



HISTORY OF MUNNESWARAM TEMPLE



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PREFACE

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The temple of Munnesvaram in Chilaw is one of the oldest and most famous Hindu temples in the island. In the centuries preceding the Portuguese occupation it had enormous wealth in the form of lands and deposits of gold and other precious items in the stores attached to the temple. The inhabitants of the lands of Munnesvaram had to perform customary services for the maintenance of the temple and its establishments. The daily worship, rituals and annual festivals were conducted on a grand scale.

The monarchs of Sri Lanka especially the rulers of Kotte and Kandy exercised a custodial function over this temple as attested by inscriptions. Some of them visited the shrines, made extensive grants of lands and issued proclamations relating to the temple services.

Munnesvaram fell in evil days under the Portuguese in the 16th and 17th centuries. The temple and its establishments were looted, relieved of their wealth and destroyed. There was a resurrection under Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe of the Nayakkar dynasty. But, it was not accompanied by the restoration lands and properties. Since then the temple had to be sustained with meagre resources that were available. In recent times a large number of pilgrims visit the temple. The temple is now maintained in a flourishing state although there are anxieties about the future.

Munnesvaram is one of the few temples where all festivals and religious observations listed in the Hindu Calendar are conducted on an elaborate scale meticulously according to the prescriptions in the agamas. It is significant that the agragara at Munnesvaram had existed without interruption over a long period of time. The priests

of Munesvaram were highly esteemed because of their learning piety and dignity and the kings of Kotte had a special regard to them. An imaginative reading of the inscription of Parakramabahu VI (1412-1467) engraved on the basement of the temple suggests that there was a very close relationship between the Brahmins of this temple and the royal court. Indeed some of them seem to have held the rank of Purohita at the royal court. The agrahara was also a reputed centre of Hindu learning and the Vedic Tradition.

Munnesvaram attracts ones attention because of the reason that it is a historical and archeological site of considerable importance. As we have shown elsewhere the garbhagrha and its adjuncts as found today are parts of the original buildings constructed in the Vijayanagara style of art and architecture. In the course of circumambulation a historian would easily discern the characteristics of Vijayanagara art in the design of the riches pilasters and sculpture on the exterior walls of the basement.

The author of this monograph, Sivaramakrishna Sarma, who grew up at Munnesvaram from his childhood as an inmate of the agraharam is familiar with all matters pertaining to the temple.

There is no other person in the island who could with confidence and authority as he could on this subject. In 1964 he published a book in Tamil, which was the most coherent and comprehensive account ever written on Munnesvaram. Now, in retirement he produced a small monograph in English wherein he has introduced a considerable amount of information found in volumes published recently. At this point there has to be a word of caution. It cannot be disputed that the Portuguese conquistadors destroyed Hindu Temples and Hindu institutions. In the meantime provinces Buddhism also suffered a major reversal. These events occurred 500 years ago. The Portuguese nation as constituted now is far different from the Portugal about which we come to know from archival records of the Colonial period. The King of Portugal, in the 16th century, was an autocrat who lived in an age of tyranny, despotism and intolerance. Decisions were made by him and the coterie of clerics and grandees who surrounded him. Nowadays people have to be conscious of the historical and demographic realities of multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism. Academics cannot afford to alter on this score.

INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is the oldest and most complex of all religious systems and has a long and complex history. It has no specific founder or theology and originated from the religious practices of different people more than four thousand years ago by intermingling with varied religious beliefs. It is a combination of ancient legends, beliefs and customs which has adapted, blended with, and spawned numerous creeds and practices.

The term religion comes from two Latin words, re (back) and ligare (to bind or bring). Hinduism is unique since it grew over a long period of time in syncretism with the religious and cultural movements composed of innumerable sects. Hinduism is not only a religion, but also a way of life, with rich philosophy and aimed principles. It is the faith mainly followed by the Hindus.

The foundation of Hinduism has been laid firmly on spiritual concepts. The entire structure of Hindu life is built on eternal truths, the findings of the Hindu Rishis or seers. The Vedas describe an ultimate reality, which is extolled as *Brahman*.

The Word Hindu is derived from the word Sindhu, which is the name of a major river that flows in the northwestern region of the Indian Subcontinent. The ancient Greeks and Armenians used to refer the people living beyond the river Sindhu as Hindus and gradually the name struck. When the Muslims came to the sub continent they called the people living in the region as Hindustanis to distinguish them from the foreign Muslims. Subsequently when the British established their rule in India they started calling the local religions collectively under the name of Hinduism.

Hinduism consists a set of beliefs and traditions which have evolved and got accumulated over a long period of generations.

The development of the evolution of the way of life based upon a set of religious movements evolved in the subcontinent over a lengthy period of time. It is not based upon a single scripture or the teachings of a single prophet or a founder.

The early stage of Hinduism believed and stressed the Vedic sacrifices. A proper relation with the gods and the cosmos is established with the help of the power of sacrifices. The Veda comprises the liturgy and interpretation of the sacrifice and culminates in the Upanishads. The mystical and speculative works seen in the Vedas briefs the doctrine of Brahman, the absolute reality that is the self of all things, and its identity with the individual soul, or atman.

Post-Vedic developments of Hinduism in all its branches accept and establish the doctrine of karma. Karma explains that the individual reaps the results of his good and bad actions through a series of life times. The concept of the goal of moksha (mukthi) liberation from suffering and from the compulsion to rebirth, which is attainable through elimination of passions and through knowledge of reality and finally union with God were accepted.

The divine knowledge of four Vedas, are the basis of Hindu philosophy. The Upanishads delve into the metaphysical nature of the universe and soul.

In the present days the temples serve the purpose of religious activities of the masses. The temples also serve as centers for cultural, social gatherings. Normally every village has a number of temples.

Tradition empowers Munneswaram with a degree of sanctity and antiquity which cannot be surpassed by other Hindu temples in Sri Lanka. In fact, it occupies a position which is exceptional in many ways. It has played a crucial role in the development of the religious and cultural traditions mainly of the Hindus living in the island over a long phase of time. As in the period of the Kotte kingdom, Munneswaram still continues to be a focal point of Hindu - Buddhist interaction.

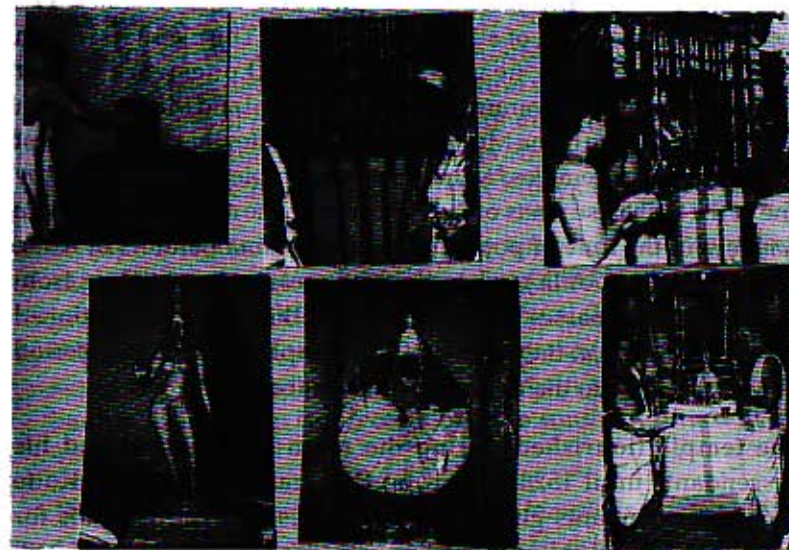
The well-known temple at Munneswaram is one of the oldest temples in the island. The daily rituals, pujas, ceremonies and special

events like the annual festival, Navaratri celebrations Sivaratri observations etc. are conducted in a very grand scale as prescribed in the texts. The devotees come from all parts of the island to this temple to participate in these religious ceremonies.

Since this temple has a long tradition and history which is very interesting to study, I have dealt most of the historical aspects in a very brief manner, with appropriate documental proofs.

I wrote a book entitled "The History of Munneswaram Temple" in Tamil language in 1964 dealing all the aspects related to this temple in a much elaborated scale. This present book deals only the historical feature of this temple. I sincerely thank Prof. S. Pathmanathan, Dept. of History, University of Peradeniya for reading the manuscript and writing the preface for this book.

B.S.Sarma



History of Munneswaram Temple

Munneswaram is a small village situated in the North Western Province, located about a mile inland to the east of Chilaw town from which it is separated by a large plain of paddy fields. It is a place of great antiquity and is chiefly remarkable for an ancient Hindu temple built of granite, sand stone and chunnam called Sri Munneswaram temple. The temple at Munneswaram to give its full name, Vadivambiga Sametha Munna Nathaswamy temple, has a better tradition of antiquity than any other Hindu temple in Sri Lanka. It had been held, it is said by the Hindus for many centuries past as one of the most important ancient shrines of this land.¹

In Sri Lanka, as Sir Paul Peiris has stated "long before the arrival of Vijaya there were five recognized Iswarams which claimed and received the adoration of all India and named Thiruketheeswaram and Thandeswaram near Mannar, Tirukkoneswaram near Trincomalee, Nakuleswaram near Kankesanturai and Munneswaram near Chilaw." "The name Munneswaram indicates that it is the oldest of all the Ishwara temples."³ Munneswaram temple was mentioned by one of the Sinhalese poets of the 15th century, the author of the *Kokila Sandesya* in the time of popular King Parakrama Bahu VI of Kotte (1412 A.D. - 1467 A.D.), when the bird messenger traveling from Matara to Jaffna passes this temple.⁴ Since this shrine is mentioned in *Kokila Sandesaya*, the origins of this temple go back to a period very much prior to the reign of Parakramabahu VI.

The temple flourished during the reign of this king and his descendants until 1528 A.D. King Parakrama Bahu VI of Kotte and his descendants gifted several villages and paddy lands for its maintenance. Interestingly a *sannas* (deed) to this effect is still seen on the outer wall of the main shrine room and its legality was upheld in the Chilaw courts.

According to tradition, at Munnessaram during a period when the Brahmins of Munnessaram temple is said to have ruled Chilaw and Puttalam Districts in the name of the goddess Sakthi (Pathini), coins known in the country as 'pincers coin' (Tamil - Kuraddu Kasu; Sinhalese Andu Massa) were minted. The shape of the coin was that of a pair of pincers, hence the name. On the outer side of one of its forks or handles was an inscription which with some difficulty, was found to be in Chola grantham, the reading of which was, is "Parasurama".⁵

Simon Casie Chetty gives a description of this temple as in 1834 as follows: "it is a place of great antiquity, and is chiefly remarkable for an old temple built of sand stones and chunnam, roofed over with the same material in the form of an arch, having at the west end a small dome, surmounted with a copper vase originally gilt. On the walls of this temple there are some inscriptions in the Grantha character, but so much worn out by time that they are scarcely legible. The temple is surrounded by a mud wall, within which is a well providing water for ablution".⁶

The Munneswaram temple, which is situated along the Chilaw-Kurunegala road is referred to as "the Great temple" (Periya kovil in Tamil & Maha devala in Sinhala) around which there are four other small temples of great antiquity and of much historical interest. At the entrance of this temple along the north-east direction a Ganesha shrine called Vettai Thirumada Nalla Vinayaka temple is located.

Sri Munneswara Khsethtra Vinayaka temple is a Ganesha temple along the north eastern direction, surrounded by the paddy fields generally called "Vele Ganadevi" or "Vayal (Kedhara, Kalaththu) Pillayar" temple. The temple of Aiyanayaka (Aiyanar) is situated along the south-east direction to the main temple. The famous Badhra Kali temple is located along the southern direction to the main temple.

The Vettai Thirumada Nalla Vinayaka temple is managed by the descendants of the ancestor Muthuraakku achchary who lead the team in the restoration of the main temple during 18th century. Until the recent past, the officiating priests who perform the puja

ceremonies at the main temple also performed the daily puja ceremonies at this Vettai Thirumada Nalla Vinayaka temple in the mornings just after the puja at 7.30 a.m at the main temple.

The priests who perform the puja ceremonies at the Badhra Kali temple are those who come down traditionally from generation to generation through pedigree. The pujas at Aiyanayaka temple are performed by Sinhala kapuralas and their descendents, from time immemorial.

Any body without any discrimination of gender, caste, religion can perform their puja ceremonies at the Sri Munneswara Khesethra Vinayaka temple. Before the commencement of the flag hoisting ceremony for the annual festival, at the main temple, the officiating priest who would be the chief priest for the festival, together with others perform special puja rituals at this Sri Munneswara Khsethtra Vinayaka temple. Apart from this, before commencing any extraordinary events or unique ceremonies of the main temple, special pujas are performed at this temple by the priests of the main temple.

Tradition invests Munneswaram with a degree of sanctity and antiquity which cannot be surpassed by other Hindu temples in Sri Lanka. In fact, it occupies a position which is unique in many ways. It has played a vital role in the development of the religious and cultural traditions especially of the Hindus living in the island over a long period of time. As in the days of the Kotte kingdom, Munneswaram still continues to be a focal point of Hindu - Buddhist interaction. The temple is supported and patronized by Buddhists also who could be seen at the temple in large numbers during the festival seasons. There has always been free access for all visitors to the temple although the Vedic and Agamic forms of worship are observed here much more meticulously than at any other Hindu temple in the island.⁷

The 'Stupi' (vimanam above the garbhgrha or moolasthaana) was constructed in the 17th century on the instructions of King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe of Kandy. Some of the main idols installed for worship at this temple are very ancient and were there before the temple was

ruined by the Portuguese in 1578 A.D. Some of these icons were recovered accidentally from the well inside the temple courtyard (Thirumanjana well) when it was re-dug, where these idols were found carefully hidden by the pious devotees for safety reasons. This prevented these idols from falling into the hands of intolerant alien zealots bent on a course of destruction of all idols.

Siva is worshipped here, under the title of "Muniyiswara" or "Iswara the Penitent" but the shrine is particularly sacred to his consort "Parvathi", whose figure is said to have been originally discovered in a pool of water in the neighbourhood.⁸ There are figures of nearly all the deities of Hindu mythology, amongst which, the one with six heads and twelve hands, representing "Skanda" in his marital character (form), was presented to the temple by an ancient king of the coast of Malabar. A grand festival is held at this temple during the month of August for eighteen days.⁹

Munneswaram was referred to by a variety of different names such as Monicarrao, Munnessaram, Manjacio, Moneswaram, Mooneseram, Monocera, Monuseram, Municerai, Muneswaran, Remonecero, Monneseram, Muniyaiswara, Monni'svaram, Munneswaram, Munnessaram, Moneceram, Monicerao, Monisseram, Muneccerao, Municeram, Municirao, Munisserao, Munessaram, Munnesvaram, Muniswaram, Munnicuvaram and Munnaeseram during different periods of time.¹⁰

Munneswaram which is sometimes called Munnesaram by the Hindus in modern times is however, referred to in the inscription as Monnisvaram. The contemporary Sinhalese text has the form Munnesarama. The form Monnisvarama is not altogether inexplicable and a clue for its explanation may be found in some of the expressions found in South Indian inscriptions (Annual Report on Epigraphy (ARE) Madras, No.229 of 1916) Monnaiapar and Monnaippiran are names that occur in medieval South Indian Inscriptions. The exact significance of the term Monnisvarar could be a compound of the words Monnai and Isvarar. This expression may signify either a temple of Siva constructed by a dignitary who had the name beginning with the element 'monnai' or a temple situated in the locality of Monnai. It is even probable that the name

was introduced by settlers from South India who were familiar with such a name in their original homeland. Another explanation is that Monnesvaram is a corruption of the name Munnisvaram. (CTI, pt.I, p.39) The name Munnisvaram could be explained as a combination of the words muni and isvaram and would denote a temple of Siva, the foremost of sages.¹¹

The *Dakshinakailasa Mahatmiya* in its 15th and 16th chapters gives a detailed description about this temple. According to a myth recorded in the *Dakshinakailasa Mahatmiya*, A Sanskrit work glorifying the temples of Sri Lanka, Lord Rama has worshipped at this shrine.¹²

The account is summarized as follows: Sri Rama, after having vanquished the mighty Ravana, started his return journey towards Ayodhya his capital by "*Pushpaka Vimaana*," the air-chariot, accompanied by Sita, Lakshmana, Vibhishana and several others. The "*Brahmahathi Dhosha*" which arose as a result of Ravana Samhara (killing of Ravana) assumed the form of a dark shadow following him. When the air-chariot was passing over the location of Munneswara Kshethra (temple), Rama felt that the "*Brahmahathu Dhosha*" was leaving. Rama was astonished over this strange feeling, which he realized was due to some unknown divine reasons. Rama and others descended on to the ground. All had ablutions at the sacred Siva theertham (holy waters) which had the efficacy of conferring supreme bliss, absolving one of all sins and securing one from the power of evil. Rama, on the sacred Wednesday synchronous with the second day of the fortnight of the waxing moon in June, enshrined the Swarna Linga at Munneswaram and consecrated it with appropriate religious rituals. He set at naught the evil influence of "*Brahmahathi Dhosha*" and proceeded on his journey towards Ayodhya.

According to another myth in the same *Dakshinakailasa Mahatmiya*, sage Vyasa worshipped at this temple.¹³ He had in mind the welfare of the world as a whole and therefore established a shrine for worship that could give absolution for all. The site of the temple is found on the coast of Cape Comorin to the south of Ramesvaram, the north-west of Kataragama and on the south-west of Konesvaram. This temple here is referred to as Kailasa and stands

unique among other temples of Sri Lanka and is known by the name Munneswaram temple. He installed a Siva linga and worshipped here. Linga is the symbol of worship of Hindus. (Lingam means symbol). This symbol the lingam is broad in the middle and conical towards the top. This is in the form of a flame. In Hindu philosophy the God is formless. Other forms of worship are also adopted by the Hindus to grace the souls for the easy comprehension of the Divine and liberation, the God appeared in the form of a flame. This flame is worshiped as a lingam in stone and as other forms that make the worship meaningful and easier to grasp. This is considered more sacred by Hindus. This is the only shrine which is capable of destroying all the sins committed at Kasi.

Like other ancient Siva temples, there are many theories steeped in myth and mythology about the origin of the temple. Tradition claims a hoary antiquity to Munnesvaram but its origins are obscure.¹⁴

King Kulakkottan, the son of the emperor Vararamadeva Maharajah who was a descendant of Manu Neethikanda Cholan visited Sri Munneswaram temple in the 512th year of the Kaliyuga. He felt that the entire structure needed complete restoration. He improved the different shrines, cleared the tanks and built steps for them. He invited his guru Neelakanda Sivachariyar and other Brahmin priests splendidly versed in the Vedas, to perform a Consecration ceremony at this temple on an auspicious occasion.

In order to perform the daily religious rituals and to conduct the social functions, he brought the appropriate people from Madurai, Karaikkal, Tiruchchappali, Coodaloor, and Marungur. They were of different occupations such as brahmins, velalas, merchants, carpenters, sculptors, flutists, oil merchants, pall-bearers, cuisiniers, spinners, weavers, wood-cutters, washermen, fishermen, potters, drummers, smiths of iron, tin, copper, silver, gold, and gems, etc. and allowed them to settle down in the vicinity of the temple.

For the supervision of the services of these people, the king appointed a prince of Madurai named Thaniunnappupalan of the lineage of the moon-god (Chandra kula) and consecrated him the ruler of Munneswaram.

The new chief Thaniunnappupalan summoned the citizens of the area and advised them to observe the rules and regulations regarding the payment of taxes charged for the conduct of festivals and other related religious ceremonies. He cleared the land of about ten square miles around the temple area, which was a huge jungle and entrusted the land to the citizens for cultivation, the product of which he directed should go to the services of the temple. Having accomplished this, Thaniunnappupalan summoned the chiefs of that area to a conference in which he addressed them thus "Let me proclaim to you the details of the architectural and ecclesiastical undertakings, I have realized by the grace of Sri Vinayagar, Sri Muunnesvararar, Sri Vadivalagi Amman and Shanmugar. I shall let you know the different works assigned to the service men."

Thaniunnappupalan who was in charge of the temple area, alienated the land belonging to the temple to sixty four villages. He chose twelve leaders and awarded the title of **Chandrasekara Mudaliar** to the first, **Pattankatti Korala** to the second and **Aththu Korala** to the rest. He settled the first two that is **Chandrasekara Mudaliar** and **Pattankatti Korala** at Munneswaram and announced that they and their successors should be in charge of conducting the annual festivals. He settled the other ten **Aththu Koralas** in the villages Pampala, Pahala Piramanthaluwa, Kokkavila, Thampala, Suruvila, Pallama, Thahampawa, Mandalana, Mikulama and Ugampitiya. He entrusted them to collect the income and relevant taxes from the citizens of the villages for the maintenance of the temple and to impel the people to provide the necessary provisions required during the festival season.¹⁵

The endowments made by kings, princes and pious devotees

King Parakramabahu VI (1410 A.D. – 1462 A.D.) who was ruling from his capital Jayawardenapura paid a visit to this temple in 1448 A.D., during the 38th year of his reign after consecration.¹⁶ He completed the renovation of the temple, made a donation of lands to the temple and the priests and directed that a monthly allowance be made from the state coffers for the daily performance of pujas. He made an inscription relating to his services in detail on the tenth day of the lunar month of October in the year 1369 of

the Salivahana era corresponding to 1448 A.D. Even now the stone inscription could be seen on the outer wall of the main shrine, but reading of the content has become difficult due to the recent renovations. When the king made this endowment, the chief priest was one Neelakanda Sivachchariyar and his brother was the chief administrator of this temple.

The translation of an extract, from the Mahavansa by M.A. Mutukisna, Mudlr, says "that Sri Sangabodi Wathama Tripuvana Sakkara Wickrama Sakkrewarthi Sri Prakkruma Bahu who resided in the city Jayawardena castle and who was crowned in the Christian year 1404, caused this engraving on the stone for the Munnaeseram Temple to be made and given in the 38th year of his reign, in the month of October on the 10th day of the waxing moon in the Hindu year Salivakana Sakaptham 1362, and the year of Buddha 1983 equal to the Christian year 1440 A.D."¹⁷

King Parakramabahu IX (1509 A.D – 1528 A.D.) bearing the title of Kalikala Sarvagyna Pandhitha in the year 2060 of the Buddhist era corresponding to 4519 of the Kaliyuga and to 1517 A.D. made a pilgrimage to this temple and worshipped Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu. After attending the puja ceremonies he presented a copper plate inscription giving details of the donation of some lands in the villages with Mala Ela on the east, the three boundary stones in Madampe on the south, Manamatota canal on the west and the canal running into Munneswaram on the north as boundaries, to the chief priest of the temple.¹⁸

King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe (1747 A.D. – 1782 A.D.) who ruled the Kandyan Kingdom from his capital at Kundasala inquired about the destruction of all the buildings of this shrine by the Portuguese. He invited sculptors from South India and the reconstruction work was done under his personal supervision. He had the super structure rebuilt in the 1750s. The Kalasam (Kotha) on top is made of silver, a fine work of art and culture displaying the best of South Indian Hindu architecture. He performed the consecration ceremony in the year 1753 A.D. He made arrangements for the performance of daily rituals and pujas and the annual perahera festival and donated lands as stated by copper plate inscription dated the 14th day of August 1675 of the Salivahana era corresponding to 1753 A.D.¹⁹

“By virtue of a reply of His Excellency the Governor of this island bearing No.1299 dated July 8th 1875” Brahmasri Kumarasamy Kurukkal became the chief priest of the temple. This was set out in a power of attorney granted by the Governor in 1878 (Exhibit D3). Brahmasri Kumarasamy Kurukkal was chosen by the twelve persons who claimed to be Trustees mentioned in the case No.20, 181, Chilaw, to be incumbent in place of Sinnatamby Kapurala who was old, sickly and incompetent. He was the predecessor of Sockkalingam Kapurala. Brahmasri Kumarasamy Kurukkal got the villagers together and broke down the ruins and restored the temple and performed the consecration ceremony in 1798 of the Salivahana era corresponding to 1875 A.D. According to evidence in a case at Chilaw court (402-DC, 7306 - D-18) a list of temple property movable and immovable was produced by Brahmasri Sundaram Kurukkal of this temple.

Brahmasri Somaskanda Kurukkal (1886 A.D. - 1940 A.D.) extended the work of Brahmasri Kumarasamy Kurukkal and performed the consecration (Kummbhabhisheka) ceremony in 1919 A.D.²⁰

Brahmasri Balasubramanya Kurukkal (1898 A.D. - 1968 A.D.) organised the consecration (Kummbhabhisheka) ceremony in 01.07.1963. Some renovations took place again and consecration (Kummbhabhisheka) ceremonies were held on 04.07.1991 and in 25.05.2005.

Fate of the temple during the Portuguese period

The temple held in veneration by Buddhists as well as Hindus, is one of considerable antiquity. The first authentic record appears to be a Royal grant of lands to the temple in the year 1448 by means of a sannas (deed) inscribed on its walls. This inscription appears to have been removed from an older building, and built into the present one.

In 1596 the temple is said to have been sacked and destroyed by the Portuguese, and after being rebuilt in the interval, to have been destroyed a second time about the year 1600 A.D.²¹

Thereafter there is a record on a copper plate dated 1675 A.D., in the Government Archives of a further Royal grant of lands. The

temple, however, appears in the course of time to have fallen into disrepair, and it is stated that in 1804 A.D. brahmin priests ceased to officiate there. Evidence is produced of official correspondence in that year dealing with the area of the land given to the temple, and the amount of paddy to which the priests of the temple were entitled. Between 1894 A.D. and 1873 A.D. the affairs of the temple seem to have suffered still greater neglect, during which time the buildings naturally suffered.

The Architectural style and design of the temple is unique. The whole extent of the shrine is enclosed within an area 120 feet by 110 feet in dimension. The nucleus or the central part of the temple is called the *garbhagrha* (Moolasthan). The *garbhagrha*, the *ardhamandapa* and the *mahamandapa* have entrances towards the eastern direction and all of them are constructed in granite and is said to be built in 14th or 15th centuries. The structures of the buildings of this shrine have never been investigated and commented upon by professional academics qualified in art, history or archaeology. There is evidence to show that the *garbhagrha* (Moolasthan) the *ardhamandapa* and the *mahamandapa* all belong to an earlier period. Four rows of tall pillars made of granite are seen supporting the roof of the *mahamandapa*. The pillars on the northern and southern ends are built into the side walls. The architecture of the pillars in the two middle rows have been carved so as to project the appearance of alternating parts with rectangular and octagonal shapes. The whole structure is roofed and ceiled with simple plain slabs of granite. A few carvings are seen on the roof of the stone slab of the *mahamandapa*. The emblem of double fishes and the emblem of a single fish is seen prominently carved on the roof of the *mahamandapa* of this shrine. The carving of the fish or double carp is generally accepted as the dynastic emblem of the Pandiyan kingdom. In addition there is a stature of a human figure in one of the granite pillars, the identity of which is not known.

The inscription of Parakramabahu VI at Sri Munneswaram temple

The inscription of Parakramabahu VI at the temple of Sri Munneswaram records the grant of money to the temple and to the priests by the king. It throws some light on the history of this temple.

The inscription is engraved in an admixture of Tamil and Grantha characters. The epigraph begins with a conventional description of the king's descent, title and concludes with a Sanskrit sloka.

The translation of an inscription seen in the temple at Monnisvaram and a note by G.M. Fowler, published in the Journal of the Ceylon branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1887 Volume X. No. 35 (Page 118 - 119) is as follows:

"I have examined the Monni'svaram inscription several times and much of it illegible. It has, I think, been removed from an older building and built into the present one. Several of the letters near the joints of the stones are covered by the mortar, which would not be the case if it had been cut in situ. The inscription runs along a kind of cornice, and consists of only four lines, extending for about thirty or forty feet. Its height from the ground is about four feet. In digging a tank near the temple two pieces of sculpture were found: a bull's head and an image of (?) "Suppiramaniyan" These did not appear to be very ancient. There is a case in the Chilaw court, I believe, in which the inscription is evidence."

The translation is as follows.

"Let happiness be! On the tenth day of the waxing moon in October, in the thirty-eighth year of his reign, His Majesty Sri Parakrama Bahu*+ descendant of the illustrious family of Sri Sangabodhi, worshipper of the lotus feet of Sri Samantaputra (Buddha) of a Solar race, King of Kings, serpent to the royal and mercantile races, and emperor of the three worlds, invited to the Jayawardhana Kotte* the Nampimar (priests) who officiate before the god of Monnisvaram, and addressing himself to the Brahmin Pandit, who is proficient in all sciences amongst them inquired into the circumstances of that temple and bestowed the lands which formerly belonged to the priests, lying within the district of Monnisvaram in the holy name, and as the property of the god. As pusai lands he granted to the priests 22 amanams of field at lippadeniya, and 30 amanams in Kottapitiya to Mutanmai (chief priests) and 8 amanams of field in Tittakkadai, with the inhabited places and forests appertaining to this. In addition to the offering of 3 nails of rice, he granted 30 fanams to the priests per mensem and 11 fanams to each of

the Mutanmais (chief priests) for the daily offering of vegetable curries, greens, and perfumes, to be enjoyed from generation to generation, while the sun and moon exist, as Sarvamaniyam (free gift) to the god of Monnisvasram, which is hereby decreed to be irrevocable. Those who cause any damage to the land will be guilty of Panchamahapatakam (the five great sins) while those who take an interest in it will attain heavenly bliss.

Here follows a Sulokam the translation of which is: To this effect this was caused to be inscribed by Parakraman through the grace of Monnisvaram, who is an ocean of wisdom in Saivasim and lord of all the different classes of gods".

*+ Sri Parakrama Bahu VI, 1410 A.D. - 1452 A.D.

* The modern Kotte

As shown by S.Pathmanathan, G.M.Fowler accepts that much of the inscription was illegible to him but he gives the translation of almost the whole text. We are therefore led to imagine that he had access to a copy of a record preserved presumably in manuscript form by the temple authorities.²²

An article on this inscription by A. Velupillai has been published in 1971.²³ He has used the estampage prepared by the Archaeological Department of the Government of Ceylon and a photo copy of the estampage and a transliteration of the text of the inscription has been published for the first time. (An inscription from the Munneswaram Siva Temple CTI.Pt, pp 37-43).

A copy of the text of the manuscript of this inscription is found in the Oriental manuscripts collection of the British Museum (British Museum Oriental manuscripts. 6616, published by S.Pathmanathan in 1972, Tamil ccacanankalum ila varalarru arayacciyum, Tamil Epigraphy and studies on Ceylon History) Ilantera (Colombo, 1972). This gives almost the entire text of this inscription, with no gaps except in one instance. This contains also a paraphrase of the text which helps to interpret and translate the obscure passages in the text which are archaic in style and obscure in meaning. The text as found in the manuscript mostly confirms to the original and if it is

the product of the decipherment of the stone inscription it represents a most successful attempt at decipherment of the epigraph.²⁴

Role of Portuguese at this temple

The arrival of Portuguese in Sri Lanka was merely an accident. Their arrival was a rude quirk of destiny. In 1505 A.D. when Vira Parakrama Bahu VIII (1484 A.D - 1509 A.D) was the king of Kotte, Senasammata Vikramabahu (1469 A.D. - 1511 A.D.) was the king of the Hill country and Pararajasekaran (1478 A.D. - 1519 A.D.) was the Tamil king, in the North; a Portuguese fleet, under the command of Captain, Major Don Lourenco de Almeida, forced by winds and waves was tossed into Cali (Galle) the harbour, located on the Southern coast. He learnt that this was the famous island of Celaio (Ceylon) and he sailed on to Colombo, the port in the Kotte Kingdom.

News of the arrival of a strange fleet reached the king. Rajavaliya, a Buddhist chronicle, described the arrival of the Portuguese as follows: "There is in our harbour of Colombo, a race of people, fair of skin and comely withal. They don jackets and hats of iron: rest not a minute in one place, but walk here and there. They eat hunks of stone (bread) and drink blood (wine). They give two or three pieces of gold and silver for one fish or one lime. The report of their cannon is louder than the thunder when it bursts upon the rock of Yugandhra."

Hearing the news of the arrival of the strangers, the King decided to receive them. Messengers were sent with gifts of fruits to receive the aliens. Don Lourenco was pleased with the goodwill gesture of the King. He dispatched Fernao Cutrim, one of his captains of the fleet, as his envoy to Kotte. However, the Portuguese envoy did not meet the King nor did he have an opportunity to converse with him, but he was given the assurance that the King would be pleased to form an alliance with the Portuguese.

Subsequently, Don Lourenco chose Payo de Souza as his envoy to meet the King of Kotte and negotiate a treaty. At an audience with the King de Souza proposed a treaty. Accordingly, the King undertook to give tribute of four hundred bahars of cinnamon every year. The

Portuguese agreed to protect and defend the ports of the King. The treaty heralded the entry of the alien forces in the political arena of the country. Entry of the Portuguese changed the destiny of Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

One interesting point noted was that Portugal was established in 1139 A.D. It is ironic that at this time Polonnaruwa was at its peak. Portugal was a small coastal nation which developed like an anthill in 100 years into an empire. Father Manuel de Morais said in 1552 A.D. that Sinhala pagodas were richer than the richest churches in Lisbon.

Filipe de Oliveriya, the Portuguese Governor, was acclaimed by Portuguese authorities for destroying more than 500 Hindu Temples. Brutal acts of vandalism and destruction carried out by the ruthless Portuguese were uncontrollable. The destruction of famous Hindu temples such as the Kandasamy Kovil (Nallur), Kailasanathar Temple (Nallur), Munneswaram Temple (Chilaw), Vishnu Temple (Devinuwera), Tirukethieswaram Temple (Matota) and Tirukkonesar Temple (Trincomalee), caused great frustration, dissension and restlessness in the hearts and minds of the devotees. A few of the well known places of worship that were destroyed by the Portuguese were, the Sacred Temple of the Tooth, Kotte, the Vihara Kande vihare, the Kotte Raja maha vihara, the Attanagalle vihare, the Nawagamuwe temple and vihare, monasteries of learning such as the Totagamuwe temple and pirivena, the Sunethradevi temple and pirivena, the Kelani vihare, the Devinuwara temple and devale, the Maha Saman devale, Ratnapura, the Munneswaram temple, the Madampe Thanivelle devale, the Naga vihare Kotte, the Kali kovil, Kalutara, the Tondamannar kovil the Mannar kovil. It is recorded that as many as 500 kovils were destroyed in Jaffna alone. Oliveriya also burnt down "Saraswathy Mahal", - the oldest museum and the library, that housed precious and the most valuable historical documents, depicting the origin, history, literature, arts, science, medicine, culture, civilization and other details of a proud ancestry.

Meticulous keepers of records, Portuguese writers like Queyroz, Trinidad, Perniola, Barros, do Couto provided much information. Father Fernao De Queyroz is the author of "The Temporal and

Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon". He was a Portuguese Christian clergyman born at Amarante in Portugal in the Province of Douro Minho, in 1617, and on December 26, 1631, he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Coimbra. Later he set out for the Indian Missions, arrived in Goa, India in 1635. It appears that he began to write the book by about in 1671 and completed it 1686. After a continuous residence of fifty three years in India he died in Cochin on 01st March 1645. The work consisted of six books, and Father S.G. Perera, who translated the book from Portuguese to English, compiled the books into three volumes. The English translation was first published by the Ceylon Government Press, in 1930. Father S.G. Perera in his preface declared that the book to be second only to the Mahavamsa in its value for the history of Ceylon. The descriptions given in the book are the most despicable account regarding the activities of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka.

The Portuguese Encounter - A Reign of Terror, from 1505 to 1658

At a seminar held in Colombo in 2005 at the Bandaranaike, Memorial International Convention Hall the following were stated: It was a scholarly odyssey into the past of Portuguese murder, brutality, destructiveness, religious bigotry, and absolutist suppression for the annihilation of Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka. This massive massacre of 'unbelievers' pagans, heretics and infidels and the destruction of places of worship of Buddhists and Hindus, was carried out by the Portuguese conquerors of Ceylon between 1505 and 1658. Thousands of idols, images, pictures and religious items were smashed to powder and temples and devales plundered of their gold, ornaments, jewellery, and clothes before they were destroyed. In Goa the speakers said that what was left was only in museums and memoirs.

'The Portuguse Period' the original document of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, was translated into English by V. Pernoila says that "when I landed in Ceilao, Jafanapatao was in revolt against Philipe de Oliveria, the Governor of that kingdom. Men and women were all against him, and he had only a boy of fourteen years on his side. Phillipe withdrew into a temple which had a narrow enclosure three

yards in height. He had but a small number of Portuguese with him, for the lascarins (native soldiers) who had helped him to conquer that kingdom, had been sent back by him to their military bases outside the kingdom. The temple was besieged by thousands of men. But he acted with such courage and valour that he not only defeated them, but even opened the doors inviting them to enter, though he had not one man to a hundred of them. The General, hearing of this, and suspecting the extremity to which Phillipe de Oliveira had been reduced, sent Luis Teiceira de Macedo of the Seven Corlas to his relief. Luis Teixeira and his men entered the heart of the Kingdom committing such great cruelties, cutting children in two and severing the breasts of women, a treatment which struck awe and terror into the people, that he was unopposed till he effected a junction with Phelipe de Oliveira who received him with transports of joy. Then they set out together in search of the enemy and put them to flight, killing many and imprisoning others in the various encounters in which ours were always victorious. The leaders of the revolt, thinking that all was now over with Portuguese rule, sent a message to a prince of the ancient royal family who had retired to the mainland, inviting him to come and take possession of his kingdom. He came with great joy, accompanied by Brahmins. On reaching Jafanapatao he withdrew to a temple till the people came to give him a solemn entry. The poor man was deceived in this, for Phelipe de Oliveira and Luis Teixeira, coming to know what was going on, carried out an attack. Not a man escaped; all were either killed or captured. The prince and one of the chief personages were sent to Colombo, where this news was brought to us in the beginning of April (5th or 7th)".²⁵

He further says that, "Remonecerao (Munneswaram) is also well populated not only because of the vicinity to Chilao from which it is only a half league away, but also for the fertility of its soil. Since it belonged to the temple and to the Brahmins it has always been one of the best. Beginning from Remonecerao (Munneswaram) and following the order of the journey we made, one has to know that in this town there was a temple very famous among the gentiles of the whole of India, the goal of many pilgrimages in the past from the whole island of Ceilao and from other regions outside of it, with a

concourse of people varying according as the times were propitious or not. This temple always had extensive lands and rich revenues, and a great number of people addicted to its service, as were many Brahmins to whom food had to be supplied, or better, who lived on those revenues; many dancing girls performed at festivals and players accompanied the worship. Of old, according to tradition, this temple was well known and venerated among all the gentiles as the god was supposed to have been born in the very place where they built the temple. This was the reason for the veneration and respect shown to it.^{25A}

The destruction of Munneswaram temple by Portuguese

The original document of the Catholic church in Sri Lanka, The Portuguese Period translated into English by Perniola says that, some years earlier, Father Provincial came here and spoke to Father Lambert about destroying the temple and pulling it down, and thus do away completely with all traces of that infernal 'idolatry'. But they did not have hand spikes, and even if Father Provincial were to bring them from Colombo, they might fail. Father Lambert (Fr. Lambert Ruiz), as an experienced person, told him that such an undertaking could not be accomplished without handspikes and without many people.²⁶

P.E. Pieris says in his, Ceylon; The Portuguese Era Volume I, "Numerous inscriptions bore record to the wealth which the devotion of successive kings had dedicated to the service of the temple, and the sixty two villages of the district to which it gave its name, comprised its separate domain. Much plunder was anticipated and the Portuguese pressed eagerly on. The Attapattu Mudaliyar was however on the watch and barred the way, but the Sinhalese were driven back with the loss of Midaliyar himself, whose head was sent to Colombo. They then sacked the temple, which they razed to the ground. Loaded with loot they turned back to Colombo, taking with them four panguals of areca as well. (Chapter IXp. 199ff)".

Munneswaram temple fell on evil days with the decline in the power and influence of the Kotte and Kandian monarchy and the

corresponding rise of Portuguese power in the kingdom of Kotte. The Portuguese soldiers under the command of Diogo de Mello had this temple razed to the ground when they ravaged the lands of Chilaw and Negombo in 1578 A.D.²⁷

The ancient temple and the village suffered much during the Portuguese time

Pieris states that, "in A.D. 1600 The Portuguese showed no compassion in the reprisals they exacted. Over as a thousand villagers were taken prisoner tortured unsparingly and employed to discover the whereabouts of the wealth and without success, and finally the great temple of Munnessaram was razed to the ground" (Chapter XIV page 348).²⁸

Destruction by the Portuguese and reconstruction

Perniola in his translation of the original manuscript says that, a mile inland from Chilao there is a temple, formally well known and very rich, for it possessed one hundred and six villages. It was much venerated, for they believed that their god was born there. This god was a block of stone, like marble, of a man's height, placed over another larger and square block, which they call lingam, and I think that it is the same infamous and indecent divinity as Priapus. The general gave the temple to us. Father Provincial, going there, ordered a church to be built in honour of St. Paul, remodeling the building according to our own style, and to destroy the infamous stone, which the Brahmins maintained was impossible to destroy, as the god was born there and would bring down evil on anyone who dared to lay hands on it. But without more delay than was required to fetch two iron bars from the fort to destroy it, the idol was brought down, exposing the falsehood, superstition and deceit into which Brahmins had led the people.²⁹

The original document of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, The Portuguese Period which was translated into English by V. Pernicola says that, "We wrote last year that the famous idol of Monoceram was completely overthrown and the infamous stone shattered which, according to the blind credulity of the gentiles, had sprung

up from the earth, just as it was raising itself two cubits above the ground. They maintained that it could not be removed from there, without bringing down punishment on any one who dared to lay hands on it. But as it has been publicly overthrown from the accustomed shrine and demolished, people despise it, and the wiles of the Brahmins are exposed.³⁰

Speaking of the destruction of temples, a misunderstanding has crept in on account of the word pagoda. This word has been taken as signifying a temple. It does not signify a temple, but it signifies also a statue of a deity.³¹

The Portuguese, after their arrivals in Sri Lanka in 1505 A.C. began a campaign of forced conversions and destruction of many Buddhist and Hindu temples. They destroyed this temple completely in 1578 A.C. all except the basement. One of the faithful, no less excellent by nobility than conspicuous for religiosity, vehemently inflamed against idols, unearthed four of them which had been buried in the ground at the time of the conquest of the island. He took them and burned them. One of them, named Perumal, is most famous in the whole island. Its monstrous figure is fashioned out of brass, and is represented seated on a bronze peacock, with a coiled hooded serpent between his teeth. On his head he has tiaras with many crowns; he has four hands, hurling as many bolts of lightning.

The great disaster to Buddhism and to Hinduism was the destruction of their temples and places of worship. "We charge you to discover all the idols by means of diligent officers, to reduce them to fragments and utterly consume them" wrote one king of Portugal to his viceroy (Bailey, Ceylon p.42). His policy was faithfully executed in Ceylon. The temples at Nawagamuwa, Mapitigama, Wattala, Dewinuwara and Munneswaram were destroyed and some of them plundered (Queryroz, pp.714, 441, 427). A Franciscan report claims that more than 400 idols were destroyed (BNI, FG 177, f.6b).³²

Fate of the villages and temple lands of Munneswaram

Original Documents translated into English by V.Perniola, explains that "to establish a college in Colombo I decide and bestow on them the following lands and villages of the temple of Municerao and all

their appurtenances, pasture grounds and dependencies, to have and to hold fully as and in the manner in which they were possessed at the time of the gentile kings of the island... I also notify all to observe and fulfill this fully and to have it observed and fulfilled to the letter, given in Colombo on the 20th day of the month of October. By order of His Majesty through Dom Jeronymo de, Azavedo captain general of the Conquest of the island of Ceilao and of its kingdoms and of the lands of the south".³³

On the 22nd October 1605, Dom Jeronymo de, Azavedo captain general of the Conquest of the island of Ceilao and of its kingdoms and of the lands of the south according to the original document of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, The Portuguese Period translated into English by V. Perniola, gave them letters patent in the name of His Majesty and by order of the viceroy, by which he granted them and destined for the foundation and maintenance of the College of Colombo, the village of Municeram. In ancient times, this village belonged to the temple and enjoyed great privileges.³⁴

According to "a letter of Philip II to J. Countinho, Lisbon, 7th March 1619 (Dr. vol. VI pp, 155-157) Antao Vaz Freire, who was the controller of revenue in the island of Ceilao, wrote to me by the, mail of last year informing me that the Religious Society, according to what he had heard from one of them, claimed that I should give them permission to erect a college in that island. Antao Vas Freire mentioned that he found that there was no income enough to allow the Friare of St. Francis to erect new colleges, and the Friare ought to have the preferences since Dom Joao Perapandar, king of that island had endowed them with the rents of the temples of the kingdom of Cotta for the sake of erecting colleges. If there was no income enough for the Franciscans, there was still less for those of the society of Jesus to erect a new college, unless I were to allot to them for this purpose the big village of Monecerao, which had belonged to the temple, together with the lands of the island of Cardiva which stretches from Putalao to Chilao and which was given for the support of the college of Cochín by Dom Jernimo de Azevedo when he was general of Ceilao. It seemed reasonable to Antao Vas Freire that if the Fathers of the Society of Jesus were left

in possession of all those villages, there was no reason why a new college should not be erected with their revenue."³⁵

During the Portuguese era the Jesuits held sixty two villages belonging to the temple of Munnesseram which yielded over 500 pardaos of three larins each, and sixteen Gabadagan in the three Korales, yielding 400 parados all of which were claimed on a grant from de Azavedo and the revenue from which was devoted to the purpose of their College in Colombo.³⁶

The letter of the King of Portugal dated 28th March, 1608, refers to a grant by de Azavedo to the Jesuits for the College at Cochin of "the lands adjoining the harbour of Quilao as far as the harbour of Caradiva, being bounded by the Channel which runs from the said river as far as Caradiva, the whole forming an island." Quilao is a misprint for Chilao. The grant would include the whole of the Kalpitiya Peninsula and would stretch from Udappuwa, 12 miles from Chilaw, up to Dutch Bay, the Channel being the sheet of water formed by Mundel lake, Puttalam Lake and Dutch Bay (Doc. Rem. I.242). The sixty-two villages of the Munnesseram temple include the entirety of the Munnesseram Pattu which up to date consists of sixty-two villages, though four of them are now subdivided into Ihala and Pahala hamlets.³⁷

Dom Jeronymo de, Azavedo captain general of the Conquest of the island of Ceilao and of its kingdoms and of the lands of the south, withdrew the sixty-two villages which had belonged to the devala at Munnessaram from the Franciscans who had been enjoying them and on 22nd October 1605 granted them to Jesuits.³⁸

Perniola's translation of the Royal decree Lisbon, 10th March 1644 ACE III pp, 144-145 says: "I, the king, bring to the notice of all those who will see this decree that I have considered what Father Francisco Barreto of the Society of Jesus, Procurator General of the Province of Cochim, submitted to me regarding the confirmation of the villages which the College of Columbo possessed in the island of Ceilao. Besides, I also grant them for another nine years the village of Municerao in lieu of the four hundred xerafins which was the allowance paid to the College from the royal revenue. This

grant carries with it the obligation to increase by another four to the number of those who are already working for the conversion of the Seven Corlas, in whose district the village of Municerao is situated.

I order that this decree of gift be carried out and observed notwithstanding any other order to the contrary and the fact that the village of Municerao had already been assigned to the royal revenue. In the book of the accounts and of the revenue of the island of Ceilao the necessary entry must be made according to which the College of Colombo will no longer receive the payment of four hundred *xerafins* as allowance".³⁹

According to letters patent, Colombo, 1st September 1644, ACE III pp. 141-142 it was ordered; "I Dom Joao, by the grace of God, Kings of Portugal.. make known to those who see this letter of compensation, that consider in what is written in the pervious petition of Father Sebastiao da Fonseca of the Society of Jesus, Rector of the College of this city and procurator of the College of Cochim, and what is alleged by him in that petition, I decide and it is my pleasure to bestow for the support of the College of Cochim the village of Monicerao in compensation for the island of Calpeti, which was taken away from it by me express order and instruction, ordering that they should give it the village of Monicerao to hold it in the same way as it had held the island of Calpeti. I make known to the Captain General of the Island and conquest of Ceilao and to the controller of revenue and to the other officials and persons to whom it belongs to take cognizance of it, and order them that they carry this decree and observe it and see to it that others carry it out and observe it fully, just as it is contained in this document, without raising any doubt or making any exception, and that they allow the College to hold and possess that village on the same conditions on which it had held island of Calpeti, and that they put the College in possession of the village of Monicerao, given in Colombo on 2nd September 1644".⁴⁰

Rev. James Cartman, described in his book on "Hinduism in Ceylon", that the pattern of the Hindu temple, whether large or small, is invariably the same. A description given here is of the Isvari

temple (Agamic) at Munneswaram. The holy place, this section of the temple, accessible only to Brahmin priest, is screened off by an orange coloured curtain which is drawn aside during puja. Inside this recess, there is a black linga, behind which a circular brass disc is fixed and he explains in detail about the lay out of the structure. He further narrates that the main courts of the temple, together with the eastern entrance, are linked to a man's body. The Holy Place is the head, and the linga is the powerful light of wisdom. The Courts from the neck and chest; the vahanam is the heart; the Palipeedum the naval; the Kodimaram, the genital organs. The feet are located at the eastern entrance and the tower represents the toes. This temple has four entrances facing east, south, west and north. The main entrance faces east where the lingam faces the 'Sthala Vruksha' (Bo tree) and the cemetery. The statue of Dhakshina moorthy occupies the southern direction of the garbhagraha. Lingothbhava moorthy is positioned on the western side of the garbhagraha and goddess Durga is placed on the northern side of the garbhagraha.⁴¹

Originally there were only three idols namely Dakshinamurthy (in the southern direction), Lingothbhava moorthy (in the western direction), and Durgadevi (in the northern direction) of the outer 'Koshta' space of the garbhagraha of this temple.

Dakshinamurthy, in his aspect as the universal teacher, teaches the secrets of yoga, tantras, yantras, alchemy, magic, occult knowledge, arts and sciences, ancient history and knowledge of the future to the sages and saints, gods and goddesses and his highly qualified devotees. He is called Dakshinamurthy, because he does his teachings sitting on the snowy mountains of Himalayas facing the Indian subcontinent, which is in the southerly direction to him. The images of Dakshinamurthy, depict Siva in a pleasant mood, seated on a high seat, with one leg folded while the other rests on the *Apasmarapurusha*, the deluded self. One of his arms holds a snake or rosary or both in one hand and fire in the other. The snake is a symbol of tantric knowledge and the fire a symbol of enlightenment. Of the remaining two one is in *abhayamudra* (posture of assurance) and the other holds a scripture in *gnanamudra* (posture of presenting knowledge).

Rev. James Cartman further says in his book about Dhakshinamurthy: "On the outer wall of the Holy Place in black stone image, dressed and garlanded, called Teksanamurti, a manifestation of Siva as a hermit. The image has four hands, and at his feet are small images representing his disciples, whilst less than one foot is a demon-like creature, mooyalaka, the evil one. It is obvious that this image receives marked attention by its devotees. At the beginning of the temple festival, a small yellow string is placed over the third hand, and this string remains there for the duration of the festival. The image is frequently redressed. Several steps lead up to the shrine and on one of them forming a kind of fender arrangement, are nine button-like protrusions above the level of the stone. These represent the nine Sakties of Siva and their arrangements is as follows: 1. Yama, 2. Jasitha 3. Rudri 4. Kalabikarani, 6. Balavikarani, 7. Balabrahmadani, 8. Sarvabothadamani, 9. Mononmami".⁴²

It is believed that the Lingothbhava murthy that is placed on the western side of the *garbhagraha* is now seen without a proper basement ('Avadaiyar'). This was the Linga that occupied the *moolasthan* before the destruction of the original temple by the Portuguese. This form is to show the supremacy of Siva over Brahma and Vishnu, the other two *megagraba* in the Hindu Trinity, which makes his creator, preserver and destroyer, three in one. It is interestingly shown by a carving on the stone lingam. This image signifies the importance of Siva in the form of Linga as the Supreme Self, without a beginning and without an end. According to Hindu mythology, Siva once revealed his infinity to Brahma and Vishnu in the form of a pillar of fire that could not be scaled by either of them from one end to the other. As Lingothbhava murthy, Siva appears within the Linga, with four arms, while Brahma and Vishnu adore him from the two sides. At the top is a swan, at the bottom a boar, and in between a flame of fire. It symbolically represents a story told in the *Linga Puranam* about a dispute that took place between Brahma and Vishnu as to who was the superior. Suddenly a flame rose up between them. Brahma, assuming the form of a swan rose up to the top to find the source. Vishnu, assuming the form of a boar delved down into the earth to do the same thing. Neither was successful and it was then that they realized that Siva, represented by the flame, was the most superior.⁴³

Rev. James Cartman has this to say in his book about Lingothbhava moorthy, "Facing the Western entrance is a most interesting conical shaped linga stone, resting on a stone altar. The linga stone itself is more than four feet high and contains the carvings of the Siva flame separating the Swan (Brahma) and the Boar (Vishnu). This linga is called Lingothbava. Near it is a small round stone upon which coconuts are broken. The Linga in garlanded, oil is poured over it, camphor is burnt at its base and gifts of food are made to it".⁴⁴

Durga represents the Divine Mother. She is the energy aspect of the Lord. Without Durga, Siva has no expression and without Siva, Durga has no existence. Siva is the soul of Durga. Durga is identical with Siva. Sakti is the omnipotent power of the Lord, or the Cosmic Energy.

Rev. James Cartman, refers to the drinking of Holy water thus, "On this outer wall of the Holy Place, there is a stone image of Durga, standing upon the head of a buffalo. Below this is a narrow stone channel coming from within the Holy Place itself, and projecting about eighteen inches from the wall. Along this channel flow the water and the milk with which the main image of the Holy Place has been washed. Devotees, standing on the outside of the Holy Place, take some of this liquid in their hands and place it to their lips".⁴⁵

Sakti activates the actions of the Lord Siva through the three attributes of Nature, namely, Sattwa, Rajas and Tams. Knowledge, peace, lust, anger, greed, egoism and pride, are all Her forms. In Devi Sukta of the *Rig Veda Samhita*, 'Vak' (symbolizing speech, the daughter of the sage Anbhirna), realized her identity with the Divine Mother, the Power of the Supreme Lord, which manifests throughout the universe among the gods, among men and beasts and among the creatures of the deep ocean. *Kena Upanishad* says that the Divine Mother provided wisdom to defeat the demons only with the help of the Supreme Lord. The worship of Devi, the universal Mother, leads to the attainment of knowledge of the Self. The story in the *Kena Upanishad* known as the "Yaksha Prasna", supports this view.

Prof. A. Veluppillai in his article titled, "Munnicuvaram (Munnesvaram) Kovil: Its History, Ceremonies and Layout: A brief

history of the Munnicuram kovil," which was published in Uppsala Studeis in the History of Religions (2) 1995, pp. 68-71. Uppsala University, says that, in analyzing these historical events in this kovil, we can say that this kovil has stood as a centre for maintaining the Saiva traditions and agamic ritual systems. Also we are in a position to know the lineage of priesthood that has contributed to the development of this kovil tradition.

Regarding the Munneswaram kovil layout he points out, that this kovil stands as great monument surrounded by various other small shrines. To the south-east of the kovil is one kovil dedicated to Vinayakar (the god who has no Lord above) A kovil dedicated to Aiyanar (deity of reverence) is situated in the northeast corner of the third path-way of the kovil. The Kali (black goddess) kovil stands in the northern part of the chariot pathway and in the southern direction of the outer courtyard of this kovil is situated another Vinayakar kovil. This area is honored greatly by the devotees as a sacred place.

About the structure of this temple he further points out that the kovil that faces to the east consists of three pathways around it. A sacred pond is situated in front of the kovil and a Bo-tree stands by the side of it, glorified as the tree of the kovil (*sthala vrksa*). The main sanctum here is the one which is largest in comparison to other kovils in Ilankai, and the structure above the sanctum (*vimana* the one which is well measured) is also large in proportion. The various architectural aspects of this kovil conform to the prescriptions laid down in the agamas. The garbhagrha and the adjoining hall (*ardha mandapa*) are built in granite stone keeping to the traditional art of kovil building. The Siva linga is installed in the main sanctum of this kovil, which is also large in size. Siva as the undivided causal principle is worshipped in the linga. His more manifest aspects are represented in various other images. The linga represents the male aspect and the *pitha* as a yoni represents the female principle complementing the male principle of linga; both together reflect the Siva-Sakti concept. In Saiva tradition the linga is the most sacred and highly venerated object. Hence Siva linga is installed in the *garbhagrha* 'womb- house' of any Siva kovil.

The *daksina murti* (the god facing the south) is installed in the southern direction of the outer wall of the main sanctum, the sculpture of which is one of the best productions of a skilled artist. The *lingothhava muri* ('the god manifest in the linga') is enshrined in the western wall of the main sanctum. A separate shrine is dedicated to Sakti who faces the south. Separate shrines are allocated for the surrounding deities (*parivara devatas*) such as Vighnesvara ('Lord of Obstacles') Murukan, Turkkai Durga: ('Goddess who is difficult to transgress') Vishnu and Bhairava ('terrific form') Candesvarar is installed in a independent shrine in the northeast of the main sanctum. Lord Nataraja ('Dancing King') is a bronze idol enshrined in a separate hall. A kovil for the nine planets (*navagraha*) also find a place in the hall adjoining the *sthambha mandapa* (flagstaff hall) another special aspect to be mentioned is the installation of the bronze icons of 63 devotees of Siva (Civan-atiyars), in a shrine room. There are other forms of Siva; Candrasekhara murti, (the god with the crescent moon as the ornament in the hair'), Bhiksatana ('roaming beggar'), and Somaskanda ('the god with Uma and Skanda), in bronze are installed for worship.

The various halls (mandapas) add to the magnificent structure of this kovil. Next to the central sanctum is the sacrarium (*ardha mandapa*). This is followed by the *maha-mandapa* (main-hall), *nrtta-mandapa* (dance hall), *Isthambha-mandapa* (flagstaff hall), *Ivasantha-mandapa* (*spring hall*) and *yaga-sala* (sacrifice hall), reflecting the architectural aspect of this kovil. There are six daily ceremonies for worship (pujas) held and various special rituals are performed according to the agamic prescriptions.⁴⁶

Daily pujas and special ceremonies

Puja rituals are preformed six times daily on a great scale as prescribed in agamas beginning at 5.00 a.m. and ending at 9.00 p.m. All the rites, observances and special festivals prescribed according to Hindu religious tradition are conducted at this temple which is very unique to this temple.

It is the only temple in the Island where the *vasanta navarattir* is celebrated on the scale of a festival.⁴⁷

The annual festival of Munneswaram is an important event of the Temple calendar. It lasts for 27 days in the months of August and September. Simon Casie Chitty describes it as "A grand festival is held at this temple during the months of August for eighteen days successively, and is attended by Malabars and Singhalese, notwithstanding their adherence to different creeds. According to a notice published by the temple authorities in 1889 A.D. the annual festival at this temple was held for eleven days at that period. The festival begins with the flag hoisting ceremony at the "Dwajasthanmbha Mandapa" of the Temple. The Temple processions are restricted to an internal pathway (fist prahera) for the first two days and processions along the internal pathway and the second pathway (Ambhagaha Veediya) are conducted for the next three days. Later, the rest of the processions of the festival proceed along the three pathways (inner, middle and outer prahara of the big temple). Devotees from far and wide visit this ancient temple to attend the pujas and make their annual offerings. On the pre-Poya day (penultimate day) of the festival there is a very special car procession, when the statues of god are placed upon a huge wooden juggernaut and pulled around the temple by devotees. On the final day (Poya day) of the festival, large chariots gaily decked are drawn to the Deduru-oya, for the water-cutting (*theertham, diya-kepima*) ceremony with Somaskandha Murthy (Images of Siva his consort Parvati and Skanda) along with "*asthadevar*". After the water cutting ceremony the procession goes back to the temple along a decorated route through Chilaw town, accompanied by traditional Hindu Nadeswaram and Sri Lankan Thambatta music etc. The concluding ceremonies of the festival take place after the arrival of the perahera at the temple.

Foot notes

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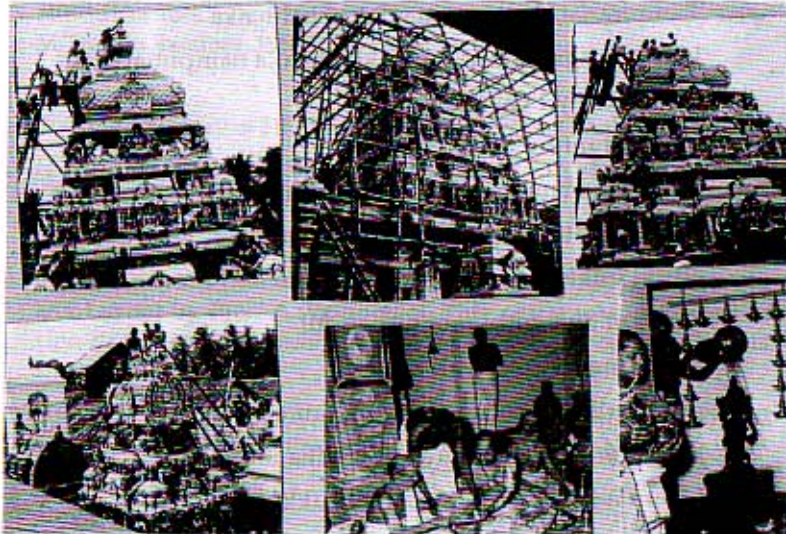
APPENDIX 1

TRANSLITERATION OF AN INSCRIPTION AT THE TEMPLE AT MONNISVARAM

Swasti Sri Samantabhadra caranaravinda
 Vandita dinakara vamsabhijata Rajadhiraja
 Pararaja sekhara bhujanga Sri Sanghabodhi
 Vatmarana Tribhuvanaccakkaravartti Sri
 Parakrama Bahu devarku yantu
 38 avatu Appaci Munpattam
 Pakkam Monnisvaramutaiya tampiranar ai
 Pujikkira Nampimarai Jayavardhanak
 Kottaikku alaattu vija Samagava
 pantitar Purohita(rai) Tampiranarutaiya
 kshettirankalir Ceyti kettu munpu
 nampimarkku ninra monnisvarattil
 cimaikku utpatta kshetrat
 Tampiranarkku tirunanamattukkaniyaka
 karpittarulina maikku pujakkaniyaka nampimarkku
 iluppaiteniyil vayal amanam
 irupattirantum kottaippittiyil
 vayal amanam muppatum mutalmaikku
 karpittut tittakkatayil vayal amanam
 ettum itukkulla kutiyiruppun katun
 akavum niyamittu monnisvarattil
 nampimarkku irukkak karpittu
 mania ullatum munnali ariciyil amutu
 kariyamuthu ilaiyamutu sugandha mutalana
 vaium nampimarkku mata monrukku
 panam muppatummutalmaikkutaima panam

masamonrukku ovvoruttarku Patinonrum
 ivarkalukku parampariya maka candraditya
 varai sarvamaniyamaka natakkumpati
 Monnisvaramutaiya Tampiranar
 Avamatiyavarkalukku niyamitta alavukku
 Meloruvaralum vignam inriye irukkak
 Karpit tarulina intak kanikku ahitam
 ceytavarkal panca maha patakam
 ceytavarkalakavum Itukku hitan
 ceytavarkal suriya patattaip perakkatavarakavum

Tadidam Gana nathasya
 Saiva nama maho dadhe
 Monnisvarap prasadena
 Canda nathasya sasanam



Exrtact from: Journal of the Ceylon branch of the Royal Asiatic
 Society 1887 - Volume, X No.35

Translation of an Inscription at the Temple at Monnisvaram
 Note by G. M.Fowler, Esq., C.C.S
 (Page 118 -119)

I have examined the Monni'svaram inscription several times and much of it illegible. It has I think, been removed from an older building and built into the present one. Several of the letters near the joints of the stones are covered by the mortar, which would not be the case if it had been cut in situ. The inscription runs along a kind of cornice, and consists of only four lines, extending for about thirty or fourty feet. its height from the ground is about four feet.

In digging a tank near the temple two pieces of sculpture were found: a bull's head and an image of (?) "Suppiramaniyan". These did not appear to be ancient.

There is a case in the Chilaw court, I believe, in which the inscription is evidence.

Translation

"Let happiness be! On the tenth day of the waxing moon in October, in the thirty- eighth year of his rein, His Majesty Sri Parakrama Bahu* descendant of the illustrious family of Sri Sangabodhi, worshipper of the lotus feet of Sri Samantapatra (Buddha) of a Solar race, king of kings, serpent to the royal and mercantile races, and emperor of the three worlds, invited to the Jayawardhana Kotte* the Nampimar (priests) who officiate before the god of Monnisvaram, and addressing himself to the Brahmin Pandit, who is proficient in all sciences amongst them inquired into the circumstances of that temple and bestowed the lands which formarly belonged to the priests, lying within the district of Monnisvaram in the holy name, and as the property of the god. As pusai lands he granted to the priests 22 amanams of field at lippedniya, and 30 amanams in Kottapitiya to Mutanmai (chief priests) and 8 amanams of field in

Tittakkadai, with the inhabited places and forests appertaining to this. In addition to the offering of 3 nalis of rice, he granted 30 fanams to the priests per mensem and 11 fanams to each of the Mutanmains (chief priests) for the daily offerings of vegetable curries, greens, and perfumes, to be enjoyed from generation to generation, while the sun and moon exist, as Sarvamaniyam (free gift) to the god of Monnisvasram, which is hereby decreed to be irrevocable. Those who cause any damage to the land will be guilty of Panchamahapatakam (the five great sins) while those who take an interest in it will attain heavenly bliss".

Here follows a sulokam the translation of which is: To this effect this was caused to be inscribed by Parakraman through the grace of Monnisvaram, who is an ocean of wisdom in Saivasim and lord of all the different classes of gods".

- ✦ Sri Parakrama Bahu VI, 1410 -1452 A.D.
- * The modern Kotte



Exrtact from: Journal of the Ceylon branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 1916,

Volume XXIV No 68, (Page 186)

Ceylon Numismatics

H.W.Codrington, B.A. Oxon, c.c.s.

Relative to 'hook' coins or larins, referred to by the learned lecturer, I may say I came across a coin somewhat allied to this class but known in the country as 'pincers coin' (Tamil - Kuraddu Kasu; Sinhalese - Andu Massa) It was minted, according to tradition, at Munnessaram during a period when the brahman of Munnessaram temple is said to have ruled Chilaw and Puttalam Districts in the name of the gooddess. The shape of the coin is that of a pair of pincers, hence the name.

On the outer aspect of one if its forks of handles was an inscription which with some difficulty, was found to be in chola grantham, the reading of it was, I belive, Parasrama.

Mr.Codrington replied to Mr. Proctor, He said if as it has been attempted to show in this lecutuer, the so called Lankesvara type dates from the 9th centary, if not from the 7th. Mr Proctor's theory falls to the ground. The coin certainly preceded the Chola invasion of Ceylon in the eleventh century.

APPENDIX 4

Exrtact from: THE CEYLON LITTORAL 1593

P.E.Pieris Litt D. (Cantab)

Soc Resp. Do Instituto De Coimbra.

1949 Edn.

Monicarrao (Munnessarama), (Page 4)

The terras of Monicarrao constituted the Domain of the Devalaya which the Portuguese destroyed in 1578 (Port. ERA. 1-199) and consisted of sixty - four villages of which Munnessarama where the Devalaya once stood was the chief, and the rest were aduttha (appearing in Portuguese as azutas) thereto. The recognised boundaries were on the East, the Village Xenanam is Devamedia Korale (Hevana); West, the tree Almarao, presumably some well known banyan tree; North, the village Cusala in Devamedia Korale; South the tank Syratallao.

In 1614 the possessors of this domain were the Jesuits, but the Canacapole Dom Jheronimo and the Patangation Dom Pedro Xembraduria, who attended to assist the Tombo Commissioner, did not know what their title was. As a matter of fact they claimed under a grant of de Azavedo. The Canacapole produced the palm leaf accounts of the lands going back to more than a hundred years. An amunam of paddy was here valued at 2 larins, and it was possible to raise two crops in the year with the exercise of diligence, the Senhorio receiving 1 amunam 1 pela as Otu on each amunam sown.

The village Munnessarama contained 203 amunam 1 pelaa of sowing; of these 26 formed the Muttettu though only 4 were cultivated, the rest being under forest. The usual Mayorals were here replaced by Durias, of whom there were 10, possessing 20 amunams in the Maha moncao, and 10 more in the small. Similarly the Canacapole possessed three amunams. These Durias had each under him four culles obrigatorios, who are liable to serve them. The ten sowed 104 amunams and 1 pela divided among, themselves, and 40 amunams were under forest. The ten also possessed 10 garden lots, but there

were no trees in them. They paid the Jesuits yearly 20 larins decum and 30 pingas worth 12 larins. A complete list of the Aduttha villages is recorded.

Economically the most important was valachenna (Velihena) with 120 amunams sowing yieding sevenfold, distributed thus:

3 Ancient muttetu; 12 possessed by 4 durias; mayorals; 55 ottu; 50 under forest.

There was extensive cultivation of coconut as appears from the following details of gardens and ortas.

2 Muttetu, 300 palms, yieding 5000 nuts worth 15 larins; 4 by durias, 140 p., 2000 n. paying decum and pingas; 8 by 8 service culles, 800p., 12,000 n., 2 by canacapole Bramane, 120 p., 2000n., 1 Muttetu, 20p., 300n., 25 by 25 natives, 1,300 p., 18,000 n., they pay the padres. 18 larins decum; 2 by 2 lascarins, 70 p., 1000 n., 5 which on the death of the holders Raju gave to inhabitants of the Port of Chilao. 3 by 3 panicals of Elephants, 110 p., 2,000 n., 10 Abandoned by owners 20 p., 300 nuts.



APPENDIX 5

Exrtact from: CEYLON: THE PORTUGUESE ERA -VOLUME I

P.E.Pieris

A. D. 1576. The Portuguese there upon landed in spite of the opposition of the inhabitants, and revaged Chilaw and the Munnesseram district, burning down several spacious banga salas filled with Areca and Cloth and destroying a large vessel with its cargo of 500 bahars of cinnamon which was destined for the red sea and four champanas full of areca. For the third time they ravaged Negumbo and Kammala, and then made their way to the ancient and revered temple of Munnesseram.

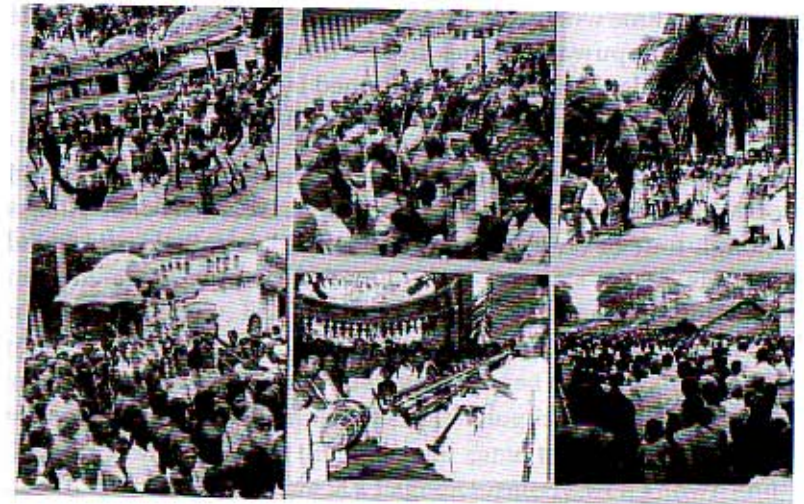
One of the five Isparam or residences of Siva in Ceylon, it claimed precedence over the great fanes at Trincomalee, Mantota, Kangesanturai and Rameswaram, and was said to have been built by Ramachandra, the Awatar of Vishnu, himself, after the defeat of Ravana. Numerous inscriptions bore record to the wealth which the devotion of successive kings had dedicated to the sevice of the temple, and the sixty two villages of the district to which it gave its name, comprised its separate domain. Much plunder was anticipated and the Portuguese pressed eagerly on. The Attapattu Mudaliyar was however on the watch and barred the way, but the Sinhaslese were driven back with the loss of Mudaliyar himself, whose head was sent to Colombo, and then sacked the temple, which they rezed to the ground. Loaded with looty they truned back to Colombo, taking with them four panguals of areca as well. (Chapter IX p. 199 ff).

A.D. 1600. The Portuguese showed no compassion in the reprisals they exacted. Over a thousand villagers were taken prisoners torture was unsparingly employed to discover the whereabouts of gomey though without success, and finally the great temple of Munnessaram* was razed to the ground (Chapter XIV page 348).

A.D.1606. In 1607 -1608 there were in the college of Colombo and its residencies ten or twelve Jesuits one of whom, Pedro Eurizco, by name, was at the special request of de Azavedo stationed at

by name, was at the special request of de Azavedo stationed at Malwana. This priest was also sent by the general to convert the ' king' of the Seven Korales by whom he was well received. At this time a pestilence broke out in the island in which the Jesuits were of great help, and many were converted. In the District of Chilaw they baptised 400 of the people and their Patangatins, and across the river in the territoy of Munnesseram temple they erected the church of St. Paul. (Chapter XX Page 407).

- * Manjacirao Q. It had apparently been rebuilt after last destruction.



APPENDIX 6

Exrtact from:

CEYLON: THE PORTUGUESE ERA - VOLUME II

P.E. Pieres Page 37

For instance the Jesuits held sixty two villages belonging to the temple of Mannesseram* which yielded over 500 pardos of 3 larins each and 16 Gabadegan in the three Korales yielding 400 pardaos, all of which were claimed on the grant from de Azavedo and the revenue from which was devoted to the purposes of their College in Colombo.

* The King's letter of 28th March 1608, refers to a grant by Azavedo to the Jesuits for the College at Cochin of "the lands adjoining the harbour of Quilao as far as the harbour of Cardiva, being bounded by the channel which runs from the said river as far as Cardiva the whole forming an island, Quilao is a misprint of Chilao. The grant would include whole of the Kalpitiya peninsula, and would stretch from Uddappuwa, 12 miles from Chilaw up to Dutch Bay, the channel being the sheet of water formed by Mundel Lake, Puttalam Lake and Dutch Bay (see Doc, Rem I. 246).

The 62 villages of the Munneswaram temple include the entirely of the Munneswaam Pattu which up to date consists of 62 villages, though four of them are now subdivided into Ihala and Pahala hamlets.

APPENDIX 7

Exrtact from: CATHOLIC CHILAW

Aloysius Fernando-1932 Edn

Munneswaram is a village about a mile inland to the east of the Chilaw town. Its present importance is fully rested on the ancient Hindu temple. This village had fared much during the Portuguese time as an important place of Jesuit missions. The temple of Munneswaram, to give its full name, Vadivambiga Sametha Munna Nathaswamy Temple has a better tradition of antiquity than any other Hindu temple in Ceylon, It had been held, it is said by the Hindus for many centuries past as one of their four ancient Shrines in Ceylon: the others being Thirukketheswaram, Kathirgamam and Thirikona Malai (Koneswaram). Traditon has it that Brahama worshipped in it in Kretayuga, Sri Rama in Tretayuga and Sri Viyasa in Devaparayuga. By the endowment of wealth to the temple by the royal benefactors, the temple, possessed 66 villages (C.M.L 18-9-13). During the Portuguese period the number of villages had been increased to 106.

The route from Chilaw that led to the temple of Munneswaram was through extensive open fields where numerous cattle grazed. At one season it became a swampy track of land which rendered the pedestrians difficult to traverse. Perhaps with a view to minimise idolatry, the General Azevedo gave this temple village to the Jesuit priests to saw the seed of Christianity. In the year 1606, the Provincial stationed at Chilaw, Fr. L.Ruiz and going to Munneswaram gave orders to erect a Church in honour of St. Paul. When the mission was started, the Christians of Chilaw destroyed the "lingam" which was enshrined in the temple. The following is a brief account of a Jesuit priest as to how the 'linagam' came to be destroyed. "A mile inland of Chilaw there is a Pagoda formerly well known and very rich, for it possessed 106 villages. It was much venerated for they believe that their god was born there. This god was a block of stone, like marble, of a man's height, placed over another larger and square block, which they call Lingam, and I think that it is the

same infamous and indecent divinity as Priapo. This pagoda the general gave the temple to us. The Provincial, going there, ordered a church to be built there in our own style and to destroy the infamous stone which the Brahmins maintained was impossible, as it was born there and would bring down evil of any one who dared to lay hands on it, But without more delay than was required to fetch two iron bars from the fort, with which it was destroyed the idol was brought down, exposing the falsehood, superstition and deceit into which the Brahmins had led the people" (Lt. of Fr.H. Gomez.S.J. dated 29.12.1606 Cey. Ant 11 page 21). The temple of Munneswaram, it would be seen, was razed to the ground by the Portuguese in retaliation for the wanton destruction of churches during the revolt of Manoel Gomez, a captain of the Portuguese among some Lascarins, who had deserted to the enemy in search of higher honours (page 9-10).

At Munneswaram the Father exerts himself very zealously for the welfare of the souls to Christ. One of the Christians of this place, a man of great influence and zeal is very keen on destroying idols. He dug up for idols which had lain buried since the conquest of the island. One of these was a huge idol of the god Perumal celebrated throughout the island. It was of bronze and represents the god astride on a peacock which held a writhing snake in its beak. The figure bore many crowns on its head and had four hands from which it was hurling as many thunderbolts.(page 14).

At Munneswaram a convert of great influence destroyed many idols and further tried to root out idolatry as much as he could (page 14).

APPENDIX 8

Colombo 12. 3. 1804,

To: Henry Powney Esqr.

Secretary to the Board of Revenue and Commerce, Colombo.

Sir,

I have the pleasure to forward the petition of the padre of the pagoda at Moneswaram, requesting me to cause the paddy renter of Chilaw to deliver to him the quantity of grain formerly granted (annually) by the King of Kandy to the pagoda. I beg leave to observe for the information of the Board that 512 parrahs is too much to be paid to the Renter of Chilaw alone as valuing each parrah at the rate of one Rindollar, it will amount exactly to one fourth of his rent. The grant was given by the King of Kandy long before the District of Chilaw was ceded to the Dutch at a time when it was full of inhabitation and the whole country in a state of Cultivation. At present it is not one quarter inhabited and not a third of the paddy grounds sown. I therefore take the liberty of recommending to the Board that the Chilaw Renter may be exempted from three fourths of the payments and that if it's the intention of Government that the full quantity shall be given to the pagoda that the other paddy Renters of the District may be obliged to pay their quotas in proportion to their respective farms.

I have the honour to be c Chilaw.

Sgd . W.E.Campbell.

Agent of Revenue and Commerce.

10.2.1804

A true copy

sgd : John Macdowall

Actg: Secy to the Board of Rev. and Com.

Extracts from the Diary and Proceedings of the Hon'ble Fredric North, Governor, Captain General and commander in chief of the British possessions in the island of Ceylon.

16th March 1804

Read letter and enclosure from the Board of Revenue and commerce.

To: His Excellency, the Hon'ble Frederic North,
Governor and c and c, Colombo.

Sir,

We have the Hounour to lay before your Excellency the copy of a letter from the agent of Revenue at Chilaw with a translation of a grant by the King of Kandy to the pagoda of Mooneseram therein referred to,

By, Mr. Campbell's letter, your Excellency will observe that the priests of the Pagoda consider themselves entitled by virtue of this grant to nearly 512 parras of the paddy Revenue of the District which appears to us a claim that cannot be allowed, the ground in itself is undefined with regard to the particular land given, which cannot now be ascertained and the priests have consequently marked out, the finest fields in the district.

We are of opinion, that as the original intention of the grant could only be for the proper maintenance of the Priests attached to the pagoda, it should now receive that interpretation, and therefore we have the honour to propose that Mr. Campbell the Revenue Agent and Mr. Dean the President of the provincial court of the District should be appointed to confer with the Priests of the pagoda and compromise the matter in such a way as to allot a piece of ground as near the temple as possible sufficient for their decent maintenance and support.

We have the honour to be with the highest respect and c and.c

Sgd. Rebert Arbuthnot, President

N.Sanmarez

A.Wood,

R.Boyd.

TRANSLATION OF A COPPER PLATE CERTIFICATE IN
TAMIL

[Given by King Keerthi Sri Rajasingha (1747-1782 A.D) to this
pagoda in 1753 A.D. Seen in temple records**]

By the high and mighty Ruler of the world who reign the eight regions and take tributes of the Kings of Angam, Kalingam, Maradam, Mallayalam and from the Kings of the Fifty Six Kingdoms were granted as alms to the pagoda of Moonasparar situated at Moonsaram, the land and property which belongs to the Revenue of the said mighty King as follows.

The Paddy fields called	Carrewetty	four ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Illoopadeniya	six ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Peramanantalooway	two ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Cannengatty	three ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Madattuvelly	one and a half ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Paueadee	two ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Moodaliar Taloovay	one and a half ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Perapencully Nallanayakan WelyMaravan Welli Sawarana	two ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Pallawally	four ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Collootalooway	four ammonams
The Paddy fields called	Olytalooway	two ammonams

Total Ammonams thirty two together with the belonging jungles, lands, hills and ditches in order to endure the Charity of Moonesparar till the sun and moon exist. Thus by order of the King in this copper plate certificate granted on Sunday the 14th August 1675 in the year Sreemoogam.*

Sgd.G.Casie Chetty,(Malabar Translator)

A true copy of the Translation.

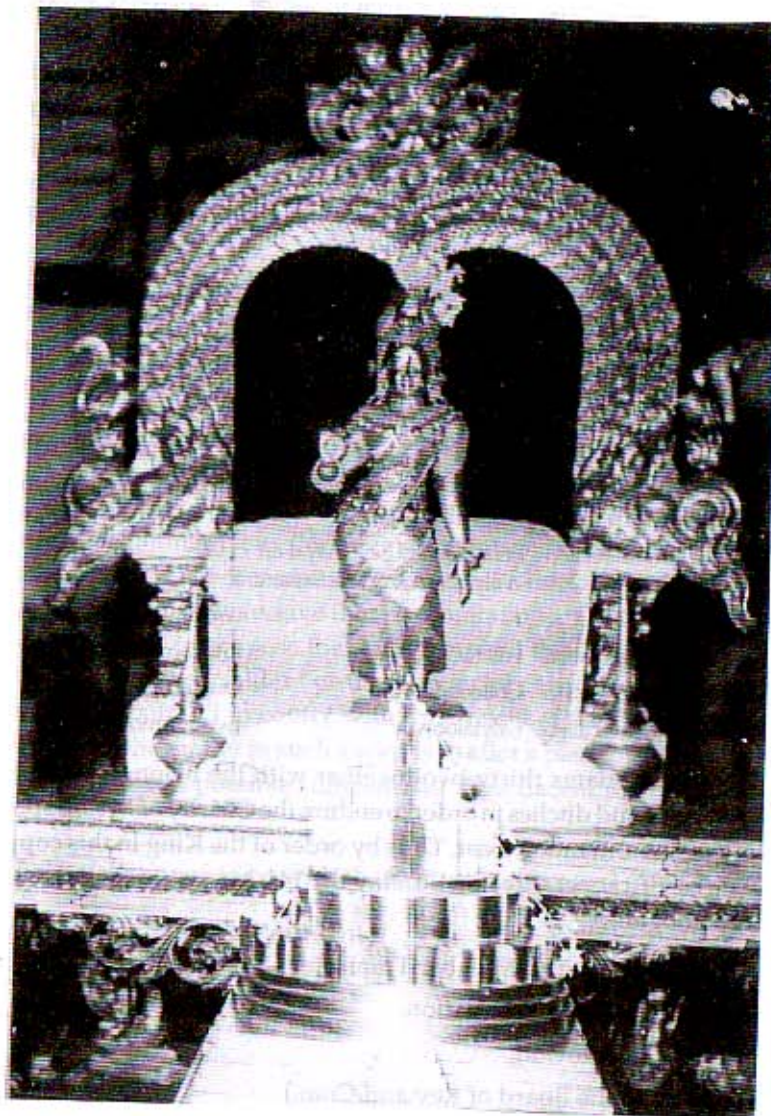
Sgd.John Macdowall,

(Act.Secy.to the Board of Rev.and Com.)

Copy was issued to M.Somaskanda Kurukkal by R.E.Rennus.
Colombo, 11.09.1923

* author's note

* This corresponds to 1753 A.D



Exrtact from: **HINDU TEMPLES OF SRI LANKA,**

Edited S.Pathmanathan,

Published by Kumaran Book House-2006

Buildings and Architectural Design

The component parts of the temple are found within a walled enclosure, which is approximately 120' by 110' in dimensions. The central shrine consisting of the *garbhagruha(m)*, *arttamantapam* and the *mahamantapam* are exclusively of stone constuction. On the consideration of architectural style and design they could be assigned to the 14th and 15th centuries. The ornamentation on the mouldings and pilasters is restrained and, the architectural design is reminiscent of the Vijayanagara style. The original character of the three component parts has virtually remained unchanged despite renovations made periodically ever since the restoration in the 18th century.

A close examination of the integrated components of the central shrine reveals that they are the remnants of the original *pagoda*, which is said to have been destroyed by the Portuguese *conquistadors* in 1578. In all probability the original *vimanam*, the superstructure over the sanctum, had fallen down during the process of destruction in the 16th century. It had to be rebuilt in the 18th century during the period of restoration. The present *vimanam*, which rises to a height of 46 feet is entirely of brick construction. This three storeyed *vimanam*, which was constructed in the period of the Kandyan Kings, has undergone modification on account of periodical renovations. In the central niches of each of the three storeys there are figures of *Mahavishnu*, *daksinamurtti* and *Brahma* on the western, southern and northern sides respectively.

The three principal components of the stone-built structure occupy an area, which is approximately 33' by 16' in dimensions. The inner sanctum, the *mulastanam* houses a sacred lingam on the side of which has been installed an image of the Goddess, described as *Vativampikai*. The central shrine containing the image of the lingam

is flanked on either side by subsidiary shrines; the shrine of Ganapati on the right and that of Murukan on the left.

The entire building is roofed and ceiled with plain slabs of stone. There are some carvings on the stone slabs at the centre of the roof of the *mahamantapam*. The representations of the figures of fish and the double carp are of unusual significance, and may perhaps suggest some Pandyan connections. There are four rows of tall and heavy pillars supporting the roof of the *mahamantapam*. Those on the northern and southern ends are built into the walls. The design of the pillars in the two central rows is of a peculiar kind. Each of them has been carved so as to project the appearance of alternating parts with rectangular and octagonal shapes. The topmost portion of each pillar is devoid of any ornamental carving. On the whole, the plainness of the surface of the walls of the *mantapam*, and the simplicity and restraint in ornamentation are the hallmarks of the architectural style of those parts of the Munnesvaram temple that have survived the ravages of man in the 16th century. The enclosed circumambulatory round the temple and the gateway are recent constructions, which do not merit a detailed consideration as they do not exhibit any remarkable quality.

Festivals and Daily Services

Almost all the rites, observances and festivals known to the Hindu religious tradition are conducted at Munnesvaram with a regularity and splendour that could seldom be surpassed anywhere else in Sri Lanka. Worship is conducted six times daily and all activities commence at 5 a.m. and end at 9 p.m. when all the doors are closed. The first session of worship called *usatkala pucai* or *truvanantal* is conducted at 5.30 a.m. At *tiruvanantal* offerings consisting of milk and baked rice flakes are offered to the divinities in the shrines of Vairavar, the Mother Goddess and the inner sanctum. The worship is conducted with invocations and glorification of the divinities.

During the *cantippucai* or the second session of worship the images of all the deities in the temple are consecrated and worship is conducted in honour of all of them. Milk-rice made of a red variety of *campa* rice is the principal offering to the divinities.

The third session of worship is called *uccikkahp pucai* because of the fact that it is conducted at mid-day. At this time worship is conducted on an elaborate scale at the *mulastanam* and the *amman* shrine. The fourth session of worship called *cayaratcaip pucai* is conducted in the evening. During this session the rituals of *avahanam*, *apisekam*, *alarikaram*, *tiparitanai*, *tottiram* and *niruttyam* are performed elaborately at the sanctum and the *amman* shrine. This session of worship is conducted in the evening before sunset. During the fifth session, which generally takes place at around 7.30 p.m., all the images are washed, consecrated and adorned with garments and garlands and the offerings made to them uniformly consist of rice. The day's proceedings are concluded with the *artta camappucai* which is conducted at the sanctum and the *amman* shrine. At the conclusion of this session of worship all the doors of the temple will be closed.

cukkiravaram, *taipponkal*, *taippucam*, *civarattri*, *panrikuni uttiram*, *cittirai varusam*, *aini uttiram*, *tipavali*, *kantacasti* and *markalit tiruvatirai* are special occasions on which annually rituals and festivals are conducted on an elaborate scale as in most other Hindu temples in the island.

The annual festival at Munnesvaram, which lasts for a period of 27/28 days, commences with the *dvajarohanam* and concludes on the Full Moon day of the month of *avani*. On each day of the festival, the images of Vinayakar, Cuppiramaniyar, Arumukacami, Comaskantar and *amman* are paraded round the temple. The events of the last week of the festival are special significance and somewhat peculiar to Munnesvaram. On the day of the *paktotsavam* the images of the sixty-three *nayanmar* of the Saiva tradition are taken in procession along with those of the deities. This particular festival is conducted only at Munnesvaram in Sri Lanka.

The image of Siva in the form of *bhiksatana* is taken in procession on the day of *bhikatan utsavam*. The bronze image, which is approximately 5 feet 6 inches in height is of an exceptionally high quality of workmanship. On the day of the *nataraja-utsavam* the image of Siva in the form of Nataraja is taken in procession. The bronze image used for this purpose is said to have been recovered from a well in the temple premises.

APPENDIX 11

THE TRANSLATED VERSION OF THE MUNNESVARAM TAMIL INSCRIPTION OF PARAKRAMABAHU VI*

*From: The Munneswaram Tamil Inscription of Parakramabahu VI, S.Pathmanathan, Journal of the of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS) New series Vol.XV111,1974, p. 68

Let there be happiness and prosperity.

The King of Kings and 'Emperor of the three worlds', Sri Sanghabodhi Parakramabahu devar of the solar dynasty, who is (like) the serpent to (the King) Pararajasekhara(n), adores the lotus feet of the Buddha. On the 10th day of the waxing moon of the month of aippaci (October-November) in the 38th year of his reign His Majesty invited the chief priests who propitiate the God of Munnesvaram and inquired about the affairs of the temple from the (learned) *purohitar* called Vijasamagava *pantitar* and endowed the lands in the temple district of Munnesvaram, which formerly belonged to the priests as a temple land. For the performance of worship, he granted to the priests 22 *amanam* of field at Iluppaideni(ya) and to the Chief Priests, 30 *amanam* of field at Kottaippitti and 8 *amanam* of field at Tittakkatai with the inhabited localities and forests attached to them. Moreover, he provided for the (daily) offering of three measures of cooked rice, curry, betel and incense and a monthly grant of 30 *panam* to the chief priests and 11 *panam* for each of the other priests to be enjoyed in perpetuity (till the Sun and the Moon endure) and from generation to generation as a gift free of all taxes. Those who cause any obstruction to this grant will incur the sin of committing the five most heinous crimes while those who support it will attain the position of the Sun.

This proclamation has been issued by Parakrama (bahu) through the grace of the Lord of Munnesvaram, the Lord of all beings and the ocean of the knowledge of Saivism.

APPENDIX 12

TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT OF A COPPER PLATE INSCRIPTION ISSUED IN TAMIL BY KIRTTI SRI RAJASINHA (1747 - 1782)*

*Note: Extract from, Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka, Edited S.Pathmanathan, Published by Kumaran Book House. 2006 (This is a slightly modified version of the translation made by John Macdowall, Act.Secy. to the Board of Revenue. A Copy of the translation of the text was issued to M.Somaskanda Kurukkal by R.E.Rennus from Colombo, 11.09.1923. Pa. Civaramakirusna Carma, munnesvara varalaru, p. 60)

By the high and mighty Ruler of the world, who reigns the eight regions and collects tributes from the Kings of Angam, Kalinkam, Marattam, Malayalam and from the Kings of the fifty-six kingdoms, were granted to the temple of Munnesvarar situated at Munnesvaram, the landed property in the form of paddy fields, which belong to the revenue of the said mighty King as follows: four *amanam* at Karavetti, six *amanam* at Iluppaideniya, two *amanam* at Piramanattaluvay, three *amanam* at Kannankatti, one and a half *amanam* at Matattuveli, two *amanam* at Paueadee (?), one and a half *amanam* at Mutaliyartaluvay, two *amanam* at Pirappankuli, Nallanayakan-veli and Maravan-veli, four *amanam* at Pallaveli, four *amanam* at Kolluttaluvay and two *amanam* at Ollittaluvay.

In all thirty- two *amanam* inclusive of jungle lands, hills and ditches have been granted as *tevatnam* to the temple of Munnesvaram to be held in perpetuity. This (endowment has been made) on the order of the King in a copper plate charter issued on Sunday the 14th of August 1675 in the year Srimukam.*

APPENDIX 13

Exrtact from: **HINDUISM IN CEYLON**

Rev. James Catman O.B.E., M.A., B.D., M.Th.,
edn. January, 1957, pp 90-96

The pattern of the Hindu temple, whether large or small, is invariably the same. A description is here given of the Ishvari temple (Agammic) at Munnesvaram near Chilaw. It is a very old temple and contains many shrines.

Fig. 1. shows the plan of the Main Courts of the temple.

Fig. 2. shows the actual position in the temple of the various shrines and temple equipment.

The detailed description of the temple shrines and furnishings is given under the headings of the several courts of the temple as shown in Figs. 1 & 2

THE HOLY PLACE (1)

This section of the temple, accessible only to the Brahman priest, is screened off by an orange coloured curtain which is drawn aside during the puja. Inside this recess, there is a black linga, behind which a circular brass disc is fixed. Another brass frame, containing numerous oil lamps, forms a bright halo of lights. The linga itself has the three horizontal lines and the round puttu mark, all peculiar to Saivite ritual. Upon the linga rests a garland of flowers.

THE INNER COURT (2) & (3)

In this section, the Inner Court, there are several important images and ritual vessels. Members of the higher castes are permitted to assemble here during the puja, provided they have fulfilled all the rules relating to purification, including bathing and abstinence from meat foods.

At 2(a) the images placed on a low table are bright and reputed to be made of a composition of five metals, gold, silver, brass, copper and lead. They are dressed like human beings and are garlanded.

On the top of the brass lamps, of which there is a wide variety, is the image of the swan, the significance of which is expressed in a Tamil saying " As the swan separates milk from water, so God separates good from evil."

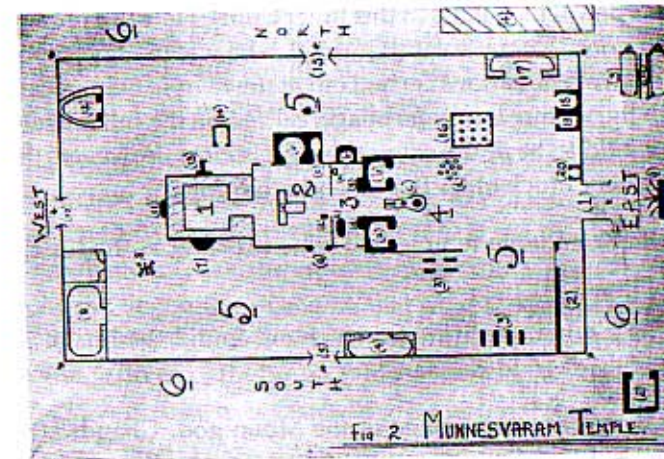


Diagram of Munnesvaram Temple.

At 2(b) is a separate shrine chamber, screened off in the same way as the Holy Place, and containing a black stone image of Parvati. The image, about two feet six inches in height, has most elaborate metal ornamentation on the head, ears, arms, and feet, and is dressed, like a Tamil woman, in Sari. It is garlanded with flowers.

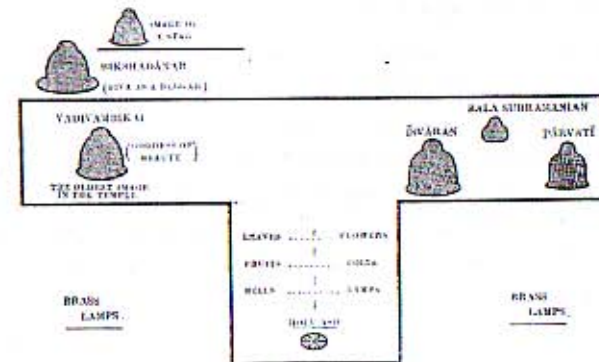


Illustration of the arrangements at 2 (a).

At 2(c) is a smaller shrine containing the image of Nataraja, Siva as the dancing god, with an image of his Sakti on the left, and an image of Vishnu-Krishna, sitting under the protective canopy of the five-headed cobra, on the right.

At 2(d) is one of the pillars in this Inner Court. Here is a photograph of all old priest, Kumarasvami Gurukul, who was mainly responsible for extensive renovations carried out at the temple many years ago. Beneath the picture is a stone image, carved on the pillar itself. This image is said to be of the same priest. It is clear, however, that the image is very much older than the photograph.

At 3(a) hangs a large temple bell which is rung at the time of the puja.

At 3(b) is a separate shrine in which are found the images of the same gods and goddess as in 2 (c).

At 3(c) is an old stone image of the Moon god, Chandra, having four hands, two of which are holding a canopy behind his head, whilst at the other side of the entrance, at 3 (d) is a similar image representing the Sun god, Surya.

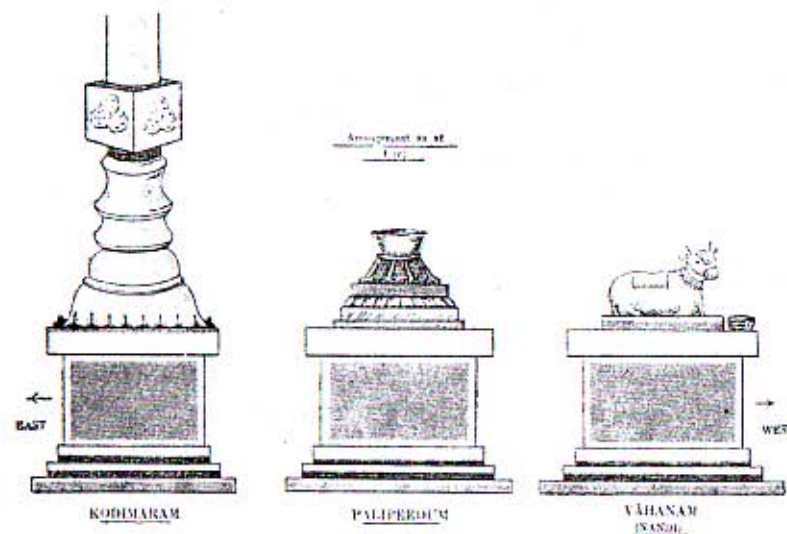
At 3(e) is a coloured image of the sacred bull, Nandi, which is used during the procession of the god round the precincts of the temple. This image rests upon a pedestal.

1. THE OUTER COURT (4)

On either side of the entrance to the Outer Court are two fairly large shrines. The one on the left, at 4(a) is a Ganesa's shrine, in which there is a black stone image of Ganesa. This image is also garlanded, and before it a lamp is kept burning. Above the shrine forming a canopy is a decorative arrangement including small images, which are, from left to right, a rat, an attendant, Ganesa an attendant and a rat. The rat, of course, is the vahanam, the vehicle of the god. On the right, at 4(b), is a Skanda or Subrahmanya shrine, in which are the images of Skanda, Devayani and Valli, whilst the arrangement of figures on the decorated canopy above are, from left to right, a peacock, Devayani, Skanda, Valli and a peacock. The peacock, again,

is the vahanam. At 4(c) in the very centre of the Court, is a stone altar facing the Holy Place. On this altar, nearest to the entrance to the Inner shrine, is an image of the sacred bull, Nandi, in a recumbent position. The main vahanam is found at this place in every temple, and the vahanam itself indicates the main deity of the temple. If a temple is a Ganesa temple, the vahanam facing the inner shrine, will be a rat ; if a Skanda temple, it will be a peacock ; if an Amman temple, a lion; if a Vishnu temple, a kite.

Immediately behind the sacred Nandi is the Palipeedum, or Patiralinga, a circular stone on which offerings are placed, gifts, or rice or roasted paddy. Still further behind this is the Kodimaram, the flagpole, which reaches through the roof into a glass ventilated recess. At the beginning of the annual temple festival, the flag is hoisted on this pole and is not lowered until the festival is over. During the festival period a long piece of cloth, upon which the form of a cow is drawn, is fastened around the flag post with the sacred grass tadrupai.



At 4(d) during the festival period are kept a wide variety of tom-tom drums used in connection with the, ritual of the temple.

5. THE INNER VERANDAH (5)

5(1) This is the main entrance. On each side there is a small image in stone: these images are known as Dvalrapalas, the gods of the entrance, or guardians of the gate. Hindu temples always have the entrance facing the East. There is at least one exception to this rule, the Ganesa Temple at Mauipay. Legend states that this temple originally faced the East, as do all other Hindu temples, But later when a Christian Church was built opposite its Eastern end, the temple mysteriously changed right-about and now faces, the West.

At 5(2) is the temple kitchen in which one of the Brahmin priests cooks the rice for the temple. This cooking is done over an open fire.

At 5(3) are stored a large number of vehicles, many of them very cumbersome. They represent many of the animals sacred to the various gods, and they are used mostly during the festival period when the gods and goddesses are conveyed round the temple and through the neighbouring streets.

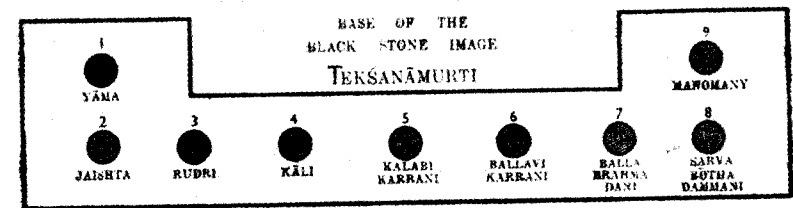
At 5(4) is the Naynanmar Image House in which there is the small image of Kali together with images of the sixty-three Hindu saints. These like the image of the gods, are periodically dressed. They are also ceremonially washed. Many of these, metal images have been presented to the temple by devotees.

At 5(5) is the southern entrance.

At 5(6) is an entrance to the inner shrine, where, on either, side of the door, there, is a huge figure of a female guard. Both these figures are brightly coloured and somewhat grotesque. Above this entrance is a carving of the goddess Lakshmi, riding in a chariot and protected on either side by an elephant

On the outer wall of the Holy Place at 5(7) is a black stone image, dressed and garlanded, called Teksanamurti manifestation of Siva as a hermit. The image has, four hands, and at his feet are small images representing his disciples, whilst under one foot is a demon-

like creature, Mooyalaka, the evil one. It is obvious that this image receives marked attention by its devotees. At the beginning of the temple festival, a small yellow string is placed over the third hand, and this string remains there for the duration of the festival. The image is frequently redressed. Several steps lead up to the shrine and on one of them forming a kind of fender arrangement are nine button-like protrusions above the level of the stone. These represent the nine Saktis of Siva, and their arrangement is as follows:



These Saktis are also objects of worship.

At 5(8) is an unusual pattern of bells, like a chandelier. All the bells ring together.

At 5(9) is a fairly large room in which, during festival times, images of the gods and goddesses are displayed for the many devotees who come to the temple. On the walls facing the court are many carved figures, including those of several gods each one of whom is sheltered by the cobra, the Naga Tambiran.

At 5(10) is the Western entrance.

At 5(11) facing the Western entrance, is a most interesting conical shaped linga stone, resting on a stone altar. The linga stone itself is more than four feet high and contains the carving of the Siva flame separating the Swan (Brahma) and the Boar (Vishnu). This linga is called Lingodpava. Near it is a small round stone upon which coconuts are broken. The Linga is garlanded, oil is poured over it, camphor is burnt at its base and food gifts are made to it.

At 5(12) is a recently constructed shrine. It is dedicated to Vishnu. Inside the shrine, the image of Vishnu occupies a central position,

with that of Maha Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) on his left, and that of Boma Lakshmi (goddess of earth) on his right. There is an image of the kite, the vahanam of Vishnu.

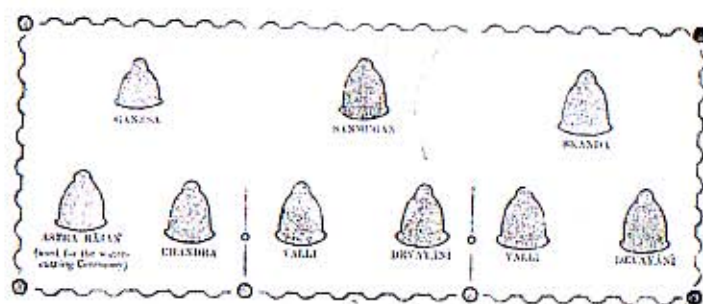
At 5(13) on this outer wall of the Holy Place, there is a stone image of Durga, standing upon the head of a buffalo. Below this is a narrow stone channel, coming from within the Holy Place itself, and projecting about eighteen inches from the wall. Along this channel flows the water and the milk with which the main image of the Holy Place has been washed. Devotees, standing on the outside of the Holy Place, take some of this liquid in their hand and place it to their lips.

At 5(14) is another separate shrine in which the stone image is called Chandre Surya, a composite image to the Moon-Sun god.

At 5(15) is the Northern entrance.

At 5(16) is a caged shrine containing the Nava Grahas, the nine planets, all of whom are represented by small images. The Nava Grahas are especially pacified during the festival. Their arrangement has already been explained in Chapter 5.

At 5(17) is a large shrine containing several images, arranged in groups of three as follows :



Chanmuga is the name given to Skanda when he is represented with six faces and twelve hands.

At 5(18) is a small recess, called the Homa place, where, during the festival, a large fire is kindled and fed with ghee. This sacred fire is clearly connected with Vedic sacrifice.

At 5(19) is a small office for the priest.

At 5(20) near the, main Eastern entrance, there is a small shrine in which there is a black stone image of Bhairava, together with an iron trident, the weapon usually found at a Bhairava shrine. In this temple, the Bhairava shrine in the Inner Verandah is called the New Bhairava.

At 5* are the eight small images found in the corners of the temple. These are the guardian gods of the compass, explained in Chapter 5.

6 THE OUTER VERANDAH (6)

Around the wall of the temple is the open Outer Verandah. Along this, during the festival, there will be found many kinds of booths in which various commodities are sold. There are also certain fixtures which are marked on the sketch.

At 6(1) facing the Eastern entrance to the temple, there is a very old banyan tree, surrounded by a low stone wall, and in front of which stands the Bhairava trident. This is now known as the Old Bhairava, obviously the original Bhairava.

At 6(2) is a separate temple, dedicated to Ganesa.

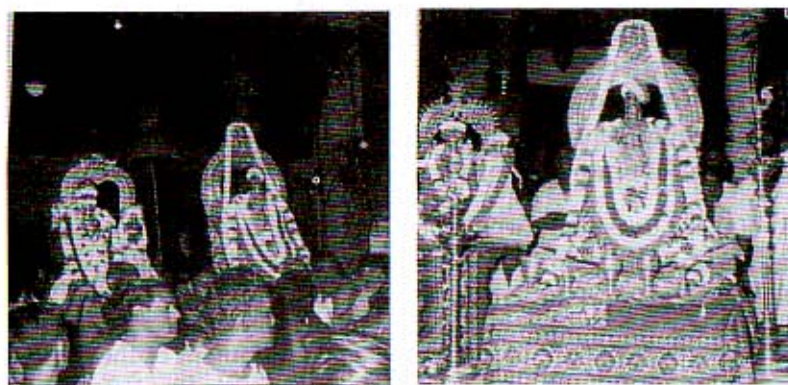
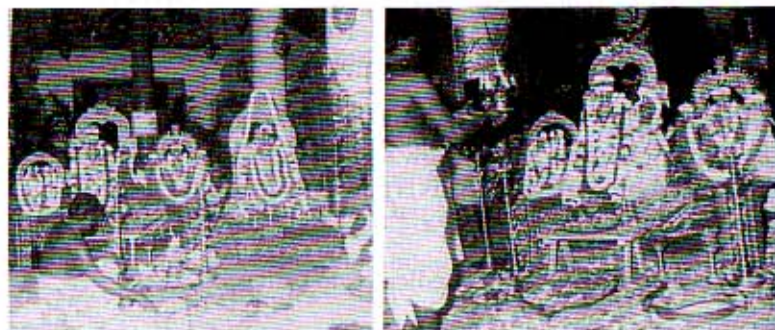
At 6(3) are two high stone platforms between which is kept the large festival car, on which the image of the main deity is drawn round the temple. Stone steps lead up to the platform. At the festival the image is carried up these steps and placed upon the car. The car intricately carved and brightly coloured, is an essential part of the temple equipment, and many devotees regard the car itself with reverence, at times even prostrating themselves before it.

At 6(4) are the small dwelling quarters occupied by the Brahman priests and their families. Attached to this particular temple are, eight Brahman priests.

This detailed account of the images and equipment of the Hindu temple at Munnesvaram does not include a sacred tank. In many other temples the sacred tank is usually situated on the border of the outer verandah. For the water-cutting ceremony, the priests at

Munnesvaram take the image of the deity to a nearby river, whereas at the Skanda Temple at Nallur, this ceremony takes place at the tank adjacent to the temple.

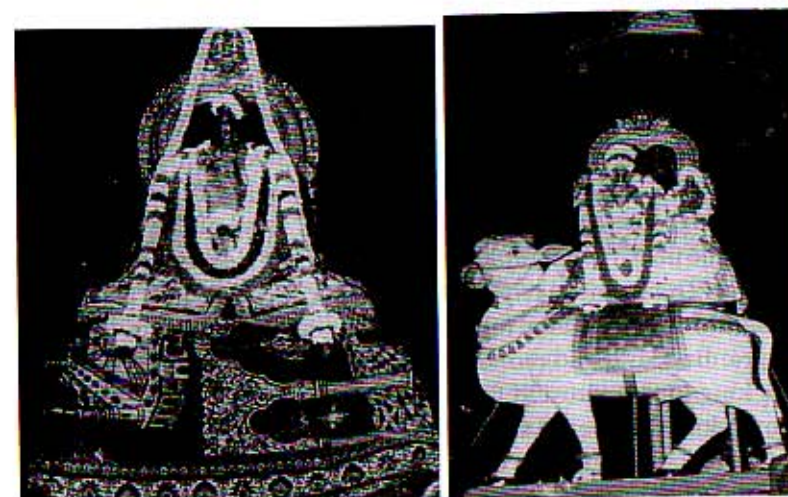
The main courts of the temple, together with the eastern entrance, are likened to a man's body. The Holy Place is the head, and the linga is the powerful light of wisdom. The Courts form the neck and chest; the vahaam, is the heart; the Palipeedmn, the naval; the Kodimaram, the genital organs. The feet are located at the eastern entrance and the tower represents the toes.



Exrtact from: HINDU TEMPLES OF SRI LANKA

Edited S.Pathmanathan, Published Kumaran Book House 2006
preface written by R.Namasivayam pp ix - x

The temple of Munnesvaram in Chiaw ranks third in order of importance among the temples of Siva in the country. Kings and princes richly endowed it and the temple was in a most flourishing condition during the 15th and 16th centuries before the Portuguese *conquistadors* had laid their hands on it. At Munnesvaram, which is visited by Saiva devotees and pilgrims from all parts of the country, worship is conducted strictly according to the Agamas. It is the only temple in the Island where the *vasanta navarattiri* is celebrated on the scale of a festival. Besides, there are images of the 63 Saiva nayanmar in honour of whom worship is conducted on the occasions of their respective anniversaries.



APPENDIX 15

Exrtact from:

**Munnicuvaram (Munnesvaram) Kovil:
Its History, Ceremonies and Layout
Prof. A. Veluppillai,**

This article was published in *Uppsala Studies in the History of Religions*(2) 1995, pp. 68-71. © Uppsala University

A brief history of the Munnicuram kovil

Among the renowned Siva kovils which emerged in various parts of Ilankai, Munnicuvaram kovil at Cilapam in the western part of Ilankai was prominent and extolled as a kovil of great antiquity. The presiding deity is called Sri Munnainathar ('Lord of antiquity') and the goddess is Sri Vativampika Devi ('goddess of beautiful form'). Munnicuvaram being a great Saiva shrine became a centre of highest devotion where people of various categories paid homage to the presiding deity. Thus this is extolled as a sacred site (*punya ksetra*), and renowned for its *murti*, ('deity'), *sthal* ('sacred place'), and *tirtha* ('sacred ford') aspects.

In addition to its mythological significance having a tradition of epics and puranas,^[1] the kovil has a long and significant history.^[2] The ancient tradition of this kovil has attracted the kings who reigned in different periods. The inscriptions attached to this kovil bore record to the wealth which the successive kings with true devotion provided to the regular service of the kovil. This kovil appears to be one of the important temples in the territory of Kotte in the fifteenth century. The Tamil inscription of the Parakramabahu VI (1412-1467) found in Munnicuvaram reflects the patronage extended by this king by granting land and money to the kovil and its brahmin priests.^[3] The king took interest in the renovation of the kovil too. The kovil is mentioned in the *Kokila Sandesaya* which was written in his reign, and we can presume that this kovil would have had a long tradition and its origin would go back to a period earlier to this King.^[4]

The royal patronage to the kovil of Munnicuvaram continued until the 16th century, and during this period another ruler of Kotte

Parakramabahu IX (1509-1528 A.D.), donated extensive lands to the kovil by recording in a copper plate inscription.^[5] It records his visit to this kovil and the endowment.

It is worthwhile to mention here that any donation or contribution for renovation of a Saiva kovil is honoured as a 'holy act' (*punya karya*) in Saiva tradition. Since this kovil is claimed to be an ancient one, the kings and the people would have developed a high devotion and these grants reflect as the token of their devotion. As a result of this Munnicuvaram attracted more devotees who visited on pilgrimage and attained similar prominence to that of Tirukkoneccuram. At the same time it developed to be a centre for Saiva religious and cultural activities and rituals were performed in accordance to the prescribed form. More communities were settled around the kovil to attend to the various activities of maintenance of this great kovil.

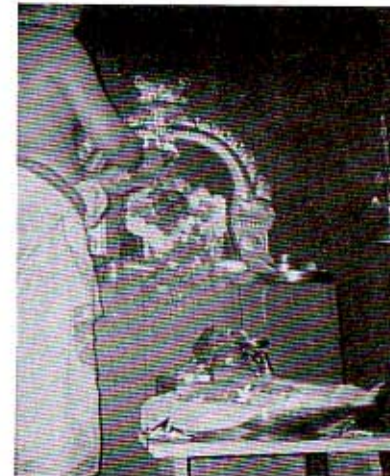
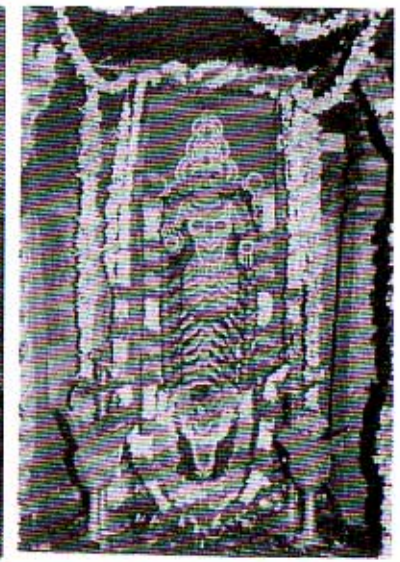
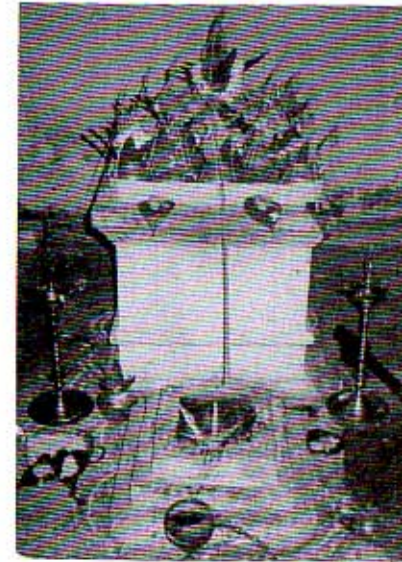
The rise of Portuguese power in the Kingdom of Kotte in the 16th century led to the downfall of this kovil. The Portuguese soldiers caused a complete damage to this flourishing kovil by razing it to the ground in 1578.^[6] This seems to be a common incident in the history of the most of the leading kovils in Ilankai. Whenever these kovils met with devastation or damage by any force, the kings, priests and people with great devotional spirit engaged themselves in restoration activities and caused the regular kumbhabhiseka to be held accordingly.

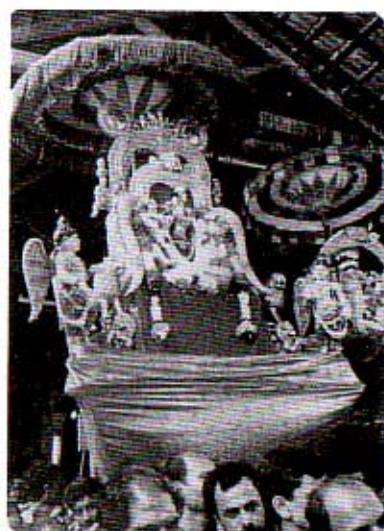
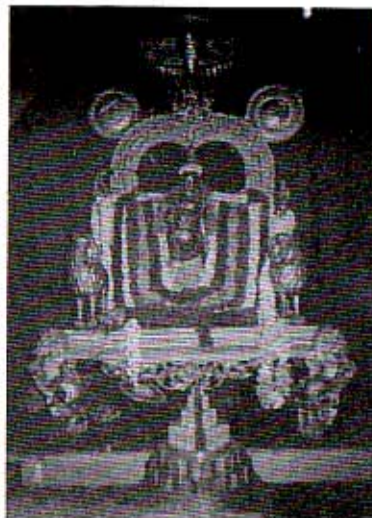
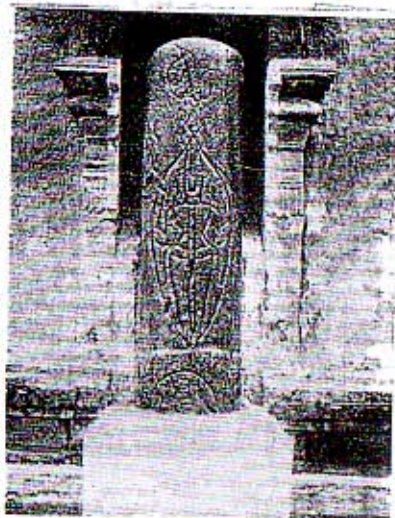
Kumbhabhiseka ceremonies held in Munnicuvaram

The renovation activities and the consecration ceremonies are said to be the special features in the history of the kovils. The devastated Munnicuvaram kovil was renovated in the eighteenth century by the Nuvaran King Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747-1782 A.D.) and the kumbhabhiseka ceremonies were performed in the year 1753. For the regular performance of the daily and special rituals of the kovil, he made a grant of extensive lands to the priests of the kovil, through a copper plate in the same year.^[7]

End Notes

- [1] B. Sivaramakrishna Sarma, *Sri Munnesvara Varalaru* [The History of Sri Munnesvaram Temple] (Colombo: The Colombo Co-operative Printers' Society Ltd., Colombo, 1968), p. 4 ff. See also C. Rasanayagam, *Ancient Jaffna*. (First published in 1926) (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1984), p. 83; M. Somaskanda Kurukkal, *Sri Munnesvara Manmiyam*, [The Glories of Sri Munnesvaram] (Colombo Virakesari Printers, Colombo, 1949), pp. 13-34.
- [2] S. Pathmanathan, "Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka: Some points of contact between two religious traditions (circa A.D. 1300-1600), *Lanka*, No 4, ed. Peter Schalk, March, 1990. pp.102-103. Also see P.E. Peiris, "Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Ceylon Branch*, XXVI, No. 70, (1917), pp. 17-18.
- [3] B. Sivaramakrishna Sarma, op. cit., pp.50-51.
- [4] S. Pathmanathan, "Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka: Some points of contact between two religious traditions" (circa A.D. 1300-1600), loc. cit.
- [5] S. Somaskanda Kurukkal, op. cit, p. 36.
- [6] Ibid., p. 37. Also see B. Sivaramkrishna Sarma. op. cit, p. 10.
- [7] B. Sivaramakrishna Sarma, op. cit, p.10.





HISTORY OF MUNNESWARAM TEMPLE

B.S. SARMA

Munneshwaram attracts one's attention because of the reason that it is a historical and archaeological site of considerable importance. The Garbhagrha and its adjuncts as found today are parts of the original buildings constructed in the Vijayanagara style of art and architecture.

Munneshwaram is one of the few temples where all festivals and religious observations listed in the Hindu calendar are conducted on an elaborate scale meticulously according to the prescriptions in the Agamas.

The author of this monograph, Sivaramakrishna Sarma, who grew up at Munneshwaram from his childhood as an inmate of the Agraharam is familiar with all matters pertaining to the temple.

There is no other person in the island who could with confidence and authority as he could on this subject. In 1964 he published a book in Tamil, which was the most coherent and comprehensive account ever written on Munneshwaram. Now, in retirement he produced a small monograph in English wherein he has introduced a considerable amount of information found in volumes published recently.

B. Sivaramakrishna Sarma (1941) currently the Executive Director, Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education, has served as Director of Education (E.M.I.S) Policy Planning & Review Division at Ministry of Education & Higher Education, Deputy Director of Education - Religious Unit, Principal, Hindu College Colombo, Chief Education Officer, Education Officer, Circuit Education Officer (Science), Editor, Educational Publications Department. He is a Science graduate from the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya later gained post-graduate Diploma in Education. He served as the secretary to the Advisory board of the Hindu religion at Ministry of Education & Higher Education. He had participated in number of seminars and forums on Hindu Religious topics at International level.

