Ascetics, Devotees, Disciples, and Lords of the *Maṭam*:

Monasteries in Medieval Tamilnadu

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Abstract

Ascetics, Devotees, Disciples, and Lords of the *Maṭam*: Monasteries in Medieval Tamilnadu

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The *maṭam* is understood in scholarly studies as an institution of asceticism and monasticism in Hinduism. The term *maṭam* can refer to caravansaries, choultries, rest houses, or monasteries for ascetics. While diverse in their functions and teachings, *maṭams* have historically shared the common characteristic of the teacher-disciple relationship and lineage. The *maṭam* emerged in the stone inscriptions from the South Indian region of Tamilnadu in the ninth century of the Common Era as one of the many institutions that received patronage from citizens to support its people and activities. While the inscriptions reveal the activities of *maṭams*, scholars have instead focused on tracing the lineages of *maṭams* in the Tamil region without examining the inscriptions for what they say about the people who lived in *maṭams* or frequented them occasionally.

This thesis examines the stone inscriptions from the ninth through thirteenth centuries for what they can tell us about the people who participated in *maṭams* and the activities that these institutions undertook. Ascetics, devotees, disciples, and "lords of the *maṭam*" (*maṭamuṭaiya*) were among the *maṭam* community and benefitted from *maṭams*' services. These same *maṭam* people were also one of the many kinds of people who served the temple complex in medieval Tamilnadu. The term *maṭam* is representative of diverse people and activities, and the inscriptions reveal that the *maṭam* in the Chola period was as varied in South India as the name suggests.

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Working towards the completion of a doctoral degree is something that cannot be done without the support and guidance of a number of people. There have been many people – professors, colleagues, friends, and family – that have supported me throughout my many years of doctoral studies and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued encouragement. I would like to begin by extending my thanks to the staff of the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India for graciously granting me access to the transcripts of the inscriptions that are in their keeping in Mysore. Thank you to the people of the École Française d'Extrême Orient in Pondicherry for their assistance during my time in India.

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Transliteration, Translation, and Citation

I have used the transliteration of the figures, texts, and words that are in Tamil as they appear in the *Tamil Lexicon* (MTL) with the exception of the long and short o and e since these are not distinguished in the inscriptions. In the case of Grantha characters, which were used in the inscriptions for Sanskrit letters, I have used the standard Sanskrit transliteration. I have used the standard non-scholarly transliteration for the names of places, kings, and dynasties. For example, I have used Chidambaram for Citamparam and Chola in place of Cōḻa.

All translations of the Tamil language inscriptions are my own except where specifically noted. In terms of translation method, square brackets indicate an editorial addition to a translation by an editor or by me. A series of dots indicates a break in a text, which may mark damage to the inscription, missing characters, or an incomplete or unfinished line in the inscription.

The published texts that I consulted are distinguished from the unpublished transcripts by citation. An inscriptional text available in publication in *South Indian Inscriptions* or elsewhere is indicated by use of the volume's standard abbreviation in the citation. For example, a text published in *South Indian Inscriptions* is indicated by use of SII in its citation. An unpublished full-text transcript is indicated in its citation by use of its ARE number from the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy*. I have provided a footnote in those instances where I have consulted the unpublished transcript of an inscription.

Abbreviations

ARE *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*

CMK *Ceṉṉai Māṉakar Kalveṭṭukaḷ*

CIPS *Chronological List of Inscriptions of the Puduttokkai State Arranged According to Dynasties*

EI *Epigraphica Indica*

IPS *Inscriptions (Texts) of the Pudukkottai State Arranged According to Dynasties*

KK *Kaṉṉiyākumari Kalveṭṭukaḷ*

MDh *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*

PI *Pondicherry Inscriptions*

PP *Periya Purāṇam*

RV *Ṛg Veda*

SP *Somaśambhupaddhati*

SII *South Indian Inscriptions*

SITI *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*

Tait Up *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*

TK *Tarumapuri Kalveṭṭukaḷ*

TAM *Tiruvannamalai: A Sacred Śaiva Complex of South India*

TAS *Travancore Archaeological Series*

Tēv *Tēvāram*

Ysam *Yatidharmasamuccaya*

Chapter One

Reading the Writing on the Wall: Epigraphy's Role in Indian Historiography and

the *Maṭam*

A. Some Introductory Remarks

> Hail! Prosperity! In the [2]7th [regnal] year of Śrī Kaṉṉaratevar,
> Vācaspati Bhaṭṭārar, the son of Vijñāna[kṣe]ma Bha[ṭṭ]ārar,
> the lord of the *maṭam* of Tiruvūṟal of Takkolam,
> gave ninety never aging and never dying living sheep
> for one perpetual lamp
> for Mahā[d]evar of Tiruvūṟal.
> The shepherd Mummalai was under the obligation to
> protect this one lamp and these never dying and never aging living
> sheep (SII 5.1365).

This tenth-century inscription, which is located on the south wall of the central shrine of the Jalanāthēśvara temple at Takkolam, records a donation for a perpetual lamp for the god Śiva of Tiruvural made by Vācaspati Bhaṭṭārar. The making of such stone epigraphs has a long history in India that reaches back centuries before the Common Era. There are approximately 90,000 inscriptions from India as a whole, engraved not only in stone but on metal, wood pillars, tablets, plates, pots, bricks, shells, and other objects dating from before the Common Era up to modern times. Such inscriptions may have been as brief as a single mark or word or extremely lengthy texts (Sircar 1965, 1). While the earliest inscriptions date from the third to fourth century before the Common Era, and while inscriptions are found throughout India, their distribution is not even in terms of their antiquity, geography, and language. Inscriptions are much more common in the medieval period than in earlier times and, in geographical terms, approximately 25,000

inscriptions come from the Tamil region of South India and these constitute the largest body of inscriptions from a single region (Salomon 1998, 5).

Modern historical studies of India using the evidence of inscriptions began in the colonial period and continued to flourish in the first half of the twentieth century. Despite the wealth of epigraphical materials available to scholars, inscriptions have been under-utilized by researchers of Indian history. While "the authors of inscriptions always suffered from a limitation of space and their treatment of history was never elaborate," these records are an important source of history that touches upon many aspects of life (Sircar 1965, 23). Other literary sources do not contain the type of historical information that inscriptions do (Salomon 1998, 3). Inscriptions describe contemporary events in many cases and often provide information about the people and events of history that may not be known from other sources (Sircar 1965, 17-18). This dissertation seeks to add to our understanding of Tamil history in the medieval period by examining the inscriptions from the ninth to thirteenth century for what they reveal about the *maṭam*, commonly defined as a monastery, in the Chola period.[1]

The term *maṭam*, derived from the Sanskrit *maṭha*, is defined in the *Tamil Lexicon* (MTL [1927-32] 1982, 3020) as a "Hermitage;" "Monastery, convent for celibate monks;" "Choultry where pilgrims and religious mendicants are fed;" "Rest-house;" "Temple;" "Place;" or, "Car." Percival's ([1993] 2006, 251) *Tamil-English Dictionary* defines the *maṭam* as "A school, a college, the residence of young Brahmans prosecuting

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[1] The word Chola specifically denotes the Chola dynasty that ruled parts of the Tamil region from the ninth to thirteenth century. It is also used by researchers of Tamil history to refer to the historical period of the ninth to thirteenth century. Although I am using the phrase Chola period to indicate this period, I do not mean to suggest that the Cholas were the only dynasty in power in the region during this time nor have I limited my analysis to inscriptions concerning *maṭams* that are dated in the regnal years of Chola kings. Other dynasties held power in the region and I have taken into consideration *maṭam* inscriptions dated in the regnal years of non-Chola kings, including – among other dynasties – Pallavas, Pandyas, and Rashtrakutas (as in the case of the inscription that serves as an epigraph to this chapter).

sacred studies." Winslow's *A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary* ([1886] 2006, 835) defines the *maṭam* as a "college or school for young brahmans prosecuting sacred studies;" "a monastery, occupied by ascetics;" "a choultry at which rice is given periodically to mendicants;" "a caravansary for pilgrims and other religious mendicants;" or, a "rest-house."

These definitions convey the notion that the *maṭam* is a religious institution that houses in the long term monks, ascetics, or others undertaking sacred education or that it is an institution that provides feeding and housing specifically for pilgrims and mendicants seeking food and rest during their travels. The term *maṭam* is often translated in English as "monastery" or "seminary." Although the *maṭam* has characteristics that are analogous to the western Christian monastery such as religious education, feeding, and housing, scholars who research the *maṭam* (e.g., Koppedrayer 1990) caution that one should not liken it to the Christian monastery because the *maṭam* has a uniquely Hindu purpose with a focus on the preceptor-disciple relationship and lineage. The term *maṭam* is applied to a diversity of institutions whose functions range from rest houses to pilgrimage centres to centres that oversee large networks of endowments and house a community of ascetics. Today, these diverse institutions are united under the rubric of the term *maṭam* since they have in common the teacher-disciple relationship and an emphasis on a lineage that is traced back into history several centuries in many cases (Koppedrayer 1990, 1-2). Although lineage is a shared factor for the types of centres that are identified as *maṭams*, not all of these institutions have been comprised of members who were celibate and who were disciples of a particular teacher. Some *maṭams* link their members through kinship ties and the inheritance rights to a specific *maṭam* was determined by

family, meaning that control of an individual centre was transferred from biological father to son rather than from preceptor to disciple. In other *maṭams*, inheritance followed familial inheritance rights but leadership was decided by election (Koppedrayer 1990, 2).

Koppedrayer suggests that what also unites these diverse institutions under the rubric of the term *maṭam* is the way that they link a part of the population with Hinduism's temple tradition. Defining temple tradition as "the complement of devotion, ritual, festival, pilgrimage, and so on, that centres around the temple," she suggests that the way that each *maṭam* serves this linking function depends on the nature of the specific *maṭam* (Koppedrayer 1990, 3). Sectarian beliefs, caste, family ties, traditions can all be the means whereby *maṭams* are connected to temple tradition. Often, this involves a complex history that extends beyond religion and includes economic, political, and social factors.

In this dissertation, I will examine epigraphical materials drawn from Chola-period Tamilnadu for what they reveal about the *maṭam*. I limited my study to inscriptions from the period of the ninth to thirteenth century because it is in the ninth century that *maṭams* first appear in the stone inscriptions in the Tamil region and because it is up to the thirteenth century that we find the largest body of stone inscriptions, with *maṭam* inscriptions factoring more prominently in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and then falling off in the fourteenth century. The Tamil *maṭam* was one of a number of institutions that received support through patronage during the Chola period. *Maṭams* received endowments of land, money, and other properties for their construction and maintenance from individual citizens, local corporate bodies, and rulers. While most inscriptions of this period record gifts to temple deities, the heads of *maṭams* might

appear in the inscriptions as the recipients of donations in the case of endowments for *maṭams*. I will discuss the organizational structure of *maṭams* since the inscriptions reveal that the people of *maṭams* included not only their leaders but also the devotees, disciples, servants, and others who may have taken advantage of *maṭams*' services either in the short or long term. While many researchers have focused on *maṭams* as educational centres, the inscriptions reveal that *maṭams* received donations for their ritual activities such as the lighting of lamps. They were also given donations for providing charitable services such as feeding. The inscriptions show that *maṭams* played a role in the temple complex in the Chola period by providing services such as the recitation of sacred hymns in temples. I will examine the role of the *maṭam* in the Chola-period temple complex to understand its relationship and responsibilities within this diverse social, political, economic, and religious institution. Individuals who were associated with *maṭams* in the inscriptions were the patrons of both *maṭams* and temples. Because *maṭams* are associated with the concepts of asceticism and monasticism, I will discuss the possible meaning and implications of people connected with asceticism and monasticism both owning and endowing private property and what this might mean for our understanding of asceticism and monasticism in medieval Tamilnadu and South Asia in general. In the remainder of this chapter, I will trace the history of epigraphical studies in India and how researchers can approach inscriptions. I will also discuss existing scholarship on *maṭams* in the Tamil inscriptions and outline the subject matter of this dissertation.

B. Approaching the Inscriptions: The History of Epigraphical Studies in India and How to Read the Inscriptions

1. A Brief History of Epigraphical Studies in India

The British presence in India began with merchants active in trade along the country's coast and was rather quickly transformed into a colonial state that governed vast regions of the country. The desire to uncover India's past for the purpose of making the region's culture understandable to colonizers accompanied this transformation (Trautmann and Sinopoli 2002, 494). According to Cohn (1996, 3), European states made their power visible from the eighteenth century onward not only through ritual and display but also through procedures that extended their capacity in a number of areas. They defined and classified space by making separations between the public and private spheres, recorded transactions such as the sale of property, counted and classified their populations by replacing religious institutions as the registrars of births, marriages, and deaths, and standardized languages and scripts. The establishment and maintenance of these nation states depended upon recording, codifying, controlling, and representing the past.

The process of state building in Britain was also closely tied to its emergence as an imperial power and India was its largest and most important colony. The British entered a new world in India and tried to make sense of it using their own methods of knowledge and thinking (Cohn 1996, 4). The British in India not only took control of a geographical space but also an epistemology that did not correspond to their own. Nonetheless, they believed that they could conquer and govern this space through translation as a way of making the unknown known. The first step in this process was

learning local languages, although it was not until the 1740s and 1750s that a significant

number of British East India Company people knew Indian languages (Cohn 1996, 20). It

was the years 1770-85, which Cohn (1996, 20) calls the formative period of this process,

during which the British successfully appropriated Indian languages in their construction

of a system of governance. More British officials were learning the classical languages of

India (e.g., Sanskrit and Persian) and the British began to construct an apparatus of

grammars, treatises, and the like in relation to language that converted Indian forms of

knowledge into European objects (Cohn 1996, 21).

Rather than the work of the state, Trautmann and Sinopoli (2002, 494) suggest

that Europeans' attempt to make sense of India during this period was located in the

learned societies that were established at the three British colonial centres of Calcutta,

Bombay, and Madras with the founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta in

1784, the Bombay Literary Society in 1804, and the Literary Society of Madras in 1812.[2]

The learned societies were not officially part of the colonial government. Instead, they

were voluntary organizations whose members' interests were not mandated by the state.

These organizations were not, however, without ties to the colonial administration since

many of their members were initially and almost wholly British East India Company

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[2] While all three societies were important, Trautmann (2009, 2) argues that the Asiatic Society of Bengal was dominant. Madras emulated Calcutta by founding a triangle of institutions (i.e., a learned society, college, and courts) that paralleled Calcutta's. The Madras School of Orientalism took its lead in scholarship from the Asiatic Society of Bengal by publishing in its *Asiatic Researches*. While following Calcutta's lead, the Madras School also positioned itself as special by claiming superior knowledge of South Indian languages. Chakrabarti (1982, 328) suggests that the Asiatic Society of Bengal was successful for three reasons. First, it was clear to those involved that Britain's role in India would be expanded beyond trade to include political control of the country. Second, Europeans turned to India as they sought to free themselves from a solely Judeo-Christian theory of the origins of religion and culture. Third, many literary and philosophical societies were established in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century and the founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal simply reflected the "scientific spirit of late eighteenth century Britain" (Chakrabarti 1982, 328).

employees whose goals as members of a learned society often merged with the interests of the colonial government (Trautmann and Sinopoli 2002, 494).

Thapar ([1978] 2004, 1-2) explains that it was colonial administrators and scholars, who came to be known as Orientalists and Indologists, that undertook the first study of India's history. This happened, in part, because the British East India Company required that its employees become familiar with the customs, histories, languages, and laws of its territories so that they could effectively govern them. Initially, Orientalists turned to Hinduism's textual traditions, written primarily in Sanskrit, for their reconstruction of Indian history. They privileged the Purāṇas, often translated as "stories of the old," in this endeavour, identifying them according to Trautmann and Sinopoli (2002, 496) as the location of the "national memory of the Indian people." Realizing that the Purāṇas contained a wealth of mythology and that very little history in the Orientalists' view could be extracted from this literature, they undertook "a recovery operation" (Trautmann and Sinopoli 2002, 496). In the Asiatic Society of Bengal's *Third Anniversary Discourse* delivered in 1786, William Jones (1746-1794) (1806, 421), the President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, declared that because India's history was "a cloud of fables" there were four areas to which researchers needed to turn to satisfy their "curiosity concerning it." These were the study of languages and letters, philosophy and religion, art and architecture, and science and the arts.

Trautmann and Sinopoli's (2002, 495) study of the Society's earliest *Asiatic Researches* reveals that the journal did not represent material culture and texts equally and that material culture was subordinated to texts. Material culture – art and archaeology – was represented in the earliest volumes of *Asiatic Researches* only in a few articles and

only in relation to the texts of inscriptions. They explain that the privileging of texts

reflected a new kind of Orientalism that was formed at Calcutta and for which the Asiatic

Society of Bengal became well known in Europe. Calcutta's Orientalism claimed the

authoritativeness of its scholarly work based on knowledge of Sanskrit and a few other

regional languages. Knowledge of Oriental languages was seen by Orientalists as giving

them access to the mind of Indians (Trautmann and Sinopoli 2002, 495).

Within a few decades, the Orientalists' disenchantment with the Purāṇas as a

source of India's history caused people to seek out other kinds of sources such as coins,

inscriptions, and chronicles. The 1830s saw what Chakrabarti (1982, 330) describes as a

significant increase in research on India's archaeology that was facilitated by James

Prinsep's (1799-1840) participation in the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the

decipherment of a number of ancient Indian scripts. Prinsep, whom Thapar ([1978] 2004,

9) believes opened up epigraphical sources for study and whom Sircar (1965, 8) credits

with "placing the study of Indian archaeology on a sound and critical foundation," was

instrumental in deciphering Indian scripts. Decoding the Brahmi script began with the

British East India Company's Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) in the late eighteenth century

when he succeeded in translating two inscriptions dated to the ninth-tenth century

(Chakrabarti 1982, 330).[3] Prinsep, who held the position of Assistant Assay Master of the

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[3] Wilkins' "A Royal Grant of Land, Engraved on a Copper Plate, Bearing Date Twenty-three Years Before Christ; and Discovered Among the Ruins at Mongueer. Translated from the Original Sancrit, by Charles Wilkins, Esq. in the Year 1781" in *Asiatic Researches* in 1788 was the first publication of an old inscription (Salomon 1998, 200).

Calcutta Mint, succeeded in the 1830s with reading the Aśokan inscriptions (third century

BCE).[4] He and others also succeeded in deciphering the Kharoshti script.

The creation of the post of Archaeological Surveyor in 1861 encouraged the

official collection, publication, and study of inscriptions. Alexander Cunningham (1814-

93), the first head of the Archaeological Survey of India, undertook the study of India's

monuments in an official capacity. Cunningham implored the government well before his

tenure as head of the Archaeological Survey of India to take a role in the preservation of

the country's material culture. In "Proposed Archaeological Investigation" published in

the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Cunningham (1848, 535) wrote,

> The discovery and publication of all the existing remains of architecture
> and sculpture, with coins and inscriptions, would throw more light on the
> ancient history of India, both public and domestic, than the printing of all
> the rubbish contained in the 18 Puranas.

He was of the opinion that Buddhism flourished in India for centuries and that it was, in

fact, dominant in India until the early eleventh century of the Common Era when

Mahmud of Ghazni (971-1030) invaded India. He wrote, "Buildings, coins, and

inscriptions all point to Buddhistical ascendency until the attacks of the Musalmáns under

Mohamed Ghaznavi" (Cunningham 1848, 535). Cunningham claimed that Buddhism's

dominance made it central to India's history as evidenced by the travel accounts of

Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, for example.[5] Since Hindu texts did not mention Buddhism in

his opinion, it was necessary to look to material remains to study Buddhism and, thereby,

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[4] While Sanksrit inscriptions had been published since the time of Wilkins and some of the later scripts derived from Brahmi had been deciphered, inscriptions from the Gupta period had remained incomprehensible when Prinsep began his work. Salomon (1998, 204) credits Prinsep's "Notes on Inscription No. 1 of the Allahabad Column" in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1834 with breaking ground on the Mauryan Brahmi script.

[5] Chakrabarti (1982, 332) suggests that Cunningham's affinity for Buddhism lay in political and religious motivations. Archaeological evidence of Buddhism was proof for Cunningham that Hinduism was not the only or most important religion in India historically. Recognition of this would allow for the acceptance of Christianity in the country.

develop a more accurate and complete record of India's history (Cunningham 1848, 535).

He wrote,

> The institutes of Menu, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the fabulous
> Puranas are all silent regarding Buddhism, as if that religion had never
> flourished in India. The publication of all the existing remains of Buddhism
> in the shape of architecture, sculpture, coins, and inscriptions I would conceive be
> equally valuable for the illustration of the history of India, both religious and
> political, with the printing of the Vedas and Puranas. It is a duty which the
> Government owe to the country (Cunningham 1848, 535).

He went on to explain that architecture and sculptures were daily deteriorating and

inscriptions were broken or defaced. Cunningham felt that it was essential for the

government to protect them since they were the best resources for the study of Indian

history and at imminent risk of being lost to researchers like him.[6]

Years later, Cunningham expressed his concern that the British had still done little

to study monuments.

> During the one hundred years of British dominion in India, the
> Government has done little or nothing towards the preservation of
> its ancient monuments, which, in the most total absence of any written
> history, form the only reliable sources of information as to the early
> condition of the country (Cunningham 1871, iv).

The British had until this point been chiefly concerned with empire building and had left

the study of India to colonial officers and amateurs whose unaided efforts were in

Cunningham's opinion desultory and incomplete because of the fact that few officers

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[6] Although today's researchers might agree with the concerns for preservation that Cunningham raised in "Proposed Archaeological Investigation published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal," they would likely disagree with his methods of preservation. In *The Stûpa of Barhut: A Buddhist Monument Ornamented with Numerous Sculptures Illustrative of Buddhist Legend and History in the Third Century BC*, Cunningham (1879) wrote that his last visit to Barhut proved valuable because it showed how wise he had been to remove some of the site's sculptures to Calcutta. In his latest visit, he discovered that "*every stone that was removable has since been "carted away" by the people* for building purposes" (Cunningham 1879, vii). In his letter to Cunningham, Robert Childers expressed "a hope that the sculptures might find their way to the India Office instead of being consigned to the peaceful oblivion of an Indian Museum," an opinion that Cunningham agreed with though he was concerned that they might also be consigned to oblivion in the vaults of the British Museum as had other Indian artefacts he had seen in the Museum's collection (cited in Cunningham 1879, vii).

stayed in one place for a long period of time and most had to leave their studies to their

limited leisure time. He encouraged the government to undertake "a careful and

systematic investigation of all of the existing monuments of ancient India" and expressed

his desire to study India's monuments by following in

> the footsteps of the Chinese pilgrim Hwen Thsang [Xuanzang], who, in
> the seventh century of our era, traversed India from west to east and back
> again for the purpose of visiting all the famous sites of Buddhist history
> and tradition (Cunningham 1871, iv).

The contribution of the Archaeological Survey of India under Cunningham's

tenure and that of his successors was significant. They identified hundreds of sites,

extended the chronology of material culture from 1000 before the Common Era to 1750

of the Common Era, and helped to establish the relationship between material culture and

textual traditions for use in historical studies in India despite often using material culture

to verify the content of literature rather than approaching these artefacts on their own

merit (Trautmann and Sinopoli 2002, 499-500).[7]

By the early twentieth century, there were substantial amounts of data drawn from

archaeology, epigraphy, and numismatics to complement and add to the other sources

that researchers could use to study India's history. Indian historians began writing on

India's ancient history in the nineteenth century. They tended to follow the example set

by British historians and focused on dynastic and political histories. Indian historians

working in the 1920s and 1930s felt the impact of nationalism. Although they continued

to study dynastic and political histories like their predecessors, their work reflected

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[7] In *Report for the Year 1871-72*, Cunningham (1873, 2) defined India's archaic period as 1000 to 250
BCE. He described its earliest remains as funeral mounds, circles or monoliths of stone, implements,
ornaments, and coins. In an earlier report, for the years 1864-65, Cunningham (1871, 264) placed the silver
pieces that he found at Chandravati in present-day Rajasthan between 500 and 1000 BCE although he noted
that the city's ruins dated to no earlier than the sixth or seventh century of the Common Era.

nationalist ideas such as the glorification of historical India and advocating the unity of its political past that were, in part, borne out of the desire to counter Europeans' criticisms of India's history (Thapar [1978] 2004, 10-12). Although the nationalist ideology that underlay their work was problematic, this group of historians made important contributions to the study of India's past. For example, they made local and regional investigations of areas such Tamilnadu common.

One of the first, most important, and enduring contributions to Tamil history during this period was K.A. Nilakanta Sastri's ([1935] 1975) *The Cōḷas*, which was first published in 1935. He used primarily inscriptional evidence from the Chola dynasty to write a comprehensive history of ninth to thirteenth-century Tamilnadu that was meant to touch on every aspect of Tamil culture under the Cholas – literature, government, religion, and social life. The first part of *The Cōḷas* is organized with a chapter on each Chola ruler and the second part by topic: dynastic rule; local government; taxation; agriculture and landholding; industry; coins, weights and measures; education and learning; religion; literature; and art. Nilakanta Sastri ([1935] 1975, 5) favoured the *meykkīrttis*, or the eulogies of rulers, that prefaced the stone inscriptions as historical documents and saw them as invaluable because they provided the chronology of a ruler's reign and gave reliable accounts of specific events.[8] He provided an appendix with abstracts of unpublished inscriptions that he saw as crucial for understanding the history of the Cholas at the end of the first edition of *The Cōḷas*. He also likened the Chola dynasty to a Byzantine monarchy – the absolute authority of a ruler over a united empire with concentrated resources (Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 447). Researchers such as

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[8] *Meykkīrttis* were initiated by the Chola king Rajaraja I who ruled from 985 to 1014.

Nilakanta Sastri discovered regional materials in local archives, filled voids in history, and made correctives to existing understandings of Indian history by discovering regional variations (Thapar [1978] 2004, 14).[9]

Starting in the 1950s and 1960s, historians turned to new topics of research and new kinds of evidence. In terms of the inscriptions, researchers began looking beyond the inscriptions' prefaces and their descriptions of the deeds of kings to the business portion of the inscriptions for information about political and social structures and economic systems. Historians who were inspired by Marxism developed a theory of feudalism and argued that the alienation of rights to the revenue from land led to a feudal polity in India. Researchers began to introduce new theories inspired by anthropology and sociology by the 1980s. The focus moved from Indian feudalism to state formation, with anthropological models being used to argue for the absence of the centralized bureaucracy that had been embraced by earlier researchers (Ali 2012, 8-9).

One of the more noteworthy scholars of this period was Burton Stein who utilized Chola-period inscriptions from Tamilnadu for his research. Stein (1980, 3) wrote that even though there was a wealth of literature on historical South India, scholars had failed to study the peasant societies that were central to medieval political formations. Although there were references to agricultural techniques, crops, and landholding, few studies in Stein's view explored the participation of peasant communities that was key to social functioning in this agricultural society and scholars tended to interpret the role of peasants as unchanging and untouched by the events taking place around them. He wrote

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[9] Ali (2012, 7) suggests that the legacy of Orientalist and nationalist historiography on India has been long lasting. Orientalists and nationalist scholars privileged certain types of evidence (e.g., Indic language inscriptions) and set the parameters that shaped the field (e.g., the focus on dynastic histories) for later scholars.

of scholarship on medieval South India,

> It is as if events and the historical process of which they are a part moved
> past or around agrarian arrangements, just as the charming little Indian
> tradition of the peasant who worked in the field while a battle raged nearby
> because he knew that warriors were obliged, by their *dharma*, to respect
> the cultivated field (Stein 1980, 2)!

Stein offered a new interpretation of the history of medieval South India based on peasant society and culture. He suggested an alternative theory of state centred on the complementary concepts of ritual polity and the segmentary state. The concept of ritual polity suggested that there were other cultural components that underlie state formation, the legitimation of political authority, and configurations of smaller political units instead of administrative power and control of territory (Heitzman 1991, 23). He advocated a concept of the segmentary state under the Cholas that realized political integration and unity through overlordships.

Stein rejected the concept of a unitary state which most South Indian historians, notably Nilakanta Sastri, had embraced for South India. He wrote,

> In fact, this type of unitary state did not exist nor could it have existed
> in medieval South India any more than in medieval India as a whole, with
> the possible exception of the Mughal state of the seventeenth century; nor
> did such a state exist in most of the world prior to the industrial revolution which
> provided the technology and mobile force required to sustain unitary states as we
> know them (Stein 1980, 264).

He offered an interpretation of state formation that used the concept of the segmentary state and situated political authority at the local level. Stein (1980, 22) suggested that there were combinations of patterns among a society's social elements that were distinct and opposed. These social elements or segments combined to become part of the social whole of the Indian sub-continent but also parts of the differentiated cultural regions within the sub-continent and reflected both the local and supra-local social contexts.

Stein adapted Aidan W. Southall's work on the segmentary state in Africa for South India. According to Southall (cited in Stein 1980, 265), the segmentary state could be understood as having following characteristics: (1) territory was divided into zones of authority; at the centre, authority of the sovereign was absolute but as we moved towards the periphery, authority of the sovereign became variable, limited, and relative; (2) there was a centralized government at the macro-level but local administrations also exercised control; (3) the central administration was repeated in the peripheral zones; (4) the central authority successfully claimed a monopoly on the use of force; (5) there were subordinates that were organized in relation to the central authority with every authority having power over subordinate authorities; and (6) the more peripheral subordinate authorities were at risk of changing loyalties.

In the case of South India, kings were overlords whose sovereignty was recognized by local leaders throughout the macro-region. Kings rarely, however, directly controlled more than a small portion of the macro-region (Stein 1980, 45). The segmentary state was formulated through *nāṭus* or local units of society that were under the leadership of chiefs whose authority was recognized by the groups within the *nāṭu* but was limited (Stein 1980, 270). Each *nāṭu* had subordinate units or corporate bodies and cultivators, artisans, merchants, labourers, and ritual specialists had their own assemblies within the *nāṭu*. Rule by the chief at the local level and the king at the centre was based on ritual incorporation and *dharma* rather than administration (Stein 1980, 275).

While Stein is one of the most well-known researchers of this period and his work marked a shift in thinking on Tamil history, he like Nilakanta Sastri is not without criticism. While of the opinion that Stein's (1980) *Peasant State and Society in Medieval*

South India was one of the most important books on the subject since Nilakanta Sastri,

Noboru Karashima (1984, xxv) found it too speculative and disagreed with Stein's stress

on the *nāṭu* and rejection of bureaucracy under the Cholas.[10] Instead, Karashima argued

that the Cholas maintained a central administration. Karashima (1984, xx) noted that one

of the limitations of existing scholarship on Tamil history that used epigraphical evidence

was the tendency of researchers to generalize their findings based on a small sample of

inscriptions that they had pulled from various periods and regions. To improve upon

existing scholarship and, thereby, our understanding of historical Tamilnadu, Karashima

and his collaborators (i.e., Subbarayalu and Shanmugan) chose micro-studies using

inscriptions and limited their studies topographically and historically. For example, he

compared the stone inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries from the *brahmadeya*

(rent-free *brāhmaṇa* settlement) village of Isanamangalam (twenty-one inscriptions) with

the non-*brahmadeya* (non-*brāhmaṇa* settlement) village of Allur (nine inscriptions),

which were both in Tiruchirappalli taluk in Tiruchirappalli district, to better understand

landholding and social structures in two different types of villages during this period

(Karashima 1984, 3-35). Karashima has also been particularly interested in analyzing

inscriptions statistically with an eye to the changes that took place over time. He wrote as

recently as 2012 that the approach of using a minimal number of inscriptions and the

primary reliance of scholars on the English summaries of inscriptions in the *Annual*

Reports on Indian Epigraphy, while at times permitted for more general studies, has

continued to be commonplace. Karashima (2012) prefers to work with a corpus of

inscriptions in the original Tamil rather than one or two inscriptions for these reasons.

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[10] Karashima (2012) has also been critical of Nilakanta Sastri and other researchers of the 1930s for their nationalistic bias in trying to prove, for example, that local government was democratic by electing members to *brāhmaṇa* assemblies.

While James Heitzman (1997, 11-12) appreciated Nilakanta Sastri's contribution to our understanding of local administration (e.g., *brāhmaṇa* assemblies), he argued that it allowed for little structural change because it suggested that the Cholas inherited a system of bureaucracy from other dynasties and that the Cholas' remodelling of it was at the will of the king. Heitzman (1997, 17) suggested that Stein's work needed re-thinking as well. He challenged Stein's concept of the segmentary state by saying that there was substantial evidence that kings implemented taxation and administration during this period and that Stein's theory of ritual polity glossed over class differences. Like Karashima, Heitzman favoured a more limited study area in terms of geography and historical period. His *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State* (1997) was a study of the Chola-period inscriptions from the Cholamandalam region of central Tamilnadu. He was concerned with modes of production and landholding, temple urbanism, and temple networks. He was especially concerned with intermediate authorities, the "possessors" or "lords" (*uṭaiyāṉ*) of one or more villages who may have been agents of the king or members of a local assembly (Heitzman 1997, 202).

2. Inscriptions as Literature; Inscriptions as Objects

Ali (2000, 166) notes in "Royal Eulogy as World History" that inscriptions "have not had the privilege of feeling the tremors that have shifted the ground in interpretive practices in the last hundred years in Indology and South Asian history." The reason for this is that inscriptions have traditionally been approached by researchers as self-disclosing documents rather than texts, in part, because of their form and content (Ali 2000, 166). Because inscriptions dealt with property transactions and appeared in the

mediums of copper and stone, scholars approached them as documents free from the authorial meaning and cultural dialogue of other genres of literature.

More recently, inscriptions have been interpreted and critiqued in the same ways and using the same methods that researchers have applied to texts. In *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims*, Chattopadhyaya (1998, 22) suggests that inscriptions, like other texts, must be read both diachronically and synchronically. The diachronic allows scholars to understand that a text or genre of literature emerges from a certain point in history and requires that analysis take into consideration its origins and authorial context. A reading that takes the synchronic into consideration acknowledges that a certain text or genre of literature is only one of a diversity of literatures present at a particular point in history and reflects a specific historical context (Chattopadhyaya 1998, 22). In the case of the stone inscriptions, the diachronic requires that we understand that the Chola-period inscriptions emerged, developed, and changed through history for certain purposes and audiences; the synchronic requires that we acknowledge that inscriptions were one of many types of literature from the Chola period.

Inscriptions are not documents that contain hard data free from the interpretive process of either their authors or their past or present readers.[11] Inscriptions, instead, constitute a genre of literature with their own contents, formats, grammars, literary conventions, and symbols. In more recent times, scholars who study religion have broadened the meaning of the term text to engage in the reading of non-literature. What

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[11] I have chosen to define the term author rather broadly to include the individuals or groups who undertook the endowment recorded in an inscription, the persons who were involved in receiving the donation, the individuals who authorized the endowment and the production of its record, the individuals who recorded the endowment on palm leaf, and the persons who engraved it in stone. I have defined the reader of inscriptions as any individual who encounters an inscription in manuscript or paper format (i.e., palm leaf) or engraved in copper or stone in the past or present even though this person may not have been or is not able to read an inscription like a person might read a book but may have interacted with it visually rather than as literature.

has traditionally been defined by scholars as non-literature has been affected by researchers' widening of the category of text. It is commonplace for researchers to read art, architecture, rituals, and the human body as texts and to apply literary critique to these literatures. The result, Jones (2000, 124) notes is that in the last decades "everything from cathedrals to cookware and caves has been imagined as texts, often to considerable advantage."

Inscriptions are a type of literature that appears in the mediums of copper and stone. Although there is no denying that they are texts, our understanding of inscriptions should not be limited to the written word, to a purely textual reading of epigraphical material simply because they use language. In actuality, inscriptions are not only the words, phrases, and sentences that record gift giving. The very method whereby inscriptions are presented to scholars – in paper format – somehow risks decontextualizing or misinterpreting them. We risk failing to see them as objects whose form, shape, placement, method of production, and dialogue with their surroundings are fundamental to their existence and to their meaning. When we read the texts of the inscriptions in the volumes of *South Indian Inscriptions* – Tamil words type set in black ink on paper bound and published by a modern press – we lose sight of the fact that these words were in fact painstakingly carved into the walls of a temple or etched onto a piece of copper and that this medium itself has significance.

> Hail! Prosperity! In the [3]rd [regnal] year of [Tiripuvaṉa Cakkaravat]tikaḷ
> Cuntara Pāṉ[ṭi]yatevar who was pleased to take Conāṭu,
> Ammai Aṟa Peruñcelviyār in the .. *tiru[ma]ṭam* in Śrī Matur[ai]
> gave fifty never dying and never aging sheep
> for Tirukkoṭu[ṅ]kuṉ[ṟam Uṭaiya N]āyaṉar of Tirukkoṭuṅkuṉṟam of Tirumalai
> *nāṭu*.

For Ammai Aṟa Peruñcelviyār,
we the *śrī rudra śrī māhesvaras* agreed to maintain one sacred perpetual lamp as long as the moon and sun endure.
This is under the protection of the *paṉ māheśvaras* (SII 8.430).

The importance of the location of this inscription and the medium in which it was recorded should not be overlooked. The fact that the inscription was engraved in stone on the north wall of the Lakṣmī *maṇḍapa* of the Maṅkaiṉātha temple at Piranmalai in Ramnathapuram district gives the inscription – the act of donation, the donor Ammai Aṟa Peruñcelviyār, the donation of sheep that is recorded, the authority of the temple people who agreed to maintain the lamp, and the fame of the donor – solemnity and permanence. These qualities conveyed through the physicality of the inscription are echoed in the words "*cantrātittaval*" (as long as the moon and sun endure) to describe the endowment, "*nuntā*" (perpetual) to describe the lamp that the endowment was intended to support, and "*cāvā-muvā-p-perāṭāy*" (never dying and never aging living sheep) to describe what was given. Both the words of the inscription and the fact that it was carved in stone on the temple give the donor, the donation, and its managers religious, social, and economic status and permanence. Scholars who interact with inscriptions as texts only, whether they consider them documents or literature, risk misinterpreting them – their content, form, purpose, and ideology.

When considering the material nature of inscriptions that talk about *maṭams*, one of the challenges that we face is the fact that the vast majority of *maṭam* inscriptions from the Tamil region that we have available to us are not located at *maṭams*. Among the rare exceptions of Chola-period inscriptions at *maṭams* are two records from the Śaṁkarācāryasvāmin *maṭam* at Tiruvanaikkaval (Jambukesvaram) in Tiruchirappalli district. Both inscriptions are located on the west wall of the *maṭam* and record a donation

for the building of the Naṟpatteṉṉāyiravaṉ *maṭam* on the northern side of the temple at Tiruvanaikkaval. The first inscription is attributed to the rule of Tribhuvanachakravartin Konerinmaikondan. It records that the *maṭam* was built by Avūruṭaiyāṉ Coḻakoṉ and explains that ascetics were to be fed therein (ARE 486 of 1908). The second inscription refers to the building of this same *maṭam* and is dated in the regnal year of the same ruler (ARE 487 of 1908). These inscriptions also indicate that the people of this *maṭam* were the disciples of Namaśśīvāyadevar of the Śaiva Tiruccattimuṟṟattu Mutaliyār lineage.[12] The editors of the *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* for the year 1909 write that there can be no doubt that the present-day Śaṁkarācāryasvāmin *maṭam* is the Naṟpatteṉṉāyiravaṉ *maṭam* of the inscriptions (ARE 1909, 103).[13] On the basis of their examination of other inscriptions, they suggest that the ruler of the inscriptions is later than the Chola king Kulottunga I (r.y. 1070-1120), though it is difficult to determine whether he was Chola or Pandya. The fact that both inscriptions describe the people who presided over the *maṭam* as disciples of Namaśśīvāyadevar of the Tiruccattimuṟṟattu Mutaliyār lineage suggests that its earliest date may be the thirteenth century since it is only in the thirteenth century that the word *mutaliyār* (he who is first) appears in the inscriptions in relation to *maṭams* and lineage.

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[12] This information comes from the review of the transcript by the editors of the 1909 *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* (ARE 1909, 104).

[13] The Naṟpatteṉṉāyiravaṉ *maṭam* of Tiruvanaikkaval is mentioned in a Chola-period inscription at the Ādimūlēśvara temple in nearby Tiruppalatturai. This inscription records a grant of land to the Naṟpatteṉṉāviravaṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvanaikkaval and informs us that this *maṭam* was associated with the *cantāṉam* of Tiruccattimuṟṟattu Mutaliyār (ARE 586 of 1908). Two other *maṭams* at Tiruvanaikkaval are mentioned in inscriptions from this same place. One of these inscriptions records a donation of land for feeding *māheśvaras* in the Tirujñānaśambandaṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvanaikkaval (ARE 585 of 1908). The Āṇṭār Empirāṉ *maṭam* is also located at Tiruvanaikkaval according to another inscription (ARE 584 of 1908). This inscription links the Śaiva Āṇṭār Empirāṉ *maṭam* to the Cenmapikkuṭi Mutaliyār lineage and is evidence that one site had multiple *maṭams*.

In Tirunelveli in southern Tamilnadu, there are five inscriptions engraved on the south wall of the Vembattur *maṭam* in the street south of the Nelliyappar temple. All of them date from the thirteenth century and mention the Ceyyanampirāṭṭi *maṭam* at Tirunelveli. The earliest, an inscription from 1234, records a donation of income by masons to [Ti]ruvaḷañcū[li] Uṭaiyār, the *tāṉapati mutaliyār* (religious officer and head of a *maṭam*) of the Ceyyanampirāṭṭi *maṭam* in the south street of Tirunelveli for the maintenance of the *maṭam* (ARE 296 of 1940-41).[14] A 1238 inscription records a donation of land made tax-free by the king at the request of one Aiyaṉ Maḻavarāyaṉ for the purpose of feeding a number of people including *tavacis* (ascetics) who were identified only as residing in the *maṭam* ("*maṭattil vattikum tavaciyar*"), *tavacis* who were described as pilgrims (*tēcāntiri*) ("*i-m-maṭattil uṇṇum tecāntiri-t-tavaciyar muppatum*"), a singer of the sacred Śaiva *tirumuṟai* ("*tirumuṟai otum per oṉṟum*"), and one priest ("*tirupaḷḷi aṟai nokkum per oṉṟum*") in the Ceyyanampirāṭṭi *maṭam* built in the south street at Tirunelveli ("*tirunelveliyil teṟkil tiruvītiyil*") by the king's aunt and named after her (ARE 292 of 1940-41).[15] Two other inscriptions of 1238 record further details of this endowment (ARE 293 of 1940-41; ARE 294 of 1940-14).[16] A 1250 inscription refers to the donation of income by masons to [Ti]ruvaḷañcū[li] Uṭaiyār, called the *tāṉapati mutaliyār* of the Ceyyanampirāṭṭi *maṭam*, just as in the 1234 inscription engraved on the walls of this *maṭam* (ARE 295 of 1940-41).[17]

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[14] The transcript reads: "*[tirunel]veliyil teṟkil tiruvītiyil ceyyanampirāṭṭiyār tirumaṭattu tāṉapati mutaliyār tiruvalañculi uṭaiyār*" (ARE 296 of 1940-41). The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[15] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[16] The transcript of ARE 293 of 1940-41 was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[17] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

The sole example of a Vaiṣṇava *maṭam* inscription that is located at a *maṭam* is an inscription dated 1251 and inscribed on a slab set up in the Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi *maṭam* at Srirangam in Tiruchirappalli district. Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi *maṭam* is named after the fifteenth-century *ācāriyar* (preceptor; teacher) Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi of the Teṅkalai School who taught therein. An icon of Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi receives worship in the *maṭam* today and paintings on the walls of the *maṭam* depict scenes from his life (ARE 1936-37, 75). In the inscription, a *maṭam* for renouncers (*saṁnyāsīs*) named Cuntara Pāṇṭiyaṉ *maṭam* was set up by one [Va]rantaruvāṉ Eṭuttakai[ya]ḷakiyāṉ who was also known in the inscription as Pallavarāyar of Tunjalur (SII 24. 196).[18] In this case, an individual who was identified as a prominent person in his village ("*tuñcalūruṭaiyāṉ*," meaning the lord of Tulanjalur) provided a *maṭam* named after the Pandya ruler Sundara for Vaiṣṇava *saṁnyāsīs*. The editors of the *Annual Report for Indian Epigraphy* are of the opinion that Cuntara Pāṇṭiyaṉ *maṭam* came to be re-named in honour of Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi (ARE 1936-37, 75).

Apart from the cases of Tiruvanaikkaval, Tirunelveli, and Srirangam, the vast majority of Chola-period *maṭam* inscriptions were engraved on the walls of temples. The few inscriptions on *maṭam* walls deal exclusively with *maṭam* affairs. In contrast, the very large number of inscriptions at temples may concern a variety of matters, including donations to *maṭams*. For example, a 1294 inscription at the Hariprasādēśvara temple at Karivedu in North Arcot district records the gift of land in Karivedu as *maṭappuṟam*

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[18] The editors of the *Annual Report* for the year 1936-37 describe Pallavarāyar of Tunjalur as a Pandya officer who was active during the reigns of four Pandya rulers (ARE 1936-37, 75). They also note that the *Kōyil Oḻuku*, which was compiled between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries and gives the history of the Srirangam temple, attributes the construction of this *maṭam*, Śeraṉ *maṭam*, and Laṅkeśvaraṉ *maṭam* to one Paḷḷikoṇṭaśolaṉ but they have chosen to discount the information in *Kōyil Oḻugu* in view of the evidence of the inscription.

(endowment to a *maṭam*) for Mutaliyār Śri Nantikecuraciva in the Aruntavañcaytār *maṭam* at Kanchipuram (ARE 60 of 1945-46).[19] *Maṭam* inscriptions often account for a small proportion of the inscriptions at a temple, as is the case here where only one out of the total of seven inscriptions at the Hariprasādēśvara temple deals with a *maṭam*. Since virtually none of the *maṭams* that are mentioned in the stone inscriptions in the Tamil region have survived as buildings into the modern period, we do not have access to the information that *maṭam* structures would have provided.[20]

C. Scholarship on the *Maṭam* in the Tamil Inscriptions

With the exception of Champakalakshmi's (2011) "The *Maṭha*: Monachism as the Base of a Parallel Authority Structure" in *Religion, Tradition, and Ideology: Pre-colonial South India* and Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan's (2010) "Maṭhas and Medieval Religious Movements in Tamilnadu: An Epigraphical Study," few researchers have undertaken a comprehensive study of the institution of the *maṭam* in history as

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[19] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore. On the same wall as this inscription is a 1392 inscription that records the gift of the construction of a *maṇḍapa* to the deity Nambīśvaram Uṭaiya Nāyaṉār of the temple at Karivedu by one Koṟṟamān Iṭarnikkippiḷḷai Āḷavantanāyaṉ Kurukularayaṉ, who constructed shrines and consecrated deities in this temple (ARE 61 of 1945-46), and another inscription that states that one Koṟṟamān Nampi Dhīraṉ and his son gave twilight lamps to the temple of Arikkaruḷīśvara Uṭaiya Nāyaṉār (ARE 62 of 1945-46).

[20] For an example of a study that examines the architecture of *maṭams* and what it can reveal about these centres and their relationship to temples, see Sears' (2008) "Constructing the Guru: Ritual Authority and Architectural Space in Medieval India." Sears (2008, 7) notes that even where there are remains of medieval *maṭams* – as in the case of the central Indian structures that she examined – little has been published and scholars remain uninformed on the extant material.

revealed in the Tamil inscriptions.[21] Those researchers who have studied *maṭams* using

copper-plate grants and stone inscriptions have focused primarily on tracing the

geographical spread of the specific sectarian lineages.[22] Rajamanikkam's (1962) "The

Tamil Saiva Mathas Under the Colas (A.D. 900-1300)" is typical of this type of

scholarship. The title of his essay suggests a survey of Śaiva *maṭams* under the Cholas

that one might assume would include discussion of their lineages, membership, activities,

and organizational structures. Instead, Rajamanikkam identifies the names of fifty-two

Śaiva *maṭams* in fifty-six inscriptions from the tenth to fourteenth century. He groups the

Śaiva *maṭams* by name into four categories – *maṭams* named after deities, *maṭams* with

the names of kings or feudatories, *maṭams* named after *nāyaṉmārs*, and *maṭams* with

other names – and provides a list of the *maṭam* inscriptions under each category

(Rajamanikkam 1962, 217-219). He then briefly discusses the lineages of some of these

maṭams (Rajamanikkam 1962, 220-21).

     While Rajamanikkam also examines sources other than inscriptions for

background on the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, he focuses his discussion on the thirteenth-

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[21] Scholars who have undertaken a large or more comprehensive research project on Tamil history using inscriptions (e.g., a dynastic study) have also neglected *maṭams* in their work. Although *maṭam* inscriptions were at their height during the Chola period, Nilakanta Sastri ([1935] 1975) does not discuss *maṭams* in depth in *The Cōḷas*. *Maṭams* appear in *The Cōḷas* primarily as part of the inscriptional evidence that Nilakantha Sastri uses in his discussion of other topics. For example, he cites a Kanchipuram inscription listing all lands from which paddy was to be remitted from *kaṭamai* (taxes) including *maṭappuṟam* lands in his discussion of the *nāṭu* under the Cholas (Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 505). During his discussion of *dāna* (gifts) under the Cholas, he explains that temples, *maṭams*, and *agrahāras* (*brāhmaṇa* settlements) flourished under this type of service to society (Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 452). *Maṭams* receive the most attention during his discussion of literacy and education when he explains that *maṭams* and their teachers (*vātti*) were important in education and learning (Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 628-29).

[22] Since the focus of my study is the *maṭam* from the ninth to thirteenth century, I have chosen to limit my discussion herein to scholarship that examines *maṭams* during this period and will not discuss in detail scholarship on contemporary *maṭams* such as Arooran's (1984) "The Changing Role of Three Saiva Maths in Tanjore District from the Beginning of the 20th Century," which examines three *maṭams* in the modern period.

century Meykaṇṭār, author of the *Civañānapōtam*.[23] He suggests that Meykaṇṭār was born

to establish the true Śaiva Siddhānta and that his disciples, many of whom wrote

important Śaiva texts (e.g., Umāpati Civācārya), founded *maṭams* (*Santānācāriyar*

Caritram cited in Rajamanikkam 1962, 221-23). He draws this conclusion because Śaiva

maṭams that were connected with the lineages of people with the honorific title *mutaliyār*

appeared suddenly at several places in the thirteenth century, meaning that from the time

of Meykaṇṭār, his disciples travelled the region establishing *maṭams* and promoting

Śaivism (Rajamanikkam 1962, 222). Unfortunately, Rajamanikkam limits his study to a

discussion of the lineage of a small number of Śaiva *maṭams* and *maṭams* associated with

Meykaṇṭār in particular.

Swamy (1975) follows a similar approach in "The Gōḷaki School of Śaivism in

the Tamil Country" by tracing its lineage using epigraphical evidence as it spread from

the Andhra region south into Tamilnadu. Swamy examines the organizational structure

and activities of specific Goḷaki *maṭams* using a sample of inscriptions from the eleventh

through fourteenth centuries.[24] Rather than discuss these inscriptions in detail, Swamy

only briefly summarizes their content. His analysis of *maṭam* inscriptions by time period

is limited to a few short paragraphs. His section on the thirteenth century, with its

abundance of Goḷaki inscriptions, is the time period that receives the greatest attention.

However, we learn little more about the thirteenth-century Goḷaki lineage in the Tamil

region than the names of a few spiritual teachers and the names of some individual

maṭams. Swamy (1975, 188) explains that the basic structure of a *maṭam* was constituted

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[23] Ishimatsu (1999, 574) describes the *Civañānapōtam* as the first text to summarize the basic teachings of the Āgamas in the Tamil region.

[24] Swamy (1975, 167) admits that his work is provisional because he had to rely primarily on the abstracts of the inscriptions in the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* and the published texts of inscriptions that were relevant to his study.

of a head of a *maṭam*, people who administered *maṭam* affairs, and disciples or devotees who either resided long term in *maṭams* or visited them while on pilgrimage. Swamy does not treat other kinds of people associated with *maṭams*, such as those who might be the recipients of the food provided by *maṭams*, nor does he consider the relationships that *maṭams* had with temples. What Swamy (ARE 96 of 1926 cited in 1975, 184) draws from a thirteenth-century inscription from Tiruvalangadu is the fact that "Āṇḍār Vidiviṭankap-perumāḷ was one of the pontiffs of Vaṇṇāra-mādēva-āṇḍār *maṭha*." He does not consider that this person purchased a house site from the trustees of the temple of Tiruvālaṅkāṭu Uṭaiyār nor discusses what this might suggest about the links between the *maṭam* and the temple or about property ownership and monasticism.

Champakalakshmi's (2011) "The *Maṭha*: Monachism as the Base of a Parallel Authority Structure" and Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan's (2010) "Maṭhas and Medieval Religious Movements in Tamilnadu: An Epigraphical Study" attempt more comprehensive studies of the institution of the *maṭam* by examining the epigraphical data for what they say about *maṭam* activities, sectarian affiliation, membership, and landownership. Champakalakshmi's goal is to demonstrate how the institution of the *maṭam* in South India developed an authority structure in medieval society that was parallel to the political structure. She suggests that Buddhism and Jainism developed a sense of communitas for their lay communities by including them in the *saṁgha* early on in their development. They influenced *brāhmaṇical* traditions in later times to develop spiritual lineages and monastic orders to complement temple traditions in the promotion of religion, create a sense of community among Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, and produce an authority structure in society (Champakalakshmi 2011, 286). She uses a combination of

literature and epigraphical evidence to trace how this happened in South India in the early medieval and Vijayanagara periods (1336-1565).

Although Champakalakshmi includes a discussion of Vaiṣṇava *maṭams*, which is lacking in the research of some other scholars (e.g., Swamy 1975), her treatment of the Vaiṣṇava *maṭams* is focused on the Vijayanagara period. Her work on the Chola period is focused on Śaiva *maṭams*. She interprets the absence of *maṭams* in epigraphical sources before the ninth century as evidence that in earlier time *maṭams* functioned as residences for Śaiva teachers, monks, or itinerants and that they were either part of temples or adjunct to them in the period leading up to the ninth century.[25] She writes, "There is no evidence of an institutionalization of the monastic organization until the Cōḻa period" (Champakalakshmi 2011, 287). She explains that *maṭams* began to appear in inscriptions in the ninth century because this was the time when land began to be endowed for their maintenance. However, the *maṭams* of the ninth and tenth century lacked the cohesion and institutional organization of the *maṭams* of the later Chola period and, more specifically, the post-Chola period (Champakalakshmi 2011, 287).

She organizes her discussion of the inscriptions by century and gives examples of some of the *maṭams* and lineages that appear in the inscriptions in each century (e.g., Goḷaki *maṭam*). She then discusses the religious functions of *maṭams* as educational centres and explores their relationship to the state as well as their economic function. Champakalakshmi (2011, 300) limits her analysis of the *maṭam* and the state to a brief

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[25] Champakalakshmi (2011, 286-87) is of the opinion that the *maṭams* named after bhakti saints are mentioned in *Tēvāram* and in the twelfth-century *Periya Purāṇam* and that the *Tēvāram* poet-saints stayed in *maṭams* during their pilgrimages. She uses *Tēvāram* as her evidence for saying that the earliest Śaiva *maṭams* associated with temples were named after the *nāyaṉmārs* and mentions that although *Tēvāram* refers to *maṭams* where the *nāyaṉmārs* stayed on their pilgrimages, it was Tirumūlar's *Tirumantiram* (sixth century) and Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* (ninth century) where monasticism became an important theme.

analysis of the relationship between *rājagurus* (king's preceptor) and rulers, writing that "No parallel exists between papal authority and its relationship to the European or British rulers and that of the *maṭha* heads and the states of India." She addresses *maṭams'* participation in local politics with the note that *maṭam* heads were members of temple committees and had authority in the temple in this capacity. Her analysis of *maṭams'* economic situation is limited to a discussion of the land endowments made to *maṭams* and a brief comment on the role that *maṭams* played at commercial trading centres by serving as rest houses for itinerant traders (Champakalakshmi 2011, 301).

Champakalakshmi examines the organization and activities of *maṭams* but emphasizes the heads of *maṭams* in her discussion of their organizational structure and focuses on the educational roles of *maṭams*, only touching upon other *maṭam* people and the activities at *maṭams*. Unlike temple donations, which were gifted to the temple's deity and controlled by temple authorities, *maṭam* endowments were given to the head of the *maṭam* and were under his control. She writes, "*Maṭhapatyam* hence meant control over the resources, management of endowments, and exercising great economic influence in an agrarian society" (Champakalakshmi 2011, 301).[26] While the heads of *maṭams* were important to the endowment process and the control of *maṭam* resources, the inscriptions reveal that there was a wide range of people who were associated with *maṭams* and that *maṭams* may have had little to do with education in the traditional sense. In the coming chapters, I will examine the people who participated in *maṭams* in depth to understand their roles and challenge the notion that *maṭams* were primarily educational centres by exploring the other activities that took place at *maṭams*.

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[26] *Māṭāpattiyam* can refer to either a temple superintendence or headship of a *maṭam*. I will discuss this concept in greater detail in Chapter Three.

What is also lacking in Champakalakshmi's discussion is an analysis of *maṭams* in relation to temples. While Champakalakshmi uses evidence from inscriptions to group *maṭams* and temples together as two types of authority structures in medieval Tamilnadu that provided social stability and discusses their roles in the political and economic in terms of landownership and administration, she does not examine how these two institutions interacted and engaged with each other. The Chola-period inscriptions reveal that *maṭams* and temples were in a dialogical relationship in terms of location, administration, governance, and staffing. Although *māṭāpattiyam* was related to a responsibility role in some temples, as suggested by Champakalakshmi, this was not evident in every case. There were also other kinds of *maṭam* people who had different functions in temples (e.g., hymn recitation). The *maṭam* people who served in temples were higher status regardless of their specific roles but their active participation in temples varied greatly. While the office of *māṭāpattiyam* involved the attestation of endowments, for example, it was likely a ceremonial position whereas *maṭam* people who were hymn singers, for example, were more active in the day-to-day activities of temples, as I will discuss.

Unlike Champakalakshmi, who uses a combination of literature and inscriptions to study *maṭams* in medieval South India, Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan's (2010) "Maṭhas and Medieval Religious Movements in Tamilnadu: An Epigraphical Study" draws its data solely from epigraphical material. Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2010, 218) identified 361 Tamil inscriptions from the ninth to thirteenth century that make reference to *maṭams* and utilize these inscriptions as the data set for

their study of the *maṭam*.[27] They explain that the purpose of their study is two-fold: (1) to study the functions and activities of *maṭams* and (2) to gain insights into the region's religious movements and their relationship to the social changes that took place in medieval Tamilnadu (Karashima et al. 2010, 218).

The authors explore the activities of *maṭams*, which they list as maintenance, feeding, worship, the recitation of sacred texts, and learning. They also consider the organizational structure of *maṭams* in terms of sect, leadership, workers, and expenditures. They briefly discuss the relationship of *maṭams* to temples and explain that some but not all *maṭams* were attached to temples while admitting that it is difficult to determine the relationship between *maṭams* and temples because *maṭams* seemed to retain their independence from temples even when attached to them (Karashima et al. 2010, 225). Their interpretation of this relationship is open to critique, in part, because the inscriptions often times do not give details about a *maṭam's* relationship to a temple beyond its geographical proximity to the temple, as I will discuss in the following chapters. They find that the *maṭam* inscriptions are evidence of the localization and Tamilization of the northern *brāhmaṇical* tradition of the *maṭam* that took place as *maṭam* people migrated into South India. The North Indian *brāhmaṇical maṭam* tradition absorbed Tamil cultural elements to take on a uniquely Tamil character (Karashima et al. 2010, 231-2). In the authors' opinion, this process is in accordance with the increasing power of non-*brāhmaṇas* in the region during the later part of the Chola period.

Although using a large number of inscriptions for their data set, Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan's article is open to some of the same criticisms as

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[27] Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2011) have published a second article on *maṭams* titled "*Maṭhas* and Religious Movements in Medieval Tamil Nadu: An Epigraphical Study (Part II)" that examines the inscriptions concerning *maṭams* that appeared after 1300.

Champakalakshmi's essay. While introducing a number of important ideas, they do not develop any of them in great detail. Even though there is a more extensive treatment of *maṭam* activities other than education, their analysis of worship in *maṭams* is limited to a short paragraph. More importantly, their analysis of the *maṭam* is framed by the overriding interest in tracing social change that pervades much of Karashima's research. The material is organized with the goal of demonstrating that the North Indian *brāhmaṇical maṭam* became the localized and Tamilized non-*brāhmaṇical maṭam* through donor practices. I would argue that it is better to examine the people and activities of *maṭams* as they are described in the inscriptions to trace the evolution of the *maṭam* in the region instead of using their donors for this purpose. Although Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan emphasize the importance of social change, they do not trace the changes in the *maṭams*' people and activities that the Chola-period inscriptions show. Importantly, they do not examine *maṭams*' development in an evolving Tamil culture in conjunction with other evidence (e.g., literature) and do not suggest what this might mean to our understanding of asceticism and monasticism during this period.[28]

In Champakalakshmi's (2011, 286) words, "the history of these organizations is yet to be fully revealed through intensive research on the *maṭhas*." The goal of this dissertation is to add to our knowledge of the *maṭam* in medieval Tamilnadu by examining the stone inscriptions from the Chola period. The questions I address include the following: who supported *maṭams* through patronage? Who participated in *maṭams*? Whom did *maṭams* serve? Did *maṭam* participants change over time? What was the vocabulary of *maṭam* participation and what might it reveal about *maṭam* people's

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[28] While interpreting the *maṭam's* pattern of development as one of a North Indian *brāhmaṇical* tradition that made its way into Tamilnadu and became localized and Tamilized as it settled in the region, they also relate it to a renaissance of Tamil bhakti (Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan 2010, 232)

involvement in *maṭams*? What were the activities undertaken at *maṭams*? What was the relationship of *maṭams* to temples? How can a study of *maṭams* contribute to our understanding asceticism and monasticism in Chola-period Tamilnadu and in South Asia in general?

In the following chapters, I will discuss the *maṭam* as it appears in the Chola-period inscriptions and examine what the stone inscriptions reveal about the *maṭam* in ninth to thirteenth-century Tamilnadu. In Chapter Two, I outline my research approach to the topic and the parameters that I used to construct my dataset and discuss the chronological and geographical distribution of the inscriptions. I also examine the processes by which *maṭams* received support and the people who patronized *maṭams*. In Chapter Three, I engage in an analysis of the *maṭam* in terms of its membership and the activities that were supported by the grants that the *maṭam* received. I also explore *maṭams*' relationship to temples. In Chapter Four, I undertake a case study of the Chola-period *maṭam* inscriptions from Chingleput district. Chapter Five summarizes my findings with a focus on their implications for asceticism and monasticism in Tamilnadu specifically and South Asia in general.

Chapter Two

The *Maṭam* Inscriptions of the Chola Period and the Patrons of *Maṭams*

A. Research Methodology

Stone epigraphs in the Tamil language are found in the geographical region that corresponds to the boundaries of contemporary Tamilnadu but also in the areas of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Sri Lanka. For this dissertation, I have taken into consideration inscriptions that are located outside of the modern state of Tamilnadu that are written in the Tamil language. There are *maṭam* inscriptions among the Tamil stone inscriptions from the ninth century probably up to the present. The most recent *maṭam* inscription that I have found is dated 1903 and is located at the Muttiyam Paṇṭāram *maṭam* at Nannagaram in Tirunelveli district (ARE 381 of 1917); it records the building of a *maṇḍapa*, the setting up of images, and provisions for daily worship by Muttaiya Paṇṭāram, the son of Palani Paṇṭāram, whose name is the same as the *maṭam*. While it is the case that there are inscriptions dating to the twentieth century, I have chosen to focus on the *maṭam* inscriptions from the period of the ninth to thirteenth century, which is referred to as the "Chola Period." The ninth century marks the beginning of the *maṭam* inscriptions in the Tamil region. Their numbers continued to grow during the Chola period. I chose to end my study period at the thirteenth century, which is when the inscriptions reached their height. There are a number of reasons for this decision. The fourteenth century marked the point where there was a significant decline in the number of inscriptions that mentioned *maṭams*. The post-1300 inscriptions also show changes in the geographical distribution of inscriptions, patronage patterns concerning *maṭams*, the

activities of *maṭams*, and their sectarian make-up.[29] In the first part of this chapter, I outline my research methodology and summarize my findings in relation to the geographical and chronological distribution of the inscriptions as well as their dynastic affiliation. In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss the people who made donations in the *maṭam* inscriptions of the Chola period to develop a picture of who patronized *maṭams*. The majority of donors were people who were not identified as belonging to a *maṭam* and whose connection to a *maṭam* did not go beyond the act of giving. There were also donors who were recognized as being a member of a *maṭam* who gave to *maṭams* and temples.

I also chose to limit my research to the Tamil stone inscriptions rather than undertake a study that includes both the stone inscriptions and the copper-plate grants because the number of copper-plate grants on *maṭams* from the Chola period is negligible.[30] The study of Tamil stone inscriptions has generally developed into two fields. The study of the Tamil *meykkīrttis*, which eulogize rulers, has developed into one field of study while the study of the business portion of the inscriptions has developed into another. While Nilakanta Sastri used the *meykkīrttis*, or these "bodies of glory," as the basis of his work on the Chola dynasty, Karashima, Heitzman, and others have focused their work on the business portion of the stone inscriptions and have developed theories of Tamil society using these data as their main sources rather than the *meykkīrttis*. Though I am mindful of Francis and Schmid's (2010, vii) critique of scholars

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[29] The fourteenth century has thirty-nine inscriptions compared to 212 from the thirteenth century. *Maṭam* inscriptions continue to appear in more southern districts in the Vijayanagara period. There is also an increase in the percentage of Vaiṣṇava *maṭams* after the thirteenth century while the percentage of Śaiva *maṭams* declines, although we find greater identification of Śaiva sub-sects after the thirteenth century compared to the Chola period.

[30] The copper-plate grants that deal with *maṭams* come mainly from the post-Chola period.

who limit their studies of Tamil inscriptions to the business portion, I also chose to limit my study of the stone inscriptions to the business portion, defined as the part of an inscription that most commonly records an endowment to an institution or individual.[31]

Looking specifically at the business portion of the stone inscriptions, it is apparent that they were primarily the domain of private individuals and groups rather than rulers. Donative inscriptions issued by rulers, such as those of Rajaraja I at the Bṛhadīśvara temple at Thanjavur, for example, are rare. The epigraphical materials engraved on the stone walls of temples reveal that private individuals carried out patronage of what could be described as public religious institutions and that gift giving very often took place at the local level. Patrons received social standing and economic and political authority through the ability to transact a donation. In ritual terms, gift giving involved donors with the divine as the recipient of their donations. Through this process, donors received religious status by way of the merit that they accrued through patronage. The temple was not just a religious institution but it was an economic, social, and political institution that exerted influence in all of these areas. The fact these gifts were to remain in effect in perpetuity meant that their donors maintained these benefits in perpetuity as well.

Having set the parameters for my research in terms of geography, chronology, and epigraphical medium, I examined a combination of primary texts and scholarly sources to identify inscriptions that referenced *maṭams*.[32] The texts of the Tamil stone inscriptions are available to scholars in publications such as the Archaeological Survey of India's

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[31] Francis and Schmid (2010, vii) view the *meykkīrttis* as a genre of political literature that is integral to the study of political discourse in historical Tamilnadu.

[32] I examined the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy*, *Ceṉṉai Māṉakar Kalveṭṭukaḷ*, *The Chronological List of Inscriptions from the Pudukkottai State*, *Epigraphica Indica Pondicherry Inscriptions*, *South Indian Inscriptions*, *Tarumapuri Kalveṭṭukaḷ*, *Kaṉṉiyākumari Kalveṭṭukaḷ*, *Tiruvannamalai: A Śaiva Sacred Complex of South India*, Mahalingam's *A Topographical List of Inscriptions from the Tamilnadu and Kerala States*, and the *Travancore Archaeological Survey*, as well as a number of secondary sources to identify *maṭam* inscriptions.

South Indian Inscriptions, *Epigraphica Indica*, and *Inscriptions (Texts) of the Pudukkottai State Arranged According to Dynasties* published by the Pudukkottai State Archaeology Department. The vast majority of inscriptions, however, remain unpublished and to get an idea of the inscriptions' content researchers must rely on the English summaries available in the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* and elsewhere.

I searched for inscriptions that contained terminology associated with *maṭams* in the published Tamil texts and the English summaries of the stone inscriptions found in numerous sources. Like Talbot (1987, 133) in the "Golaki Matha Inscriptions from Andhra Pradesh: A Study of a Saiva Monastic Lineage," I chose to err on the side of caution and adopt a conservative approach to identifying relevant inscriptions for my research.[33] I consider as "*maṭam* inscriptions" only those in which the word *maṭam*, *maṭappuṟam* (endowment to a *maṭam*), *maṭāpattiyam* or *māṭāpattiyam* (head of a *maṭam*), or *maṭātipati* (head of a *maṭam*) appear explicitly in the stone inscriptions. I am mindful of the fact that many of the terms that appeared in relation to *maṭams* were also used in contexts having nothing to do with them. Although the term *mutaliyār* (literally, "he who is first") was used to designate the head of a *maṭam* in inscriptions that came from later in the Chola period, the term was not exclusive to people associated with *maṭams* and was also used to designate temple superintendents, for example. As a result, I chose to exclude inscriptions where the word *mutaliyār* appeared as part of a personal name without any other reference to a *maṭam*. I have also included inscriptions that dealt

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[33] Talbot (1987, 134) limited her study to inscriptions that contained direct references to the Goḷaki *maṭam* or that mentioned individuals directly related to the Goḷaki *maṭam*. She explains that Sundaresvara Rao (1977) and Swamy (1975) adopted a more liberal approach to collecting inscriptions on the Goḷakis by including any inscription with a personal name that ended in śiva because it was common for members of the Goḷaki School to have this term affixed to their names. Talbot (1987, 134) describes their approach as unwarranted because of the evidence that the title *śivācārya* was used by Śaivas who were affiliated with other Śaiva sects than the Goḷaki branch of Śaivism, suggesting that the epithet of śiva was not unique to Goḷaki members.

with *kukais* (cave; monastic retreat) in my data set.[34] Sethuraman (1991, 30) distinguishes

between a *maṭam* and *kukai* by saying that a *kukai* was a place where the body of a

religious teacher was installed and a *maṭam* did not follow this practice; a *maṭam* that

buried its religious teacher would have been known as a *kukai*. I have chosen to include

inscriptions about *kukais* because they deal with asceticism and monasticism, and they

also include some of the terminology associated with *maṭams* (e.g., *maṭappuṟam*).

Limiting my search to the period of the ninth to thirteenth century, I identified

380 inscriptions, which formed my data set. There are a number of *maṭam* inscriptions in

the corpus of Tamil inscriptions that do not have a verifiable date. I have considered only

those inscriptions that have a confirmed date of the ninth to thirteenth century. I chose to

exclude from my data set inscriptions that could not be assigned to the Chola period by

dynasty, regnal year, or palaeography, understanding that I have possibly omitted some

of Chola-period *maṭam* inscriptions.[35] Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2010) is

the only existing *maṭam* study that generated a comparable number of *maṭam* inscriptions

to mine. They examined 380 inscriptions in total narrowing this number to 361 *maṭam*

inscriptions after they excluded duplicate inscriptions.[36] Because they do not clearly

articulate or elaborate on their research method and the method that they used to create

their data set, and did not publish a complete list of their *maṭam* inscriptions, I can only

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[34] Nineteen inscriptions from the Chola period made reference to a *kukai*.

[35] For example, I excluded inscriptions that were identified by the editors of the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* as having late or modern characters.

[36] My total of 380 *maṭam* inscriptions excludes duplicate inscriptions. For example, a twelfth-century inscription from the Ādhipurīśvara temple in Tiruvorriyur in Chingleput district on the east wall of the second *prākāra* of the temple records that Caturānana Paṇṭitaṉ of the Tiruvorriyur *maṭam* and Vāgīsvāra Paṇṭitaṉ of the Coma Cittāntam attended a discourse on the *Śrī Purānan* of Ālutaiyanampi (i.e., the *nāyaṉmār* Cuntarar) at the Tiruvorriyur temple and that they attested to a sale of land (SII 5.1358). This inscription appears twice in the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy*, once in 1896 and again in 1911. I excluded the 1911 copy. I have also factored royal orders into my statistics, counting royal orders that communicated the details of a grant recorded in another inscription as duplicates unless they contained extra information that would add to our understanding of *maṭams*.

speculate on why our separate methodologies have generated different results. One obvious difference that explains why our distributions of inscriptions by district are different is my choice to incorporate inscriptions from Pudukkottai State into statistics for Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli districts whereas they maintained Pudukkottai State inscriptions as a separate category.

I found that the *maṭam* is referred to in the Chola-period inscriptions in four ways, understanding that there is overlap in these categories and in some cases the information that we have is limited. By far the largest category of *maṭam* inscription is that in which the *maṭam* appears as the beneficiary of an endowment made either to a temple or a *maṭam*. In other instances, the inscription provides information about the administration or operations of individual *maṭams* but the *maṭam* is not directly linked to the act of donation that is recorded in the inscription. A third category of *maṭam* inscription is that in which a *maṭam* is mentioned in the identification of a donor who makes a gift to a temple or a *maṭam*. Finally, there are inscriptions where no other information is available to us about a *maṭam* other than its name.

Since one of my research goals is to examine the development of *maṭams* over time in greater depth and to help understand the possible regional variations in *maṭams*, I chose to undertake a case study of Chingleput district in northeast Tamilnadu because it would allow me to better frame the institution of the *maṭam* in time and space; this case study appears as Chapter Four. I chose Chingleput district because it has the second largest number of *maṭam* inscriptions from the Chola period, with fifty-four inscriptions. It also has the earliest *maṭam* inscription in Tamilnadu. Unlike other parts of Tamilnadu, Chingleput district has inscriptions from each of the centuries under investigation. By

comparison, *maṭam* inscriptions did not appear in Thanjavur district, which has the

largest number of Chola-period *maṭam* inscriptions, until the tenth century. The southern

district of Madurai did not generate *maṭam* inscriptions until the eleventh century and

Tirunelveli until the twelfth century. Choosing Chingleput district for my case study

allows for an examination of the inscriptions over the duration of the Chola period.

The full texts of 123 Chola-period *maṭam* inscriptions from throughout the Tamil

region were available for me to review in publications.[37] In the summer of 2011, I was

generously granted permission to read the transcripts of a sample of unpublished *maṭam*

inscriptions that are in the keeping of the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey

of India in Mysore.[38] Data for this dissertation comes from the published and unpublished

texts that I reviewed and the English summaries of the unpublished *maṭam* inscriptions in

the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* whose full-text transcripts I was unable to

consult. Reviewing the Tamil texts is essential for studying *maṭams* in the Tamil

inscriptions. The English summaries of inscriptions that are available in the *Annual*

Reports on Indian Epigraphy are limited in their content and can also be misleading. The

summaries in the earliest volumes (ARE 1887 to 1892) provide only the location of the

inscription, the reigning king, and his regnal year (e.g., ARE 70 of 1888). Summaries in

later volumes increasingly include a brief summary of the business portion of the

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[37] I found these texts in the following publications: *Ceṉṉai Māṉakar Kalveṭṭukaḷ, Epigraphica Indica, Inscriptions (Texts) of the Pudukkottai State According to Dynasties, Kaṉṉiyākumari Kalveṭṭukaḷ, Pondicherry Inscriptions, South Indian Inscriptions, Tarumapuri Kalveṭṭukaḷ, Tiruvannamalai: A Śaiva Sacred Complex of South India*, and the *Travancore Archaeological Survey*.
[38] Estampages and transcripts of the Tamil inscriptions are housed at the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India in Mysore. Unfortunately, a number of the transcripts have been lost or were for other reasons unavailable for me to consult.

inscription but detailed information is not provided.[39] While the English summaries in the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* have served as a rough guide in my preliminary search for relevant inscriptions, I have made every effort to consult the Tamil texts of inscriptions, particularly with respect to the inscriptions related to my case study of Chingleput district.

B. The Geographical and Chronological Distribution of the *Maṭam* Inscriptions

To examine the geographical distribution of the Tamil *maṭam* inscriptions, I categorized the inscriptions by the traditional macro-regions of Tamilnadu: (1) Tondaimandalam, made up of the present-day districts of Chingleput and North Arcot as well as parts of Andhra Pradesh; (2) Naduvil-nadu, made up of South Arcot district; (3) Cholamandalam, comprised of Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli districts; (4) Kongumandalam, corresponding to Salem, Coimbatore, and Dharmapuri districts as well as parts of Karnataka; and (5) Pandyamandalam, comprised of Ramnathapuram, Madurai, Tirunelveli, and Kanyakumari districts as well as parts of Kerala (Map 2.1).[40]

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[39] Mahalingam's *A Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Tamilnadu and Kerala States* provides fuller summaries of the contents of the inscriptions listed in the early volumes of the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* (ARE 1887-1903) whose Tamil texts are published without English summaries in volume four to eight of *South Indian Inscriptions*.

[40] These districts correspond more or less to the administrative units of the Madras Presidency used by the British in the nineteenth century, which were current from 1956 to 1973 in the state of Tamilnadu after Independence. In the course of the last forty years, some of these districts have been sub-divided and re-named.

Map 2.1 The Traditional Macro-Regions of Tamilnadu with *Maṭam* Inscriptions[41]

Andhra Pradesh

Nellore

Chittoor

Karnataka

Bangalore

North

Chingleput

Dharmapuri Arcot

Mysore

Salem

South Arcot

Coimbatore

Tiruchirap
palli

Thanjavur

Tamilnadu

Madurai

Ramnathapuram

Kerala

Tirunelveli

Kanyakumari

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[41] I have adapted this map from Orr (2000, 20) to include Dharmapuri district.

The largest body of *maṭam* inscriptions comes from the region of Cholamandalam with 148 inscriptions (Figure 2.1). The second largest number of inscriptions comes from the southern-most region of Pandyamandalam with eighty-three inscriptions. The northern-most region of Tondaimandalam has eighty-one inscriptions. The region of Naduvil-nadu accounts for forty-eight inscriptions. The smallest number of inscriptions from the Chola period comes from the western region of Kongumandalam, which has twenty inscriptions.

Figure 2.1 The Distribution of the *Maṭam* Inscriptions by Macro-Region
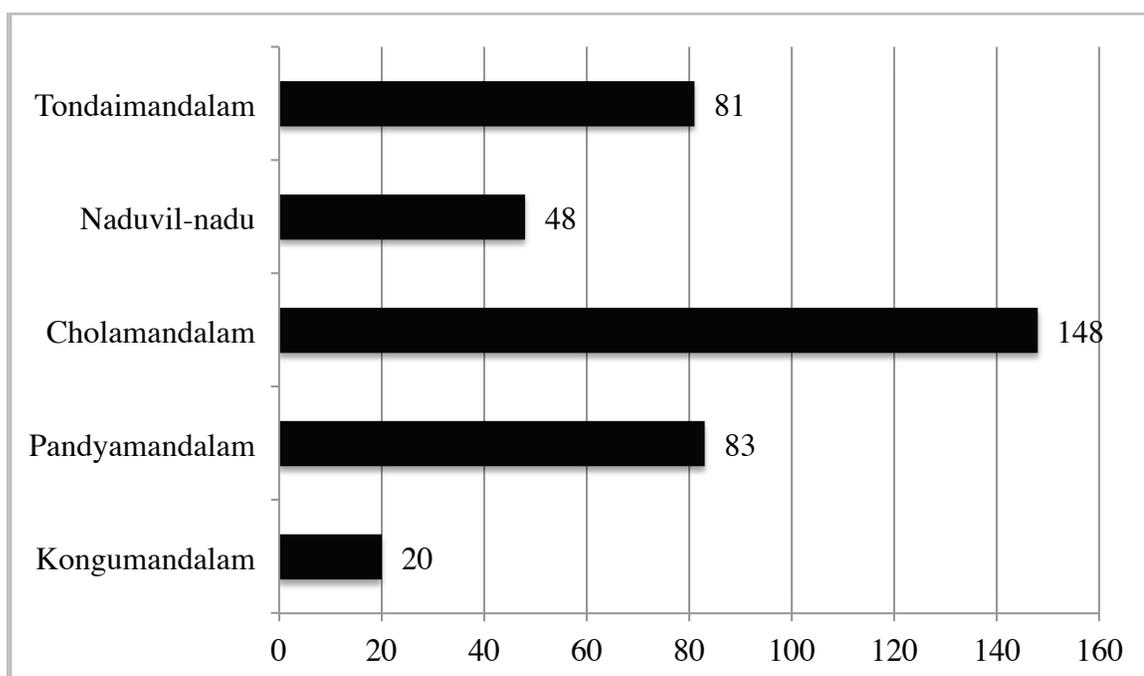
Further sub-dividing the inscriptions into the smaller geographical units of districts, I found that the largest cohort of *maṭam* inscriptions comes from Thanjavur district with 102 inscriptions appearing mostly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Table 2.1). The next largest cohort of inscriptions comes from Chingleput district with fifty-four inscriptions. The third largest number of inscriptions comes from South Arcot district, which has forty-eight inscriptions. The smallest number of inscriptions comes

from Bangalore, Mysore, and Salem districts with only one inscription each from the

eleventh century.

Table 2.1 The Geographical and Chronological Distribution of the *Maṭam*

Inscriptions by District

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	N/A	Total
Tondaimandalam							
Nellore	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Chittoor	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
North Arcot	1	4	3	5	10	2	25
Chingleput	3	3	11	12	23	2	54
Naduvil-nadu							
South Arcot	0	0	7	18	20	3	48
Cholamandalam							
Thanjavur	0	1	10	37	49	5	102
Tiruchirappalli	0	2	4	8	27	5	46
Pandyamandalam							
Madurai	0	0	2	3	18	0	23
Ramnathapuram	0	1	0	4	25	1	31
Tirunelveli	0	0	0	1	25	1	27
Kanyakumari	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Kongumandalam							
Bangalore	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Mysore	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Dharmapuri	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Salem	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Coimbatore	0	0	1	2	7	0	10
Total	4	11	41	91	213	20	380

Maṭam inscriptions first appear in the Tamil region in Chingleput district with a

record dated 800. This inscription, which is located on a slab in the floor at the

Tirumeṟṟali temple in Pillaipalayam, records that one .. [ṭu ve]ṭṭi Muttaraiyaṉ requested

that four sections of land be endowed to the Viṣṇu temple Tirumeṟṟali at Iraiyancheri and

to an unnamed *maṭam* ("*iṟaiyāṉceri paḻan tirummeṟṟaḷiyum maṭamum*") (SII 12.44).

There are four inscriptions from the ninth century, eleven inscriptions from the tenth

century, forty-one inscriptions from the eleventh century, ninety-one inscriptions from

the twelfth century, and 213 inscriptions from the thirteenth century. The date of twenty

inscriptions could not be determined with certainty but were included in my data set because they were issued in the regnal years of Chola kings and thus could be placed between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. The inscriptions suggest that *maṭams* first appeared in stone inscriptions in the northern most region of Tondaimandalam in the ninth century and that they began to appear in the stone inscriptions in more central and southern regions in the tenth century.[42] As for southern Tamilnadu, the *maṭam* inscriptions first appeared in the southern-most macro-region of Pandyamandalam in the tenth century with one inscription from Ramnathapuram district. They only became numerous in the thirteenth century and account for sixty-nine of the region's eight-one inscriptions for which we have dates. *Maṭam* inscriptions were far less common in the western part of the Tamil region during the Chola period. Inscriptions from Kongumandalam appeared in the eleventh century and were at their height in the region in the thirteenth century but still accounted for only twenty of the 380 inscriptions, suggesting that this region was peripheral. The inscriptions reveal that the donative activities involving *maṭams* began in the north and then spread south over the course of the Chola period.

Three hundred forty-seven of the 380 *maṭam* inscriptions make mention of the ruler at the time the inscription was engraved as a means of providing a date for the record (Figure 2.2). The largest number of such inscriptions (217) is dated in the regnal years of kings of the Chola dynasty. The second largest number of such inscriptions (102) refers to kings of the Pandya dynasty. There are also eleven inscriptions dated in the reigns of kings of the Pallava dynasty, seven for the Hoysala dynasty, five for the Telugu-

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[42] There is evidence in the inscriptions that donors brought *maṭam* members from the north to the south and settled them in *maṭams*.

Choda dynasty, three for the Rashtrakutas, and one each for the Irukkuveli and

Katavaraya chiefs.

Figure 2.2 The Dynastic Distribution of the *Maṭam* Inscriptions
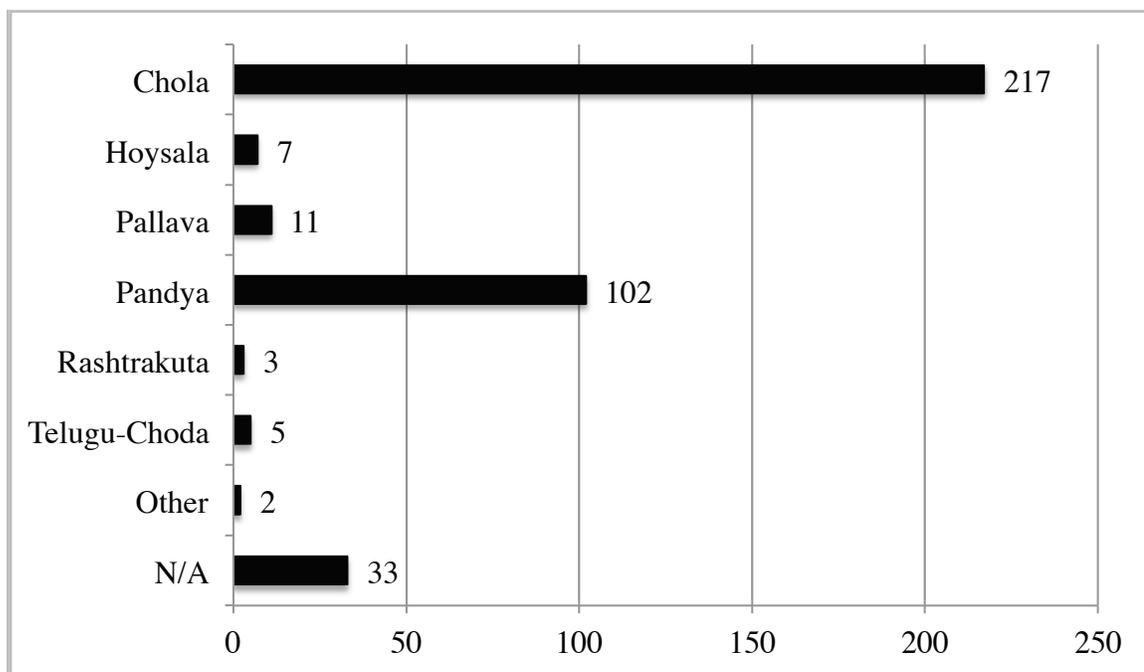
The Tamil inscriptions of the Chola period are a unique category of inscriptions

when compared to the inscriptions that come from other regions of India and other

historical periods. They are unique because they constitute the largest body of Indian

inscriptions that have survived, and also because of their content. While there are a few

inscriptions recording the establishment of temples and *brahmadeyas* (rent-free

brāhmaṇa settlements), the vast majority of Tamil inscriptions record gifts to existing

temples (Orr 2000, 22). In the course of the Chola period, such temples became

wealthier, larger, and more complex. Small brick structures were transformed into large

stone temples that had diverse and complex ritual and administrative structures

(Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 652). Their grand stone walls came to be inscribed with

the inscriptions that recorded the extensive endowments that sustained them (Orr 2000, 23).

While very few gifts to temples were designated as foundation grants, we have a different situation in the case of gifts to *maṭams*, some of which had as their object the construction and maintenance of *maṭams* rather than the support of activities at existing *maṭams*. The Kapālīśvara temple in Mylapore houses a thirteenth-century inscription that describes the establishment of a *maṭam* and refers to provisions for people working there, evidently to provide food.

> Hail! Prosperity! In the …. of Tripuvaṉa Cakkaravatti Koṉēriṉmaikoṇṭāṉ,
> Araiyaṉ Āṭkoṇṭa Nāyakaṉ alias Cētiyaraiyaṉ of Pūtimaṅkalam of
> Valivalakuṟṟam of Arumoḻitēva Vaḷanaṭu,
> built the Vaṭavīracāyi[ti]kkāṟaṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvāṉmiyūr in Koṭṭūrnaṭu in
> Jayaṅkoṇṭacōḻamaṇṭalam Puliyūrkōṭṭam alias Kulōttuṅkacōḻavaḷanaṭu.
> This [was for] the water carrier, cook, and …. of the *maṭam* (CMK 125 of 1967).

Here we find the term *eṭupiṭṭa* (caused to be built) being used for the building of a *maṭam*. This is the word most commonly used in the *maṭam* inscriptions for the building of *maṭams*. While *eṭuppitta* is also found in the inscriptions that provide for the building of temples, some of the other language that is used in the temple inscriptions is absent from *maṭam* inscriptions. Inscriptions relating to the building of temples may use language specific to consecration, as seen with the term *pratiṣṭai* (consecration) from the Sanskrit *pratiṣṭhā* or the Tamil terms *eḻuntaraḷuvitta* (caused to graciously appear) and *ukantaruḷuvitta* (caused to graciously rise up) (Orr 2013, 337). Foundation grants for

maṭams do not use such terminology.[43] Instead, we have the more straightforward

language of a twelfth-century inscription at Tiruvadandai that reads "*eṭutta kali-c-ciṅkaṉ*

maṭam" or "caused the Kali Ciṅkaṉ *maṭam* to be built" (ARE 281 of 1910) and the

Mylapore inscription above, which reads "*tiruvāṉmiyuril eṭupitta vaṭavīracāyi[ti]kkāṟaṉ*

maṭattu" or "caused the Vaṭavīracāyi[ti]kkāṟaṉ *maṭam* to be built in Tiruvanmiyur"

(CMK 125 of 1967) using the same verb *eṭu*, "to build."[44]

The *Somaśambhupaddhati*, an eleventh-century ritual manual authored by a

Goḷaki affiliate, provides some insights into what the ritual consecration of a newly

constructed *maṭam* might have entailed for this community, a group that is mentioned on

several occasions in the *maṭam* inscriptions of the Chola period. Its section on

maṭhapratiṣṭhā (consecration of a *maṭam*) specifies that a *maṭam* was to be made out of

stone, brick, or wood and that it should be equipped with the necessary servants,

residents, and decor (SP 4.11.1a; 4.11.12a; 4.11.12b).[45] The process of consecrating a

maṭam required that people enter the *maṭam* while carrying an image of Śiva and

circumambulate the interior to the sounds of the Vedas while music played in the

background (SP 4.11.3-4a). A fire was to be installed to nourish the deities (SP 4.11.9).

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[43] The term *pratiṣṭai* is absent from the *maṭam* inscriptions when dealing with *maṭams* specifically. There is an instance in an inscription that records a royal donation of three *vimānas* and the installation of the deity Māheśvara in the temple (IPS 14). The deity's installation is described using the word *pratiṣṭhā*. The donor provided houses for *maṭam* people as well in the inscription. *Maṭam* inscriptions that refer to the consecration of deities tend to refer to the arrangements for the consecration of a deity in a temple by a donor who was connected to a *maṭam* rather than the consecration of deities in *maṭams*.
[44] The Tiruvadandai inscription records a donation of paddy by an individual for a *maṭam* that had been constructed by the residents of the village (ARE 281 of 1910). Although the inscription refers to the building of the *maṭam*, it suggests that the *maṭam* was established some time prior to this gift. This transcript was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[45] I have used Brunner-Lachaux's (1998) French translation of the *Somaśambhupaddhati*. While *maṭam* inscriptions are rather silent on the consecration activities of *maṭams*, they provide us with information about the types of servants and residents that would have been found in *maṭams*, as seen in the Mylapore inscription with its provision for water carriers and cooks (CMK 125 of 1967).

Offerings were made to ensure the strength of the *guru's* spiritual family (SP 4.11.10b-12a). The *guru* then declared the name of the *maṭam* (SP 4.11.12b).

The information about the architecture and consecration of *maṭams* in the *Somaśambhupaddhati* contrasts with the information in the inscriptions. References to a consecration ceremony like that described in the *Somaśambhupaddhati* are absent from the *maṭam* inscriptions. The examples from Mylapore and Tiruvadandai are typical of the inscriptions that mention the building of *maṭams*. The inscriptions are more concerned with giving information about donors, detailing the donation, and specifying how a donation was to be used. Increasingly over the Chola period, they become concerned with giving information about donors' identities, describing the donation, how it was to be used, and also describing where *maṭams* were located in their villages than they were with giving details about the building and consecrating of a *maṭam*.

According to the inscriptions, *maṭams* received endowments for their construction or for support of their activities either as independent, stand-alone centres or as part of the temple complex. As one might expect from an agrarian society such as Chola-period Tamilnadu, land was the type of property that was most often mentioned in the *maṭam* inscriptions (Table 2.2). Six inscriptions refer to livestock, and thirty inscriptions to money or other forms of income that were given to support *maṭams*, while land was the kind of property most commonly given, bought, sold, or exchanged – in the case of 256 inscriptions. A gift might involve the donation of a piece of land or it could involve or include the remission of taxes on a piece of land. Often, land was donated to a *maṭam* after it was purchased with money by the donor from another individual or a corporate group such as a local assembly or the residents of a village. Donors purchased land with

the purpose of handing it over to a *maṭam*, keeping in mind that a donation of land did not mean the actual transfer of land to the *maṭam* but meant the gift of the land's produce or its managerial or revenue rights.

Table 2.2 The Types of Property That Were Donated to *Maṭams*[46]

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	N/A	Total
Animals	0	2	0	0	3	1	6
Garden	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
House Site	0	0	0	2	6	0	8
Income	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Land	2	4	25	61	149	15	256
Money	1	2	2	12	8	2	27
Total	3	8	27	75	172	18	303

The reasons why donations were made to *maṭams* varied and are sometimes difficult to ascertain from the inscriptions. As we have seen, some gifts were made to support the construction of *maṭams*. A greater number of inscriptions, however, record a donation as *maṭappuṟam*. This means simply "endowment to a *maṭam*," and frequently it is impossible to determine whether such a gift was made for the purpose of constructing a *maṭam* or to support some unspecified activities in an already existing *maṭam*. In some cases, we learn from the inscriptions about what the maintenance of a *maṭam* involved: most often, it was the support of a feeding charity (ninety-seven inscriptions).

C. The Patrons of *Maṭams*

1. Rulers as *Maṭam* Patrons

In the case of *maṭam* inscriptions in the Chola period, rulers appear only minimally as donors, while corporate bodies and individual donors feature much more

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[46] These statistics include inscriptions that refer to building *maṭams* and also inscriptions that provide a *maṭappuṟam* donation without reference to building a *maṭam*.

prominently. There were also donations made by people who were identified in the

inscriptions as belonging to a *maṭam* who gave to temples and *maṭams* (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 The Chronological Distribution of the Patrons of *Maṭams*[47]

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	N/A	Total
Rulers	0	1	0	5	5	0	11
Royal Orders	0	1	8	7	30	1	47
Corporate Bodies	0	0	6	10	25	3	44
Individuals	1	4	9	48	65	9	136
Maṭam People	0	2	2	4	37	1	46
Total	1	8	25	74	162	14	284

In much the same way that kings did not feature prominently in the affairs of

temples vis-à-vis their personal patronage in the Chola period, rulers did not make a

major appearance in *maṭam* inscriptions. Heitzman (1997, 144-46) found that the Chola

rulers appeared in their inscriptions in six ways: (1) *tirumukam*, or the direct royal order

of a king that had the appearance of the king's words, (2) *viṇṇappam* or *tirumukam* in

which a donor asked a king to issue an order in relation to a donation wherein the king

permitted the request of the donor but the action involving the donation took place at the

local level, (3) donations by royal women, (4) donations by kings, (5) interventions by

kings, primarily to settle local disputes, and (6) individual donors' gifts for the merit or

welfare of kings.[48] There are *maṭam* inscriptions that fall into each of these categories.

Rulers appearing in the *maṭam* inscriptions, regardless of dynasty, were most often

featured within the context of issuing royal orders and less commonly as the actors or

donors of the inscriptions.

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[47] These statistics do not include inscriptions for which this information is unavailable.

[48] Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976, 206) interpret the role of the king in temple life as one of protection and service. The king had to ensure that temple services and resources were allocated appropriately to ensure that conflict within the temple did not develop. Since the deity could not settle disputes, the king was called on to fulfil this role as the deity's protector and servant.

There are eleven cases when a ruler was a donor. These inscriptions are from the tenth to thirteenth century and they come from the Chola, Pandya, Hoysala, and Telugu-Choda dynasties. Females account for four of these inscriptions. A twelfth-century inscription located at the Naṭarāja temple in Chidambaram records a gift of land by Maturāntakiyāḻvār, the younger sister of the Chola king, as an endowment for a flower garden for the temple and for a *maṭam* (SII 4.222). A second twelfth-century inscription from Madurai records that the Pandya queen Ulakamuḻututaiyār gave land as *maṭappuṟam* (SII 14.200).[49] A thirteenth-century inscription located at the Aruḷāḷa Perumāḷ temple in Kanchipuram identifies Lakṣumidevi, one of the queens of the Telugu-Choda ruler Gandagopala, as the donor of land to the deity Aruḷāḷa Perumāḷ for services, gardens, and a *maṭam* that served food in her name (SII 4.859). A thirteenth-century inscription in Tiruppangili in Tiruchirappalli district states that a *maṭam* was the gift of the Hoysala king and queen (ARE 193 of 1938-39).

There are eight records of donations made by male rulers, dating from the tenth (one inscription), twelfth (three inscriptions), and thirteenth (four inscriptions) centuries. The inscriptions are found in Tiruchirappalli (two inscriptions), South Arcot (one inscription), Coimbatore (two inscriptions), Ramnathapuram (two inscriptions), and Tirunelveli (one inscription) districts. They were Pandyas (three inscriptions), Cholas (two inscriptions), Hoysalas (one inscription), or Irukkuvels (one inscription), with one inscription with an unknown dynastic affiliation.[50] Because there is such a small number of donations by these figures, it is difficult to analyze them to determine the

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[49] The inscription closes by saying that the donation is under the protection of the *paṉ māheśvaras* (SII 14.200). This suggests that the inscription, which is on a stone, was originally at a Śiva temple and now installed in a Viṣṇu temple (SII 14, 114).

[50] The Irukkuvel chief Bhuti Vikramakesari gave a *maṭam* to a group of ascetics according to an inscription at Kodumbalur dated in the tenth century (IPS 14).

chronological or geographical significance of these donations. They are further evidence, however, that rulers rarely acted in the kinds of local affairs that were recorded in the inscriptions. As Heitzman (1997, 143) explains, the Chola kings appeared rarely as actors in temple patronage because most transactions were enacted at the local level. The activities of rulers in the *maṭam* inscriptions confirm this for the Chola kings but also for the Pandyas, Hoysalas, and others during the Chola period.

For the most part, kings participated in the donative process through the royal orders that they issued. Royal orders in connection with *maṭam* donations began in the tenth century (one inscription) and continued in the eleventh (eight inscriptions) and twelfth (seven inscriptions) centuries but were by far the most common in the thirteenth century, which accounts for thirty of the total forty-seven royal orders that were issued, with one inscription dated only to the Chola period. The Cholas issued nineteen orders in the districts of Chingleput (three inscriptions), Thanjavur (five inscriptions), South Arcot (seven inscriptions), Coimbatore (one inscription), and Madurai (one inscription). The Pandyas issued seventeen orders in the districts of Tiruchirappalli (three inscriptions), South Arcot (one inscription), Ramnathapuram (four inscriptions), Madurai (six inscriptions), Tirunelveli (one inscription), and Kanyakumari (two inscriptions). The Hoysalas are responsible for issuing three royal orders in the thirteenth century in Dharmapuri (two inscriptions) and Tiruchirappalli (one inscription) districts.

Royal orders can be understood as the sanctioning of the patronage of private citizens rather than royal donations. In most of these cases (thirty-eight inscriptions), royal orders recorded the donation of lands or villages and the remission of taxes on land and villages for the benefit of *maṭams* at the request of corporate groups and individual

citizens. A thirteenth-century inscription at Tiruvendipuram in South Arcot district records the *tirumukam* of the Pandya king sanctioning a donation of land as *maṭappuṟam* by a citizen (SII 7.761). Three royal orders mention *maṭam* people as members of the local temple community that received instructions about the assignment of land rights. These instructions were communicated to a *maṭamuṭaiya* or *maṭapati* along with people of the temple. In the case of an eleventh-century Chola royal order at Kandiyur in Thanjavur district, *kāṇi* (property rights) were assigned to people in the temple and the king's order was communicated to the *maṭamuṭaiya* Brahma[s]oma Paṇṭitar of the *maṭam* and others (SII 5.579). Six royal orders deal with the assignment of *māṭāpattiyam* by the king. They come from the eleventh (three inscriptions), twelfth (one inscription), and thirteenth (two inscriptions) centuries.[51] Two eleventh-century inscriptions at Anaiyur in Madurai district concern a royal order giving a daily allotment of paddy as *maṭam pokam* (support of the *maṭam*) to the *māṭāpattiyam* and his descendants (ARE 508 of 1962-63; ARE 509 of 1962-63). Examples of donations to *maṭams* for the merit of the king are seen at Tirukkadaiyur in Thanjavur district in the eleventh century, which records a land donation for the merit of the king (ARE 243 of 1925), a twelfth-century donation of a *kukai* for the king at Tiruppugalur in Thanjavur district (ARE 87 of 1927-28), and the building of a *maṭam* named after the king at Srirangam in Tiruchirappalli district for his welfare in the thirteenth century (SII 24.196).

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[51] I will discuss the roles of the *maṭamuṭaiya*, *maṭapati*, and *māṭāpattiyam* in greater detail in Chapter Three.

2. Corporate Groups as *Maṭam* Patrons

Corporate groups appear as donors in forty-four inscriptions (Table 2.4).[52] The largest of the corporate groups in the Tamil region was the *nāṭṭār*, an assembly of dignitaries that came from the *nāṭu*. The *nāṭu* was the geographical unit made up of a number of villages that were organized around agriculture and irrigation. In terms of organization, each *nāṭu* had assemblies of *brāhmaṇas*, cultivators, merchants, and other groups. *Sabhais* were the assemblies of a *brahmadeya* or *caturvetimaṅkalam* (literally, "a village of the *brāhmaṇas* well-versed in the four Vedas") settlement, and they were groups composed of *brāhmaṇas*. *Ūrārs* were the assemblies of non-*brāhmaṇa* settlements. Trade was undertaken by itinerant merchants who had local contacts in the mercantile neighbourhoods called *nakarams* in villages and towns of the *nāṭu*. *Nakarattars* or the assemblies of merchants existed alongside the assemblies of cultivating groups and the assemblies of *brāhmaṇas*. Each of these groups met in separate assemblies to decide matters of local importance. In communities with growing temple complexes, these groups may have met together to decide matters for the community (Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 486-515). All of these groups participated in patronage concerning *maṭams*. Unlike endowments by individuals, which began in the ninth century, group donors did not appear in *maṭam* inscriptions until the eleventh century (six inscriptions). Donations by this cohort of donor continued into the twelfth century (ten inscriptions), and reached their height in the thirteenth century (twenty-five inscriptions).

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[52] Many of the *maṭam* inscriptions from the Chola period record a remission of taxes on lands after receiving money from an individual or group that had endowed the land to a religious institution. Like Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Matsui (1978), I have chosen to list the individual or group who gave the money as the donor who supported a *maṭam* through giving and have included them in my discussion of individual or group donors rather than classifying the village assembly that remitted taxes after receiving money from someone as the donor.

Three inscriptions are dated only to the Chola period. The largest cohort of inscriptions by district belongs to Thanjavur district with eleven inscriptions.

Table 2.4 The Chronological Distribution of Corporate Groups as the Patrons of

***Maṭams*[53]**

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	Total
Brāhmaṇa						
Assembly	0	0	3	1	4	8
Residents	0	0	0	0	1	1
Merchant						
Assembly	0	0	1	0	2	3
Guild	0	0	3	4	1	8
Nāṭu						
Assembly	0	0	0	0	1	1
Residents	0	0	0	0	2	2
Temple People	0	0	0	2	3	5
Ūr						
Assembly	0	0	0	1	2	3
Residents	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other	0	0	0	2	8	10
Total	0	0	7	10	25	42

There are six inscriptions from the eleventh century that have corporate donors. The eleventh century saw donations by *sabhais* in two instances, merchants in three cases, and the *sabhai* and *nakarattar* in one case. All of the inscriptions except one involved land. An example of the patronage by the *nakarattar* is seen in a South Arcot inscription, where the levies remitted by village merchants were to be distributed to the temple for burning lamps and maintaining its staff, and to the *maṭam* to maintain its members (SII 17.235).

We continue to have endowments by merchants, *brāhmaṇa* assemblies, and villages in the twelfth century, which accounts for ten inscriptions. Merchants account for the donors in four inscriptions. They provided house sites for *maṭams* (SII 5.295), gave

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[53] These statistics reflect the fact that an inscription may have more than one type of donor as seen in the eleventh century with a donation by a *sabhai* and *nakarattar* in one case.

money for offerings to the deity in the temple that were then to be given to the *maṭam* (ARE 606 of 1922), and arranged for the remission of taxes on lands for feeding people who studied medicine and other sciences in a *maṭam* (ARE 159 of 1925). In one instance, the *brāhmaṇa* assembly of a *caturvetimaṅkalam* was involved in a gift of land (ARE 534 of 1918).

In the thirteenth century, we have donations by corporate groups found in North Arcot district (two inscriptions), Chingleput district (four inscriptions), Thanjavur district (five inscriptions), Tiruchirappalli district (three inscriptions), Coimbatore district (two inscriptions), Madurai district (one inscription), Ramnathapuram district (one inscription), and Tirunelveli district (seven inscriptions). While we continue to see giving by the assemblies of *brāhmaṇa* villages (four inscriptions) and their residents (one inscription), the *ūrārs* of villages (two inscriptions) and their residents (one inscription), the assemblies of *nāṭus* (one inscription) and their residents (two inscriptions), and merchants (three inscriptions), we also see temple authorities (three inscriptions) involved in *maṭam* patronage and the assignment of rights involving *maṭam* people. Merchants were donors to *maṭams* involving land donations and tolls, *sabhais* were land donors, and the residents of villages made donations of land as *maṭappuṟam* endowments, and for *maṭam* people serving in temples. Masons were donors in the case of two inscriptions at Tirunelveli in which they gave a portion of their income to Mutaliyār Tiruvalañculi Uṭaiyār of the *maṭam* of Ceyyanampirāṭṭiyār (ARE 295 of 1940-41; ARE 296 of 1940-41).[54] Although corporate groups such as *sabhais* and *ūrārs* made donations to *maṭams*, they were more often involved in remitting taxes on the lands that had been

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[54] The transcript of ARE 296 of 1940-41 was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

endowed by individuals after having received money, thereby making *maṭam* lands

iṟaiyili or free of taxes. The declaration of land as *iṟaiyili* did not always mean complete

exemption from taxes but, rather, the degree of exemption was individually determined

(Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 534).

3. Individuals as *Maṭam* Patrons

The majority of endowments that were made for *maṭams* were undertaken by

individual private citizens (Table 2.3). The gender of these donors was predominantly

male although women appeared in twelve inscriptions as donors. One woman was

mentioned in three inscriptions, meaning that nine women in total made donations to

maṭams. They donated to *maṭams* as early as the tenth century and their patronage

continued into the thirteenth century. In all but two inscriptions where women donors

gave money, females donated land to support the building of *maṭams*, the maintenance of

maṭams, the running of *maṭams* as educational centres, and feeding at *maṭams*. In most

cases, the information that we have about these women comes from their identification

with respect to kinship. Familial ties were used most often to identify these women who

were wives, daughters, and mothers. At Tiruvorriyur in Chingleput district, three

inscriptions from the eleventh century record donations of land by a woman named

Āriyammai for the benefit of the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* that she established at

Tiruvorriyur (SII 4.555; ARE 127 of 1912; ARE 132 of 1912). Āriyammai's personal

name, her title as the *brāhmaṇī* (wife of a *brāhmaṇa*) of Prabhā[ga]ra Bhaṭṭaṉ, and her

husband's name and title identify her as a *brāhmaṇa* woman. She purchased land and

then gave it to the *maṭam* that she had founded to provide for the feeding of Śaivas. There

is also one instance of a palace woman who gave a land donation for a *maṭam* (ARE 88

of 1927-28). Rājarājaśolaṉ [R]ambhaiyār, who served the queen, made a donation for feeding people in a *maṭam* during festivals in the twelfth century. In another case, at Tirunelveli in the thirteenth century, a temple woman (*patiyilār*) named Kuttaṉ Nampirāṭṭi Ceyyaperumāḷ Talaikkoli bought land for *tirumeṉikaḷ* (servants) of the *maṭam* who had the duties of providing grass and flowers for the *maṭam* where Tiruttoṇṭi[śva]ratevar was living (*irukkum*) (SII 5.418). Although there were not a lot of records involving individual female donors, *maṭam* inscriptions provide evidence that Chola-period women had a greater public presence and economic freedom through the disposition of their wealth than textual traditions such as the Dharmaśāstras would cause us to think, although their economic power was less than that of men (Orr 2000, 70-71).

Males predominated as individual patrons of *maṭams*, appearing as donors in 126 inscriptions (Table 2.5). One of the four ninth-century *maṭam* inscriptions records a donation made by an individual man to support *maṭams* – the Pillaipalayam inscription recording the gift of land by.. [ṭu ve]ṭṭi Muttaraiyaṉ to a Viṣṇu temple and to a *maṭam* that I discussed above (SII 12.44). In the tenth century, male donors account for four inscriptions found in North Arcot district (three inscriptions) and Ramnathapuram district (one inscription). Two of the North Arcot inscriptions record donations of money and land by individuals at Tirumalpuram for the purpose of feeding *brāhmaṇas* in the *maṭam* at Govindapadi (SII 13.33; SII 22.319).

Table 2.5 The Chronological Distribution of Males as the Patrons of *Maṭams*[55]

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	Total
Local People	0	1	2	19	24	46
Merchants	0	2	2	3	4	11
Military or Royal Officers	0	3	2	12	4	21
People with High Honorific Titles	0	0	0	4	11	15
Temple People	0	0	2	2	3	7
Total	0	6	8	40	46	100

There are nine eleventh-century inscriptions recording the patronage of *maṭams* by men; these come from the northern part of Tamilnadu (Chingleput district) but also the more central areas of Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, South Arcot, and also Salem districts. There were two donations by agents of the king. A *brāhmaṇa* man named Mummuticoḻa Brahmamārāyaṉ, who was an agent of the king, gave land as *tevātaṉam* (land that was endowed to a temple) to the deity of the Tiruvorriyur temple and *maṭappuṟam* to the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvorriyur, which we can assume was the one established by Āriyammai (ARE 135 of 1912).[56] A merchant arranged for feeding people in a *maṭam* in Thanjavur district (ARE 94 of 1931-32) while house sites were given for a *maṭam* in Salem district by two merchants, one of which was named Kayilāyam Uṭaiya Nāyaṉār (ARE 265 of 1979-80). There are forty-six inscriptions recording donations by men to *maṭams* from the twelfth century. Though inscriptions continued in the more northern

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[55] These statistics reflect the inscriptions for which donor information is available. In certain instances, there is not enough information in an inscription to be able to place a donor in one of these categories. I have adapted the classification systems of Heitzman (1997) and Karashima (1984) for individual donors. The people designated as military or royal officers were those who were in the employ of the king. Local people were the individuals with the *kiḻavāṉ* (elder) or *utaiyāṉ* (possessor) title suffixed to the name of a village, for example, and also any other person who was identified as belonging or living in a village. Merchants included members of a *nakarattar* or guild. People with high honorific titles were those with *araiyāṉ* (king), *nāṭalvāṉ* (leader of the *nāṭu*), and *mūventaveḷāṉ* (member of the cultivating caste serving the three kings) in their names. Temple people were those persons associated with temples.
[56] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

part of Tamilnadu, they now spread further south into Ramnathapuram district. While donations by people with a king's title reached their height in the twelfth century and merchants continued as donors, most donors were now local people. Among local men, people who were termed village *kiḻāṉs* and *uṭaiyāṉs* made donations of land. At Tiruvottur in North Arcot district, a village *uṭaiyāṉ* named Naṭṭuvāykkuṭaiyāṉ Ātittaṉ Uyyavantāṉ bought land from a group of people from the village and gave it as *maṭappuṟam* for a *maṭam* ascetic and his descendants (SII 7.96). The thirteenth century has the greatest number of inscriptions by individual male donors to *maṭams* with sixty-five inscriptions in total, with local people such as the prominent landowning village *uṭaiyāṉs* accounting for the largest cohort of donor. Donations by people with a king's title fall off in the thirteenth century.

Champakalakshmi (2011, 235) notes that there were different and changing methods of negotiating identity in medieval South India. Literature and inscriptions reflected different ways of marking identity and presenting society in medieval south India before the advent of the Vijayanagara period in the middle of the fourteenth century. South Indian literature from the seventh to thirteenth century described social organization and stratification using the framework of *varṇa* (caste), which was absent from the inscriptions. The bhakti hymns, for example, showed an awareness of *varṇa* by the poet-saints in their protest against orthodox Vedic *brāhmaṇism* and its claim of access to the divine. Champakalakshmi (2011, 244) interprets this as a rejection of *brāhmaṇas'* exclusive claim of the role of *guru* by the bhakti poets in favour of the individual who had perfected devotionalism regardless of caste. The bhakti writers did not wholly deny

or negate caste but understood a person's position as a *bhakta* as superior to caste affiliation.

By contrast, there was little emphasis on caste as a marker of identity or community construction in the inscriptions of the Chola period. With the exceptions of *brāhmaṇas* and some sectarian groups who used caste as a determinant of people's relationship to temples, *varṇa* was hardly mentioned in the inscriptions of the seventh to thirteen century (Champakalakshmi 2011, 236).[57] Often times, the only way to determine caste is by analyzing the names of individuals and groups as they appeared in the inscriptions. For individuals, the word *bhaṭṭar* might suggest that the person was a *brāhmaṇa* when it was suffixed to a personal name whereas the word *veḷāṉ* might give evidence of non-*brāhmaṇa* caste affiliation when attached to the end of a person's name. *Brāhmaṇa* donors, whether they were corporate bodies such as *sabhais* or individual *brāhmaṇas* who may have been in the king's military, were more common earlier in the Chola period as *maṭam* donors. Over the course of the Chola period, donations by non-*brāhmaṇa* groups and individuals became more common in the *maṭam* inscriptions.

Personal information, occupational affiliation, and identification as a service group were the more common methods of marking people's identity in the *maṭam* inscriptions. Patronage of *maṭams* by the military or royal officers reached its height in the twelfth century and declined in the thirteenth century, which is the point when gifts by local people, who were mostly village *uṭaiyāṉs*, increased in number. Members of the military were in the position of *senāpati* (general), elephant mahout, or member of an army regiment, for example, while royal officers included administrators, for example.

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[57] An exception is the copper-plate grants. The *praśastis* (eulogies) of the kings claimed *kṣatriya* status and the inheritance of a lineage of great warriors. The donative portion of the copper-plate grants also provides information on caste since they often recorded endowments to *brāhmaṇas* (Champakalakshmi 2011, 237).

While there are instances of them giving money and house sites, they most often gave

land to *maṭams*. People with high honorific titles – *araiyāṉs*, *nāṭalvāṉs*, and

mūventaveḷāṉs – account for the next largest cohort of donor. By comparison, their

numbers are small; in all cases, their gifts to *maṭams* involved land. Merchants most often

gave land also but they donated taxes, paddy, and house sites as well.

What the *maṭam* inscriptions show is that people's identities were tied to their

function, occupation, and status as owners of property.[58] The gifts that donors made to

maṭams were often part of a larger transaction that included a donation to a temple. Their

specific relationship to *maṭams* is more difficult to ascertain and is known to us only

through their donations. We know that the military, royal officers, prominent locals,

village residents, and temple people who were *brāhmaṇa* and non-*brāhmaṇa* were the

kinds of people who gave to *maṭams* but we cannot conclude with certainty that they

were lay or initiated members of *maṭams* based on their patronage.[59]

Gifts to gods or their representatives on earth resulted in a transfer of divine merit.

The donative act had the ability to legitimate the donor's authority. An endowment

allowed the donor to "tap into the power of the divine, to enhance sanctity, and then to

demonstrate it to society" (Heitzman 1997, 1). The ability of a donor to participate in

grants and thereby legitimate power rested in the ability to command and control the

resources that served as gifts. The people who could have afforded to make a donation to

a temple and have it inscribed on its walls were the members of the most important

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[58] It has been argued that there was a shift in the inscriptions concerning caste as an identity marker in the inscriptions from the Vijayanagara period when caste became the key category of identity and community, suggesting that it became the norm and was practiced consciously (Champakalakshmi 2011, 236).

[59] The inscriptions also give us a sense of the kinds of people who did not give to *maṭams*. *Maṉṟāṭis* (shepherds), for example, were one of the communities that did not make endowments to *maṭams* though they were donors to temples.

social, political, and cultural communities in society. Inscriptions functioned as the demonstrative component of donations that were proof of people's wealth, authority, and status. The private citizens who gave to *maṭams* were sufficiently wealthy to be able to dispose of their wealth and were prominent members of society as property owners.

These gifts, which signified a donor's political, economic, and social power and status, had another meaning. They signalled a transformation. The mundane gift endowed to an institution or person became sacred through the donative process (Heitzman 1997, 123). One-time donations became sacralized objects that were priceless and meant to endure for eternity. The act of giving a gift was a means of accessing the divine and perhaps donors were somehow transformed through this process. The walls of temples and less so *maṭams* became inscribed over the centuries with the records of this transformation and were part of this process.

4. *Maṭam* People as Patrons

So far, I have been discussing the range of people involved in making donations to *maṭams*. I turn now to a consideration of patronage (of temples as well as *maṭams*) by individuals associated with *maṭams*. I have defined a "*maṭam* person" as anyone who was described as being of a *maṭam*, living in a *maṭam*, identified with a term that suggests *maṭam* connections (e.g., *maṭamuṭaiya*), linked to a *maṭam* through lineage, or identified as the beneficiary of *maṭam* services even if it was only occasional. I was able to identify forty-six inscriptions in which it was clear that a *maṭam* person was involved in making a donation or purchasing land for the benefit of a temple or *maṭam* (Table 2.3). Their

participation as donors began in the tenth century while over eighty percent of these

inscriptions date from the thirteenth century (Table 2.6).[60]

Table 2.6 The Chronological Distribution of *Maṭam* People as the Patrons of *Maṭams*

and Temples[61]

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	Total
Āṇṭār	0	0	0	1	3	4
Mahāmuṉi	0	0	0	0	1	1
Makaṉar	0	1	0	0	1	2
Maṭamuṭaiya	0	1	1	0	1	3
Maṭapati	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mutaliyār	0	0	0	0	1	1
Piḷḷai	0	0	0	0	1	1
Śiṣyar	0	0	0	0	10	10
Tāṉapati	0	0	0	0	1	1
Tapassiyar	0	0	0	1	3	4
Total	0	2	1	2	23	28

Males account for the greatest number of *maṭam* people who donated or bought

property for *maṭams* and temples in the Chola period. While there were female *maṭam*

people (e.g., disciples) who were donors, they were small in numbers.[62] In three cases,

women described as being from a *maṭam* or as the disciples of *maṭams* made donations or

purchased property. Ammai Aṟa Peruñcelviyār, whom I discussed in Chapter One, seems

to have been associated with a *maṭam* at Madurai and gave sheep for a perpetual lamp in

the temple of Toru Koṭuṅkuṉram Uṭaiyār (SII 8.430).[63] An inscription from Nallur in

Thanjavur district records that a female disciple who was married provided for a *maṭam*

for her teacher Tallan Uṭaiyār Īsāṉatevar; this teacher is said to have settled in Nallur and

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[60] The inscriptions are distributed across the tenth (two inscriptions), eleventh (two inscriptions), twelfth (four inscriptions), and thirteenth (thirty-seven) centuries, with one inscription dated only to the Chola period.

[61] These statistics reflect the fact that multiple terms may be used in an inscription to describe a *maṭam* person.

[62] There is also one instance of a woman identified with a *maṭam* who sold land to someone who then gave it over to the temple (SII 7.944). The seller was the wife (*akamuṭaiyāḷ*) of the *māṭāpattiyam*.

[63] The text reads: "*śrī matur[ai]il .. tiru[ma]ṭattil ammai aṟa-p-peruñcelviyār*" (SII 8.430).

was from the lineage of *mutaliyārs* of Malikai *maṭam* at Tiruvidaimarudur (ARE 49 of 1911; ARE 1912, 72). At Mannargudi, also in Thanjavur district, an inscription records the purchase of land by the Vaiṣṇava *mahāmuṉi* (great sage) of a *maṭam* and his female *śiṣyar* for the benefit of the *maṭam* (SII 6.59).

Information about the natal village, caste, and kinship ties of *maṭam* people who were donors was less common in the inscriptions than the information that was given for their *maṭams* in describing them as donors. While there are cases where caste and kinship were referred to in the inscriptions, most of the information that we learn about these donors had to do with their *maṭams* and it seems as though their *maṭam* identity was the primary one that was highlighted in the inscriptions, although the nature of the connection with the *maṭams* was rarely spelled out. When a gift of land was made for the god of Tiruvidaimarudur by "Piṉākapāṇi Paṭṭaṉ of the Ko *maṭam*," the fact that this *maṭam* was located in a *caturvetimaṅkalam* may suggest *brāhmaṇa* connections as might the suffix *paṭṭaṉ* to his name (SII 5.699).[64] We cannot tell anything about Piṉākapāṇi Paṭṭaṉ's specific role in the Ko *maṭam* though from the inscription. Was he a devotee or a disciple of the *maṭam* or its leader? Did he live in the *maṭam* or was he visiting it? The inscription does not answer these questions.

There are other inscriptions that indicate that a donor was a resident of a *maṭam* through the use of a term such as *irukkum* (who remains or lives). In other instances, *maṭam* people who were donors were referred to by terms that suggest a religious identity. There are four cases where the word *āṇṭār* was applied to patrons identified with *maṭams*. In the *maṭam* inscriptions where the donor was an *āṇṭār*, the term was prefixed

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[64] The text reads: "*ivai ko maṭattu [pi]ṉākapāṇipaṭṭaṉeṉ*" (SII 5.699).

to donor's name in the form of *āṇṭāṉ*, *āṇṭār* or *āṇṭārkaḷ* (with the plural suffix).[65] For

insight into who *āṇṭārs* were, we can look to other literary sources. In *Tēvāram*, Appar

calls himself the *āṇṭār* (Tēv 6.36.1) and *āṇṭāṉ* of the lord (Tēv 4.42.2).[66] This seems to

suggest that an *āṇṭār* was a devotee of the Lord. Perhaps, we can interpret the *āṇṭārs* of

the inscriptions as devotees in light of this. When an *āṇṭār* – Acaṉtampā[ṭi] Tiḻaiyāṉ

Āṭumviricaṭaiyāṉ – gave land as *maṭappuṟam* for the maintenance of an *āṇṭār* residing in

the *kukai* at Tiruppanaiyur in the twelfth century, he did so as a devotee (ARE 131 of

1974-75).[67] In the thirteenth century, people referred to as the *āṇṭārs* or devotees of the

Tirunāvukkaracaṉ *maṭam* at Tirupachur in Chingleput district gave money to the temple

of this place for conducting worship three times a day (ARE 111 of 1929-30).[68] A

Ramnathapuram inscription records the purchase of land by an *āṇṭār* (*āṇṭārkaḷ*) of the

Tirujñānacampantaṉ *maṭam* at Tirupputtur; he was also described as the *piḷḷai* (disciple)

of the *mutaliyār* of the Accaramalakiyāṉ *maṭam cantāṉam* of Kiḻai *maṭam* at Tiruvarur

(ARE 129 of 1908). In another thirteenth-century inscription, from Thanjavur district, a

donor – Āṇṭār Vitivitaṅka Perumāḷ – was referred to both as an *āṇṭār* and the *maṭātipati*;

he bought a house site from the temple trustees at Tiruvalangadu for his *maṭam*, which

was named Vaṇṇaramateva Āṇṭār *maṭam*, in the same village (ARE 96 of 1926). In the

Chola-period inscriptions in general, the term *āṇṭār* was used for both deities and people.

Since *maṭams* were named after both deities and people, it can be difficult to determine if

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[65] It was common for the plural of a term such as *āṇṭār* to be used when applied to an individual person. We see this in the case of the word *śiṣyar* (disciple) as well.

[66] The text of the poem reads: "*perumāṉār eṉṉai maṇṇil āṇṭāṉ*" (Tēv 4.42.2).

[67] The transcript reads: "*āṇṭārkaḷil acaṉtampā[ṭi] tiḻaiyāṉ āṭumviricaṭṭaiyāṉeṉ*" and "*iru[kkum] āṇṭār .. c-caṭaiya[n]ārkku nāṉ maṭappuṟam*" (ARE 131 of 1974-75). This inscription also reveals that *kukais* received donations that were designated as *maṭappuṟam*. The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[68] The transcript reads: "*tirunāvukkaracaṉ maṭattil āṇṭār pacupatitevarkum viṉāyakatevarum*" (ARE 127 of 1929-30). The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

a given *maṭam* was named after an *āṇṭār* who was a deity or a person.[69] In all four cases with *āṇṭārs* as donors, these people were *āṇṭārs* of a *kukai* or *maṭam* that was in the same village as the temple where the inscription was located, suggesting a more localized pattern of giving to these institutions by *āṇṭārs*. They donated land to a *kukai* or bought house sites or land for their *maṭams* or gave money for temple worship.

Ascetics identified using the terms *tapasi*, *tapassi*, *tapassiyar*, *tapasyar*, *tavaci*, or *tavasi* appear for the first time in the twelfth century as donors or as people who bought property for their *maṭams*. At Tiruvottur in North Arcot, the *tapassi* named Vaippur Uṭaiyāṉ Tevaṉ Viṭaimelvaruvāṉ, clearly from Vaippur as someone who was prominent in the village as an *uṭaiyāṉ*, purchased land and handed it over to the temple at Tiruvottur as *maṭappuṟam* for feeding *āṇṭārs* of the sacred street ("*tiruvīti āṇṭārkaḷ amutu*") (SII 7.97). This same person was identified as a recipient of *maṭappuṟam* in another inscription (SII 7.96). Three inscriptions, all from the thirteenth century, described *maṭam* people who were donors as ascetics. Periyatevaṉ, possibly a *tavaci* of the Melai *maṭam*, gave a donation for the eastern portion of the enclosure of a temple in a Solamadevi inscription in Coimbatore district (SII 26.236).[70] A *tavaci* of the *maṭam* in the temple of the deity at Tirukkalakkudi in Tirunelveli district built a shrine of Aḻaka Perumāḷ at Tirukkalakkudi (ARE 74 of 1916). In the case of an inscription at Pillamangalam in Tiruchirappalli district, Aṭaivār Viṉaitirttār, referred to as a *tapasyar* and *śiṣyar* (disciple) of the Bhikṣā *maṭam* lineage bought the Virapāṇṭiyāṉ *maṭam*, which was likely named after the Pandya king, that was located in the *tirumaṭaiviḷākam* (premises surrounding the temple) of the

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[69] It can be difficult to determine this because even a term like *teva*, which might point to a deity, was used in the names of both deities and people.

[70] The text reads: "*melai maṭattil [tavaci] periyatevaṉ*" (SII 26.236).

temple from the temple at auction (IPS 397). These patrons are evidence that ascetics

were owners of property and had the power to transfer it to institutions such as *maṭams*.

There are also cases where prominent *maṭam* people termed *mahāmuṉis*,

maṭamuṭaiyas, *maṭapatis*, or *mutaliyārs* were donors. There are three instances of a

maṭamuṭaiya who was a donor to a temple for services in the temple; these include, in the

tenth century, a *maṭamuṭaiya* who gave gold for services in the temple at Tiruvorriyur in

Chingleput district (EI 27.47) and, in the eleventh century, a *maṭamuṭaiya* who gave gold

for the purchase of cows for bathing the deity in the same temple (SII 5.1354).[71] In the

thirteenth century, an *uṭaiyār* of a *maṭam* bought land and gave it to the temple for

services in the temple that included offerings to the deity and the recitation of the Vedas

in the temple (SII 12.245).[72] The thirteenth-century Mannargudi inscription that I

mentioned earlier identified a *mahāmuṉi* and his female *śiṣyar* as the purchasers of land

for their *maṭam* (SII 6.59). A *maṭapati* at Tiruvalangadu in Thanjavur district bought

house sites in the thirteenth century (ARE 96 of 1926). There is one case where a

mutaliyār associated with a *maṭam* made a gift to a *maṭam* in Thanjavur district (ARE

262 of 1917) and one case where land was exchanged between the temple and the

mutaliyār of a *maṭam*, also in Thanjavur district (ARE 108 of 1911). More often, the term

mutaliyār was used with reference to the head of the lineage to which a donor belonged.

For example, an inscription from Tiruvannamalai describes the donor Hṛdayaśivaṉ as

living in the Vidyā Vinotaṉ *maṭam* of this place and also as a disciple (*śiṣyar*) of

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[71] Also in the tenth century, the donor of a Takkolam inscription was referred to as the *makaṉar* (son; disciple) of the *maṭamuṭaiya* (SII 5.1365). While the *maṭamuṭaiya* was not the donor in this instance, a person identified as his "son," perhaps suggesting that he was a disciple of the *maṭamuṭaiya*, made a donation. *Maṭamuṭaiyas* tended to appear in the inscriptions in responsibility roles in temples, as signatories to donations, for example, rather than as donors to *maṭams* or temples. I will discuss this further in the coming chapters.

[72] The text reads: "*tirunāvukkaracu teṉ tirumaṭattil uṭaiyār aḻakiya tirvaiyāṟuṭaiyār*" (SII 12.245).

Siddhāntavyākhyātākkaḷ Varada Śivācārya who was one of the disciples of the *mutaliyār* of Tirukkoṭuṅkuṉram of the Lakṣādhyāya Mutaliyār lineage of the Goḷaki *maṭam* (TAM 276).[73]

Śiṣyars were donors in the thirteenth century in eight cases spread throughout the Tamil region in North Arcot district (one inscription), Chingleput district (one inscription), Thanjavur district (two inscriptions), Tiruchirappalli district (one inscription), Ramnathapuram district (one inscription), Madurai district (one inscription), and Tirunelveli district (one inscription). I do not mean to suggest that the term *śiṣyar* came to replace words such as *āṇṭār* to describe *maṭam* people who had this role in the inscriptions but rather that *śiṣyar* came to be used more commonly to describe donors who were connected with *maṭams* in the thirteenth century. In five cases of *śiṣyar* inscriptions, land was either bought or donated for the benefit of a *maṭam* or temple, as we saw with the Mannargudi inscription (SII 6.59). In three of these cases, land was bought by a *śiṣyar* for the benefit of a *maṭam* while a donation of land was made by a *śiṣyar* for the benefit of a temple. In one instance, a *tapasyar*, whom I discussed above as the purchaser of a *maṭam* at auction, was also described as a *śiṣyar* (IPS 397). A *śiṣyar* bought a house site in another instance (SII 23.495). A *śiṣyar* of Jñānaciva Iṟavaḷar gave money to the temple for worship in a Chingleput district inscription (ARE 111 of 1929-30).[74]

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[73] The text reads: "*śrī goḷaki maṭattu lakṣādhyāya mutaliyār cantānattu tirukoṭuṅkuṉrattu mutaliyār śiṣyakaḷil siddhāntavyākhyātākkaḷ varada śivācārya śiṣyaṉ hṛdayaśivaṉ*" (TAM 276).

[74] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

D. Conclusion: *Maṭam* Property Management

The *maṭam* donor is representative of the individuals and groups who supported religious institutions during the Chola period. Donors were the members of Tamil society who had rights to property and the ability to transfer it to these institutions. In the case of donations that supported *maṭams*, property was given to both temples and *maṭams* to support *maṭams*. While rulers made donations for *maṭams*, they appeared most commonly within the context of royal orders and the sanctioning of the donations that were made by other people for *maṭams*. Rulers also factored in sanctioning the rights to hold positions in *maṭams* and issued royal orders that assigned these rights to individuals at *maṭams*. While corporate groups such as the residents of a village or a village assembly also made donations most often of land to *maṭams*, they were more commonly the groups that remitted taxes on the lands that private individuals gave for *maṭams*. Private individuals account for the largest body of donors that supported *maṭams*. While there were a handful of women donors, the majority of individual donors were men through donations of land and money. The fact that people who were described as living in a *maṭam*, as heading a *maṭam*, or as the devotee or disciple of a *maṭam* gave property to these centres and to temples means that *maṭam* people had the ability to make donations or purchase lands for the benefit of temples and also their *maṭams* in the Chola period. I will return to this issue in my concluding chapter.

While the inscriptions that record donations made by people to temples to support their activities suggest that the deity of the temple was the recipient of these gifts, inscriptions that record donations to support *maṭams* are somewhat different. In the case of temples that received endowments to support *maṭams*, in the case of a *maṭappuṟam*

gift to a temple for example, the deity of the temple seems to have sometimes been the recipient of these gifts. In the case of inscriptions where a *maṭam* was being given a gift without mentioning a gift to a temple, a person whom we can assume was important to the *maṭam* was the recipient of the gift. People who were referred to as belonging to a *maṭam* as a devotee, disciple, or head of a *maṭam* made donations of their own property to temples and *maṭams* most often in the villages where their *maṭams* were located. As with other donors who supported *maṭams*, they gave mostly land. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the people associated with *maṭams* in greater depth and also the types of activities that were supported at *maṭams* through giving in the Chola period.

Chapter Three

The People and Activities of *Maṭams* in the Chola Period

A. The *Maṭam* and the Tamil Landscape

In this chapter, I will survey the people who were associated with *maṭams* in the Chola period and explore the activities that they undertook there. Not only were there a number of different types of people associated with *maṭams* during this period but there were also a number of activities linked to *maṭams*, revealing the diversity and complexity of *maṭams*' participation in the cultural milieu of Tamilnadu in the Chola period. The various relationships of *maṭams* with their environments are suggested by the location and distribution of *maṭams* and their inscriptions. The example of Tiruvannamalai in North Arcot district shows that some temple-towns had multiple *maṭam* inscriptions and multiple *maṭams*. The inscriptions at the Aruṇāchalēśvara temple mention the *maṭam* of Ukkirar Cattiyavā[cakataṉmavā]ṇiyar (SII 8.138), the Nāṟpatteṇṇāyira *maṭam* (TAM 206), the Kal *maṭam* (TAM 269), and the Vidyā Vinotaṉ alias Kāṅkayarāyaṉ *maṭam* (TAM 276). Inscriptions elsewhere, in North Arcot and South Arcot districts, dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also refer to the *maṭams* at Tiruvannamalai. A stone now set up in the Central Museum in Chennai, which was likely originally from North Arcot district, records the gift of a village to the Aḻiyāviratam Koṇṭāṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvannamalai (ARE 513 of 1913) and an inscription from the Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram explains that land was given to the temple by a person living in a *maṭam* north (*vaṭakkil*) of Tiruvannamalai (SII 12.171). Tiruvannamalai was not the only place to have a number of *maṭam* inscriptions and multiple *maṭams*. Other villages that had

several *maṭams* included Kanchipuram, Tirukkalukkunram, and Tiruvorriyur in Chingleput district, and Chidambaram in South Arcot district.

While the inscriptions reveal that sometimes a town or village like Tiruvannamalai had more than one *maṭam*, they may also reveal the location of a *maṭam* in a village, often in relation to its proximity to the temple. Staying with the example of Tiruvannamalai, Kal *maṭam* was simply described as being in Tiruvannamalai ("*tiruvaṉṉamalaiyil kalmaṭattil*") (TAM 269), Vidyā Vinotaṉ alias Kāṅkayarāyaṉ *maṭam* was in the holy Tiruvannamalai ("*tiruvaṇṇāmalaittiruppatiyil kāṅkayarāyaṉ tirumaṭamāṉa vidyā vinotaṉ tirumaṭattu*") (TAM 276), and another *maṭam* was described only by its cardinal direction north of the village ("*tiruvaṇṇāmalaiyil vaṭakkil maṭattil*") (SII 12.171). Where these examples locate these *maṭam*s in or near Tiruvannanamalai, there are other examples that give a more detailed description of a *maṭam's* location. In these instances, *maṭams* are almost always described as being in a temple's *tiruvīti* (sacred street) or *tirumaṭaiviḷākam* (premises surrounding the temple). The Ukkirar Cattiyavā[cakataṉmavā]ṇiyar *maṭam* was located in the *tiruvīti* of Tiruvaṉṉamalai Uṭaiyār of the Tiruvannamalai temple ("*uṭaiyār tiruvaṇṇāmalai uṭaiyār tiruvītiyil ukkirar cattiyavā[cakataṉmavā]ṇiyar maṭattukku*"), for example (SII 8.138). While these descriptions give us the physical location of a *maṭam*, they should not in-and-of themselves be taken to mean sectarian affiliation between a *maṭam* and a temple. The fact that a village like Tiruvannamalai had multiple *maṭams* may have been due to a number of factors. Some of the villages that had many *maṭams* were important political and economic centres, and these factors likely contributed to their growth as places with more than one *maṭam*. While the description of a *maṭam* in proximity to a temple gives us the

maṭam's physical location in the village, it does not confirm a relationship between a *maṭam* and a temple. It may be that the temple, as a village landmark, was a way of fixing the physical location of a *maṭam*, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four. Perhaps, a better way of asserting a relationship between a *maṭam* and a temple is to look at the participation of *maṭam* people in temples.

B. Ascetics, Devotees, Disciples, and Lords of the *Maṭam*: The People of *Maṭams*

1. *Maṭam* People in the Ninth Century

The sparse *maṭam* inscriptions from the ninth century do not give us a lot of information about the types of people who were involved with *maṭams* during this period. These earliest *maṭam* inscriptions are only four in number. Two of the inscriptions are damaged such that there is no available information concerning the people who were associated with *maṭams*. Of the other two inscriptions, one comes from the village of Ramakrishnamaharajupet in Chingleput district and records the name of Ālaiyaṉ who was the servant of Tiṇṭi Bhaṭāra of the Tirumayāṉa *maṭam* (ARE 140 of 1967-68). Here, we see the term *bhaṭṭārar* used as a title or part of the name of a *maṭam* person. *Bhaṭṭārar* referred to a respected man, sovereign or feudatory, a Śaiva ascetic, or a preceptor according to Tamil epigraphical records (Sircar 1966, 52). Variants of the term – *bhaṭṭa* and *bhaṭṭār* – suggest *brāhmaṇa* affiliation. Nilakanta Sastri ([1935] 1975, 487, 494) describes *bhaṭṭārars* as learned *brāhmaṇas*. Some of the *bhaṭṭārars* of the *maṭam* inscriptions from later centuries were also *paṇṭitaṉs*, suggesting learning.[75] This name, regardless of its specific meaning, indicates that Tiṇṭi Bhaṭāra was a high-status person.

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[75] *Bhaṭṭārar* and other similar forms were often applied to deities as well.

Table 3.1 Some Terms for *Maṭam* People

	Some Terms for *Maṭam* People
Ninth Century	*bhaṭṭārar, caṭṭa perumakkaḷ*
Tenth Century	*bhaṭṭārar, brāhmaṇa, makaṉar, maṭamuṭaiya, maṭapati, paṇṭitaṉ, śiṣyar, śrī mahāvratikaḷ*
Eleventh Century	*ācāriyar, aṭiyār, bhaṭṭārar, brāhmaṇa, cantāṉam, civayoki, māheśvara, maṭamuṭaiya, māṭāpattiyam, paṇṭitaṉ, pittarkaḷ, śiṣyar, śrīvaiṣṇava, tapassiyar, vaiṣṇava, varggattār*
Twelfth Century	*āṇṭār, apūrvi, brāhmaṇa, civayoki, māheśvara, maṭamuṭaiya, maṭapati, māṭāpattiyam, paṇṭitaṉ, tapassiyar, tevaraṭiyār, śrī māheśvara, śrīvaiṣṇava, vaṁśattār*
Thirteenth Century	*ācāriyar, āṇṭār, aṭimai, brāhmaṇa, cantāṉam, civayoki, jīyar, kuru, mahāmuṉi, māheśvara, maṭamuṭaiya, māṭāpattiyam ceyvarkaḷ, maṭātipati, mutaliyār, mutalikaḷ, paṇṭitaṉ, paricārakar, piḷḷai, saṁnyāsī, śiṣyar, tapassiyar, tecāntiri, vātti*

The other inscription with information on *maṭam* people, from Kaverippakkam in North Arcot district, applied the term *caṭṭa perumakkaḷ* to the people associated with a *maṭam*.

> In the twenty-fifth [regnal] year of Kovicaiya Nirupatoṅkali Kirampa ….
> we the *sabhai* of Avani Nārāyaṇacati[rvetima]ṅkalam gave ….
> for *uḻakku* of oil daily .… of the *maṭam* for the *caṭṭa perumakkaḷ* of
> the *maṭam* (SII 12.79).

This is the only case in the *maṭam* corpus of inscriptions where I found the term *caṭṭa perumakkaḷ* in relation to *maṭam* people. It is likely that these *caṭṭa perumakkaḷ* constituted some sort of important or governing body for the *maṭam* since it was the recipient of the endowment. A second *maṭam* inscription with a *perumakkaḷ* (literally, "great people") dealt with a village *perumakkaḷ* as donors of land as *maṭappuṟam*, given to a *maṭam* at Tuttur in Tiruchirappalli district in the thirteenth century (ARE 217 of 1994-95). The term *perumakkaḷ* was not restricted to *maṭams* and it seems to suggest an administrative body. In the context of temple administration, there are inscriptions that mentioned the *caṭṭa perumakkaḷ*, which seems to be responsible for receiving donations on behalf of the temple. In the eleventh century, for example, the *caṭṭa perumakkaḷ* of the

temple was charged with receiving paddy annually as part of a financial exchange between the village of Manarkudi and the temple (TAS 6.110). Given that the word *caṭṭa*, like *bhaṭṭa*, could refer to *brāhmaṇas* and *perumakkaḷ* means "great people," the term may refer to a group of learned *brāhmaṇas* who had a responsibility role in a *maṭam* or a temple.

2. *Maṭam* People in the Tenth Century

There are eleven inscriptions from the tenth century; we again see the term *bhaṭṭārar*, but also *brāhmaṇa*, *makaṉar* (son; disciple), *maṭamuṭaiya* (lord of the *maṭam*), *maṭapati* (head of the *maṭam*), and *śiṣyar* (disciple), suggesting that even more types of people came to be associated with *maṭams* in the tenth century (Table 3.1). The title *bhaṭṭārar* is found in two inscriptions. One of these, the Takkolam inscription that I began this dissertation with, described Vācaspati Bhaṭṭārar, a donor to the temple, as the *makaṉar* of Vijñāna [Kṣe]ma Bha[ṭṭ]ārar, who himself was described as a *maṭamuṭaiya* (SII 5.1365). The term *makaṉar* literally means "son" (with an honorific plural suffix). As Talbot (1987, 139) notes in her study of the Telugu and Sanskrit inscriptions from this period from Andhra Pradesh that deal with monasticism, it was not uncommon for the term son to refer to a disciple.[76] Vācaspati Bhaṭṭārar was described as the son of Vijñāna [Kṣe]ma Bha[ṭṭ]ārar who possessed the Tiruvūṟal *maṭam* of Takkolam (SII 5.1365).[77] It seems very likely in the case of this inscription – with the description of Vijñāna [Kṣe]ma Bha[ṭṭ]ārar as he who possesses the *maṭam* of Tiruvūṟul of Takkolam – that Vācaspati Bhaṭṭārar was a disciple of Vijñāna [Kṣe]ma Bha[ṭṭ]ārar rather than his son. This

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[76] The terms for father (*taṇḍri*) and elder brother (*anna*) lack the figurative meaning of the word son and should be taken literally in the inscriptions. Talbot distinguishes (1987, 139) between a literal meaning of the word from the figurative by looking for other terms in the inscriptions that confirm kinship.

[77] The text reads: "*takkolattu tiruvūṟul maṭamuṭaiya vijñāna [kṣe]ma bha[ṭṭ]ārar makaṉār vācaspati bhaṭṭārar tiru[v]ūṟal mahā[d]evaṟkku vaitta*" (SII 5.1365).

inscription also shows that the terms for *maṭam* people in the Chola period were overlapping. In this case, Vācaspati Bhaṭṭārar was a *bhaṭṭārar* and *makaṉar* while Vijñāna [Kṣe]ma Bha[ṭṭ]ārar was a *bhaṭṭārar* and *maṭamuṭaiya*. As we shall see in the following discussion, a *maṭamuṭaiya* may have also been involved in temple affairs.

The term *maṭamuṭaiya* is found in two other tenth-century inscriptions. At Kiranur in Thanjavur district, the *maṭamuṭaiya* was a *tēvarkaṉmi* (temple servant) who had a role in making decisions about services in the temple (ARE 273 of 1950-51).[78] Another inscription, at Tiruvorriyur in Chingleput district, describes Caturāna[n]a Paṇṭita Bhaṭā[ra]r as a *maṭamuṭaiya* and records his gift of gold for the worship of the deity in the temple (EI 27.47). While a *bhaṭṭārar* like Vijñāna [Kṣe]ma Bha[ṭṭ]ārar, he was also a *paṇṭitaṉ* or a man of learning. Another inscription from Tiruvorriyur refers to this same Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ Bhaṭārar as a *maṭapati*; here, he is not a donor but is involved in the affairs of the temple (ARE 177 of 1912). This is the earliest appearance of the term *maṭapati* – literally, "lord of the *maṭam*" – for a *maṭam* head. *Maṭapati* and *maṭātipati* (which appears in later centuries) suggest the headship of a *maṭam* with the term *pati* while the role of the *maṭamuṭaiya* is more ambiguous. The *uṭaiyāṉ* name does not necessarily translate to the role of *maṭam* head since *uṭaiyāṉ* – literally, "he who possesses" – was generally used for important or prominent people in a community who were not automatically or necessarily the heads of their communities.[79]

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[78] I have borrowed Orr's (2000, 93) definition of a responsibility role in the temple as one having to do with managing or overseeing temple resources or representing the temple by accepting donations or signing agreements with people who were involved in transactions with the temple. The inscriptions show that *maṭamuṭaiyas* were one of the groups that had a responsibility role in the temple in the Chola period since they accepted donations and signed agreements on behalf of the temple.

[79] Prominent people at the village level who tended to be local landowners often had *uṭaiyāṉ* in their names.

Brāhmaṇa affiliation with *maṭams* is seen in the tenth century. Two inscriptions from Tirumalpuram in North Arcot district describe *brāhmaṇas* at Govindapadi as the recipients of daily feeding in the *maṭam* (SII 22.319; SII 22.328).[80] The *brāhmaṇas* of these inscriptions were not the direct recipients of these donations. They were also not described as living in the *maṭam* nor do we know their names. These inscriptions do not use language that would clarify their identities with respect to their relationship to the *maṭam* (e.g., *maṭamuṭaiya*) or their qualities or expertise (e.g., *paṇṭitaṉ*). All we know about them is that they were to be fed in a *maṭam*. An inscription from Uttaramerur in Chingleput district records a gift of land by a woman as *bhaṭṭavṛtti* (SII 3.333=6.322). While the inscription does not refer to *maṭam* people as *bhaṭṭas* or *brāhmaṇas*, *bhaṭṭavṛtti* – which means "*brāhmaṇa* livelihood" – was a donation for learned *brāhmaṇas*.[81] In the case of this inscription, we learn that the recipients of the *bhaṭṭavṛtti* endowment were required to have specialized scriptural knowledge, which will be discussed later in this chapter; they were also required to live in the *maṭam*. Here, we see a much more specific association of *brāhmaṇas* with *maṭams* than in the Tirumalpuram inscriptions, as well as an indication of activities other than feeding taking place in *maṭams*.

We also find terms specific to asceticism and discipleship in the tenth century. An inscription in Ramnathapuram district registered a donation of sheep for a lamp for the *maṭam* of the *śrī mah[ā]vratikaḷ* (the Great Penance; one whose penance is great), who were likely Kālamukhas (SII 14.88; Sanderson 2007, 179-84). The term *śiṣyar* (disciple) appeared for the first time in a single inscription. A hero stone from Tiruchirappalli district, carved with a figure of what appears to be a *brāhmaṇa* pierced in the neck by an

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[80] The text of SII 22.328 reads: "*cantātittaval [maṭa]ttile uttamāgram nittamoru brahmaṇaṉe ūṭṭvāka*."

[81] *Brāhmaṇa* status was not always identified using this term or one of its derivatives. *Brāhmaṇa* affiliation was suggested by terms such as *brahmadeya*, *caturvetimaṅkalam*, and *sabhai* as well.

arrow marks the destruction of a *maṭam* and the death of a disciple named

Carrimuṟṟattevan, who is described as a "*brāhmaṇa śisyan*," confirming that he was a

brāhmaṇa disciple who died in this instance when his *maṭam* was destroyed (SII 12.56).[82]

3. *Maṭam* People in the Eleventh Century

In the eleventh century, as *maṭam* inscriptions became more numerous, a wider

range of terms started to be used to describe people associated with *maṭams*. Along with

the continued use of terms such as *brāhmaṇa* and *maṭamuṭaiya* to describe *maṭam* people

who gave to temples and *maṭams* or who were the recipients or beneficiaries of

donations, now we see *āṇṭārs*, *tavacis*, *civayokis*, *māheśvaras*, and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* as *maṭam*

people as well, though these people may not have the enduring association with *maṭams*

that *maṭamuṭaiyas* and *paṇṭitaṉs* had.

Five of the six inscriptions mentioning individual *maṭamuṭaiyas* identified them

as *paṇṭitaṉs*. Two of these inscriptions are from Kandiyur in Thanjavur district. One of

these mentions a Lakuḷīśvara Paṇṭitar as a *maṭamuṭaiya* (SII 5.578). The term *paṇṭitar*

and the title *maṭamuṭaiya* identify him as a man of learning and as a member of a *maṭam*

respectively. The inscription indicates that he was the beneficiary of *ācāriyar pokam*

(support of an *ācāriyar*), which involved the assignment of rights; this was one of two

inscriptions from this century that mentions an *ācāriyar* in relation to a *maṭam*.[83] In a

second inscription at Kandiyur, the *maṭamuṭaiya* Brahma[s]oma Paṇṭitar was named first

among the people who received a royal order that provided for an appointment in the

temple; others who were mentioned were the *śrī karyan ceyvarkaḷ* (temple managers) and

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[82] This inscription is dated paleographically to the tenth century (SII 12, 1986). This is not the only instance of a *maṭam* or *kukai* being destroyed. A thirteenth-century inscription from Tirutturaipundi in Thanjavur district records the destruction of a *kukai* (ARE 471 of 1912; Sethuraman 1991, 32-35).

[83] The text reads: "*maṭamuṭaiya lakuḷīśvara paṇṭitaṟku ācāriya pokamum*" (SII 5.578). As the recipient of *ācāriyar pokam*, he was clearly an *ācāriyar* and probably an Atimārga ascetic as suggested by his name.

tevarkaṉmikaḷ (temple servants) (SII 5.579). An inscription from Madam in North Arcot

district mentions another Lakuḷīśvara Paṇṭitar, identifying him using the word

maṭamuṭaiya and indicating that he was the head of the *maṭam* of Mahātevar of the

Tiruvarincīśvaram temple at Melpadi (SII 3.18).[84] Interestingly, this Lakuḷīśvara Paṇṭitar

had the term *kaṉmikaḷ* attached to his name, suggesting that he was also a servant of the

temple; a group of shepherds made a declaration about a donation to the temple in his

presence. Like most of the *maṭamuṭaiyas* in the eleventh century, he was not as a donor

or recipient of a donation for a *maṭam* but was in a responsibility role in relation to a gift

or order involving a temple.[85] An inscription from Melsevur in South Arcot district

described the *maṭamuṭaiyas* of the *maṭam* (using the plural form *maṭamuṭaiyārkaḷ*) along

with the temple's *tevarkaṉmikaḷ* as receiving a portion of the endowment made by

merchants (SII 17.235). This reference to *maṭamuṭaiyas* as members of an anonymous

group suggests that a *maṭamuṭaiya* was not necessarily an individual who was singularly

prominent in a *maṭam* but was a community of important people in a *maṭam*.

The term *māṭāpattiyam* designated both temple superintendents and *maṭam* heads.

It often appeared in the context of the temple rather than the *maṭam* and it can be difficult

to determine from an inscription if it was referring to a temple superintendent or a *maṭam*

leader. The *māṭāpattiyam* Kaṉṉaṭaka Paṇṭitar was a member of the temple committee in

an inscription at Kolar in Mysore district (SII 3.66). Two other *māṭāpattiyam* inscriptions

come from Anaiyur in Madurai district. They record an order of the king requiring the

[84] The editors of *South Indian Inscriptions* are of the opinion that the name Lakuḷīśvara links the *maṭam* at Melpadi with the Lakuḷīśvara Pāśupatas at Karohana in Gujarat through a *praśasti* (SII 5, 27).
[85] The transcripts are unavailable to me for two inscriptions from Tiruvavadudurai that deal with the remission of taxes on land that mention a *bhaṭṭārar* of the *maṭam* who was involved with the temple, showing that the name *bhaṭṭārar* continued to be associated with *maṭam* people who were involved with temples in the eleventh century (ARE 101 of 1925; ARE 125 of 1925; ARE 1925, 87).

payment of paddy as *maṭam pokam* (support of a *maṭam*) for Ampalattāṭi Veṅkāṭan̲ who

received the local *māṭāpattiyam* and are less ambiguous with reference to a *maṭam* (ARE

508 of 1962-63; 509 of 1962-63). Ampalattāṭi Veṅkāṭan̲ secured the rights (*kāṇi*) to hold

the position of *māṭāpattiyam* and to recite *tiruppatiyam* (hymns). The paddy was ordered

to be taken from the temple daily for him (ARE 508 of 1962-63). *Maṭam pokam* was tied

to his role as *māṭāpattiyam* and his responsibility as reciter of *tiruppatiyam*.

New terms for ascetics were introduced in the eleventh century with one

inscription that used the word *tavaci* and another inscription that used the term *civayoki*.

We find variations of the term *tavaci* – *tapassi*, *tapassiyar*, *tapasvin*, *tavaci*, and *tavasvi* –

in the *maṭam* inscriptions.[86] It is derived from the Sanskrit *tapas* (heat) and refers to both

the practice of asceticism and the power or heat that is generated from ascetic practices

by the *tapasvin* or one who possesses *tapas* (Olivelle 2006, 31). According to an

inscription at Konerirajapuram in Thanjavur district, the *tavas[v]i* Tiṭṭai Viḻumin̲āna

Piḷḷai received a land grant as *maṭappur̲am* for feeding people designated as *aṭiyārs*

(devotees; servants) and *śrī māheśvaras* (Śaiva devotees), neither of whom was explicitly

identified as ascetics, during festival times (SII 26.691).[87] Here, we have a person clearly

identified as an ascetic who evidently had an enduring association with a *maṭam* and the

responsibility for feeding people that was extended to his descendants (*varggattār*) who

inherited this responsibility. While this suggests a long-term association with a *maṭam* for

him, the people that he was responsible for feeding appeared in rather generic terms –

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[86] *Tapassiyar*, in the Grantha script, was the most common variant of *tavaci* in the *maṭam* inscriptions.
Śiṣyar and *vaṁśattār* were other terms that were commonly in Grantha whereas *maṭamuṭaiya* and *maṭapati*
were in the Tamil script.
[87] This was the only time that *aṭiyārs* appeared in the *maṭam* inscriptions in the eleventh century (SII
26.692). Damage to the inscription makes it unclear if the *aṭiyārs* of the inscription were the *śrī*
māheśvaras or if they were two separate groups of people.

unnamed and impersonal – in the inscription. The fact that these people were to be fed at a specific time as dictated by the requirements of the donation suggests that their relationship to the *maṭam* was connected to their attendance at festivals.

The *aṭiyārs* of the Konerirajapuram inscription were likely devotees. The word *aṭiyār*, from *aṭi* meaning "foot" with the honorific suffix, implies that *aṭiyārs* were "at the feet" of someone and evokes the image of submission. Hints about whom the *aṭiyārs* of the inscription might have submitted themselves to comes from the bhakti poets. The poetry of the *āḻvārs* and *nāyaṉmārs* is filled with the symbolism of people who placed themselves at the feet of the lord as devotees. The *aṭiyār* in the *bhakta* poems is not connected to the literal meaning of slavery but to slavery within the context of devotion as someone who has submitted to the divine. *Aṭiyārs* were both servants in the traditional sense of servitude and slaves of the divine in the inscriptions of the Chola period. In the early Chola period, *aṭiyārs* who were offered food in temples, at festivals in some cases, were high-status devotees (Orr 2000, 53). The fact that *aṭiyārs* were fed during a festival in the Konerirajapuram inscription suggests that they were devotees rather than literally servants or slaves.

The term *civayoki* – "an ascetic of Śiva" or Śaiva *yogi* – first appeared in connection with *maṭams* in the eleventh century in an inscription at Tirukkadaiyur in Thanjavur district (ARE 243 of 1925). The word *yoki* is connected to the Sanskrit *yoga*, which is derived from the root *yuj* meaning "to yoke" and suggests that one should yoke to the divine. The *civayokis* of this inscription were not the direct recipients of a gift for a *maṭam* and they did not have a responsibility role like the *maṭamuṭaiyas* that I have discussed. Instead, ten *civayokis* well-versed in the Vedas were to be fed daily in a *maṭam*

through a *maṭappuṟam* gift. Because of their knowledge of the Vedas, the inscription suggests that they were *brāhmaṇas* since this was a common way of describing this group in the inscriptions.

Māheśvaras and śrīvaiṣṇavas were devotees of Śiva and Viṣṇu respectively.[88] *Māheśvaras* appeared in the inscriptions in two cases and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* were found in three inscriptions. We do not have a lot of information about the *māheśvaras* and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* of the eleventh century from the inscriptions – we do not know their names, their natal villages, or their relationship to a specific *maṭam* beyond being fed. We know little more of the *śrīvaiṣṇavas* of an inscription from Uttaramerur in Chingleput district other than that they were to be fed in the *maṭam* (ARE 184 of 1923).[89] Like *civayokis*, *māheśvaras*' and *śrīvaiṣṇavas*' relationship to *maṭams* was mediated through the service of feeding in *maṭams*, which was quite unlike the relationship that *maṭamuṭaiyas*, for example, had with *maṭams*.

4. *Maṭam* People in the Twelfth Century

In the twelfth century, *āṇṭārs*, *brāhmaṇas*, *civayokis*, *māheśvaras*, *maṭamuṭaiyas*, and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* continue to be seen in the inscriptions. There is one instance of a *maṭamuṭaiya paṇṭitaṉ* who had a responsibility role in a temple (SII 5.1358), two inscriptions with *maṭapatis* (SII 8.256; ARE 505 of 1922), and four inscriptions mentioning the office of *māṭāpattiyam* (SII 7.944; ARE 368 of 1911; ARE 236 of 1925; ARE 189 of 1928-29).[90] These people were mostly concerned with temple affairs. In one case, the rights of *māṭāpattiyam* and singing *tiruppatiyam* were assigned to Rājarāja

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[88] While *māheśvaras* and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* were general terms for Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava devotees, they were also devotees who were more specifically involved in temple affairs.
[89] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[90] The transcript of ARE 505 of 1922 was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

Piccaṉ (ARE 236 of 1925) while, in another instance, a *māṭāpattiyam* misappropriated

temple property and was expelled (ARE 189 of 1928-30). The instance of a wife

(*akamuṭaiyāḷ*) of the *māṭāpattiyam* as the seller of land is important because it points to

householder status for the office of *māṭāpattiyam* (SII 7.944).[91]

    Tapassiyars and *civayokis* continued to be involved with *maṭams* in the twelfth

century, with *tapassiyars* appearing in eleven inscriptions and *civayokis* in six

inscriptions. While *tapassiyars* and *civayokis* appear with greater frequency in

inscriptions in more northern parts of Tamilnadu, they are also found as far south as

Kanyakumari district in the twelfth century. In most cases, *tapassiyars* and *civayokis*

were fed in *maṭams* much as they were in the inscriptions from the preceding century.

Often, *tapassiyars* and *civayokis* were grouped together with other kinds of people –

āṇṭārs, *brāhmaṇas*, and *tevaraṭiyārs* – who were fed in *maṭams*. Two inscriptions at

Ratnagiri in Tiruchirappalli district show that *tapassiyars* and *civayokis* were among a

larger community of people who were fed in a *maṭam*, often on special occasions (ARE

179 of 1914; ARE 180 of 1914).[92] These examples show that individual *maṭams* were not

restricted to serving one type of people through feeding but they provided food to

numerous groups who were distinct from one another.

    Māheśvaras and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* appeared in the twelfth-century inscriptions in a

pattern consistent with their roles in the eleventh century. Even though there were a

greater number of inscriptions that mentioned *māheśvaras* and *śrīvaiṣṇavas*, they

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[91] Talbot (1987, 139) estimates that some members of the Goḷaki *maṭam* in Andhra Pradesh abandoned celibacy and the ascetic vow and became householders beginning in the thirteenth century. Inheritance would have then been based on hereditary relationships instead of discipleship or merit.

[92] The term *tevaraṭiyār* literally means "servant" or "slave" of God. It was frequently applied to temple women in the inscriptions. These are the only instances where *tevaraṭiyārs* were grouped with *tapassiyars* and *civayokis* for feeding at a *maṭam* in the twelfth century. There is also one case of *tevaraṭiyārs* being fed in another *maṭam* in the twelfth century (SII 17.628).

continued to appear most often as people who were provided with food in *maṭams*. Ten of the eleven inscriptions concerning *māheśvaras* mention that they were to be fed, sometimes during festivals.[93] All four of the inscriptions mentioning *śrīvaiṣṇavas* record donations for feeding, in two cases at festivals (406 of 1919; 508 of 1922).[94] One of these two inscriptions, from Chingleput district, referred to the *śrīvaiṣṇavas* as *brāhmaṇas* (ARE 406 of 1919).

Āṇṭārs appeared in eleven inscriptions in the twelfth century. *Maṭams* were named after *āṇṭārs*, as in the case of the Thanjavur district inscription that refers to the Āṇṭār Gatiyābharaṇa *maṭam* (ARE 353 of 1927), they were the recipients of donations (ARE 155 of 1989-90), and they resided in *maṭams* (SII 5.702; ARE 131 of 1974-75). They were more commonly one of the groups who were given food in *maṭams* on ordinary and special days (six inscriptions). The inscriptions sometimes specify that they were *apūrvi āṇṭārs*, or pilgrims as suggested by the term *apūrvi*, who were fed on *amāvasi* (new moon) days in the *maṭam* for instance (ARE 33 of 1932-33).[95] *Āṇṭārs* were not the only pilgrims who frequented *maṭams*. *Apūrvi māheśvaras* – devotees who were also pilgrims – were fed in *maṭams* as well (ARE 483 of 1918). It could be that the *āṇṭārs* who were fed in *maṭams* during a festival were a different type from those who had enduring relationships and positions of prominence in *maṭams*.

How can we envisage the pilgrimage of the *apūrvis* of the inscriptions? Pilgrimage is the tour undertaken by a follower or followers to the places that they are obliged or

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[93] Inscriptions involving *māheśvaras* are found in the twelfth century in North Arcot district (one inscription), Thanjavur district (seven inscriptions), Tiruchirappalli district (one inscription), South Arcot district (one inscription), and further south in Tirunelveli district (one inscription).
[94] The four inscriptions that I reviewed come from Chingleput (one inscription), Thanjavur (one inscription) and South Arcot (two inscriptions) districts.
[95] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

desire to visit. It involves both the act of travelling and the experience of being at their destination once the pilgrims arrive (Peterson 1982, 70). The physical action of walking is central to pilgrimage in Hinduism and the importance of walking dates back to the Vedic period. The story of Rohita in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (7.13-15) of the *Ṛg Veda*, for example, shows the religious value of walking. Hariścandra, while the son of a king who had for himself a hundred wives, was without a son. Asking the advice of Nārada, Hariścandra vowed to offer his son to the god Varuṇa should he have one. A son named Rohita was born to him. When the day came for Rohita to be sacrificed to Varuṇa, he escaped to the wild where he wandered for years. Apart from the wandering ascetic that was a prescribed ideal and practiced norm, pilgrimage is the most common form of religious walking. The motivations for different kinds of pilgrimages that are undertaken by people are varied and pilgrimage should not be seen as a single reality (Olivelle 2007, 178-79).

The activities of the *āḻvārs* and *nāyaṉmārs* can help us understand the practice of pilgrimage specific to the Tamil historical context. *Tēvāram* has been described as "the 'literature of pilgrimage' par excellence" in Śaivism (Peterson 1982, 69). According to the twelfth-century hagiography *Periya Purāṇam*, the *Tēvāram* poets composed their hymns while they were on pilgrimage. They talked of Śiva as the god who dwelled in specific places in the Tamil country. Appar, Campantar, and Cuntarar did not give a lot of details about their travels from place to place but gave extensive descriptions of the places that they visited and of Śiva in his localized forms. Of the Lord at Tiruvannamalai, a pilgrimage site that is very popular in modern times, Campantar says,

> The Lord whom the gods praise,
> and devotees worship with flowers,

> the god who blessed the demons
> on the day he burned the three citadels,
> is the Lord of Aṇṇāmalai,
> on whose slopes
> herds of wild cows run about,
> terrified by the thunderclap (Tēv 1.69.1)

and then later in the hymn adds,

> The Lord of the gods,
> the spouse of beautiful Umā,
> he who once bent his bow of war
> to set fire to the three cities,
> is the Lord of Aṇṇāmalai,
> on whose slopes
> waterfalls bring large pearls and gems
> gathered in forest tracts
> by gypsy hunters with long bows (Tēv 1.69.5).[96]

The poets embraced the language of landscape to glorify Śiva and their pilgrimages were undertaken out of love for Śiva, as clearly expressed by Campantar in this hymn (Peterson 1982, 73).

Returning to the inscriptions, some *maṭams* were feeding centres for all sorts of pilgrims. They fed diverse people – *āṇṭārs*, *brāhmaṇas*, *civayokis*, *māheśvaras*, *śrīvaiṣṇavas*, and *tapassiyars* – on special occasions but also on a daily basis. There was a distinction between *āṇṭārs*, *māheśvaras*, *śrīvaiṣṇavas*, and ascetics. We should not assume, for example, that the *āṇṭārs* of the Tiruvidaimarudur inscription were ascetics nor can we assume that the *tapassiyars* of the inscriptions were a type similar to the *civayokis* of the inscriptions. What distinguished them? Perhaps, a Madurai district inscription provides some insight (SII 5.295). Here, a *maṭam* was provided house sites for *tapassiyars*, suggesting some sort of living arrangement for this type of ascetic. *Civayokis* were not described as the recipients of donations for *maṭams* or as living in *maṭams*. The

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[96] This translation of Campantar's hymn about Tiruvannamalai is by Peterson ([1991] 2007).

fact that the *tapassi* Viṭaiyiṉmelvaruvāṉ and his descendants (*vaṁśattār*) were given

irrigation rights and remitted taxes through *maṭappuṟam* suggests a settled type of

asceticism rather than itinerant asceticism (SII 7.96).[97] In this case, Viṭaiyiṉmelvaruvāṉ's

descendants were not likely his offspring but members of his lineage. Perhaps,

tapassiyars reflected a domesticated or settled type of asceticism, in certain instances,

whereas *civayokis* were an itinerant or mendicant type of ascetic.

5. *Maṭam* People in the Thirteenth Century

The thirteenth century has the most *maṭam* inscriptions of any century and it is

also the century that has the greatest number of terms for describing *maṭam* people,

indicating a wide range of people that were now part of *maṭams*. Even though *brāhmaṇas*

were among the *maṭam* people of the thirteenth century, this word to designate them was

less common in the inscriptions. We continue to see *maṭamuṭaiyas* in one instance as a

donor of land for a temple (SII 12.245) and a *maṭātipati* who provided a house site for a

maṭam (ARE 96 of 1926). There are four instances of *māṭāpattiyam*. Two inscriptions at

Peraiyur describe Veṉṟāṉ Tirumaḻapāṭi Uṭaiyāṉ as the "*māṭāpattiyam* in the temple" but

neither inscription contains other information that might confirm his *maṭam* affiliation or

explain his duties in the *maṭam* (SII 23.163; SII 23.165). This shows the ambiguity of the

māṭāpattiyam title, which was also used to designate the office of temple superintendent.

By contrast, a clear case of a *māṭāpattiyam* inscription that dealt with a *maṭam* is from

Tiruvannamalai; it recorded a donation of income for clothing, camphor, and sandal paste

for the deity of the temple at Tiruvannamalai that was made before the *māṭāpattiyam*

ceyv[ā]rkaḷ (*maṭam* managers) in the temple, more clearly identifying the *māṭāpattiyam*

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[97] *Vaṁśattār* was used in *maṭam* inscriptions for lineage in the context of inheriting rights while disciples who made donations in the thirteenth century were referred to as a *śiṣyar* of a lineage that was identified as a *cantāṉam* rather than *vaṁśattār*.

with the *maṭam* at Tiruvannamalai (TAM 119).[98] Persons of prominence in *maṭams* –

people who were perhaps the heads of *maṭams* – were identified using the term

maṭamuṭaiya, *maṭapati*, *maṭātipati*, and *māṭāpattiyam*. We also have a *mahāmuṉi* in a

Vaiṣṇava *maṭam* who, together with his female disciple, purchased land for their *maṭam*

(SII 6.59) while a *vātti* (teacher) of a Śaiva *maṭam* was involved in buying land (ARE

173 of 1935-36).

While these people did not disappear from the inscriptions in the thirteenth

century, some new terminology to designate the prominent people of the *maṭams*

emerged during this period and reflected changes in Tamil society taking place both

inside and outside the *maṭam* over the course of the Chola period. *Mutaliyārs* and *jīyars*

began to appear in the inscriptions to designate the heads of *maṭams* or *cantāṉams*.

Although *mutaliyārs* were generally associated with Śaiva lineages and institutions and

jīyars with Vaiṣṇava ones, the inscriptions indicate that this was not always the case. The

five *jīyar* inscriptions that I reviewed had a *jīyar* as a land donor for a *maṭam* (it is

unclear if he was a member of the *maṭam*) (ARE 558 of 1926) and *jīyars* who were fed in

a *maṭam* (ARE 493 of 1919). In three instances, although mentioning a *jīyar*, the *maṭams*

were Śaiva rather than Vaiṣṇava (IPS 196; ARE 356 of 1916; ARE 106 of 1939-40). An

inscription at Tiruvalisvaram in Tirunelveli district, for instance, provided for the feeding

of *māheśvaras*, or Śaiva devotees, in a *maṭam* with Śaiva affiliation that was headed by

someone with a *jīyar* title (ARE 356 of 1916).

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[98] As I stated at the beginning of the chapter, the Tiruvannamalai inscriptions mentioned a number of *maṭams* at Tiruvannamalai. This inscription, however, did not give a name for this particular *maṭam* but only explained that the *māṭāpattiyām ceyvārkaḷ* was in the temple of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai Uṭaiyār (TAM 119). People were also described as managing *maṭappuṟam* ("*maṭappuṟattil niṟkkum per*") (ARE 292 of 1940-41). Like temples, *maṭams* had treasuries that received their endowments, as seen at the Aruḷāḷa Tātaṉ *maṭam* when money was paid into the treasury (*paṇṭāram*) of [Ā]ḷvār Tirukkurukur Mahāmuṉi at Alvartirunagari in Tirunelveli district (ARE 523 of 1958-59). The transcripts of ARE 292 of 1940-41 and ARE 523 of 1958-59 were consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

As *mutaliyār* simply translates as "he who is first in rank" (using the honorific plural suffix), it was used for people having nothing to do with *maṭams* and deities. As Swamy (1975, 180) notes, the term *mutaliyār* was an honorific title and should not be taken to imply caste, sect, or community even when it was used in the context of the *maṭam*. I found thirty-three cases from throughout Tamilnadu where a *maṭam* person was called a *mutaliyār*.[99] A *mutaliyār* was in a responsibility role in a *maṭam* in one case (ARE 126 of 1910) and was a donor in one instance (ARE 262 of 1917). The term *mutaliyār* was part of the identifying information for disciples of *cantāṉams* in seven cases. Most frequently, in twenty-three inscriptions, *mutaliyārs* featured as the recipients of donations to *maṭams* and they were also sometimes the people that *maṭams* were named after. The roles of *mutaliyārs* were sometimes qualified by other terminology, as was the case when Mutaliyār Tiruvalañculi Uṭaiyār was called the *tāṉapati mutaliyār* (religious officer and head of a *maṭam*) of a *maṭam* when he received endowments for his *maṭam* at Tirunelveli (ARE 295 of 1940-41; ARE 296 of 1940-41).[100]

Although we find one example from Kanchipuram in which *jīyars* were fed in a *maṭam* (ARE 493 of 1919), *mutaliyārs* and *jīyars* were generally not a category of *maṭam* person that was fed in *maṭams*; they received gifts that were meant for feeding other sorts of people. What specifically *mutaliyārs* and *jīyars* did at *maṭams*, what their roles and responsibilities were, remains rather obscure. Determining the function of such people is especially difficult in the case of a *jīyar* (one inscription) or *mutaliyār* (four inscriptions)

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[99] The term *mutaliyār* suggests a singular person of importance in a *maṭam* by its use in relation to named individuals. There were also groups of anonymous *mutalis*. A resident of Nodiyur in Thanjavur district gave land for the maintenance of the *mutalis* residing in the *maṭam* (ARE 199 of 1932-33). The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[100] The term *tāṉapati* can be translated as the "lord of the temple." The transcripts of these inscriptions were consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

whose name was given to a *maṭam*. If *maṭams* were named after *jīyars* or *mutaliyārs*, as was the case at the Puṭpagiri Jīyar *maṭam* in North Arcot district, we cannot necessarily assume that they were the living heads of their *maṭams* or the actual people who oversaw *maṭam* operations (ARE 106 of 1939-40). There are many instances of *maṭams* being named after rulers and we do not interpret them to be the head or preceptor of these *maṭams* or even their disciples or devotees.[101] We do not make this assumption with the *maṭams* named after the Śaiva *nāyaṉmārs* or donors either. Perhaps, the *jīyar* or *mutaliyār* in this case was a person who was being honoured by whomever founded or constructed the *maṭam*.

The importance of *mutaliyārs* is more apparent or obvious in the small number of inscriptions where they were listed as part of their disciples' personal information. Hṛdayaśivaṉ described himself as the *śiṣyaṉ* of Siddhāntavyākhyātākkaḷ Varada Śivācārya who was himself a disciple of the *mutaliyār* of Tirukkoṭuṅkuṉram of the Lakṣādhyāya Mutaliyār lineage of the Śrī Goḷaki *maṭam* in a Tiruvannamalai inscription (TAM 276). Hṛdayaśivaṉ made his donation of land for food offerings on Puṇarpūcam, the *nakṣatra* (asterism) day of his *mutaliyār*, for the deity of Tiruvannamalai. *Mutaliyārs* were the important people, the contributors or heads of lineages, through which *cantāṉams* defined themselves and their heritages though *mutaliyārs*' specific duties and responsibilities were not outlined in the inscriptions.

While there are the rare instances of women who were associated with *maṭams* as donors and disciples, there are no cases where women were explicitly identified with positions of prominence in *maṭams* as *maṭamuṭaiyas*, *maṭapatis*, *mutaliyārs*, or *jīyars*.

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[101] *Maṭams* named after kings were established by donors for the merit of kings.

Although the editors of the *Annual Report of Indian Epigraphy* (ARE 60 of 1922) interpret the recipient of the endowment in a 1250 inscription at Tiruvamattur in South Arcot as an "abbess" of a *maṭam* and Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2010, 223) conclude that "she seems to have been the *maṭha* head," the transcript of the inscription is less clear about her role in the *maṭam*. The inscription records a donation by Tiruvatipponnampalakkuttan providing paddy and money for clothing for Ammaiyār dwelling in the Śaiva-affiliated Narpattennāyiravati *maṭam* (ARE 60 of 1922).[102] She was not a *maṭamuṭaiya*, *maṭapati*, or *mutaliyār*. In fact, I did not find a single case of a woman with one of these designations. Also problematic is the term *ammaiyār* (mother). Because there is no other information about the recipient – personal name, kinship ties, or lineage – we do not know if the recipient was a woman named Ammaiyār or a group of women who were referred to as *ammaiyār* since the plural suffix could suggest either possibility. All that we can conclude with certainty is that a woman or women resided in a *maṭam* named Narpattennāyiravati and that she or they received an endowment of paddy and money.[103]

There are seven inscriptions in the thirteenth century that mentioned *ācāriyars*. They were the recipients of donations, as was the case at Tiruvannamalai (TAM 270). Other types of *maṭam* people who received donations were described as the disciples of *ācāriyars*. At Puduppalaiyam in Ramnathapuram district, a *śiṣyar* who was a member of the lineage of an *ācāriyar* of the Tiruvarur Krśaṇa Koḷaki (Kṛṣṇa Goḷaki) *maṭam* was the recipient of a land grant (SII 26.532). *Ācāriyars* were most commonly part of the

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[102] I would like to acknowledge the generosity of Leslie C. Orr for sharing the unpublished transcript of this inscription with me.

[103] There is another instance of a woman living in a *maṭam* (SII 7.69). She was also not described using any of the terms for a *maṭam* person.

identifying information that was provided in the inscriptions for the donor *śiṣyars* that I

discussed in Chapter Two.

    Civayokis did not factor prominently in the thirteenth century, appearing in only

one inscription at Tribhuvani in South Arcot district that provided for their feeding in a

maṭam (PI 139). By contrast, we find seventeen inscriptions mentioning *tapassiyars* in

Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *maṭams*.[104] *Tapassiyars* were donors to *maṭams*, although they might

not have been identified in all of these instances as a member of a *maṭam* as was the case

for the *tapassiyar* of the temple who built a *maṭam* in the sacred precincts of the temple at

Tirumullaivayal in Chingleput district (SII 17.730). *Tapassiyars* were also the recipients

of donations for *maṭams* and they bought land for their *maṭams*, indicating that they

dwelled in *maṭams* and had enduring relationships with them. *Maṭam tapassiyars* also

made donations to temples (ARE 224 of 1909) and built shrines for deities (ARE 74 of

1916). *Tapassiyars* appeared most commonly though, in seven inscriptions in total, as the

people who were fed in *maṭams*. An inscription from the Śiva temple of Tirunelveli

provided for feeding *tapassiyars* living in the *maṭam* and also *tecāntiri tavacis*; also fed

in the *maṭam* were one singer of *tirumuṟai* and one person who tended to the sleeping

chamber of the deity (ARE 292 of 1940-41).[105] This inscription illustrates the different

types of *tapassiyars* who were common in the Chola period. *Tapassiyars* were permanent

residents of *maṭams* in some cases while they may have wandered as mendicants or

pilgrims in other instances.

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[104] I found inscriptions concerning *tapassiyars* in the more central Thanjavur (two inscriptions), Tiruchirappalli (one inscription), and South Arcot (one inscription) districts. Coimbatore had three inscriptions concerning *tapassiyars* in the thirteenth century. More of the inscriptions were from the southern districts of Ramnathapuram (four inscriptions), Madurai (three inscriptions), and Tirunelveli (three inscriptions).

[105] *Tecāntiris* were travellers or pilgrims. They were not identified specifically as *tapassiyars* in every case but were were part of *maṭams* in the thirteenth century in a handful of inscriptions, always within the context of feeding. The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

The term *saṁnyāsī* (renouncer) appeared for the first time in the thirteenth century in the *maṭam* inscriptions. There are four inscriptions that mention *saṁnyāsīs*, and all of them indicate a Vaiṣṇava sectarian affiliation. At Tiruvendipuram in South Arcot district, feeding was to take place in the Nārāyaṇa Anubhava Saṁnyāsī *maṭam*, with the name of the *maṭam* suggesting that it was intended for *saṁnyāsīs* or named in honour of a particular *saṁnyāsī* (ARE 253 of 1955-56). At Srirangam, a rather short inscription recorded the building of a *maṭam* for *tridaṇḍa saṁnyāsīs* ("*tridaṇḍi sanyāsīkaḷ*") (triple staff) (SII 24.196).[106] A single inscription from Madurai district specified that the *saṁnyāsīs* who were to be fed in the *maṭam* near the temple were to be *tridaṇḍa* and *ekāṅgi* (single staff) *saṁnyāsīs*, showing the emergence of these categories of renouncers in the inscriptions only in the thirteenth century (ARE 277 of 1929-30). At the Appāṉ temple at Sermadevi in Tirunelveli district, a donation of land as *maṭappuṟam* was made to Aḻakiya Maṇavāḷa Jīyar who was a *tridaṇḍa saṁnyāsī* of the *maṭam* near the temple (ARE 675 of 1916). While the thirteenth-century inscriptions identified *saṁnyāsīs* as a category of person that was to be fed at *maṭams*, the Sermadevi inscription reveals that a *jīyar* was a *tridaṇḍa saṁnyāsī*, suggesting that *jīyars* and possibly other prominent people in *maṭams* may have been renouncer ascetics. Aḻakiya Maṇavāḷa Jīyar was the recipient of land that was given by the temple as *maṭappuṟam* to support his involvement in a festival, indicating that a *saṁnyāsī* could be the owner or manager of land and have a role in temple activities.

The language of asceticism in the inscriptions clearly changed over the course of the Chola period. Although *tapassiyars* continued their presence in the inscriptions in the

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[106] The text reads: "*ceyvitta cuntarapāṇṭyaṉ maṭam*" (SII 24.196). The *maṭam*, which was named after the Pandya king Sundara, was built for his merit – "*perumāḷ cuntarapāṇṭiya tevar tirumeṉikku.*"

thirteenth century, Śaiva *civayokis* all but disappeared at the same time that Vaiṣṇava

saṁnyāsīs made their first appearance in the epigraphical records. The *tapassiyars* of

maṭams represented a type of asceticism that had a more enduring connection or

relationship with *maṭams* as people who dwelled in *maṭams* and received donations for

them, perhaps indicating the growth of a domesticated type of asceticism. Śaivism's

civayokis were not donors to *maṭams*, the recipients of *maṭam* gifts, or living in *maṭams*.

They were the people for whom *maṭams* provided services, suggesting that they, and at

least some of the Vaiṣṇava *saṁnyāsīs* of the thirteenth century, practiced a more itinerant

asceticism. The vocabulary of asceticism in the inscriptions likely reflects the changing

patterns of asceticism in Chola-period Tamilnadu as much as it does changes in *maṭam*

participation specifically. Even as *maṭam* inscriptions show an enduring centuries-long

participation of different types of ascetics in the institution of the *maṭam*, they also mirror

the changing patterns of asceticism in the larger Tamil cultural milieu during the period

of the ninth to thirteenth century and replicate the patterns of asceticism found more

generally.[107]

Thirteenth-century inscriptions used the terms *piḷḷai* (child, son, or daughter) in

three cases or *śiṣyar* (disciple) in eleven instances to designate disciples. An inscription at

Maniyur in Thanjavur district refers to a *piḷḷaikaḷ* of the Nārasimhadevar *cantāṉam* (SII

8.205). At Tiruppattur in Ramnathapuram district, a record identifies Śrīkaṇṭaśiva both as

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[107] *Maṭams* did not simply reflect the broader Tamil social context. Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976, 189) note that while temples resembled features of South Indian society, the way that they expressed these characteristics was unique. The same can be said for *maṭams*. We begin to get a sense of ascetic practices generally in Tamilnadu in the inscriptions in the ninth century with references to *tapassiyars* and *civayokis*, whose relationship to temples was defined by their feeding. While there were increasing references to ascetics in the tenth century, the inscriptions were contained to the more northern region and it was only in the eleventh century that inscriptional references to asceticism were found further south (Orr 2012, 311-12). Śrīvaiṣṇavism was concerned with defining *saṁnyāsa* as early as the eleventh century in its textual sources such as *Yatidharmasamuccaya* while the Vaiṣṇava inscriptions in general did not mention *saṁnyāsa* until the thirteenth century (Orr 2012, 314-15).

one of the *āṇṭārkaḷ* residing in the *maṭam* and as a *piḷḷai* of the lineage connected to the

Kiḷai *maṭam* at Selva-Tiruvarur (ARE 129 of 1908). Ten of the *śiṣyar* inscriptions

identify them as donors to temples and *maṭams* or the purchasers of land for temples or

maṭams. In four of these instances, *śiṣyars* were the recipients of donations for *maṭams*

specifically. An inscription from Ramnathapuram district describes Īsāṉatevar of the

Eṉakkunalla Perumāḷ *maṭam* as a *śiṣyar* of the lineage of an *ācāriyar* of the Goḷaki

maṭam and the recipient of a land donation; he resided in a *maṭam* named for the donor

Oruvāṟuṇarntāṉ Eṉakkunalla Perumāḷ (SII 26.532). A Tirunelveli district inscription

records the gift of house sites to the *tavacis* who were also *śiṣyars* of the *maṭam* for

reciting hymns in the temple (SII 5.420). The inscriptions show the trend of giving more

information about donors' religious identity in the thirteenth century; for the most part, a

śiṣyar was identified as the disciple of an *ācāriyar* or a *mutaliyār* of a *cantāṉam* rather

than as the "disciple of the *maṭam*." *Śiṣyars* may have been living in *maṭams* but the

primary connection seems to have been to the lineage they belonged to, reflecting the

now more complex identities that were given for *maṭam* people later in the Chola period.

 Āṇṭārs, *māheśvaras*, and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* were mentioned in much the same way in

the thirteenth century as they were in earlier times. The twelve inscriptions mentioning

māheśvaras and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* were concerned with feeding at *maṭams*. Although

māheśvaras and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* participated in *maṭam* activities, they did so mainly as the

people who were provided for in *maṭams* through feeding on special days, much as in

earlier centuries. While *maṭams* were named after *āṇṭārs*, as was the case with the Āṇṭār

Empirāṉār *maṭam* of the Cenmapikkuṭi Mutaliyār *cantāṉam* in an inscription at

Tiruppalatturai in Tiruchirappalli district (ARE 584 of 1908), and *āṇṭārs* were involved

in property transactions as buyers of land for their *maṭams* (ARE 96 of 1926), they were also among the people who were fed in *maṭams*, continuing the pattern from earlier times.

We should not assume that the *āṇṭārs*, *māheśvaras*, and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* of the Chola-period *maṭam* inscriptions were necessarily ascetics or disciples. The terminology of the *maṭam* inscriptions reflects the distinction that was made between ascetics and non-ascetics, between disciples and devotees. *Maṭams* were named after *āṇṭārs*; *āṇṭārs* received and gave donations for *maṭams* and they made gifts to temples; *āṇṭārs* seem to have resided in *maṭams* and may have headed them. This was not the case for *māheśvaras* and *śrīvaiṣṇavas*. Given that *āṇṭārs* and, more often, *māheśvaras* and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* frequented *maṭams* during festivals, perhaps they were people who had very specific but also infrequent dealings with *maṭams*. While ascetics identified as *tapassiyars* and *civayokis* were also fed on special days, the *āṇṭārs*, *māheśvaras*, and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* who were fed at festivals might be interpreted within the context of laity and pilgrimage. It may be that they should be viewed as lay people or as pilgrims whose occasional association with *maṭams* was structured around the ritual calendar.[108]

In addition to the persons I have been discussing, *maṭams* had other kinds of people who were part of *maṭam* life through servitude rather than leadership, discipleship, or devotionalism. There are examples as early as the eleventh century that make mention of *pittarkaḷ* (servants) involved with lamps (SII 26.122) and, in the thirteenth century, *paricārakar* who were *maṭam* servants (SII 5.478; ARE 513 of 1922). Who some of these servants might have been is illustrated in the Kapālīśvara temple in Mylapore that I

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[108] Different kinds of people stayed at *maṭams* when they travelled. Even kings stayed in *maṭams* when they travelled, as seen in an eleventh-century inscription from South Arcot district that recorded the issuing of a royal order concerning a temple endowment while the king stayed at a *maṭam* (SII 7.760). Kings were known to camp at temples and attend festivals at places like Chidambaram and Tiruvorriyur in the Chola period (Nilakantha Sastri [1935] 1975, 473).

mentioned in Chapter Two within the context of building *maṭams*; it made provisions for cooks and water carriers for the *maṭam* (CMK 125 of 1967). Water carriers and cooks were also cited at Tirukkannapuram in Thanjavur district (ARE 513 of 1967). They reinforce *maṭams*' role in feeding. Potters, drummers, and the guards of the deity who were probably temple servants were fed in a *maṭam* at Tiruvisalur in Thanjavur district in the thirteenth century (SII 23.47). By contrast, the water carriers and cooks at Mylapore did not seem to have been involved with the temple (CMK 125 of 1967).

The inscriptions also refer to men and women who were sold or given to *maṭams* in perpetual servitude; there is one such inscription from the twelfth century and two from the thirteenth century. In the twelfth century, women who were attached to a *maṭam* were part of a list of people who bound themselves in service to the temple in perpetuity (ARE 76 of 1925; ARE 1925, 84). A thirteenth-century inscription at Tiruvaikkali in Thanjavur district provided for students in a *maṭam* through a land grant and recorded that the donor of land also gave women to be hereditary servants in the *maṭam* (ARE 276 of 1925). An inscription at Achyutamangalam in Thanjavur district explains that a stone mason (*kal taccar*), his wife (*akamuṭaiyāḷ*), and their four sons were sold as *aṭimai* (servants; slaves) to the *maṭam* (ARE 409 of 1925).

Most of the inscriptions from the Chola period that mentioned servitude were not concerned with the transfer of people between landowners but with the giving of slaves to temples (Ali 2006, 45). Men and women were bought, sold, and gifted to temples, and they tended to be donors' household or personal servants rather than labourers who worked the land. While it is easy to identify someone as a slave by the term *aṭiyār*, which means those "at the feet" of another, the inscriptions were uncertain about what that term

actually meant. The language of servitude expressed bonds of submission that transcended the literal meaning of the word and it was a way of showing humility, devotion, and the importance of a person (Ali 2006, 46). As I mentioned previously, *aṭiyārs* were devotees in *maṭams* in the context of ritual activities. The term *aṭimai*, which is also derived from the root *aṭi*, signalled servitude as well but did not appear in the Chola-period inscriptions until later (Orr 2000, 216). While *aṭimai* was used by the bhakti poets of the earlier centuries for devotion, it did not appear in the inscriptions until the twelfth century. In the context of the inscriptions, *aṭimai* lacked the ambiguous meaning of *aṭiyār* and was commonly used in the inscriptions for slaves who were pledged in hereditary service to *maṭams*. The *aṭimai* of the Achyutamangalam inscription were not pledged in servitude to the *maṭam* as devotees of the *maṭam* but as hereditary servants who were transferred to the *maṭam* through their being sold (ARE 409 of 1925).

C. The Sectarian Affiliation of *Maṭams*

What was the sectarian affiliation of the people who were associated with *maṭams* as their leaders, disciples, or devotees? One of the features of the Chola-period *maṭam* inscriptions is that it is not always possible to determine whether an inscription was referring to a Śaiva or a Vaiṣṇava institution and this applies in a few cases to the *maṭam* inscriptions. Though inscriptions often provided names for the *maṭams*, they did not necessarily indicate sectarian affiliation since *maṭams* were named after deities, saints, rulers, and donors, as we saw at Srirangam with the Cuntara Pāṇṭiya *maṭam*, which was named after the Pandya ruler (SII 24.196), and Eṉakkunalla Perumāḷ *maṭam* at

Puduppalaiyam, which was named after the donor Oruvāṟuṇarntāṉ Eṉakkunalla Perumāḷ (SII 26.532).

Sometimes a *maṭam's* name was ambiguous, as was the case with the Śivalokanāyakan *maṭam* at Tiruvavadudurai, which received an endowment for feeding devotees from one Śaṅkaraṉ Śivalokanāyakaṉ of Ilangarikudi in the twelfth century (ARE 148 of 1925). Here, the name Śivalokanāyakaṉ could refer either to the god Śiva or to the donor who bears the same name. If it refers to the donor's name, it is not necessarily the case that the *maṭam* can be identified as Śaiva.[109] In another inscription from the same place and same period, we encounter the mention of the Naṟpatteṉṉāyiravam *maṭam*, a name referring to a group of 48,000 whose significance is obscure (ARE 150 of 1925).[110] On the basis of their names, assigning a *maṭam* to the Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava community is sometimes possible but in other cases we must depend on the content of the inscription or other clues rather than the name of the *maṭam* itself. The fact that Aḻakiya Maṇavāḷa Jīyar of the Mutivalaṅkum Perumāḷ *maṭam* at Sermadevi was a *tridaṇḍa saṁnyāsī* tells us that the *maṭam* was Vaiṣṇava, for example (ARE 675 of 1916).

Sometimes it is easy to determine sectarian affiliation. A thirteenth-century inscription from Tiruppattur identifies a donor as Śrīkaṇṭaśiva and describes him as a resident of the Tiruñānacampantar *maṭam* (ARE 129 of 1908). The names Śrīkaṇṭhaśiva and Tiruñānacampantar point toward a Śaiva sectarian affiliation. In fact, the name Tiruñānacampantar – the name of one of the Śaiva poet-saints – was frequently used as a

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[109] We frequently find cases where a person with a Śaiva name patronized a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu or someone with a Vaiṣṇava name donated to a Śaiva temple
[110] The name Naṟpatteṉṉāyiravam or 48,000 is likened by Rajamanikkam (1962, 224) to Chidambaram's 3,000 and Tiruvilimilalai's 500, groups of *brāhmaṇas* or temple servants. It might also refer to the *maṭam* patron since guilds and other corporate groups often bore numeric labels.

maṭam name from the twelfth century onward. The name suggests that these *maṭams* were Śaiva but it should not be taken to mean that they had an affiliation beyond this by having the same name.[111]

Looking at the inscriptions that provide indications of sectarian affiliation, it is apparent that a large majority of *maṭam* inscriptions, 313 of the total of 380 inscriptions, appear to be Śaiva while fifty-nine are Vaiṣṇava. There are instances when a *maṭam's* sub-sect can be identified, although this is rare. Śaivism's Goḷaki *maṭam* included the Jñānāmṛtācārya, Kiḻai *maṭam*, Lakṣādhyāya or Bhikṣā, Nandikēśvara, and Tiruchchattimuṟṟam lineages in Tamilnadu during the Chola period.[112] Scholarship has often assigned the Goḷaki *maṭam* to Śaivism's Pāśupata sect. The Pāśupata sect was the first Śaiva sect to develop and the Goḷaki School, like the Pāśupata, was based on the Sanskrit Āgama texts and the role of the *guru*. While researchers such as Mahalingam (1957) have concluded that the Goḷakis were Pāśupata, Talbot (1987, 134) makes the argument that the Goḷaki *maṭam* was Siddhānta in its affiliation using epigraphical evidence from the Andhra region.[113] Śaiva Siddhānta originated in central India in the Madhya Pradesh region in the eighth century or possibly earlier (Ishimatsu 1999, 573). It spread over large parts of northern India and came to have branches in southern India

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[111] Chola-period *maṭams* were named for the *nāyaṉmārs*. Along with Campantar, who was most prominent (seventeen inscriptions) in naming *maṭams*, there were *maṭams* and *kukais* named after other *nāyaṉmārs*, primarily Appar (eight inscriptions) and Cuntarar (four inscriptions) coming mostly from the thirteenth century. *Maṭams* named after Appar used his name Tirunāvukkaracar for *maṭams* while *maṭams* named after Cuntarar used his name but were also named after his *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*, which recounts the lives of the Śaiva saints.

[112] Swamy (1975, 180) describes the Goḷaki *maṭam's* move into the Tamil region as taking place over a period of time rather than as a sudden migration into the region.

[113] For example, Talbot (1987, 134) explains that the thirteenth-century Malkapuram Inscription, which records a donation of villages by a Kakatiya king and his daughter to a Śaiva teacher, made references to Śaiva, Śaiva Siddhānta, and Śuddha Śaiva and was, therefore, evidence of Śaiva Siddhānta affiliation.

from the tenth to thirteenth centuries.[114] It spread south through *brāhmaṇa* male

preceptors affiliated with *maṭams* and temples who claimed allegiance to the Āgamas,

which are the literary foundation of the tradition (Ishimatsu 1999, 573). In the Tamil

region, Siddhānta *brāhmaṇa* priests came to dominate the worship of Śiva in temples and

uphold the use of Sanskrit in temples, and Siddhāntin preceptors established *maṭams*

(Ishimatsu 1999, 573).

The literary record is not particularly illuminating on the subject of *maṭams*. In the

case of the Goḷaki School, the *Somaśambhupaddhati*, which I discussed in Chapter One,

provides little information about *maṭams* beyond outlining its consecration ceremony (SP

4.11). As a ritual manual, the *Somaśambhupaddhati* is focussed on describing a range of

Goḷaki rituals. While it does not give us a lot of information on *maṭams*' activities, the

Somaśambhupaddhati does provide us with insights into some of the people connected

with the Goḷaki *maṭams* (e.g., *ācāriyars* and *śiṣyars*) in the Chola period within the ritual

context. During his discussion of inititation (*dīkṣa*), Somaśambhu (SP 3.1.1-13) lists the

general rules concerning initiation and explains the types of initiation suited to *ācāriyars*,

śiṣyars, and *saṁnyāsīs*, who were some of the people identified with *maṭams* in the

inscriptions. He then outlines the ideal characteristics of the Goḷaki master and disciple,

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[114] While scholars have shown that Śaiva Siddhānta's origins were in central India, there have been attempts by both scholars and nationalists to regionalize this more pan-Indian tradition. In his preface to the eighth-ninth-century *Parākhyatantra*, Goodall (2004, xix) notes that Śaiva Siddhānta was once spread across most of India and reached as far as Cambodia as early as the tenth century according to epigraphical records. He suggests that one of the reasons why researchers have interpreted it as a Tamil, non-dualist tradition dated to the post-twelfth century is because Sanskrit sources have been neglected in favour of Tamil ones. Tamil nationalism embraced Śaiva Siddhānta in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It played a significant role in the anti-caste movement in Tamilnadu that was exemplified by the Self-Respect Movement of the 1920s (Irschick cited in Ishimatsu 1999, 571). The Movement's leaders sought to restore Tamilnadu to its perceived original condition free from foreigners such as *brāhmaṇas* who were believed to have travelled to the region after the fifth century and were thought to have corrupted Tamil culture by introducing caste discrimination and the promotion of Sanskrit over Tamil. Śaiva Siddhānta was identified by them as an authentic Tamil tradition free of polluting *brāhmaṇical* elements and Śaiva Siddhānta's Sanskrit literature (e.g., Āgamas) were seen as corruptions of Tamil literature (Ishimatsu 1999, 572).

explaining that the best master is physically well, good-natured, patient, and of a pure heart while the disciple is one whose mind is filled with devotion to his master (SP 3.1.14-15).

The epigraphical records reveal that the Goḷaki *maṭam* emerged in the Tamil region in the earlier centuries of the Chola period but that not all of the Goḷaki lineages found in Tamilnadu were present from the beginning; some lineages arose in the post-Chola period. Although the Goḷaki School in general was found throughout the Tamil region in the Chola period, some of its lineages remained regional institutions that did not develop a presence that extended beyond a certain district or village. The Lakṣādhyāya or Bhikṣā *maṭam* lineage, the most common Goḷaki School in the Chola period, was found in inscriptions throughout the Tamil region. The inscriptions concerning the Tiruchchattimuṟram lineage were found in Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli districts. The Kiḻai *maṭam* branch's inscriptions all came from the thirteenth century, mostly in the far south of Tamilnadu and commonly made mention of Selva-Tiruvarur (Tiruvarur) in Thanjavur district to the north. All of the inscriptions that mentioned the Jñānāmṛtācārya lineage belong to the thirteenth century and were located at the Vāḷīśvara temple at Tiruvalisavaram in Tirunelveli district. The Nantikēśvara lineage appears only once in the Chola period in a thirteenth-century inscription from Chingleput district (ARE 239 of 1912). It is clear from the inscriptions that the Goḷaki lineage of the Lakṣādhyāya or Bhikṣā *maṭam* was widespread whereas the Kiḻai *maṭam* was mostly in the south and the Tiruchchattimuṟram, Jñānāmṛtācārya, and Nandikēśvara lineages were even more localized. The inscriptions show us who supported the Goḷakis with endowments, the types of gifts that they were given, the people who frequented their *maṭams*, and their

activities. Lacking in the epigraphical records, however, is a discussion of Goḷaki

theology. As I discuss below, we learn from the inscriptions that members of the Goḷaki

School recited *tiruñānam* in temples but we do not know the nature of this text and so do

not have insights into its theological relevance for the Goḷakis.

The Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *maṭam* inscriptions are not significantly different from

one another in their language, format, and content. Most *maṭam* inscriptions recorded

gifts, and similar types of people donated similar types of properties for similar purposes

in the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *maṭam* inscriptions. The only significant differences between

the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sets of inscriptions are the expected sectarian ones – the names

and terminology such as *māheśvaras* to refer to Śaiva devotees of *maṭams* and

śṛīvaiṣṇavas for Vaiṣṇava ones. While Śaiva inscriptions might used the term *mutaliyār*

to designate an important person of a *maṭam* and we may find the term *jīyar* used in

Vaiṣṇava cases, the term *mutaliyār* was not restricted to Śaiva *maṭams* and *jīyar* was not

restricted to Vaiṣṇava ones. Apart from terminological variations, the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava

maṭams supported similar activities for similar types of people through the endowments

that they received – learning, reciting hymns, lighting lamps, and feeding.

D. Learning, Reciting Hymns, Worshipping Deities, Lighting Lamps, and Feeding:

The Activities of *Maṭam* People

1. Learning

I identified thirty-two inscriptions in the *maṭam* inscriptions that suggest learning

though not all of them refer to the education of students by teachers; some of them simply

identified someone as a learned person (Table 3.2). There were *civayokis* (ARE 243 of

1925) and *brāhmaṇas* (ARE 635 of 1919) who were described as being well-versed in the Vedas, suggesting learned *brāhmaṇas*.[115] The inscriptions that dealt with learning were rather ambiguous when it came to the subject. People who are referred to as *ācāriyars* and *paṇṭitaṉs* were found in inscriptions from throughout the Chola period, suggesting *maṭams*' association with learning though the inscriptions rarely cited them in a role having to do with teaching and learning. Nine inscriptions made mention of *ācāriyars*. In one case, an *ācāriyar* bought land for his *maṭam* (ARE 129 of 1908). In a second case, a *maṭamuṭaiya* who was also a *paṇṭitaṉ* was the beneficiary of *ācāriyar pokam* (SII 5.578). In the seven other inscriptions, a donor or recipient of a gift was identified as belonging to the lineage of an *ācāriyar*. In the thirteenth century, taxes on the lands purchased by a *śiṣyar* of the *ācāriyar* of the Bhikṣā *maṭam* and *vātti* (teacher) of a *maṭam* were remitted (ARE 173 of 1935-36). We are given no other information about the roles of these *ācāriyars*. The eleven inscriptions about *paṇṭitaṉs* that I reviewed had them in roles as *maṭamuṭaiyas* (ten inscriptions) and *māṭāpattiyams* (one inscription) who fulfilled responsibilities in temples for the most part.[116] As with *ācāriyars*, they were not described as teaching people or as expounding on a teaching in their *maṭams* or in temples. While *ācāriyar* and *paṇṭitaṉ* point to men of learning, they did not appear in the inscriptions in the role of teacher. A *kurukaḷ* (spiritual preceptor; teacher, from the Sanskrit *guru*) was the recipient of a gift but the inscription does not tell us what his teaching would have entailed (TAM 270).

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[115] The text of ARE 635 of 1919 was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[116] In one instance, a *paṇṭitaṉ* was a *maṭamuṭaiya* and *kaṉmikaḷ* (SII 3.18) and, in another case, a *paṇṭitaṉ* was part of the *tevakaṉmikaḷ* of the temple as well as a *maṭamuṭaiya* (ARE 273 of 1950-51). One inscription that mentioned a *maṭamuṭaiya paṇṭitaṉ* mentioned a second *paṇṭitaṉ* named Vāgīsvāra Paṇṭitaṉ who expounded (*vakkāṇi*) Coma Cittāntam (SII 5.1358). He was not identified as part of a *maṭam* however.

Table 3.2 The Activities of *Maṭam* People

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	N/A	Total
Learning	0	4	7	4	16	1	32
Recitation	0	0	1	0	11	0	12
Worship	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Lamps	0	1	0	0	4	1	6
Feeding	0	3	12	44	32	6	97
Total	0	8	20	48	65	8	149

The inscriptions provide further details about learning in *maṭams* beyond the activities of *ācāriyars* and *paṇṭitaṉs*, although they may tell us more about what *maṭam* people were learned in rather than whether they were students or teachers in the literal sense. Different types of *maṭam* people, often *brāhmaṇas*, were learned in sacred texts, the epics, philosophy, commentaries, and grammar.[117] The tenth-century inscription from Uttaramerur recording the building of a *maṭam* by a woman described the recipients of her land grant as *brāhmaṇas* who were well-versed in a combination of subjects (SII 3.333=SII 6.322). To qualify for the *bhaṭṭavṛtti* endowment, they needed to be learned in a combination of the Vedas, *Nṛtya Bhāṣya* or *Nyāya Bhāṣya* commentary, two *darśanas* (system of thought), Mīmāṃsa or Vaiśeṣika philosophy, *vyākaraṇa* (Sanskrit grammar), and Vārttika commentary. The *bhaṭṭavṛtti* recipients were required to live for three years in the *maṭam* built by the woman donor.

Another inscription from Chingleput district, this time from Kanchipuram in the thirteenth century, concerns a donor who made a *bhāṣyavṛtti* endowment for the study or expounding of Rāmānuja's commentary (*bhāṣya*) on the *Vedānta Sūtras* in the *maṭam* (ARE 493 of 1919). A thirteenth-century Thanjavur district inscription referred to a donation of land for Malāyali *brāhmaṇas* (*malaiyāṉ pirāmanār*) reading or learning

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[117] By text, I mean not only written texts but the songs and hymns that were sung, recited, or performed as well (Narayanan 2007, 229).

(*vācittu*) Vedānta in a *maṭam* (ARE 276 of 1925). A Ramnathapuram inscription, again

from the thirteen century, recorded a donation made to read or learn (*vāci*) the

Mahābhārata, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and Purāṇas (ARE 546 of 1922).[118] Two inscriptions further

south in Tirunelveli district mentioned a land grant for th*e brāhmaṇas* of the *maṭam* who

were learned in the *Brahma Sūtras* of Vedavyāsa (ARE 544 of 1911) and a royal order

concerning a land grant for a person who was learned in the Śāstras ("*śāstram vācikkum*

pēr") in a *maṭam* (ARE 667 of 1916). Studies pursued in *maṭams* focused not only on

sacred texts, philosophy, and grammar but also on medicine and the sciences. A twelfth-

century inscription at Tiruvavadudurai in Thanjavur district did not deal with sacred texts

but concerned people of learning (*paṭippār*) studying *vyākaraṇa*, medicine, and the

sciences (ARE 159 of 1925).

The vocabulary of learning tells us more about the types of subjects *maṭam* people

were learned in than it does the role or function *maṭam* people might have had in

education. It seems that *maṭams* were less concerned with secular learning. While *maṭam*

people were acknowledged as learned with titles like *ācāriyar* and *paṇṭitaṉ*, they were

also described as well-versed in sacred texts, philosophy, grammar, and commentaries,

and engaged in reading or learning as the use of the terms *vāci* and *paṭippār* show. The

studying or reading of these texts (*vāci*) by *maṭam* people was different than *maṭam*

people reciting hymns (*otu*) in *maṭams* or temples.[119] None of these inscriptions used the

language of recitation we find with devotional hymns, for example. Instead, they

commonly use *vāci* or its derivative (*vācikkum* or *vācittu*) for reading or learning, an

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[118] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[119] This is not to suggest that Vedic hymns, for example, were not recited in the Chola period. Inscriptions from the tenth and eleventh centuries refer to the recitation of Vedic hymns using the word *otu* (read; recite) in relation to the students of a Vedic school and temples (Orr 2007).

activity that took place in *maṭams* instead of temples. It is not clear from the inscriptions if these people were students or teachers and if the *maṭams* were schools. It could be that patronage of *maṭams* was meritorious for the donor because it supported learned people and allowed them to devote themselves to their studies.

2. Reciting Hymns, Worshipping Deities, and Lighting Lamps

There are twenty inscriptions that mentioned the recitation of texts in the *maṭam* inscriptions but not all of them dealt with this activity in relation to *maṭams* (Table 3.2).[120] In three instances, donors who provided for the recitation of hymns in temples also provided for *maṭams*; there is no connection between the recitation in temples with *maṭams* beyond the provision for both by the donor. In another instance, a *maṭam* person made a donation to a temple for the recitation of hymns in temples: in a thirteenth-century inscription from Chidambaram, an *uṭaiyār* of a *maṭam* gave land after purchase for services in the temple that included provisions for *brāhmaṇas* who recited in the temple (SII 12.245).[121]

In twelve inscriptions, *maṭam* people had the role of hymn reciters in *maṭams* and more commonly in temples. They were involved with the recitation of the Tamil devotional poems or hymns – *tiruppatiyam*, which means "sacred stanzas."[122] There are inscriptional references to *tiruppatiyam* in temples beginning in the ninth century

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[120] There are four inscriptions where I could not determine the connection between the recitation of hymns and *maṭams*. Though I have included them in the twenty inscriptions than mentioned hymn reciting in the *maṭam* inscriptions, I have excluded them from my discussion of the specific kinds of recitation in the inscriptions.

[121] Recitation of the Vedas in temples was the responsibility of *brāhmaṇas* in the Chola period (Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 640).

[122] While *tiruppattiyam* is taken to mean the Śaiva *Tēvāram*, it also referred to the Vaiṣṇava *Tiruvāymoḻi* as well in general in the inscriptions (Swamy 1972, 97-8).

(Zvelebil 1975, 150).[123] We do not see the recitation of *tiruppatiyam* involving *maṭam* people until the eleventh century at Allur in Tiruchirappalli district where paddy was given as *maṭam pokam* to a *māṭāpattiyam* for reciting *tiruppatiyam*, evidently in the *maṭam* (SII 8.675).[124] The remaining inscriptions about reciting *tiruppatiyam* concern its recitation in temples by *maṭam* people. A woman was given the right to recite hymns and play the lute in the temple and also the right to live in a *maṭam* in the thirteenth century (SII 7.69).

The compendium of Tamil Śaiva devotional texts composed during the medieval period is today known as *Tirumuṟai*. Although we cannot be sure of what this term refers to in the Chola-period inscriptions, there are four *maṭam* inscriptions that mention *tirumuṟai*; all of them dating to the thirteenth century. A Thanjavur district inscription in the village of Tiruvidavayal registers a land grant to a *kukai* for a reciter of *tiruppāṭṭu* (sacred song) and for the caretaker of the shrine where *tirumuṟai* was housed in the *kukai* ("*tirumuṟai eḻuntaraḷi irukkum*"), indicating the presence of a *tirumuṟai* manuscript as an object of devotion in the *kukai* (ARE 10 of 1918). A Chingleput district inscription registered a gift of land for the *āṇṭārs* of the *maṭam* who looked after the *maṇḍapa*, recited *tirumuṟai*, and took care of the flower garden, suggesting that they served in the temple (ARE 350 of 1928-29).[125] A Coimbatore district inscription recorded the donation of paddy for a *tapassiyar* who recited *tirumuṟai* and worshipped the deity ("*tirumuṟaiyotiy pūci-t-tirummāṇtal[um]*"), a second *tapassiyar* who had the duty of

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[123] People who gave for the singing of the hymns of Campantar, Appar, Cuntarar, and Māṇikkavācakar in Chola institutions came from all parts of society though the majority of donors were from village assemblies or were individuals (Swamy 1972, 99).

[124] The text reads: "*stāṉa [maṭa]m tevārattukku tiruppatiyam viṇṇappamceyum*" (SII 8.675).

[125] This inscription comes from the seventh regnal year of Rajaraja III (r.y. 1216-60) and is the earliest epigraphical reference to *tirumuṟai* according to Swamy (1972, 98).

attending to the bed chamber of the deity (*"tiruppaḷḷi aṟai[yun]"*), and a third *tapassiyar* whose responsibilities were unclear in the inscription; all of these ascetics were associated with the *maṭam* in the sacred precincts of the temple (SII 26.156). A donation recorded at Singikulam in Tirunelveli district recorded a donation for people who were to be fed in a *maṭam* at Tirunelveli; among them was a *tirumuṟai* reciter ("*tirumuṟai otum per oṉṟum*") (ARE 292 of 1940-41).[126] In this case, the reciter of *tirumuṟai* seems to have had little connection with the *maṭam* other than being fed there.

Another text mentioned in a few of the *maṭam* inscriptions – four in total, all of which are from the thirteenth century – is *tiruñāṉam*. The precise meaning of this term or nature of this text is unclear but seems to refer to some body of Śaiva literature. An inscription from Tiruvalisvaram, dated 1255, recorded the agreement about the allocation of land made by temple authorities with Pukaḻi Perumāḷ of the Jnānāmṛtācārya Goḷaki *maṭam*; he had the responsibility of reciting *tiruñāṉam* in the temple (ARE 359 of 1916). Two inscriptions at Tirunelveli were concerned with a donation of land for *tapassiyars* who were charged with reciting *tiruñāṉam* in the temple; they were each affiliated with different *maṭams* but all of them were from the Goḷaki lineage (SII 5.420; SII 5.421).[127] It is clear that *tiruñāṉam* was especially associated with the Goḷaki *maṭam* since all four of the inscriptions mentioning this text gave members of this group the responsibility for reciting it in temples.

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[126] The people who were fed in the *maṭam* included *tapassiyars* who lived in the *maṭam*, *tecāntiri tapassiyars* who were described as taking meals in the *maṭam*, the manager of the *maṭam*, and a priest of the shrine (ARE 292 of 1940-41). ARE 293 of 1940-41 is the royal order communicating the details of ARE 292 of 1940-41 and has not been included in my statistics. The transcripts of these inscriptions were consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[127] The text of SII 5.421 reads: "*tiruñāṉappura iṟaiyili*," indicating that the donation was an endowment for *tiruñāṉam* that was made free of taxes.

Maṭam people were engaged with a range of subjects and genres of literature depending on the institution. In *maṭams*, they were educated in the Vedas, the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and so forth (as suggested by the verb *vāci*), while the act of their reciting (*oti*) *tiruppatiyam*, *tirumuṟai*, and *tiruñānam* tended to take place in temples rather than *maṭams*. They were learned in Sanskrit texts in *maṭams* but were responsible for singing Tamil devotional hymns in temples. Only certain people had the right of singing hymns in temples in the Chola period; they were specially trained and endowments were made to care for them (Swamy 1972, 100-02). *Maṭams* were one of the institutions that were part of this. People belonging to a *maṭam* – specifically identified as *āṇṭārs*, *māṭāpattiyams*, and *tapassiyars* – had the responsibility of reciting hymns in temples. In some cases, *maṭams* were the places where temples' hymn reciters were fed. As hymn singers in temples, *maṭam* people would have participated in the ritual life of temples and had a high status in temples in this role.[128]

The *maṭam* inscriptions also involved the deities of temples as the recipients of donations in some cases. The installation and worship of deities in *maṭams* were referred to in the inscriptions as well. For example, a 1234 Chola inscription at the Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram records a donation of land for the image of the deity Tirumañcaṉam Aḻakiyār set up in the Tirunāvukkaraśutevaṉ *maṭam* at Chidambaram (ARE 305 of 1958-59). A second thirteenth-century inscription from the Naṭarāja temple records a donation of land to provide for offerings to the deity Tiruvālavā Uṭaiya Aḻakiya Cokkaṉār in the Tirunokkaḻakiyāṉ *maṭam* at Chidambaram (ARE 153 of 1961-62). Inscriptions mentioning the worship of deities in *maṭams* are rare. Most often, services

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[128] Hymn singing in temples was primarily the purview of males. By the close of the Chola period, the right to sing hymns in the temple belonged increasingly to professionals and to high-status people including *brāhmaṇas* (Orr 2000, 107-10).

involving deities were referred to conjunction with the deities of temples who were provided for by *maṭam* people who were donors when they gave to temples or other donors who made provisions for a *maṭam* and for services for the deity in the temple in the same endowment.

The inscriptions referred to the establishing of lamps in *maṭams* as well. Along with a donation of oil for a *maṭam* that may suggest a provision for a lamp (SII 12.79), there are six other inscriptions that mention the burning of lamps in *maṭams*. At Tiruchuliyur in the tenth century, sheep were given for oil to be used for lamps in the *maṭam* of the *śrī mah[ā]vratikaḷ* of temple. The text reads, "*paḷḷipaṭai cuntarapāṇṭya īśvarattu śrī mah[ā]vratikaḷ maṭattiṉukku viḷakku ne[y]ku aṭuttu cāvā muvā perāṭu irupatu*" (SII 14.88). Although the lamps were not designated as perpetual lamps or sacred lamps, the fact that livestock were to be maintained in perpetuity to supply oil suggests that the lamps were supposed to be continually replenished with oil for burning.[129] A thirteenth-century inscription from South Arcot district recorded a land grant for a lamp in the temple and a lamp in the *maṭam* of Āṇṭār [Tiru]vuṇāyakaṉ (SII 12.143).[130] It is difficult to know in this case if the lamp was for ritual or practical purposes since the lamp for the temple was designated a *tiruviḷakku* (sacred lamp) whereas the *maṭam's* lamp was described only as a *viḷakku* (lamp). While these inscriptions did not specify how these lamps were supposed to be used – whether they were for illumination or for worship – there are two examples of lamps for ritual use in *maṭams*: in a Coimbatore district inscription, a *tiruviḷakku* was endowed together with

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[129] *Tirunantā viḷakku* (perpetual lamps), which were commonplace in temples, were not evident in the *maṭam* inscriptions.
[130] The text reads: "*āṇṭār [tiru]vuṇāyakaṉ maṭattukku viḷakku*" (SII 12.143). This inscription is a continuation of another inscription that identified the deity of the temple as Subrahmanya Piḷḷaiyār (ARE 51 of 1922).

food offerings (*amutu*) for the *maṭam* (SII 26.246) and, at Tirunellikaval in Thanjavur district, a *canti viḷakku* (lamp for daily worship) was given for a *maṭam* (SII 17.563). The Tamil *canti* is related to Sanskrit *sandhi*, meaning juncture (time), or *sandhyā*, the three times (morning, noon, and evening) of the day for worship (Orr 2013, 340). The *Kāmikāgama* (cited in Davis 1991, 150) explains that lamps were important because they were a means for worshippers to please Śiva's eyes.

3. Feeding

There were a number of institutions – the *ampalam* (hall), *cālai* (feeding house), temple, and *maṭam* – that had a role in feeding people in the Chola period. While *maṭams* tended to house learned individuals such as the *paṭippār* and *maṭam* people recited hymns in temples, by far the most common activity at *maṭams* was feeding. Although provisions for feeding at *maṭams* did not begin until the tenth century, they were the most frequent reason for making a gift to a *maṭam*. Ninety-seven inscriptions recorded arrangements that gave *maṭams* the responsibility of feeding people. Some inscriptions mentioned feeding in *maṭams* only in passing, while others elaborated on the act of feeding by giving details about who was to be fed, what food people were to be provided with, and when they were supposed to be fed.

While the phrase *śrī māheśvara pūcai* – meaning literally "worship of Śrī Māheśvara" or "worship of the holy devotees of Śiva" – appears in relation to feeding at

today's *maṭams*, it was not common in the stone inscriptions of the Chola period.[131] A rare instance of *śrī māheśvara pūcai* is in Thanjavur district with the donation of Gautaman Āṉtāṉ Kuṉra Meṟintār for *śrī māheśvara pūcai* in the Akattiyatevar *maṭam* (SII 17.550). Instead, the inscriptions used words such as *coṟu* (boiled rice) and *uṇṇa* (food) to describe the food that was given to people. In two instances, *coṟu* was used to mark feeding, as seen at the *maṭam* at Kanchipuram that served food (*coṟu*) in queen Lakṣumidevi's name (SII 4.859). *Uṇṇa* was in five transcripts that I reviewed, one tenth-century inscription, one eleventh-century inscription, and three twelfth-century inscriptions. This term was applied to the feeding of *brāhmaṇas*, *tapassiyars*, *civayokis*, and *māheśvaras*.[132]

The word *amutu* is the term that was most commonly used to designate feeding, appearing in twenty-four of the transcripts that I examined beginning in the tenth century and continuing through the thirteenth century. *Brāhmaṇas*, *tapassiyars*, *civayokis*, and *māheśvaras* were the beneficiaries of *uṇṇa* while the people who were given *amutu* were *brāhmaṇas*, *tapassiyars*, *civayokis*, and *māheśvaras* but also *āṇṭārs*, *apūrvi āṇṭārs*,

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[131] In a study of the contemporary Śaiva Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Ātīṉam in Thanjavur district, Yocum (1990, 266) describes *śrī māheśvara pūcai* as the ritual that takes place just before people are fed daily in the *maṭam*. A *tampirāṉ* (disciple) living at the Ātīṉam waves incense and a lamp, tosses *bilva* leaves and jasmine flowers, and prostrates before the seat and food that have been set aside for the head of the Ātīṉam. *Otuvārs* also sing. The head of the *maṭam* does not normally attend *śrī māheśvara pūcai* so it is often performed in front of an empty seat. During the ten days of the *Guru Pūjā* festival, the head of the *maṭam* eats in the dining hall and the *tampirāṉ* performs additional rites. On the tenth day of the festival, the head of the *maṭam* circumambulates the refectory as part of *śrī māheśvara pūcai*. Yocum also notes that the dining hall's decorations on its stone pillars – only four pillars have sculptures, two of which depict *tampirāṉs*, one depicts Kāmadhenu (cow of plenty), and one depicts the Kalpaka tree (wish-fulfilling tree) – are a sign of the hall's function as a feeding centre.

[132] In the case of the inscription from the tenth century, located in Tirumalpuram in North Arcot district, gold was provided by a donor for feeding a *brāhmaṇa* in the *maṭam* (SII 13.33). An eleventh-century Chingleput district inscription provided for feeding *brāhmaṇas* (ARE 635 of 1919). In the twelfth century, one Chingleput district inscription provided *nellu* (food; paddy) for fifty *brāhmaṇas* on new moon days in the *maṭam* (ARE 281 of 1910) while a second inscription registered a land grant for a *maṭam* for its maintenance and for feeding *tapassiyars* and *civayokis* (ARE 404 of 1922). In Thanjavur district in the twelfth century, a *māheśvara* was fed in the *maṭam* in the temple at a festival (SII 5.986). The transcripts of ARE 281 of 1910, ARE 635 of 1919, and ARE 404 of 1922 were consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

aṭiyārs, *śṛīvaiṣṇavas*, *tecāntiris*, and people involved in temples as hymnists and servants. The word *amutu* suggests that feeding was a means of honouring people. *Amutu* is from the Sanskrit *amṛta*, meaning "nectar of immortality," and commonly referred to the consumption of food by deities in the Chola-period inscriptions (Orr 2010). The use of this term and the fact that feeding was done on special days suggests that there was a ritual component to feeding in *maṭams*. The act of providing food was a social service or charity provided by *maṭams* within a ritual framework that was meant to honour the recipients of feeding.

These diverse communities of people were fed throughout the year at *maṭams*. Some people were fed daily in *maṭams* while others were fed at specific times of the year. People who lived in *maṭams* were provided with food as were people who may have had only an occasional or passing contact with *maṭams*. People who were fed daily in the *maṭam* included *brāhmaṇas*, as in the case of the tenth-century inscription from Tirumalpuram in North Arcot that specified that five *brāhmaṇas* should be fed daily for as long as the moon and sun endured (SII 22.319). An inscription from Thanjavur district recorded provisions for the daily feeding of *māheśvaras* (ARE 103 of 1925) and a second inscription for *āṇṭārs* (ARE 67 of 1926). A Tiruchirappalli district inscription referred to the daily feeding (*amutu*) of *tecāntiris* with a *maṭappuṟam* endowment (IPS 396).

More often, the inscriptions show that people were fed in *maṭams* on special days. Six endowments arranged for feeding on *amāvasi* days, all of which came from the twelfth century. A gift of land recorded in a Chingleput district inscription provided for feeding fifty *brāhmaṇas* on *amāvasi* days (ARE 281 of 1910).[133] A South Arcot

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[133] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

inscription required the feeding of *brāhmaṇas* in the *maṭam* on *amāvasi* days (ARE 233 of 1928-29). The four other inscriptions designated that *āṇṭārs*, *māheśvaras*, or *śrīvaiṣṇavas* as those who should be fed in *maṭams* on these days. Donors also arranged for feeding people on specific *nakṣatra* days. This may have been linked to a celebration of the birthday of the donor or in honour of someone else's birthday. A 1219 inscription provided money for feeding *māheśvaras* in the Grāmarājaṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvalisvaram on each day of the Bharaṇi *nakṣatra* (ARE 358 of 1916). In another inscription from Tiruvalisvaram, dated 1221, arrangements were made for feeding thirty itinerant *tavacis* during the Rohinī *nākṣatra* (ARE 357 of 1916). In many cases, *maṭams* had the responsibility of feeding people who attended festivals at temples. Feeding during festivals is evident in fourteen inscriptions dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. In the eleventh-century, *śrī māheśvaras* attending the sacred days (*tirunāḻ*) of Viśākham in the month of Vaikāci and Tiruvātirai in the month of Mārkaḻi were given food (*amutu*); the donation was described as *maṭappuṟam*, indicating that they were fed in a *maṭam* (SII 26.691). An inscription at the Tiruvannamalai temple from the twelfth century registered a guild's donation of land to the *maṭam* in the *tiruvīti* of the temple for feeding 1000 *māheśvaras* on three sacred days (*tirunāḻ*) for as long as the moon and sun endured (SII 8.138). While this inscription provided for a rather large number of people, most often the inscriptions either did not provide a specific number for the people who were fed or the numbers were quite small. Festivals that occasioned such feeding were in the months of Cittirai, Vaikāci, Āṭi, Āvaṇi, Appaci, and Mārkaḻi.

The inscriptions did not elaborate on the theological reasons for feeding. They were more concerned with specifying the donation, listing the people who were to be fed,

and detailing when food was to be provided. Olivelle (1991, 18) suggests that ritualized feeding was central to Hinduism from its earliest period. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* tells us that Prajāpati was both the creator and the food for his creations. Creation and production of food followed the creation of the first creatures. Without sustenance, both creation itself and its creatures were at risk of destruction. Food was a central force of creation and immortality in Vedic texts (Olivelle 1991, 21). Vedic religion, thus, framed food and the act of feeding within the cosmological. The cosmos came to represent a giant food cycle in which all beings were being fed and sustained. The Upaniṣads reinforced the cosmological meaning of food. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (Tait Up 2.1) declares,

> From that Self (Brahman) sprang ether (*ākāśa*, that through which we hear); from ether air (that through which we hear and feel); from air fire (that through which we hear, feel, and see); from fire water (that through which we hear, feel, see, and taste); from water earth (that through which we hear, feel, see, taste, and smell). From earth herbs, from herbs food, from food seed, from seed man. Man thus consists of the essence of food.

All creatures that dwell on earth come from food, live by food, and then return to food (Tait Up 2.2). People were encouraged to acquire as much food as possible; the person who understood the importance of food became rich with food and acquired great fame (Tait Up 3.8). The food and the eater could not exist without each other. One physically became transformed into the other so that the eater became the food for the next eater, and creation was ultimately a food chain filled with food and eaters of food (Olivelle 1991, 21).

By the time we arrive at the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*, we find Manu instructing the householder, who is told that he sustains people by giving them knowledge and food, that he must honour humans with food, ancestors with ancestral offerings, the deities with

oblations, and seers with Vedic recitation (MDh 3.78-81). Manu (MDh 3.83) teaches that the householder needs to make a daily ancestral offering of food or water, or milk, roots, and fruits, and that he should feed a *brāhmaṇa* for the benefit of his ancestors. A householder could realize wealth, fame, a long life, and heaven only if guests were honoured with food (MDh 3.99). *Brāhmaṇas*, who were pre-eminent in the Vedas and the descendants of Vedic scholars, purified those alongside whom they ate (MDh 3.184).

While these texts provide a theological explanation for feeding that links it to the cosmological, other genres of literature give us insights into the social reality of how feeding was intended to be enacted by people. Vaiṣṇavism's *Yatidharmasamuccaya* provides insights into Vaiṣṇava feeding practices from the perspective of South Indian textual sources in the medieval period by instructing the ascetic on how feeding was supposed to be carried out. Dated to the eleventh century, the *Yatidharmasamuccaya* belongs to the category of Sanksrit *brāhmaṇical* literature that concerns the *dharma* (duty) of ascetics on matters such as conduct. Its author, Yādava (Ysam 6.94), explains of food,

> Almsfood begged in the manner of a bee [from house to house or
> person to person] destroys even the most heinous sins. On such
> almsfood, therefore should an ascetic subsist, receiving it in a clean
> and undamaged bowl.

Although it teaches that an ascetic and Vedic student were entitled to receive food, the ascetic was superior.

> Even though a Brahmin may have mastered all four Vedas, offered
> Soma sacrifices, and performed a hundred sacrifices, an ascetic is
> far superior to him; they are as different as a sesame seed and
> Mount Meru (Ysam 6.296).

Preparing food and offering it to an ascetic was most beneficial for a person. The

Yatidharmasamuccaya (Ysam 6.314) taught that even if a man gave the entire earth, it

would not equal the merit of preparing food for a mendicant who is in the image of

Viṣṇu. Most importantly, "Viṣṇu himself eats in the house of a man where an ascetic

eats" (Ysam 6.307). Food was clearly central to creation but it was also the source of

immorality (*amṛta*). The use of food in rituals was an important part of a cosmic

transaction that maintained the social and physical realms (Olivelle 1991, 21). Food was

key to the socio-cultural construction of reality in Hinduism, which developed elaborate

rules and prohibitions on food. The rules concerning food transactions were a social code

that reinforced the social hierarchy and marked the boundaries of purity (Olivelle 1991,

22). Yādava's *Yatidharmasamuccaya* would have participated in this social code. The

degree to which his prescriptions would have been known to the *saṁnyāsīs* of the

maṭams is difficult to ascertain since the *saṁnyāsīs* of the eleventh-century

Yatidharmasamuccaya came to be known in the inscriptions only later, in the thirteenth

century.

Olivelle (1995, 200) suggests that the ascetic attitude towards food is counter to

this socially constructed view of food. The ascetic is both ambivalent and fearful of food.

A person must eat to live but food is what keeps *saṃsāra* (cycle of rebirth) going. This

fear is what Olivelle (1991, 23) describes as the defining feature of ascetical life. Ascetic

food practices are concerned with procuring, storing, preparing, and consuming food. The

ascetic's food effort is best described as a negative one of minimization and elimination

rather than a positive one of consumption (Olivelle (1995, 201). The ascetic actively

reduces or eradicates food efforts all together. The person who stores no food and takes in

either nothing or only what has been given best meets the ascetic ideal. The inscriptions show that *maṭams* accommodated mendicant ascetics through their feeding charities, and these people might best fit Olivelle's (1991, 1995) description of ascetical life. However, the inscriptions affirm a more positive view of food in *maṭams* and do not articulate the fear of food that Olivelle describes. The fact is that some kinds of ascetics (e.g., *tapassiyars*) were active in the social and cosmic food cycle as the ones who gave people food; and their food effort would have been sizeable in this regard. Instead of fleeing from social and cosmic engagement by rejecting food as Olivelle (1995, 202) suggests, these ascetics actively engaged in the social and cosmological by embracing food.

E. Conclusion: The Role of the *Maṭam* in the Temple Complex

The technical language of the *maṭam* inscriptions evolved over the course of the Chola period, showing the developing and changing people who were part of *maṭams*. The *maṭamuṭaiya* surfaced earlier in the Chola period as a person of prominence in the *maṭam*, as suggested by his name as the lord or possessor of the *maṭam*. Though the individual *maṭamuṭaiya* was more common than groups of *maṭamuṭaiyas*, the name itself did not guarantee the headship of a *maṭam* for a person since there were communities of *maṭamuṭaiyas* dwelling together in *maṭams*. As with *maṭamuṭaiyas*, there were other kinds of people who lived in *maṭams* (e.g., *āṇṭārs* and *tapassiyars*). As people who lived in *maṭams*, they had a continual and long lasting association with their *maṭams*. In some cases, their relationship to their *maṭams* was meant to endure through their descendants who were likely their disciples. Other sorts of people, some of whom were also *āṇṭārs* and *tapassiyars*, had a more limited or occasional participation in *maṭam* life as the

people who were tended to by *maṭams*. Most often, these people were fed in *maṭams* on special days. Their connection to *maṭams* was defined by the act of feeding and was mediated through pilgrimage. Providing food to people was commonplace in the Chola period and the *maṭam* was not the only institution that received endowments for the purpose of feeding people. If we look at food inscriptions at other institutions – specifically the temple, *ampalam*, or *cālai* – we see that they were also tasked by donors with the responsibility of feeding people. They fed the same types of people that *maṭams* did, often under the same circumstances. What distinguished *maṭams* from other feeding centres, and why would an institution associated with asceticism and monasticism take on this responsibility? I will discuss this in Chapter Four in the context of examining the *maṭam* inscriptions from Chingleput district.

The gifts that were made to *maṭams* to provide for services such as feeding were most often inscribed on the walls of temples and meant to survive in perpetuity, as suggested by the language of the inscriptions and the medium of stone. While there are a handful of inscriptions from the Chola period that have endured to today on the walls of *maṭams*, the fact is that the vast majority of extant inscriptions dealing with *maṭams* are located at temples and most inscriptions were likely engraved on temples rather than *maṭams* historically. The choice to record the arrangements that were made for *maṭams* at temples probably had more to do with the role of temples in Tamil culture during the Chola period than it did *maṭams*. The *maṭams* that these records documented were most often in the same villages as the temples that were home to their inscriptions. The location of *maṭams* had as much to do with economic, social, and political factors as it did religious ones, as I will show in the coming chapter.

Maṭams' relationship to their village temples extended beyond having their records stored on temple walls. The inscriptions show that some *maṭams* were for people learned in religious and secular matters who probably had little to do with temple life. Patrons also secured the duty of feeding people during temples' festivals for *maṭams*, as one example of *matams*' contribution to temples. This was one of a wide range of roles that *maṭam* people held in temples. While the name suggests an important position in the *maṭam*, the *maṭamuṭaiya* was also one of the people who participated in temple affairs. *Maṭamuṭaiyas* attested to temple donations, served as signatories to temple endowments, and were the recipients of royal orders that were communicated to temples. They were prominent in *maṭams* but they also had a degree of authority in village temples as people who fulfilled these roles. They were later joined in these roles by other *maṭam* people such as *maṭapatis*. While high status by nature of theses duties, the *maṭamuṭaiyas*, *maṭapatis*, and other *maṭam* people who carried out these responsibilities were not active in the day-to-day operations of temples in these capacities and their roles were, instead, ceremonial. *Maṭam* people's responsibilities in temples was not confined to these ceremonial positions. They had other jobs in temples that were more essential to the daily operations of temples. *Maṭam* people recited hymns, tended gardens, and made flower garlands for ritual purposes. These duties required them to contribute to and participate in temple rituals on a regular basis. Their contributions were rewarded with payment or

support of some sort in exchange for their services and they would have most certainly had a high status in temples reflective of their roles.[134]

The inscriptions are evidence that *maṭams* and their members had a functional relationship to temples – they provided a service or services – much like other groups identified with the operations of the temple complex in medieval Tamilnadu, such as temple administrators, priests, musicians, and servants. In the temple context, the functions of *maṭam* people included fulfilling responsibility roles, the recitation of hymns, and the feeding of various communities of people. *Maṭam* people were part of the repertoire of people who served the temple and participated in the temple complex in Chola-period Tamilnadu. I propose to discuss these issues with specific reference to Chingleput district in Chapter Four.

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[134] Nandi (1973, 25-29) divides temple staff in South India's temples into priests, non-priestly attendants, and managerial staff. The first category of temple staff was a hierarchy of priests who were responsible for conducting the rituals at temples. The second category, non-priestly attendants, were divided into the two groups of (1) teachers and students and (2) the people who were connected with the day-to-day rituals of the deities (e.g., drummers) and people whose duties were not connected to attending to the temples' deities (e.g., cooks). Some of these individuals were employed full time at temples while others were employed part time. The third category of temple staff was the managerial staff that was responsible for the administration of temples and had the responsibility of supervising the collection of temple revenues and enforcing the conduct of priests and others. *Maṭam* people would have fulfilled many of these roles according to the inscriptions.

Chapter Four

***Maṭams* in Chingleput District in the Chola Period**

A. An Introduction to the *Maṭam* in Chingleput District

The earliest *maṭam* inscriptions were found in the ninth century in

Tondaimandalam in the northern part of Tamilnadu. In the tenth and eleventh centuries,

they continued to be found in northern areas but also central Tamilnadu. They moved into

the more southern regions in the twelfth century, and they reached their height throughout

Tamilnadu in the thirteenth century. As I have mentioned, Chingleput district is the

location of the earliest *maṭam* inscription in the Tamil region. Unlike some of the other

districts, particularly those further south, the northern Chingleput district has the

distinction of having *maṭam* inscriptions dating from every century of the Chola period.

The fifty-four *maṭam* inscriptions from Chingleput district that I identified are a rather

small proportion of the 2279 stone inscriptions Mahalingam identified for the area in his

A Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Tamil Nadu and Kerala States (1989).

Nonetheless, the Chingleput corpus constitutes the second largest cohort of *maṭam*

inscriptions by district in the Chola period.

The chronological distribution of the instriptions finds three inscriptions in the

ninth century, three inscriptions from the tenth century, eleven inscriptions in the

eleventh century, thirteen inscriptions in the twelfth century, and twenty-three

inscriptions in the thirteenth century (Table 4.1). Inscriptions were distributed across

seven of the district's eight taluks – Chingleput, Ponneri, Saidapet, Sriperumbudur,

Tiruttani, Kanchipuram, Madurantakam, and Tiruvallur. *Maṭam* inscriptions are found in

every taluk except for Sriperumbudur. Saidapet, Chingleput, and Kanchipuram taluks

have the largest number of inscriptions. Saidapet taluk's inscriptions are concentrated in

Tiruvorriyur (fifteen inscriptions) but also found in modern-day Chennai (three

inscriptions), Polichalur (one inscription), and Velacheri (one inscription). The

inscriptions from Chingleput taluk are found in the villages of Tirukkalukkunram (five

inscriptions), Palur (two inscriptions), Sirucheri (two inscriptions), Tirukkachur (two

inscriptions), Senganmal (one inscription), Tiruvadandai (one inscription), and

Tiruverkadu (one inscription). Kanchipuram taluk's inscriptions are in Kanchipuram

(seven inscriptions), Uttaramerur (three inscriptions), Pillaipalayam (one inscription), and

Pudupakkam (one inscription).

Table 4.1 The Chronological and Geographical Distribution of the *Maṭam*

Inscriptions in Chingleput District

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	N/A	Total
Chingleput	0	0	0	6	8	0	14
Kanchipuram	2	1	4	2	3	0	12
Madurantakam	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Ponneri	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Saidapet	0	2	6	4	8	0	20
Tiruvallur	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Tiruttani	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	3	3	11	13	23	1	54

The Chingleput district inscriptions come primarily from the Chola dynasty with

thirty-five inscriptions whereas inscriptions from the Telugu-Choda dynasty account for

four inscriptions, the Pandyas for three inscriptions, the Pallava dynasty for two

inscriptions, and the Rashtrakuta dynasty with only one inscription (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 The Dynastic Distribution of the *Maṭam* Inscriptions in Chingleput District
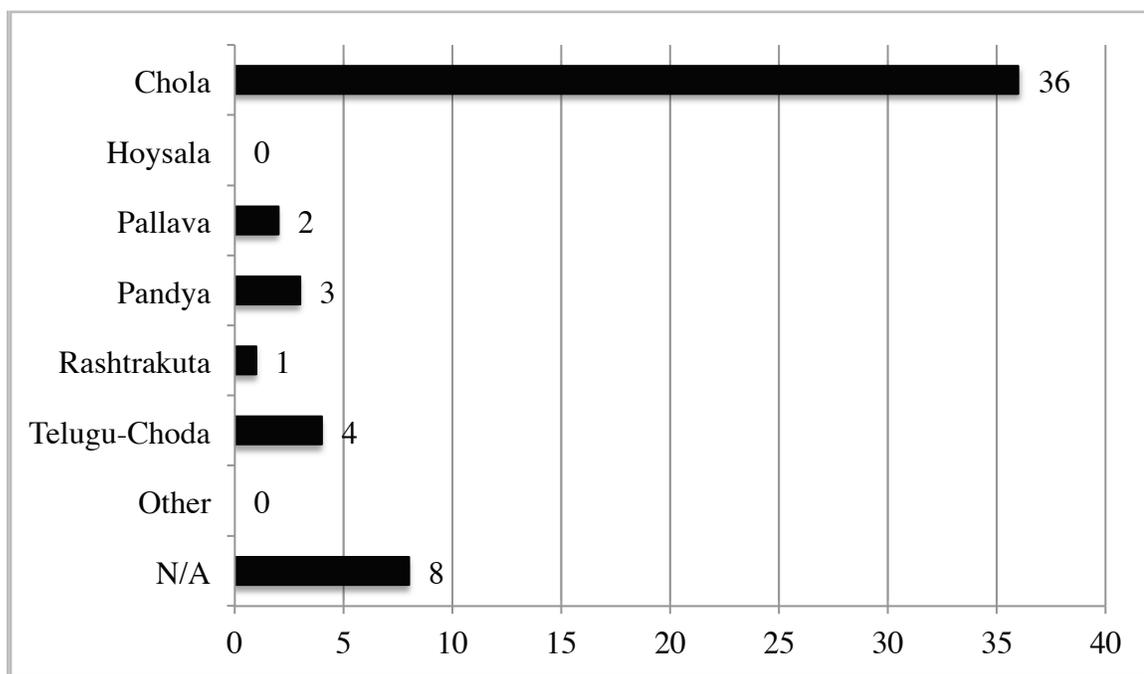
Temples and *maṭams* in Chola-period Tamilnadu were the recipients of endowments of land (256 inscriptions), money and other income (thirty inscriptions), and animals (six inscriptions). A gift of land, which was the type of property most commonly given to support *maṭams*, may have involved an actual gift of land (sometimes after purchase), its produce, revenue, or the remission of its taxes. In Chingleput district, land (thirty-six inscriptions) was also the most commonly endowed property for *maṭams* while donations of animals (two inscriptions), money (six inscriptions), house sites (one inscription), and paddy (one inscription) were also given although much less often (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 The Types of Property That Were Donated to *Maṭams* in Chingleput District[135]

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	N/A	Total
Animals	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Garden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
House site	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Income	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Land	2	1	8	9	16	0	36
Money	0	1	1	1	2	1	6
Paddy	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	2	2	9	11	22	1	47

The land that was endowed for *maṭams* was comparable to the land that was endowed to temples as *tevatāṉam*. *Tevatāṉam*, which means a "gift to god," was land that was given to Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples. A gift of *tevatāṉam* was given to the deity of the temple with temple authorities having the responsibility of managing it. While *tevatāṉam* land was gifted to temples through patronage, it is not clear if temples owned the land in the modern sense. Temples did not have outright ownership over the land that was given to them. Rather, the land's produce was bought, sold, and endowed to temples, and donations transferred the managerial and revenue rights of the land to temples. In royal grants, the temple was given the rights to the king's share of the revenue. In private donations, a portion or share of the land's produce was given to the temple. Since the temple did not own the land outright, the people who inhabited the land as tenants could not be displaced as a result of the gift, and *tevatāṉam* land required that the temple respect the occupancy rights of tenants. Only a king was able to intervene to allow *tevatāṉam* land to be leased to new tenants (Hall 1980, 23). This helps to explain how whole villages were endowed to temples as *tevatāṉam*. *Tevatāṉam* land was also not

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[135] These statistics reflect that fact that not all of the inscriptions from Chingleput district have available information for the type of property that was recorded in the inscription.

made tax-free automatically through patronage. Rulers and local assemblies continued to require taxes on the land and, as a result, arrangements had to be made for the land to become tax-free. Under the Cholas, this usually meant the rights to certain tax revenues in return for merit or a lump sum payment against future taxes (Hall 1980, 24). It is likely that *maṭappuṟam* land was similar to *tevatāṉam* land in terms of ownership, occupancy, and taxes but it was for the benefit of the people of the *maṭam*.

The donations that were made to support the activities of *maṭams* were either for the construction of new *maṭams* or for the maintenance of existing *maṭams*. New *maṭams* were constructed in Chingleput district as late as the thirteenth century. A twelfth-century inscription in the village of Tiruvadandai recording a gift of paddy by a resident of Tirumangalam for feeding described the *maṭam* where the *brāhmaṇas* were to be fed as having been built by the residents of Tiruvadandai (ARE 281 of 1910).[136] In the thirteenth century, a royal order at the temple in Polichalur conferring tax-free status on lands described the *maṭam* as having been built in Tirumullaivayal by a *śivabrāhmaṇa* named Tapasyakāśyapaṉ Jayaṅkoṇṭacoḻa Nampi (SII 17.730).

As in other places in Tamilnadu during the Chola period, the Chingleput inscriptions have more references to patronage that was intended for maintaining *maṭams* than for building them. A thirteenth-century inscription from Velacheri records a gift of land by one Ce[tiy]aitevar to the *maṭam* of Tirunāvukkaracu at Tiruvanmiyur (ARE 303 of 1911).[137] The inscription added that the amount of land donated by Ce[tiy]aitevar was twenty *veli* (land measure) and that it was given as *maṭappuṟam iṟaiyili* or a tax-free endowment of land to the *maṭam*. The phrase *maṭappuṟam iṟaiyili* implied a donation for

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[136] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[137] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

the maintenance of a *maṭam* that was tax-free but, as with elsewhere in Tamilnadu, it is

necessary to ask what maintenance of a *maṭam* involved in Chingleput district.

Throughout Tamilnadu, endowments for *maṭams* included learning (thirty-two

inscriptions), the recitation of hymns (twelve inscriptions), worship (two inscriptions),

lamps (six inscriptions), and feeding (ninety-eight inscriptions) in the Chola period. This

pattern that was continued in Chingleput district, which had two cases of endowments

involving learning and fifteen donations for feeding, keeping in mind that these gifts were

often overlapping, and a donor may have provided for worship in a temple and feeding in

a *maṭam* in a single record, for example.

B. The Patrons of *Maṭams*

1. Rulers as *Maṭam* Patrons

The people who provided for these sorts of endeavours at *maṭams* included the

royal figures, corporate bodies, and individuals; as elsewhere in Tamilnadu, individual

men featured most prominently in Chingleput district inscriptions as donors (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 The Chronological Distribution of the Patrons of *Maṭams* in Chingleput

District[138]

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	N/A	Total
Rulers	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Royal Orders	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
Corporate Bodies	0	0	1	0	4	1	6
Individuals	1	1	6	9	8	0	25
Maṭam People	0	1	1	0	4	0	6
Total	1	2	8	11	18	1	41

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[138] The table includes only those inscriptions for which donor information is available.

Only a single royal figure was a patron in Chingleput district. This is the Telugu-Choda queen Lakṣumidevi who donated land to Aruḷāḷa Perumāḷ (Viṣṇu) of Kanchipuram in the thirteenth century. The inscription that records the gift tells us that the *maṭam* served food in her name ("*i-p-perāl coṟu itukiṟa maṭattukkum*") (SII 4.859). Lakṣumidevi is described as both the queen of Gandagopalan and the daughter of Viranarasingadevar.

Royal orders were also not common among the Chingleput district inscriptions. Only three royal orders appeared among the *maṭam* inscriptions, and all of them were issued by a Chola king and were concentrated in Saidapet taluk. A twelfth-century inscription at Tiruvorriyur recorded Kulottunga I's order for a land grant to provide food in the Kulottuṅkaśoḻan *maṭam*; this *maṭam* at Tiruvorriyur was named after him (ARE 200 of 1912). A second twelfth-century royal order is also located at Tiruvorriyur, also at the Ādhipurīśvara temple (ARE 368 of 1911). Kulottunga "who was pleased to take Madurai and the head of the Pandya" (Kulottunga III) ordered that the *tevātaṉam* lands that were lying waste were to be leased out. Among the local authorities who were to act on this order was a *maṭapati* who was listed first ahead of the *tānattars* (temple trustees), *śrī māheśvara kaṇkani ceyvār* (supervisor of devotees), *śrī kāryam ceyvār* (manager of temple affairs), *koyil matalikaṇakku* (chief temple accountant), and *tevātaṉa nāṭṭavār* (assembly of the *tevātaṉam*). A thirteenth-century inscription from Tirumullaivayal records another order by Kulottunga III, who declared a donation *tevātaṉam* and *maṭappuṟam* lands tax-free (SII 17.730). We do not learn a lot about the *maṭam* from this inscription. Instead, we learn more about the kinds of people who participated in carrying out a royal order once it was issued by a ruler. On this occasion, eight different people were listed in the inscription as carrying out the royal order. Irāca Nārāyaṉa

Muventaveḻāṉ was the *tirumantira olai* (palace scribe) who would have heard the king's

words and had the responsibility of writing them down (Heitzman 1997, 157). Next came

Villavarāyaṉ,Viḻiñcattaraiyaṉ, .. Cittarāyaṉ, Toṇṭaimāṉ, and Vāṉātarāyaṉ, who was a

puravuvari (accountant). The final two signatories were Ciṟṟāmūr Utaiyāṉ and

Cēntamaṅkalam Utaiyāṉ. They were *puravuvari* who were *vari pottakam*, which

Heitzman (1997, 158) describes as supervisors of tax books.

This inscription follows the pattern of the royal orders issued by the Cholas,

which involved a two-fold division of the administrative procedures. There were the

events that took place in the court and the activities of the tax department. A royal order

officially originated with the king and then passed through court personnel to the head of

the tax department. A royal order passed from the king to supervisory personnel to

accountants to the clerks who made official entries in registers. Although the number of

positions within the tax department varied, the hierarchy of offices stayed the same, and

the output of departmental processes remained the same – a written document containing

the orders of the ruler travelled to the locality concerned with the matter and was

inscribed on the walls of the temple (Heitzman 1997, 158-59).[139] In the case of the

Tirumullaivayal inscription, Irāca Nārāyaṇa Muventaveḻāṉ represented the events that

took place at court while Ciṟṟāmūr Utaiyāṉ and Cēntamaṅkalam Utaiyāṉ were part of the

activities that took place outside of the court.

In the later part of the Chola period, the Chola rulers exercised their influence

over local temple affairs rather indirectly. The royal orders concerning *maṭams* fit this

pattern. Kulottunga III of the twelfth-century inscription intervened by instructing that the

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[139] Heitzman (1997, 156) notes that the only surviving records of the land revenue department of the Cholas are the stone inscriptions, which means that information on its activities comes from solely from the records of religious patronage.

tevatāṉam lands should be leased out (ARE 368 of 1911), which was one of the areas

where the Cholas inserted themselves in local matters according to Hall (1980, 23). In the

thirteenth century, Kulottunga III was involved in a local matter but, again, in a limited

way within the context of remitting taxes (SII 17.730). He, as well as other rulers,

remained outside of or free from direct patronage of *maṭams* as they did with other

institutions in the Chola period. Many of the orders issued by the Cholas were

confirmations of arrangements that had already been agreed upon at the local level.

2. Corporate Groups as *Maṭam* Patrons

In Chingleput district, there are six inscriptions that recorded a donation by a

corporate group to support a *maṭam*. Merchants (two inscriptions), *brāhmaṇa* assemblies

(two inscriptions), the assembly of an *ūr* (one inscription), and the residents of a *nāṭu*

(one inscription) were donors. In the eleventh century, a merchant guild constructed a

maṭam at Kanchipuram (ARE 264 of 1955-56). The *maṭam* was named Nānādēsi

Tisaiyāyirattu Ainūṟṟuvan, which suggests to Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan

(2010, 228) that the *aiñūṟṟuvar* merchant guild made the endowment.[140] Mercantile

communities continued to participate in *maṭam* inscriptions as donors in the thirteenth

century, as we see in an inscription recording that the *nakarattar* of the eighteen countries

built the *maṭam* in the village at Senganmal (ARE 227 of 1916). *Nakarattar* were

assemblies of merchants; a number of mercantile groups – including traders,

businessmen, and people who were involved in manufacturing – lived in *nakarams* and

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[140] Karashima (2009, 142) suggests that although the *ainūṟṟuvar* appears in the inscriptions from Tamilnadu earlier than Karnataka, its origin is connected to present-day Aihole in Karnataka. He found that many of the *ainūṟṟuvar* inscriptions began with the eulogy of the *ainūṟṟuvar*. The *ainūṟṟuvar* eulogy commonly included a discussion of the charter with rights and duties, the *dharma* (duty) that they practiced as merchants, their lineage from the deities Vāsudeva, Kaṇḍalī, and Mūlabhadra, their association with Aihole through the goddess Parameśvari, the wide area represented by the eighteen *paṭṭinams* (a port or merchant town), thirty-two *veḷāpurams* (harbour area of a port), and sixty-four *kaṭikai tāvaḷam* (market in the citadel of a town), and their hill banner. These numbers were fictitious and meant to imply large numbers.

participated in the *nakarattar*. At Tiruvorriyur, an important *nakaram* in Chingleput

district, the *nakaram* included the homes of artisans, cloth merchants, sculptors, and

shepherds (ARE 136 of 1912 cited in Hall 1980, 52).

The other inscriptions that recorded donations to *maṭams* by corporate groups

include one from Tirukkalukkunram placed only in the Chola period for forest land as

maṭappuṟam evidently by the assembly of a *brāhmaṇa* settlement (ARE 155 of 1932-33).

This donation was made by a *sabhai*, an assembly associated with the *brāhmaṇa* village.

Many of the *agrāharas* and *maṅkalams* (auspicious suffix for towns) were created by

royal grants (Nilakanta Sastri [1935] 1975, 493). The *ūravār* (assembly) of a non-

brāhmaṇa village was involved with selling land for the benefit of a *maṭam* (ARE 14 of

1934-35).[141] Another corporate group that featured as a patron of *maṭams* in Chingleput

district was the *nāṭṭār* or assembly of the *nāṭu*. At Tirukkachur, a thirteenth-century

inscription recorded that the residents of the *nāṭu* made a *maṭappuṟam* endowment for the

mutaliyār of the *maṭam* that was in their locality (SII 26.327). Agrarian communities

were organized or grouped into *nāṭus*. Many of the interactions that took place between

rulers and villages were mediated by institutions that operated at the *nāṭu* level, which

was an intermediate level of organization. *Nāṭu* assemblies were dominated by peasants,

perhaps as representatives of peasant villages, but *brāhmaṇas*, artisans, and merchants

also participated in them (Hall and Spencer 1980, 132). The administrative bodies of the

nāṭu are highly visible in the corpus of Tamil inscriptions of the Chola period in relation

to the collection and remission of taxes (Hall 1980, 28). In the Chingleput district, we

have several types of corporate groups that offered their support to *maṭams*, including the

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[141] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

brāhmaṇa assembly of a *caturvetimaṅkalam* that donated land, several different merchant groups that supported *maṭams* also through gifts of land, and the residents of a *nāṭu* that made a donation of land for a *maṭam*.

3. Individuals as *Maṭam* Patrons

Maṭam donations in Chingleput district, as elsewhere in Chola-period Tamilnadu, were mostly made by individuals. In general, we have seen that the number of female donors was small with twelve inscriptions, four of which came from Chingleput district. The earliest inscription, a tenth-century inscription from Uttaramerur in Kanchipuram taluk, recorded that a woman built a *maṭam* and provided a *bhaṭṭavṛtti* endowment to support learned *brāhmaṇas* who lived in a *maṭam* (SII 3.333=SII 6.322). Three other inscriptions concerned the gifts of a woman named Nākalavvaiccā[ni] alias Āriyammai; they are eleventh-century inscriptions from the Ādhipurīśvara temple at Tiruvorriyur, which was an especially prominent site for *maṭam* inscriptions. They recorded that she provided for the construction (*eṭuppitta*) of the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* and that she made a series of gifts of land that she had purchased for feeding *māheśvaras* in the *maṭam* (SII 4.555; ARE 127 of 1912; ARE 132 of 1912).[142] In 1049, she purchased land from the *mahāsabhai* (great *brāhmaṇa* assembly) of a *brahmadeya* village in Pulanadu totalling sixteen *mā* (land measure) (ARE 132 of 1912). In 1051 and in 1054, she bought other tracts of land from several individuals and made them over to the *maṭam* for feeding (SII 4.555; ARE 127 of 1912).[143] She was the *brāhmaṇī* (wife of a *brāhmaṇa*) of Prabhā[ga]ra Bhaṭṭaṉ of Mekalapuram of Ariyadesam. Āriyammai is the only example of a donor to *maṭams* who appeared in multiple inscriptions from Chingleput district; she was also one

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[142] The transcripts of ARE 127 of 1912 and ARE 132 of 1912 were consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[143] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

of the more active donors to *maṭams* in the entire Chola-period corpus.[144]Āriyammai did not originally come from Tiruvorriyur but made donations for a *maṭam* in the village where she was thought to have settled.[145]

There are twenty-one Chingleput district inscriptions in which *maṭam* patrons were male donors who were neither associated with royal orders nor identified explicitly as *maṭam* people; personal information is available in eighteen of these inscriptions (Table 4.4). In the case of the two earliest inscriptions, information about the donor is missing: there is a fragmentary ninth-century inscription recording that .. [Katu]vetti Muttairayaṉ arranged for land to be donated to the temple of Tirume<u>r</u>rali and to a *maṭam* (SII 12.44) and, in a tenth-century inscription at Pudupakkam, a land endowment to a *maṭam* was made tax-free by a *sabhai* but the name of the donor is unknown due to damage (SII 12.84).

Table 4.4 The Chronological Distribution of the Male Patrons of *Maṭams* in Chingleput District

	Ninth Century	Tenth Century	Eleventh Century	Twelfth Century	Thirteenth Century	Total
Local People	0	0	1	4	5	10
Merchants	0	0	0	1	3	4
Military or Royal Officers	0	0	1	2	0	3
Temple People	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	0	3	7	8	18

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[144] Āriyammai's donative activities were not limited to the *maṭam*. She also made a gift of land that she had purchased to the temple for a flower garden and supplying flower garlands to the temple daily (ARE 155 of 1912). The land that she had purchased included house sites for the tenants who cultivated the land, and they were not required to pay taxes (ARE 1913, 97).

[145] The editors of *Epigraphica Indica* write that Prabhā[ga]ra Bhaṭṭaṉ and Āriyammai were likely brought from the north with scholars and *civācāriyars* such as Sarvaśiva Paṇṭitaṉ of the Thanjavur temple by Rajendra's generals after the king's expedition to the Ganges and that the *maṭam* was built by her thereafter (EI 27, 299). She was not the only woman donor at Tiruvorriyur from the north who settled in Tiruvorriyur and then engaged in donative activities in the village. Nimpalatevi, the wife of Intaḷateva of Talaikrama of Viradadesa, made a donation of ninety sheep for a lamp in the temple (ARE 138 of 1912). Viradadesa has been located in Karnataka (ARE 1913, 97).

The eleventh century has only three inscriptions in Chingleput district by male donors. A handful of years after Āriyammai's last endowment to the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvorriyur, a *brāhmaṇa* man named Mummuticoḻa Brahmamārāyaṉ, who was a member of the military, gave *tevātaṉam* land to the deity of the Tiruvorriyur temple and *maṭappuṟam* to the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* (ARE 135 of 1912).[146] The people of Vaidavur sold land to the *mahāmuṉi* (sage) of Periya Koyil who was feeding people in a *maṭam* near the tank of Aruḷāḷa Perumāḷ at Kanchipuram (ARE 635 of 1919).[147] At Vedal in Madurantakam taluk, land was purchased from one Tirumaṅkalaṅkiḷāṉ Anuṅkan Araiyaṉ of Vedal and then given to a *maṭam* by Araṅkaṉ Namiyananti who was a *kiḷāṉ* of Velipakkam (ARE 176 of 1961-62).

The twelfth century has nine inscriptions from Chingleput district that record the transactions by individual men involving *maṭams*. People who were *araiyāṉs* (four inscriptions), *mūventaveḷāṉ* (two inscriptions), *pallavaraiyāṉs* (two inscriptions), *kiḷāṉs* (two inscriptions), and *utaiyāṉs* (one inscription) were donors, as were merchants (one inscription), keeping in mind that more than one of these terms may have been part of a donor's name. At Tirukkalukkunram, Tevantainātaṉ Aruḷāḷa[n] alias Kulottuṅkacoḻa Māpotiyarāy[āṉ], a resident of Rajarajapuram, gave money to temple authorities who then purchased land from the *mahāsabhai* of a *brāhmaṇa* settlement for the Naminanti A[ṭi]kaḷ *maṭam*, which was named after a *nāyaṉmār* and found in the *tirumaṭaiviḷākam* (premises surrounding the temple) (SII 3.75). At Kanchipuram, Aṟpākkiḻāṉ Cirilanko, who was a *mūventaveḷāṉ*, bought land and gave it over to a *maṭam* at Kanchipuram (ARE

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[146] A member of the king's administration or military often had the name of the king as part of his name. The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[147] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

406 of 1919).[148] At Palur, Kuṟicci Uṭaiyāṉ Arayaṉ Tirucciṟṟampalam Uṭaiyāṉ alias Apimanameru Pallavaraiyaṉ gave land as *maṭappuṟam* for *apūrvi āṇṭārs* (pilgrim devotees) in the *maṭam* on *amāvasi* (new moon) days (ARE 33 of 1932-33).[149] As an *uṭaiyāṉ* (lord; possessor) of Kurichi, he was likely a landowner and an important person in the village. At Tiruverkadu, Araiyāṉ Kaṅkaikoṇṭāṉ Coḷaviccātira Pallavaraiyaṉ, an *araiyāṉ* and *pallavaraiyāṉ*, made a donation for a *maṭam* (ARE 392 of 1958-59).[150] The inscription identified him as coming from the village of Iraiyur and explained that he bought land from the *ūrār* of Neydalvayil and gave it over as *maṭappuṟam* for the deity of Tiruverkadu. The *ūrār* made the land tax-free after receiving money from him. All of the twelfth-century donors gave land. In six cases, the donated land was made tax-free due to either a *brāhmaṇa* assembly of village (in three of these inscriptions) or the assembly or residents of an *ūr* (in three of these inscriptions), as was the case when Tillaiyāḷi alias Viranārāyaṉ Mūventaveḷāṉ requested that a *brāhmaṇa* assembly give over tax-free land for a *maṭam* (ARE 404 of 1922).[151]

There are eight inscriptions recording *maṭam* patronage by individual men in the thirteenth century found in the villages of Tiruvorriyur (two inscriptions), Mylapore in modern-day Chennai (two inscriptions), and Velacheri (one inscription) in Saidapet taluk; Tirupalaivanam in Ponneri taluk (two inscriptions); and Kanchipuram (one inscription) in Kanchipuram taluk. While there were *mūventaveḷāṉs* and *pallavaraiyāṉs* who were donors to *maṭams* in the twelfth century, they do not factor in the thirteenth century. A man bearing the name or title *āḻvāṉ* (one who rules) appeared in one inscription while

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[148] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[149] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[150] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[151] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

araiyāṉs were donors in two inscriptions, a *nāyakam* was a donor in one inscription, and an *utaiyāṉ* in one inscription (again, more than one of these terms may be used for a single donor). A Mylapore inscription recorded that Pūṭimaṅkalavaṉ Araiyaṉ Āṭkoṇṭa Nāyakaṉ alias Cetiyaraiyāṉ built a *maṭam* at Tiruvanmiyur and made provisions for its maintenance (CMK 125 of 1967).

In all but one case, the donors made arrangements for a land donation.[152] In two inscriptions, land was purchased from individuals and, in one case, it was bought from the assembly of a village. In an inscription at Tiruvorriyur, a merchant from Tirunavalur purchased land from the *āḻvāṉ* of a different village (ARE 238 of 1912). Like this donor from Tirunavalur, many of the *maṭam* patrons were identified in relation to their villages, with the names of their villages being suffixed to their personal names in three instances. This suggests that donors identified themselves by their village affiliation, which may have been one of importance for some people. In three cases, the land that was donated was made tax-free by the assembly of the village.

Unlike the rare case of Āriyammai who made multiple donations to a *maṭam*, there are no male donors in Chingleput district who appeared more than once as a donor to a *maṭam*. Whereas Āriyammai was identified in the inscriptions as a *brāhmaṇa* wife of Prabhā[ga]ra Bhaṭṭaṉ, male donors tended to be identified not in terms of kinship but by their titles as *araiyāṉs*, *utaiyāns*, *kiḻāṉs*, *mūventaveḷāṉs*, and *pallavaraiyāṉs* and their natal villages. This language reflected their social and political roles in local communities. The *maṭams* that they patronized were not necessarily in their home villages. Only one inscription placed the *maṭam* in the donor's village whereas ten

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[152] It is not apparent in the Mylapore inscription recording Pūṭimaṅkalavaṉ Araiyaṉ Āṭkoṇṭa Nāyakaṉ's building of a *maṭam* what the donation was (CMK 125 of 1967).

inscriptions placed the *maṭam* in a village that was different from the donor's hometown.[153] They patronized *maṭams* in twelve different villages. As with Āriyammai, we do not know the relationship that male donors had with the *maṭams* that they supported.

4. *Maṭam* People as Patrons

There are seven inscriptions in which people identified by their *maṭam* affiliation served as the donors to temples and *maṭams* in Chingleput district. People clearly associated with *maṭams* in the inscriptions made donations to temples and *maṭams*, they received rights in temples and *maṭams*, and purchased land for their *maṭams*. The inscriptions were from the tenth (one inscription), eleventh (one inscription), and thirteenth (four inscriptions) centuries; one inscription can only be placed between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. The tenth century finds Caturāna[n]a Paṇṭita Bhaṭā[ra]r, a *maṭamuṭaiya* making a donation of gold for services in the temple at Tiruvorriyur (EI 27.47).[154] In the eleventh century, a person with the same name deposited money with the temple for purchasing cows for bathing the deity of the same temple with *ney* (ghee; oil) on a special day (SII 5.1354).[155] In both cases, he was identified as belonging to a *maṭam*.

In the thirteenth century, we find inscriptions at Tiruvorriyur, Tirukkachur, Tirukkalukkunram, and Tirupachur that record donations by people associated with *maṭams*. At Tiruvorriyur, a person identified with the Kulaṇṭai Āṇṭār *maṭam* at Kulattur made arrangements for a cow, bull, and calf for a lamp in the temple of Tiruvorriyūr Uṭaiya Nāyaṉār at Tiruvorriyur (SITI 1.512). The donor, Maṉavālaiyamukantāṉ, was the

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[153] The hometown of the donor was not available in seven inscriptions and the location of the *maṭam* was unknown in two cases.

[154] The text reads: "*tiruvorriyūr matamuṭaiya caturāna[n]a paṇṭita bhaṭā[ra]r*" (EI 27.47).

[155] The text reads: "*tiruvorriyūr tirumayāṉamu matamuṭaiya caturānana paṇṭitaṉ*" (SII 5.1354).

makaṉ (son) of Perṟāḷ (possibly a female name) who was living in the *maṭam* ("*maṭattil*

irukkum"). While the term *makaṉ* means son, it may identify Maṉavālaiyamukantāṉ as a

disciple of Perṟāḷ, as we see elsewhere in Tamilnadu during this period. At Tirukkachur

in the thirteenth century, a person named Puśpakiri Māṇikkakūttaṉ of the Tyākavinotaṉ

maṭam in the *tirumaṭaiviḷākam* of the temple gave money for three lamps in the temple

(ARE 52 of 1932-33). At Tirukkalukkunram, Civatavana Perumāḷ Akorateva Iṟavaḷar

bought land from a *māheśvara* for a *maṭam* (ARE 145 of 1932).[156] There are two

inscriptions at Tirupachur that dealt with donors who were part of a *maṭam*. The first, an

inscription dated only to the Chola period, recorded a donation of money by two *āṇṭārs*

of the Tirunāvukkaracaṉ *maṭam* for worship of the deity of the temple at Tirupachur three

times a day (ARE 127 of 1929-30).[157] The only information that we learn about these

āṇṭārs is that they were named Pacupatitevar and Viṉāyakatevar, and they in all

likelihood lived in the Tirunāvukkaracaṉ *maṭam* at Tirupachur.[158] The second Tirupachur

inscription explained that Oṅkāratevar Iṟavaḷar, a *śiṣyar* of Jñānaciva Iṟavaḷar of the

cantāṉam of Lakṣādhyāya Iṟavaḷar of the Goḷaki *maṭam* at Varanasi, gave money for

decorating the deity in the temple at Tirupachur (ARE 111 of 1929-30).[159] This time, a

śiṣyar gave money for services involving worship of the deity in the local temple. There

was no kinship information provided for the *āṇṭārs* of the first inscription or Oṅkāratevar

Iṟavaḷar of the second inscription. What we do learn about Oṅkāratevar Iṟavaḷar is that he

was a disciple of someone named Jñānaciva Iṟavaḷar and that Jñānaciva Iṟavaḷar was from

the *cantāṉam* of Lakṣādhyāya Iṟavaḷar of the Goḷaki *maṭam* at Varanasi. While we learn

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[156] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[157] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[158] The transcript reads: "*i-v-vūr tirunāvukkaracaṉ maṭattil āṇṭar pacupatitevarum viṉāyakatevarum*" (ARE 127 of 1929-30).
[159] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

little personal information about Oṅkāratevar Iṟavaḷar, we learn more about the Goḷaki *maṭam* from this description. The inscription confirms that Iṟavaḷar was a name used for *śiṣyars* of the Goḷaki *maṭam*, and we learn that the Goḷaki *maṭam* had a disciple in Tirupachur in the thirteenth century who made a donation of money to the temple.

People identified with *maṭams* in the Chingleput corpus made donations of animals and more commonly money rather than land. The fact that the people connected with *maṭams* gave these kinds of property does not mean that *maṭam* people in Chingleput district, unlike elsewhere in Tamilnadu, did not own land; the sample is simply too small to make this type of conclusion. What is important to note from these examples is that people identified as *āṇṭārs*, *makaṉs*, *maṭamuṭaiyas*, *paṇṭitaṉs*, and *śiṣyars* gave property to temples. Unlike the non-*maṭam* individuals who were more often the important people of a local village, *maṭam* people were identified as belonging to a *maṭam*, which is similar to how temple people were identified in Chola-period inscriptions when they made donations.

Generally, people tended to be described with reference to a hometown in the inscriptions from the Chola period (Orr 2000, 79). While an individual's hometown might have been a village or other locality, the hometown of a temple person was his or her temple's village. *Maṭam* people were the devotees, disciples, and heads of certain *maṭams*, and their hometowns were tied to their *maṭams*. Unlike the individual donors and corporate donors, *maṭam* people's hometowns were the villages where their *maṭams* were located. It is difficult to know if their hometowns – the locations of their *maṭams* – were their places of birth, and we should not assume that they were brought to their hometowns and settled in them through endowments. An important feature of the

donations made by *maṭam* people is the fact that their gifts tended to be for temples in the same village as their *maṭams*, so they tended to support the temples in their hometowns.

A non-*maṭam* person's donation may have been overlapping – providing an endowment for both a *maṭam* and a temple in a single endowment – while the gifts that *maṭam* people made were intended for only one institution. While people identified as coming from a *maṭam* were the donors in these inscriptions, they were not the only people who were mentioned in the inscriptions. In four cases, people other than the donor were seen in a responsibility role due to the fact that their endowments concerned temples. Although no temple administrators or village authorities were in the tenth-century record of Caturāna[n]a Paṇṭita Bhaṭā[ra]r's donation of gold for services in the temple at Tiruvorriyur (EI 27.47), shepherds were tasked with tending cows in the eleventh century when a person with this same name gave the cows for bathing the deity in the temple with *ney* (SII 5.1354). In three instances, groups involved in temple administration – *māheśvaras* or *tāṉattārs* – agree to undertake the services provided for through a *maṭam* person's endowment, not unlike other endowments concerning temples (ARE 111 of 1929-30; 127 of 1929-30; ARE 145 of 1932-33).[160] Though *māheśvaras* and others had roles in carrying out these endowments, *maṭam* people made their donations as individuals and not as part of a group or on behalf of a corporate body. This is in keeping with the general pattern of patronage – giving by individuals – in the Chola period (Heitzman 1995, 75). It seems that these *maṭam* people were making donations on their own behalf rather than on behalf of their *maṭam*.

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[160] The transcripts of these inscriptions were consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

C. The *Maṭam's* Hometown

Records of patronage directed toward a *maṭam* were often inscribed in stone at the local village temple. The example of Tiruvannamalai that I discussed in the previous chapter demonstrates this pattern, and it is also the case in Chingleput district. Inscriptions engraved on temple walls sometimes described *maṭams* as being in close proximity to the temple. In ten cases from Chingleput district, *maṭams* were described as being located within the vicinity of the temple – in the *tiruvīti* or *tirumaṭaiviḷākam* or in a cardinal direction in proximity to a temple – as some of the examples discussed above illustrate. Does this mean that *maṭams* had an administrative or ritual relationship with these temples? Were these descriptions simply a way of marking the location of the *maṭam* in a village, in the same way that the boundaries of donated land were described in the inscriptions? It seems that there were a variety of ways in which a *maṭam* and a temple might be related. The tenth-century Caturāna[n]a Paṇṭita Bhaṭā[ra]r was both a *maṭam* head and a signatory to temple endowments at Tiruvorriyur but no one associated with the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* built at Tiruvorriyur by Āriyammai was linked to temple affairs.

The village of Tiruvorriyur, just to the north of the modern city of Chennai, accounts for fifteen *maṭam* inscriptions. The city of Kanchipuram has seven inscriptions. Tiruvorriyur and Kanchipuram have the largest concentrations of *maṭam* inscriptions in their taluks (Map 4.1). They are also the two largest concentrations of *maṭam* inscriptions in Chingleput district by village. They were also home to a number of *maṭams*. This raises the question: why were inscriptions, and *maṭams* for that matter, concentrated in a small number of villages?

Map 4.1 Major Urban Centres in Chingleput District with *Maṭam* Inscriptions

✳ Tiruvorriyur
✳ Kanchipuram
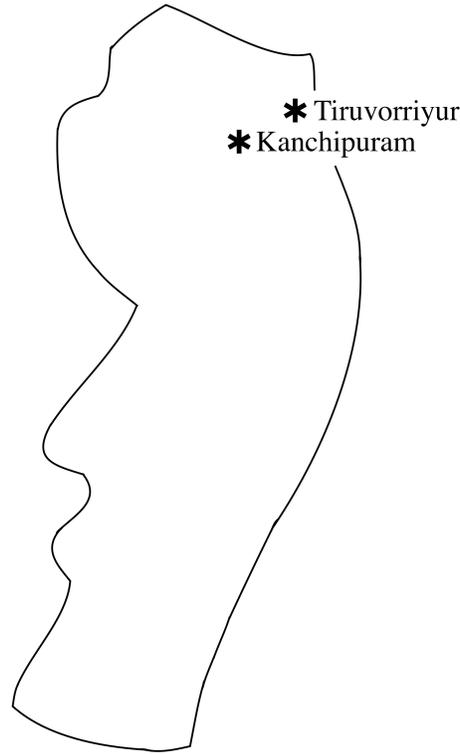
In the case of the Tiruvorriyur inscriptions, the Ādhipurīśvara temple is the

location of all of the Tiruvorriyur *maṭam* inscriptions. Fifteen of Chingleput district's

fifty-four records are engraved here. No other temple or village in Chingleput district has

as many *maṭam* inscriptions. Fourteen of the inscriptions, which were spread across the

tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, dealt with *maṭams* at Tiruvorriyur while

one inscription recorded a donation by a person belonging to a *maṭam* in another village

to the deity of Tiruvorriyur.[161] The earliest *maṭam* inscriptions at Tiruvorriyur concern the

maṭam connected with Caturāna[n]a Paṇṭita Bhaṭā[ra]r. Although he was a *maṭamuṭaiya*

of a *maṭam* who was involved in temple affairs as a signatory and as a donor to the

temple, there is little to no information about his *maṭam* in terms of whom it was for,

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[161] This inscription records the donation by Maṉavālaiyamukantāṉ of the Kulaṇṭai Āṇṭār *maṭam* at Kulattur
for the deity at Tiruvorriyur (SITI 1.512).

what activities took place there, and what services it might have provided. On the other hand, we know more about the activities of the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* built by Āriyammai in the eleventh century since the records of her endowments specify that the gifts were for feeding *māheśvaras* in the *maṭam*. We find one inscription in the twelfth century at Tiruvorriyur for a *maṭam* named after the Chola ruler Kulottunga that was near the Ādhipurīśvara temple (ARE 200 of 1912). The Tiruñāṉacampantaṉ *maṭam*, likely named after the *nāyaṉmār*, was mentioned in a thirteenth-century inscription as a feeding *maṭam* for *māheśvaras* (ARE 238 of 1912). A second thirteenth-century inscription mentioned the Naṇṭikeśvara alias Ariyavratamkoṇṭa Mutaliyār *maṭam* affiliated with the Goḷaki lineage (ARE 239 of 1912).

While the *maṭam* inscriptions at Tiruvorriyur are all engraved at the Ādhipurīśvara temple, Kanchipuram's eight inscriptions are found at two different temples.[162] The six inscriptions at the Vaiṣṇava Aruḷāḷa Perumāḷ temple from the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries mention multiple *maṭams* in Kanchipuram. The single eleventh-century inscription named the Arikeśuvaṉ *maṭam* in Kanchipuram as a feeding *maṭam* that was located on the northern bank of the tank of the temple (ARE 635 of 1919).[163] The twelfth-century inscriptions recorded a donation of land for feeding people in a *maṭam* (SII 4.134) and a *maṭappuṟam* donation for the deity Aruḷāḷa Perumāḷ ("*aruḷāḷa perumāḷukku maṭappuṟamāka*") with no name given for the *maṭam* (406 of

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[162] Kanchipuram's *maṭams* were mentioned in inscriptions from other villages as well. A late thirteenth-century inscription in North Arcot district recorded a *maṭappuṟam* donation for Mutaliyār Śrī Naṇṭikecuraciva in the Aruntavañcaytār *maṭam* at Kanchipuram (ARE 60 of 1945-46). Unfortunately, the inscription did not give information about the donor so we do not know the donor's relationship to the temple, the village of Karivedu, or the *maṭam* at Kanchipuram. The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[163] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

1919).[164] The three inscriptions from the thirteenth century included the *maṭam* that was named after the Telugu-Choda queen Lakṣumidevi (SII 4.859), as well as an inscription for a *maṭappuṟam* endowment for a *maṭam* with no available name (ARE 389 of 1919) and another *maṭam* that provided for expounding Rāmānuja's *bhāṣya* (commentary) (ARE 493 of 1919).[165] Kanchipuram's Sitēśvara temple, dedicated to Śiva, has two inscriptions referring to a *maṭam*. Both are from the eleventh century and refer to the Nānādēsi Tisaiyāyirattu Ainūṟṟuvan *maṭam* (ARE 264 of 1955-56; ARE 273 of 1955-56).[166]

Tiruvorriyur and Kanchipuram's prominence as locations for *maṭams* may have had more to do with their importance as urban centres whose development was due to political, social, and economic factors as well as religious ones. The proliferation of *maṭams* was likely a consequence of a number of inter-related factors rather than a result of religion alone. *Maṭams* were likely not established at Tiruvorriyur and Kanchipuram because they were primarily or mainly environments that were somehow conducive to religious pursuits alone – as though they were obscure pilgrimage sites that were transformed by the efforts of religious people into important religious centres – but because they were among the larger urban centres in Chingleput district owing to a number of factors. They would have been important local spheres of politics, economics, and religion by nature of a number of factors, and the inscriptions reflect this. There are 324 inscriptions in total at Kanchipuram and 137 inscriptions in total at Tiruvorriyur

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[164] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[165] The transcript of ARE 389 of 1919 was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[166] The transcript of ARE 273 of 1955-56 was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

during the Chola period compared to sixteen at Mahabalipuram, for example (Table

4.5).[167]

Table 4.5 The Number of Inscriptions in Chingleput District by *Nakaram*

	Total Number of Inscriptions[168]	Total Number of *Maṭam* Inscriptions[169]
Kanchipuram	324	8
Mahabalipuram	16	0
Tirukkalukkunram	81	5
Kadapperi	8	0
Narasinghapuram	5	0
Tiruvorriyur	137	15
Kattur	8	0
Pundamalli	5	0
Aranvayal	5	0
Koppur	1	0
Vengal	7	0
Tirusulam	13	0
Total	610	26

Hall and Spencer (1980, 128) note that Kanchipuram's importance as an urban

centre in South India was due to a range of factors that were synergistic in nature.

Kanchipuram was a sacred dynastic centre whose authority as the location of dynastic

political power was united with its status as the home of religious institutions.

Kanchipuram dates back to the first millennium when it was an important Buddhist and

Jain site. It became the capital of the Pallavas perhaps as early as the third century. By the

time Kanchipuram emerged fully in recorded history in the sixth century, it was an

agglomeration of settlements. While Kanchipuram's place as a central political centre

was in decline by the end of the twelfth century, its reputation as a religious centre

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[167] I used Mahalingam's *A Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Tamil Nadu and Kerala States* (1989) to compile these inscriptions.

[168] These numbers include all of the stone inscriptions dated from between the ninth and thirteenth centuries and include inscriptions from non-Hindu sites.

[169] These numbers include only the inscriptions that were on-site in these villages. The number given for Tiruvorriyur includes only the inscriptions at Tiruvorriyur that concern *maṭams* and does not include inscriptions from elsewhere that mention Tiruvorriyur *maṭams*.

continued (Hall and Spencer 1980, 145). Its neighbourhoods were scattered with agricultural plots and its temples were the centres of commercial activity and habitation. There were about 100 identifiable villages located within the ten kilometres of countryside that extended past the core of the city (Heitzman 2004, 143-44). Its economic prosperity was reflected in commercial agriculture in the immediate area and also international trade (Hall and Spencer 1980, 131).[170] Kanchipuram was in the centre of one of the two major cotton-producing areas of South India. It became an important weaving centre in the Pallava period that saw continued growth in the cotton industry in the Chola period (Hall and Spencer 1980, 131).

Each *nāṭu* had one *nakaram*, which was the location of centralized trade in each *nāṭu* where itinerant and local merchant groups engaged in the exchange of goods.[171] In the Pallava period, the more significant or higher *nakarams* were called *mānakarams* (Hall and Spencer 1980, 136). Whereas *nakarams* were smaller commercial centres and may or may not have had a temple or assemblies, *mānakarams* had multiple functions and major administrative functions. Kanchipuram was a particularly important *mānakaram*; it was, in fact, only one of two *mānakarams* during the Pallava period (Hall and Spencer 1980, 136).[172] Kanchipuram's influence as an economic centre continued in the Chola period. As a *mānakaram*, Kanchipuram was the centre of a network of at least

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[170] While some scholars have questioned the historical accuracy of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang's account of his time in South India in the seventh century, it nonetheless suggests that Kanchipuram was an important port for Ceylon and Southeast Asia; his description of Kanchipuram as an important trade centre likely reflected its internationalism since the Pallavas were engaged in sea trade with Southeast Asia by this time (Hall and Spencer 1980, 129-30).

[171] Hall and Spencer (1980, 133) suggest that because the *nakaram* was the central marketplace for the *nāṭu*, it had to be within close proximity (i.e., walking distance) so that people could reach it easily on market days. This may explain the proliferation of *nāṭus* in the Chola inscriptions.

[172] *Mānakarams* also owed their existence to political factors. The only two *mānakarams* of the Pallava period – Kanchipuram and Mahabalipuram – were important administrative centres as well (Hall and Spencer 1980, 137).

twenty-four *nakarams* and participated in a network of major markets that included

Thanjavur and Madurai (Hall and Spencer 1980, 137). Tiruvorriyur was also an important

nakaram in Chingleput district in the Pallava and Chola periods. Of the twelve

Chingleput district *nakarams* identified by Hall (1980, 219-20), Kanchipuram had the

largest number of inscriptions from the Chola period while Tiruvorriyur had the second

largest number of inscriptions, as can be seen in Table 4.5. Both of these *nakarams* had

numerous *maṭam* inscriptions and multiple *maṭams*.

The Tiruvorriyur and Kanchipuram inscriptions also show that *maṭams* were

given land that was outside of their most immediate vicinity, which suggests that *maṭams*

oversaw networks of landholdings. This was also the case for *maṭams* elsewhere in

Chingleput district. A thirteenth-century inscription on the north wall of the central shrine

of the Dantīśvara temple in Velacheri recorded a donation of a plot of land in that village

to the *maṭam* of Tirunāvukkaracu at Tiruvanmiyur by Ce[tiy]aitevar (ARE 303 of

1911).[173] This gift of land to a *maṭam* in another village appears to have been recorded at

the temple in closest proximity to the land rather than at the temple in the *maṭam's*

village. The transaction may have been recorded at Velacheri because it was where the

land was located. While Velacheri and Tiruvanmiyur are quite close to one another, both

in what is today the southern part of Chennai, the inscription reveals that some individual

maṭams had a network of land that extended beyond their most immediate vicinity. The

Tiruvorriyur and Kanchipuram inscriptions confirm this as well.

While the above discussion deals with the location of *maṭams* and helps to explain

the location of their inscriptions – the physical location of *maṭams* in proximity to

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[173] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

temples, why certain villages had more than one *maṭam*, why villages' temples were the places that housed the inscriptions concerning *maṭams*, and why one village may have the record of a donation for a *maṭam* in another village – the inscriptions also provide information about a *maṭam's* lineage and its branches within Tamilnadu and outside of the region. The Chingleput district inscriptions link *maṭams* in the Tamil region with *maṭams* as far away as Varanasi, as we saw in the case of the thirteenth-century inscription in Tirupachur that recorded the donation made by Oṅkāratevar Iṟavaḷar, the *śiṣyar* of Jñānaciva Iṟavaḷar of the Lakṣyadhyaya Iṟavaḷar lineage of the Kollā (Goḷaki) *maṭam* at Varanasi (ARE 111 of 1929-30).[174] The fact that people were identified with the Goḷaki *maṭam* shows that the Goḷakis were in Tamilnadu in the Chola period; it allows us to trace their settlement patterns in the region during this period; and, it shows that Tamil *maṭams* belonged to lineages that originated outside of Tamilnadu. Although we cannot discount that the inscriptions may have recorded affiliation between institutions in different regions, we should not necessarily assume a formalized or institutionalized affiliation between the temple in Tirupachur and the *cantāṉam* of Jñānaciva Iṟavaḷar or the Kollā *maṭam* in Varanasi, for example.[175] The Tirupachur inscription may reveal more about the donor's personal religious associations and relationships forged through these sorts of more localized connections than it does formalized relationships between the two institutions.

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[174] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[175] Identifying *maṭam* people with Varanasi was not unique to Chingleput district. An inscription in Thanjavur district from a few years later identified its donor Iṟavaḷaṉ with the Bhikṣā *maṭam* at Varanasi (ARE 72 of 1930-31). Iṟavaḷaṉ made a donation for worship of the deity in the temple at Pandanallur.

D. Ascetics, Devotees, Disciples, and Lords of the *Maṭam*: The People of *Maṭams*

1. *Maṭam* People in the Ninth Century

As with *maṭam* inscriptions from other areas of the Tamil region, there were specific terms in the *maṭam* inscriptions to describe the people connected to *maṭams*. While providing information on the types of people associated with *maṭams*, their roles in *maṭams*, and their relationships to *maṭams*, they also provide insights into *maṭams*' relationship to temples. Only one of Chingleput district's total three inscriptions from the ninth century provides information about people associated with *maṭams*. An inscription from Ramakrishnamaharajupet that I mentioned in Chapter Three recorded the name of Ālaiyaṉ, the servant of Tiṇṭi Bhaṭāra of the Tirumayāṉa *maṭam* (ARE 140 of 1967-68).

2. *Maṭam* People in the Tenth Century

There are three inscriptions from the tenth century in Chingleput district. They include the *bhaṭṭavṛtti* donation by a woman donor at Uttaramerur that suggests *brāhmaṇa* affiliation with *maṭam* people by use of the term *bhaṭṭavṛtti* (SII 6.322). A 957 inscription recorded a donation of gold for a lamp in the Tiruvorriyur temple by the son of a merchant. Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ was referred to in the inscription as a *maṭapati*, or head of the *maṭam*, who held the office of Dharma (ARE 177 of 1912). The 959 inscription concerns a payment of gold by a person with this same name for services in the temple on Avittaṉ (Avittam) *nākṣatra* (EI 27.47). Arrangements were made to provide rice offerings, ghee, sugar, and vegetables and to support three *tevāramāṇikaḷ* (perhaps reciters of *Tēvāram)* and two cooks for the temple kitchen. Part of this inscription was composed in Sanskrit, in Grantha script, and here the Caturāṉa[n]a Paṇṭita of this inscription was described as a general of the Chola Rajaditya and the son

of Rājaśēkhara, formerly named Vaḷabha, who was initiated in the *kukai* of Nirañjana

Guru at Tiruvorriyur.[176] He was identified in the Tamil portion of this inscription as

"*tiruvorriyūr maṭamuṭaiya caturāna[n]a paṇṭita bhaṭ[ar]ār*" or "Caturāṉa[n]a Paṇṭita

Bhaṭ[ar]ār who possessed the *maṭam* at Tiruvorriyur," suggesting that he was a person of

importance in the *maṭam* who was also learned as seen with the *paṇṭitaṉ* epithet while

bhaṭarār may imply asceticism, preceptorship, or *brāhmaṇa* affiliation (EI 27.47). He

may have been an important person in the *maṭam*, perhaps its head. He came to

Tiruvorriyur where he changed his personal name following his initiation and made a gift

of gold to the temple for services in the temple that were to take place on his birth

constellation.[177]

3. *Maṭam* People in the Eleventh Century

The name Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ was found only in inscriptions from Chingleput

district. It was one of a handful of names for a *maṭamuṭaiya* that appeared more than once

or twice in the entire corpus of *maṭam* inscriptions throughout Tamilnadu. It seems to be

the name borne by those who succeeded the original Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ as *maṭamuṭaiya*

at Tiruvorriyur. A Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ appeared at Tiruvorriyur in the eleventh century

in two inscriptions. In an inscription from 1043, he was said to have deposited money in

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[176] Nilakanta Sastri ([1935] 1975, 649) writes that the description of Caturāṉa[n]a Paṇṭita in this inscription is an interesting and authentic account detailing the types of motives that inspired people to adopt ascetic renunciation. Nilakanta Sastri describes him as someone who had mastered the arts and sciences as a boy and had wanted to spend his life in service to the world as an adult. He came to be closely associated with the Chola king Rajaditya. He became upset because he did not have the pleasure of serving and dying on the battlefield and became indifferent to the world as a result. He bathed in the Ganges and adopted asceticism after being initiated by Nirañjana Guru at Tiruvorriyur.

[177] The editors of *Epigraphica Indica* speculate that Caturāna[n]a Paṇṭita Bhaṭā[ra]r was not at Tiruvorriyur before 951 (EI 27, 296). They estimate that Nirañjana Guru cannot have a date later than 900 based on epigraphical sources (e.g., ARE 327 of 1911). If one accepts their theory, this would mean that the pupil and successor of Nirañjana Guru who was never actually in the presence of his *guru* and predecessor nonetheless became the head of a *kukai* that was transformed into a *maṭam* and came to be responsible to some degree in temple affairs.

the temple treasury for services relating to the deity in the temple on special days (SII 5.1354). In this inscription, he was described as the *maṭamuṭaiya* of Tirumayāṉam *maṭam* of Tiruvorriyur.[178] Thirty-four years later, a 1077 inscription referred to him as a *maṭamuṭaiya* and indicated his involvement in the temple as one of the signatories to a document concerning an endowment to the temple that also included Pālaiyūr Kiḻavaṉ Cilamaiyan, a *puravuvari tiṇaikkaḷ* (tax officer); Korramaṅkalam Uṭaiyāṉ Cirāḷaṉ Kaṇṭarāccanāna Irumaṭicoḻa Tirunaraiyūr-nāṭṭu Viḻupparaiyan, a *śrī kāriyam* (temple manager); and Tiruvorriyūr Uṭaiya[ṉ] Nārāyaṇacāṉ, a village *uṭaiyaṉ* (SII 5.1356).

Apart from these two inscriptions mentioning Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ, the remaining nine inscriptions from the eleventh century dealt with feeding different communities of people at *maṭams*. The Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* that Āriyammai established at Tiruvorriyur provided for feeding *maheśvaras* (SII 4.555; 127 of 1912; 132 of 1912).[179] In the Vaiṣṇava context, a *mahāmuṉi* (great sage) was feeding *brāhmaṇas* in a *maṭam* at Kanchipuram (ARE 635 of 1919), and a *maṭam* for feeding *śrīvaiṣṇavas* was provided for at Uttaramerur (ARE 184 of 1923).[180]

4. *Maṭam* People in the Twelfth Century

The name Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ appeared again in the twelfth century. An inscription from 1172 recorded that Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ of the *maṭam* at Tiruvorriyur, Vāgīsvāra Paṇṭitaṉ of Coma Cittāntam, and others attended a recitation of the *Śrī*

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[178] The text reads: "*tiruvorriyūr tirumayāṉamu maṭamuṭaiya caturānana paṇṭitaṉ*" (SII 5.1354). The editors of *Epigraphica Indica* interpret the passage as "*tiruvorriyūr tirumayāṉamu[m] maṭam[um]uṭaiya caturānana paṇṭitaṉ*" (EI 27, 298).
[179] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[180] The transcripts of these inscriptions were consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

Purāṇan of Āluṭaiyanampi (Cuntarar *nāyaṉmār*) (SII 5.1358).[181] This inscription

recorded that a sale of land was made to Periyāṉ Coman and his descendants and that

Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ and others attested to the sale.[182] As with the inscriptions that came

from earlier centuries, Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ was the *maṭamuṭaiya* at Tiruvorriyur and also

a learned man, as suggested by the *paṇṭitaṉ* title.

The other sorts of *maṭam* people in the Chingleput district inscriptions in the

twelfth century were neither donors to *maṭams* nor the recipients of gifts but, instead, the

people mentioned for how a donation was to be used. An inscription from Palur identifies

the people who were to be fed in the village's *maṭam* as *brāhmaṇas* and *tapassiyars*

(ARE 26 of 1932-33), and a second twelfth-century inscription from the same place

specifies that *apūrvi āṇṭārs* were to be fed in a different *maṭam* on special days (ARE 33

of 1932-33).[183] *Civayokis* and *tapassiyars* were fed in a *maṭam* at Madurantakam (ARE

404 of 1922).[184]

5. *Maṭam* People in the Thirteenth Century

As in Chola-period inscriptions more generally, the term *mutaliyār* was used for

people associated with Śaiva *maṭams* and *jīyar* was used for people affiliated with

Vaiṣṇavism beginning in the thirteenth century in Chingleput district, although these

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[181] Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2010, 222) conclude that Vāgīsvāra Paṇṭitaṉ was a member of Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ's *maṭam*. We cannot confirm *maṭam* affiliation for Vāgīsvāra Paṇṭitaṉ however. He was described as being of Coma Cittāntam but he was not described using terminology employed for *maṭam* people (e.g., *maṭamuṭaiya*). Because the term *paṇṭitaṉ* was not specific or limited to people associated with *maṭams* but was used for men of learning affiliated with many types of institutions, we cannot assume that his designation as a *paṇṭitaṉ* linked him to Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ's *maṭam* or any *maṭam* for that matter. There is also nothing grammatically that suggests affiliation with Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ's *maṭam* either.

[182] Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ was listed with *śrī māhe*.. tāṉ, *śrī ka[ri]ya* (temple manager) Ariyapirāṉpat .. tan, Vāgīsvāra Paṇṭitaṉ of Coma Cittāntam, Ceyaṅkoṇṭacolamaṇṭala Piṭā[ra]ṉ, Tiruvoṟṟiyūr Piccaṉ, and the *koyil nāyakam* (temple officer) Patampakkanāyaka Paṭṭaṉ (SII 5.1358). Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ was also in the list of signatories at the end of this same inscription that included Vāgīsvāra Paṇṭitaṉ, Ceyaṅkoṇṭacolamaṇṭala Piṭāraṉ, Tiruvorriyur Piccaṉ, Patampakkanāyaka Paṭṭaṉ, and .. [ṉ u]ravākkināṉ.

[183] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

[184] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

terms were not exclusively sectarian. Four inscriptions referred to *mutaliyārs*. A

Tiruvorriyur inscription recorded the sale of two houses by the temple for money to

Mutaliyār Vakīśaratevar in Kīḻai *maṭam* at Tiruvarur (SITI 1.524). A second Tiruvorriyur

inscription recorded a land donation to the *maṭam* of Naṇṭikeśvara alias

Ariyavratamkoṇṭa Mutaliyār and his pupil (ARE 239 of 1912). A Tirukkachur inscription

provided for Mutaliyār Perumāḷ Tatar of the *maṭam* in the village (SII 26.327). A

maṭappuṟam endowment was made at Sirucheri and mentioned an *ācāriyar* in the context

of Paramasiva Ācāriya and *mutaliyār*; the inscription is fragmentary and does not allow

further information concerning the *ācāriyar* and *mutaliyār* (ARE 14 of 1934-35).[185] In the

Chingleput district inscriptions, *mutaliyārs* were the recipient of either house sites or land

for their *maṭams*. In the only example of a *jīyar* from Chingleput district, a Kanchipuram

record noted provisions for feeding *jīyars* in the *maṭam* (ARE 493 of 1919). Unlike

inscriptions concerning *mutaliyārs* who were the named individual recipients of gifts, the

jīyars of the Kanchipuram inscription were unnamed and mentioned as a group. *Āṇṭārs* of

the *maṭam* who tended the *maṇḍapa*, recited *tirumuṟai*, and cultivated the flower garden

were provided for with a land donation according to a Tiruppalaivanam inscription (ARE

350 of 1928-29). A *śiṣyar* was a donor in one inscription (ARE 111 of 1929-30).[186] As in

the twelfth century, *maṭams* in the thirteenth century continued to serve as feeding centres

in Chingleput district, as was seen at Sirucheri with the feeding of *maheśvaras* (ARE 102

of 1933-34).[187]

      Three Chingleput district inscriptions, all of which are from the thirteenth century,

provided information about the types of people whose job it was to work in *maṭams* as

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[185] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[186] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[187] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

servants. A Tirukkalukkunram listed a land endowment for Uran *maṭam* for its

maintenance for servants (*parikāra[r]kaḷ*) (SII 5.478). A royal order at Polichalur

commanding that land be made tax-free was for the servants (*paricārakaṟkum*) of the

Tiripuvanaviran *maṭam* in the *tirumaṭaiviḷākam* of the temple (SII 17.730). An inscription

at Mylapore tells us who these servants might have been specifically (CMK 125 of 1967).

In this case, a *maṭam* was built at Tiruvanmiyur and was staffed with water carriers and

cooks, likely involved in the feeding charity of the *maṭam*. As with elsewhere in

Tamilnadu, the majority of the *maṭam* inscriptions in Chingleput district were Śaiva

rather than Vaiṣṇava. Forty-two inscriptions were likely from Śaiva centres while twelve

inscriptions were Vaiṣṇava in affiliation. Both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *maṭams* in the district

undertook activities that included learning and feeding.

E. Learning and Feeding: The Activities of *Maṭam* People

1. Learning

The number of inscriptions in the Tamil region concerning learning in *maṭams* is

quite small – thirty-two in total – compared to the overall number of inscriptions. While

there are five inscriptions mentioning the *maṭamuṭaiya* Caturāṉana Paṇṭitaṉ that hint at

him as a man of learning with the title *paṇṭitaṉ*, the number of inscriptions that address

learning in Chingleput district is small. The tenth-century *bhaṭṭavṛtti* inscription at

Uttaramerur that I previously discussed is illustrative of the kinds of learning that were

undertaken by *maṭam* people (SII 3.333=SII 6.322).[188] The inscription specified that in

order to be eligible to live in the *maṭam*, a person had to be learned or well-versed in one

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[188] Nilakanta Sastri ([1935] 1975, 576) explains that *bhaṭṭavṛtti* endowments were used under the Cholas for teachers in schools and people who expounded the Purāṇas or philosophies in temples.

Veda, *vyākaraṇa*, Mīmāṃsā, and two *darśana* or alternatively one Veda and *Nṛtya*

Bhāṣya or one Veda, *Nṛtya Bhāṣya*, *vyākaraṇa*, Vārttika, Vaiśeṣika, and Ṭīkā. They were

not expected to be specialists in one area only, either the Vedas or Mīmāṃsā for example,

but in a combination of subject matters that included a genre of sacred texts (Vedas),

commentarial texts or genres (*Nṛtya Bhāṣya*; Vārttika; Ṭīkā), philosophy (Mīmāṃsa;

Vaiśeṣika), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), and systems of thought (*darśanas*). We do not really

know from the inscription what was being done with their expertise. The term *vātti*

(teacher) or *vācittu* (to read, learn) was not used in the inscription for them. Instead, the

term *vallār* (capable men) was to describe them and suggests that they were well-versed

or trained in these subjects. Whether these *vallār* were teachers in the sense of providing

an education to students is unclear from the inscription since it does not specify whom

they would have taught, where they might have taught (i.e., the *maṭam* or temple), or

when they would have taught. Were these capable men people who did not teach students

but expounded on these subjects in the temple? The inscription does not give any

indication that this community of *bhaṭṭavṛtti* recipients had the responsibility of reciting

these texts or giving discourses on these subjects in the *maṭam* or the temple. Perhaps,

this inscription signals only that the *maṭam* was a place of *brāhmaṇical* intellectual

learning.[189]

2. Feeding

The maintenance required for a *maṭam* involved the material goods needed for its

operations, as illustrated by an eleventh-century *maṭappuṟam* endowment at Vedal to

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[189] A non-*maṭam bhaṭṭavṛtti* endowment provided for people with expertise in some of these same subjects. At Anur, a village *brāhmaṇa* who was well-versed in one Veda, *Sāmāveda*, the grammar of Pāṇiṇi, and Mīmāṃsā was provided for through an endowment (ARE 76 of 1932-33). He was required to teach four students and feed them daily. A thirteenth-century *bhaṭṭavṛtti* gift was made at Tirukkachur for two *bhaṭṭaṉs* in the temple of the deity Tiruvekampamuṭaiya Nāyaṉār at Kanchipuram as well (SII 26.328).

supply firewood and water for four months annually, implying through the supply of firewood and water that *maṭams* were places where feeding took place (ARE 176 of 1961-62). There are ninety-seven inscriptions that cite feeding in a *maṭam* as the purpose for making a donation from throughout Tamilnadu in the Chola period. Chingleput district accounts for fifteen of these inscriptions. Feeding emerged in *maṭams* in Chingleput district in the eleventh century with Āriyammai's purchase of land to feed the *maheśvaras* in the Rājentracolaṉ *maṭam* at Tiruvorriyur (ARE 127 of 1912).[190] *Maṭam* inscriptions concerning feeding came from the eleventh (five inscriptions), twelfth (six inscriptions), and thirteenth (four inscriptions) centuries. While the term *coṟu* (boiled rice) was found in one inscription and *uṇṇa* (food) in three inscriptions to designate feeding, *amutu* (food offering) was the more common feeding language in Chingleput district, much like *maṭams* elsewhere. *Amutu* was used in twenty-three of the inscriptions that I examined from throughout Tamilnadu, six of these from Chingleput district, to designate feeding. The kinds of people who were offered *uṇṇa* were *brāhmaṇas* (two inscriptions) and *civayokis* and *tapassiyars* (one inscription) whereas people given *amutu* were *māheśvaras* (four inscriptions), *śṛīvaiṣṇavas* (one inscription), and *apūrvi āṇṭārs* (one inscription). Though two inscriptions specify the provision for food daily, feeding also took place on special days, which was the case in three inscriptions. In the twelfth century at Tiruvadandai, a donor gave paddy for food (*uṇṇa*) for feeding fifty *brāhmaṇas* in the *maṭam* on *amāvasi* days (ARE 281 of 1910).[191]

Other institutions apart from *maṭams* – hostels, feeding houses, rest houses, and temples – also provided for feeding. *Ampalams* (hall), *cālais* (feeding house), and

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[190] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.
[191] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

temples fed people.[192] There are thirty non-*maṭam* inscriptions that dealt with feeding in Chingleput district during the Chola period; half of the inscriptions date from the eleventh century, and most of them concerned feeding in temples specifically. This particular group of inscriptions follows a similar pattern to the *maṭam* inscriptions with the difference being that feeding at temples was often connected to food offerings to the deity. As was the case in the *maṭam* inscriptions, we catch a glimpse of the kinds of arrangements required to provide for feeding at other institutions with a tenth-century inscription at Tirukkalukkunram where an *ampalam* was built in the temple and provisions for fire and wood were made (EI 3.38D). Like the Vedal inscription, which provided for firewood and water for a *maṭam* (ARE 176 of 1961-62), the Tirukkalukkunram example shows the kinds of provisions made for feeding in the Chola period, as does a thirteenth-century inscription at Tiruvorriyur that gave five women and their descendants to the *cālai* to husk paddy in the feeding house in perpetuity (SII 4.558).

Places other than *maṭams* fed similar communities of people as *maṭams* both daily and on special days. They fed *brāhmaṇas* (nine inscriptions), *māheśvaras* (four inscriptions), *śrīvaiṣṇavas* (three inscriptions), *bhaṭṭas* (two inscriptions), *apūrvi āṇṭārs* (one inscription), *civayokis* (one inscription), and *tavacis* (one inscription). Daily feeding was seen from the eleventh century. A Tirumukkudal royal order required that the gold that the residents of a village had been paying to support a *cālai* should be used in the

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[192] *Cālais*, unlike these other institutions, seems to have had the singular purpose of feeding. The *cālai* inscriptions are smaller in number than the *maṭam* and temple inscriptions concerning feeding. C*ālais* and *maṭams* shared some characterisitics. They were named after donors and kings, for example. They received similar endowments of land for provisions for feeding (e.g., firewood and servants). By contrast, *cālais* did not have people who were described as their "possessors" or "lords". While both *cālais* and *maṭams* fed ascetics, devotees, and the learned, *cālais* were not connected with preceptorship, discipleship, and lineage.

current year for the expenses of the deity Mahāviṣṇu at the temple (EI 21.38). Expenses included those of the temple, the maintenance of a Vedic school, hostel, and a hospital (*āturacālai*) intended for the students of the school and temple servants. The hostel was to feed sixty people daily, including *brāhmaṇas* who were well-versed in the *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *vyākaraṇa*. Feeding expenses included the cost of mats, oil for lamps, bathing on Saturdays, and the wages for cooks and servants who tended to the students and teachers.[193]

Feeding during festivals was specified in five inscriptions from the tenth (one inscription), eleventh (three inscriptions), twelfth (one inscription), and thirteenth (one inscription) centuries. The earliest inscription comes from Perumbakkam in Saidapet taluk and recorded a land endowment for feeding seven *brāhmaṇas* during the festival (ARE 210 of 1961-62). People fed during festivals were *brāhmaṇas* (one inscription), *śrīvaiṣṇavas* (three inscriptions), and temple servants (one inscription). They were provided for at the Tiruvātirai festival (two inscriptions), for example. Because these people were fed during festivals, it may be that they were visitors who were attending the festival in some, but not all, instances. Sustenance was provided for travellers, as seen in a tenth-century inscription at Kuram, which provided for an *ampalam* that served water to them (ARE 105 of 1923).

Unlike the *maṭam* inscriptions, these inscriptions tended to deal more often with feeding people who worked in temples and were connected to food offerings in temples. Ten of the thirty non-*maṭam* feeding inscriptions in Chingleput district are of this type, including the earliest one dating from 755. In this inscription at the Vaikuntha Perumāḷ

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[193] Providing food for students was not rare. An eleventh-century land grant at Tinnanur in Sriperumbudur taluk was for services in the temple and for feeding students who were studying the Vedas (ARE 176 of 1937-38).

temple at Uttaramerur, the *mahāsabhai* designated a land gift as *avippuṟam* (endowment for offerings to the deity), which was to provide for a *brāhmaṇa* priest who was making a daily offering of rice and ghee to the deity and then partaking of the consecrated food himself (SII 6.356). There is one case of a *tavaci* who cleaned the temple receiving food (ARE 5 of 1944-45), one instance in which garland makers were provided for with food (ARE 146 of 1912), and two inscriptions that relate to food for people who recited texts in temples – *brāhmaṇas* reciting the Vedas in the eleventh century (ARE 146 of 1912) and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* reciting *tiruppatiyam* in the thirteenth century (ARE 181 of 1923) – and five inscriptions making provisions for *brāhmaṇas* and *civayokis* in relation to food offerings in the temple. At Sivapuram in the eleventh century, land was given for the benefit of a *civayoki* during offerings to the deity (ARE 228 of 1961-62) while a *civayoki* and *brāhmaṇa* were fed during midday services in the temple at Tiruvorriyur (ARE 133 of 1912). In the one instance of a female who was given food that had been offered to the deity, the *mahāsabhai* of a village gave a *tēvaratiyāḷ* (temple woman) named Perumāḷ Nācci *prasādam* daily in recognition of her contribution to the building of parts of the temple in the thirteenth century (ARE 172 of 1923).

F. Conclusion: Summing Up the *Maṭam* in Chingleput District

Chingleput district is the region in Tamilnadu that has inscriptions through the ninth to thirteenth centuries. This makes for a suitable case study for a number of reasons. It permits us to trace the evolution of the *maṭam* in the Chola period through time while isolating the geographical and cultural factors that might affect *maṭams* in specific parts of Tamilnadu, and the corpus of inscriptions – fifty-four in total – is a sufficient size to

allow us to make some generalizations about *maṭams* as they developed during this

period. I began this chapter by outlining the chronological and geographical distributions

of *maṭams* in the district. While the inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries were

small in number (totalling three in each century) and began to increase in the eleventh

century (eleven inscriptions), they reached their peak in the thirteenth century (twenty-

three inscriptions) like elsewhere in Tamilnadu. The thirteenth century saw the greatest

activity concerning *maṭams* and shows that this was clearly an important time for *maṭams*

as part of the donative process. While *maṭams* saw a rise in their participation in the

epigraphical data, this may not have been simply because there was an increased interest

in supporting *maṭams*. Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2011, 205) suggest that

the increase in *maṭam* benefaction should not be interpreted as a direct result of changes

in the overall pattern of patronage in the Tamil region. The ratio of *maṭam* inscriptions to

the total number of inscriptions is greater (more than seven percent) when compared to

other centuries (e.g., less that two percent in the eleventh century). They argue that this is

evidence of particularly vigorous *maṭam* activity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

However, we should not completely divorce *maṭam* patronage from the larger picture. In

terms of the geographical distribution of *maṭams* in Chingleput district, *maṭams* and their

inscriptions were concentrated in two taluks, Saidapet and Kanchipuram. Within these

smaller geographical units, they were further concentrated in the villages of Tiruvorriyur

and Kanchipuram. This may have to do as much or more with the fact that these places

were important political, economic, social, and religious centres as evidenced by

Kanchipuram, which was an important political centre as the Pallava capital and an

important regional centre for the Cholas in later centuries. As a *mānakaram*, it was central to the economic interests of Kanchipuram taluk but also Chingleput distrist.

As with elsewhere in Tamilnadu, *maṭams* were the recipients of mostly land by donors who were most commonly males who were private citizens. While rulers made an appearance in the inscriptions as donors to *maṭams*, they more frequently issued royal orders concerning land and taxes often at someone's request, assigning rights, and settling local disputes. Corporate bodies such as the more localized assemblies of *brāhmaṇas*, non-*brāhmaṇas*, and the assemblies of the larger geographical units of *nāṭus* supported *maṭams* by making land endowments, these influential groups more commonly remitted taxes on lands at the request of individuals. Merchant assemblies and guilds also gave property in the form of land and money. Most frequently, *maṭams* received patronage from individuals that we could call private citizens. They were *brāhmaṇa*, while increasingly non-*brāhmaṇa* over time, merchants, the agents of kings, people with high honorific titles, temple people, and locals. They were identified in the inscriptions by their occupation, function, role, kinship, and hometown. Their titles as lords or possessors of their villages and the fact that they could dispose of property meant that they were prominent people in their communities who likely had political, economic, and social influence as landowners. One of these important groups was the *maṭam* person who gave to *maṭams* and temples. Unlike other donors in Chingleput district, *maṭam* people tended to give money rather than land. The kinds of *maṭam* people who were donors were *āṇṭārs*, *makaṉars*, *maṭamuṭaiyas*, *paṇṭitaṉs*, and *śiṣyars*, although these terms were overlapping for these people. *Maṭam* people who were devotees, disciples,

possessors or heads of *maṭams*, and preceptors gave to *maṭams* and temples beginning in the tenth century.

We learn from the Chingleput district inscriptions that these same kinds of people were active in *maṭams* in rather specific ways. The one inscription from the ninth century that has information about *maṭam* people reveals that they had servants and that people who were part of *maṭams* were *bhaṭṭārars*, suggesting the possibility of *brāhmaṇa* affiliation with *maṭams* from the earliest times. *Brāhmaṇa* affiliation with *maṭams* continued in the tenth century with people who were well-versed in sacred texts, commentaries, grammar, philosophy, and systems of thought residing in *maṭams* in the long term. At the same time that *brāhmaṇas* learned in Sanskrit subjects were living in *maṭams*, people designated only as the possessors of a *maṭam* (i.e., *maṭamuṭaiya*) were known only through serving in ceremonial roles in temples as the signatories to endowments, for example. Being called a *paṇṭitaṉ* meant that these same persons were learned but their expertise is not clear from the inscriptions. As we move into the eleventh century, as more kinds of people continued to emerge in connection to *maṭams*, people who were known as *brāhmaṇas*, *māheśvaras*, and *śrīvaiṣṇavas* were now part of the *maṭam* community but in the specific context of feeding. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, ascetics and pilgrims were added to the list of people who benefitted from *maṭams'* feeding charity daily and on special days.

Maṭam people participated in the medieval temple complex in Chingleput district in a manner that was consistent with their participation in other parts of Tamilnadu during this period. Although they made donations to support temple activities, as was the case with Caturānana Paṇṭitaṉ when he endowed gold to the temple at Tiruvorriyur in the

eleventh century (SII 5.1354), the other inscriptions that mentioned people with the name Caturānana Paṇṭitaṉ showed that *maṭam* people – specifically those who were *maṭamuṭaiyas* and *maṭapatis* – were involved in temple affairs. Their role in the inscriptions as members of the local community who received royal orders concerning land transactions involving temples and people who served as signatories to endowments to temples suggests that *maṭamuṭaiyas* and *maṭapatis* had a responsibility role in temples. Though it is the lone inscription from Chingleput district of its type, a thirteenth-century inscription at the Tiruppalīśvara temple at Tiruppalaivanam shows that *maṭam* people other than *maṭamuṭaiyas* and *maṭapatis* also had roles in temples (ARE 350 of 1928-29). Land was given for the maintenance of the *āṇṭārs* of the Anparkkaitiyar *maṭam* who tended the *maṇḍapa* where texts were recited in the temple, recited *tirumuṟai*, and cared for a flower garden.

While Chingleput district is unique because it has inscriptions from each of the centuries of the Chola period, the Chingleput district corpus of inscriptions confirms the pattern found in *maṭam* inscriptions throughout Tamilnadu in terms of the kinds of people who donated property to support *maṭams*, the types of properties that were gifted to institutions to support *maṭams*, and the intended uses of patronage. The organizational structure of *maṭams*, their membership, and activities were comparable to those from elsewhere in the region during the Chola period.

Chapter Five

Ascetics, Devotees, Disciples, and Lords of the *Maṭam*; Learning, Reciting Hymns,

and Feeding: Some Concluding Remarks on *Maṭams* in Medieval Tamilnadu

A. The Geography of the *Maṭam* in the Chola Period

This dissertation approached the stone inscriptions written in the Tamil language

to study the institution of the *maṭam* during the ninth to thirteenth centuries in Tamilnadu.

The stone inscriptions concerning *maṭams* account for only 380 of the approximately

15,000 inscriptions from Chola period that have been found in the Tamil region.

Although this is a rather small number of inscriptions, the fact that they were spread

across Tamilnadu meant that *maṭams* were not confined to a limited number of sites or

one or two macro-regions in the Chola period but were found throughout the region.

While *maṭam* inscriptions originated in northern-most Tamilnadu in the earlier centuries

of the Chola period, they were not limited to this part of the region. As time progressed,

maṭam inscriptions spread further south so that there were a significant number of

inscriptions in southern-most Tamilnadu by the end of the Chola period, and *maṭams*

came to be found throughout the Tamil region by this time. The inscriptions are

important records of history that transmit information on *maṭams* during this period and

also give us insights into the larger cultural issues in the region during this period of

Tamil history.

Though *maṭams* were not confined to one or two areas but were found throughout

Tamilnadu, there is evidence that there were higher concentrations of *maṭams* at a small

number of sites. While there were villages throughout the Tamil region that had a *maṭam*,

there were certain villages that had more than one *maṭam*. Although *maṭams* were dotted

throughout the Tamil landscape, some centres had more than one or two *maṭams*. This

was owing to political, social, economic, and geographical reasons as much or more so

than religious ones. While a place like Kanchipuram was an important sacred site, it was

also an important political and economic centre. All of these factors came together to

contribute to Kanchipuram as an important site for *maṭams* of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava

affiliation during the Chola period. Being located along the Palar River and serving as the

political capital of the Pallava dynasty and then becoming an important regional centre

under the Chola rulers, Kanchipuram was certainly not a remote or isolated location

geographically or otherwise. The Tamil inscriptions in general bunched up at a limited

number of urban centres that were close to water sources and had political, economic, and

social power in the region (Heitzman 2004, 137). These factors contributed to

Kanchipuram as an important centre for *maṭams*. Kanchipuram shows that *maṭam*

inscriptions and *maṭams* were clustered at urban centres. It was an important centre of

political, economic, and social power well before *maṭams* were established in the village.

The choice by donors to build or support existing *maṭams* at Kanchipuram had as much

or more to do with these factors. Donors chose to fund *maṭams* at urban centres rather

than more remote or removed places, making *maṭams* part of the Tamil urban

environment.

The extant inscriptions are found almost entirely at temples and there are, in fact,

few *maṭams* that have surviving Chola-period epigraphical records about *maṭams*

inscribed on their walls. Apart from the eight inscriptions at *maṭams* in Tiruvanaikkaval,

Tirunelveli, and Srirangam that I mentioned in the opening chapter, the rest of the 380

inscriptions are found mainly at temples. Temples house *maṭams*' historical records, which document *maṭams*' patronage, participants, and activities. Although the inscription at the *maṭam* at Tiruvanaikkaval is the only one in the village concerning a *maṭam*, inscriptions at Tirunelveli and Srirangam concerning *maṭams* are found at temples as well. While Vembattur *maṭam* at Tirunelveli has five inscriptions from the Chola period surviving on its walls, Tirunelveli's other inscriptions – three in total – are located at temples.

This may be explained by a number of factors. There are few Chola-period *maṭams* whose architecture has survived into the modern period. Since there is evidence of inscriptions from this period on contemporary *maṭams*' walls, although sparse in number, it is fair to suggest that there were inscriptions that did not survive to today simply because the buildings themselves did not survive. Patronage and its economic, political, social, and ritual benefits were centred around the temple in the Chola period. Donations to *maṭams* were often made in conjunction with donations to temples. It may be that these records were engraved on the walls of temples rather than *maṭams*. Temples, as the more prominent institution in a village when compared to *maṭams*, were the more logical place to house these records since they dealt with important local matters – land transactions, the assignment of rights, the settling of disputes, and so forth. Most importantly, the dearth of extant inscriptions suggests that the *maṭam* was not an institution that received an overwhelming amount of patronage in the Chola period, especially if we take into consideration the fact that generally speaking the more than 15,000 inscriptions from this period were donative in nature and *maṭam* inscriptions account for less than three percent (2.5%) of them.

As I mentioned at the close of Chapter Four, Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2011, 205-7) use a statistical analysis of the inscriptions to analyze the prominence of *maṭams* over time. The ratio of *maṭam* inscriptions to the total number of published inscriptions was 70:1,130 or 9.51 percent in the twelfth century and 174:2,210 or 14.90 percent in the thirteenth century compared to 30:2,400 or 3.51 percent in the eleventh century. In their view, the large total number of inscriptions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries does not explain the relatively large number of *maṭam* inscriptions in these centuries. In other words, the increase in *maṭam* inscriptions cannot be explained by the fact that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in general had the largest number of inscriptions overall. Instead, they interpret the ratio of *maṭam* inscriptions to the total number of inscriptions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as evidence that *maṭams* were particularly vigorous at this time. There is no denying that *maṭams* were most vigorous in the Chola period in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The fact remains, however, that they account for less than three percent of the overall (published and unpublished) inscriptions in the Chola period, meaning that *maṭams* were much less significant and influential an institution than were temples. Although Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2010, 2011) emphasize the role of donors in *maṭam* growth and development in Tamilnadu, it is apparent that the *maṭam* was not a hugely influential institution in the eyes of Chola-period donors who chose to transfer gifts to temples instead.

The inscriptions also show us that *maṭams* were often identified in terms of their relationship to a temple, at least in physical terms. The inscriptions sometimes give us the location of *maṭams* in their villages. Their locations were most often given in relation to

temples – in a cardinal direction in proximity to the temple or in the temple's *tiruvīti* (sacred street) or the *tirumaṭaiviḷākam* (premises surrounding the temple) – in what we can imagine was a prominent location because of its proximity to the temple. What would the *maṭam*'s physical environment have looked like? *Maṭams* were clearly an urban institution. Heitzman (1997, 220) notes that the urbanism that took place around temples during the Chola period actually showed a predominance of rural features. The defrayment of tax income from lands was central to temples' endowments and the temples' landholdings were primarily adjacent to the temples. Populations of merchants, ritual specialists, and others were added to temples' trade centres. The addition of more communities to a centre did not result in people infringing on temple lands but houses and neighbourhoods were, instead, interspersed with these farmable lands. The result was a rather large and quite spread out urban centre with cultivatable fields interspersed with settled neighbourhoods. Villages and temples that were under the umbrella of this larger urban centre maintained connections with each other. As the recipients of land endowments, *maṭams* would have paralleled temples as landowners but on a much smaller scale. They would have been one of the institutions whose cultivatable lands were part of the urban centre. *Maṭam* people were also one of the communities that were added to temples' trade centres as the recipients of house sites, for example, or by nature of the fact that they were located in temples' *tiruvīti* or *tirumaṭaiviḷākam*. Whereas characterisitics of the medieval urban culture have remained in South India (Heitzman 1995, 220), the *maṭams* that were part of it have not survived to the modern period.

Some researchers have traced lineages through the centuries to show *maṭams'* migration into the Tamil region (e.g., Swamy 1975). Others have focussed on

demonstrating the *maṭam's* evolution from a North Indian *brāhmaṇical* tradition to a non-*brāhmaṇical* Tamil one (i.e., the Śaiva *maṭams* dominated by men of theVeḷḷāḷa community) (e.g., Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan 2010). Yet others have studied the contemporary non-*brāhmaṇa* Śaiva *maṭams* (Koppedrayer 1990). No one has looked at why the *maṭams* of the Chola period disappeared from the inscriptions and the Tamil landscape. Tiruvorriyur, which was one of the most active *maṭam* centres with fifteen inscriptions, produced only four inscriptions after the thirteenth century. Kanchipuram, another active *maṭam* location with eight inscriptions, had six inscriptions for this same period. In the case of Tiruvorriyur, the Rājentracoḻaṉ *maṭam* founded by Āriyammai in the eleventh century vanished from the inscriptions in the same century and Caturānana Paṇṭitaṉ, who factored in a number of inscriptions as a *maṭamuṭaiya* temple donor who was also involved in temple affairs, disappeared after the twelfth century. A *maṭam* named Ankarayan *maṭam* appeared for the first time at Tiruvorriyur in the fourteenth century (SITI 1.509). Not all of the villages had their *maṭam* inscriptions decline as Tamilnadu moved into the Vijayanagara period. By contrast, Tiruvannamalai, which had only five inscriptions about *maṭams* in the Chola period, had a total of fifteen inscriptions during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. There are more that 150 inscriptions in total at Tiruvannamalai that belong to the Vijayanagara period, owing to the importance that the Vijayanagara kings and others assigned to the temple and also the growing importance of the temple in this period (Srinivasan 1990, 81).

While some Chola-period *maṭams* continued after the thirteenth century, others *maṭams* disappeared and new ones emerged. Clearly, new *maṭams* continued to be established after the thirteenth century but what happened to the Chola-period *maṭams*?

Tirunelveli's Vembattur *maṭam* houses inscriptions concerning the Ceyyanampirāṭṭi *maṭam* at Tirunelveli and the Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi *maṭam* at Srirangam, which is named after a fifteenth-century *ācāriyar*, has inscriptions mentioning the Cuntara Pāṇṭiyaṉ *maṭam* at Srirangam. It is possible that these *maṭams* were re-named at some point so that the Ceyyanampirāṭṭi *maṭam* became Vembattur *maṭam* and Cuntara Pāṇṭiyaṉ *maṭam* became Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi *maṭam*. Why would a *maṭam* be re-named? While some *maṭams* survived into the later medieval period and even fewer into the modern period, most of them disappeared from the inscriptions and the region all together. Why was this the case in light of the fact that lineages such as the Bhikṣā *maṭam* continued to be seen in the region after the thirteenth century? The case of Tiruvannamalai shows that economic, political, and social issues contributed to what happened to *maṭams*. The post-thirteenth century inscriptions also show the changing make-up of *maṭam* people and their activities in the Vijayanagara period, and these may also hint at why the Chola-period *maṭams* did not survive in the long term. Though *maṭams* continued to receive endowments after the thirteenth century, they were much fewer in number, and the inscriptions show that the roles and activities at *maṭams* changed. Described as people who were learned in sacred texts, the epics, philosophis, commentaries, and grammars such as the Vedas, Mīmāṃsa, *vyākaraṇa*, and Vārttika in the Chola period, *maṭam* people were now associated with the Āgamas (ARE 523 of 1917) and authoring Purāṇas in honour of the temples' deities (ARE 180 of 1935-36).[194] While members of *maṭams* maintained the more ceremonial responsibility roles in temples by attesting to temple agreements for example, they were less involved in some of the duties associated with the day-to-day operations of temples.

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[194] The text of ARE 523 of 1917 was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

The only case of *maṭam* people reciting *tiruppāṭṭu* (sacred songs) in the post-Chola period comes from a fifteenth-century inscription at Manappadaividu in Tirunelveli district that records that a *śiṣyar* of the Bhikṣā *maṭam* and his descendants were to enjoy the rights associated with reciting in the temple (SII 26.466). We see the founding of all-Veḷḷāḷa *maṭams* in the sixteenth century as well (e.g., Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Ātīṉam).[195]

B. The Identity of the *Maṭam* Patron and the *Maṭam* Person

In the preceding chapters, I examined the donors who provided endowments for *maṭams* and also the people of *maṭams* in the Chola period. Now, I would like to summarize my findings and make some concluding remarks. As I showed in Chapter Two, donors to *maṭams* were primarily individual males who were not explicitly affiliated with *maṭams*. While there were instances of rulers who patronized *maṭams*, the number of donations by rulers was quite small. In the case of *maṭams*, they continued the general pattern of patronage in the Chola period by primarily issuing royal orders concerning gifts of land and the remission of taxes on lands endowed to institutions at the request of local people, settling local disputes, assigning rights such as the office of *māṭāpattiyam* to people, and serving as the beneficiaries of donations by donors who gave property for the merit of kings. Corporate bodies – primarily the assemblies of *brāhmaṇa* and non-*brāhmaṇa* villages, the residents of villages and *nāṭus*, and merchant assemblies and guilds – also supported *maṭams* through endowments. *Sabhais* and *ūrārs* more commonly, however, remitted taxes on the lands that had been given by individuals after having received money from them. The majority of patrons to *maṭams* were men

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[195] Ishimatsu (1999, 576-77) notes the extraordinary ways that lineage was inherited between *brāhmaṇas* and non-*brāhmaṇas* in Śaiva Siddhānta between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Meykaṇṭār, whose caste was unknown, was raised by *śūdras*; the lineage was passed from him to the *brāhmaṇa* Aruṇanti.

from various occupational and social strata. *Brāhmaṇas* and non-*brāhmaṇas*, members of

kings' administration and military, merchants and locals, many of whom were prominent

landowners, all provided for *maṭams*. While they gave money outright at times, they

more often donated land, often after purchasing it, and then made it over to a *maṭam* and

arranged for the remission of taxes on the land. As for women – *brāhmaṇa* wives, women

who served the royal court, and temple women – it is as donors that they were most

active in *maṭam* affairs, although they account for a small percentage of donors.

It is difficult to determine the connection that these patrons may have had to

maṭams. They were not identified as disciples or lay members of *maṭams* and we cannot

assume that their affiliation with a *maṭam* necessarily extended beyond their donation.

This is complicated by the fact that their donations were in many cases simultaneously

directed not only to *maṭams* but to temples as well. Participating in the patronage of

maṭams was a way for people to access the solemnity and permanence that the

inscriptions themselves as stone monuments and the donative act as a sacred gift

accorded them. When Kuṟicci Uṭaiyāṉ Arayaṉ Tiruccirrampalam Uṭaiyāṉ made a

donation of land for the *maṭam* at Palur in the twelfth century, he was asserting his

position of prominence as a landowner in his community and acquiring the status that

came with such a gift (ARE 33 of 1932-33).[196] Interpreting the gifts recorded in the stone

inscriptions from the Chola period as gifts of economic, social, and ritual power for

donors, Heitzman (1997, 63) concludes that the lands that were given to temples

belonged to private individuals and groups. The people who were most active in property

rights were locals with sufficient status to own land, which would have been the most

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[196] The transcript of this inscription was consulted at the Epigraphy Branch, Mysore.

valuable property in an agrarian society such as historical Tamilnadu. The same can be said for donors to *maṭams*. The words of an inscription, its being carved in stone, and the donation itself gave a donor like Kuṟicci Uṭaiyāṉ Arayaṉ Tiruccirrampalam Uṭaiyāṉ economic, social, and religious status, and permanence. This same status would have been accorded to *maṭam* people who were donors. When Maṟaiñāṉacampa[nta]ṉ and Āḻitter Cittakar who were living in a *kukai* gave land for a garden to the temple at Tirunellikkaval in Thanjavur district in the thirteenth century, they too would have received economic, social, and religious status, and permanence in exchange for their gift (SII 17.564).[197]

Maṭam people from the Chola period are known through the limited space of the inscriptions and need to be distinguished from the donors who were not connected to *maṭams* as the people who resided in *maṭams* or as devotees, disciples, and lords of the *maṭam*. *Maṭam* people appeared in the inscriptions as participants in temple affairs; donors to *maṭams*, sometimes purchasing land and other property for their *maṭams* but also as the supporters of temples through donations; the recipients of donations to *maṭams*; and the beneficiaries of *maṭam* services. The inscriptions reveal that *maṭam* people were a different category of person than the donor to a *maṭam* who was not explicitly connected to a *maṭam*. Donors who gave to *maṭams* but were not identified as *maṭam* people were defined by their dynastic affiliation in the case of kings and queens, by membership in a village assembly, their village or *nāṭu*, or merchant assemblies or

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[197] This sort of exchange makes it challenging to conceive of the donations recorded in the inscriptions as the sort of pure or free gift that Laidlaw (2000) discusses in the Indian context.

guilds in the case of corporate donors, or kinship ties, natal village, or occupation in the case of individuals who gave to *maṭams*.[198]

By contrast, the donor who was a *maṭam* person was not circumscribed by caste, kinship, or natal village. In fact, there is little evidence in the inscriptions that these were important issues for *maṭam* people. *Maṭam* people were known in the inscriptions by their association with a *maṭam* and the stone inscriptions privileged this identity over caste, kinship, or natal village for *maṭam* people. Perhaps, their *maṭam* identity came to replace or supersede their identity from birth. As we move from the ninth century to the thirteenth century, the shift that we find in *maṭam* identity was not one away from *maṭam* affiliation but one that privileged *maṭam* identity even more. By the thirteenth century, a person connected with a *maṭam* was not just described as "being of a *maṭam*" or "living in a *maṭam*" or using a term such as *maṭamuṭaiya* but was now designated as a member of a *maṭam* belonging to a *cantāṉam* that was traced to *mutaliyārs* and *maṭams* as far away as Varanasi in some instances. *Maṭam* people's self-identification was with their *maṭam* and also with their *cantāṉam* in later centuries.

While donors who were not explicitly associated with *maṭams* had their relationship to a *maṭam* defined by the donative act, the relationship that *maṭam* people had with a *maṭam* was not mediated through their donative activities but through their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the *maṭam*. *Maṭam* people's relationship to *maṭams* was defined by their membership, function, or profession vis-à-vis the *maṭam* and the temple, in some cases, or through the services that they received from the *maṭam*. This information can help us to develop an understanding of the organization of *maṭams* and

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[198] Membership in an assembly or village would have also identified these donors as belonging to a caste, as was the case with *sabhais* as *brāhmaṇa* assemblies.

gauge the degree of participation in *maṭam* life by the different kinds of people who were

associated with *maṭams*.

There was a range of people involved in *maṭams*. Their participation in *maṭams* is

best described as diverse and context specific. There were a number of people who were

persons of importance or prominence in *maṭams*, as suggested by their names, titles, or

roles. As "lords of the *maṭam*," *maṭamuṭaiyas* were clearly important people in *maṭams*.

Their specific roles or duties in *maṭams* are difficult to ascertain because they more often

appeared in the inscriptions as people attesting to temple endowments and serving as

signatories to temple matters. The types of *maṭam* people who served this function were

added to in later centuries when *maṭapatis*, *maṭātipatis*, and the ambiguous *māṭāpattiyam*

surfaced in the inscriptions over the course of the Chola period. We learn more about the

roles of these people in temples than we do about their participation in *maṭams*. They

clearly had a connection to temples but their duties suggest that the degree of their active

participation in the day-to-day administration of temples was minimal, if not ceremonial.

In the later Chola period, *mutaliyārs* and *jīyars* took on the status of important *maṭam*

people as the recipients of patronage and the people through whom *maṭam* lineages were

traced.[199] Unlike their earlier counterparts (e.g., *maṭamuṭaiya*), they tended not to appear

in the inscriptions in responsibility roles in temples but as the recipients of *maṭam*

patronage and they were also listed in the *cantāṉams* that were given for *maṭam* people

who were donors to *maṭams* and temples.

Mutaliyārs, for example, headed the *cantāṉams* of *maṭam* disciples who were

known by the terms *śiṣyar* and *piḷḷai*. Men and women were *śiṣyars* and their

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[199] We do not see *cantāṉam* in relation to the *maṭamuṭaiya*, for example, in the Chola period.

inscriptional identities were tied to discipleship. While the *maṭam* inscriptions embraced the language of kinship to describe their members (e.g. *makaṉar*), the genealogy of *maṭam* people, particularly *ācāriyars*, *śiṣyars*, and *mutaliyārs*, was not traced through biological kinship ties. Instead, they were people who were connected to each other through the fictive kinship ties that Koppedrayer (1990, 330) and Talbot (1987, 139) describe. When Vācaspati Bhaṭṭārar, whom I began this dissertation with, described himself as the *makaṉar* or son of a *maṭamuṭaiya*, he likely reflected *maṭams*' language of kinship by defining himself as the disciple of a *maṭamuṭaiya* rather than as a biological son. They saw themselves as people who were related to each other through the lineage of their preceptors, which became more apparent in the later Chola period (and the post-Chola period). The language of the preceptor and the disciple became more commonplace in the inscriptions as the Chola period progressed. By the thirteenth century, someone like Hṛdayaśivaṉ described himself as the disciple of Siddhāntavyākhyātākkaḷ Varada Śivācārya who was a disciple of the *mutaliyār* of Tirukkoṭuṅkuṉram of the Lakṣādhyāya Mutaliyār lineage of the Śrī Goḷaki *maṭam* (TAM 276). The language of inheritance – of progeny – was tied to fictive kinship ties not only for individual members of *maṭams* but for *maṭam* communities as well, as we saw in the case of the *maṭam vaṁśattār* and *vargattār* (families; descendants) and their inheritance of rights in relation to *maṭams*.

The different types of *maṭams* that were apparent in the Chola period do not allow us to apply this generalization to every *maṭam*. While Hṛdayaśivaṉ gave an elaborate description of himself that was tied to his lineage (TAM 276), Piṉākapāṇi Paṭṭaṉ described himself only as being "of the Ko *maṭam*" when he gave his gift of land to the

deity at Tiruvidaimarudur in the same century (SII 5.699). Information on lineage was absent from the inscriptions of the earlier Chola period and some of the later inscriptions as well. We cannot assume in these cases that the *maṭams* were tied to lineage and preceptors and disciples. If all that we know about a *maṭam* is that it was responsible for feeding people during festivals, should we assume anything more about it? The fact that *maṭams* were places where intellectuals resided, temple employees were fed, devotees and pilgrims were given food, and *maṭam* people worked in temples as hymn reciters means that *maṭams* – their people and their activities – were as diverse as the people that I have just described. The fact that fictive kinship ties were important for some *maṭam* people does not mean that actual kinship ties were discounted all together for people connected to *maṭams*. There were instances of *maṭam* people with literal kinship ties, although they were much less common.

Researchers of historical *maṭams* and *maṭams* in the modern period tend to describe the *maṭam* as a male institution. Yet, there is evidence of female participation in *maṭams*. They were donors to *maṭams* and they were also members of *maṭams*. I would argue that the information on women's participation in the leadership of *maṭams* is far more ambiguous than scholars such as Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2010) suggest. While there is evidence of women disciples in *maṭams* and females who were described as residing in *maṭams*, none of them were identified as filling prominent positions in *maṭams*. Women *maṭam* members lived in *maṭams* and were disciples of *maṭams*. They were not, however, identified in the inscriptions as the female equivalent of the "lord of the *maṭam*" or with other terminology that might suggest preceptorship. Living in a *maṭam* and being the beneficiary of a *maṭam* endowment should not be taken

to mean that a person was a preceptor. While a woman or women identified as *ammaiyār* in the Tiruvamattur inscription that I discussed in Chapter Three received a *maṭappuṟam* endowment, there is no evidence to suggest that she or they were the preceptor of a *maṭam* with initiated disciples or lay followers (ARE 60 of 1922). The inscriptions do, however, signal the fact that *maṭams* were not the wholly male institution that scholars have concluded they were.

The prominent people of *maṭams* and their disciples seem to have a more enduring relationship with *maṭams*, unlike some of the other communities that participated in *maṭams*. There were certain kinds of people whose relationship to *maṭams* was not defined by living in a *maṭam*, being a prominent person of a *maṭam*, a disciple of a *maṭam*, or lineage but by being the beneficiaries of *maṭam* services. I would agree with Koppedrayer (1990, 338) that what made *maṭams* distinctive was ritual rather than doctrine, although I would qualify this by saying that not all of *maṭams*' activities (e.g., running lamps) were always or necessarily ritualistic in nature. In the case of Chola-period *maṭams*, it is difficult to determine what their doctrines might have been from the inscriptions. Their activities, however, give us insights into who participated in them as the beneficiaries of the services that *maṭams* provided.

Maṭams were centres where people learned in sacred texts, grammar, and philosophy resided. The inscriptions are suggestive of learning but they do not automatically translate to a role or responsibility for educating students in every instance. Champakalakshmi (2011, 297) sees historical *maṭams* as educational institutions that were organized public institutions of higher learning inspired by Buddhist and Jain monastic centres (i.e., *saṁghas* and *paḷḷis*) to teach religious doctrine and philosophy. We

need to ask ourselves what we mean by teaching when we talk about *maṭams* as educational institutions. If we conceive of them in the modern sense of a school with students and teachers or as a contemporary *maṭam* with its discourses by preceptors and printing presses to disseminate its teachings, Chola-period *maṭams* might not fit these images of *maṭams* as institutions having a mandate to teach. *Maṭams* were places where learned people resided but this does not mean that they were teachers. Some *maṭams* may have had students and teachers in the traditional sense whereas other *maṭams* may have had no greater educational role in a community other than being a place where people who were devoted to intellectual pursuits or well-versed in a number of subjects resided.

The special knowledge that *maṭam* people had seems to have been of two types. On the one hand, we find that *maṭam* people were learned in topics related to Sanskrit, grammar, and commentaries (although they evidently were not among the people who recited the Vedas in temples). On the other hand, we have *maṭam* people who recited the Tamil *tiruppatiyam*, *tirumuṟai*, and *tiruñānam*. We should not assume that the learned people who resided in a *maṭam* were the same category of *maṭam* person as the people who recited hymns in temples. *Maṭam* people who were hymn reciters may have had as much or more in common with the other kinds of people who recited texts in temples than they did the learned individuals who resided in *maṭams*. It could be that the *maṭam* of intellectuals was an institution quite different in terms of structure, people, and function from the *maṭam* of hymn reciters.

Maṭamuṭaiyas, *maṭapatis*, *maṭātipatis*, and *māṭāpattiyams* were involved in temple affairs and so too did other types of *maṭam* people have work in temples, although the scope of their work and the privileges derived from their duties varied.

Champakalakshmi (2011) emphasizes the office of *māṭāpattiyam* in the temple to the neglect of the other *maṭam* people who were more active in the day-to-day operations of the temple. Whereas *maṭamuṭaiyas'* roles in temples appear to be more ceremonial, the *tapassiyars* of the *maṭam* who tended to the deity and recited *tirumuṟai* in the temple in a Coimbatore district inscription, for example, were more active in the daily life of their temple as ritual specialists (SII 26.156). They were not the only types of *maṭam* people who were more active in the temple complex. While *maṭams* had gardens of their own, *maṭam* people also had responsibilities in temples related to tending gardens, cultivating flowers, and making garlands. In an inscription from Ramnathapuram district, someone belonging to the Pakaivṉṟāṉ *maṭam* was given charge of a flower garden that had been donated to the temple (ARE 44 of 1924). His responsibilities may have entailed picking flowers and making garlands, as was the case when temple authorities at Tiruvalisvaram in Tirunelveli district gave land to Aghorateva of the Jñānāmṛtācārya *cantāṉam* for maintaining a flower garden, picking flowers, and making garlands (ARE 361 of 1916).

Maṭam people's knowledge of the Vedas, grammar, philosophies, and commentarial traditions would have meant that *maṭam* people learned in these subjects were high status. *Bhaṭṭavṛtti* endowments, for example, suggest *brāhmaṇa* status. *Maṭamuṭaiyas*, *maṭapatis*, *maṭātipatis*, and *māṭāpattiyams* were prominent people in *maṭams* as the people who possessed them and headed them, and they were often also prominent as temple authorities and would have been high status as a result. *Maṭam* people who were hymn reciters in temples would have also been higher status. Tending gardens, picking flowers, and making garlands were jobs involving unskilled labour that were essential to temples because of the role of flowers in rituals. The responsibility of

gardening and making flower garlands was delegated to high-status individuals such as *āṇṭārs* and *tapassiyars* later in the Chola period (Orr 2000, 116). As people who secured the rights to these tasks, *maṭam* people would have been higher status as well.

One of the other responsibilities that *maṭams* had in relation to temples was feeding. They were feeding centres for the other sorts of people who worked in temples or who visited temples during festivals, and the relationship of these people to *maṭams* is known to us only in relation to the act of feeding. As I illustrated in Chapters Three and Four, feeding was a charity that a number of institutions provided in Chola-period Tamilnadu. Temples, feeding houses, rest houses, and *maṭams* fed many of the same types of people. In the case of *maṭams*, feeding was their most common activity. Even the kinds of servants that worked in *maṭams* supported their role as feeding centres. The language of feeding in *maṭams* was most connected to *amutu* (food offerings) and providing food on special days such as festivals. *Āṇṭārs*, *māheśvaras*, *śrīvaiṣṇavas*, *tapassiyars*, *civayokis*, and *saṁnyāsīs* were the kinds of people who were fed in *maṭams*. Although temples often coordinated feeding with the making of food offerings to deities, *maṭams* did not necessarily feed people in this context. Nonetheless, the charity of feeding was a way of honouring the people who were fed. It also shows a more context-specific relationship of these sorts of people, who were likely devotee-pilgrims, to *maṭams*. *Maṭams*' relationship to temples in the Chola period was forged through these sorts of activities. It does not seem likely, however, that the roles of *maṭam* people in temples in the Chola period can be likened to their responsibilities in temples today as overlords, which stems from a decision made by the British colonial government to return the control and administration of religious institutions to Indian hands in 1863. Given the

ceremonial role of the offices of *maṭamuṭaiya*, *maṭapati*, *maṭātipati*, and *māṭāpattiyam*, it is difficult to envisage them as the contemporary *maṭapati* who oversees temple affairs.

C. Asceticism and Monasticism in the *Maṭam*

Asceticism in India found expression in the form of the sedentary hermit who was celebrated in mythology but disappeared in the early centuries of the Common Era and the itinerant mendicant who persists today (Olivelle 1990, 133). The hermit embraced a return to nature in environment and lifestyle, giving up all products of culture except fire. He lived alone in the wilderness, wore animal skins, let his hair and nails grow long, and ate uncultivated food. Although normative texts describe him as highly concerned with the physical body and as constantly bathing, he was dirty and foul smelling (Olivelle 1990, 134). The renouncer also rejects culture but in a less obvious but more fundamental way. Renunciatory life requires a total break from society that is so complete that renunciation is considered death legally and ritually. Although rejecting society, the renouncer is completely dependent upon it because the renouncer needs the generosity of people to survive and the very purpose and meaning of renunciation is dependent on culture. "If all people are renouncers, they would cease to be renouncers; it is possible, on the other hand, to imagine a situation where all humans are hermits" (Olivelle 1990, 136).

Contemporary understandings of asceticism have come to be associated with Advaita Vedānta's Śaṅkarācārya, Śrīvaiṣṇavism's Rāmānuja, and Śaiva Siddhānta's Meykaṇṭār. Orr (2012, 306-7) encourages us to break away from today's model of asceticism when contemplating medieval asceticism. Nilakanta Sastri ([1935] 1975, 649) describes the asceticism of the medieval period as,

> The ascetics owned no property themselves; but their organizations,
> the monasteries (*maṭhas*), often owned vast estates devoted to their
> maintenance and the encouragement of learning and the arts. What
> proportion of the population led such a pious life, if not uneasy, poverty,
> and whether it was a larger one than at present, it is difficult to determine.
> The times were quite favourable to the ascetic ideal, and all religious
> systems in the country applauded it.

While Nilakanta Sastri's analysis of *maṭams* points to them as important landholders in the Chola period, his praise of Tamil society's favourability of the ascetic ideal and his interpretation of *maṭams* as the home of pious but impoverished ascetics does not mesh with the lived reality of *maṭam* people as we know it from the inscriptions. His analysis fails to acknowledge that the world of the *maṭam* was not populated only by ascetics and that *maṭams'* ascetics may not have fit the ascetic ideal of celibacy and poverty.[200]

The inscriptions clearly identify *maṭam* people as ascetics, although this is not evident in every case. Even though non-sectarian *tapassiyars*, Śaivism's *civayokis*, and Vaiṣṇava *saṁnyāsīs* all made an appearance in the *maṭam* inscriptions in the Chola period, each category of ascetic surfaced in the epigraphical records at a defined moment in the Chola period and had a specific relationship to *maṭams*. *Tapassiyars* appeared for the first time in the *maṭam* inscriptions in the eleventh century with a single inscription that recorded a *tavas[v]i* and his *varggattār* as the recipients of *maṭappuṟam* for the purpose of feeding people (SII 26.691) and then in the twelfth century as donors and the beneficiaries of feeding in *maṭams*. In the thirteenth century, they resided in *maṭams*, bought land for their *maṭams*, and continued to benefit from *maṭams'* feeding charity. By contrast, Śaivism's *civayokis*, who also show up in the inscriptions for the first time in the eleventh century, were wholly the beneficiaries of *maṭam* feeding and were not a type of

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[200] The fact that a female disciple who was married gave land for a *maṭam* (ARE 49 of 1911) and a non-*brāhmaṇa māṭāpattiyam* had a wife (*akauṭaiyāḷ*) (SII 7.944) challenges the assumption that *maṭam* people were celibate.

ascetic who made donations for *maṭams*, lived in *maṭams*, or were the recipients of *maṭappuṟam*. As *civayokis* all but disappear from the inscriptions in the thirteenth century, *saṁnyāsīs* surface for the first time at Vaiṣṇava *maṭams* as the beneficiaries of feeding charities. While there is one case of a *maṭam* named after a *saṁnyāsī* (ARE 253 of 1955-56), most often this type of ascetic was the recipient of food in *maṭams*. Vaiṣṇava *saṁnyāsīs* were further specified as *tridaṇḍa* (triple staff) and *ekāṅgi* (single staff) *saṁnyāsīs*, reflecting the community's different kinds of asceticism.

The inscriptions clearly traced *maṭams*' connection to asceticism through the centuries but they also revealed or reflected the characteristics of the different types of ascetics in Tamilnadu in the Chola period. *Tapassiyars* seem to have been non-sectarian in the sense that the term or one of its derivatives was used for Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas. They were the ascetics who resided in *maṭams* and seemed to have had a more enduring or long-term relationship with individual *maṭams* by living in them and having their children or disciples (e.g., *vaṁśattār*) inherit their rights while the sectarian *saṁnyāsīs* of Vaiṣṇavism and even more so Śaivism's *civayokis* had a more specific and short-term involvement with *maṭams* that was centred on the charity of feeding. Perhaps, *tapassiyars* reflected a domestic or settled type of ascetical life with ascetics who had a permanent home, property that they received as endowments and gave as gifts to *maṭams* and temples, and a family made up of their disciples (e.g., *vaṁśattār*), although this was not always the case. *Saṁnyāsīs* and *civayokis* were itinerant or mendicant ascetics whose type of asceticism was reflected in the fact that they did not act as donors or recipients in the inscriptions, suggesting that they were not property owners. The fact that *maṭam* people, whether they were identified as *mahāmuṉis*, *piḷḷaiyars*, *śiṣyars*, or *tapassiyars*,

were donors suggests that they were property owners since they had the ability to dispose of it to institutions.[201]

One of the ways that we can better understand the ascetic ideal in the Chola period is to look at asceticism in comparable non-Hindu communities. Researchers consider the Jain *paḷḷi* a similar institution to the Hindu *maṭam* as a residence for ascetics and monastics. The discussion of Hindu *maṭams* and Jain *paḷḷis* in the Tamil region needs to be framed by scholarly interpretations of their relationship.[202] The standard narrative of their history, which has been embraced by many scholars, acknowledges the presence of Jains and Buddhists in South India as early as the second century before the Common Era and suggests that orthodox Hindus grew to feel threatened by their Jain and Buddhist counterparts and sought to rid them from the region. The writings and activities of the poet-saints – the Śaiva *nāyaṉmārs* and the Vaiṣṇava *āḻvārs* – from the sixth century onward, are regarded by scholars who favour the standard narrative as the great Hindu revival that brought about the demise of Jainism and Buddhism (Minakshi cited in Davis 1998, 215). The Śaiva literature presents Jains as the despised other – despised because they did not accept Śiva. In *Tēvāram*, the Jains are condemned as "the low camaṇar who have no wisdom" (Tēv 4.5.8). The *Tēvāram* poets' rhythmic praises for the divine are filled with lyrical polemics against Buddhists and Jains.[203] The hymns of Appar, the convert who laments his wasted years as a Jain monk, are filled with a feeling of guilt at

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[201] In the modern period, there is evidence of *maṭam* people owning private property. In a will dated 1874, the head of the Dharmapuram *maṭam* outlined his private ownership of land (cited in Oddie 1984, 41).

[202] Davis (1998, 214) defines the standard narrative as the way that the encounter of Jainism and Śaivism was related and replicated in scholarship by researchers such as Minakshi (1938), Zvelebil (1973), and Stein (1980).

[203] Peterson (1998, 168-69) notes that although Tamil Śaivas lumped Buddhists and Jains together as heretical *camaṇars*, the *Tēvāram* poets were careful to distinguish them. Buddhists were referred to in the poems as *puttar* from the word *buddha*, for example. The word *camaṇar*, a Tamil variant of the Sanskrit *śramaṇa* meaning "he who strives," was used almost exclusively for Jains, which suggests that the *Tēvāram* poets saw Jains as monks who practiced extreme asceticism.

having committed the greatest sin of being a Jain monk (Peterson 1998, 168). He describes himself as a Jain "robber who stole unripe fruits when there were ripe fruits to eat" in his praise of the lord of Tiruvarur (Tēv 4.5.1). Cuntarar cautions devotees who wear the loin cloth and who seek to eliminate their worldly attachments to not be fooled by the Jains who go naked (Tēv 7.22.9). Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas are said to have united in a common mission against the *camaṇars* (literally, "he who strives") through the bhakti hymns and brought about the demise of Jainism in the region (Nilakanta Sastri cited in Davis 1998, 215).[204]

Yet, Jainism maintained a presence in the region during the Chola period and epigraphical evidence records that Jain temples and *paḷḷis* were accorded grants by patrons during this period. Champakalakshmi (1978, 69) suggests that by looking at these Jain inscriptions, which she describes as "the other side of the coin" of the history of the two traditions, we can have a more accurate understanding of the relationship between Jainism and Hinduism.[205] Paleographically, there is epigraphical evidence of Jainism in the Tamil region as early as the second century before the Common Era.[206] The "kitchen,"

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[204] The standard narrative is problematic for a number of reasons according to Davis (1998, 217). First, it collapses religious and social conflict into a short period of time, suggesting that the downfall of a religion could be brought about in the space of just a few centuries. It accepts later sectarian dramatizations in tests like the twelfth-century *Periya Purāṇam*, which provides stories as that of the Pandya king who converted to Śaivism through Campantar's miraculous efforts (PP 2529-2782). It essentializes both Hinduism and Jainism by interpreting them as cohesive and clearly defined religions with fixed teachings and practices and does not allow for the interplay of religious ideas between religions. The claim that the small Jain community that survived in the region after conflict adapted itself to Hinduism implies that a homogeneous Jainism submitted itself to the process of Hinduization. The standard narrative fails to adequately address the presence of Jains who continued to write and teach in the region even after their supposed downfall.

[205] Champakalakshmi (1978, 69) discusses the problems of relying only on the Tamil Hindu sources to understand Jainism's history in the region. Although critical of the texts' portrayal of Jainism, she does not suggest abandoning literary sources in favour of epigraphical evidence but instead advocates using inscriptional material as another method of studying the subject. She explains that by looking only at the epigraphical evidence scholars would be hard pressed to find evidence of the conflict that the literature describes (Champakalakshmi 1978, 76).

[206] Until the twentieth century, the earliest known Tamil inscriptions were the seventh-century Pallava inscriptions and the eighth-century Vatteluttu inscriptions from the Pandyas (Mahadevan 2003, 1).

as it is called, is dated to the second century BCE. It is the earliest known Tamil-Brahmi

inscription in existence, the earliest known Jain inscription in South India, and one of the

oldest Jain inscriptions in India (Mahadevan 2003, 7). It comes from Mangulam near

Madurai. Kaṭalaṉ Vaḻutti caused to be carved a *paḷḷi* as a religious endowment for the

kaṇi (monk) Nantasirikuvaṉ (SII 22.465). A *kaṇi* with this same name received a *paḷḷi*

from an individual named Caṭikaṉ as a religious endowment (SII 22.460). The word *kaṇi*,

derived from the Prakrit *gana*, identifies Nantasirikuvaṉ as a Jain monk who was

provided a *paḷḷi* as his dwelling. Numerous inscriptions like the ones at Mangulam record

that Jains lived in natural caves in hills and received endowments. They are also evidence

of the patronage for these kinds of people from the time of the earliest inscriptions. The

Jain inscriptions are distributed widely throughout Tamilnadu and, even though their

numbers are small, they are evidence of the spread of Jainism in the region for two

centuries of the Common Era (Champakalakshmi 1978, 70).

About the first century before the Common Era, Jain asceticism came to be

associated with *paḷḷis* as residences. They came to be connected with feeding and housing

ascetics and pilgrims by the fifth century CE (Orr 1998, 190), paralleling the activities of

maṭams that emerged in the ninth century. The donative activities of Jain religious people

and *maṭam* people share some themes. Like the Hindu inscriptions, the Jain inscriptions

were donative rather than votive in content. Jains endowed their religious institutions

with property for a number of activities. *Paḷḷiccantam*, a gift to a *paḷḷi*, can be likened to

maṭams' endowment of *maṭappuṟam*. More importantly, Jain religious people were

constituted of men and women, and they were active donors to Jain institutions,

accounting for half of the donors who set up images at Jain sites in the eighth and ninth

centuries (Orr 2012, 308). While *maṭam* people accounted for a much smaller percentage of donors – forty-three inscriptions or 11% of the 380 inscriptions that I identified – compared to their Jain counterparts, they used a language that was similar to Jain religious people to identify themselves as donors. Jain religious people used the vocabulary of people of prominence, discipleship, asceticism, learning, and lineage in their donative records. They self-identified as honoured people (*aṭikaḷ*; *paṭārar*), disciples (*māṉākkaṉ*; *māṉākkiyar*), ascetics (*tapassiyar*; *vairāgyar*), teachers (*ācirikar*; *kuravar*; *kuratti*), or lineage (*gaccha*; *saṁgha*) (Orr 2012, 308).[207] *Maṭam* people defined themselves using a similar language – *maṭamuṭaiyas*, *śiṣyars*, *ācāriyars*, *paṇṭitaṉs*, *tapassiyars*, and *cantāṉam*, *vaṁśattār* and *varggattār* – for themselves. The inscriptions show us that multiple and overlapping categories were used to describe the religious people of both communities.

Maṭams and *paḷḷis* – institutions intended for ascetics and monastics – owned property, bought land, transferred property through patronage, and provided services such as feeding to their respective communities. The fact that people identified with the ascetical life were patrons suggests that they owned the property that they gifted to their religious institutions. Heitzman (1997, 63) argues that references to boundaried land in the corpus of Chola-period inscriptions imply that the land being transferred through

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[207] A number of eighth-century inscriptions from Kalugumalai that are found below the images of *tirthaṅkaras* (fordmaker) on rock record that images were caused to be made by Jain honoured people who were identified as disciples. Cānti Ceṉa Aṭikaḷ, the *māṉākkar* (disciple) of Vimaḷacan Tirakkuravaṭikaḷ (SII 5.390) and Perāṇanti Paṭārar (*bhaṭṭārar*), the *māṉākkar* of Śrī Puṭppaṇanti Paṭārar (SII 5.391) caused images to be built. When Maṇṭiyaṅkiḷāṉ Kulottuṅkacoḷa [Kāṭu]veṭṭikaḷ Rājakāriyañ gave land as a gift to a *paḷḷi* for his preceptor Candrakīrtidevar, he was described as a *guru* (*gurukkaḷ*) in an inscription from the twelfth century at the Jain temple at Tirupparuttikunru in Chingleput district (SII 4.366). While the following inscription from the same temple is from the sixteenth century, it is evidence of a endowment involving Jain *gurus* not only the beneficiaries of endowments but as people who also bought and sold land. In this instance, a *guru* of the temple sold land to another *guru* (SII 4.368). Jains who were involved with *paḷḷis* were also *paṇṭitaṉs*, suggesting people who were learned (ARE 330 of 1908; ARE 331 of 1908; ARE 332 of 1908).

endowments was privately owned; this explains the need for references to boundaries in the inscriptions. Owners had the right to dispose of their land as they wanted. When *paḷḷi* members and *maṭam* people who were ascetics bought, sold, and donated property, they did so as owners, as private citizens much like their non-ascetic counterparts. As institutions that received what were in some instances rather large land endowments and as the owners and administrators of these endowments, *paḷḷis* and *maṭams* were important landholders with economic, political, and social influence and not the impoverished persons that Nilakanta Sastri ([1935] 1975, 649) envisions. This can help re-shape our thinking on asceticism and monasticism in the region during this period by challenging the assumption that Nilakanta Sastri and others make concerning asceticism and monasticism. *Maṭams'* ascetics were not the celibate and impoverished people that Nilakantha Sastri and others would suggest.

I suggested in Chapter One that inscriptions are a medium that is both literature and art, both the written word and the visual. They constitute a genre of literature that was not divorced from other literary genres or art forms. What might the ascetics who frequented *maṭams* have looked like in the Chola period and how might medieval ascetics have interpreted their asceticism? The inscriptions do not give us a lot of insight into these matters. How closely would they have resembled the descriptions in other literature or artistic images? Would the Śaiva *tapassiyars* and *civayokis* have resembled the *nāyaṉmārs* whose images are known to us in literature and art? Śaivism's twice-married Cuntarar is depicted in bronzes from the Chola period as the handsome bridegroom holding a lotus in one hand, a staff in the other hand, and wearing coiffed hair with a top knot. By contrast, Appar wears the simple cloth and *rudrākṣa* beads of the devotee with

folded hands (Dehejia 2002, 157-60).[208] The ninth-century Māṇikkavācakkar, who has

been called the ideal monastic, is adorned in the bronzes with nothing more than the

sacred thread and a manuscript in his hands. Would the people of Śaiva *maṭams*, whether

they lived in them or frequented them occasionally as *āṇṭārs*, *maṭamuṭaiyas*, *mutaliyārs*,

tapassiyars or *civayokis* resembled Cuntarar, Appar, or Māṇikkavācakkar? While the

Somaśambhupaddhati describes the Goḷaki master as physically fit, good-natured,

patient, and having a pure heart and the disciple as one who is devoted to his master (SP

3.1.14-15), would the Goḷakis of the *maṭams* have fit the model prescribed by

Somaśambhu?

South India's Śrīvaiṣṇava community follows the teachings of Rāmānuja (1017-

1137) who is seen as both a devotee (*bhakta*) and the king of ascetics (*yatirāja*)

(Narayanan 1990, 161).[209] Rāmānuja is Śrīvaiṣṇavism's most important preceptor; he

authored commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Brahma Sutra*; and, he established

Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta philosophy. According to the hagiographical tradition, Rāmānuja

lived in a *maṭam* and served in temples at Kanchipuram and Srirangam. Today's

Vaiṣṇava *maṭams* have celibate students (*brahmacārins*), disciples, lay followers, and

preceptors who travel with their disciples and give discourses on the community's

teachings. The head of the *maṭam* is always a male *brāhmaṇa saṁnyāsī* who initiates

disciples and conducts rituals (Narayanan 1990, 162). Śrīvaiṣṇavism's current

understanding of the *maṭam* is rooted in a centuries-long history that is inspired by the

asceticism of Rāmānuja. Though he was clearly a talented theologian, the biographies

[208] Dehejia (2002, 159) discusses a tenth-century bronze thought to be Appar's sister Tilakavati. She conveys the simplicity of devotion. As with Appar, she is standing with her palms together in devotion. She has a shaved head, is dressed in a long cloth, and wears simple jewellery.
[209] The contemporary Śrīvaiṣṇava community is split into the Vaṭakalai (northern) and Teṅkalai (southern) schools. Both schools have several *maṭams*.

authored in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries celebrate him as a *yati* and *saṁnyāsī*, thereby giving us a sense of what renunciation meant during this period through his example (Narayanan 1990, 165).[210] Rāmānuja's renunciation was clearly not the anti-culture of the hermit but it also did not mesh perfectly with the anti-culture of the renouncer either.

Saṁnyāsa was the formal renunciation of the world by males as they progressed through the *āśrama* system. A *saṁnyāsī* was the person who had in theory moved through the *āśrama* system, initially as a *brahmacārin*, then a *gṛhastha* (householder), a *vānaprastha* (forest dweller), and finally a renouncer, although the reality is that people did not adhere to the *āśrama* system as it was prescribed. In Śrīvaiṣṇavism, *saṁnyāsa* was also surrendering (*prapatti*) to Viṣṇu and taking refuge in Him (*śaraṇāgati*) (Narayanan 1990, 162). In the thirteenth century, the *saṁnyāsī* was the person who was in the fourth stage of the *āśrama* system – the renouncer – who had also surrendered himself to Viṣṇu and took refuge in Him. The *saṁnyāsī's* saffron robes symbolized both the stage of renunciation and the condition of self-surrender to the divine. Returning specifically to the example of Rāmānuja as it is portrayed in Chola-period texts, his renunciation was representative of the fourth stage of the *āśrama* system but also the attitude of *prapatti* and *sarangati*. He formally renounced his family and surrendered himself to Viṣṇu when he adopted *saṁnyāsa*. At the same time that he adopted celibacy, sported the dress of the *saṁnyāsī*, begged for food, and was buried after his death, he did

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[210] The biographies explain that Rāmānuja adopted asceticism after becoming offended by his wife's behaviour towards a lower caste preceptor who had dined at their home. This first incident led to the detachment from his wife. He eventually sent her to her parents' home and became a renouncer by asking Viṣṇu to become his *ācāriyar* and begging Him for the markings of the *saṁnyāsī* (Narayanan 1990, 167-68). Despite the implications of this story, Śrīvaiṣṇava leadership, including the leadership in *maṭams*, is almost exclusively *brāhmaṇa*.

not wander the countryside as an itinerant mendicant. Instead, he remained connected to his disciples and lay followers (Narayanan 1990, 171). His renunciation of the householder life was accompanied by a desire to develop a community of followers and to maintain a connection to them as a spiritual teacher. It may be that the *saṁnyāsīs* who frequented *maṭams* had the appearance, activities, and attitude represented in this image of Rāmānuja. In the *Yatidharmasamuccaya*, Yādava (Ysam 3.9) says that the renouncer may choose to either shave his head or wear a top knot. The *saṁnyāsī's* obligatory dress includes the sacrificial string, loincloth, waistband, the triple staff, a water strainer, and a bowl (Ysam 3.26). Yet, the Vaiṣṇava inscriptions show no awareness of the *Yatidharmasamuccaya* text and neither do the Śaiva ones the *Somaśambhupaddhati*. While Śrīvaiṣṇavism was concerned with defining *saṁnyāsa* in its literature in the eleventh century with the *Yatidharmasamuccaya*, its *maṭams* were not concerned with the *saṁnyāsī* until the thirteenth century. The literature can enhance our understanding of the significance of *maṭams* and asceticism so long as we keep in mind that there was a great diversity in the types of *maṭams* and of *maṭam* people in the Chola period.

D. Some Final Remarks

Champakalakshmi (2011, 286-87) is of the opinion that the existence of *maṭams* pre-dates their appearance in the inscriptions and that their introduction in the Tamil corpus in the ninth century signals the institutionalization of *maṭams* in Tamilnadu as they were brought into the system of endowments. Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan (2010; 2011) argue that *maṭams* in Tamilnadu were originally a *brāhmaṇical* institution from North India that migrated into the region and underwent the processes of

localization and Tamilization. By localization, they mean that the North Indian

brāhmaṇism of *maṭams* came to be accepted by non-*brāhmaṇas* of the Tamil region. *Ūrs,*

which were non-*brāhmaṇa* villages, came to accept *maṭams* as evidenced by their

patronage of them. The Tamilization of *maṭams* means that the North Indian *brāhmaṇical*

orthodoxy of *maṭams* adapted to the local environment. This was reflected in the fact that

maṭams embraced Tamil culture as demonstrated by their recitation of Tamil hymns such

as *tiruñānam* (Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan 2010, 232). These authors'

argument for localization and Tamilization rests on their analysis of the increasing

patronage of *maṭams* by non-*brāhmaṇas*. Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugan's

approach also assumes a homogeneity for *maṭams* that did not exist in the Chola period.

It supposes that all *maṭams* were alike in their origins, activities, people, and theologies.

There is evidence of increasing non-*brāhmaṇa* landownership and patronage in the Tamil

region over the course of the medieval period in general. The increasing patronage of

maṭams by these kinds of people was in keeping with the larger pattern of landholding in

the region but there were other factors that contributed to the evolution of *maṭams* in the

Tamil region.

     Existing scholarship on *maṭams* overlooks the complexities of the *maṭam* person.

I do not discount the impact that changes in the patrons of *maṭams* would have had on

maṭams nor do I discount the impact that any changes in the political, economic,

religious, and cultural spheres going on around *maṭams* in the Tamil region would have

had on them. However, I would like to look more closely at how *maṭam* people described

themselves – that is, the vocabulary of *maṭams* in the inscriptions – to understand the

evolution of *maṭams* in Tamilnadu. Cox (2010) has suggested that the choice of script in

epigraphical records may have important political and cultural implications and Pollock (2006) has written about the meaning of language in terms of the cosmopolitan and the vernacular. The language of *maṭam* people is more telling of *maṭams* than the patronage patterns of people who were not aligned with *maṭams* beyond the donative act. The fact that the *maṭamuṭaiya* of the Chola period (who was more common in the earlier centuries) used the language of Tamil – as the *uṭaiya* of the *maṭam* – to describe himself and his role in the temple is more revealing of *maṭam* people and their activities than the donors to *maṭams*. Does it matter that *maṭam* people came to increasingly use the language of Sanskrit (its script and, more so, its words) over the course of the Chola period, not that it came to replace Tamil? The *maṭam* inscriptions were from the beginning a mixture of Sanskrit words (sometimes written in the Grantha script or transliterated into Tamil) with Tamil ones. While I do not want to place too much emphasis on this, the fact is that *maṭam* people grew over time to use the language of the preceptor and the disciple – of the *mutaliyār* and the *śiṣyar* belonging to a *cantāṉam* – over the course of the Chola period so that by the thirteenth century, they defined themselves not so much as the "possessors" or "lords" of *maṭams* but as the disciples of preceptors with lineages extending beyond the Tamil environ in some cases. Though scholars use the preceptor-disciple relationship as the uniting factor for *maṭams*, the *maṭams* of the Chola period show that it was not universal to *maṭams* but became more common as time progressed.

I began this dissertation with some definitions for the term *maṭam* that pointed to the diversity of the institution. The inscriptions show that in the Chola period, *maṭams* were marked by such diversity. This does not prevent us from making some

generalizations about the people and the activities of *maṭams* in the Chola period however. *Maṭams* were institutions that were defined not by their theology but by their activities and by fictive kinship ties, in some cases, in the later Chola period. They were also places that were intended for a range of people – ascetics, those who were learned, devotees, disciples, and peceptors – in the long term and occasionally. At the same time as the inscriptions show that learned persons belonged to the world of the *maṭam*, they also illustrate that *maṭams* were more so a space for the ritualized feeding of these same kinds of people. We should not be too quick to interpret the Chola-period *maṭams* as only feeding centres or places of learning. They should not be studied through the lens of contemporary understandings of *maṭams*, asceticism, and monasticism. We should not assume that every *maṭam* had a preceptor, initiated disciples, and lay followers and that *maṭams* were necessarily the places where the theological and doctrinal ancestors of today's *maṭam* people lived.

The prominent people of Tamil society – people with economic, social, and political status who did and did not belong to *maṭams* – were the ones who gave to *maṭams* by participating in a system of patronage that conferred prestige in these same areas through giving to religious institutions like the *maṭam* but it also gave donors access to the transcendent through the act of giving their wordly goods. While donors secured permanence through the donative act, the *maṭams* that they provided for were also supposed to survive in perpetuity. Though most of the *maṭams* themselves have not endured into the modern period, their extant inscriptions have ensured that the Chola-period *maṭams* and their people have lived on. The inscriptions can help us unpack the ascetic and monastic ideals equated with *maṭams* to reveal the lived reality.

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