

The Great Temple at Tanjore.

THE RAJARAJESVARAM—TEMPLE OF SRI BRIHADISVARA—AT TANJORE.

Tanjore, the royal city of the Cholas, the Nayaks, and the Mahrattas, is the eighth largest in the Presidency, and, is on the main line of the South Indian Railway, 218 miles south of Madras. It lies in N. Lat. 10°-47' E. long. 79-10'24", and is set amidst the vast deltaic tract of the Cauvery, known as the Garden of South India. As the capital of a succession of ancient Hindu dynasties, and, in all ages, one of the chief political, literary and religious centres of the South, the city is full of interesting associations:

Tanjavur or Tanjore derives its name from Tanjan—an *asura* (giant) who according to local legend devastated the neighbourhood and was killed by Sri Anandavalli Amman and Vishnu, Sri Nilameghapperumal. Tanjan's dying request that the city might be named after him was granted. This tradition is perpetuated by the temple of Sri Tanjapurisvara and Anandavalli Amman, and the temple of Sri Nilameghapperumal, originally built in Vambulamsolai,¹ and later removed to the bank of the Vennar, two miles north of the city. Another derivation of the name is from *Tanjam* or refuge

(1) கிண்டிசை என்னும் கெட்டுப் போன
காலத்தில் அந்தக் கெட்டுப் போன
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which makes it mean 'the City of refuge'. The *Tanjapuri-Mahatmya* derives the name from Tunga or Kulottunga, a Chola king who according to this *Sthalapurana* built Tanjore and named it Tungapura after him. This does not seem to be borne out by any historical account. The city also goes by the name of Alagai—*Alagais* as tradition says that Kubera stayed and worshipped here.

The city has passed through various vicissitudes of fortune. Within historical times, Tanjore has been the capital of the Muttaraiyars (*முத்தரையர்*), and next, that of the later Cholas (during the 9th and 10th centuries) from the time Vijayalaya¹ (A. D. 846-880) the founder of that line, conquered it from the Muttaraiyars and selected it as his capital in preference to Uraiyur (now a suburb of Trichinopoly), the seat of the ancient Cholas; later it was a mere royal residence when Rajendra I (A. D.

(1) *Vijayalaya and Tanjore*.—The Kanyakumari stone inscription of the Chola Virarajendra Deva (See *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 42) says: "He (Vijayalaya) established in the Chola country, the City of Tanjapuri which was praised even by Brahma and other Gods, and which flourished with all good qualities being a newly founded town" (vv. 54). Vijayalaya is here said to have constructed anew the city of Tanjapuri in the Chola Country. But the Tiruvalangadu grant of Rajendra I, which is earlier than the Kanyakumari record, distinctly mentions that Vijayalaya took the city by force (*ajagraha*) and set up in it the image of Nisumbhasudani (Durga). Relying on this record which may be taken to record the truth, we conclude that the City was seized from the Muttaraiyars, the vassals of the Pallavas, by Vijayalaya (see *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XIII, p. 136). The consecration of the image of Nisumbhasudani in the city is recorded in verse 45 of the Tiruvalangadu grant as "Having next consecrated there (the image of) Nisumbhasudani, whose lotus feet are worshipped by Gods and demoms, he by the grace of that goddess bore just (as easily) as a garland (the weight of) the whole earth resplendent with her garment of the four oceans" (*S. I. I.*, Vol. III, p. 418). This temple of Nisumbhasudani does not exist now at Tanjore. But there is a famous shrine of Kali—Sci Kodi Amman, at the western gate of the fort, known popularly as Pachchaikkali and Pavalsakkali. These dual forms are locally associated with the conflict of the Deity with Tanjan, the *Asura* and the rescue of the city from him. The annual festivities of the goddess in her double coloured form are celebrated with great devotion. The conquest of the city by Vijayalaya is described in the Tiruvalangadu plates (*S. I. I.*, Vol. III, p. 418) thus:—

"He took possession of the town *Tanchapuri* which was picturesque to the sight, was as beautiful as Alaka, had reached the sky (by its high turrets) and the white wash of whose mansions, (appeared like) the scented cosmetic (applied to the body) just as he would seize (by the hand) his own wife who had beautiful eyes, graceful curls, a cloth covering (her body) and sandal paste as white as lime in order to sport with her." The name *Tanchapuri* continued down to the Vijayanagar times (1500 A. D.), the country being called *gise vengai* (vide *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. IX, p. 340)—T. N. R.