Chera rulers (like Udayan Cheralathan, Neduncheralathan, Adu Kottu Pattu Cheralathan, Selvakkadunko Valiyathan, etc.,) illustrated in the *Sangam* classic *Pathitruppathu* (2012: 32-33) may also indicate their Jaina affiliation. The performance of the Jain rite *Vadakkirikal*⁷ by the Chera king Udayan Cheralathan illustrated in the *Akananuru* (2017.Poem: 55,246) and *Purananuru* (2017.Poem: 65-66), further reveal the close affiliation of the Chera family with the 'Noble Faith of the Lord Jina.'

The Tirumalai inscription also tells us about the clear cut continuation of the lineage of ancient Cheras and the later Chera-Perumals of Kerala (*EI*, Vol.VI.1900-1901: 331-332)⁸. A number of medieval Vatteluttu inscriptions of Kerala such as Kinalur, Alathur, Thiruvannur, Thazhekavu and Kollam (*TAS*, Vol. V. Part. I. 1924. No.13: 40-46; *SII*, Vo. V. 1986. No.784: 338; *Vol.VII.1932. No.174: 74*; Narayanan 1972: 70-78; 2013. Index. A62, 71, B123, C28: 130, 145, 465, 469, 474, 484, 495) clearly say that *Trikunavay* was a chief Jain *Palli* which was the model for all other Jain temples of Kerala. A c.2nd Century CE Mannarkoyil Tamil-Brahmi inscription connects *Ilango* alias *Ilango Adigal* with *Kuna* alias *Kunavayir Kottam*) (Mahadevan 2003.No.89:447)⁹. If it is true, a junior Chera prince named *Ilanko Adigal* possibly lived during c.2nd Century CE and the place *Kunavay* and its Jain temple might have existed even before this date. However, the Kinalur inscription (Narayanan 1972: 20, 76-78; 2013.Index.B23: 484) links *Trikunavay* with the later Chera king Vijayaraga (c.883-913 CE), Similar in the case of Thiruvannur record (Narayanan 1972: 70-72; 2013.Index.A62: 465) with Rajaraja Chera (c.1036 - 1089 CE). According to the present Kollam Pillar record under discussion, the Chera Perumal Rama Kulasekhara is managing the *Trikunavay* affairs directly from the court. It is reasonable to postulate that the Chera ruling family had a close association with the *Trikunavay Palli*. Jainism must have been the state sponsored faith during ancient and the early part of the medieval age. This could be the reason for *Trikunavay* becoming the model of all Jain centres of Kerala. Because of this reason the concluding passages of most of the Jaina inscriptions from Kerala specifies the holiness of *Trikunavay* temple, such as 'the defaulters are offenders who will be equally considered as wrongdoers to the holy *Trikunavay*,' and also, 'should protect the temple property as equal to the property of the *Trikunavay*,' and so on (Narayanan 1972: 70-75).

At the same time, we did not have much evidence for Jain patronization by the later Cheras, except a few rulers like Vijayaraga, Rajaraja and his successor Rama Kulasekhara. The Hindu revivalism initiated by Adi Sankaracharya, and the subsequent development of Tamil *Bhakti* movement must have influenced the later Chera rulers as well. The earliest known Chera Perumal Rama Rajashekara (c.800-844 CE) has been identified as the Cheraman Perumal Nayanar, one of the sixty three Saiva *Nayanars*. Likewise, the second Chera ruler Sthanu Ravi (c.844-883 CE) is identified as the Kulasekhara Alvar, one of the twelve Vaishnava *Alvars* of Tamil *Bhakti* tradition

(Narayanan 2015: 64-65,67). There is good reason to believe that from the period of Rama Rajashekara onwards the illustrious *Trikunavay Perumpalli* appears to have lost its prominence. Absence of any Chera record between 9th -11th Century CE speaking about *Trikunavay*-except the Kinalur inscription (Narayanan 1972: 20, 49-50; 2013.Index.B23: 484)¹⁰ - indicates the loss of Jain patronization from the Later Chera rulers starting from Rama Rajashekara (c.800-844 CE) up to Ravi Kotha Rajasimha (c.1021-1036 CE).

Another noteworthy fact that the absence of any evidence regarding the Chera rulers who preceded Rama Rajashekara. During this period, the Pallava and Chola eminence in the Kerala country could have made Chera rule an unimportant chapter. However, from the Thiruvannur record (Narayanan 1972: 70-72; 2013. Index. A62: 465) it is acceptable the Jain affiliation of Rajaraja, the immediate successor of Ravi Kotha Rajasimha, who was a staunch patron of Hinduism as attested by the Mannarkoyil, Trichambaram and Indianur inscriptions (Narayanan 2013.Index.A59,60-61,63: 464-465). However, Rajaraja was certainly a tolerant ruler who had encouraging attitude towards Jainism as well.

Trikunavay appears to have held its prominent place up to the period of Rama Rajashekara. Its fame begins to decline due to the change in the faith of the later Chera rulers¹¹ which ultimately led to its conversion into a Siva temple, which is eloquently described in the medieval literary works. The Brahmin's apathy towards *Kunaka Thampuran* alias *Trikunavay Tevar* as mentioned in certain *Manipravalam* literatures like *Kokasandesam* (2007.Sloka.48: 60)¹² of the late medieval period, should be seen in the light of the shift of the sectarian affiliation of the Cheras. At this juncture, Rama Kulasekara's *Prayaschitta* to the Arya Bahamans described in the Kollam Pillar Inscription (L: 13-28; *TAS*, Vol.V.Part.I.1924.No.13.L.13-28: 44; Narayanan 2013. Index. A.71: 130, 145,469) testify to his efforts to reclaim their support.

However, it appears that Rama Kulasekhara became the follower of Jainism, and patronised his traditional family shrine and that could be one of the main reason for the decline of the Perumal Empire in Kerala. Rama Kulasekara's conversion into the Noble Faith from Hinduism probably led to internal troubles leading to a civil war in the kingdom. His Jaina affiliation as a wrong doing to the Arya Brahmins could be added more fuel to fire. The rise of the Hoysala power under the leadership of Vishnuvardhana further worsened the situation. The Jain Bitti Deva's conversion into Vaishnavism as 'Vishnuvardhana,' under the influence of saint Ramanuja led to tumultuous changes not only in the Kannada country but Kerala as well.

Hoysala Vishnuvardhana V/S Rama Kulasekhara Perumal

Here we have to note some vital historical facts about the Hoysalas and the Cheras of Mahodayapuram. At the present state of our knowledge, Rama Kulasekhara (1089-1122CE) was the last Chera Perumal of Thiruvanchikulam, and after that the great empire has declined (Narayanan 2013: 73-74). Around the same time Hoysalas

established empire under their expansionist king Vishnuvardhana (c.1108-1152 CE). It also appears that at the same time the Cholas lost their political clout in the south except in their core region¹³. Inscriptional evidences show that the Cholas and the Pandyas were defeated and they too became subordinates to Hoysala Vishnuvardhana (EC, Vol.V.1902: Hn.53, 119, Cn.149, Ak.18, Bl.17, 124). An Arsikere inscription (1142 CE) of Vishnuvardhana speaks about the setting up of a new *agrahara* in Kellangere (near Arsikere) for certain Brahmin refugees who previously had land at *Kodanganur* which they received as *Janameejaya* (EC, Vol.V.1902: Ak.110)¹⁴. Kodanganur could be the same Kodungallur, which was once an integral part of the Perumal's capital Mahodayapuram. The term *Janameejaya* could be the same *Janmideya* of Kerala, which is similar to *Brahmadeya*¹⁵ in other parts of India. The Brahmin-temple-land oriented medieval feudal system of Kerala is known as *Janmi* system and the landlords known as *Janmies* (Kunjan Pillai 1959: 8-44; Veluthat: 2013: 113, 121-123). Here we have to take note of the opinion of M.G.S.Narayanan (2013:129) who said that “*meanwhile something strange appears to have happened to the Chera kingdom though the wars against the Pandyas and the Cholas apparently did not produce anything more than a stalemate with slight occasional gains and losses. How far this new phenomenon was internal and how far it was related to external invasions and the impact of wars cannot be assigned in the present state of our knowledge*”. Corroborating this observation with the contemporaneity of all above said historical facts and events leads us to formulate some hypotheses regarding the collapse of the second Chera Empire.

We did not have any solid evidence concerning the causes for the decline of the later Chera Empire except certain traditional accounts and narrations. The popular *Keralolpathi* tradition attests that the last Perumal embraced Buddhism, then Islam and went to Mecca (*Keralolpathi*.1868: 26-29, 65-66, 73-75; Narayanan 2013: 129-134). Here it should be remembered that in medieval Kerala, the term ‘*Bauddhas*’ was not only used to denote the Buddhist, but other non-Hindu followers including Jains and Muslims as well (Day 1863: 365-366). The Muslim tradition according to *Tuhafat Ul Mujahideen* (2005:29-31) by Sheikh Zeinuddin too testifies to the partition of the kingdom among governors by the last Perumal and his conversion to Islam and subsequent journey to Mecca. But on the basis of Kollam pillar inscription and other supportive evidences, we found out the Jain affiliation of Rama Kulasekhara. At the same time, Rama Kulasekhara's worry to please the Brahmins and to make amends for having offended them could be found reflected in the *prayaschitta* (compensation) which he offered to the Brahmins by the same record. This record clearly says that he is living in the *Panainkavu* palace in *Kurakkeni Kollam*, “*sitting in council with Ariya Brahmins,*” made amends for some offence against them by donating paddy for their daily feeding (L: 13-28: *TAS*, Vol. V. Part. I. 1924. No. 13. L. 13-28: 44; Narayanan 2013. Index. A. 71: 469)¹⁶. Rama Kulasekhara's profligate encouraging attitude towards Jains of Kerala could be one of the reasons behind the *prayaschitta* (penance) grant given to the Brahmins. His conversion into Jainism, subsequent patronization could be the chief factors behind the exasperation created among the Arya Brahmins of Kerala. The

Kollam inscription could be an appeasement measure taken by the king to resolve the remorse of the Kerala *Nambuithiri* Brahmins.

The interesting issue to be probed here is why king Kulasekhara left his traditional capital at Mahodayapuram in the central Kerala and living Kollam in the South? Definitely the ruler must have faced some severe external attacks most probably from Vishnuvardhana, the powerful Hoysala emperor and the emerging savior of Brahminical faith. A number of inscriptions clearly indicate that Vishnuvardhana's kingdom not only extended over the Pandya and Chola territories but over the Cheras as well (Dhiraj 2016: 638-641). A record (1178 CE) from Nagamangala says that king Vishnu captured a number of forts including *Karukankollam* (EC, Vol.IV.1898: Ng.70; Dhiraj 2016: 641). This must be the same *Kurakkeni Kollam* (Kollam/Quilon) in the Rama Kulasekhara's *prayaschitta* grant (L: 17-19; TAS, Vol.V. Part. I. 1924.No.13.L.17-19: 44). These two instances: Rama Kulasekhara's *prayaschitta* to the Brahmins at Kollam along with the accommodation of Brahmin refugees at Kellangere by Vishnuvardhana support the traditional accounts of the former's conversion into another religion. At the same time, on the basis of Kollam pillar inscription it seems safe to say that Rama Kulasekhara was a Jain; afterwards, if we accept the tradition, he must have converted into Islam. Vishnuvardhana's invasion ultimately forced the Chera king to transfer his capital to a safer place in the southern part of Kerala, Viz., *Kurakkeni Kollam* alias Kollam. The invasion of Vaishnava Vishnuvardhana perhaps encouraged Rama Kulasekhara to appease the Brahmins of Kerala to get their spiritual support for his temporal power. Endowment of *Cherikkal* (king's own land) land in the presence of Brahmin council called *Nalu Thali* to the Kumaran Udaya Varman of Venadu for feeding the Brahmins should be seen from this angle.

Ayiram* alias *Trikunavay* *Ayiram

The Kollam Pillar inscription mentions two terms, Viz., *Trikunavayiran* and *Ayiram*, which have a significant bearing on the medieval history of Kerala. The record mentions that the king was sitting in the council at the temple hall with the *Arya Brahmins*, *Nalu Thali*, *Ayiram*, and *Arunurruvar* along with his feudatories ('...*ari-ya brahmana-rung-kudi-yirunnada-ththu.....pakka-l.....yacking-gai-yilth-thirukkaina-naicharulanangu-tha-liyu-ma-yi-[ram-a]-ru-nurru-varum...*' (L.33-47; TAS, Vol. V. Part. I. 1924. No. 13. L. 33-47). In another place the record says that the responsibility for collecting paddy from the *Trikunavay Tevar's* land was entrusted to *Trikunavayiran* ('*ivvann-[am]-mai-chchamaikku-[m-thiruk-]-ku-navayiranum-ikkadai-kadamaiya-l* L: 107-111)¹⁷. It has already been said that the *Nalu Thali* was the king's council of Brahmins belonging to the adjacent four Brahmin settlements in the Chera capital. The *Ayiram* must be a shadow force (*Nilal*), probably maintained exclusively for the king Rama Kulasekhara. It is very crucial to note this is the only inscription of the entire Chera dynasty which mentioned these two terms. The *Trikunavayiran* and *Ayiram* must have been closely connected. The former could be the commander or head of the latter. At the same time, *Trikunavayiran* could be the same *Trikunavay Adhikarar* (officer of the *Trikunavay*) mentioned in the Alathur Jain inscription of c.11th Century CE (Narayanan 1972: 73-75;

2013. Index. B1, C28: 474, 495). The specific purpose of the *Ayiram* organisation and its head *Trikunavayiran* is difficult to postulate, but it is reasonable to assume that they had the same role played by other organisations of numerical appellation which existed in the medieval Kerala like the *Munnuttuvar* (The Three Hundred), *Annuttuvar* (The Five Hundred), *Arunurruvar* (The Six Hundred), *Muvayiravar* (The Three Thousand), *Ayirattirunurruvar* (The Thousand Two Hundred), etc.

The Alathur and Thazhekavu Jain records clearly say that these two temples were under the supervision of the *Nalpattennayiravar* (The Forty Eight Thousand) (Narayanan 1972: 73-74; 2013.Index.C28: 495)¹⁸. The Thiruvannur temple was supervised by *Arunurruvar* (Narayanan 1972: 70-71; 2013.Index.A62: 465). The Kinalur record put the supervision of *Kunavaynallur Tevar* (The god of the *Kunavaynallur* or Kinalur) under the *Muvayiravar* (The Three Thousand) and the *Ezhunnuruvar* or *Ezhunnuttuvar* (The Seven Hundred) organisations (Narayanan 1972: 76-78; 2013.Index.B23: 484). These organisations could be a militia which provides protection to the temples and other properties in the medieval feudal social structure. At the same time, they provide military help for the king as well. Consequently, kings and his chieftains could have maintained these kinds of organisation exclusively for their personal and political purposes. Here we have to note that the *Ezhunnuruvar* in the Kinalur inscription “is the organisation of the companions of honour belonging to the governor of *Kurumpurai-nadu*” (Narayanan 1972: 76-78; 2013.Index.B23: 484). Simultaneously, the temple at Kinalur had an organisation called *Muvayiravar*. The *Ayiram* of *Trikunavay* could be having the responsibility of protecting the temple besides handling the administrative affairs of the temple as well. Hence, as per the present pillar record, the responsibility of the collection of a share of produce from the land of *Trikunavay* temple was placed under *Trikunavayiran*. All these evidences prove Rama Kulasekara’s Jain affiliation and that the *Trikunavay* temple affairs were directly controlled by the king’s office. The *Ayiram* was not only a managerial organization of the *Trikunavay* temple, but a shadow force of the Jain king Rama Kulasekhara¹⁹.

The *Ayiram* was an organization of the Ten thousand (multiple of Thousand) militia (Narayanan 2013: 232)²⁰. Here we have to remember that the members of the medieval Chera forces mainly comprised of the Nair warriors, and the bodies like *Annurruvar*, *Arunurruvar*, etc., had their military nature with Nair predominance. The question that arises now is who were the members of the *Trikunavay Ayiram*? Jains or Nairs? The Nairs of Kerala definitely had a proven Jain ancestry. The closing stages of the Chera age witnessed a large-scale Jain-Nair assimilated acculturation in Kerala country. During this period perhaps there were no major differences between the Jains and the converted Jain-Nairs. It seems logical to call the *Trikunavay* shrine as a Jain-Nair temple. The members of the *Trikunavay Ayiram* and its head *Trikunavayiran* could be a Jain-Nair. Interestingly, certain traditional literary records attest the *Trikunavay* temple and its property’s ownership by two Nair families called *Vadakkedathu Nair* and *Thekkedathu Nair* (Narayanan 1972: 21). Here we have to validate a logical hypothesis formulated by M.G.S.Narayanan (1972: Introduction. ix) that the Jains of Kerala “were

almost completely absorbed in the Nair community". We also have to recall the opinion of another renowned scholar Raghava Varier (1974: 22) that the *Vaniya* sub-caste among the Nairs may have been converted Jains. Future studies on this postulation can further reveal the truth.

Onnu Kure Ayiram (The Thousand without One)

In this background, it is imperative to discuss about a Nair organisation called *Onnu Kure Ayiram* (an association of One minus One Thousand or The Thousand without One or 999) still surviving today in Kodungallur, the ancient capital of the Cheras. We did not have any historical records except traditional accounts regarding the origin of this organisation²¹. Nowadays, *Onnu Kure Ayiram* is known as *Onnu Kure Ayiram Yogam*, but usually referred to in abbreviated form as *OKAY*. It is purely a Nair organisation which comprised a large number of Nair sub-classes living in the vicinity of Kodungallur. Interestingly, this hereditary body has been the administrative authority of the Kodungallur Bhagavati temple. The meeting of the *Onnu Kure Ayiram Yogam* is held on the first day of every Malayalam month in front of the temple, in which all administrative matters relating to the temple within the purview of their authority were discussed and suitable resolutions are taken. Further, the members of the *Yogam* (Committee) will be perform a ritual called *Nilal Irikkal*, which can be interpreted as 'sitting as shadow.' We are aware about the term *Nilal* found in the medieval inscriptions, which means shadow mainly denoting the "companions or body guards who will move along with the master like shadows inseparable from the object of origin" (Narayanan 2013: 233). The *Ayiram* body of king Rama Kulasekhara was also his *Nilal* or Shadow force. The expression *Nilal Irikkal* in the present day context could mean protecting the deity of the temple as his/her *Nilal* or Shadow. Remarkably, this local tradition is supporting the association of this organisation with the last Chera Perumal as well. It says that the thousand members in the *Ayiram* organisation were reduced to nine hundred and ninety nine due to the conversion of the last Perumal into Islam who subsequently went to Mecca. The *Keralolpathi* (1868: 65-66)²² tradition also associates the reason for the conversion of last Perumal into Islam with the story of mistreatment by king to one of his Nair commander *Padamel Nair*, who was the leader of the king's attendant force called *Akampadi Pathinayiram* (The Retinue Ten Thousand). This *Padamel Nair* could be the *Trikunavayiran* alias *Ayiravan* in the Kollam Pillar inscription, and he also could be the *Trikunavay Adhikarar* find mentioned in the Alathur record. On the basis of these narrations in the traditional accounts substantiated by the *Ayiram* organisation of the Kollam Pillar inscription, it seems logical to reach a supposition that the present *Onnu Kure Ayiram Yogam* of the Kodungallur temple was an inheritor or successor of the *Ayiram* organisation of the last Perumal Rama Kulasekhara. The lost one could be the king itself after the conversion from Jainism into Islam.

Here, we have to recall the observations made by some scholars regarding rituals in the *Bharani* festival performed in the Kodungallur temple wherein "vulgaritys are shouted and bloody sacrifices are made which represents the commemoration of an attempt to

drive away the Jain or Buddhist monks and nuns from the place" (Narayanan 2013: 232, 250n4). The ritual *Nilal Irikkal* or protecting the deity of the temple as a shadow force by the Nair warriors could be indicative of the past conflicts that once existed between two rival groups possibly for the authority over the worship and administration in the temple. The tradition regarding the conflict between Brahmin *Uralar* of Irinjalakuda and the Nairs of *Thrikanamathilakam* for the *Trikunavay* temple and its property (Narayanan 1972: 21) is also coinciding with the situation. The protection given by the *Ayiram* body of the king Rama Kulasekhara to the Kodungallur temple could be a reality. This information again speaks of the *Sramana* association of the last Perumal. The administrative authority over the Kodungallur temple exercised by Nair's *Yogam* (committee) and along with its priest's Jaina associated designation as *Adigal*²³ further hint at the Jain ancestry of the temple. Owing to this observation, the identification, by some scholars, of Kodungallur temple as the one where Chenguttuvan installed Buddhist Kannaki image in the Chera capital city at Vanji mentioned in the *Silappadikaram* could be revisited²⁴.

Summation

The above discussion mainly based on the Kollam Pillar inscription is crucial one to understand the position of Jainism in the early and medieval Kerala. This inscriptional analysis clearly shown that the dynastic rule of the medieval Cheras were the continuation and extension of the *Sangam* Cheras. It also established the relation between the 'Noble Faith of the Lord Jina' and the *Keralaputras*. Traditionally, most of the rulers of the ancient *Chera-Keralas* were either staunch Jains or patrons of this faith, because this study evidently established the Jaina affiliation of all the '*Athan*' suffixed ancient Chera rulers. This study further divulged the Chera's close association with the *Trikunavay Perumpalli*, the ancient/medieval Jain pivot of Kerala. The Chera prince named Ilanko Adigal could be a reality, and probably he lived during about the 2nd Century CE, and the place *Kuna/Trikunavay* and its Jain temple might have existed even before 2nd Century CE.

During the medieval age, the Hindu revivalism and subsequent historical events naturally influenced the Later Cheras of Kerala also, who showed their affinity and preference to Hinduism. Some of them, particularly Vijayaraga, Rajaraja, and Rama Kulasekhara patronized Jainism besides Hinduism. But the Kollam Pillar inscription and other supportive evidences indicate that Rama Kulasekhara was also a devout follower of Jainism, which was one of the reasons for the decline of the empire. His conversion into Jainism, subsequent patronization must have irritated the Arya Brahmins of Kerala. The *prayaschitta* part of the Kollam Pillar inscription could be an appeasement measure taken by the king to resolve the remorse of the *Nambuithiri* Brahmins of Kerala. The incursion of Hoysala Vishnuvardhana hastened the process of decline of Perumal kingdom of Makkothai. The invasion of 'Vaishnava' Vishnuvardhana probably encouraged Rama Kulasekhara to appease the Brahmins of Kerala to get their spiritual support for his temporal power. The Jaina affiliated *Trikunavay Ayiram* in the Kollam pillar inscription can be identified as the *Ayiram*

shadow force of the Chera king Rama Kulasekhara. Furthermore, the *Ayiram* body of Rama Kulasekhara can be identified as the forerunner of the present Nair organization called *Onnu Kure Ayiram Yogam* of Kodungallur region. The assimilation on a large scale Jain followers in the Nair caste of the Hindu fold in Kerala has to be postulated for further research.

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Notes

- ¹ For comparison with the published Tamil transcript, see *TAS*, Vol.V.Part.I.1924.No.13.L.70-79: 45.
- ² Reference to both *Kirradichchuvaram* and *Kittradichchuvaram* temples in the record could be same and one. See L: 80-81,125-126; *TAS*, Vol.V.Part.I.1924.No.13.L.80-81,125-126: 45.
- ³ The expressions like 'kittradichchuvath-thu-melodiththi....' and 'kirra-dichurathu-molodik-ku' in the record could probably mean the Melam or orchestra at *Kittradichchuvaram* (L: 80-81,125-128; *TAS*, Vol.V.Part.I.1924. No.13.L.80-81,125-128: 45). The defaced part of the inscription is not conveying the exact source for the paddy to *Trikunavay* and *Kittradichchuvaram*. On the basis of the immediate flow of the lines in the record, it is not unreasonable to suppose that it is also collected as a share from the *Cherikkal* land's tenancy right which handed over to the *Cherikkal Karalan* (tenant of crown's land) namely *Kumaran Udaya varman of Venadu*.
- ⁴ As the above lines, the word *Cherikkal* was mentioned twice, and but it gives different meanings as 'crown's land' as well as 'king's office' or court. The word 'nelattai' (nelat-tai) can be divided into 'nel' and 'attai' or 'atti,' means 'paddy' and 'stack,' can be interpret as 'stack of paddy.' At the same time, the word 'nilam' is a common word for land, especially for paddy field in Kerala at least since medieval age.
- ⁵ The 'thiruk' in the 'thiruk-ku-navayiranum' is defaced in the epigraph, but there is a good possibly to read it as *Trikunavayiran*.
- ⁶ There are certain strong reasons to believe that the *Elini* alias *Yavanika* in the *Tirumalai* record was an ancient Chera ruler than one belongs to the group of *Perumals*. The core content of the record says that *Vidugadalagiya Perumal* repaired and saved from ruin the image of a *Yakshi* and *Yaksha* along with a gong and a channel of the *Arhat (Engunavoirai)* temple on the *Tirumalai* Mountain which was set up by the very pious-minded Chera-Kerala king of *Vanji* named *Yavanika* (*EI*, Vol.VI.1900-1901: 332). On the basis of this description, it is clear that the shrine and other establishments were in a ruined condition being built by a Chera ruler of a very earlier date. Here, it is reasonable to assume that the Chera king who repaired the Jain temple on the *Tirumalai* hill had a *Yavana* touch. *Yavanika* in the record could be a title of the King *Elini* on account either he overpowered the *Yavanas* or got protected by the *Yavana* soldiers. There is another supposition that the *Yavana* colonies were protected by the Chera king. The presence of *Yavanas* in this region is referred by the *Tamil classics*; which largely connects the ancient Chera kings (*Pathitruppathu* 2012.*Pathigam*.2: 73-74; *Silappadikaram* 1939.*Cantos. xxviii, xxix: 322,335*). *Silappadikaram* (*Cantos. xxviii, xxix: 322, 335*) states that the

Yavanas had owned fertile land in this country and they paid tribute to and got protected by Cheran Chenguttuvan. It further says that, "sing to the glory of our king (Chenguttuvan), the lord of men, who protects the earth as far as Cape Comorin, abounding in heavy large stones, with his bow, fish and tiger flags, including the fertile country of the Yavanas of the barbarous speech?"(Silappadikaram, Cantos. xxviii, xxix: 335). The kingdom of the Yavanas got protected by Chenguttuvan could be indicating their trade settlements and colonies. One the basis of above observations, it is reasonable to suppose that Elini the Yavanika could be the Kadal Pirakottiya Cheran Chenguttuvan of the ancient Chera family.

- ⁷ The ritual called Vadakkirikal is a Jain sacred practice by which through prolonged voluntary fasting a Jain welcome death.
- ⁸ The Chengama inscription of Kulothunga Chola III refers to the Vidugadalagiya Perumal in the Tirumalai inscription as the Pirantha Perumal or 'the born Perumal,' son of one Rajaraja (EI, Vol.VI-1900-1901: 333; SII, Vol.VII.1932.No.127: 53). The term 'Vidugadalagiya (Vidukadalakiya) Perumal' can be interpreted as 'the Perumal whose abode is at the sea.' The Tamil-Malayalam word 'vidu' denote residence, 'kadal' means sea, and 'agiya' or 'akkiya' means 'befitted.' The surname 'Perumal' affixed with the name further establishes his place in the line of Perumals of Makotha. The Tirumalai inscription tells us about his father Rajaraja Chera and their forefather Yavanika alias Cheran Chenguttuvan, help us to connect the ancient and the medieval Cheras. Yavanika was mentioned as the very pious-minded Chera-Kerala king of Vanji and Rajaraja as "the foremost on the right path, who came from the Chera family of Vanji" (EI, Vol.VI.1900-1901: 332). We identified Yavanika as the Kadal Pirakottiya Cheran Chenguttuvan of the ancient Chera family (see Note.6). The Rajaraja can be identified as the Ravi Rama Rajadithya alias Adithyan Kota Ranaditya (c.1036 - 1089 CE), who belongs to the medieval line of the Chera-Perumal family reigned from Thiruvanchikulam (Narayanan 2013: 70-71). He must be identical with the Irai Irayar alias Rajaraja in the Thiruvannur Jain inscription discovered from the vicinity of Kozhikode city (Narayanan 2013.Index.A62: 465). Another two native records, one from Trichambaram near Kannur and another from Indianur near Malappuram also mention his name (Narayanan 2013.Index.A61, 63: 465). Two Chola records from Mannarkoyil in Tamil Nadu mentions this ruler as Chera Mannar Rajaraja Deva. (Narayanan 2013.Index.A59, 60: 464). Most probably Rajaraja was succeeded by Rama Kulasekhara. At the present state of our knowledge, the relationship between Rama Kulasekhara and Rajaraja cannot be identified. Possibly, the former was brother or son of the latter. If it is true, we have to consider Vidugadalagiya Perumal, son of Rajaraja as the last Chera-Perumal than Rama Kulasekhara.
- ⁹ This record refers that the gift of a Jain Palli caused to be made by one Ilanko of Kuna ("kunavin ilanko ceypita palli". Mahadevan 2003.No.89:447)
- ¹⁰ The 11th Century CE Kinalur inscription refers to the sanctification of Vijayaragiswaram temple during Vijayaraga's reign (883-913 CE) (Narayanan 1972: 20, 49-50; 2013.Index.B23: 484).
- ¹¹ It is remarkable that the first two later Chera kings, viz., Rama Rajashekara alias Cheraman Perumal Nayanar (c.800-844 CE) and Sthanu Ravi alias Kulasekhara Alvar (c.844-883 CE) established family temples dedicated to Siva and Vishnu in and around the capital city, viz., Tiruvanaikkalam and Tirukkulasekharapuram respectively (Narayanan 2015: 67-68).
- ¹² The Dvijas (Brahmins) are neither permitted to enter the temple nor to see directly the god instead they can worship from outside of the shrine ('chemme-kanmanaruthu-kunakatthampurane-dvijanmar-kkenrat-niyum-thozhuka-purame-ninru.' Kokasandesam.2007.Sloka.48: 60).

- ¹³ King Vishnuvardhana was the real establisher of the Hoysala imperialism. After the capture of Talakad, the ancestral capital of Western Gangas from the Cholas in the year 1116 CE, he sounded the death knell to Chola imperialism in South India. Kulothunga I (1070–1120), Vikrama Chola (1118–1135), Kulothunga II (1133–1150) and Rajaraja II (1146–1173) were the contemporary Chola rulers of Vishnuvardhana. By the hand of the Western Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI (1076–1126 CE), the Cholas also lost their political predominance in the Vengi region of Deccan. Accepting the mighty Western Chalukya suzerainty by Vishnuvardhana after some prolonged wars with Vikramaditya VI as well helped the former's imperial dream's execution on the Tamil, Kannada and Malayala regions of the Peninsular India. See Nilakanta Sastri 2013: 170-182; Dhiraj 2016: 638.
- ¹⁴ This record further adds that the "great king Vishnu saying I will give you a much better village and bringing them along with him, he gave them here Kellangere, which was adorned with all the Brahmans"(EC, Vol.V.1902: Ak.110).
- ¹⁵ Brahmadeya was one of the typical features of the Brahmin-temple oriented medieval feudal order of entire India. This is the tax free land grant either in the form of single plot or an entire village donated to Brahmans.
- ¹⁶ ".....[yi]-ramar-thiruvadi-koyiladhikarigalayina-sri-kulasekarach-chakki-ravarththigal-kurakkenik-kola-ththu panangavi-n-koyilagathi-runnarula-ariyarodu-vanna-virodhaththinu-prayachchith-thithathinu-putha-na-raiyal-padhinazhi-kkollum-parayal-niyatham-oro-paraich-seidhu.nel..."(L: 13-28; TAS, Vol.V.Part.I.1924.No.13 L.13-28: 44; Narayanan 2013.Index.A.71: 469).
- ¹⁷ The 'thiruk' in the 'thiruk-ku-navayiranum' is defaced in the epigraph, but there is a good possibility to read it as *Trikunavayiran*. For comparison with the published Tamil transcript, see L: 107-111; TAS, Vol.V.Part.I.1924.No.13.L.107-111: 45.
- ¹⁸ Certain inscriptional evidences clearly prove that the *Narpattennayiravar* was not just a trade organisation; but maintained, or performed as, a militia as well. A Tamil inscription from Arkeswara temple at Channapatna in Karnataka, dated 1247 CE register an endowment for the god *Arumolisvaram Udaiya Nayanar* of the temple by *Narpattennayira-Chchenapati* (ARMAD 1909.No.83: 21). *Chchenapati* (*Senapati*) denotes the commander of an army or militia. Another inscription from the pond at the Kudalur village in the same Channapatna taluk also refers to a donation made by *Narpattennayira-Chchenapati* and his daughter to the temple there (ARMAD 1909.No.83: 21).
- ¹⁹ Here, we have to remember the observation of M.G.S Narayanan (2013: 231-32) that the *Ayiram* organisation was a retinue of king Rama Kulasekhara; and their seat was in the Chera capital at *Makothai* alias *Kodungallur*.
- ²⁰ The numerical appellations to trade guilds like *Arunurruvar* or *Ayiravar* did not comprised exactly what the number mentioned as its name like *Ayiram* (Thousand) equal to thousand members or *Arunurruvar* (Six Hundred) equal to the Six hundred members, but it will comprised multiple of Ten, means Thousand equal to Ten Thousand (*Pathinayiram*) and Six Hundred equal to Six Thousand (Narayanan 2013: 232).
- ²¹ The present researcher collected information regarding the tradition associated to the *Onnu Kure Ayiram Yogam* directly from the temple authorities and certain members of that organisation.

- ²² According to the Keralolpathi tradition, a conflict occurred between the last Chera Perumal and his Nair commander namely Padamel Nair. Padamel Nair was the leader of the Ten Thousand force of the Perumal known as Akampadi Pathinayiram. The real problem was created by the Chera queen on account of her refuted love and lust by the king's loyal commander. The crooked queen made conspiracy against the commander. Finally, the king decided to punish the Nair at the provocation of his beloved wife. King paid the whole salary at the man's appeal and commanded him to be sunk in the river called Azhiyar. As a commander Padamel Nair instructed his ten thousand soldiers (Pathinayiram) as well to continue their 'Akampadi Sthanam' (follow their master) and departed for heaven. The king realised his mistake when it was too late. As atonement the king embraced Islam and went to Mecca. (Keralolpathi 1868: 65-66).
- ²³ The term 'Adigal' or 'Adikal' have a significant place in the history of Jainism in Kerala. This word has certain Jain-Nair association. Adigal is generally used as a respectful title or an honorific suffix meaning 'slave of the god'. In the earlier period it was largely used to denote the Sramana saints, specifically the Jain monks. Here we have to remember Ilango Adigal, the author of the epic Silappadikaram. We have a large number of inscriptional as well as literary evidences from Kerala and Tamil Nadu to prove the unquestionable identification of 'Jaina Adigal' (EI, Vol. IV.1896-97: 136nt; SII, Vol.III.Part.III-IV.1987.No.97: 229-230; Vol.XIX.1967.No.80, 89, 301: 41, 45, 149; Silappadikaram 1939: 48; Ekambaranathan & Sivaprakasam 1987.No.25, 322,331,361,493: 26,254,262,290-291,418; Desai 1957: 41-42). According to the Painkannoor Subrahmanya swami temple (near Kuttippuram, Malappuram) inscription (c.11th Century CE), Parutaiyar (?), Urar and the Adikal Rajasekharar (Adikal Irayasekarar) made certain provisions to protect the property which set apart for the (Nandavilakku) perpetual lamp, Nalpanka (?), and the Palli (Narayanan 2013.Index.C22: 493). Adikal Rajasekharar probably was a priest or an official of the temple. The term Palli could be denoting a monastery or other kind of Jaina establishment. This inscription did not mention any kind of Kachams (Code of conduct), which were popular during the Chera age to control the Hindu temple affairs, further ascertain its Jaina affiliation. The hereditary proprietors of the Kallil Jain Palli is also a Samantha Nair sub caste called Pisharody. The term Pisharody could be derived from two words: Tamil Pichai (Sanskrit/Malayalam Bhiksha) and Adigal. Pichai means basic needs obtained through alms, largely practiced by Jain and Buddhist monks. In this logic, Adigal who obtain Bhiksha became Pisharody. Today, in the Kerala society, Adikal is one of the sub-castes of the Nair community. Tradition says that they were the degraded Brahmins due to their priestly duties in the Bhadrakali temples; offering flesh and liquor to the goddess and also partaking both (Krishna Rao 2008: 8). The priests of the Kodungallur Bhagavathi temple are also called as Adikal. The Adigal of Kerala is a small community, mainly concentrated in Palakkad, Trissur and Malappuram districts. In the Travancore region they are known as Adishens or Adichan Nairs. The term 'Adichan' was popular during the medieval period. Adichan Kothai, governor of the Munni-nadu mentioned in a Perunna inscription support this hypothesis (TAS, Vol.V.Part.I.1924.No.13: 36-37; Narayanan 2013.Index.C42: 500). Iravi Adichan, minister (Amaicchi) of the Chera king Kotha Ravi alias Kotha Kotha Kerala Kesari (c.913-943 CE) mentions in the Trippunithura inscription could be another such example (Narayanan 2013.Index.A16: 442). During the medieval time, transformation of Jain deities, temples, rituals, and cults can be identified by the Jain term 'Adigal' in Kerala. We have evidences to prove the term 'Perumanadigal' (Peruman +Adigal) to denote either god or king during the Perumal age. (SII, Vol.III.Part.III-IV.1987.No.104: 236; TAS, Vol.II&III.1992.No.39, 49: 175-192; Narayanan 2013. Index.A53-54, 76, C41, 43: 461-462,471,499-500). Sankaran Kotha Varma alias Adikal Puraikilar in the Thirunelli inscription of the Chera king Bhaskara Ravivarman could be another remarkable example for the prominence of Adigal in the royal court (IA, Vol.XX.1985: 285-290; Narayanan 2013.Index.A36: 452-453). Adigal in the Adigal Maluvakkon in a Trikkakara inscription

leads us to think about his Jain-Nair affiliation (TAS, Vol.II&III.1992.No.47: 188-189). Certain Chera records inform us that the term 'Kilan Adikal' was a common title used by the Nair royal women in the Chera court, especially wife and daughter of the king Vijayaraga, the founder of the Vijayaragiswaram Jain palli at Kunavaynallur (Kinalur) (SII, Vol. III. Part. III-IV. 1987. No. 103: 235-236; TAS, Vol. II & III. 1992. No. 36: 170; Vol. IV. Part. II. 1924. No. 38: 144-145; Narayanan 1972: 20, 76-78; 2013.Index.A7, 17, 24, B23: 437-38, 442-445, 484).

²⁴ At the present state of our knowledge about Buddhism in Kerala, we did not have many archaeological remnants from the northern and central region of Kerala, except an image which looks like Amitabha Buddha from Pariyaram (Taliparamba Taluk, Kannur District) and another one from Kodungallur (Thrissur District). At the same time, most of the prominent Jain settlements in Kerala were concentrated in the Malabar and central part of Kerala. There is a good reason to believe that the southern part of Kerala especially in the district of Kollam, Alappuzha, and Kottayam were the main settlements of Buddhism in Kerala; simultaneously, Jainism concentrated in the central and the northern part of the state with its pivot at Trikunavay near Kodungallur.

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