INTRODUCTION

Kalkulam taluk, situated in Kanyakumari District, has been occupying a central place in the history of Travancore. The taluk, with a multitude of political and socio-economic legacies, presents a veritable treasure house of mankind. With the royal house of the Ays, Venad rulers and the Maharajas of Travancore, Kalkulam taluk occupies a permanent place in the history of Travancore as well as Kanyakumari District. It is closely associated with many important events including the spread of Christian faith.

The total geographical area of Kalkulam is 229.39 square miles. It is divided into lowland, midland and high land. The lowland area is 59 square miles, the midland area 49.89 square miles and the high land area 120.50 square miles.¹ The lowland area comprises places like Kappiyara, Valvachagoshtam, Alur, Eraniel, Thalakulam, Kadiapattinam, Manavalamkurichi, Colachel and Thiruvithancode. The midland area consists of Attur, Thuckalay, Kalkulam, Kothananallur, Mekode, Aruvikara, Thiruvattar, Thirupparappu and Ponmana along with surveyed and unsurveyed hills which come under the high land division.²

Kalkulam taluk receives a share of both the South West and North-East Monsoons, the former in a larger measure than the latter. The South West Monsoon occurs between January and June and the North East Monsoon

2. Ibid.
between October and November. The winter is perhaps the driest part of the year. In February humidity is at its lowest. But nights are chill. In summer, the day is extremely hot. From April onwards the temperature during the day gradually falls. In October it is at its lowest as this period gets the maximum rainfall. The hot months of April and May witness summer storms, often accompanied by heavy showers.

Rivers of the taluk are mostly non-perennial and short. Paralayar rises on the mountains north of Mahendrageri hills, enters the plains at Thiruvattar and meets another river Kodayar. The rivers together form the Kuzhithuraiar which is also known as Tambraparani. The river then flows through hilly tracts of Kalkulam and reaches the sea at Tengapatinam. The Valliyar is another river which starts from Velimalai. It runs through the villages of Kothanalloor, Kalkulam, Eraniel, Thalakulam, Kadiapattinam, Manavalakurichi of this taluk and drains into the Arabian Sea.

Kalkulam taluk has an ancient history. During the first century A.D. this region formed part of the Pandya Kingdom. Then it came under the Ays who ruled as subordinate chieftains of the Cheras. During the time of the latter Ays, Thiruvidaikodu in Kalkulam became the capital³. After Varaguna, the Ay ruler, this region came under the Pandyas. The Pandyan Dam across the river Paralayar in Kalkulam further confirms the rule of the Pandyas. When this region was under the Cheras, Kalkulam became a part of the Cheramangalam
Desam. When Bhaskara Ravivarman was the Chera king Rajaraja I made his southern expedition and discontinued the *salai* attached to the temple at KaraiKandesvaram and Talakulam in Kalkulam. The Tirunanthikarai inscription mentions about the Rajaraja Then Valluvanadu, a territorial subdivision of Rajaraja I. It says that Muttom was in Valluvanadu.

For nearly half a century the southern part of the old Pandyan kingdom including Kalkulam was governed by Chola Pandya Viceroy. When Veerakeralavarma was the first Venad king, Vira Keralapuram also called as Muthalaikuruchi in Kalkulam taluk became his capital. The Elavanasur inscription confirms Achyta’s supremacy over this region. With the advent of the Europeans, Colachel, prominent sea port, once again attained its prominence. The English and the Dutch had their settlements there. Due to the Battle of Colachel, the most gruesome of battles recorded in the history of Travancore, several villages of Kalkulam taluk were badly affected. Ultimately Travancore forces defeated the Dutch forces. In commemoration of the great victory of Travancore over the Dutch, a pillar of victory had been erected at Colachel. Thereafter the Travancore rulers held sway over this region.

After independence with the reorganisation of the provinces of India on linguistic basis, this taluk came under the then Madras State (the present Tamilnadu) from 1st November 1956. It became one among the four taluks of

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Kanyakumari District. It consisted of three Panchayat Unions viz., Thiruvattar, Thuckalay and Kurunthencode and two Municipalities viz. Thuckalay and Colachel. It possessed twenty eight Town Panchayats and twenty one Village Panchayats. During this period, the total population of the taluk was 3,49,467. 

Kalkulam taluk, with headquarters at Thuckalay, is historically important on account of Amman temple at Mandaicadu, Theresa Palli, the earliest Syrian Christian Church at Thiruvithancode, Thaikkapalli at Thuckalay, Kumarakoil on the slopes of the Veli Hills, Udayagiri Fort east of Thuckalay, Padmanabhapuram, the earliest capital of Travancore State, Thiruvithancode, the capital of Venattu Adigal, Indian Rare Earths factory at Manavalakurichy, Pechipparai and Perumchani dams, the main water reservoirs in a picturesque natural environment and Muttom promontory with an imposing light house on the Arabian Coast.

Scope of the Study

The doctoral thesis entitled Political and Socio-Economic Trends in Kalkulam Taluk upto 1962 aims at making a comprehensive study of the history of Kalkulam taluk covering all political and socio-economic aspects. The study is an attempt to focus on the early rulers, the traditional system of administration and how far the people ultimately had tasted their civil rights. It deals with the missionary movement which enlightened the people. It brings to light the liberation of the people from the bondage to a life of freedom. The

study attempts to present the land ownership and the land reforms which help agrarian production. In order to highlight all the hidden importance to the future generation, the present topic has been selected for a systematic study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study is intended to bring out the true history of the region. The study would open new vistas and add a new dimension to the social history of Kalkulam. The researchers who have attempted a study so far have not covered the social, political and economic condition of this region. Hence an earnest attempt is made to bring out the multifaceted history of Kalkulam in a genuine historical perspective. It is a micro study of a local region. Regional studies would be able to bring out more details.

**Objectives of the study**

The study was undertaken to accomplish the following objectives.

- To trace the history of the Kalkulam taluk.
- To study the local administration.
- To portray the life style of the people
- To analyze the economic and social development of the people
- To sketch the changes happened through various stages.

**Hypothesis**

- Among the four taluks of Kanyakumari district, Kalkulam taluk, from the time of ancient Chera rulers, upto the Travancore rulers, assumes greater significance.
• The taluk has undergone religious convulsions which have their roots in the past history.

• The awakening of the basic communities with their effort to achieve civil rights ultimately had united this taluk with the Madras State.

• Missionary endeavour through education and the preaching of Christianity, had shaken off the bondage.

• The land reforms made from time to time had intended to change social relations and to ensure social justice.

Period of study

The period chosen for the study is relevant and significant. The period of study stretches from the ancient Cheras upto 1962. The reason for confining the study upto 1962 is because, after the merger of the Tamil speaking areas including Kalkulam with the Madras State on 1st November 1956, the administrative set up of the local bodies then in existence in Kalkulam were allowed to continue under the Travancore-Cochin State upto 1962. The local administration of Tamil Nadu was extended to this taluk with effect from 1st April 1962. Hence, choosing this period is quite relevant.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in the present research work is both descriptive and analytical. Besides the primary and secondary sources, corroborative evidences were also utilised for the study. It enabled to arrive at an appropriate conclusion and make the vital findings.
Sources for the study


Secondary sources are used substantially to corroborate the data supplied by primary sources. The published works of different authors furnish considerable information. Travancore State Manuals, magazines, journals, souvenirs and newspaper reports are also used elaborately. The various sources are tested through cross examination and analysed extensively to eliminate the chances of bias and to arrive at the point of objectivity.

The sources mentioned above are formed in the Cellar Library Kerala Government Secretariat Trivandrum, Kerala State Archives and Kerala State Public Library Trivandrum, Concordia Seminary Library Nagercoil, District Central Library Nagercoil, Scott Christian College Library, Statistical Office,
The thesis is organised into seven chapters apart from the introduction and the conclusion. The introductory chapter gives a vivid account about the geographical position of the taluk with the scope, purpose, objectives, period of study, hypothesis, sources and the design of the study.

The first chapter, *Kalkulam Taluk under Early Sovereigns* explains in detail the reign of ancient rulers including the Ays, the Perumals, the Venad rulers, the Chola Pandya Viceroy and the Travancore rulers. It explains the expeditions of the Vijayanagar, Nayaks to conquer this region during the reign of the Travancore rulers. This chapter brings out the details regarding the battles fought in this taluk. It also describes about Maharaja Marthanda Varma’s hunt against Ettuveetil Pillamars and the regions in Kalkulam taluk which were involved in the heat of the struggle.
The second chapter **Political Trends of Kalkulam Taluk from the Advent of Europeans to the Formation of Kanyakumari District** describes the attempt of the Europeans to occupy Colachel and the different strategies the Travancore Maharajas adopted at the Battle of Colachel. It deals with Kalkulam taluk during the period of transition and the position of the taluk during Velu Thambi’s rebellion. This chapter also gives a clear cut picture on John Munro’s reforms which enabled the enrichment of the people of Kalkulam taluk. Further it explains the role played by the people to achieve democracy and the union of Kalkulam taluk with the Madras State.

The third chapter **Emergence of a New Order** is exclusively devoted to the local administration of Kalkulam taluk through the ages. It deals with the village union, the village administration in Kalkulam after independence, and the Panchayat unions of Kalkulam. It also describes the formation of Municipalities in Kalkulam taluk and their function. It reveals the work rendered by these administrative institutions for the betterment of the taluk.

The fourth chapter **Social Spectrum of Kalkulam Taluk** deals with the different castes in Kalkulam taluk especially the oppression of Nadars and their struggle for social rights, the customs and practices of Nairs, the social position and practices of the Brahmins and the customs and practices of all the other castes. It also explains the various social evils prevailed in Kalkulam taluk and the emancipation from them. It traces the impact of the government
legislations which were passed from time to time in order to liberate people and to lead them towards an equalitarian society.

The fifth chapter *Religious Fulcrum of Kalkulam Taluk* gives elaborate information about primitive forms of worship, the presence of Buddhism, Jainism Saivism and Vaishnavism in Kalkulam taluk and the famous worshipping centres. This chapter also gives an account of the spread of Christianity and Islam in Kalkulam.

The sixth chapter *Education and Public Health of Kalkulam Taluk* deals with the early educational system, Eluthupallis, Kalaris, the development of education before and after independence and the schools existed in Kalkulam taluk. It also deals with the indigenous medicines which the early people were familiar with, Vaidyasalas, departmental medical institutions, Mission hospital at Neyoor, and the Leprosy Asylum at Colachel.

The seventh chapter tells about the *Economic Trends of Kalkulam Taluk*. It deals with the land tenure, agriculture and the irrigation system of the taluk. It explains the Indian Rare Earths Ltd and cottage industries. It also deals with the general economic conditions and economic development of the people.

The last chapter is the summing up of the main points of the facts referred to above. It also reflects the findings of the study.