CHAPTER - I

Socio - Religious Condition of Tirunelveli
SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONDITION OF TIRUNELVELI

In ancient times, the Venkatam hills on the North Kanyakumari, the seat of the Virgin goddess Parvathi on the South, the Kuna Kadal (‘The Easten Sea’ – Bay of Bengal) on the east and the Kuda Kadal (‘the western sea’- the Arabian Sea) on the west bowed the land of the Tamil language and the Tamils. The land just north of the land of the ‘Virgin Goddess’ was called Tirunelveli means ‘the Sacred paddy hedges’. The land of the paddy fields on the Southern and northern banks the ever perennial river, the Tamira Parani rising from the Podiyil hills, running of 120 kms north eastwards and joins the Bay of Bengal at Korkai, the ancient port city of the Pandyas.

In ancient times, the region of Tirunelveli was known as Then Pandi Nadu. It was in Triangular Shape. In the 7th Century St. Gnana Sambhandar and in the 9th Century St. Sundarar refer to this place as Nelveli in relation to “Nelveli Venra Ninra Sir Nedu Maran”. St. Manicka Vacagar, the Tamil bhakti rhymmist praised Then Pandi Nadu as Sivaloham, ‘the abode of Lord Siva’. Thiruvasagam*, he tells about Then Pandi Nadu. The capital city of Then Pandi Nadu was Tirunelveli. The famous Siva temple namely Nellaiyappar ‘the Lord of Paddy fields’ is located here. The name ‘Tirunelveli’ came after this name. St. Thirugnana Sambhandar has highly praised this place in his third Thirumurai of Tevaram*,

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* Thiruvasagam Thiruvasagam Vilakkavurai, Pathigam 18
* Thirumurai Thirumurai of Tevaram, Third Part, Verse 2, Padhigam 3, 4
According to him, Tirunelveli is an important centre for Saivites. It is said that so much paddy fields surround this temple; hence the name Nelveli is came into being. A story from Sthala Purana tells us that one Brahmin named Veda Sarma spread out a quantity of paddy near his Yagasala for the purpose of drying and went to the river for bathing. At that time a heavy rain poured in the ground. But the God Nellaiyappar made a fence round the dried paddy for protection and henceforth this city acquired the name Nelveli ‘the paddy hedge’.

Though Tirunelveli is contiguous to Madurai, Ramnad and Nanchil Nadu, it has a historic past. An ancient Tamil work the Iraiyanar Aahapporul Urai of Nakkirar makes mention of the existence of three Sangams, the first at Then Madurai located in an around Lemuridesa in Indonesia, the second a Kapatapuram of the Coast of Korgai (Tuticorin) as mentioned in Arthasastra and the third at Manalur east of Thirupparam Kundram and south of the present Madurai.

The only traces of the earliest inhabitants of Tirunelveli that survive are certain stone implements that have been found near Cheranmahadevi and Putugudi. This would identify with what has been called the “Neolithic age”. At Adichanallur in Tirunelveli District another class of interments urn-burials without any megalithic appendage in the form of a bounding circle, has been found in large numbers; though they cannot be brought strictly into the orbit of megalithic monuments they seem to be somehow related to them as iron implements, black and red ware and fragmentary burials are common. The pottery of Adichanallur is more primitive than the megalithic pottery of

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6 Ibid., 73.,
8 Bishop R. Caldwell, A History of Tinnevelly, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 4-5.
the other sites. All these help us to understand the antiquity and historicity of Tirunelveli.

The scholastic world may know that the ancient Tamils have classified their land into five eco-zones of physiographic divisions. They are the Kurinchi (the mountainous tract) and the Palai (the arid-parced Sandy tract), the Mullai (the forest tract), the Marudam (the agricultural tract), the Neidal (the littoral tract). It is of great interest to the scholars of nature and geography says that all the five land divisions of Sangam Age are still in the Tirunelveli region. The land of Kurinchi could be seen in Ambasamudram, Tenkasi and Sencottah which are located near Courtallam and Podiyil Hills. The Tamil Legends describe the branches of Podiyil Hills like Velli Hills, Mahendra Hills, Agathiyaar Hills, Thorana Hills, Thiru Courtallam Hills etc.

In Courtalla Kuravanchi, the poet Thirikooda Rasappa Kavirayar tells about the Podiyil Hills. This Podiyil Hills are considered as the great gift to the whole of Tirunelveli. The glory of this mass of mountains is the famous Agastyalalai which is 6125 feet known to the natives as the Eka Pothigai, the place to which the Rishi Agastya after the achievement of his great life’s work (which included treatises on medicine, theology and Tamil grammar) retired to rest; there, mindful of the human race he created Tambraparani over whose fortunes he still presides from his mountain

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10 K.V. Perumal, Porunai Valam (Tamil), The South India Saiva Siddharta Works publishing society, Tirunelveli 1977, p.5.
11 Ibid., p.15.

* Podiyil Hills
hermitage. A perfect cone in shape, standing on a low base in a wide gap on sky line, Agastyamalai, whether viewed from Tranvancore or Tirunelveli\textsuperscript{12}.

Next to it on the South, but at a respectful distance stands the great Ainthalai Pothigai, five headed, as its name implies. The hills which form the western boundary of the district are a continuation of the great irregular chain of the Western Ghats, which here attain comparative regularity. Save for a recess enclosing a bay of the Tenkasi Taluk, they march in straight line from the northern limit of the district as far as Papanasam and the valley of the Tambra Parani; thence sweeping for twelve miles in a bold curve towards the southeast, they once more resume their southward trend towards the sea\textsuperscript{13}.

The immense and rugged barrier of hills, towering along the western side of the district and visible from almost any point of the level country presents for the denizen of the plains the most fascinating object of the landscape. At Tenkasi the ghats begin to widen out and above Papanasam the range attains its greatest thickness. Low hills skirt their base and behind these extend higher undulating hills and broad valleys, with here and there extensive plateaus, leading gradually up to the great range of high rugged mountains which marks the watershed\textsuperscript{14}.

With the Ainthalai Pothigai the watershed turns southeast as far as the Nanguneri frontier, which marks the point from which the ghats again march southwards. Above Tirukkurungudi they tower up to close on 6000 feet dropping slightly to the Mahendragiri range which dips to rise again and ends abruptly in a magnificent scarp of bare precipitous rocks. This is the last of the Tirunelveli ghats.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.3.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp. 3-4.
After Panagudi the mountains rise once more to half their height, dropping after a few miles to the Aramboli pass in the level country\(^\text{15}\).

The next region Mullai could be seen in Papanasam and Kalakad regions which are surrounded by forest areas. The western side of Ambasamudram and Alwarkurichi remained as ghat forests\(^\text{16}\). 286 square miles of the upper ghats between Kalakad and Vasudevanallur were declared ‘reserved forest’\(^\text{17}\). The southern most forests which command the Nanguneri Taluk and with its outliers, Manpothai and Kolundumamalai a part of Ambasamudram Taluk. They form a strip about fifteen miles long, rising from above Pangagudi to the Mahendragiri watershed and widening gradually towards the north to include the dense sholas which hold the sources of the Nambiyar, the Kila Manimuttar and the Pachaiyar. The outer slopes are often very precipitous and rise in places to about 3000 feet between them and the higher hills which rise to the watershed are the evergreen forests, interspersed with bare grass slopes\(^\text{18}\).

Since the Marudham tract is a arable land, it could be seen in Ambasamudram, Tenkasi, Tirunelveli and Srivaikundam areas which consist of flourishing paddy fields. The season of its cultivation is the interval between the Pisanam and kar crops and it is grown on wet lands which retain a little moisture and can get one or two floodings during that period. Among the regularly irrigated crops paddy easily comes first. Of the total cultivated area of the district this crop occupies one-fourth; the proportion in the Ambasamudram taluk which possesses the best of the lands irrigated by the Tambraparani rises to nearly two thirds. Other fully irrigated crops grown on wet lands are plantains, betel-vine and sugar cane\(^\text{19}\).

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p.4.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 196.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 200.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 150-151.
Kayalpattinam, Veera Pandiya Pattinam and Kulasekara Pattinam are all the Neydal land. Korkai the port city of the Pandyas was situated near Tuticorin port. The sea coast about 85 miles in length extends along the Gulf of Mannar from Vembar an insignificant port on the north to a point about four miles east of Cape Comorin. South wards as far as Tiruchendur the coast, like that of Ramnad is low and presents generally the appearance of a continuous forest of Palmyras and scrub jungle fringed with sand. The coast line then drops to a lower level for seven miles until the high sandy promontory of Manappad is reached. Towards the south, at Kuttanguli, Idinthakarai and elsewhere the gneissic rocks of the Nanguneri Taluk jut out a little distance into the sea\textsuperscript{20}. Kulasekarapattnam is a small port, with which small country craft trade all the year round. Larger vessels going to and from Ceylon and the more distant ports of India generally avoid the period of the south west monsoon it is difficult then both to negotiate the reef and to land goods. Kayalpattinam a little port protected by a reef is visited by country craft all the year round. As at Kulasekarapattnam, the southwest monsoon does not interfere with this class of trade. Vaippar and Vembar, 15 and 20 miles north of Tuticorin, are two important ports visited on an average by two or three small country vessels a month\textsuperscript{21}. Nanguneri and Tiruchendur Taluks are noted for the Palai land and these are considered as drought areas. The most peculiar division of the district is the great undulating expense of red sand- the Teri country as it is called, which dominates the southern part of the Nanguneri taluk and a great port of the taluk of Tiruchendur\textsuperscript{22}.

Thus all the five types of land in the Tirunelveli area, a peculiar characteristics which might have been the inspiration to Tolkappiyar and other Sangam poets.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 16.
The land of Tirunelveli is watered by the Porunaiyaru or Then Porunai and was therefore called Porunai Nadu. In ancient literary works, the river Tamraparani was widely known as Thunn Porunaiyaru\textsuperscript{23}. The Tamraparani rises on a noble conical mountain called Pothigai, more commonly called Potiyam, the mainly of which is probably, “a place of concealment”. This mountain stands back nearly ten miles from the rest of the mountains of the range, so that the Tamraparani which takes its rise upon it drain a considerable extent of mountain country before it emerges into the plains\textsuperscript{24}.

Lassen in his *Indische Alterthumskunde* describes the Tamraparani as “an inconsiderable stream, with a renowned name”. It holds a high position amongst the Indian rivers in regard to the benefits it confers; and its name seems to have become famous in India from a very early period. It may worthily be called an “ancient river” by which I understand a river renowned in ancient song\textsuperscript{25}. In Kambararamayana*, it is mentioned about river Tamraparani,

This Porunaiyaru which flourishes Tirunelveli has been famous for thousands years of ages. Even the Asokan Edits and the Greek Geographer Ptolemy point to its gloriness. They mention the river as Thamba Panni\textsuperscript{26}. It was called Tambapanni by the early Buddhists, three centuries before Christ, in king Asokas’ inscription at Girnar\textsuperscript{27}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{23} K.V. Perumal., Op.Cit., p.36.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Bishop. R. Caldwell., Op.Cit., p.7.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p.7.
\item * Kambararamaynam
\begin{verse}
"காம் கம்பராமயனம் அரசன்றிலின் காம்பராமயானின் செய்திக்குரை செய்திக்குரை \\
கோர்க்கை அரசன்றின் அரசன்றின் காம்பராமயானின் செய்திக்குரை \\
அன்றையது காம்பராமயான இவையானது \\
காம்பராமயான உரையானது இவையானது \\
சான்றாகியது காம்பராமயான உரையானது \\
சான்றாகியது காம்பராமயான உரையானது"
\end{verse}
(Kambararamaynam Nadavitta Padalam, Kitkindha Kandam)
\item \textsuperscript{26} K.V. Perumal, Op. Cit., pp. 35-36.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Bishop R. Caldwell, Op.Cit., p.9.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The meaning of the name Tamraparani considered in itself, Tamra means red, parni from parna, a leaf that which has leaves that is tree. Tamraparani might therefore be expected to mean a tree with red leaves. The marriage relations into which Vijaya, the ancient ruler of Ceylon and his followers are said to have entered with the Pandyas would also make them acquainted with Korkai at the mouth of the Tamraparani, the oldest capital of the Pandyas, which must have been their capital at that time and the river may thus have been indebted for its name to those Singhalese visitors. At all events it seems more natural that Tamaraparani, “the tree with the red leaves” should have been first the name of a tree, then of a town, then of a district, them of a river then that it should have been the name of a river at the outset\textsuperscript{28}.

Hindus have still a great idea of the religious merit of bathing in this stream. Every portion of the stream is sacred. There are two of these waterfalls on the main stream, one called Vanatirtham; on the slope of Pothiyam and the still more frequented about 90 feet in height at Papanasam (destruction of sin). The latter is commonly called Kalyanitirtham, the sacred bathing place Kalyani (Parvathi) but by some Kalyanatirtham, the wedding bathing place that is the place where Parvathis’s marriage to Siva was exhibited to Agastya. This fall is at the place where the Tamraparani leaves the mountains and enters the plains\textsuperscript{29}.

Of Paleolithic man in Tirunelveli Mr. Bruce Foote while exploring the district in 1883, discovered a number of fragments of Chert, silicified wood and limpid quartz imbedded in the red loan underlying the teri sands in Sawerpuram and Srivaikuntam Taluks. These specimens may be Neolithic age\textsuperscript{30}. Adichanallur, Korkai and Kayal are sites of archeological and historic interest. In these and other near places like Agaram,

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 8.
Vadakku Vallanad, Murappanad, Vasavappapuram, Karunkulam, Vittilapuram, Kongarayakurichi, Tiruppuliyangudi, Srivaikuntam, Pudukudi, Velur, Kalvay, Appankoil, Maramangalam sepulchral urns have been found. In Adichanallur, 2 miles from Palayamkottai on the road to Tiruchendur possesses considerable interest as on archeological field of exceptional richness. The high ground to the west of the village had been known as a place where ancient burial urns were to be found\(^\text{31}\). The objects yielded by these burial sites are finally made pottery of various kinds in great number; many iron implements and weapons vessels and personal ornaments in bronze, a few gold ornaments, a few stone beads, boxes and some household stone implements used for grinding curry or Sandalwood. Thus the people who made these objects appear to have been skilful in all\(^\text{32}\).

When history first faintly dawns, the Pandyas are found in possession of the greater part of the district. The Pandyas were the rulers of one of the three great kingdoms into which Southern India was divided in the earliest times. Native tradition represents the eponymous ancestors of the Pandyas, Cheras and Cholas as three brothers living together at Korgai, four miles from the mouth of river Tamraparani in the modern Srivaikundam taluk. Eventually a separation took place, Pandyan remaining at home, while Cholan founded a kingdom in the north and Cheran found one in the West\(^\text{33}\). The Cholas seem to have ruled in the Tanjore and Tiruchirapalli districts, the Cheras established themselves in Travancore, Malabar and Coimbatore, and the Pandyas in Madura and Tirunelveli\(^\text{34}\).

The capital of the Pandyas according to ancient Tamil poets is the modern Madura, a fact which Pliny as has been seen confirms. It was called Northern Madura

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 424.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 425.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 40.
\(^{34}\) Ibid.
to distinguish it from another city of the same name in the extreme south of the
Peninsula, which had been formerly a Pandya capital but had been submerged by the sea.

Another important Pandya town was Korkai which was well known to the writer of the
Periplus Maris Erythrai and to Ptolemy. The internal history of the Pandya Kingdom
during the first five centuries of the Christian era is shrouded in obscurity\(^{35}\).

It is mentioned by Ptolemy, the Geographer called it as ‘Kolkhoi emporium’.
Both the author of Periplus and Ptolemy agree in representing Kolkhoi as the
headquarters of the pearl fishery at that time and as included in the dominions of King
Pandian. It was the first part visited by the Greeks after rounding Cape Comorin and the
first place on the Tirunelveli Coast whose name was recorded by them\(^ {36}\). The Tamil
name of the place is almost identical with the Greek. It is still pronounced Kolkai on
the western coast, and we can found ‘kolkai’ which was written in an old Tamil
Inscription in the temple at Tiruchendur\(^ {37}\). It was once the centre of the pearl trade and
the principal seat of civil government in the South\(^ {38}\). From Cape Comerin toward the
south this region extends to Colchis where the pearl fisheries are found and it belongs
to the Pandian kingdom\(^ {39}\). Periplus describes Korkai “where the pearl fisheries are they
are worked by condemned criminals, and it belongs to the Pandiya Kingdom”\(^ {40}\).

The first Pandiyan King of whom we got information that Mudukudumi Peru
Valudi. He became famous for patronizing Yajnas celebrated by Brahmana sacrificers
and so became famous as ‘Palyagasalai’, the builder of many sacrificial halls\(^ {41}\). In the
Velvikudi grant one yaga patronized by this Pandiya king is referred to. This grant was

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 42.
\(^{37}\) Ibid.
\(^{38}\) Ibid.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 436.
issued probably in the third quarter of the 82 Century A.D. for the purpose of restoring a property given by Palyaga Mudukudumi. It was narrated in the gift deed of Narkorran of Korkai who never deviated from the path of Sruti as taught by the learned Vedic Scholars.\footnote{Ibid., p. 437.}

The triangular shaped Then Pandi Nadu was 192 kilometers in length from north to south, where as the breadth was 95 kilometers from east to west. It flourished during the reigns Pandiyas of Vadimalamba Ninra Pandian and Mudu Kudumi Peruvudhi\footnote{K.V. Perumal, OP Cit., p.56.}. Around 680 B.C., Korkai was the capital of the early Pandian Kingdom and later it was moved to Koodal during the reign of Pandian Nedunj Chezhian. After the Sangam Age, around 300 years Kalabhras ruled Tamilnadu including Then Pandi Nadu. In the year between 575 and 600 AD Pandyan Kadungon defeated the Kalabhras and started his reign\footnote{Ibid., P. 57.}. The dynasty founded by Kadungon mentioned in the Velvikudi grant is generally treated as the rulers of the first Pandyan Empire\footnote{P.N. Chopra, T.K. Ravindran, N. Subramanian, History of South India, Vol. 1: Ancient Period, S. Chand & Company Ltd, New Delhi, 1979, p. 98.}. The Pandyan power was restored by Kadungon at the end of the 6\textsuperscript{th} Century after the ‘Kalabhra Interregnum’\footnote{P.T. Srinivas Iyengar, Op.Cit., p. 607.}. Kadungon was succeeded by his son Maravarman Avani Sulaimani who ruled for 25 years from 620A.D\footnote{P.N. Chopra, et.al, Op. Cit., p. 98.}.

The Velvikudi grant mentions Arikesari Maravarman’s victories in the battle fields of Pali and Nelveli, Uraiur and Sennilam. There is conflicting opinion that whether Nelveli is identical with the modern Tirunelveli. He ruined the Paravas who were the fisherman community in the extreme south of the Pandyan Country\footnote{Ibid., p. 99.}. This king was an elder contemporary of Tirugnana Sambandar and a close contemporary of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
  \bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., p. 437.
  \bibitem{K.V. Perumal} K.V. Perumal, OP Cit., p.56.
  \bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., P. 57.
\end{thebibliography}
Siruttondar and therefore also of Narasimha Varman I. He was a Jaina in his early days but was later converted to Saivism and after conversion he became such a Staunch Saivite that Sundaramurthi who has given the catalogue of Saiva Saints has included him in the list and he ascribes to him the victory in Nelveli. It was during his conversion that the impalement of 8000 Jain ascetics took place in Madurai. The Tiruttondattokai calls him Ninrasir Nedumaran and he is also popularly called Kun Pandyan. His wife Mangaiyarkarasi and his minister Kulachirai are also included among the 63 Saiva Saints\(^9\). During the Pallava Pandya period, the Alwars and Nayanmars spread Vaishnavism and Saivism in the Then Pandi Nadu.

The last great ruler of this first Pandyan empire was Raja Simha III who ruled from 900 to 920 AD. He was defeated by the Chola Parantaka I who earned the title Madurai Konda Parantaka. His son Virapandya was now in some sore of power in Madurai upto 966 A.D. After his death, the Pandyan country came under the direct rule of Chola empire. The Chola militia kept the Pandyan Chieftains in their place and imperial authority was secured for the Cholas\(^{50}\). During the Imperial Cholas, their glorious power extended beyond Then Pandi Nadu. An inscription of Raja Raja Chola found at Cheran Mahadevi in Tirunelveli District serves a best evidence for that. Another place called Gangai Kondan was named after Rajendra Chola the son and successor of Raja Raja Chola\(^{51}\).

The 13\(^{\text{th}}\) century was a period of Pandyan revival. Their power reached its zenith with the celebrated reigns of Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan and Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandyan which cover the second part of the 13\(^{\text{th}}\) Century. They asserted their independence from the Cholas to such an extent that the second half of the 13\(^{\text{th}}\)

\(^{9}\) Ibid., p. 100.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., pp. 104-105.
Century has come to be called an age of the Second Pandyan empire. It has been said that Kulotungan III, the Chola ruler cut off Vira Pandiya’s head and it was on the head that he put his foot and it was his insult which made Maravarman Sundararapandya to think of revenge. Vira Pandya was the predecessor of Maravarman. So he invaded the Chola country in 1219 A.D., defeated Raja raja III, set fire to Uraiyyur and Tanjore and annexed a part of the Kingdom, ordered Rajaraja III to pay tribute and assumed the title Sonadu Kondaruliya 52.

During the reign of the Later Pandiyas Maravarma Sundara Pandya I ruled his country from Madurai. In his reign, he constructed a City called Sundara Pandiyapuram near Tenkasi in Tirunelveli District 53. Marco Polo, the Venitian traveler called the ‘Prince of Medieval Travelers’ spent several months in Then Pandi Nadu and gathered information. Writing on Kayal, the Chief emporium of the Pandya Kingdom, Marco Polo says that ‘the King to whom the city belongs possesses vast treasures and wears upon his person a great store of rich jewels. He maintains great state and administers his Kingdom with great equity and extends great favour to merchants and foreigners so that they are very glad to visit his city’ 54.

Again he records his impression that, ‘It is at this city that all the ships touch, that come from the West as from Hormos and from Kis and from Aden, and all Arabia laden with horses and with other things for sale. And this brings a great concourse of people from the country round about, and so there is great business done in this city of Cail’ 55. From the earliest times, the Pandya country i.e., the Then Pandi Nadu has been famous for its pearls, and Marco Polo gives a substantially correct account of the

55 Ibid.
fisheries, adding that ‘the king derived great revenue from them. Moreover nobody is permitted to take the pearls out of the Kingdom’

The following is Marco Polo’s description of the pearl fishery. The term Ma’bar as used at that time both by Polo and by the Arabs included as we have seen the greater part of the Coramandal Coast; pearl fishery of Mabar is referred that it is from Rameswaram to Cape Comorin, constituting the Eastern coast of the Gulf of Mannar, the fishery carried on the Ramnad coast being of less importance. The port mentioned by Polo must have been near Keelakarai or it may have been a placed called Periya Pattinam. This is the place which Ibn Batuta called Fattan, this is the Pattanam. Evidences of the perfect truth of Marco Polo’s statement regarding Kayal and its trade and of the identity of Kayal with the Sea Port of Mabar mentioned by the Mohammedan historians. According to those statements Kayal was frequented by multitudes of vessels from the Arabian Coast and the Persian Gulf and also by vessels from China. There is another small port in the same neighbourhood a little to the north of Kayalpattanam called ‘Pinnacael’ in the maps, properly Punnai-k-kayal, but this is also stated that their ancestors came originally from Kayalpattanam. Through Kayalpattanam and Punnakkayal, the Pandyas developed their conditions in Tirunelveli.

In 1162 A.D., while Parakrama Pandya ruled the Pandyan Kingdom from Madurai, whereas his brother Kulasekara Pandya ruled his Kingdom from Tirunelveli. From that day onwards Then Pandi Nadu was separated from Madurai Kingdom.

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56 Ibid.
58 Ibid., pp.41-42
59 Ibid.
In 1268 AD Maravarman Kulasekara Pandiyan made Tirunelveli as his capital city and constructed many temples and villages. He was succeeded by Alagan Perumal Kulasekara Pandyan, Veera Pandyan, Tirunelveli Pandyan, Athiveera Rama Pandyan, Varathunga Rama Pandyan, Sree Vallabha Pandyan etc., all were the rulers of Tirunelveli Pandyan Kingdom. Among these rulers some of them were Tamil poets. Athiveera Rama Pandyan was the author of Vetri Vetkai and Nydatham and Vara Thunga Rama Pandyan was the maker of ten Tamil works. Generally, the Pandyas were called the Pancha Pandyas (‘five Pandyas’), the brothers. The imperial Pandyas were at Madurai. Marco Polo, who visited the coast of Tirunelveli in 1292, tells that the Kingdom was divided between five brothers.

In the reign of Sundara Pandya in 1311, Aladu-din-Khilji sent his forces to South India under his General Malik Kafur. He came to Madurai and devastated many temples and villages. Even in Then Pandi Nadu also, the Muslim forces made many arrogant things and went away. Ibn Batuta, the Mohammaden servant of the Emperors of Delhi visited Mabar in 1348-49 on his way to Quilon for the purpose of embarking there on his masters business in one of the Chinese junks which then visited that port annually. He found the whole of Mabar including the Pandyas under the government of the Muhammaden King. This subjection of the country to the Mohammedans had lasted since Kafur’s invasion in 1311. The country had been governed for the emperors of Delhi by Governors deputed by them for twenty or thirty years. Malik Kafur was followed by the invasion of the Hoysalas of Mysore and Kakatiyas of Warrangal. In

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60 Ibid., p.60.
1327 AD Mohammad –Bin-Tughluq sent his forces under Jalal-ud-din-Hassan Shah to South India. He captured Madurai and many southern areas.\textsuperscript{64}

This Muhammadan interregnum lasted for about 47 years from 1323 to 1370 due to invasion of Kumara Kempana of Vijayanagar. It is also said therein that the name of the Pandya King conquered and sent to Delhi by the Muhammadans was Parakrama Pandya\textsuperscript{65}. From the commencement of the decay of the power of the Pandyas in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, the Kingdoms of Dwarasamudra and Vijayanagara rose to the position of paramount powers in Southern India. The strong Telugu dynasty of Vijaya Nagara was preceded by a strong Kanarese dynasty that of the Hoysalas of Dwara Samudra. This is sometimes popularly called a Mysore dynasty\textsuperscript{66}.

The capital of this Kanarese dynasty was Dwara Samudra, a place about the centre of the Mysore country and about 105 miles northwest of Seringapattam. The first king of this dynasty who acquired sovereignty over an extensive range of districts was Bitti Deva, converted by Ramanuja Charya from Jainism to the Vaishnava faith and known after his conversion as Vishnu Vardhana. He became the most powerful monarch of his time in Southern India, and is expressly stated to have subdued the Pandyas and Keralas\textsuperscript{67}.

Kannad or Canarese instances of which we have in the Canadian Anaicut that is the Kannada man’s anaicut and the person called Palaiyan, a Canarese man who is said to have built the oldest portion of the fort at Palayamkottai. The fort at Palayamkottai could be traced to the Hoysalas, whose help was sought to drive out the Sri Lankan

\textsuperscript{64} K.V. Perumal, Op. Cit., p.60.
\textsuperscript{65} Bishop R. Caldwell, Op. Cit, p.42.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., pp. 42-43.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 43.
invasion. It was during this period that the paramount authority of over the South was claimed by the Kannada Kings of Dwara Samudra\textsuperscript{68}.

To champion the cause of Hindu civilization and culture in South India, a new Kingdom Vijayanagar came into existence under Harihara and Bukka in the year 1336. Kumara Kampana who was the son of Bukka had ruled the Southern part of the empire as Vice Roy from the beginning of his father’s reign and was ably assisted in this work by such famous generals as Gopana and Saluva Mangu\textsuperscript{69}. The Kolar inscription dated 1356 A.D. mentions that Kampana was appointed by his father as the Maha Mandaleswara of the Mulbagalryja and he was also entrusted with the task of extending the Vijayanagar rule in the Tamil country\textsuperscript{70}.

The details of this campaign is to be found in the exquisite Sanskrit poem Madhura Vijayam by Kamparna’s wife Ganga Devi\textsuperscript{71}. As for the epigraphical sources, there are about 132 inscriptions which were engraved during the period of Kampara’s conquest and rule in the Tamil country. They are found scattered in the various districts of Tamil Nadu\textsuperscript{72}.

Gangadevi says that Kumara Kampana and his strong army consisting of elephants, horses and archers took five or six days to cross the Karnataka country and reach the banks of the Palar\textsuperscript{73}. An inscription from Tirukkalakudi in Ramnad District mentions that Kamparna Udaiyar destroyed the Muslims, established orderly government and appointed many Nayakanmars; Kampana’s invasion of Madurai must

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} A. Krishnasamy, The Tamil Country under Vijayanagar, published by Annamalai University, 1964, p.7.
\textsuperscript{72} A. Krishnaswamy, Op.Cit., p.8
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p.8.
have happened between 1361 and 1363 AD\textsuperscript{74}. The Pandyan Chronicle gives a very interesting account of the conquest of Madurai from the Sultans and the restoration of worship in the Siva and Vishnu temples there. Kamparna’s vice royalty may be regarded as the brightest Chapter in the history of Vijayanagar rule in the Tamil country. He was not merely a conqueror but was also the first viceroy who infused into the Tamil country the true spirit and significance for which Vijayanagar came into existence. He tried successfully to restore and preserve the ancient religions and temples in the country\textsuperscript{75}.

According to inscriptional evidences, the Pandyas completely lost their hold on the Madura country in the second half of the 14\textsuperscript{th} Century. They found themselves restricted to the southern most part of the Tamil Country, viz, Tirunelveli District. From 1335 to 1371 AD Madura and the surrounding places were subject to the rule of the Sultans. An inscription from Tirukkalakudi mentions one Ko-Maravarman Virapandya deva ruling in this 31\textsuperscript{st} year, when Kampana Udaiyar came from the North, destroyed the Muslims, appointed several Nayakars and restored peace and order\textsuperscript{76}.

A Pandya ruler was ruling in the Tirunelveli District about 1371 A.D., proved by a description from Kottar near Nagercoil. It is a record of the 15\textsuperscript{th} regal year of one Ko-Jatavarman Parakrama Pandya and he seems to have assumed royal power in 1356 AD. An inscription from Karivalamvandanallur of Tirunelveli district dated 1402 AD mentions one Jatilavarman Kulasekaradeva ruling in his 7\textsuperscript{th} year and he must have assumed royal powers in 1396 AD. One Maravarman Kulasekara Deva ruling in his 14\textsuperscript{th} Year is mentioned in an inscription from Tenkasi and it is dated Saka 1331 viz 1409 AD. It is stated in the inscription that a temple at Tenkasi was restored from the

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp.29-31.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 149.
foundation to the pinnacle by King Alagan Perumal Kulasekara deva. In the same place another inscription refers to one Jata Varman Konerinmai Kondan Kulasekaradeva ruling is his 10th regnal year. In 1415 AD, Parakirama Pandya Deva was ruling in his 31st year according to a record, from Courtallam in Tirunelveli District. Then, Jatavarman Vikrama Pandya ruled in 1422 and his records are found in Courtallam and Tirupputtur. 

From 1422 to 1463 AD., Jatavarman Arikari Parakrama Pandya was ruling over the Pandya Country with Tenkasi as his capital. He bore the surnames of Manabharana, Mana Kavacha and Arikari. His inscriptions are numerous and some of them contain long historical introduction in Tamil beginning with Pumisaivandai. He was also known as Ponnin Perumal and his inscriptions in the famous Siva temple at Tenkasi enumerate his victories and other achievements. He ruled from 1422 to 1463 AD for 41 years.

The Pandyas who had practically retired in the Tirunelveli District attempted to regain their former position in Madura and so it led to the invasion of Tenkasi by Narasa Nayaka. Jatavarma Kulasekara Parakrama Pandya was forced to become a feudatory of Vijayanagar and to pay tribute from 1497 AD and continued to rule till 1507 AD. Narasa Nayaka was died in 1503 and he was succeeded by Vira Narasimha. After him Krishna deva Raya ascended the throne in 1509. Krishna Deva Raya was succeeded by his brother Achyutaraya in 1529.

During that time Viswanatha Nayaka was the representative of Vijaya Nagar Empire in Madurai region. The Tenkasi’s Pandya ruler who was the contemporary of

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77 Ibid., p.150.
78 Ibid., pp. 152-153.
79 Ibid., p. 159.
80 Ibid., pp. 159-160.
Achyutaraya was one Jatilavarma Srivallabha. The Tiruvadi (Travancore) ruler who was the contemporary of Achutaraya was Udayamarthanda Varman. This Tiruvadi ruler waged war with the Pandya ruler Srivallabha conquered large tracts of territory in Tirunelveli and assumed the title of “Ventrumankonda Bhutalaviran”. He made Kalakad his headquarters in the Tamil Country and resided there for a considerable time, renovating temples at Ambasamudram, Mannarkoil and Kalakkad and improving several villages. He seems to have been invading the Pandya territory as early as 1515 AD. An inscription from Brahmdesam in Tirunelveli district mentions that a gift of the Village of Veppangulam was made for worship and repairs to the temple while Bhutalavira Udayamartanda varman was encamping there. Another record from Kallidaikurichi dated 27th April 1531 mentions a gift of land to the Siva temple by the same ruler which he was staying at a place called Valasey. Thus by a series of invasions from 1515 to 1531, the Tiruvadi ruler conquered a large portion of the Tirunelveli territory belonging to Srivallabha who was a tributary of the Vijaya Nagar emperor. Therefore Srivallabha had to seek the help of Achuta Raya. There are twelve inscriptions of this Srivallabha Pandya in the present Tirunelveli District and the earliest is dated 24th April 1534.

Achyuta Raya himself led the expedition against these southern enemies. He sent one of his generals Salakaraju Chinna Tirumala to the South to subjugate the rebels. He marched past the city of Madura and encamped on the banks of the river Tambraparani. The Tiruvadi was completely defeated. The record from Kalahasti dated 27th July 1532 mentions Achyuta’s levy of tribute from the Tiruvadi ruler, the subjugation of Saluva Nayak and Tumbichi Nayaka and the planting of a pillar of

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82 Dr. A. Krishnasamy, pp. 206-207.
83 Ibid., p.207.
84 Ibid, p. 206.
victory on the banks of the river Tambraparani. Then the Salakaraju china Tirumala proceeded to Tiruvanandapuram where he worshipped Lord Padmanabha.

The inscriptions of Kalahasti and Kanchipuram mention that the King defeated the Tiruvadi ruler on the banks of the river Tambraparani, set up a pillar of victory on the spot and married a Pandya Princess. The Pandya Srivallabha out of gratitude to the emperor and with a desire to cement the relationship between himself and the Vijayanagar ruler offered his daughter in marriage to him.

In all these wars, Viswanatha Nayaka, the representative of Madurai accompanied with Achyuta Raya. He ruled the Madurai region for nearly 35 years i.e., 1529 to 1564. In his period, the Pandiyan Chieftains of Tirunelveli Region revolted against him. So he sent Ariya Natha Mudaliyar to subjugate them. He also quelled formidable insurrection in Tirunelveli headed by five confederate chiefs, said to have been brothers, who styled themselves the five Pandavas i.e, Pancha Pandavas. It was Visvanatha’s task to reconcile the conflicting interests of all these classes, to smooth away differences and to conciliate affection; At last he contrived a scheme by which it seemed possible to attain success i.e., Poligar system.

After the death of Achyutaraya in 1542 many struggles and complications surrounded the Vijaya Nagar empire. The advent of Portuguese created a great fear in the minds of them. Kayal was regarded by the earliest Portuguese as belonging to Travancore, and that the King of Travancore was regarded as the legitimate sovereign of the whole of the South of Tirunelveli. At that time the Pandya Kings had sunk into insignificance, and the Nayak of Madura had not yet consolidated their power. It was

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86 Ibid., pp. 210-212.
89 Ibid., p. 57.
natural therefore that the king of the adjacent territory of Tranvancore should take the opportunity of bringing at least the southern portion of Tirunelveli under his rule. They had explored the whole of the Tirunelveli coast and made themselves acquainted with the lucrative pearl fishery. 1532 was the date of the commencement of the Portuguese power on the Tirunelveli coast. By 1542, when St. Xavier first visited the coast, the pearl fishery had fallen entirely into Portuguese hands. The places where the Portuguese had established themselves in Xavier’s time were Manapadu, Punnaikayal, Tuticorin and Vembar.

During the interval between the death of Achyutaraya and the final coronation of Sadasiva Raya, there seems to have been a general unrest in the Southern part of the empire. Several Chieftains of Tamilagam might have attempted to overthrow the imperial authority. But the most important cause of the invasion was the disturbed political condition in the region south of the city of Madura and the interference of the Tirunelveli rulers. During his period the Pandya country seems to have been divided into two chieftaincies with their respective capitals at Tenkasi and Kayathar. The modern taluks of Tenkasi, Shencottah, Sankaranainarkoil and Srvilliputtur formed the Kingdom of Tenkasi. The ruler of this territory was Jatila Varman Srivallabha who was subject to be sovereignty of Vijayanagar. The chieftaincy of Kayathar consisted of the modern taluks of Kovilpatti, Srivaikundam and Tirunelveli which was ruled over by one Vettumperumal.

Rama Raya could not tolerate such a disturbed political condition in the southern part of his empire. So he sent an expedition under his cousins Vitthala and Chinna Timma. The expedition was sent to the South for the firm establishment of the

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91 Bishop R. Caldwell, Op.Cit, pp.67-68
92 Ibid., p. 68.
Vijaya Nagar Empire in the most distant corners. Secondly, the missionary activities of
the Portuguese on the pearl fishery coast seemed to have created great fear in the mind
of Ramaraya. The conversion of the Paravas or the fishermen in the fishery coast
roughly from Rameswaram to Cape Comorin implied a transfer of the political
allegiance of the people from Vijayanagar to Portugal94.

The Vijayanagar army seems to have entered into the Travancore territory
through the Aralvaymozhi pass Unni Kerala Varman came to the conclusion that it was
dangerous to fight with such a huge army. So he sought the help of St. Francis Xavier,
who was then preaching Christianity in Travancore, to help him against the Badagas
(Nayaks). But at first Xavier said that the only help he could offer the king was his
prayers since he was only a missionary and not a soldier95.

Meanwhile, Vitthala’s army was advancing triumphantly through the country
and before it, the panic-sticken villages abandoned their homes and sought refuge in
forests and hills. But when the army was only two leagues north of the village of
Kottar, the Vanguard stopped suddenly unable to proceed further. Though the officers
in the rear ordered the soldiers to march on, yet those who were in the front were
unable to move. “A tall majestic man, dressed in black, appeared in front of us and
reprimanded us to retire at once” said the soldiers. Then Vitthala came to know that it
was St. Francis Xavier who commanded them to retreat. Such an order Vitthala could
not disobey and accordingly the troops were ordered to retreat. Thus was Travancore
saved from the Vijaya Nagar army by the prayer and request of St. Francis Xavier who
became the saviour of Travancore96.

94 Ibid., p. 218.
95 Ibid., pp. 224-225.
96 Ibid., 225.
Xavier used a variety of means for protecting the Christian villages, that is the villages of the Paravas along the coast, from the violence of the Badagas. The coast was generally called by Xavier, the comorin coast, the villagers along the coast amongst which he itinerated the comorin villagers, and the Christian converts the Comorin Christians. Later on, the coast was commonly called Pescaria, the fishery, by which the pearly fishery was denoted, and the principal functionary amongst the Portuguese on the coast was styled the captain of the fishery\textsuperscript{97}.

The sea along the coast which extends from Cape Comorin to the low land of Kayal and the island of Ceylon is called the Pearly fishery. The fishery is made every year, beginning in March or April and lasts fifty days. The fishers or divers are all Christians of the Country, and all are permitted to engage in this fishery, on payment of certain duties to the King of Portugal and to the Churches of the Friars of Saint Paul on that coast\textsuperscript{98}.

The first appearance of the Portuguese in force in Tuticorin was in 1532, when the fleet despatched from Cochin broke the power of Muhammadans along the coast and the Paravas were baptized by Father Michael Vaz and his assistant priests. The number said to have been baptized was, as has been said 20000 inhabiting thirty villages from Cape Comorin northwards. Of these villages Tuticorin was one. In 1543 when the celebrated Xavier arrived, Tuticorin had a Portuguese Governor. The establishment of the settlement there must, therefore, be placed somewhere in the ten years between 1532 and 1542, but from 1532 for some fifty years the inhabitants of Tuticorin were regarded like the rest of the Paravas, as Portuguese subjects\textsuperscript{99}.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., p.73.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., pp.74-75.
The Portuguese as we have seen made Punnaikayal their chief station for a time, but as there is only an open road-stead there, without anything that could be called a harbour; they made Tuticorin their chief settlement from about 1580. According to the letters of Xavier, Tuticorin had a Portuguese Governor in 1542-44. Xavier always speaks of the Governor in the singular. It is probably that it was the same functionary who was afterwards called captain of the fishery\textsuperscript{100}.

The following names of places mentioned in Xavier’s letters were Tuticorin, Manapadu, Punnai Kayal, Kombukiaiyur, Alandalai, Kayal, Talai, Veerapandiapattnam, Vembar, Pudukottai, Tiruchendur Pattanam etc,\textsuperscript{101} In these places he did his Evangelical work. In 1545 Xavier left to East Asia i.e Malacca\textsuperscript{102}. He was a man of mental powers and devotedness and expanded his strength to the Paravas of the eastern coast and the fishery people\textsuperscript{103}.

**The Religious Condition of the Native People**

The Hindus constitute the bulk of the population in Tirunelveli. The revival of the Saiva religion and the consequent disappearance of the Jaina and Buddhist influence in Southern India is known to have begun about the beginning of the seventh Century A.D. Evidence of the wide spread influence of Jainism and of the existence also of Buddhism in the district is soon in the stone remains which are to be found in places so far apart as Kalugumalai, Marugalthalai, Virasikhamani, Kulattur, Muramban, Mandikulam and Pudukottai\textsuperscript{104}.

The earliest evidence of religion in South India is to be found in Adichanallur near Tirunelveli. The excavated material at that site reveals gold mouth pieces, images

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., pp. 75-76.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 78.
\textsuperscript{102} Punitha Francis Saveriyar (Tamil), C.R. Narcesan, Nanjil Pathipagam, Nagercoil 1989, p.22.
\textsuperscript{104} H.R. Pate, Op. Cit., p. 100.
of fowls and spears all symbolic of Murugan, the favourite God of the Tamils usually
enshined on hill tops. In the Tolkappiam Murugan is the God of the Hills and the
hunters. The existence in the Tirunelveli district of many important temples
dedicated to Siva and Vishnu at Tirunelveli, Tiruchendur, Alvarthirunagari, Nanguneri,
Tirukkurungudi, Papanasam and Sankarankoil. A festival or Kodai is to be
performed for their domestic gods. Among the lesser deities, Ayyanar or Sasta who has
a shrine in almost every village of the district. It is here the God who brings rain in its
season. It is worshipped by people of all castes.

Midway between the orthodox gods and the demons come the female deities or
Ammans whose worship in an interesting blend of brahmanical and Dravidian ritual. It
is however as Gramadevatas general guardians of the village that these deities play
their most important part.

Muhammadans who constitute only six percent of the population of the district
are proportionately to the adherents of other faiths, most numerous in the three taluks of
Tirunelveli, over ten percent in Tiruchendur and ten percent in Tenkasi. They belong
with few exceptions to that widespread class which speaks Tamil and it is generally
designated by the comprehensive term ‘Lebbai’. The Muhammadans of the coast
towns of the Tiruchendur Taluk, Kayalpattinam is their most important centre. The
mosque at Pottalpudur attracts more Hindu worshippers than Muhammadans.
Attankarai mosque near the mouth of the Nambiyar is the tomb of a Muhammadan
Saint to which many people make offerings in fulfillment of vows. At Melapalayam, a
suburb of Palayamkottai, there is a tomb similarly respected by the people.

108 Ibid., p. 97.
Economic Condition of the people:

Among the regularly irrigated crops, paddy easily comes first. Of the total cultivated are of the district this crop occupies one fourth, the proportion in the Ambasamudram taluk, which possesses the best of the lands irrigated by Tambraparani rises to nearly two-thirds\textsuperscript{110}. In Tiruchendur and Nanguneri taluks large areas of sandy soil recorded in the accounts as “available for cultivation” are really unfit to produce any crops at all. In the case of lands only Palmyras alone are grown, the extent to which a holding should be deemed cultivated or not\textsuperscript{111}.

Regarding their economic condition, the position of affairs varies greatly in the different parts of the district. The transition from tenant to labourer is as has been seen very slight; the general indebtedness of the agricultural classes is a thorny subject. Enquiries showed that in one typical tract about one-half of tenant populations were debtors and it is probable that the same would apply to ryots\textsuperscript{112}.

A large percentage of population makes its living from agricultural and pastoral occupations. Some peoples of this district survived through their arts and industries. The ordinary artisans, the carpenter, the goldsmith, the black smith and the potter existed in most village communities. Hand-spinning as a serious industry has long been existed\textsuperscript{113}. The steam-ginning factory was first introduced in the district in 1894. In the time of the Dutch, who possessed the monopoly of the sea-borne trade in cloths, weaving must have been an industry of first-rate importance. The industry was became very prosperous centre in Ambasamudram, Kallidaikurichi and Viravanallur\textsuperscript{114}.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 150.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 149.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., pp. 193-194.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., pp. 210-211.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp. 214-215.
A large number of populations in the sand tracts of Tiruchendur Taluks, depended upon Palmyra tree\textsuperscript{115}. A superior kind of jaggery produced in a few villages of Tiruchendur Taluk, notably in Kayalpattanam and under the supervision of the Jesuit Missionaries\textsuperscript{116}. The Bell metal vessels are made in a number of villages in various parts of the district. The Chief Centres of this industry flourished in Vagaikulam, Mannarkoil, Seydunganallur, Eral, Tirunelveli, Narasinganallur and Sankarankoil. Workers in brass are Kannasaris and are usually found along side the bell metal workers\textsuperscript{117}. Fishing is the occupation of hundreds of paravas in the Sea coastal villages\textsuperscript{118}.

The seas of Tuticorin and Mavar yielded the quantity of pearls. All the business connected with the pearl fisheries is under the direction of a superintendent stationed at Tuticorin. Another most important commercial product of the Gulf of Mannar is the sacred chank or conch conducted from Tuticorin\textsuperscript{119}. The annual export of shells from Tuticorin amounts about 2,50,000 roughly one eighth of the total Bengal consumption, the Chief sources of supply being Ceylon and Rameswaram\textsuperscript{120}. The trade of the district may be considered under three heads imports, exports and internal commerce. The details and value of articles imported and exported at Tuticorin and at the minor ports of Kulasekarapattanam and Kayalpatnam. Gingelly oil, onions, chillies, palmyra mats and fibre, candy and cloths are exported to Ceylon. Koraimats, Chillies, hides and cloths were exported to Singapore\textsuperscript{121}.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 220.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 224.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 228.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 229.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 234.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 236.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., pp. 236-237.
Paddy was imported from Rangoon. Dry grains, piece goods, hardware and matches were imported from Bombay. The weekly markets held in more than sixty villages and towns throughout the district play an important part is circulating products within the district, collecting goods for export and distributing imports\textsuperscript{122}.

\textbf{Caste System:}

Thousands of low caste Hindus and those belonging to depressed classes were by conversion to Christianity, freed from age-old social disabilities which had reduced them to a position of mere animals. For the first time in the history of South India the lower classes were made conscious of their position in the world as human beings. More substantial and lasting gains in this field of the social uplift of unprivileged classes were achieved by the Christian missionaries. Their social work made the caste Hindus also conscious of their duty to serve the depressed classes, which resulted in the launching of new movements for social reform in the Hindu fold\textsuperscript{123}.

According to Robert Caldwell a well known missionary, Christianity was introduced amongst the Shanars in Tirunelveli. The most important event of the time was the commencement in 1797, of that movement towards protestant Christianity amongst the Shanars in Tinnevely which had directly or indirectly contributed so largely to the improvement of the district and which has been the precursor of so many similar movements in different parts of the country. According to Caldwell, Sundaram alias David was the first Shanar protestant Christian who was the first Shanar Catechist. In March 1797, four families of Shanars placed themselves formally under Christian instruction and under his pastoral care\textsuperscript{124}.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p. 237.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., p.236.
Some converts belonging to the same class were baptized at place called Shanmukhapuram, near the place now called Kadetchapuram. These were the first Shanars baptized. The Vijayaramapuram people were also baptized during the same year. Two years afterwards the first Christian village was founded in connection with the Tirunelvelvi Mission. As this little settlement was the first place in Tirunelvelvi which could be called a Christian village, it received the name of Mudalur “first town”. Thus they are the first people to accept Christianity\textsuperscript{125}.

Apart from the legendary origin of the community, the view of Robert Caldwell is that Nadars were emigrants from the northern coast of Srilanka. He found there a caste bearing the name Shandror of which he said Shanar in etmologically a corruption\textsuperscript{126}.

The Shanars and Nadars occupy a peculiar status. One group known as the Nadars, entered Tirunelvelvi sometime in the age of the Imperial Cholas and after a time invited some shanars who had come to South Travancore to serve as climbers of Palmyra trees. Eventually there was some fusion between the Nadars and Shanars, though later the Nadars of Virudhunagar, Sivakasi and Tirunelvelvi held themselves superior to the Shanar. The history of a small portion of the community known as the Nadars is notable. They seem to have been employed as tax gatherers by the Pandyas and later by the Nayaks. They were concentrated in the region of Tiruchendur and worked as petty lords under the Poligars. In recent times there have been frequent quarrels between the Nadars and Nadans. Now the Nadars are generally an affluent community thriving in the sphere of commercial business\textsuperscript{127}.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 247.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p.59.,
The city of Palayamkottai consist of both upper and lower communal people. But Christianity acted only among the lower community people at first. But in course of time both forward and backward class people accepted Christianity. Many of them are benefited the social and educational institution organized by the Christian Missionaries. Brahmins, Vellalars, Mudaliyars, Yadavs, Nadars, Maravars, Reddiyars, Kaikolar, Parayas, Kammalars etc, and many kinds of Scheduled Caste people are lived in Palayamkottai. Christians, Hindus and Muslims are lived here. Muslims are mostly lived in Western side of Palayamkottai that is Melapalayam.

Brahmins occupied the higher position in the society. Mostly they lived in Southern part of Tirunelveli. There were many divisions among them. Aiyyangars and Smarthas were dominated. Aiyyanagars were Vaishnavites and they never worshipped Siva. Smarthas were Saivaites. The Aiyyanagars never allowed any outcaste people into their houses. Thye considered themselves as highly upper class people.\(^{128}\)

Vellalars were an influential community of the non-brahmins. Invariably they were land owners and cultivators. There are variations in the customs and manners of the different sections of the Vellalars. Certain sections like the Kondaikkiti Vellalar and Karkarta Vellalar were pre-eminently “Uluvittunbar” or land lords.\(^{129}\) “Kottai Pillimar a sect of Vellalars lived at Srivaikundam near Tirunelveli. They constructed a fort and lived there. They never allowed their ladies outside and outsiders also could not enter it. They made marriage alliances among them.\(^{130}\)

Kaikolars were doing weaving and spinning. They were known as Mudaliyars and Senguthar. During the time of Achyutha Nayaka, they came to Madurai and Tirunelveli along with General Ariyanada Mudali. Some of them are land lords\[^{131}\].

Yadavas were the cattle-breeders. According to Pallava inscriptions there were known as ‘Idaiyar’. It must be remembered that the Idaiyar are mentioned in the Sangam works too. Probably the poets, Idaiyar Nedunkiranar and Idaiyan Sendan Korranar, authors of certain verses in the Ahananuru were members of this caste of Shepherds\[^{132}\].

The Maravars are found the largest number in the Southern Districts. In the political sphere they seem to have wielded considerable influence under the Pandyas. In fact the Maravar caste consists of a brave and warlike people and were employed as soldiers in war. But during times of peace, they and their Kinsmen took to highway robbery. There are several sub divisions among the Maravars. The Kondaynkottai Maravar form an important division\[^{133}\]. They lived in and around Tirunelveli District.

The Kammalar call themselves as Visvakarmas i.e., supposed to be descended from Visvakarma, the architect among Gods and believe that they are even superior to Brahmins. Most of Kammalars are vegetarians. The kammalas were well organized. The five divisions among them were gold smiths (Tattan), brass-smiths (Kannan), Carpenter (Tachchan), stone mason (Kal tachchan) and blacksmith (Kollan or Karuman). From early times they have been the leading custodians and promoters of the fine arts like architecture, sculpture and iconography\[^{134}\].

\[^{131}\text{Ibid., p.236.}\]
\[^{133}\text{Ibid., pp. 55-56.}\]
\[^{134}\text{Ibid., pp. 65-66.}\]
Paravas are fishery people lived in the coastal areas. By the preaching of the Roman Catholic Missionaries, they converted into Catholic Christian faith during the eighteenth century. Moreover among these, Nayakars, Reddiyars, Chettiyars and some other caste people are also lived in Tirunelveli region. During eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries all these backward class people lived only in poor condition and they led only an ordinary life. They believed in superstitious believes and many of them were not well educated. They were badly in need of Social reforms and social services. Only the Christian missionaries provided westernization for them.

It is probable that the origin of the position of depressed classes if partly racial, partly religious and partly a matter of custom which emerged in the post Brahmana period. Probably in the age subsequent to the Brahmanas, these distinctions appeared. They have been described by various names such as untouchables, depressed classes, Adi Dravidas, Scheduled Castes and so on. The term ‘Scheduled castes’ is the expression standardized in the ‘constitution of the Republic of India’ though this name was first covered by the Simon commission. In Tamil Nadu, the demon of untouchability became increasingly dominant in the Pallava, Chola and later periods. In fact, the disabilities which were imposed on the depressed classes and on the untouchables assumed abominable forms with the lapse of time. As a consequence, various kinds of disabilities and harassments were imposed on the lower sections of the community. Apart from the social tradition, the economic position of the lower classes contributed to their misery and suffering at the hands of the higher classes. Most rural people were landless. In villages, they were debarred from public conveniences such as

135 Ibid., p. 113.
136 Ibid., p. 111.
roads, ferries, wells and schools and they were not allowed to enter into the Hindu temples. Hence they led a pathetic life.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 119-120.}

**Spread of Christianity in Tirunelveli:**

The Dutch had factories at Vembar, Vaipar, Punnaikayal, Old Kayal, Manapadu and Cape Comorin. They had several trading out stations in places like Alwar Tirunagari and other interior places. The Dutch did not like the Portuguese, claim civil authority over the Paravas, the caste of fishermen along the coast, but they professed themselves to be their patrons and protectors and it was to the interest of the Paravas to keep on terms of amity with their Dutch neighbours, as they thereby gained protection from the exactions and oppressions of the Hindu and Muhammadan rulers of the interior.\footnote{Bishop. R. Caldwell, Op.Cit., p. 79}

The priests of the Paravas were very numerous. The Dutch had expelled the priests from Tuticorin. They had removed the images and other ornaments from the Church and converted it to their own use, so that the Paravas would not enter it and preferred to say their prayers in the street. Late on we find that the Dutch had become more tolerant and erected Churches for themselves. The date of the erection of their Church in Tuticorin then used by the English.\footnote{Ibid., p.238.}

The decline of Portuguese power greatly affected the spread of Catholic Christianity. Most of their former trade came into the hands of the Dutch and the English. The most controversial and at the same time the most famous mission in India was also established under the aegis of the Portuguese by the Jesuit, Robert de Nobile. It was inaugurated at Madura i.e., Madura Mission in 1592 one of the ancient centres of Tamil Culture. He launched a programme of converting the higher castes on his arrival
in Madurai in 1606 one that was not attempted till then by any other missionary. He concluded that the failure of Christian Missions in reaping rich fruits was because of the inseparable attachment of the missionaries with things foreign. They wore an alien garb, used signs and symbols incomprehensible to the people and the doctrine they proclaimed was formulated too much in accordance with the genius of the west and overstressed those aspects of the eternal truths which appealed only to the occidental.

It states that there were then twenty members of the Society of Jesus in the Mission viz, Seventeen fathers and three brothers. The fathers were distributed over twenty two parishes, sixteen of which were on the Tirunelveli coast, six inland, including the residences at Madura, the court of the Nayaka, the lord of those lands. There are in all that coast more than 90000 Christians, and the fathers visit all the parishes and churches there, going from one to the other according to necessity, though the principal residences are in seven chief places. A statistics for 1600 AD was given. Seventy four were baptized in the village of Tuticorin, 300 in Manar, 100 in Vaipar, 15 in Periya Pattanam, 100 in Vembar, 4 in Madura, and 45 in land (Tirunelveli Region). In all 547, with about 50 others in other places. A congregation was established in interior Kayathar in 1640. From that place 45 persons were converted.

Another one Jesuit Missionary was John-De-Britto. He was mainly responsible for the spread of Christianity in Marava country and Madurai. He was murdered by Kilavan Sethupathi of Ramnad. This crucification influenced not only the Marava country but also the Tirunelveli region which became one of the causes of conversion.

The Tirunelveli region was the scene of the commencement of the missionary labours of Xavier and Madura Mission. Constantine Beschi was an another celebrated

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140 P.N. Chopta, et.al, op.cit., p.228.
missionary of the society of Jesus. He was a Tamil Scholar and Poet. A list of Beschi’s numerous works, in verse and prose in Tamil and Latin, will be found in the Madras Literary Journal for April 1840. His poems in the Classical dialect, especially his great poem, the Thambavani was a long and highly wrought religious epic. He was an Italian by birth and entered into the Society of Jesus in the year 1698. He sailed to India in 1706 and came to Tirunelveli in the year 1708. From 1714 to 1716 Beschi was stationed at Kamanayakanpatti in Tirunelveli District. Very often he visited Kayathar which is situated from 18 miles from Palayamkottai. Beschi was imprisoned by the Brahmins of Gurukkalpatti a village near Sankarankoil. He was rescued by the Christians of Kayattar. Later he went to Tiruchi and breathed his last at Manapadu in 1746. Some years after Beschi’s death troubles began to gather round the Missions of the Jesuits all over the world.

The new colonizing powers were opposed to missionaries of Portuguese origin and therefore, propaganda used to send apostolic missionaries and vicars belonging to other nationalities. The capuchins, the Discalced Carmelites, the Theatines and later on the Foreign Missionary Society of Paris which were the Religious orders of recent origin were particularly utilized by Rome for the missionary work here. These missions worked hard, built churches, ordained priests, founded seminaries and converted thousands to Christianity. The propaganda reaped rich fruits in South India especially in Malabar, Travancore, Tirunelveli and other parts of Tamil Nadu.

In 1814, the Society of Jesus restored by Pope Pius VII and in 1838 two Jesuit Missionaries, Fathers Martin and Duranquet arrived in Palayamkottai to recommence their ancient mission in Tirunelveli.

142 Ibid, p.238.
The town of Tirunelveli was the more ancient capital of the district, as Palayamkottai is the more modern. It is uncertain whether Tirunelveli was anything more than one of the principal towns in the district during the time of the Pandya kings, but it seems to be certain that during the greater portion of the period of the rule of the Nayaks at Madura it was regarded as the capital of the Southern Portion of their dominions. Protestant missionary activity in South India was first started in the Danish settlement of Tranquebar. King Fredrick IV of Denmark founded a mission there to spread protestant Christianity in India. The first missionaries of the Royal Danish Mission, Ziegenbalg and Plutschan both Germans arrived in Tranquebar in 1709 and started their work. Ziegenbalg was the real founder of the Danish Lutheran Mission. He built the large and beautiful Jerusalem Chruch in Tranquebar, translated the New Testament into Tamil and laid the foundations of Protestant Christianity in South India.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century missionary feeling developed in England and in 1698, the oldest Anglican Missionary Society was founded. Then the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) was also found. In 1701, the Society for the propagation of Gospel in Foreign parts (S.P.G.F.P) was founded and incorporated by Royal Charter. When the British power and influence were increasing Madras seemed a better place than Tranquebar for a mission centre. Schultz, a missionary at Tranquebar moved to Madras in 1728.

The missionaries were all Lutherans, mostly Germans who were trained at the University of Halle. The S.P.C.K. tried to give the mission as Anglican a look as possible, by having the Book of Common Prayer translated, and trying to insist on its

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148 Ibid.
use. In 1743, Schultz was succeeded by Fabricious who translated the whole Bible into Tamil\textsuperscript{149}. The first reference to missionary work in Tirunelveli in connection with the missions of the Church of England appears in the memoirs of the celebrated Swartz, a man of apostolical simplicity, devotedness and zeal. This was in 1771. Swartz notices Palayamkottai in his journal of that year as “first and one of the Chief towns in Tirunelveli, belonging to the Nawab, but having an English garrison”. He mentions that fact that there were a few Christians there then\textsuperscript{150}.

Christian Fredrick Schwartz who was the famous S.P.C.K. Missionery who worked at first with the Danish Royal Mission at Tranquebar and later at Tiruchirapalli and Tanjore. A great ascetic like person he exerted much to spread Christianity in South India\textsuperscript{151}. Swartz first visited Palayamkottai in 1778, when the widow of a Brahmin was baptized by him. Her name Clarinda appears at the head of the small list of 40 persons constituting the Palayamkottai congregation in 1780. Soon after she set herself to erect a small church in the fort, and this she succeeded in doing through the help of two English gentlemen. This was the first Church connected with the Church of England ever erected south of Tiruchirapalli. It was dedicated to the worship of God by Swartz in 1785\textsuperscript{152}.

The congregation in Palayamkottai continuing to increase and openings presenting themselves in the surrounding country Swartz became desirous of sending a European Missionary to take charge of the infant mission. This desire he was able to gratify in 1791, when Jaenicke, a German like himself but a missionary of an English Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge arrived in Palayamkottai and commenced his labours. By that time the number of Native Christians in Palayamkottai

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., pp.231-232.
\textsuperscript{150} Bishop R. Caldwell, op.cit., p.244.
\textsuperscript{152} Bishop R. Caldwel, Op.Cit., p.244.
and the neighbourhood had increased to 403. Even at this early period education had not been neglected. From the time of Swartz’s visit in 1784, as they have done ever since, the congregation and the school went hand in hand\textsuperscript{153}.

Jaeniche thought not so distinguished a man as Xavier and Beschi, but would have been quit able to hold his own with any of the rest of the Roman Catholic missionaries in Tirunelveli of that period. His journals show that he was a devout, zealous and prudent man, well fitted in every way for laying the foundations of a mission in Tirunelveli. He carried his work indefatigably and with considerable success. In the course of the year he visited Tuticorin and Manapadu, both of which places then belonged to the Dutch in each of which he found a Native congregation under the care of a Catechist. The congregation at Manapadu consisting chiefly of weavers, was at that time the largest in Tirunelveli. The Governor of Tuticorin at that time was Mr. Mechern who was very friendly to Jaenicke and desirous of helping him in all his plans. Later in 1792 Jaenicke left to Tanjore but his mind was always in Palayamkottai\textsuperscript{154}.

The Lutheran missions were the only protestant missions in South India on foot till the end of the eighteenth century. However the Nineteenth century opened with a new hope for the protestant missions and there took place a rapid and varied development in organization and church building activity. The decline of Portuguese power weakened the organization of Roman Catholics and Protestants used the opportunity to convert large numbers to their fold; mainly from the lower classes. A number of missionary societies took active interest in propagating the protestant faith in South India\textsuperscript{155}.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., pp. 244-245.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., pp. 245-246.
William Wilber force, that indefatigable champion of noble causes, raided his voice in the British parliament in favour of the evangelization of India through missionary efforts. This dream became a reality with the founding of missionary societies like the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) and the Basel Mission. The history of the protestant missionary activities with the arrival of William Tobias Ringel taube, a missionary of the LMS in 1806. The LMS was followed by the CMS and the Basel Mission\textsuperscript{156}.

The political power and influence of the British in the beginning of Nineteenth Century played a vital role in the establishment of the protestant missionary societies in South India. British officers too evinced a keen interest in the spread of Christianity\textsuperscript{157}.

The American Board of commissions for foreign mission was formed in 1810 and in 1834 it began to work in Madurai and its neighbourhood and in 1851 in Madras. In 1855 they started missionary work at Vellore which however was taken over in 1857 by the Dutch Reformed Church of America and came to be associated with the Scudder family. Church of Scotland also started missionary work in Madras which concentrated on educational work. The two other important missionary societies which worked in South India are the Salvation Army and Wesbyean Mission. The Salvation Army organization concentrated mainly on the lower classes of Travancore and Kerala\textsuperscript{158}.

The division of the Christian church into several different denominations and sects caused pain to thinking Christians. Enlightened Christians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wanted a union of the different churches. It was among the protestants that the movement for union of different churches first started. They wanted the churches to be “one, not divided native, not foreign”. In the beginning of the

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p.233.
twentieth century closer relations were established among some of the protestant churches of South India, which resulted in the formation of the South India United Church in 1908. In 1947 as a result of the Union of Methodist, Congregationalist and Presbyterian Churches of South India with the Church of England, the church of South India was formed; this marked a most important event in the history of church in India. Christians hope that the integration of all Christian churches will be effected in the very near future\textsuperscript{159}.

Both the Catholics and the Protestants contributed to the culture of South India. The missionaries considered it there duty to do all they could towards effecting a change for the better in the educational, social and cultural conditions obtaining in South India. They felt the need and importance of educating the local people mainly to attract them to Christianity, and with that end in view founded schools, seminaries and colleges as adjuncts to churches and chapels. The missionaries admitted students in their educational institutions regardless of caste and creed. They were also pioneers in the field of female education and emancipation. They fought against the traditional customs of inequality by starting schools and colleges for women. These institutions played a vital role in promoting enlightenment among women of South India. Sarah Tucker College in Palayamkottai was the first college started for Women in South India\textsuperscript{160}.

The introduction of a new system of education, widely different from the traditional system marked the revolutionary changes in the intellectual setup of South India especially in Palayamkottai regions. The missionaries opened the eyes of the depressed classes to their deplorable conditions and the necessity to better themselves through education. They even entertained backward children in their schools. The old

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., pp. 233-234.  
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 235.
and effete customs and traditions were subjected to greater strain. The old concept of
dharma by which backward classes were denied education was thus given a rude
blow\textsuperscript{161}.

Educational opportunities made the unprivileged classes rapidly advance in the
social scale and awarded in them a desire to live better. English education in like
manner opened a new way of socio-political thinking and practice in South India which
led the lowly people to a realization of a new sense of individuality, dignity and
self-respect\textsuperscript{162}.

To enable them to engage actively and effectively in evangelical work, the
missionaries took themselves to the study of the languages of the regions where they
worked. The learned the vernacular languages and commenced the composition of
religious and secular works in the newly mastered tongues, this eventually resulted in
the growth of vernacular languages and literature\textsuperscript{163}. The names of Gundert, Garth
wight, Robert Caldwell, Pitt, Arnas Padri, Benjamin Bailey, Richard Colling and
Drummond still inspire scholars. The printing presses started by the missionaries at
important Christian Centres, published the books composed by them and the local
Christians. The inauguration of printing in a scientific way in South India in the
Seventeenth Century helped the development of South Indian Languages to a
remarkable degree\textsuperscript{164}.

In the Tirunelveli region, the protestant missionaries like Renius, G.U.Pope,
Margoshis, Sargent, Robert Caldwell and John Thomas achieved their sincere Gospel
works and still had greened in the minds of the local people.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., pp. 235-236.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p.236.
Position of Palayamkottai:

The missionaries provided educational opportunities in South India especially in Tirunelveli District. Many schools and colleges were opened in and around of Palayamkottai and it became the Oxford of South India.

Palayamkottai, the present capital of the district of Tirunelveli is situated about a mile to the South of the Tamraparani, whilst Tirunelveli lies two miles to the north. Traffic and all connections between the two towns have been facilitated since 1844 by a beautiful bridge over the Tamraparani erected by Colonel Horsley at the sole expense of a wealthy native, Sulochana Mudaliyar. Few traces now remain of the fortifications of Palayamkotti most of which have been removed as no longer necessary but when the English first arrived in Tirunelveli they found it the strongest fort South of Madurai. It was a fortified town as well as a fort and was defended by a double system of fortifications, the outer line lower than the inner, with a complete set of bastions and strongly fortified gates. The whole of the fortifications were cased with cut stone. It was the only stone built fort in Tirunelveli District. Madurai was frequently taken and retaken, but Palayamkottai lay so far to the South that it was never exposed to any attack from Europeans, and never sustained any serious assault from Natives.

Palayamkottai is in Tamil Palaiyangottai which means camp-fort from Palaiyam originally a camp, secondarily an estate held on military tenure and kottai a fort. The Telugu form which corresponds to Palaiyam is Palem. This would virtually be identified with the more common title Poligar and it is noticeable that tradition represents this Palaiyan as a Canarese man, and that the ordinary title of a Poligar in Canarese is Paleya i.e, Palaiyan. The native idea is that the fort of Palayamkotta that is

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165 Bishop R. Caldwell, op.cit., p.89.
166 Ibid., p.89.
the old fort, or the oldest portion of the more recent fort was built by this Palaiyan about 200 years ago. This of course is a very vague estimate\textsuperscript{167}.

It would place the erection of the fort in the time of the Nayakas of Madura, whereas if the founder of the fort and the excavator of the Palaiyan channel were really, as tradition invariably states, a Kannadi which there is no reason to doubt it would appear probable that he lived in the still earlier period when the Kannadi Kings of Dwara Samudra held supreme power. Two reasons may be adduced on the other hand, for adhering to the derivation which accords with the ordinary spelling and consequently regarding the first part of the name of Palayamkottai as denoting a camp\textsuperscript{168}.

It is that Palayamkottai is in some old documents as Vilangulam Palayam; The camp of Vilangulam is that there is a large village to the westward called Melapalayam, the Western camp\textsuperscript{169}. A poetical name for Palayamkottai is Mangai-nagaram, the city of maiden but who this maiden is at present unknown. A tradition survives of the existence of a town in ancient times on the site on which the fort of Palayamkottai was subsequently built. A petty King lived there, it is said called Pranda Raja, who has given his name to various places in and about the fort including a tank\textsuperscript{170}.

It had always been noticed that many of the stones in the walls of the Palayamkottai fort had previously been portions of some Hindu temple, and this is clearly proved by the carvings and inscriptions that remain. These temple stones were found not only in the outerfort, which was undoubtedly built in the Nawab’s time, but also in the walls of the inner fort which is said to have been erected by a Hindu\textsuperscript{171}.

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., p.90.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
One explanation of this given by natives is that Palaiyan, though a Hindu did not scruple to avail himself of the stones of abandoned temples, and is particular that he made use of stones of a great wall which formerly surrounded the temple at Muttu Krishnapuram, a place about five miles east of Palayamkottai, a temple which had been erected about a hundred years before the fort by One Mayilerum Perumal Mudali who was Vaishnavite\textsuperscript{172}. Another and more probable explanation is that not only was the outer fort wholly built by the Muhammadan commandant during the period of the Nawab’s rule, but that the wall of the inner fort also was completed and strengthened by him, when he not only made use of the stones of dilapidated temples, but also it is said pulled down some temples for the purpose. One of the temples said to have been appropriated in this manner was that at Murttiyapuram, a place on the banks of the river Tambraparani. The outer and lower fort used to be called the Pillaikkottai, or child fort. This name was probably given to it on account of it being the smaller of the two, but some natives assert that it meant the fort of the pillai, that is of Muhamad Yusuf Khan, commonly called simple Khan Saheb, who was often called “the Pillai” in consequence of his having originally been, not a Muhammadan but a Vellala Hindu, a caste to which the title Pillai pertains\textsuperscript{173}.

During the time the East India company carried on trade they had a commercial agent in Palayamkottai. They had a warehouse for their goods, and also a cotton-screw near the agent’s house on the banks of the river. The first reference to Palayamkottai in Orme is in 1756, in which it was stated that the ramparts of fort were in ruins and only capable of resisting an enemy which had no battering cannon. Muhammad Yousuf khan was appointed to command the troops and carry on the revenue administration in

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 91.
Madura and Tirunelveli in the same year, soon after which doubtless he commenced to make the fort of Palayamkottai a place of greater strength\textsuperscript{174}.

It appears to have been garrisoned by the English from 1765. The first reference to it in the journals of Swartz, the eminent missionary is in 1771, when he speaks of it as a fort belonging to the Nawab, but having on English garrison. The earliest data in the English Church yard in Palayamkottai is 1775\textsuperscript{175}. Thus Palayamkottai became the educational centre by the missionaries of both protestants and catholics. Only the backward people and the downtrodden accepted Christianity at first. The evangelical activities of the missionaries had a beneficial impact on society. From Nineteenth and the twentieth centuries Revolutinary changes took place in both backward sect and depressed class people by the services rendered by the missionaries. After Independence, the Government also took many steps to improve their conditions.

Industrialization and the growth of slums in cities, rapid increase of population etc put on the shoulders of the Christian Church more responsibilities, as an organization standing to serve the cause of humanity. The Churches turned their attention to the task of bringing up orphans and succouring the sick, aged and destitute men and women. During the recent decades orphanages and refugee homes have been steadily growing in number and strength. Orphanages give shelter, food, general education and training in some handicrafts or trades which enable the inmates to earn a livelihood and refugee homes receive and rehabilitate fallen women and help them recover the dignity of womanhood\textsuperscript{176}.

The medical institutions run by the Christian Missions have played an unforgettable role in the history of health in South India. Besides relieving human

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
suffering and removing evils of society, the church is interested in solving the problems of unemployment and poverty in the country. The Christian churches are also currently engaged in running Technical and Industrial schools, co-operatives and several village projects to provide employment to the unemployed. Leaving aside the old idea of conversion through preaching, the missionaries are now striving as lovers of humanity to achieve something more enduring\textsuperscript{177}.

Both Catholics and protestants missionaries contributed much to the improvement of Tirunelveli. By presenting Christianity the Jesuits brought a large number of people into the Christian fold. Among them a French Missionary Fr. Adrian Caussanel came forward and established an organization to serve the poor with a high standard. He established the congregation of the Brothers of the sacred heart at Palayamkottai by inspiring many priests and they began to serve for the oppressed class sincerely from 1903. It’s ministry consists in preaching the Gospel of Christ, spreading the good news of liberation to the poor, neglected and marginalized sections of society, liberating them from poverty, corruption, ignorance and superstition and above all proclaiming and communicating the gift of salvation to people in every age\textsuperscript{178}.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 237.
\textsuperscript{178} ‘Brothers of the Sacred Heart (India) Journal, August 1994, published by Brothers of the Sacred Heart, Palayamkottai, p.5.