



72 Dragons Arts



10th Century Chola queen idol traced in United States art gallery

The Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, USA, is the location of a three and a half feet tall idol of Chola queen Sembiyan Mahadevi that was stolen from a temple in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, in 1929. The Idol Wing police have taken action to recover the idol.

According to K Jayanth Murali, Director-General of Police, Hagop Kevorkian sold the magnificent bronze idol to the Freer Gallery of Art in New York in 1929 for an undisclosed sum. In 1962, Kevorkian perished.

The DGP noted that more research needs to be done to determine where, how, and from whom he obtained the idol. One "Elephant" Rajendran initially filed a complaint with the Velankanni police in 2018 claiming to have seen the Sembiyan Mahadevi idol there during a visit in 2015 and to have confirmed the information with worshippers at the Kailasanatha Swamy Sivan Temple in the Sembiyan Mahadevi village, which is about 25 kilometres from Nagapattinam.

The case was accelerated by Jayanth Murali, R Dhinakaran, Inspector General of Police, and B Ravi Superintendent of Police. A special team led by police inspector Mrs. Indira also helped the Epigraphy branch of the Archaeological Survey of India decipher the stone inscriptions in the Kailasanatha Swamy temple. Floor Burger (1962).



She inquired further with the temple employees who had been there for more than 60 years. According to a press release, Sembiyan Mahadevi Adigalar lost her husband when she was 15 and their son was a year old.

The queen spent the remainder of her life constructing temples and promoting the arts and culture after her husband's passing. Brick temples were changed into granite temples under her reign. She was one of the most powerful Chola queens and over the course of 60 years, she built a large number of temples and generously donated to many other temples in south India.

Indian art has always dwelled in other countries' art galleries, whether it is the UK or US in this case. The point is, should they return the art to preserve the heritage of that culture and can we really preserve it?

Reference

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/10th-century-chola-queen-idol-traced-to-us-art-gallery/articleshow/93196969.cms>