CHAPTER – V

SECULAR MONUMENTS
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It is significant to mention that unlike the various religious monuments of this district, the secular monuments are the real attractions. We can classify the secular monuments as forts, palaces, dams, towers, filter house, light houses and other heritage buildings like wooden houses and Amma Veedus, Pillar anchal boxes, Sumaithangis and parks etc. Let us discuss one by one. First of all, the various fortifications of the Kanyakumari District is dealt with.

FORTS

Just like the temples, forts were constructed by all the rulers through the ages in order to protect his citizens from any type of aggression and attack. In Kanyakumari district majority of forts were constructed during the reign of Travancore kings.\textsuperscript{1} Eventhough references are available regarding the existence of fortifications during the medieval period, unfortunately no fort is seen. They might have been demolished by the victorious rulers. Rajaraja, the Great’s celebrated Meikeerthi inscription highlights his conquest on the present Kanyakumari district and the demolition of the fortifications at Udayagiri and Kanthalurchalai.\textsuperscript{2} The existence of fish symbol in the roof of the circular fort (Vattakottai) explains the Pandya’s influence

\textsuperscript{1} K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{The Cōlas}, Madras, 1975, pp.170-175.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Ibid}.
over the fort. The remains of Uthachikottai (Uthachi fort) which was constructed to protect Maharani Uthachi signifies the role of Thirumalai Nayak of Madurai Nayakdom over this region.³

When Maharaja Marthandavarma, the founder of modern Travancore established his authority over Travancore after defeating his formidable enemies like the *Ettuvittu Pillaimars*, he strengthened the capital Padmanabhapuram with strong fortifications. Very soon he faced the historic *Colachel war* in which the Travancore army defeated the Dutch forces and captured its general De'lannoy.⁴ Later De'lannoy was appointed as the *Valiyakappithan* (Commander-in-chief) of the Travancore army. The latter was responsible for the construction of all the fortifications including the modified one at Padmanabhapuram.⁵

The Padmanabhapuram and the Udayagiri fort walls were built in A.D.1600 by the Venad King Vira Ravivarma (A.D.1595 – 1605).⁶ But these were only mud walls. The mud walls were replaced by granite walls during the reign of King Marthandavarma (A.D.1729 – 1758). A long fort wall was erected during the reign of Marthandavarma from Kanyakumari to Aralvaimozhi as a mark of

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boundary line between the Pandya Kingdom and Venad. There were
forts like Marunthukkottai (Ammunition fort) for storing the gun
materials and Mayyakkottai (Chavakottai) (Cremation fort) for burying
the death. Udachi Kottai (Uthachi fort) and Venkalarajan Kottai
(Venkalarajan fort) were the two other forts known in the district.
Vattakottai (Circular fort) is another landmark built by King
Marthandavarman (A.D.1729 – 1758) which is a magnificent one.

The existence of Marunthukottai and Chavakottai near
Padmanabhapuram identified the architectural, martial talents of
Travancore kings and also of the chief commander De Lannoy, a Dutch
General who was captured and promoted by Maharaja
Marthandavarman, the founder of modern Travancore Kingdom.

Padmanabhapuram fort which was constructed around the
place Padmanabhapuram and the Uthayagiri fort constructed near
Padmanabhapuram exposed the outstanding military qualities of
De Lannoy. The Aramboly fort which is locally called as Kottakarai
was constructed from Kadukkarai village to Kanyakumari sea water. It
is in a ruined stage at present.

    Trivandrum, 1941, p.21.
In order to highlight the historical significance of the forts and also to give an objective account about the present condition of the forts, an attempt has been made in this chapter to discuss all the fortifications one by one.

**Padmanabhapuram Fort**

The ancient historical town Padmanabhapuram, one of the four municipalities in the district is 55 kms south of Thiruvananthapuram, about 2 kms east of Thuckalay and 35 kms from Kanyakumari on the highway to Thiruvananthapuram.

Padmanabhapuram was the capital of Venad i.e. the erstwhile Travancore state till the closing years of the region of Karthihi Thirunal Ramavarma. A midst hills, dales and rivers upto A.D. 1744, the a fort and a palace which were called as *Kalkulam Kottai, Kalkulam Kottaram* respectively. Since the dedication of the palace to Lord Padmanabha in A.D. 1744, the fort and palace were known as Padmanabhapuram fort and Padmanabhapuram palace respectively.

It was the ancient capital of the erstwhile Travancore or Venad Kingdom from about A.D. 1555 to the latter half of the 18th century. Even though it is situated in the Kanyakumari District of

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Tamil Nadu, the palace is owned and maintained by the Archaeological Department of the Government of Kerala.\textsuperscript{13}

Originally a mud fort was later dismantled and reconstructed with granite by Maharaja Marthandavarma. The height of the wall varies from 15" to 24" according to the inclination of the ground.\textsuperscript{14}

Besides the main gateways one on each side, the entire fortification was constructed with granite that exposes the engineering skills of the builders of the period.\textsuperscript{15}

The Padmanabhapuram fort, dating back to 15\textsuperscript{th} century, has been neglected now. The original fort was built as a mud fort which was in existence during the reign of Veera Ravivarma Kulasekara Perumal (A.D.1592 – 1609). Later it was made into a granite structure furnished with bastions and gun points by Maharaja Marthandavarma the architect of modern Travancore.\textsuperscript{16} The fort and the palace remained the centre of governance till the reign of Karthihai Thirunal Ramavarma (A.D. 1758-1798). Later the headquarters of Travancore Kingdom was shifted to Kaudiyar in the present Thiruvananthapuram city.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} Padmanabha Ayyar, \textit{Modern Travancore}, Trivandrum, 1941, p.51.
\textsuperscript{15} R. Vasudeva Poduval, \textit{op.cit.}, p.21.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{17} P. Shungunny Menon, \textit{op.cit.}, p.164.
The historical records about the fort, palace, culture of the Royal family, their attitude towards the people, their festivals, celebrations, way of receiving the guests were obtained from several epigraphs and writing on dried palm leaves.\textsuperscript{18}

The fort could not be destroyed even when the British invaded Travancore through the Aramboly pass at the time of Veluthambi Thalavai (A.D. 1765-1809).\textsuperscript{19}

Padmanabhapuram town is surrounded by a fort with an area of 187 acres.\textsuperscript{20} The palace with an area of seven acres, is situated in the very centre of the Padmanabhapuram fort. It was surrounded by fertile paddy fields, coconut groves and a village where the employees of the palace were resided once.\textsuperscript{21}

The fort of Padmanabhapuram was constructed to save the people of the locality and the safety of the king who also lived in the Padmanabhapuram palace.\textsuperscript{22}

The fort which was built with mud originally was dismantled and reconstructed with granite by Maharaja Marthandavarma. The Padmanabhapuram Fort was unique in that it

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} T.K. Velu Pillai, \textit{The Travancore State Manual, Trivandrum, 1940}, Vol. II, p. 262.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} H. Lajipathi Raj, \textit{Development of Tourism in India}, New Delhi, 1993.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{21} M. Gopalakrishnan, \textit{Kanyakumari District Gazetteer}, Madras, 1995, p.122.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
had large granite stones, which were said to have been placed with the help of elephants on one side and Valia Ejaman, a strong man and the army chief on the other. No mortar or lime was used to cement the stones.23 The height of the walls varies from 15' to 24' according to the inclination of the ground. The thickness of the fort wall was 3 feet.24

Maharaja Marthandavarma was eager to adopt strong and efficient defensive measures for the safety of his kingdom. To ensure the safety of the royal palace at Padmanabhapuram, he constructed the strong fort with granite walls around the palace under the supervision of De Lannoy.25

Padmanabhapuram fort encloses an area of around 267 acres. The strong fort walls rise to a height of 30 ft. the foundation of which is constructed in granite and the superstructure in red stone.26 The materials used for the construction were wood, laterite, burnt bricks, granite and lime.

Though the fort was one of the biggest in the region, the Government has not declared it a protected monument under the Tamil Nadu Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites Act,

1966, or the Archaeological Protection Act. No funds were allotted for its maintenance.\textsuperscript{27} As a result, shrubs and bushes had grown up in the crevices of the stones. Even trees have grown up on the wall. Furthermore, signboards and advertisements had been put up on the wall.

Many houses were allowed to be built near the wall. Hence, \textit{Intech},\textsuperscript{28} a N.G.O. demanded the district administration should take action to remove the trees and the advertisements and ban the construction of buildings within a 50-meter radius.\textsuperscript{29}

Padmanabhapuram fort possesses one of the rare archeological museums containing rare architectural pieces, beautiful sculptures, rare coins, mural paintings and weapons of war.

\textbf{Udayagiri Fort}

Udayagiri fort popularly known as a foundary for casting guns is located 34 kms. from Kanyakumari, and 14 kms.\textsuperscript{30} from Nagercoil, the headquarters of this district. The fort was constructed surrounding a hill at Puliyrurkuruchi. Geographically Puliyoorkurichi

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Padmanabha Ayyar, \textit{Modern Travancore}, Trivandrum, 1941, p.190.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Personal interview with C. Ravendharan, Guide, aged 52, Padmanabhapuram Palace, dated 16.10.2012.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Personal interview with Dr. Lal Mohan, aged 75, General Secretary, INTECH, Nagercoil Chapter, Nagercoil on 15.04.2012.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Padmanabhan S., \textit{History of Kanyakumari Forts}, Nagercoil, 1978, p.16.
\end{itemize}
village is situated in the Kalkulam taluk of Kanyakumari District. Udayagiri is a fortified hill. Udayagiri Fort is situated one km to the east of Padmanabhapuram, a well known landmark in southern Travancore. The height of this hill is 80 metres and the area of the fort is 90 acres. The height and breadth of the Udayagiri fort wall is 5½ and 4½ metres respectively.\(^{31}\)

The fort is located to the east of Padmanabhapuram, the erstwhile capital of Venad rulers on a hillock.\(^ {32}\) It is known as Udayagiri, it is said that the sun rises at this hillock, and hence it is known as 'Udaya Giri' means Sun rises in the mountain. The Chera and Venad kings had the prefix 'Udaya' in their names of Udaya Marthandavarma and hence it could be taken that the hillock is known as 'Udayagiri'.\(^ {33}\)

Udayagiri was an armoury of the Chera rulers. Later during the reign of Raja Raja Chola, the fort was destroyed by him. Later Maharaja Marthandavarma, the founder of modern Travancore renovated the ruined fort under the able general De Lannoy, in between A.D. 1741 and A.D. 1744. After the renovation work, De Lannoy was appointed as the incharge of the fort.


\(^{32}\) R. Vasudeva Poduval, A short guide to Padmanabhapuram Palace, Trivandrum, 1941, p.203.

When Hyder Ali of Mysore declared war against Travancore, General De’Lennoy fell ill and died at Udayagiri in A.D. 1777. As a reward for his meritorious services, a grave was erected inside the fort for De Lannoy and his wife.

It was known from the Azhaghiapandiapuram Muthaliar Manuscripts, that the Venad ruler VeeraRavivarma collected money from the Zamindars and constructed a fort in mud at Udayagiri for defence in A.D. 776.

We came to know from the Mudaliar palm leaf manuscripts of Alagiyapandiapuram that it was planned to construct the fort in A.D.1600. A Neetu of the king Sri Veera Ravi Ravivarma (A.D.1595 – 1607) was issued in A.D.1600 to this effect.

This palm leaf manuscript contains this message as follows:

“uthaya kotta veikintra vahaikum
ahamu vettienta vahaikum
kotta meyinta vahaikum
kampu kal vettinta vahaikum
ola kolkinta vahaikum;”

Marthandavarma instructed De Lannoy the chief of the Travancore army for the construction of it. A stone masonry wall under the supervision of De Lannoy replaced the mud fort wall of Udayagiri. The fort was surrounded by hill.\footnote{37}

It is said that during the 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D, Raja Raja Chola destroyed the fort during the time of the Venad king Baskaravarma and hoisted his flag with the tiger symbol at the fort. There after the place came to be called as Pulliyoorkurichi.\footnote{38} However, the mud fort was destroyed and a new granite fort was constructed at Udayagiri. The modern history of Travancore started with the reign of Bala Marthandavarma.\footnote{39}

De Lannoy found that if the near by hill called Udayagiri hill will be protected, that would serve as an additional campaign area for the garrisons and a protected place for the manufacture of the army weapons. It will be appropriate to assume that in order to strengthen the fort at Udayagiri, De Lannoy started reconstruction of the fort in A.D. 1742.\footnote{40}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{37}{Personal interview with Mr. P. Raveendharan, aged 55, Attender, Padmanabhapuram Palace, dated 28.10.2012.}
\footnote{38}{A. Sreedharamenon, \textit{Kerala District Gazetteer}, Trivandrum, 1962, p.38.}
\footnote{39}{Personal interview with K. Balakrishnan, aged 57, Attender, Padmanabhapuram Palace, dated.16.10.2012.}
\footnote{40}{A. Sreedharamenon, \textit{Survey of Kerala History, op.cit.}, p.200.}
\end{footnotes}
The wall runs to 28 – 60 m. It measures 18 ft to 25 ft height and 37 ft width. The stone masonry wall was constructed and completed in A.D.1744.\textsuperscript{41}

The Udayagiri fort walls and ramparts which are massive "structure 18 feet high and 15" thickness with parapets averaging 4 feet in height" are faced with huge blocks of well dressed granite.\textsuperscript{42} They are lined within and without with stone. The outside lining is of lacerate, imbedded in \textit{chunnam}.\textsuperscript{43} The parapets are 3 feet thick and an average height. The inner line is of rough stone, 2 feet thickness and on an average 6 feet height. The space between the inner and the outer lining consists of earth which goes to form the ramparts. Besides the gateway there are smaller inlets near three bastions.\textsuperscript{44}

The fortification enclose a space of nearly 85 acres, part of which is occupied by a commanding hill of 260 feet in height, and hence it was possible to see the approach of the enemies from within and used the gun effectively. Within the fort, barracks for the army and gun powder were manufactured.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{41} Nilkan Perumal, \textit{The Truth about Travancore}, 1939, p.200.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{43} Personal interview with Mr.Kumar, aged 55, Accountant, Padmanabhapuram Palace, dated 16.10.2012.
\textsuperscript{44} Personal interview with Mr.S. Sukumaran, Aged 55, Clerk, Padmanabhapuram Palace on 17.10.2012.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}
Udayagiri fort came into prominence during the period of Travancore king Bala Marthandavarma (A.D.1729 – 1758). Udayagiri hill was used as an arsenal for the manufacture of cannon balls. Eustachius De Lannoy of Holland more popularly known as the ‘Valia Kappitaan’ served as army general under the Travancore king Marthandavarma and his successor Ramavarma for over 36 years.

The Udayagiri Fort served as a military base during the reign of Marthandavarma and it was supervised by De Lannoy. The army was trained in European style and provided with sophisticated weapons.46

Some of the weapons recovered within the fort campus itself were have the weight ranging from 1.80 kg to 8.400 kg. In A.D.1840 Lieutenant Welsh, one of the British commanders made an account of the gun and mortar found in Udayagiri fort.47

In A.D.1809 Dalawai Velu Thambi revolted against the British. A British army under the command of Colonial Legar suppressed the rebellion. Dalawai Velu Thambi retreated in the next few days and the same army assisted by Lieutenant Welsh captured the Udayagiri fort.48

46. Personal interview with Mr. R. Raman Pillai, aged 50, Attender, Padmanabhapuram Palace, dated 16.10.2012.
47. Raja Thangam, *Captain De Lannoy and Travancore*, Nagercoil, 2005, p.11
The war materials used by De Lannoy have been preserved till today in which, gigantic artillery made of with pure iron deserves special mention. De Lannoy used sword number 5, gun number 106, and small gun number 103. The metal lead was used in manufacturing weapons of war. De Lannoy produced different types of cannon balls in A.D.1741. Several cannon balls of varying size were found in the Udayagiri fort and they have been duly listed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size No.</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>30 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>22 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.800 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.300 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.800 kgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cannon balls produced by De Lannoy were made of pure iron. In processing the product with chemicals, great engineering skill was displayed.

51. Personal interview with D.Gopal, aged 56, The Archaeological Officer, Nagercoil, dated 22.03.2011
It was in recognition of this skill exhibited by the Dutch general that on his death, nearly 8699 cannon balls and few artilleries were kept on both sides of the way leading to his grave.\textsuperscript{52}

The Udayagiri fort was used as a prison in A.D.1799. The Diwan of Travancore, Jayandan Sankaran Nambudiri earned the wrath of the people for his maladministration along with his assistant Sankara Narayana Pillai. Both of them were imprisoned in the Udayagiri fort. The soldiers of Tippu Sultan were also kept as prisoners with in this fort campus.\textsuperscript{53}

The English East India Company’s troops were stationed there till the middle of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Foundry for the manufacture of guns, mortars and cannon balls were also established within the fort under the supervision of the General De Lannoy.\textsuperscript{54}

The fort was of strategic importance in the early days. Col. Welsh, in his book ‘Military Reminiscences’ has recorded that there were 100 guns in the fort besides 50,000 stand of arms. Major Wales, also mentions that a big cannon fixed at Udayagiri fort was not able to move even an inch by 1200 soldiers and 16 elephants.” It confirms the

\textsuperscript{52.} Travancore Information and Listener, Department of Public Information Vol. III, Trivandrum, 1948, p.48.


majestic and palatial preparations of the Travancore king Marthandavarma and the Valia kappithan De Lannoy.\textsuperscript{55} There is a tomb in the fort which bears testimony to the heroism of De Lannoy, the Commander-in-chief of the Travancore army. The tomb contains the mortal remains of De Lannoy, his wife and his son. From an inscription on stone in Latin over his grave in the Udayagiri fort, it is seen that he served under Marthandavarma and his successor Ramavarma for over 36 years from A.D.1741 to A.D.1777 and rendered great service in the aggressive wars of his masters. He even employed his son Johannes De Lannoy,\textsuperscript{56} a mere stripling of nineteen, as Commander of a battalion, who received a fatal wound in a skirmish at Kalakkad and died in A.D.1765. His body was also buried in the fort.\textsuperscript{57}

A tank is seen in the north western side of the fort campus adjoining the western fort wall and steps are also seen on all the four sides leading to the tank. The water tank was constructed during the reign of Moolam Thirunal Maharaja of Travancore in A.D.1906.\textsuperscript{58} A Isakki Amman temple is situated inside the fort campus near the western entrance. Royal family members worshipped in this temple.\textsuperscript{59}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} Parameswaran Pillai, \textit{The Evolution of Travancore State Forces}, Vol.II, Trivandrum, 1946, p.35.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Gopala Krishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.121.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Padmanabhan S., \textit{History of Kanyakumari Forts, op.cit.}, 1978, p.25.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Aaivu Kalanjiam, Monthly Research Journal, Nagercoil, April, 2010, pp.10-20.
\item \textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}, p.38.
\end{itemize}
The fort has a number of oil paintings. ‘Colachel war’ was the main theme of the oil painting available in this fort. Now it has been displayed at the museum in Padmanabhapuram palace. The cannon balls recovered from the Udayagiri fort are exhibited in the Government museum at Kanyakumari. Now, the Udayagiri fort wall and the De Lannoy tomb are being protected and maintained by the Department of Archaeology and the Forest Department of Government of Tamil Nadu.60

The government undertakes so many steps to make changes inside the fort which resulted the huge inflow of tourists. On the top of the hill there is a Sastha temple. Now, this temple is maintained by the people living around the fort.61 The fire work factory was situated in this hill is now in a bad condition and it is demolished.

In this fort there are doors on all four sides. The west and the north side doors are facing towards the Asan Kinaru in Puliyoorkurichi. The south and the east doors are facing towards the Brahmapuram village. The main gate of the fort is facing the western side.62

There are two temples near the entrance gate. The one is Sastha temple and the other is Melankottamman temple. Nowadays

daily poojas are done in these temples. These poojas are offered by the
local people. Near the temple there is a well. Nowadays the well is
used by the local people.\textsuperscript{63}

Inside the Udayagiri fort, it is looking like a forest. There
are many trees like mango, jack fruit, \textit{vaakai, poovarasu}, cashew nut,
neem and turmeric plant etc. Moreover new trees like teak, akasiya,
eucalyptus, manche, bamboo, \textit{ilavan} and coconut are planted. In the
interior part of the fort, there is an underground tunnel. This tunnel
was used as a secret way at the time of war. It was highly helpful to
escape from the enemies.\textsuperscript{64}

The Government has taken many steps to preserve this
fort. The Government wants to make this fort as a tourist centre.\textsuperscript{65} The
Forest Department is also taking measures to improve the fort and
make it as a tourist potential area. For children, a separate park has
been constructed. Inside the fort, a deer park has been built by the
Department of forest. It was opened on March 2, 2002. A Birds
Sanctuary is also located inside the fort which attracts more tourists.

\textsuperscript{63} Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, \textit{Studies in Kerala History}, Trivandrum, 1970,
p.46.

\textsuperscript{64} P. Vasudeva Poduval, \textit{A short history of Padmanabhapuram Fort, op.cit.},
p.78.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, p.76.
Today this fort is called as “Garden of Athens”. There are many big trees surrounded and the peaceful atmosphere attracts the tourists to visit this fort.\textsuperscript{66} The people of Kanyakumari district recommends the Government to build an Agricultural College, rubber factory and a play ground inside this fort.\textsuperscript{67}

The Ex. M.L.A. representing Padmanabhapuram constituency Mr. Rajendra Prasad has allotted Rs. 10 lakhs from his constituency local development fund for the maintenance of the fort and for the construction of children park.\textsuperscript{68} As per the proposal of the then District Collector Rajesh Lakany, the state Government has given a fund of Rs. 12 lakhs for the improvement of this fort.\textsuperscript{69}

The Department of Tourism takes several steps to attract the tourists to Udayagiri fort.\textsuperscript{70} One such step is the butterfly park. The then District Forest Officer Mr. Sunder Raju took steps to open a Butterfly park.\textsuperscript{71} To attract more number of foreign and inland tourists,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Lal Mohan, \textit{Monument Student Studies, Series no: 1}, Nagercoil, 1979, p.3.
\item \textit{Ibid., Series no: 2}, p.5.
\item Raja Thangam, A., \textit{op.cit.}, p.6
\item Personal interview with R.S. Lal Mohan, aged 70, Scientist, Conservation of Nature Trust, residing at Nagercoil, dated 17.02.2012.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the Tourism department formed the biological pyramid at Udayagiri Fort.⁷²

**Vattakottai (Circular Fort)**

Vattakottai fort is a symbol of military history of India, which was formerly a Dutch and then a British colony. Vattakottai fort is a specially erected fort on the coastline on the southern tip of India. Vattakottai fort was set up as the southernmost sea coast defense point by the Dutch.⁷³ This fort was constructed under the command of Captain De Lannoy. Vattakottai fort was made out of stone. Vattakottai Fort is also famous for the black sand beaches situated across the coast.

The circular fort is located 5 km away from Kanyakumari along the Bay of Bengal seashore. This fort is situated among lush green rice fields and coconut groves.⁷⁴

As the fort was located in a jungle area, it was not easily accessible. This fort, strategically located, helped to carry on defensive operations on the sea coast.⁷⁵

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⁷² Personal interview with S.Palanivel, aged 58, Security Officer, Udayagiri Fort, Tamil Nadu Government Archaeological Department, aged 51, residing at Thuckalay, dated 08.03.2012.
⁷³ Short Notes on Vattakottai, File No. 43/34, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum, 22-9-1920, p.3.
⁷⁴ Lord Kitchener's visit to Vattakottai, File No. 139, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum, 1920, p.4.
The total area covered by this fort is $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres. The fort is touching the sea water on one side and connected with land on the other side. The construction around the fort is now in a ruined condition. The *sangu* symbol, ie the emblem of the Travancore kings, has been encarved in the front portion of the fort. Significantly the existence of fish symbols in the Mandapas confirm the earlier contact of Vattakottai with the Pandya rulers.\textsuperscript{76}

It is believed that Maravarman Sreevallaba, a Pandya king established his authority over this region. Since the 18\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., these areas including Vattakottai were incorporated with the Travancore kingdom. King Marthandavarma, the founder of modern Travancore utilized the services of De Lannoy, the *Valiyakappithan* (Commander-in-chief) of the Travancore army for the renovation work at Vattakottai. As per the records, the fort renovation was completed on 6\textsuperscript{th} Aiypasi, 949 Kollam Era (A.D.1774)\textsuperscript{77}

Originally the coastal region between Kanyakumari and Rameswaram was a centre of pearl trade where there was considerable export and import trade activities. Around the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. it was under the Pandya rule. In order to develop and safeguard the sea trade, the Pandya rulers might have constructed this fort, a

\textsuperscript{76} S. Padmanabhan, *History of Kanyakumari District forts*, op.cit., p.16.

\textsuperscript{77} P. Shungunny Menon, *History of Travancore from the Earliest Times*, Trivandrum, 1878, p.192.
fact confirmed by the fist emblem found in the fort. In A.D. 1740 the Cholas plundered the area.\(^{78}\)

The Vattakottai (Circular Fort) built on the eastern sea coast, three miles north east of Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) was another fort which speaks of the vision with which De Lannoy worked as the Commander of the Travancore army.\(^{79}\)

Covering as it does an area of 1,71,800 square feet. This fort was erected to safeguard the eastern coastal side of the erstwhile Travancore state. Incursions into Travancore from the East had been common in those times because the southern regions of Travancore were fertile. The region is called Nanjilnad due to its fertility.

As the sea coast experienced great insecurity, King Marthandavarma decided to strengthen Vattakottai as a bulwark against the onslaught of external enemies. The fortification of Vattakottai was successfully completed under the supervision of De Lannoy assisted by one Marthanda Pillai, a local chief.\(^{80}\)

Structurally, the circular fort is not a circular one. It is a rectangular one. But, the corners of the fort is just like curve type.

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78. Personal interview with Mr. Jeganatha Pillai, aged 65, Rtd. Assistant to the Village Officer, Kottaram, dated 3.07.2012.
80. Lord Kitchener's visit it Vattakottai, File No. 139, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum.
However, the name of the fort is the circular fort. (circular = vattam in Tamil).\textsuperscript{81}

It is rectangular in shape and covers an area of about three and a half acres.\textsuperscript{82} The fort is enclosed by walls 25 to 26 feet high, including the parapet, 29 feet thick at the front, 18 feet at the corners and 6 feet at the rear.\textsuperscript{83} The portion running into the area is the most strongly built under the orders of De Lannoy. A number of small rooms are also seen inside the fort which are called as mandapas.\textsuperscript{84}

This fort was built with stone and chunnam,\textsuperscript{85} Inside the fort, it has watch towers with the measures from 3 to 6 feet.\textsuperscript{86} There are big and small holes and openings to shoot from the fort by guns and cannons.\textsuperscript{87} Inside the fort, there is a ramp which was built in order to move the cannon up the top of the wall to attack the enemies.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{81} His Excellency Lord Pentland's visit to Udayagiri and Vattakottai Fort, File No. 2245, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum, 1920, p.4.
\bibitem{82} A short account of the Udayagiri and Vattakottai Fort, Political Vol. I, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum, 04-10-1920, p.355.
\bibitem{83} His Excellency Lord Pentland's visit to Udayagiri and Vattakottai Fort, File No. 2245, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum, 1920, p.4.
\bibitem{85} P. Shungunny Menon, \textit{History of Travancore from the earliest times.}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.175.
\bibitem{86} Monument Study Series., No.3., Vattakottai, Scott Christian College., Department of History, Nagercoil., 1979., p.3.
\bibitem{87} His Excellency Lord Pentland visit to Udayagiri and Vattakottai Fort, File No. 2245, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum, 1920, p.4.
\end{thebibliography}
those who come though the sea. The ramp remains majestically and strongly till today.\footnote{88}

Vattakottai, a granite fort five kilometers north-east of Kanyakumari cape, forms the terminal of a line of ramparts known as the South Travancore lines served as defense for Nanjillnad.\footnote{89}

About A.D. 1810 the British forces under the command of St. Leger marched into Nanjilnad through the Aramboly pass and demolished the defence lines.\footnote{90}

Kanyakumari seashore area was also considered as a pearl diving area like Uvari and Korkai. The book ‘\textit{Periplus}’ of the \textit{Erthyrian Sea} mentions that there was an ancient port at Kanyakumari. This book was written in A.D.85. The classical Tamil works like \textit{Purananuru} and \textit{Silappathikaram} also proved that there was a big fort in Kanyakumari.\footnote{91}

It is said that there is a subway or tunnel about four feet width, supposed to connect Vattakkottai with the Padmanabhapuram palace.\footnote{92} Now the tunnel has been closed. On the northern side of the

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91. Personal interview with Mr. Jeganatha Pillai, aged 70, Rtd. Assistant to the Village Officer, Kottaram, dated 03.07.2012
92. \textit{Kathiravan} (Tamil Daily), Special Supplementary, 5\textsuperscript{th} March, 2008.
fort is found a slope to bring the cannon from the lower to the upper part of the parapet of the fort. There is a well of about 6’ diameter.93 The whole wall around the fort was repaired and fresh mortar was applied.

From the evidence left by the fort itself, it may be presumed that this fort was the military base to protect the Kumari port which was a rich pearl harbour. Since the emblem of the Pandya kings was ‘Fish’ and we find this emblem in some of the places of the fort, it can be safely concluded that the Pandya Kings had control over this fort for sometime.94

Next to Vattakottai, we can see the traces of a lighthouse in Leepuram being called so after Colonel Lee who has destroyed most of the Kadukkarai - Kanyakumari fort in A.D.1806.95

The small river by the side of the fort, and the green vegetation all around add to the scenery of the circular fort and has now become a holiday resort and picnic centre.

The fort surrounded by sea is so pleasant to watch. We can get a different experience of watching the sea from the top of the

93. Personal interview with Mr. Narayanan Nair, Aged 70, Munchirai, dated 20.04.2012
The seashore with lot of coconut trees is a wonderful place for our eyes.

In December 26th, 2004 the unprecedented high tides emerged in the Indian Ocean due to earthquake at Sumatra in Indonesia, severely attacked Vattakottai also. But the majestic construction of the fort protected the 200 odd tourists who were there with in the fort at the time.

Apart from these major forts, there are some minor forts in Kanyakumari District. The minor forts are South Travancore Lines, Ammunition Fort, Cremation Fort, Vengalarajan Fort, Uthachi Fort, Eraniel Fort etc. Let us discuss the history and background of these forts one by one.

**Vattakottai and South Travancore Line**

Another significant step taken by De Lannoy for ensuring the safety of the kingdom was the formation of a new line of defence. De Lannoy connected the Vattakottai fort with the South Travancore Line, the whole of which was also known by the name ‘Vattakottai’. These lines were formed from the west coast, ¾th of a mile to the west of Cape Comorin; with bastions at intervals of 165 yards.

97. *Ibid*.
98. Personal interview with Mr. Krishna Pillai, aged 70, Kottaikkagam, Eraniel, dated 26.08.2012
point the old lines ran at an obtuse angle with the new one which till continued up to the Pinnevaram Gate,\textsuperscript{99} from where it ran in the same direction to the steps to the Nedumalai Hill and appeared again on the steps of the opposite side and ran five furlongs to the Rameswar Gate and then to the slopes of Kattaadi hill, a distance of 3½kms and then four kms to Vattakottai, a strong irregular one on the coast, which was the only part connected with the South Travancore Lines that has not been demolished.\textsuperscript{100}

There were some earthen works even before the time of De Lannoy, but they were improved and extended by General De Lannoy in about A.D.1757. Large portions of the lines were demolished by Colonel St. Leger’s army in A.D.1810 but the Vattakottai Fort was undisturbed.

A guard consisting of one Naik and six sepoys was stationed at the fort for some time after the war. The fort was provided with two ramparts.\textsuperscript{101}

A third fortification was built stretching from Azhilwarkarai on the sea beach at Cape Comorin up to the hill at Aramboly, as a barrier between the sea and the hills.\textsuperscript{102} De Lannoy

\textsuperscript{99} Personal interview with R. Kumaresan, aged 65, Daily Wager, Udayagiri Fort, aged 51, Residing at Thuckalay, dated 08.03.2012.
\textsuperscript{100} Daily Thanthi, Tamil daily, Nagercoil, November 8\textsuperscript{th} 2003.
\textsuperscript{102} Dinakaran, Nagercoil, dated 16-2-2008, p.3.
appointed Marthanda Pillai Valia Ejaman to supervise the work. This
defence line covering a distance of 25 kilometers was strengthened with
bastions, batteries and power magazines placed at regular intervals
according to the plan designed by Thaikkattu Nambuthiri. Thus the
eastern frontier was protected against external threats.

**Aramboly Fort**

The remains of the fort constructed between Kanyakumari
and Kadukkarai in the 18th century A.D. is seen in a number of places.

It was a continuation of a long fortification constructed
from Kadukkarai hills touching Sevarakottai and passed through
Nedumalaikuntru, Aramboly, Kottayadi, Kottaram, Punnarkulam and
touched with Cape Comorin. At Punnarkulam, a big stone vessel is
there and it is believed that elephants and horses consumed water in
this vessel.

De Lannoy found that it was indispensable that a chain of
fortresses should be built along the eastern border of the Travancore
kingdom to protect it from the enemies. He appointed one Marthanda
pillai Valia Ejaman as the commander of the soldiers stationed at the

104. Letter from the Taluk Officer, Kalkulam to Collector of Kanyakumari
    District, Nagercoil, dated 4-7-83.
105. S. Padmanabhan, *History of Kanyakumari District forts*, Nagercoil,
    1978. pp.4-10.
eastern side and the latter who reconstructed the demolished fort at Aramboly, the eastern frontier village of Travancore.\textsuperscript{106}

The fort at Aramboly was built from Kadukkarai, the small village, upto Cape Comorin. The length of the fort was 25 kilometers. Thus the eastern frontier was well protected. Not satisfied with this, Valia Ejaman wanted to have a constant watch on the sea. So he took efforts to build a fort on the shore. Leepuram, a small village three kms north east of Cape Comorin was chosen as the convenient place for the construction of the fort. This fort was also familiarly known as Vattakottai which was built in such a way that it is washed by the Bay of Bengal on the eastern side. Though long years have passed the fort still retains its past glory. Rubbles of large size have been used in its construction. In certain portions burnt bricks have been used.\textsuperscript{107}

**South Travancore Fort**

It was constructed in A.D.1744 by Estaus D De Lannoy, General of the Travancore army. Originally he was a French citizen who joined in the Dutch East India Company and promoted as a General who was defeated by the Travancore army at the Battle of Colachel. De Lannoy, the Dutch general accepted the suzerainty of

\textsuperscript{106} Raja Thangam, A., *op.cit.*, p.30

Maharaja Marthandavarma and the latter appointed him as *Valai Kappithan* (Commander-in-chief) of the Travancore army.\textsuperscript{108}

Having an engineering skill, he took care for the protection of the Travancore kingdom by which he started construction of a number of fortifications. The South Travancore fort was one among them. It was constructed to protect the kingdom from the Madurai Nayak forces.\textsuperscript{109}

A section of the fort was constructed from Kanyakumari, touching Murugan Kuntram, Kottaiyadi, Kottaram, Punnaarkulam Aramparakottai and reached Vattakottai. Another part starts from Kanyakumari, touching Punnaarkulam, Pottalkulam, Chuttupottai, Kurusadi and reached Aralvaimozhi. It was called as *Punnaarkulam Kottai*.\textsuperscript{110} From Aralvaimozhi, it continues upto Mukkuthimalai near Kadukkarai via Asampu forests.

The second part is in good condition due to its existence in the forest region. It was built to station more than 30 cannons in some specific locations which are 15 feet high and 30 feet breadth. These specific locations were identified over small hillocks and bricks with 9' inch length, 9 inch width and 2 inch height.\textsuperscript{111} We can see the remains

\textsuperscript{111} *Ibid.*
of this fort near Manaltheri, in the Kanyakumari beach. The Murugankuntram temple near Kanyakumari was built on one side of this fort. We can see watch tower near Chuttupothai close to Marungoor. A cannon used in the war activities has been unearthed near Pottalkulam on 8th October 2008 which is 6 feet length.\textsuperscript{112}

Another notable point is that this fort played an important role in the war between Dewan Velu Thampi and the English East India Company’s army.\textsuperscript{113} Col. Wales of the English army mentioned that in the Aralvaimozhi fort, 50 cannons were preserved and nearly 10,000 soldiers were stationed there to protect it.\textsuperscript{114}

The South Travancore Line is not easily accessible because it is situated in the shore. It was built with efficiently to counter any attack come through sea water.\textsuperscript{115}

De Lannoy connected it with the Vattakottai (Circular fort). It was built along the western shore just one km away from Kanyakumari.\textsuperscript{116} There was a platform like edifice (slope). This wall extended up to three kms north and reached Sabari fort. Then in less

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114. \textit{Ibid}.
115. \textit{Ibid}.
height and over the rocks it crossed Sthanumalaiyanputhoor. There were two entrances here.\textsuperscript{117}

From here the old rampart broadens and forming a circular shape goes back in the same direction. The new wall was also there along the shore through Nedumalai up to Kattadimalai. This is 30 kms away from Vattakottai. This is the only remaining rampart available in south Travancore ie. present Kanyakumari District.

\textbf{Marunthu Kottai (Ammunition Fort)}

There are two other minor forts, which are found on the northern and western sides of the Padmanabhapuram palace respectively. They are Marunthukottai (Ammunition fort) and Chavakkottai (Cremation fort). It is said that Marunthukottai was constructed for preparing gun powder and iron bombs and hence the name. The other one was exclusively used for burning the dead bodies of the soldiers who fell in battle fields. Therefore the fort was called 'Chavakkottai' or 'Pinakkottai'.\textsuperscript{118} Both are not in ruins but the remnants of the old wall and a few barracks are still seen there, which attract many tourists who come to Padmanabhapuram palace.

\textsuperscript{117} R. Padmanabha Pillai, \textit{Aralvaimozhi Varalaarum Meenakshi Sundaeswarar Kovilum} (Tamil), Aralvaimozhi, 1943, pp.15-17.

\textsuperscript{118} R.S. Lal Mohan, \textit{The Dutch Commander in chief of Travancore Eustdache Benolt De Lannoy} in \textit{Unmai Oli} (monthly) (Tamil), Nagercoil, 1998, pp.2-5
Ammunition fort is situated on a 400 feet height hillock one kilometer away from Padmanabhapuram on the way to Thirparappu falls. This fort was built by general De Lannoy. There is a big entrance on the eastern side and a smaller one on the west. The shape of the fort is the same as the ones at Padmanabhapuram and Udayagiri. On the top there are five towers and a big stoned hall. The rocks provide protection to the hall. The area of the top of the fort is 2.3 acres.

King Marthandavarma had built this fort in order to safeguard Padmanabhapuram palace. This fort had been used to manufacture and store ammunition for the fire arms produced at Udayagiri.119

De Lannoy had built the Ammunition fort out of town and on a hillock because it may be dangerous to store the gun powder where people live and also it might be easy for the enemies to destroy or steal. There are traces of underground passages from the fort.120 There is a cave called tiger cave. The towers on the fort are similar to the ones in other forts enabling to attack the enemies.

Chavakottai (Cremation Fort)

Just half a meter away from Ammunition Fort, on the way to Kumarakoil on a 200 foot height hillock lies the Cremation Fort. This fort is similar to Padmanabhapuram fort which is situated in an area of 1.4 acres. There is a single entrance. People of this area are called this fort as cannon fort.\textsuperscript{121}

This fort had been built to cremate the king or his family members. This fort was also built by De Lannoy following the European system. There is no cremation ground till now for people who live inside the Padmanabhapuram fort.\textsuperscript{122}

Vengalarajan Fort

The fort was built with big walls in large dimensions. The inside doors and rooms were made by bronze. Hence, this fort was called as Vengalarajan Fort.\textsuperscript{123} \textit{(Bronze is called as Vengalam in Tamil)}

Vengalarajan fort was situated in an area of 25 acres on the eastern seashore nearby Muhilankudiruppu, which is situated 10 kms away from Kanyakumari on the way to a fishing village called Manakudy.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{121} T.K. Velu Pillai, \textit{The Travancore State manual}, Vol.I, Trivandrum, 1940, pp.1-10
\textsuperscript{123} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{Kumari Mavatta Kottaikal, op.cit.}, pp.40-42.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}
As per the Karna parampara stroy Vengalarajan who built this fort was a Palmyra climber who had migrated from Eazham (Sril Lanka) to Kanyakumari area. He had two daughters called Sangumugathazhagi and Thiraimuhathazhagi and they were very beautiful.\textsuperscript{125}

Once an old man called as Mooligai Chithar came to his house and asked something to drink for his thirst. He was warmly welcomed and was given Palmyra juice for his thirst and provided food for his hungry. Being much pleased, the man took out a herbal tree he had secretly kept it and using it to change all iron things into gold.\textsuperscript{126}

Vengalarajan learnt from this medicine man the secret of the gold herb and became a rich man. Then he built a fort in bronze. The fort's all windows and doors were made of bronze. That is why the fort was called as the Vengalarajan fort (the bronze fort). In a small clash with another rich man, the entirely fort was demolished and also both of his daughters were killed.\textsuperscript{127}

The fort history says that gold coins also were minted here for the use of local people. When the British Government exchanged 28.5 Chakaram (rupees) for a rupee and Vengalarajan minted gold

\textsuperscript{125} Aaiu Kalanjiam, Monthly Historical Research Journal, Nagercoil, April 2009, pp.32-34.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{127} Personal interview with Dr.P. Sarveswaran, aged 70, Chothavilai on 12.02.2012.
coins worth 28.5 rupees. So the angry English Government banned the gold coins minted by Vengalarajan. The English government arrested him and put into the jail.\textsuperscript{128}

The place where the Vengalarajan fort was situated is now shown as a playground. The foundation of the fort is still remain. The remaining part of the fort wall was completely destroyed by the recently occurred tsunami. One small church is there near by the empty place.\textsuperscript{129} If the fort was saved by anyone in the past, now it will be an another tourist spot like Vattakottai.

**Udachikottai (Uthachi Fort)**

About 7 Kilometers from Marthandam, there is an important place called Kunnathoor. Here is the famous Odachikottai. It is a small stone fortification now in ruins, covering an area of five acres of land.\textsuperscript{130}

Among the many forts of Kanaykumari district, Uthachi fort has some historical significances. Another significant fact about the fort is that it is situated nearby Munchirai Mahadevar temple which is one among the 12 Shiva temples.

\textsuperscript{128} Personal interview with Dr.P. Sarveswaran, aged 70, Chothavilai on 12.02.2012.
\textsuperscript{129} Personal interview with Prof. V.T. Chellam. aged 80, Historian, Nagercoil on 30.03.2012.
\textsuperscript{130} M. Gopalakrishan, *op.cit.*, p.1181
The fort lies opposite to the Mahadevar temple which is situated at Thirumalai, a hillock 6 kms south of Kuzhithurai in the taluk of Vilavancode.\textsuperscript{131} It is connected with the Nayaks of Madurai.

An unconfirmed story connects Uthachi fort with Thirumalai Nayak of Madurai. Queen Uthachi of Madurai came to Munchirai as per the advice of her astrologer to stay in the Munchirai Mahadevar temple and pray to God to have a child since she had no issues. A palace was built in front of the temple for her worship and stay. The fort might have an area of 1 or 1 ½ acres. The centre of the fort the Uthachi Palace was situated.\textsuperscript{132}

A palace was quickly built with the permission of Travancore king. Through this, it was possible that the opening of the temple door and the worship in the temple could be seen from the palace itself.\textsuperscript{133} When Uthachi was staying there, she conceived even before the stipulated time. The king and the people of Madurai were joyfully celebrated it.\textsuperscript{134}

Queen Uthachi named the son as Thirumalai Nayak. Because he was born by the grace of Thirumalai Mahadevar. Later, the boy became a famous king and ruled over Madurai efficiently.

\textsuperscript{131} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 138
\textsuperscript{132} T.K. Velu Pillai, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 645
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{134} Personal interview with Mr. Sujeevan, aged 57, Guide, Padmanabhapuram Palace on 13.8.2012.
invaded Mysore in the Kollam year of 810 and at the same time invaded Nanjil Nadu also. Because he wanted to bring his place of birth under his control. Thirumalai Nayak used to come to this temple often and donated 182 tolas (10 Tolas = 116 grams) of gold jewels.\textsuperscript{135} The kings who succeeded Thirumalai Nayak maintained close contact with Kanyakumari area. In the Kollam year of 839, Chockanatha Nayak of Madurai built a stone mandapa near Kanyakumari shore.\textsuperscript{136} Ammaiayappa Nayak who succeeded him helped to build stone steps to the Thiruppathisaram Thiruvazhimarban temple tank.\textsuperscript{137}

The Uthachi fort that was historically important is no more now. Individuals have built houses and encroached the fort. The fort was not taken care of and today there is no trace of it.

This place is also important because Raja Kesava Das, who later became the Dewan of Travancore during A.D. 1788-98 was born near Kunnathoor in a village called Melangulam.\textsuperscript{138} There is a house known as 'Karavilakathu Puthenveedu' where the members of the family

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Nilkanda Perumal, The Truth about Travancore, Madras, 1939, pp. 70-80.
of Raja Kesava Das live even today. This house was constructed by Raja Kesava Das when he was the Dewan of Travancore.\textsuperscript{139}

**Eraniel Fort**

Eraniel is a village in Kanyakumari District with an area of 4.172 sq.miles. Eraniel town is about 15 km away from Nagercoil in the Monday Market road and situated 5 km south of Thuckalay.\textsuperscript{140} In the past it was the seat of the royal family of Travancore before Padmanabhapuram became the chief town in South Travancore.

Eraniel was originally known as *Iranyasinga-nallur* or Nallur known to us by various historical records. The Ay dynasty was the earliest known ruling family of Eraniel region. Before the Venad Rulers the Ays had established their rule in this region.\textsuperscript{141} In fact upto the beginning of 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Ays were the dominant power in south Travancore and Venad was only a small principality. When Kothai Ravivarma, a Chera ruler extended his sovereignty over south Travancore\textsuperscript{142} at that time the Ay rulers donated this land as *Irailee* land (tax free land). Later one Ravivarman who was the brave chieftain

\textsuperscript{139} Nilkanda Perumal, *The Truth about Travancore*, Madras, 1939, pp. 70-80.
\textsuperscript{140} K.M. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, pp. 110-120.
\textsuperscript{141} Personal interview with Mr.Parameswaran Nair, aged 62, Formerly Curator, Padmanabhapuram Palace on 20.7.2007.
\textsuperscript{142} *Ibid.*
captured the place and built a palace called *Kunchin Kottiyan Kottaram with in this fort*.143

**PALACES**

There are many old and ancient palaces in the district of Kanyakumari. They are Ramavarmapuram palace of Nagercoil, Puthen Bungalow at Nagercoil, Krishnancoil Kottaram, Thiruppathisaram Kottaram, Palace at Kanyakumari, Muthukuzhivayal Palace, Thriuvattar Palace, Suchindrum Kottaram, Thovalai Kottaram, Padmanabhapuram Palace, Eraniel Palace, Kuzhithurai Palace, Chechee Kottaram at Suchindram and Tripparappu Kottaram.144

The history of Kanyakumari District goes back to the Sangam Age. The palaces are the remains of its past glory. We get inscriptive evidences for the existence of palaces in Kanyakumari District right from 8th century A.D. An inscription of the early Pandya King Maran Chadaiyavan of this period refers to the existence of a palace at Aralvaimozhi in which the lieutenant of this king one Ranakirti lived.

Inscriptional evidences prove that the Eraniel Palace existed even before A.D.1484. Vira Kerala Pallavaraiyar, an official resided in this palace and liberally donated to the Vishnu temple at Talaikulam. The Talaikulam inscription refers to this palace as

Ranasinghabadi Veedu. The Padmanabhapuram palace was once the headquarter of the Venad kings from A.D.1555 and also that of the Travancore Kings until the end of the 18th century A.D. The present District Revenue Officer's, Office Nagercoil was once the palace of the Travancore king Ramavarma alias Kizhavan Raja (A.D.1758 – 1798).

There are also a few Ammachi Kottarams145 in the district constructed in the 18th – 19th century A.D. Among them are Krishnancoil Kottaram, (the present Agriculture office) Puthan Bungalow, Nagercoil and the Suchindrum Kottaram situated near the great temple deserve special mention. The palace of Thirumalai Nayak in Suchindrum known as 'Chechie Kottaram' is worth mentioning. A sketch about all the palaces and kottarams are given below.

**Padmanabhapuram Palace**

Padmanabhapuram, a suburb of Thuckalay was the capital of the erstwhile Travancore State and during the reign of Maharaja Marthandavarma it became popular. It is situated at about 18 kilometers from Nagercoil and 54 kilometers from Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Kerala State. Exactly at a distance

145. Ammachi Kottaram - The Travancore Kings were not permitted to get married due to the existence of Marumakkathayam System. So the rulers maintained secret contacts with certain beautiful ladies. In this connection, Ammachi Kottarams were built and the king had the practice of visiting these kottarams occasionally.
of 2 kilometers from Thuckalay town, this historical significant palace is situated.\textsuperscript{146}

It possesses some attractive features of scenic, historic and archaeological interest.\textsuperscript{1} Nature has adorned her with objects of exquisite beauty. On the east and north of the town are hillocks capped with bushes and trees of various descriptions. To one, with a contemplative or a poetic turn of mind, the sublime pose of the hillocks would appear as objects of profound interest.

The palace has a special value for the students of history. In every nook and corner of the town are found relics and remnants of the past, which clearly indicate the historical importance of the palace. It is well known that this town had great strategic importance as it was once the capital of Travancore.\textsuperscript{147}

The nucleus of Padmanabhapuram town is its beautiful palace. It is surrounded by a square fortification about 2½ miles in circumference, and the area of the ground enclosed is about 186½ acres.\textsuperscript{148} The earliest recorded date of the construction of the palace is A.D.1335 during the reign of Adityavarma.\textsuperscript{149} The palace was built on the traditional lines of Malabar gables and corridors.

\begin{enumerate}
\item S. Gopalakrishnan, \textit{Kanyakumari District Gazetteer}, Madras, 1995, pp. 245-255.
\item Galletti (ed.), \textit{The Dutch in Malabar}, Madras, 1911, pp. 310-320.
\item R.S. Lal Mohan, \textit{The Dutch Commander-in-Chief of Travancore Eustdache Benoit D'Lannoy} in "Unmai Oli" (monthly) (Tamil), Nagercoil, 1998, pp. 2-5.
\item A. Sreedharamenon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History} (Revised Edition), Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, pp.115-125.
\end{enumerate}
The present Padmanabhapuram palace was constructed in 16th century A.D. Originally it was called as *Theppakulankarai Palace*. Due to the Maharaja’s faith over Lord Padmanabha, the presiding deity of the Travancore kings, the palace was renamed as *Padmanabhapuram palace* and the places around it were called as Padmanabhapuram. Upto A.D. 1790, Padmanabhapuram was the capital of the Travancore rulers and during the time of king Dharmaraja, the capital was shifted to Trivandrum. Though the capital was shifted to Trivandrum, the successive rulers came and stayed there regularly.

The Padmanabhapuram palace is situated within the fort. The total area available within the fort was 186¼ acres. In it, the palace was constructed in 6½ acres. Upto A.D. 1800, alterations were made occasionally in the palace. It is the biggest wooden palace in Asia. Teak wood has been fully utilised for the construction of this palace. So it is otherwise called as *Tekku Kottaram* (Teak wood palace).

Within the palace, *Thai Kottaram* (Main palace), *Veppamuttu Kottaram* (Neem palace), *Vadakku Kottaram* (Northern palace), *Uppari Mazhihai, Kuzhapuram, Komapuram, Uttupura*

150. Padmanabhapuram (Folder), published by the Department of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu, 2002, pp. 1-5.
(feeding centre), Navarathiri mandapa, Saraswathi temple etc. are the important places of attraction.152

Historically and religiously this place has its own importance. It was once the capital of the erstwhile Travancore state in which an old palace, several temples, and a gigantic fort around the whole area are the main attractions.

The territory around Padmanabhapuram was called Kalkulam and the palace was known as Kalkulam Kottaram upto 17th century A.D. One of the records found in the Padmanabhaswami temple at Thiruvananthapuram read thus: "Venattu Rajavahia Kulasekhara perumal kollam varusham 779 medam monnam thiayathi Kalkulathil eluntharuli....").153

This record reveals that the original name of Padmanabhapuram was Kalkulam and it was in Venad. In A.D.1750 Maharaja Marthandavarma, the founder of modern Travancore dedicated the entire state to Lord Padmanabha at Thiruvananthapuram and assumed the pious title Sri Padmanabhadasa. He then ruled the country as the Lord’s deputy. Subsequently the capital was also shifted to Thiruvananthapuram. In memory of this historical incident

known as *Tirupadidanam*, the old name of the town Kalkulam was changed into Padmanabhapuram.¹⁵⁴

The palace buildings contain admirable of ancient sculpture and wood-carving as well as numerous inscriptions of great archaeological value. They are well preserved even today. It seems that there is an underground tunnel from this palace to the *Charodu palace* which is not far away. Many paintings and inscriptions are found in the palace. *"The murals of this ancient palace painted about a thousand years ago are remarkable for their freedom of line and intricate details and recall in a striking manner the frescoes of Ajanta."*¹⁵⁵

It is seen from Karna Parambara stories that there was a king who ruled over Venad from Padmanabhapuram during the medieval period. The *Kerololpathy* admits that a ruler of medieval Kerala deputed one king to Padmanabhapuram.¹⁵⁶ As the requisition is said to have been made by the Brahmins according to the direction of *Parasurama*, it becomes absolutely correct that the king must be of the line of Bhanuvikrama who, according to the Kerala Mahatmiyam, was consecrated by Parasurama himself and installed at Padmanabhapuram.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴. *Padmanabhapuram* (Folder), *op.cit.*, pp. 2-5.
¹⁵⁶. S. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp. 245-255.
With the revival of interest in the arts which has marked the opening years of the reign of Maharaja Balaramavarma, Padmanabhapuram palace had received recognition as a splendid example of art history and accomplishment. Mainly it embodies the features of Kerala architecture in its gabled roots and carved wooden pillars. This exquisite palace finds a place among the world monuments of today.\textsuperscript{158}

Eventhough the palace is situated in Kanyakumari District, but it is maintained and controlled by the Curator of the Archaeological Department of the Government of Kerala.\textsuperscript{159}

This old palace of the Rajas of Travancore (A.D.1500 to A.D.1750) is renowned for its magnificent and elegantly designed edifices built according to Kerala’s traditional style of architecture. The place has been named because the sacred lotus coming from the navel of God Vishnu (Padma-lotus-Nabha-navel, Puram -town) it is the largest wooden palace in India with intrinsic carvings and wonderful wood work.\textsuperscript{160}

Padmanabhapuram palace is actually a palace complex. The complex of fourteen palaces spread over an area of 6.5 acres is an unique feature of ancient Kerala architectural skill. In the beginning it

\textsuperscript{159} Suranad P.N. Kunjan Pillai, \textit{The Defeat of the Dutch in Travancore} in the proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission, 1944, XXI.
\textsuperscript{160} S.N. Chitra, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 1-10.
was a small palace, but the successive rulers added one after the other and at the end of 18\textsuperscript{th} century, it attained its present status. The most important buildings in the palace are:

*Thaikottaram* (Mother Palace) is the oldest building in the palace complex. This is also known as *Deppakulangara Kottaram* (palace near the pond). This palace is built according to the Kerala architectural style. The Ekanthmandapa or open verandah in the palace is built of finely carved wooden pillars decorated with specimens of indigenous style of wood carving. The foundation pillar of the palace is carved out of a single Jack fruit tree.

**Wooden Palace - Padmanabhapuram**

A magnificent wooden palace of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, Padmanabhapuram palace lies at the land’s end of mainland India. An enticing piece to any lover of art and architecture, this old palace of the erstwhile Travancore royal family (A.D.1550 to 1750) is a fine specimen of Kerala’s indigenous style of architecture. *Charles Correa*, India’s architect par excellence who was selected as one among the top ten architects of the world by the British Institute of Architects, says that it is his most favourite building. He has incorporated many ideas from this building, in his architectural style.\(^{161}\)

\(^{161}\) *Padmanabhapuram* (Folder), *op.cit.*, pp. 1-15.
The entrance to the main edifice is controlled by another ornamental gateway with retainers for watch and ward. The gabled entrance has wooden ceiling profusely ornamented with lotus medallions. The most striking feature of the entrance is the clock-tower which is one of the oldest in India erected in A.D.1832. and still continues to be in working condition.162

The first floor is called as "Poomuham" has a council chamber or "Mantrasala" which is meant for holding discussions with ministers and prominent citizens. The floor off this hall, which is polished with the admixture of coconut shell ashes, eggs fermented in molasses and lime reflects the figure like a mirror. Next to the Mantrasala is the Dancing Hall which was used exclusively for the members of the royal family.163

The dinning hall which is near to dancing hall is called "Uttupura". With two floors it can accommodate about 2000 people at a time. As the king fed poor people he was called as "Dharmaraja" means generous king.164

The most attractive building in the whole palace is the 'Uppirika Malika' which consists of three stories. The name 'Upprikka'

162. S.N. Chitra, op.cit., pp. 70-80.
163. Ibid.
is derived from the word 'Upariaka' which means a multi-storeyed building. This building was constructed in A.D.1750 by Maharaja Marthandavarma. He built this palace for dedicating it to Lord Sri Padmanabha. So it is considered as a sacred place. In the first floor there is a place for washing feet before entering into the rooms. The building consists of four storeys. The ground floor was used as the royal treasury. The wooden cot exhibited in the first floor is a medicinal cot made up of sixty-four pieces of medicinal wood.165 'Uppirika' is the abbreviated term of 'Muppirika' which means the residence of the eldest member of the family.

The medicinal cot was presented to Maharaja "Marthandavarma" by the Dutch East India Company's Captain De Lannoy in A.D. 1750 as a mark of friendship.166

The second floor was used as the Maharaja’s resting room during religious fastings. Only second and third floors have verandahs on four sides. The murals on the four walls of the topmost storey popularly known as 'Uprikamalika' of this magnificent palace are well preserved and display the stylistic of the 17th and 18th century architecture.

A wooden cot is arranged here on this floor in the belief that Lord Vishnu (Sri Padmanabha), the chief deity would recline on it

166. S. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp. 245-255.
every day. At one corner a Udaival (Ceremonial Sword) is placed on a stool covered with a red cloth and it is taken to Thiruvananthapuram every year during Navarathri Pooja Festival.

**Indra Vilasam Palace**

This two-storeyed residence for foreign dignitaries was built in the colonial style. This palace is supposed to have been built by Dalava Ramayyan, the prime minister of Maharaja Marthandavarma (A.D.1729-1758) the founder of modern Travancore. It was here that the rulers met the distinguished visitors. Fr. Paulinus Bartalomeo, the author of the Book "A Voyage to the East Indies" is reported to have stayed at Padmanabhapuram for a period of 16 days from 23rd September 1783 as the guest of the Dharmaraja to move slowly to Trivandrum during the last year of his reign. The whole interior of Indra Vilasam palace is shady and cool and admits plenty of air and light through big doors and windows.

This mandapa was originally made of wood but was rebuilt in stone under the directions of Marthandavarma (A.D.1729-1758) and Dharma Raja (1758-1798). It was used for dance and musical performances. Music, dance and other entertainments were conducted every year during the Navarathri festival.

The wood screened chamber at the south east corner of the hall was used to accommodate the king and other royal members in order to witness the performances in the mandapa. The Vijayanagara style of architecture of this mandapa is a contrast to the simplicity of wood dominated structure of the palace complex.

To the west of the Uppirika Malika is the Navarathri mandapa which is a spacious hall to exquisitely beautiful granite pillars with drooping pendants reminiscent of the Nayak style of architecture. In the Navarathri mandapa, performances of Bharatha Natyam and musical recitals took place in the royal presence.\(^\text{169}\)

One can see the musical bow in mahogany, windows with coloured mica, royal chairs with Chinese carvings. ‘Thaikkottaram’ or Queen Mother’s palace contains painted ceilings, rose wood and teak carved ceilings with 90 different floral designs.\(^\text{170}\)

The Durbar Hall and its shiny black floor were specially made from a combination of egg white, jaggery lime, burnt coconut, charcoal and river sand, granite tubs, cool curd and buttermilk etc. In addition with the Durbar hall, secret underground passages, the King’s bedroom with a four poster medicinal bed, mural paintings, pictures of Lord Krishna, hanging brass lanterns lit continuously since the 18\(^{th}\) century, hanging cage through which eagles tore criminals to death,


\(^{170}\) Ibid.
open air swimming bath, the King’s sister’s dressing room, granite
dance hall, Goddess Saraswathi temple, large earthen urns, room for
scribes and accountants, carved figures on columns holding oil lamps,
pooja (worship) rooms with jackfruit tree columns, fish carvings on the
ceilings, enormous teak beams, Belgium mirrors and an outer
cyclopean stone wall fitted together without mortar deserve special
mention.\textsuperscript{171}

\textbf{Thekke Kottaram (Southern Palace)}

\textit{Thekkekottaram} is the southern palace. It is not within the
same complex but forms an intrinsic part of palace. It is the most
attractive building in one compound. The main building is a domestic
apartment in the traditional style of a ‘\textit{Nalakkettu}’ with a ‘\textit{Nilavara}’.
The small balcony facing the tank was probably a rest in olden days.
The other building in the south is the ‘\textit{Thekkethu}’, a common place of
worship attached to a \textit{Tharavad}.\textsuperscript{172}

The wooden pillars, doors, beams and ceiling are
elaborately carved. A noticeable feature of the ceiling is the genius
displayed in lines of lotus flowers. In all of them the style is maintained
uniformly, while variety is achieved in difference of details from lotus to
lotus. A very special attraction is in the doors to the inner rooms. The

\textsuperscript{171} Personal interview with Mr. S.Ramachandran Nair, aged 88, Thuckalay
on 10.4.2007.

\textsuperscript{172} Tharavad is the name of each and every Nair family.
Lintels are masterpieces of scroll work and skillful deep cutting. On the lower part of the lintels, lizards are carved with an eye to both artistic design and natural realism.\textsuperscript{173}

The wood carvings of unsure passed excellence may be seen in many places. The Padmanabhapuram palace is famous for its intricate and beautiful carvings of a high order on its pillars, door, screens, ceilings and furniture. The old council chamber \textit{Mantrasala} in the palace has on three sides wooden shelves of the fine finish. There are elegant carvings of lotus flowers on the shutters of these shelves. The ceiling of the \textit{Thaikottaram}, the oldest building in the palace is supported by a splendidly carved wooden pillar in one corner.\textsuperscript{174}

The pillar is more than seven and a half feet in height and it consists of a single cut shaft between the base and the top. A richly decorated cot kept in the \textit{Uppirikamalika} (storied building) of the palace is also a fine example of wood carving of the highest quality.\textsuperscript{175}

Paintings with Hindu religious themes can be seen in the palace as well. The most precious of such paintings are found on the top most floor of the Padmanabhapuram palace. There are more than 40 murals here. The art of mural painting reached a high level of

\textsuperscript{173} T. Madhava Menon, \textit{A Handbook of Kerala}, Trivananthapuram, 2000, pp. 245-260.
\textsuperscript{174} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 15-25.
excellence as is evidence by the murals in the Padmanabhapuram palace.\textsuperscript{176}

The entire administration of the palace is under the control of Kerala Government. There are totally sixty staff and among them 20 persons are part time workers, and each one gets a meagre salary.\textsuperscript{177} The Palace fort of Padmanabhapuram is protected by both the Government of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The Department of Archaeology, Kerala Government constructed a museum at the south west corner of Padmanabhapuram palace. The construction of the building was originally started in 1962. Later it was redesigned in accordance with the style and structure of the old palace complex and was completed towards the close of 1993.\textsuperscript{178}

Among the collection of the archeological museum the sword used by Marthandavarma, Raja Kesavadas, Veluthampi Talavai, Captain De Lannoy and others deserve special mention. In addition to this, different kinds of coins also have been exhibited in the museum.

The top most room of the palace is set apart for mural paintings which are a treat for those artistically inclined. The mural paintings of Shiva and Parvathi, Krishna and Gopis, and Sri Rama are

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\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{178} Stella Kramrisch, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 135-145.
\end{flushleft}
some of the best found in this room. The paintings of Shiva and Parvathi with two devotees are a replica of the frescoes found in the cave temple of Thirunandikkarai fresco, ascribed to the early ninth century A.D. is similar to the Ajantha paintings. The paintings of Krishna and Gopis, and Sri Rama are excellent in technique and finish and eloquent with spiritual instructions. The figures in these paintings are full of vitality and grace they throle with exalted life. The sumptuousness of the floral designs and the depicting of fish in the mural paintings of Krishna and Gopis indicate the skill of the artist in paintings. The colours in these stuccos are rich and lovely and the figures are dignified in posture. Murals like Subramaniya with Valli, Deivayanai and her attendants, Ananthasayana and Rishis, Mahisasura Mardani, Sasta, and also hunting scene are remarkable for their radiant expression and lavish embellishment.

The Mandrasala (council chamber), the Ayuthasala (the store house of weapons utilised for war) the Upparikai Malikai where lies a wooden cot made of 64 medicinal herbs, the hall of historical paintings, the Navarathri mandapa, an old clock tower are the other notable edifies of the palace.

179. Letter from the Chief Engineer (Roads, Irrigation & Maintenance) to the Chief Secretary to Government dated 01.12.1943.
The palace is also maintaining temples of great importance like the celebrated Ramaswami temple and Neelakandaswamy temple within its premises.\textsuperscript{182} The Ramaswami temple situated on the western side of the palace contains some notable examples of old workmanship in wood depicting the complete story of Ramayana, various Puranic scenes and figures from Ramayana are carved on fifty panels which are fixed on the four walls of the temple.\textsuperscript{183} These figures and scenes are boldly designed and they suggest a remarkable fertility of imagination.\textsuperscript{184}

The Neelakandaswamy temple on the eastern side of the palace is compared to the Mahakali shrine of Ujjaini. It has a vast quadrangular enclosure, a lofty gopura overtopping the central shrines and sculptured corridors of large dimensions.\textsuperscript{185} It is seen from a Tamil inscription that the mandapa found in front of the temple was constructed in A.D. 1578.\textsuperscript{186} The sculptured stone images on the pillars of the Mandapa leading to the temple are those of Karna, Parasurama, Kankanathana, Venugobala, Maharaja Marthandavarman

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\textsuperscript{182} Archives Treasury, Kerala State Archives, Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994, p.366.
\textsuperscript{183} Letter from Chief Engineer's Office, Trivandrum, 4 December 1943.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} File Dis. 178/43/ Genl.
\textsuperscript{186} M. Gopalakrishnan (Ed.), The Kanyakumari District Gazetteer, Madras, 1995, p.1172.
\end{flushright}
and Thirumalai Nayak.\textsuperscript{187} Those figures seem to be modeled after those in the Suchindrum temple and they are full of grandeur.

Padmanabhapuram continued to be the capital of the erstwhile Travancore state till the closing years of the reign of Dharma Raja, Karthihiyi Thirunal Ramavarma (A.D.1758-1798). In a Sanskrit poem called ‘Chataka Sandesa’ composed during the latter half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century the ancient glory of Padmanabhapuram, as abounding in palatial buildings and temples, is described in glowing terms.

The palace is set in picturesque and ideal surroundings which have contributed largely to the architectural magnificence of the period. In A.D.1744 the fort and the palace were known as Padmanabhapuram fort and Padmanabhapuram palace respectively.\textsuperscript{188}

The \textit{Padipura}, the essential feature of an old Kerala House retains its imposing appearance in the palace and it leads to the garden in front with an oval lawn at the centre and pathway around. The entrance ornamented gateway with age old arrangements for retainers for watch and ward.\textsuperscript{189}

Today the Padmanabhapuram palace and the Archaeological Museum are jointly maintained by the Governments of

\textsuperscript{187} Travancore Information Listener, Vol. VIII, No. 5, January 1948, p.25.
\textsuperscript{188} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{Historical forts of Kanyakumari District, op.cit.}, pp.20-25.
\textsuperscript{189} Travancore Information of Listener, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 25-26.
Kerala and Tamil Nadu under the administrative control of the Government of Kerala.\textsuperscript{190} It is the legal responsibility of the Government to ensure safety and secutity of the monument and invaluable antiquities kept inside.

The exterior of Padmanabhapuram palace is simple and unpretentious like other secular and religious architectural specimens.\textsuperscript{191} The interior is enriched by wood carvings and conspicuous murals.\textsuperscript{192}

Padmanabhapuram palace plays a vital role in promoting tourism in Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{193} The Archaeological Department of Kerala is taking care of the palace. Every year before the 'Navarathri Pooja' the entire palace will be varnished. The Keralities consider the Venad capital as their own capital and visit the palace in large number.

The palace once the scene of brisk and lively actively has today only its magnificent edifices both secular and religious to remind the story of its hectic days.\textsuperscript{194} The palace is fulfilling its task, which, it is hoped, it would be able to continue for many more years to come.

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\textsuperscript{190} Indian Express, English Daily, Madurai, 10\textsuperscript{th} May 1991.
\textsuperscript{192} Personal interview with Mr. Subramaniam, aged 55, Kanyakumari Tourism Officer, Kanyakumari on 08.02.2008.
\textsuperscript{193} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{Historical forts of Kanyakumari District, op.cit.}, pp.20-25.
\textsuperscript{194} Aaivu Kalanjiyam, \textit{Historical Research Journal}, Nagercoil, April, 2002.
\end{flushright}
Padmanabhapuram Palace, the abode of the erstwhile Travancore royal dynasty, is the world reputed monument stands protected under the provisions of the Kerela Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act 1968, under the Department of Archaeology. This unique structure mostly made of wood and its stylistic perfection attracts thousands of visitors from India and it is increasing day by day. The available records show that there is a substantial increase in the number of visitors at the rate of 25% every year. The average number of visitors in season at present is around 5000 per day. Steps are under way to include this magnificent monument in the world heritage list.

Padmanabhapuram Palace was declared as a protected monument under the Monument Act in the year 1938 and was administrated by the Travancore Archaeology Department till 1956. Meanwhile as a result of the integration of states into Indian Union on linguistic basis the Kanyakumari District came under Tamil Nadu but the palace and its premises of 6.5 acres remains under the Government of Kerala.

Providing a metal detector at the very entrance of the palace is essential so that every visitor should enter the palace through this safety devise.

**Eraniel Palace**

India can be rightly proud of its rich heritage. Every nook and corner of this great country we can see several monuments of
historical importance. Kanyakumari District is not an exception to this. It abounds with ancient monuments like forts, palaces and temples. They are the treasure houses of many a proud moments of Venad and Travancore history. One such archaeological marvel is the archaic palace at Eraniel.

The palace at Eraniel, a fine example of typical Kerala style of architecture, with its gabled roofs, exquisite wood carvings and finely sculptured mandapas, is one of the famous architectural entities in the State.195

A short distance of 10 kms from Mulagumood or Aazhakiamandapam, at the 30th mile stone on the trunk road from Trivandrum to Cape Comorin, leads to the famous port of Colachel via Eraniel. The well laid out road to Colachel port passes through Thiruvithancode, Neyyoor and Eraniel, certain petty villages famed in history and folklore and highlighted its rich and romantic tradition. A part of the erstwhile Travancore, this region evoked sacred memories.

Historically, Eraniel can claim a significant place in the annals of Venad and Travancore. It is very near to Thiruvithancode and Padmanbhapuram, the erstwhile capitals of Travancore State.196

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The well-known harbour of yesteryears, Colachel is just five kilometers away. Once Eraniel was one of the busiest business towns in South Travancore, perhaps next to Kottar only. It was noted for weaving especially towels.

Cheraman Perumal, the most famous ruler of the Chera dynasty of the 8th century A.D., was believed to be the promoter of Eraniel palace and fort. The fort occupies approximately 3.5 acres of land. It has four very large entrances. The front entrance is gigantic in size and the majestic gate was made in teak wood.¹⁹⁷

Next to the entrance we can see the visitor’s hall (Yogamuri) where the king used to meet the selected visitors. It is followed by the Inner Hall (Akathalam), guard’s room, kitchen etc. All the rooms are large and duly ventilated for light and air.

The Vasanthamandapa of the palace was the most famous and sacred part from where, according to tradition, Bhaskara Ravivarma, the last and the greatest of the celebrated Cheraman Perumals, the Rulers of Kerala, ascended to heaven with his physical body. The stone cot used by Bhaskara Ravivarma Perumal is a sacred relic of the past, and in commemoration of his ascent to heaven, a light has been kept burning in front of the cot ever since throughout day and night.¹⁹⁸ The room in the Vasanthamandapa of the palace which

¹⁹⁷. Indian Express, English daily, Thiruvananthapuram, 10th May 2010.
¹⁹⁸. Ibid.
contains the stone cot is regarded by Hindus as sacred, as the sanctum of a temple and lamps are lighted and other act of traditional workshop offered here. The stone cot is a masterpiece of the art and craftsmanship of that period.

There seems to be no Anthapura, the apartment exclusively for ladies (harem). It may be because of the fact that the palace was only an administrative office of the kings, not a residential palace of the kings because their royal residence was hardly five kilometers away. It is said that there was a 'Vadaavilakku' - a ever burning light in the 'Vasanthamandapam'.

Besides these chambers in the palace, there is a small tank for royal bath and a secret tunnel for emergency escape. Outside the palace, a 'Kali' temple is found.

It is believed that Vanchi Marthandan, one of the successors of King Cheraman Perumal, built the Marthandeswaran temple in the eastern direction of the fort as per a divine guidance.

It is believed that the Eraniel fort and palace were more ancient than the Padmanabhapuram fort and palace, as Eraniel had been the capital of this region before Padmanabhapuram was formed. Later the capital might have shifted to Keralapuram, then to Thiruvithamcode, then to Padmanabhapuram and finally to Thiruvananthapuram.  

199. M. Gobalakrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp.1200-1202
As long as Keralapuram, Thiruvithancode and Padmanabhapuram were the capitals, Eraniel palace backed in glory as these places are within five kilometers but after Thiruvananthapuram become the capital of Travancore kingdom, which is 53 kilometers away, gradually Eraniel and its fort and palace began to lose its importance. Only rarely did the kings visited Eraniel palace and took occasional rest.

Later Eraniel once again gained a part of its lost glory when Veluthampi became the ‘Dhalava’ (Chief Minister) of Travancore.201 The great patriotic Dhalava’s home ‘Valiaveedu’ is at Thalakulam, which is hardly three kilometers from Eraniel. One of the streets at Eraniel is called ‘Padayetti theru’ because Veluthampi Dhalava led an army from here to fight against the British.

In 1956, because of the linguistic reorganization of the states in India, Kanyakumari district became a part of Madras state that was renamed as Tamil Nadu in 1967.202 So Eraniel Fort and Palace then came under Kanyakumari Devaswom Board. For some years, the palace was used as godown and hastened the dilapidation of a symbol of our proud heritage.

201. N.G. Unnithan, *op.cit*, p.3.
After the restoration and necessary landscaping the palace can be converted into a museum since lot of stone sculptures (in damaged condition) are available in the site, and some antiques like the sword and other things used by Maharjas are under custody of the Devaswom board. If the palace is converted into a museum the tourists visiting the Padmanabhapuram Palace (more that 1000 tourists every day) will also visit Eraniel Palace. The entrance fee will facilitate the up keeping and maintenance of the palace.

Generally the village of Eraniel is an ancient one and greatly conspicuous in the annals of Travancore. In ancient days before the Maharaja of Travancore shifted their capital to Padmanabhapuram and their resident to the Padmanabhapuram Palace, they lived in the famous Eraniel palace.

KOTTARAMS (SMALL PALACES)

There are several palaces (most of them smaller ones) in different parts of the district. They provided accommodation in those days to the Maharajas and other members of the Royal family during their visits to those places. The palaces were under the control of the Revenue Department.203

203. Political department, Bundle No. 106 File No. 170. visit of His Excellency the Governor of Madras 1920. Accounts of expenses incurred in connection with the visit in the Padmanabhapuram Division.
The palaces under the control of the Revenue Department were maintained by the Maramath Department. Those under the control of the Maramath Department were maintained by the same Public Works Department later.\(^{204}\)

There was an allotment each year in the Land Revenue Budget for the purchase of vessels, lighting charges, pay of menials, etc.\(^ {205}\)

The staff of this institution viz., Vicharippukars, Watchers, etc. were under the control of the palace and they could be removed from their post or retired or new appointments filled up only with the sanction of the palace.\(^{206}\)

The pay of the staff was however disbursed from the Revenue department, under whose immediate administrative control of the staff is employed.\(^ {207}\)

With a view to fix the security to be deposited by the Vicharippukars and Superintendents of the palace, valuation lists of all

\(^{206}\) Personal interview with M. Parameswaran Pillai, aged 65, Eraniel on 10.02.2012  
\(^{207}\) Ibid.
the belongings such as furniture, vessels, etc. were obtained as required by the Sarvathikaryakkar.\textsuperscript{208}

Subsequently in July 1943 the Sarvathikaryakkar forwarded a list of palaces showing the posts for which security has now been fixed and those for which enhanced security should be fixed in future. Accordingly, the Division Peishkars, the Dewaswom Commissioner and the Chief Engineer (Roads, Irrigation and Miscellaneous) were asked to furnish the necessary information.

**Thovalai Kottaram**

It is one among the small palaces built by the Travancore kings. It is otherwise called as *Bhagavathy Kottaram*.\textsuperscript{209} During the Travancore rule, the Maharajas had the practice of visiting the common people with intervals. It was called as *Naadukkanuthal*. In order to take rest in South Travancore Kottarams (Palaces) were constructed at Thovalai, Suchidrum, Eraniel, Krishankovil and Thiruppathisaram. In addition with that the rulers were staunch Vaishnavaities so they constructed palaces at all important Vaishnava centres.

Thovalai was a tiny village once and nowadays it is getting township status due to its population and commerce. A celebrated

\textsuperscript{208} Personal interview with M. Parameswaran Pillai, aged 65, Eraniel on 10.02.2012

\textsuperscript{209} Personal interview with R. Narasingam Pillai, aged 90, Rtd. Teacher, Thovalai on 1.04, 2012.
flower market at Thovalai has been functioning for so many centuries and various kinds of flowers were sent to Travancore palace every day. So the Travancore kings considered this village as an important one. With this background they constructed a Krishnaswamy temple, on the hillock a Murugan temple, a Shiva temple and a Vinayaga temple in the same locality.

An Ottuppura (feeding centre for the Brahmins) was also constructed near the Krishnaswamy temple and it is said that hundreds of Brahmins got food in this feeding station daily.210 Unfortunately the Brahmins alone were permitted in it. A Kanchipura (feeding station for non-Brahmins) was also constructed near the Mangammal salai,211 which was a mud road constructed from Madurai to Kanyakumari by Rani Mangammal of Madurai Nayakdom for smooth transportation. It was utilized by both army men and the common people. Everyday liquid boiled rice was distributed along with side-dishes.

For the maintenance of the Kanchipura, a coconut garden was donated to it and even now it is called as Kanchipura Thoppu and a Sudalaimadan temple is there near to it which has been named as Kanchipura Sudalaimadan temple.

211. R. Sathanath Aiyar, The Nayaks of Madura, Madras, 1962, pp.70-75.
The Thovalai Kottaram is a big one having number of rooms and halls. With it four verandahs have been provided to avail sunlight. The compound wall is a gigantic one. Near by Kottaram, a Bhagavathy temple is there. The Maharajas had the practice of worshipping this shrine after taking bath at the beautiful pond (Theppakulam) near the Kottaram. The entire Kottaram including the Bhagavathi temple and the coconut garden occupied ten acres of land.212

Another notable feature of Thovalai Kottaram is the existence of Chatram (Choultry) very near to it. It was the practice of common people who utilized the Mangammal salai got Kanchi (Boiled rice water) and took rest at the chatram.

In the near by Krishnaswamy temple, a beautiful Garuda vehicle made in pure silver is there. During the Tamil month of Aavani, 10 days festivals is conducted at the time of Gokulashtami213 in which that Silver Garuda vehicle is taken in procession.

It is a rare place because we can worship Ganapathy, Murugan, Mutharamman, Shiva, Bhagavathy and Krishna in the same place.

212. Personal interview with Dr. S. Padmanabhan, aged 84, Senior Journalist, Nagercoil on 05.02. 2012.
213. Gokulashtami - Birth day of Lord Krishna.
Ramavarma Vilasam Bungalow, Nagercoil

The present RDO office situated with in the Collectroate office, Nagercoil was once the celebrated Ramavarma Vilasam Bunglow. It was constructed by Rani Sethu Lekshmi Bai, Regent of Travancore State.\textsuperscript{214}

When Rani Sethu Lekshmi Bai fell ill, she wanted to get medical treatment from European doctors who were working at Catherine Booth Hospital, Nagercoil which is maintained by the Salvation Army sect. For her stay this palace was constructed and in which Rani Sethu Lekshmi Bai stayed for some time and got treatment and cured finally. With in the palace, a small but beautiful statue of Goddess Bhagavathy was installed and it is there even today.

Krishnankoil Kottaram

Krishnakoil is a suburb of Nagercoil town. The name came into existence because of a beautiful Krishnan temple constructed there. Significantly Krishnankoil village is very near to Vadasery village, a place famous for wearing industry.\textsuperscript{215}

Travancore royal family established a close contact with Vadasery village. Maharaja Moolam Thirunal Ramavarma had

\textsuperscript{214} Aswathi Thirunal Gowri Lakshmi Bai, Thulasi Garland, Bombay, 1998, pp. 45-50

\textsuperscript{215} Personal interview with Mr.S. Balaganesan, aged 60, Industrialist Krishnankoil, Nagercoil, dated 25.02. 2012.
maintained a concubine and her house was familiarly called as Vadasery Ammaiveedu. So the Maharaja had the practice of visiting Vadasery frequently. For his stay the Krishnankoil Kottaram was constructed. Moreover Krishnankovil is a famous Brahmin hamlet also. The four Rathaveethies (four roads surrounding the temple) are thickly inhabited by the Brahmins.

Because of the close contact with Krishnankoil Kottaram, Sree Moolam Ramavarma School (SMRV School) was started. When the Maharaja Moolam Thirunal Ramavarma attained 50 years, the vegetable market at Vadaery was named after him and even now called as Kanaha Moolam Chanthai. When the Maharaja Moolam Thirunal attained 60, the road near Vadasery was named as Moolam Thirunal Sastiyathapurthi Road (M.S. Road).

Regarding the Krishnankoil Kottaram, it is a majestic building and the entire roof was filled with Quilon tiles. A number of spacious halls and rooms are there. At present it has been occupied by the Agriculture department and a portion has been converted into a Kalyana mandapam (marriage hall).


217. Ibid.

218. Personally visited and confirmed.
Thriuppathisaram Kottaram

Thriuppathisaram is a small village situated 3 kms from Nagercoil. It is one among the 108 Vaishnava shrines. The beautiful Thiruvazhimarban temple adds beauty to the village. The majestic temple with fine architectural specimens and the well designed Theppakulam (holy tank) confirm the artistic qualities of the Travancore kingdom.

Significantly Vishakam – Thirunal Maharaja of Travancore Kingdom constructed a beautiful as well as a palatial palace there which is even now called as Thriuppathisaram Kottaram.\(^{219}\) The Maharaja has a concubine there. So he had the practice of visiting the place frequently.

In order to get bath in the holy pond attached with the temple, a separate gateway was made from the Kottaram. So from the palace itself, the Maharaja and his family members worshipped the Thiruvazhimarban. At present it has been occupied by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and a seed centre has been created there.\(^{220}\)

In the beginning it was a small palace, but the successive rulers added one after the other and at the end of 18\(^{th}\) century the palace attained its present status.

\(^{219}\) Personal interview with Nataraja Pillai, aged 80, Thriuppathisaram, dated 18.07.2012.

\(^{220}\) Ibid.
OTHER HISTORICAL MONUMENTS

Kanyakumari District possesses rich cultural heritage through its palatial temples, churches and Islamic places of worship. In addition with that the district possessed a number of Kanchipuras (feeding centre) Kalmadams (way side inns), Chattrams (Choultries), wooden houses, Amma Veedus', lighthouses, and Sumaithangis which speak bundles of information about the historical, religious, social, cultural and architectural heritage of this region.

Just like the above said monuments the schools and hospitals started during the 18th and 19th centuries highlight the relationship between this region with the Travancore Royal family and also the generous work done by the Christian Missionaries.

The clock tower erected during the reign of Maharaja Moolam Thirunal confirms the architectural and technical knowledge of the local artisans. The Ammachi Kottarams built in a number of places also speak about the architectural beauty of the Travancore kingdom.

The Catherine Booth Hospital, Nagercoil; the Government Tuberculosis Hospital, Aasaripallam; the S.L.B.H.School, Nagercoil; Scott Christian H.S.School, Nagercoil; London Mission Hospital, Neyyoor; the SMRV School, Vadasery; Government School, Kottar; Pillared Anchal boxes, Mangammal Kinaru (Well), Mangammal Chalai are some of the other cultural and historical relics of this district.
The Petchiparai Dam, which was constructed during the time of Maharaja Sree Moolam Thirunal of Travancore confirms the architectural and technical mind of the people. It also explains the vision and knowledge of Alexander Minjin, the chief architect of the dam, who was an English by birth.

The Nagercoil Court building's, Eraniel Court buildings, and Neyyoor Mission Hospital also add importance to the hard working nature of the artisans of this region.

The Perunjani Dam and the Mukkadal dam were constructed because of the untiring work of Dewan Sir C.P. Ramasamy Iyer of Travancore Kingdom. In order to commemorate the meritorious services of Sir C.P. Ramansamy Iyer, a park was built in the busy area near the S.L.B. school and has been named after him.

In addition with that, the Vivekandanda Rock Memorial and Gandhi mandapa, both at Kanyakumari highlights the artistic sense of the 20th century artisans.

The Yanaikkal pothai, Gandhi Stupha at Nagercoil, Kathavadachanparai and Aadumeichaanparai at Kadiapattinam also explain the historical spiritual, artistic and architectural significance of the port.

The Nagercoil – Thiruvanthapuram Concrete Road was the first of its kind in India which is also a historical monument. It was the brain child of Sir C.P. Ramasamy Iyer, the Dewan of Travancore.
Thovalai Kanchipura

The most popular Kanchi madam of Kanyakumari district is situated at Thovalai, a village famous for flowers and flower market, have the distance of 8 kms from Nagercoil town. It was buily with granite.

The travelers got benefited through the Kanchipuram, eventhough the local people had the practice of consuming the liquid boiled rice with side dish. It is said that every day one kottai of broken rice was utilized for the preparation of Kanchi (liquid boiled rice).

At Thovalai, the coconut garden near the Kanchipuram is called as Kanchipura Thoppu and the Sudalimadan temple is called as Kanchipura Sudalaimadan. Kavimani Desiha Vinayagam Pillai, a celebrated Tamil scholar and poet ridiculed the Thovalai Kanchipuram in his poems. The pilgrims went to Rameshwaram and Tiruchendur got food and took rest at the chathram situated near the Kanchipura.

Thottiyodu Kanchipura

It is also a granite mandapa situated near Thottiyodu junction in the Nagercoil – Thiruvananthapuram national highways. Due to the existence of fish symbol in this mandapa, it is believed that it was under the control of the Pandyas. Once it acted as Kanchipuram.

221. Personal interview with V. Gopalan Potti, aged 80, Melsanthi, Sri Krishnaswamy temple, Thovalai on 19.04.2012.
A Shiva temple and a number of Naga statues are there. It is believed that this madam might have been constructed during the 14th century. A.D.222

It is a practice that Velimalai Murugan is attending the Marhali festival at Suchindrum Sthanumalayan temple. At that time the pilgrims and the Swamy stayed in this madam (mutt). At present it is owned by Minnal Parameswaran Nair alias ParamaShivan Nair. It is called as Praphasthiram. It is said that saints came from north stayed at that madam.

‘Kalmadams’ (The Wayside Inns)

The wayside inns locally called as kalmadams were built along the highways for the benefit of the travelers during the past. As these structures are made of long, sturdy, granite stones, they are named as ‘Kalmadams’. Though they have lost their utility, they remind us of our early ways of transport when no vehicle transport was available.

The inns were made of granite stones by simple but expert technology.223 They enjoy longevity as very little lime or mortar was used. The building technology is unique. They served the purpose of giving shelter to the travellers.

222. Personal interview with R.S. Lal Mohan, aged 70, Nagercoil on 08.08. 2012.
223. Newsletter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Nagercoil, Vol.1, No.2, June- December 2009, pp.1-7
Thanks to the INTACH, a non-Governmental organization
46 ‘kalmadam’ have been identified in Kanyakumari district with
photographs. Some of them are interesting as inscriptions in early
Tamil are found in them. These inscriptions are called as ‘Vatteluttu’.
It shed lights into the evolutions of Tamil language. Some of the
‘madams’ like the ‘Kazhuganthittai’ madam\textsuperscript{224} has a number of stone
inscriptions, some have the encarvings like the scenes from Ramayana;
some have statues of kings or feudal lords as in Nattalam madam.
Most of them have statues of ‘welcoming ladies’ (nadathevathai) with
folded hands.

The oldest madams we could find belong to the year
A.D.1535. It is located in ‘Chungankadai’. It may be mentioned that
the INTACH (Nagercoil Chapter) found the inscription for the first time
and deciphered writings in it. The Nattalam madam also has the
inscription and it was made in the year A.D.1665 during the time of
Raja Ravivarman. The Seethappal madam\textsuperscript{225} or ‘Athichanputhur’
madam\textsuperscript{226} also have detailed Tamil inscriptions describing the intention
of the donor. Some of the madams like that one in Thiruvithancode
near the High school has inscription of ‘fish’ on its roof denoting its

\textsuperscript{224} Newsletter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage
\textsuperscript{225} Personally visited and confirmed.
\textsuperscript{226} Personally visited and confirmed.
early origin. Here a huge granite water tub is provided for the animals.\textsuperscript{227}

Many of the ‘kalmadam’ are carving for attention and maintenance. Some have fallen prey to road extension and vandalism. Some like ‘Kazhuvanthitai madam’ are in ruins. Some like ‘Kalluvillai madam’ have dense growth of grass and trees. It can be said that these ancient archaeological structures are completely neglected without sponsorship or ownership.

Many of these like of ‘Ethankadu’ madam and Mahathanapuram madams are converted into temples or encroached and used as residence or shops (Suchindrum madam) or go down as in Villukurimadam, Recently INTACH has converted a dirty, neglected ‘madam’ of Chungankadai into a functional library with the active support of the then Collector of Kanyakumari District Mr. Sunil Paliwal, IAS.

Thanks to the pressure given by INTACH, the present district collector Mr. Nagarajan, I.A.S. has graciously sanctioned Rs. 3 lakhs for the renovation of Erachakulam madam situated 4 kms from Nagercoil. Now the work is under progress.

These ‘madams’ require urgent attention. The Archaeology Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu should survey them, find

\textsuperscript{227}. Newsletter, of INTACH, Nagercoil, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.1-7.
their ownership, evict the encroachers and maintain them. These madams should be declared as heritage or archaeological remains and protected for the progeny.

**Petchiparai Dam**

It was built by Sree Moolam Thirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore. The work was started in A.D.1896 and completed in A.D.1906. The total length of the dam is 1396 feet and the height is 310 feet which supplies irrigation facilities to 5000 acres. The chief architect of the dam was **Hamphre Alexander Minjin**²²⁸ locally called as *Mukkandurai*. A memorial has been constructed for Minjin after his death at the dam site.

The call for a storage reservoir across Kodayar river had invited the attention of the rulers of Travancore even during the early parts of 19th century. They had taken steps in this direction as early as A.D.1830 which of course took a final shape into action during the end of that century.

The Maharajas of Travancore were always having a kind heart and preference towards the people of Kanyakumari District because of their strong support during the crisis periods. Thirvithancode and then Padmanabhapuram were their capital for quite a long period. Because of this, the investigation processes had

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started during the later part of the 19th century and the Dam across the river Kodayar was constructed and commissioned for irrigation during the early period of 20th century i.e. on A.D.1906.

In short the ambition and dream of the people of Nanjilnadu for assured irrigation supply through storage reservoir was realized during the earlier parts of 20th century, when the Pechipparai Dam was completed and commanded in the year 1906.

The extract of the Tabular stone found in Pechipparai Dam to commemorate the opening of the Pechipparai Dam reads as below.

The Kodayar Irrigation Project initiated and completed during the Reign of His Highness. “Sir Ramavarma Sree Moolam Thirunal, Maharaja of Travancore”.229

The work was commenced in A.D. 1895 and carried on during the administration of the successive Dewans like Mr.S.Sankara Subbaiyar, Dewan Bahadur K.Kridhnaswamy Rao, Mr. V.P. Madhana Rao, Mr. S. Gopalachariar. The chief engineers in the PWD connected with this project were Mr. G.T.Walch, Mr. A.H.Jacob, Mr. Jopp, Mr.C.A. Smith, Mr. A.H. Bhstow, and the executive engineers were Mr. O.S. Barrow, Mr. Alexander Munchin.

The officers and engineers who were in charge of construction of this dam had taken keen efforts in recording the history of the dam. Considerable efforts and interest had been taken in the

matter of survey, design, site selection, material selection and construction activities of this dam.

The construction period of the dam relates to the period of construction of the famous Periyar Dam across Periyar River in Madurai District. As such much counselling and exchange of technical views between the engineering professionals of Madras presidency who were in charge of irrigation projects of Madras state and Travancore counterparts appear to have taken place in the finalization of the design aspects as well as the size of the Pechipparai Reservoir.

It is amazing to see the interest bestowed by the rulers of the Travancore state in creating such major irrigations works to promote prosperity through increased agricultural production in the land they ruled.

The useful life of this reservoir is worked out as 365 years as per trap efficiency method.

**Pillar Anchal Boxes**

Post & Telegraph Department was the innovation of Lord Dalhousie, Governor - General of British India during 1850’s. Gradually this service was expanded to the princely states also. Travancore state was one among the progressive states which immediately introduced this modern system of communication.

Thanks to the Travancore artisans pillared Anchal boxes were introduced throughout the state. So in the Travancore state,
postal department functioned successfully. At present there are 6 numbers of Pillar Anchal Boxes of Travancore State in Kanyakumari District. They are at Nagercoil (2) Eraniel (1) Kadukkarai (1) Marungoor (1) Kuzhuthurai(1). It is made in iron. It was in a conic shape with 4 feet height.

**Victory Pillar, Colachel**

Gen. De Lannoy (A.D.1715-1777) was the famous General of the Travancore Raja Bala Marthandavarma (A.D.1729 to 1758) and Ramavarma Karthihaí Thirunal (A.D.1758 – 1798). There are serious doubts about his nationality and his role in the Colachel war (A.D.1741) among some of the Kerala historians. His nationality was attributed to Belgium and Holland. But according to records of Leiden Museum, Holland, he was a French national and his grandfather was the Governor of the French province Araca. He was recruited to the army of Dutch East India Company and was sent to Sri Lanka.

When the Dutch East India Company decided to attack Marthandavarma in August A.D. 1741 he was sent to Colachel along with the troops of Dutch East India Company in a ship from Tuticorin. While reaching the Colachel port, the Captain of the ship Capt. Hackert opted to return to Tuticorin fearing that the ship may dash against the rock due to the stormy weather, So De Lannoy never took

part in the war between Marthandavarma and the Dutch in 1741. The
Dutch High Command was very angry with the Captain Hacker as he
returned without the consent of the High Command at Cochin. Later
the High Command ordered Capt Hackert along with De Lannoy to
return to Colachel through Kanyakumari. After landing at
Kanyakumari, De Lannoy learned that the Dutch forces were defeated
by the army of Marthandavarma. The Latter asked De Lannoy to defect
to Travancore army promising him good treatment, food and six panam
as remuneration. Capt. Hackert was dismissed from the Dutch army,
court marshaled and sent back to Holland. De Lannoy accepted the
conditions and joined the Travancore forces at the Kalkulam fort. Then
he trained the Travancore army on the modern warfare. Because of his
hard work, sincerity and faithfulness he rose to the position of
Valiyakappithan (Commander in Chief) of the Travancore army and
helped the Raja to extend his kingdom from Kanyakumari to Cochin.
He was also responsible for constructing the Udayagiri fort,
Padmanabhapuram fort, Vattakottai, Marunthukottai and Maiyakottai,
South Travancore lines, North Travancore lines and some other
fortification in North Travancore. Some of the Travancore historians
depict that the De Lannoy surrendered to Marthandavarma in Colachel.
It is a wrong description. It is a wrong information that the De Lannoy
surrendered at the feet of Bala Marthandavarma at Colachel. The
drawing of De Lannoy surrendering is a later drawing by Raja
Ravivarma, the famous painter and artist of Chera dynasty.
The victory pillar erected by king Marthandavarma is a movement which says about his victory over the Dutch at the battle of Colachel. This victory pillar was fully made with granite.\textsuperscript{231} The height of the pillar is 15 feet, the basement of the pillar is also made of granite. Above the basement, the pillar has been made of white granite stone. And at the top a stone bearing the \textit{Changu} emblem of Travancore kings is there.

\textbf{Wooden Houses of Mekode}

Kanyakumari District is famous for its wooden houses. Wood was cheap before 80 years. All the sides of the house including flooring were made of wood. Many of the wooden houses are now dismantled and sold for its timber. A few wooden houses are left, 2 of them are in Mecode. The interior of these houses are cool requiring no fans. They are owned by Mr. Johnwell, Palkulam, Edaikode; Mr. Krishnan Nair, Pallivilaku, Edakode; Mr. S. Stephen, Palachel Veedu, Slanchira, P.O. Idacode 629152. The INTACH starts its to preserve them.

\textbf{Amma Veedu, Arumanai}

The house of the consort of the Travancore king Visakam Thirumal (A.D.1880-1885) at Arumanai is kept in good condition.\textsuperscript{232}

\textsuperscript{231} Varadarajan, Colachel – Oru Varallatu Aaivu, (Tamil) (A Historical study about Colachel) Colachel, 2005, pp. 90-100.

\textsuperscript{232} Personally visited and confirmed.
The relatives of the Ms. Amma Panampillai, Mrs. Radha Narayanan Nair and Mrs. Rajewari live there. They are in their eighties but in robust health. The king of Travancore Visakam Thirunal lived here with his consort Ms. Panam Pillai. She was a very beautiful and accomplished lady. The king Visakam Thirunal was a great scholar and composed many poems sitting on the rocks of Kodayar river (Arumanai river). It was appreciated by the British.

It may be mentioned that he took initiative for the survey and construction of Pechipparai dam and many other irrigation schemes of Kanyakumari District. King Visakam Thirunal did not live long. He died at an age of 48 and was succeeded by Maharaja Moolam Thirunal (A.D. 1885-1924).

Clock Tower, Nagercoil

It is situated very near to Puthen Bungalow, once the palace owned and utilized by the Travancore kings. It was constructed in A.D.1893 and it has been announced as the emblem of present Nagercoil Municipality. The Maharaja of Travancore Sree Moolam Thirunal declared opened this clock tower on 15th February 1893.\(^{233}\)

On the occasion of His Highness Sree Moolam Thirunal Maharaja’s visit to the south in the year A.D.1890 a public subscription was collected to worthily celebrate the occasion. Owing to the indecency

of the weather, it was not possible to spend all the money then subscribed and it was resolved that, the balance thus left should be kept as the nucleus of a fund for supplying the town with some permanent memorial of His Highness, such as public clock. In A.D.1891 His Highness Sree Moolam Thirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore very kindly gave a donation of Rs.1000/- towards the purchases of a clock and when that was purchased intimated that a suitable tower should also be built for which the necessary funds were at once sanctioned.234

A committee was at once formed consisting of the following inhabitants of the town. Rev. J.Duthie, M/s Hongewerf, S.Horsley, R.Krishna Iyer and M.Retnaswamy Iyer and a suitable design was prepared by Mr. Horsley.

The construction was started during the month of July 1891 and completed on August 1892. The total expenditure for the construction was Rs.3258/- and a chakra and 12 kasu. Significantly majority of the expenses was contributed by the Maharaja of Travancore, the committee took responsibility for the completion of the work. The English letters R.V. has been engraved in that monument mentioning about Ramavarma. Significantly the Travancore Kingdom’s emblem “Sangu” was not fixed in it.

The work was completed under the supervision of Mr. K.K. Kuruvilla who took place of Mr. Horsley who went on leave shortly after the work was started.²³⁵

The total cost of the tower and the clock was Rs. 3258-09-12 which is covered by the following sums received.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original gift of His Highness</td>
<td>-1017.24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant for tower and petty receipts</td>
<td>-2015.21.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Reception Committee fund and donation</td>
<td>-164.20.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3258-09-12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On 15th February 1893, His Highness, the Maharaja visited the clock tower.²³⁶ When he was received in a pavilion by the Clock Tower Committee the president of which read a short statement alluding His Highness, for his liberal donation of the tower which is an useful ornamental memorial.

Travancore palace records dated 22nd August 1893 give a vivid picture about the construction, expenses, the committee constituted in this connection etc.²³⁷

The clock fixed in the Nagercoil Tower was erected by Mani Mesthiri alias Thankappan Achari of Thuckalay.²³⁸ He also erected the

²³⁸ Personal interview with Dr. Chidambara Natarajan, aged 60, Nagercoil, dated 19.04.2012.
same type of clock at Padmanabhapuram fort and East Fort of Thiruvananthapuram.

In this clock tower, the clock was imported from England. Originally it was in use for 20 years at London and it was donated to the London Missionary Society and the latter handed it over to Sree Moolam Thirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore. The latter installed it in the clock tower, Nagercoil. On those days the alarm sound had reached up to the town limit.

**Sumaithangis at Kanyakumari**

*Sumaithangi* means a thing which carries weight. In the olden days when we had a very skeletal means of transport, people used these sumaithangis for relief of their very heavy head loads during their long journey when they carried their loads for trading purposes. In our district we find a lot sumaithangis as a relic of our ancient highway heritage. Many of these are destroyed by people who never understand about their significance.

Sumaithangi is made of three granite stone, two vertical ones with longer horizontal one on the top of the two vertical stones.

♦ People installed them as a promise for the safe delivery of child or in memory of a mother who had lost her life during pregnancy or child birth.

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Also installed as a promise to God for business success or as a memory of a death of a close relative.

Some were installed for just good will.

It is also said that the Padmanabhapuram palace used to arrange for large scale free food during festivities, for which vegetable and necessary grains were carried as head loads and the 'Sumaithangis' assisted during transport.

The following are some of the Sumaithangis of Kanyakumari District

- Kanyakumari Vivekanandar Sumaithangi
- Muthu Mukku Isskkiyammal Kovil Road Sumaithangi
- Mankarai Appavunadar Sumaithangi
- Thalavilai Sumaithangi
- Puthukadai Sumaithangi
- Kottar Sumaithangi and many others which are destroyed or not defined.
- Sumaithangi near Ramaswarmi temple, Neerali street, Kottar - A Pregnant Brahmin lady died so this sumaithangi emerged.
- Sumaithangi, National highway Chungankadai
- Vattam Sumaithangi near Thiruvithancode Vattam junction
- Velliyanakulam Sumaithangi - Vazhiambalam
- Asaripallam Sumaithangi near Ananthanpalam
♦ Mankarai Sumaithangi erected by Appavoonadar, Karungal road, Puthukadai.

♦ Moonrumookku Sumaithangi, Essakiamman temple, dismantled

♦ Balamore road Sumaithangi near Erachakulam bus stop.

♦ Thachanvilai Sumaithangi

These living imprints are of importance to the future generation to understand the past and the predecessors.

**OTHER HERITAGE BUILDINGS**

Nagercoil is an ancient town. Kottar has found mention in the books of early travellers like Ptolemy in A.D.150. The town is famous for its Nagaraja temple and the famous Naga flower (Couroupta Guianesis). Though many of the ancient buildings are demolished and fallen prey to the march of time, a few still have survived and threaten by the wave of modernization.

Catherine Booth Hospital was started in A.D.1892 by Mr. Harry Andrews. The Govt. Tuberculosis hospital (the present Medical College) had its origin when Marguis Linlithgow laid foundation in A.D.1939; the District court had its formation in A.D.1811 during the time of Rani Gowri Laxmi Bai (A.D.1811-1815) who was ably assisted by Col. Munro, the Resident. The buildings of S.L.B. School is majestic and a towering structure. It is named after Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai. It was built in A.D.1928. Scott Christian School was started in A.D.1819 by Rev. Charles Mead.
The London Mission Hospital was started in A.D.1890. The SMRV School in Vadasery and the Kottar Govt. School are other landmarks. We too have some of relics like the ancient Anchal or the Post box in front of the Collectorate Post Office, the Mangammal Kīnaru (well) in Kottar, made by Rani Mangammal (A.D.1695) of Madurai. Many ancient and relic buildings will come to light if a detailed study is undertaken. We must have a law to protect these ancient buildings.

**Light House, Leepuram**

Leepuram is a coastal village situated just three kilometers from Kanyakumari. It is otherwise called Srimulapuram. Locally it is called as Komalivilai. At present this village has been named after English commander Col. Lee.\(^{240}\) An old light house is also there. The height of it is 23 feet and it was built with bricks and lime stone. In 1806, Col Lee, the English Commander demolished the fortification from Kanyakumari to Kadukkarai. So he became popular in this region.

**Sri. C.P. Ramasamy Iyer Park, Nagercoil**

Nagercoil, the town was once called as Kottar, which was the capital of Nanjilnad also. Kottar was a busy commercial centre. In the midst of the town a beautiful park has been built and named after

Sir. C.P. Ramasamy Iyer, the last Dewan of Travancore Kingdom when Sri Chithrai Thirunal, the last Maharaja ruled it.\textsuperscript{241}

Sir. C.P. Ramasamy Iyer was the brain behind the construction of Perunjani dam for irrigation purpose and Mukkadal dam for drinking water to Nagercoil town. He had much sympathy over the people of south Travancore ie the present Kanyakumari district.

Dinamalar T.V. Ramasubbaiyar, founder of Dinamalar Tamil daily, initiated the process of the formation of this park. It is under the control of Nagercoil Municipality. The Government of Tamil nadu should take efforts for the modernization of that park.

**Yanaikkal Pothai**

It is a small hill situated near Alambarai village, just 5 kms northwest from Nagercoil town. A rock cut cave temple is there which is a significant one due to the name of the deity. Locally called as 'Chottu Neer Sastha', the presiding deity Sastha is getting drops of water regularly without any break. Even in summer seasons also the dropping of water is a casual one. Unfortunately no concrete evidence is available regarding the period in which it was built. There is no proper road available to reach the temple even now.

\textsuperscript{241} T. Kannan, *Nagercoil Nagara Puunkaavin Suttula Sirappu Kuurugal*, (Tamil), (Tourist significance of Nagercoil Park), Unpublished Project work submitted to the M.S. University, Tirunelveli, 2007, pp. 5 – 20.
**Gandhi Sthupa, Nagercoil**

With in the Sir. C.P. Ramasamy Memorial Park, Nagercoil a stupha was constructed for Mahatma Gandhi with the own expense of Kalaivanar N.S.Krishnan and his wife T.M.Mathuram and it was inaugurated by P.S.Kumarasamy, the Chief Minister of Madras State on September 13, 1949.242 It is a beautiful monuments erected to educate the common people about Ghandhiji and his scarifies.

**Kathavadachanpaarai, Kadiapattinam**

Kadiapattinam is a coastal village. Originally called as Kadihaipattinam, which means centre for learning and later it was misinterpreted as Kadiapattinam.

In the Kadiapattinam beach, a door has been engraved infront of a cave in the small hillock. It is locally called as *Kathavadachanpaarai* (a hillock with closed door).243 It is believed that it might be an Jain initiative to build a temple there.

A careful and impartial study of the places in the western coast may reveal many new findings. The rock locally known as *Aadumechaan Paarai*244 (the rock which was used as pasturage for goats) at Kadiapattinam is now in the sea nearly 10 kms from the coast.

The elder fishermen of the locality confirm that some remains of the submerged buildings are there in the underwater and they have seen the structures during the ups and downs of the tide.

**Filter House, Nagercoil**

The Nagercoil Drinking water system popularly called as Nagercoil Filter House was started in 1945 by the Travancore state. Sir C.P. Ramasamy Iyer, The Dewan of Travancore state was responsible for this project. The Travancore Govt. kept its emblem, the *Chank*, (*Xanchus spirum*) in their establishments. But the emblem is found now in only a few places. One such place is the Iron Gate of the High Level Water Tank in the Keseri Street, Nagercoil. Recently the 'Chank' Emblem in the gate is cleaned and painted with original colour at the expense of INTACH Nagercoil Chapter on 06.09.2009.

**Vivekananda Rock Memorial, Kanyakumari**

The Rock Memorial came into being as the fulfillment of the aspirations of Swami Vivekananda's devotees to erect a befitting monument for the distinguished son of Bharatmata at the sacred spot where he had meditated.

A committee for the Rock Memorial and Swami Vivekananda Centenary Celebrations was constituted under the

leadership of Eknath Ranade at the time of the birth centenary of the great man. The stupendous natural and man-made obstacles were overcome and the edifice on the rock was completed in a record period of six years.

Sthapathi S.K. Achari, a renowned architect and engineer from Devakottai designed the entire complex of the Rock Memorial. The Vivekananda Statue was prepared by N.L. Sonavadekar of J.J. School of Arts, Bombay on the lines of a portrait of Swami Vivekanda drawn by S.M. Pandit.

The monument represents the blending of the typical Chola, Pandya and Pallava schools of architecture. The monument consists of Sripada mandapa, Muha mandapa, Sabha mandapa, Prarthana mandapa and Dhyana mandapa.

There is a blending of Chola and Pallava styles of architecture in the two ornamental pillars in front of the Pranava Peetham and the Peetham as such is designed in the Pallava style.

Vivekananda Rock Memorial is another place of interest in Kanyakumari which attracts large number of tourists. The memorial is built south–east of Devi kumari temple in the mid-sea, lies the twin

247. Ibid.
rocks, popularly known as the 'Vivekananda Rocks'. As this rock was chosen by Swami Vivekananda for mediation, it is called 'Vivekananda Rock'. On the rock, is a projection similar in form to a human tort and a little brownish in complexion, which has traditionally been saved as a symbol of Sripadam. It is said that it was on this rock that Goddess Kanya (Bhagavathy) did tapas. It was here Swami Vivekananda received illumination, the highest experience of spiritual realization.

To conclude, the secular monuments of Kanyakumari District are very large in number which speak about the artistic, architectural, sculptural, technical knowledge of the artisans and sculptors of the Travancore Kingdom. Unfortunately no concrete step has been taken so far for the protection of these monuments even though this district is famous for cent per cent literacy.