

# NANGUNERI AND ITS ENVIRONS THROUGH THE AGES

*Stepping back in time*

AUSTIN BEN

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AND ITS  
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***To our ancestors***



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**Austin Ben**

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# ABBREVIATIONS

A.R.E.	-	Annual Report of Epigraphy
A.S.I.	-	Archaeological Survey of India
A.D.	-	Anno Domini
B.C.	-	Before Christ
C.E.	-	Common Era
B.C.E.	-	Before Common Era
E.I.	-	Epigraphia Indica
Fig.	-	Figure
G.Os.	-	Government Orders
i.e.	-	that is to say
Ibid.	-	Ibidam (in this same place)
N.H.	-	National Highway
N.I.O.T	-	National Institute of Ocean Technology
p.	-	page

pp.	-	pages
S.H.	-	State Highway
Vol.	-	Volume

# TRANSLITERATION

## Note on the Method of Transliteration and Diacritical Marks

### Vowels

m	-	a
M	-	ā
,	-	i
<	-	ī
c	-	u
C	-	ū

v	-	e
V	-	ē
I	-	ai
x	-	o
X	-	ō
Xs	-	au
/	-	ḥ

### Sanskrit

Ñ;	-	kṣh
~;	-	sh
];	-	Ś (ś)
=	-	Śri
[	-	jh

### Consonants

f;	-	k/g
q;	-	ñ
r;	-	ch/s
Q;	-	ṅ
l;	-	ṭ /ḍ
z;	-	ṇ

j;	-	t/d
e;	-	n
g;	-	p/b
k;	-	m
a;	-	y
u;	-	r
y;	-	l
t;	-	v
o;	-	ḷ
s;	-	ḻ
w;	-	ṛ
d;	-	ṣ



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# INTRODUCTION

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The history of Indian archaeology spans from the 19<sup>th</sup> century C.E. to the present, and includes a wide variety of archaeologists investigating the region's history. The history of archaeology began in Western Europe, and the earliest scholars to take an interest in the archaeology of the Indian subcontinent were Western European travellers in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.

Nāṅgunēri *tāluk* in Tirunelvēli has seen a multitude of history since time immemorial. The *tāluk* is famous for its Vaishnavite temples. The Pāṇḍiyan emperors ruled Tirunelvēli since 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. as per the Nellaiappar temple inscriptions.

The main objectives of this book are as follows: to talk about the geographical features and to trace out the pre, proto, early, medieval and later historical

## *Introduction*

significance of Nāṅgunēri *tāluk*; to discuss the political history of Nāṅgunēri *tāluk* and to study the political geography and political administration of Nāṅgunēri *tāluk*; to investigate the socio-economic formations of Nāṅgunēri *tāluk*; to analyse the religious aspects of Nāṅgunēri *tāluk*.

The Nāṅgunēri *tāluk* is one of the ancient habitation sites in Tirunelvēli district, and material evidence from Iron Age to modern period is found. Historians and Scholars have written about Tirunelvēli district elaborately. But, there are no works about the historic Nāṅgunēri *tāluk*. Therefore, this book aims to bring out the magnificence about the region and the book is limited from prehistory to 1565 C.E.

This book emphasizes the historical perspective of the Nāṅgunēri *tāluk* on the basis of archaeological evidences and literary sources. (See Map 2)

## **SOURCES**

The book is brought out bearing the epigraphical sources of the Taluk, the various inscriptions are published in A.R.E. and S.I.I. Volumes published by the

## *Introduction*

Archaeological Survey of India, other literary sources viz., books, publications, district gazetteer, manual of the Tirunelvēli district compiled by A. J. Stuart and published by the Madras Government Press, district hand books and exploration report of Prof. K. Rajan namely 'Catalog of Archaeological Sites in Tamil Nadu'.

Various unpublished scholarly thesis and dissertation were also used as sources for this study. The referred works are as follows; Paintings of Sri Satyavagisvara Temple, Kalakkadu – A Study done by M. Ramesh; Krishnagiri Taluk through the Ages done by S. Paranthaman; Trade, Kingship and Islamisation – A Comparative Study of the social and Economic Organisation of Muslim and Hindu Traders in Tirunelveli District, South India done by Frank Sylvester Fanselow for award of Ph.D. from London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The past histories remain static and changes that have taken place later on add new dimensions to it. It is this nature of the subject that the present work did

## *Introduction*

not require any new method of research. The primary methodological approach was descriptive in nature, and an analytical study has been taken up only whenever such approach has been deemed to be necessary.

The usage of short forms, place names and some terms in vernacular languages (Tamil and Sanskrit) using the Diacritical marks are given in this work as per regulated research methods.





# CHAPTER 1

# OUTLINE

Nāṅgunēri is a *pañchayat* town located at 8.48° N 77.67° E in the Tirunelvēli district of Tamiḷ Nādu state in India. It is one of the *tāluk* among the fifteen *tāluka*s of Tirunelvēli district. It has an average elevation of 141 meters from the sea level. Tirunelvēli is one of the southern most districts of Tamiḷ Nādu. The district lies between 08°08'09''N to 09°24'30''N Latitude, 77°08'30''E to 77°58'30''E Longitude and has an area extent of 6810 sq.km. There are 19 Blocks, 425 Villages

and 2579 Habitations in the district.<sup>i</sup> The lifeline of the district is the Thāmiraparani River which feeds the district. It emerged as a settlement and is considered one of the oldest in the Indian sub-continent, with a history that dates back to 1000 B.C.E.

Tirunelvēli district was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1790 by the East India Company on behalf of the British Government in India. In 1910, Rāmanāthapuram district was formed from portions of Madurai and Tirunelvēli district which in turn comprised of portions of the present day Virudhunagar district.

After the independence of India, Tirunelvēli district was bifurcated on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1986 to Nellai Kattabomman district (Tirunelvēli) and Chidambaranar district (Tuticorin). Subsequently, the government of Tamiḷ Nādu changed the name as Tirunelvēli district.<sup>ii</sup>

The Nāṅgunēri tāluk occupies the whole of the extreme south of the district. It is bounded on the east by Kalkulam tāluk (Kaṇṇiyākumari district), west by Sāttaṅkulam tāluk and Śrivaikuntam tāluk (Thōōthukuḍi district), on the north by Ambāsamudram

tāluk and Pālayaṅkoṭṭai tāluk, and in the south by Rādhāpuram tāluk (Tirunelvēli district).

## TOPONYMY

The only place in Tirunelvēli supposed to be mentioned in the *Ramayana* is *Mahēndra*. This is generally identified by Hindus with Mahēndragiri, the loftiest mountain in the extreme southern portion of the range of the ghats, south of Agastya's hill; but as the legend connected with it represents it as the place from which Hanuman, the monkey-god, jumped over into Ceylon, the attempt to identify it with geographical accuracy with any particular place in our maps is not likely to be successful.<sup>iii</sup> The town was called Tirunelvēli (*Thiru+ Nell + Veli*) as the Lord of the town (Nelliappar Swami) hedged by the paddy for Tirunelvēli means, 'Sacred hedged paddy'. The paddy was hedged by rain, in course of time it was called as 'Sacred paddy hedge'.<sup>iv</sup>

The toponymy of Nāṅgunēri (tāluk of the Tirunelvēli district) also called as Vāṇamaalai, the name Nāṅgunēri is derived from the *Vishnu Purana*.

Ādisēshaṇ had sacred duty in this place as the *vāhana* of Lord Vishnu hence the place name is called as Naganai Cheri (Nagam – *Ādisēshaṇ*; Cheri – place). The name Vāṇamaalai derived from the Tamil term *Vanam* (Kaadu – forest) and *Malai* (hill), this place is fenced by the natural hill and forest, therefore the place is called as Vāṇamaalai. Also Nāṅgunēri is bounded by four reservoirs, hence place is called in Tamil as Nāṅgu + Eri = Nāṅgunēri; Nāṇ + Kur + Eri = Nāṅgunēri.<sup>v</sup>

## GEOMORPHOLOGY

Tirunelvēli district is bordered by Western Ghats (ridge and valley complex) in the West. A major part of the district constitutes a plain terrain towards the east and southeast, except for the hilly terrain in the west. The general elevation of the area varies from less than 10 to 1408 mts. above mean sea level (MAMSL) (Tulukkaparai hill range). The prominent geomorphic units identified in the district through interpretation of satellite imagery are Structural Hill, Bazada Zone, Valley Fill, Flood Plain, Pediment, Shallow buried pediment, Deep buried pediment and Coastal Plain. Soils in the area have been classified into i) Deep Red soil, ii). Red Sandy soil, iii) Black Cotton soil, iv) Saline

Coastal Alluvium, and v) River Alluvium. Major parts of the area are covered by deep red soil and are found in Sivakāsi, Tenkāsi, Seṅkāṭṭai and Saṅkarankōil blocks and it is suitable for cultivating coconut and palmyrah trees. Red sandy soil also in reddish yellow in colour and are found in Nāṅgunēri, Ambāsamudram, and Rādhāpuram blocks and it is suitable for cultivating groundnut, millets and pulses etc. The Black Cotton Soil is found in Tirunelvēli, Pālayaṅkōṭṭai and Saṅkarankāil blocks, and it is suitable for cultivating paddy, ragi, and corn etc., The Saline Coastal Alluvium are dark grey to deep brown in colour and spread over the Nāṅgunēri and Rādhāpuram blocks. The river alluvial soils occur along the river courses of Tāmraharani and Chittar River covering in the blocks Tirunelvēli and Pālayaṅkōṭṭai and it is suitable for cultivating groundnut, chilies and pearl millet.<sup>vi</sup> (Map 4)

## **AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture is the rudimentary lifeline of any economy. Agriculture plays a vital role in the district's economy. The total cropped area was 2,06,858 hectares, which worked out 30.61% to the total area of 6,75,850 hectares. The total cropped area was increased by 6.7%. Paddy, Maize, Corn, Black gram, Green gram and other

minor millets are the important food crops. Cotton, Chilies, Sugarcane and Groundnut are the important commercial crops. Out of total cultivated area of 2,06,858 hectares 31,771 hectares were sown more than once. Paddy is cultivated mainly in Tirunelvēli, Palayamkottai, Tenkasi, Shencottai, Ambasamudram and Nāṅgunēri tāluks. Other crops grown in the district are pearl millet, finger millet, pulses, groundnut, Indian sesame, coconut, chillies and indigo. The net area sown in the current year is increased by 12.7% due to excess of rainfall.<sup>vii</sup>

## **FORESTS AND WILDLIFE**

The total area of the forest in the district is 1, 27,758 hectare, among the total geographical area of 6,75,850 hectare. Particularly in Nāṅgunēri tāluk, the tiger reserves of Mundanthurai and Kalakkadu, occupies 582.07 and 223.58 sq.km respectively. The entire forest of the district stretches along the Western Ghats. Various types of forests from luxuriant tropical wet evergreen forests to southern thorn scrub forests occur in the district. Owing to its diverse geographical factors, the forests in the district are technically classified as Southern hill top tropical evergreen forests, West Coast tropical evergreen forests, Southern

moist mixed deciduous forests, Ochlandra reed forests, Carnatic umbrella thorn forests, Southern Euphorsia scrub and Southern thorn scrub.<sup>viii</sup>

## **HILLS AND RIVERS**

Located between 1,000 metres (3,300 ft) and 1,500 metres (4,900 ft) of elevation, the Mānjōlai area is set deep within the Western Ghats within the Kalakad Munḍanthurai Tiger Reserve in the Tirunelvēli District. Located on top of the Maṇimuthāru Dam and the Maṇimuthār Water Falls, the Mānjōlai area comprises tea plantations, small settlements, the Upper Kodaiyāru Dam and a windy view point called Kuthiravetti. The whole of the Mānjōlai Estates and the tea plantations are operated by The Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation Ltd on forest land leased by the Government of Tamiḷ Nādu. There are three tea estates within the Mānjōlai area: Mānjōlai Estate, Manimutharu Estate and Oothu Estate. The Estates are located at elevations ranging from 700 metres (2,300 ft) to 1,300 metres (4,300 ft).<sup>ix</sup> Tirunelvēli District enjoys the benefit of both South west and North - east monsoon. The district is chiefly irrigated by rivers rising in Western Ghats.

The dams and anicuts constructed on Thāmiraparani and Manimuthar rivers serve both agriculture and power generation. The total rain, averaging about 814.8 mm per annum, is generally well distributed. The Thāmiraparani River affords perennial irrigation to a fairly large area on which two crops are normally raised. Several tanks and wells form part of the other source of irrigation. The maps 3 and 5 attached show the river basins.

The Thāmiraparani is a symbol of Tamil culture and civilization and an identity of the far south of India. In Tamil and Sanskrit literature of earlier times, the Pāṇḍyās were referred to as the rulers of the land where the Thāmiraparani flowed. Thāmiraparani is the chief river of the district which has a large network of tributaries which includes the Pēyār, Ullār, Karaiyār, Servalar, Pambār, Maṇimuthār, Varāhanadhi, Ramanadhi, Jambunathi, Gadananathi, Kallar, Karunaiyar, Pachaiyar, Chittar, Gundar, Aintharuviar, Hanumanathi, Karuppanathi and Aluthakanniar. The two rivers of the district which are not linked with Thāmiraparani are the Nambiar and the Hanumanathi of Nāṅgunēri *tāluk*. (There are two Hanumanathis in the district).



**Hanumanathi:** It is a tributary of the Chittar River. It rises at an altitude of 1650 m above Courtāllam in Tenkasi tāluk, traverses in the slopes and at about 10 km. receives Karuppanathi, its tributary and then it flows and merges with Chittar near Surandai village. The anicuts built across the river are Mettukal anicut, Karisalkulam anicut, Panpoli anicut, Vallalkulam anicut, Elathoor anicut, Nainaragavan anicut, Pungamkal anicut and Kambli anicut.

**Nambiyar:** The Nambiyar River is the water source to the Nāṅgunēri tāluk. It takes its origin in the western slopes of the Western Ghats - 8 km. west of Thirukurungudi village at an altitude of 1500 m. above MSL. It runs eastwards and turns south east and confluences in the Gulf of Mannar at Tiruvambalapuram village. Its course of 45 km. is restricted entirely to Nāṅgunēri tāluk. The river has two tributaries, the Parattaiyar and the Thamaraiyar.

The first tributary is a stream from Mahendragiri hills and the second tributary originates from the combination of two hill streams, Mombaiyar and Kodumudiyar. These tributaries join Nambiyar at the foot of the Mahendragiri hills. The river has nine anicuts, Mailaimani anicut, Dhalavaipuram anicut,

Rajakkamangalam anicut, Mylapuram anicut, Kannanthur anicut, Vijayan anicut, Kovankulam anicut, Thittikulam anicut, and Pulimangulam anicut.

## **CLIMATE AND RAINFALL**

The district has a peculiar climate throughout the year and receives rainfall in all the seasons which representing 1303.7 mm in 2014-2015. Excess of rainfall was received for the past 6 years except 2012-2013 in the district. The maximum precipitation is contributed by the North East Monsoon (847.5 mm) followed by summer (317.9 mm) and the South West Monsoon (118.8 mm) and Winter (19.5mm). But in the current year shortage of rainfall was received during South West and Winter Monsoon season.<sup>x</sup>

## **FLORA AND FAUNA**

The faunal population both territorial and avi-fauna, of this division is also varied and fascinating like its varied floral composition. The unique primate, who is endemic to the Western Ghats, namely the Lion tailed monkeys is said to be confined to Kalakadu Hills where a sanctuary has been created solely for this species. The tiger, leopard, Busty spotted Cat, Common

Palm Civet, Brown Palm Civet, Common palm civet, Small Indian civet, Common Mongoose, Striped Hyena, Ruddy or Long tailed Mongoose, Jackal, Dhole or Indian Wild Dog, Sloth Bear, Common Otter are found here.<sup>xi</sup>

## **PEOPLE**

The population of the District was 27,23,988 registered in 2001 Census and 30,77,233 as per the 2011 census. The Density of Population per sq.km. was 399 in 2001 census and 460 persons as per 2011 census. Tirunelvēli, Tenkāṣi and Ambāsamudram are the most densely populated Tāluku in the District as per 2011 census. The sex ratio is 1023 females for every 1000 males. The literacy rate is 82.50% in the District as per 2011 census. Out of total population, males are 13, 33, 939 and females 13, 90, 049 in 2001 census and males are 15,20,912 and females 15,56,321 as per 2011 census.

The district is having Schedule caste population of 5,69,714 which represents 18.5% to the total population as per 2011 census. Schedule Tribes are found to be very small in numbers 10, 270 which is 0.33% to the total population. Nāṅgunēri had a population of 6764. Males constitute 49% of the

population and females 51%. Nāṅgunēri has an average literacy rate of 76%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 83%, and female literacy is 70%. In Nāṅgunēri, 10% of the population is under 6 years of age.<sup>xii</sup>

## LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

Tamil, Telugu and English are the mainly spoken languages in this district. Hindus are the major population and Muslims and Christians also co-exist.<sup>xiii</sup>

## FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

*Kodaivizha* is held in the month of *Thai*, Temple Car Festivals, and Cattle *shanda* are the important festivals and fairs in this district.

## OCCUPATION

Agriculture plays a vital role in the economy of the district. The total cropped area for 2012-2013 was 1,93,934 hectares, which worked out 28.69% to the total area of 6,75,850. When compared with previous year i.e. 2013-2014, the total cropped area was increased by 4.7%. Paddy, Maize, Corn, Black gram,

Green gram and other minor millets are the important food crops. Cotton, chillies, sugarcane and groundnut are the important commercial crops.<sup>xiv</sup>

Various industries, businesses, shops, educational establishments, commercial activities, transportation, religious organisations are established in the region.

The traditional markets known as Sandhais are established at places marked for such activities by the locals. The Sandhais provide local produce, cattle, and domestic pets and are functioning since antiquity. Sandhais promote

## TRADE AND COMMERCE

Pearls and conch in coastal parts are sent through the harbour at Tuticorin. Chillies, groundnut, cotton, safety matches from the northern parts of the district and fruits, *bidis*, mats, handloom clothes, toys, yarn from central areas are transported to other parts of the State.

Tirunelveli and Sankarankoil are the main business centres. Toys of Ambsamudram and palm tree

products of coastal parts are the fine handworks of the people.

## **TOURIST PLACES**

Courtāllam is famous for its waterfalls and Agasthiar Falls is also a wonderful one located at Papanasam. Vanathirttham falls is at the Western Ghats and it can be reached by boat from Kāraiyār. Kṛiṣṇnāpruam temple is famous for ancient sculptures. A birds' sanctuary is at Moonradaippu and a Tiger sanctuary is at Mundanthurai in Papanasam hills.

### **This book is chapterized as follows:**

The second chapter is “**Pre and Proto History of Nāṅgunēri Tāluk**” and highlights the Pre and Proto History of the Nāṅgunēri tāluk.

The third chapter is “**Historical Significance of Nāṅgunēri Tāluk Baring on Epigraphy and Literature**” this chapter records the historical significance of Nāṅgunēri tāluk through epigraphical and literature sources.

The fourth chapter is “**Political, Social and Economic Conditions**” elaborately discusses the Political, Social and Economic conditions of Nāṅgunēri tāluk.

The fifth chapter is “**Religious Condition**” and records the religious condition, pōjas and festivals of the place.

The sixth chapter is “**Art and Architecture**” and illustrates the Art and Architecture of the important monuments and temples of the Nāṅgunēri tāluk.





**CHAPTER 2**

**PRE AND  
PROTO  
HISTORY OF**

# NĀṆGUNĒRI TĀLUK

Robert Bruce Foote, the father of Indian Prehistory, was a British geologist and archaeologist who conducted geological surveys of prehistoric locations in India for the Geological Survey of India. He discovered the first conclusive Paleolithic stone tool (a hand axe – classified as Madras hand axe) in India. He found the tool in Pallavaram.

After the discovery he, along with William King, went on to discover more such tools and settlements in Southern and Western India. In 1884 C.E. he discovered the 3.5 kilometres (2.2 mi) long Belum Caves, the second largest cave in the Indian subcontinent.<sup>xv</sup>

## ĀDICHANALLŪR

Āḍichanallūr is an archaeological site in Thoothukudi district nearly 50 k.m. off Nāṅgunēri *taluk*. The town is known locally as Aathichanallūr, and has been the site of a number of very important archaeological finds. In 2004, a number of skeletons dating from around 1800 B.C.E were found buried in earthenware urns. More than 160 urns have been found. These urns also contained writing in rudimentary Tamil Brahmi. The script dates back to circa 500 BCE subject to confirmation by Carbon-14 dating.

A three-tier burial system were discovered in which earlier generations were buried in urns at 10 feet depth and recent ones above them. The habitation site of the people who were buried was also discovered. Analyzing the habitation site, it was understood that people lived in a fortified town and it had a separate potters quarters. There was also evidence of industrial activity and archaeologists think that it was a crowded busy town.<sup>xvi</sup>

Āḍichanallūr has a history of excavation. The urn-burial site was brought to light when a German, Fedor

Jagor, conducted a haphazard excavation at the place in 1876 C.E. An Englishman called Alexander Rea, who was the Superintending Archaeologist, excavated the urn-burial site between 1889 C.E. and 1905 C.E.

Dr. G. Thirumoorthy, who worked as the Assistant Archaeologist, ASI, led the first phase of the excavation in 2004, said of Rea's excavation: "Above all, his excavation was important for the bronze objects discovered because they are quite unique in the proto-history of South India. Besides, he discovered a figurine of a Mother Goddess. All this showed that the Tamil culture was rich then. Rea's discovery of gold diadems is intriguing, for gold does not occur at Ādichanallūr or any nearby place. The gold could have been brought from outside because of trade contacts".<sup>xvii</sup>

The preliminary study by the scientists from N.I.O.T. has revealed that the site is not a simple burial site but an extensive multi industrial mining centre where ores of copper, iron and gold were extracted. The use of the pits excavated during the mining for burial, may be contemporaneous or immediately after the mining of minerals from the site. The survey was able to establish some old workings for iron, copper and gold ores in the area. The Optically Stimulated

Luminescence (OSL) dates derived from the samples gave a date ranging from 3400 ka to 1920 ka with an error margin of 23 to 18 %. The long time-lap of 1,500 years with  $\pm 23\%$  for the Adichanallur burials indicate that an abundant mineral wealth and its exploitation by the inhabitants from the Iron Age and succeeding periods.<sup>xviii</sup> The elemental analysis of artifacts is given in the Table 1 below.

Sl. No.	Sample No.	Trench No.	Urn NO.	Age [BP]
1	1	2zB16	U-52	3000 $\pm$ 700
2	4	2zC16	U-21	2700 $\pm$ 600
3	8	2zB17	U-104	3160 $\pm$ 600
4	13	2zC15	U-10	3400 $\pm$ 700
5	16	2zB17	U-93	2600 $\pm$ 500
6	Thick pottery	2zB117/2	U-	2500 $\pm$ 530
7	Thin pottery	2zC16Q2- layer	U-29	1920 $\pm$ 350
Sl.No	Sample			
1	Wood piece	<sup>14</sup> C Date [TIFR,1963]		775 $\pm$ 95 AD

Table 1: Elemental Analysis of Artefacts from Adichanallur

## PRE AND PROTO HISTORY OF NĀṆGUNĒRI

‘Whatever relics of the oldest period that still survives will be found’, states Bishop Cladwell. Stone implements are found, not in the valley of the Thāmiraparani itself, which must have been too

frequently covered with water and too marshy to allow of human habitations being erected upon it at the outset, but on the gravelly slopes on either side of the valley, constituting the primeval banks of the stream. One place of this description called Āḍichanallūr, near Puthugudi, has been found particularly rich in sepulchral urns, to find relics of the oldest period anywhere near the sea, as it certain that the land has been slowly but steadily rising above the ancient sea level for ages, probably even before man made his appearance in the district. The rise of the land all through the historical period is capable, Kulasekharapattanam, a town and port of some antiquity, pieces of broken pottery are occasionally found imbedded in the grit stone, a marine formation abounding in sea shells of exiting species, found all along the coast.<sup>xix</sup>

Bishop R. Caldwell has written in his work “A Political and General History of Tinnevēlly”, that nothing is known as yet of the earliest inhabitants of Tirunelvēli. The hill tribes called in Malayalam as *Malayarajas* (Hill Kings), and in Tamil as *Kanikkaras* (hereditary proprietors of land), are not, I think, to be regarded, like the *Todas* of the Nilagiris, as surviving representatives of the earliest inhabitants of the plains;

but, like the hill tribes of the Pulneys, appear to be the descendants of some low-country people of a later period, who were driven to the hills by oppression or who voluntarily migrated thither.<sup>xx</sup> Probably the earliest inhabitants came to be mixed up so completely with succeeding immigrants that it will be impossible now to distinguish them. Perhaps the best representatives at present of the earliest race of inhabitants are those long-oppressed tribes that are now considered the lowest, in the social scale, the *Parriyās* and *Pallās*.

The only traces of the earliest inhabitants of Tirunelvēli that survive, so far as certain stone implements that have been found near Chearnmahadevi and Puthugudi. These implements betokened some little progress in civilization, as the sides were rounded and the curves symmetrical, this would identify them with what has been called the 'Neolithic Age'. The excellence of the pottery and the circumstance that copper ornaments have sometimes been found in the urns show that the people who buried their dead in those urns, whoever they were, and at however early a period they may have lived, were a comparatively civilized race.

The history of Nāṅgunēri *tāluk* can be traced from the prehistoric period followed by the megalithic culture. The Iron Age period megalithic culture is followed by the *Sangam* age. This region was ruled by Āy chieftains who occupied the hilly area between Tranvancore and Tirunelvēli under the *Sangam* Pāṇḍyas. From the epigraphs and literature, this region seem to have continuously occupied by many rulers namely, Pāṇḍyas, Chōlās, Chērās, Vijayanagara Nāyakās and Vēnāḍ rulers.

However the evidence found in and around the Nāṅgunēri *tāluk*, such as Ālavandānkuḷam, Vāgaikuḷam, Valavankōṭṭai, Sidapārapanallur and Kilambūr reveals the existence of pre and proto historic culture of the place. In Ālavandānkuḷam one can notice the middle Paleolithic tools such as flake tools considered to be the earliest prehistoric vestiges in the region. Micro liths were found in Vāgaikuḷam, Valavankēṭṭai and Sidapārpanallur.

The Iron Age period megalithic culture of Nāṅgunēri can be revealed by the megalithic burial remains in Chingikulam, Devanmallur, Vagaikulam, Rajakkamangalam and Melaseval. It is understandable that the migration of human from these closer



localities to the plains of Nāṅgunēri were for better livelihood. In this Iron Age megalithic culture one can notice the existence of urn burials. In these sites one can also observe the presence of Black and Red ware, Red ware and Black ware which are typical Iron Age pottery types which indicate the settlement of Iron Age period.

Prof. K. Rajan noted more than 40 Iron Age sites in Tirunelvēli district in his work 'The Catalogue of Archaeological Sites in Tamil Nadu'. A map showing the same is given in Map 1. Only three sites were referred in Nāṅgunēri *taluk*. They are Ciṅgikulam, Dēvanallūr and Rājakkalmaṅgalam.<sup>xxi</sup> Ciṅgikulam is an Iron Age Urn site and the antiquities found in this place were Black-and-Red ware, Red ware, and Black ware. Dēvanallūr is an Iron Age Urn site and the antiquities found are Black-and-Red ware, Red ware, and Black ware. Rājakkalmaṅgalam is an Iron Age Urn site and the antiquities found are Black-and-Red ware, Red ware, and Black ware.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTIQUITIES

Prof. S. K. Sitrampalam the Head of Department of History at the Jaffna University, Sri Lanka, has traced

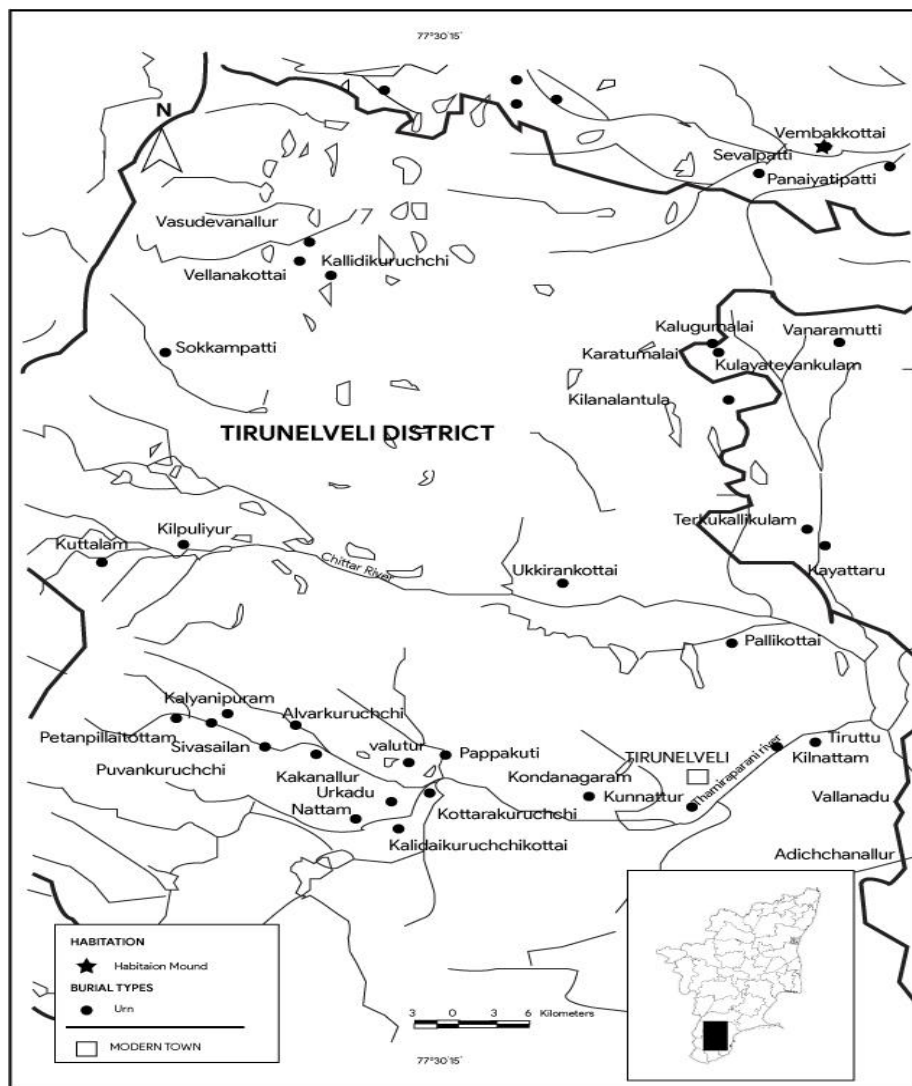
the pre-historic period of the world from the time of homo sapiens in his book 'A History of Ancient Tamil Nadu'. The advancement in studies made by sociologists, anthropologists and archaeologists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century C.E on the organic and cultural evolution of human beings has led to the study of history in a scientific manner, says the author. Sufficient evidence could be adduced now to prove that human beings first used stones as weapons, then brass and later iron all over the world.

Yet enough evidence is not available in several parts of the world to testify to this. Similar is the case in Tamil Nadu also regarding the use of pure brass in Tirunelveli district. The author places the Paleolithic period at around 50,000 B.C.E; Mesolithic period around 8,000 B.C.E and the Neolithic period around 3,000 B.C.E Pottery was used in Tamil Nadu after 3,000 B.C.E.<sup>xxii</sup>

From hunting and gathering during the Mesolithic period followed fishing. Nomadic living progressed to agriculture. Village formations with the origin of family and private property led to contented village production. Earth was considered Mother

Goddess and rituals played a vital part in the life of people then.

**IRON AGE SITES IN TIRUNELVELI REGION**



The author says that the idea of rebirth evolved after observing the death and repetitive growth of plants during this agriculture period. He produces evidences from the *Sangam* verses to show that in Tamil Nadu, the land was divided into five sectors and people cultivated millets (*varagu*, *thinai*), grams (*kollu*) and beans (*avarai*). Besides, they indulged in fishing and produced common salt.<sup>xxiii</sup>



## **CHAPTER 3**

# **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NĀŅGUNĒRI**

# **TĀLUK BARING ON EPIGRAPHY AND LITERATURE**

Some historians claim that the mention of Tirunelvēli in its oldest form has been recorded during the time of Emperor Aśhoka, although there aren't many exact details or documents to support this. Areas around Tirunelvēli were settled for a long time, but it

was around the 7th or 8th century C.E. that the mentions of this city were found, mostly due to the construction of the Nellaiappar temple.

The Pāṇḍiyaṇ king *Muluthukanda Rama Pāṇḍiyaṇ* was the one who initiated the construction with *Nindraser Nedumaran* later finishing many portions of it. This temple later became the royal shrine of the Pāṇḍiyaṇ dynasty, which ruled the larger area around Tirunelvēli and southern India.

In the 14th century C.E., this area was absorbed into the Vijayanagara Empire. After the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire, the city and adjoining areas were ruled by the Nayak kingdom, who were ultimately defeated by the Nawabs of Arcot in the 18th century C.E. However, the Deccan Sultanate couldn't hold on to power and the kingdom fractured after which multiple city-states were formed.

These were finally brought under British rule through many of the Polygar Wars and then made part of the Madras presidency. After independence, Tirunelvēli was included as a part of the state of Tamil Nadu.



## **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The sea-faring Tamils of the Tirunelvēli coast were much more able-bodied and athletic than the ordinary people. Pearl fishery in the Tirunelvēli coast was a great source of revenue to the Pāṇḍiyaṇ Kingdom. Pliny in his notes says that the pearls were mainly imported into the Roman Empire from the Indian Ocean Coastal areas. Pearl was called by the Romans as Union meaning unique gem, as no two pearls are alike in size, shape, polish and weight. Korkai was the headquarters of the Pāṇḍiyaṇ country which carried on a lucrative pearl trade with the Roman Empire.

Historical references clearly indicate that the pearl fishery in the Tirunelvēli coast accounted for a flourishing lucrative trade with the west and the Far East. The Gulf of Mannar has been one of the most important strategic spots on the coast of Coromandal. From very early times in South Indian history, the Gulf of Mannar had been a centre of brisk commercial, political and religious activities, involving in this many-faceted enterprise, people from far and wide. For many centuries, the Gulf of Mannar region had been a sort of entreport, and a cultural meeting point, from where a flourishing seaborne trade in spices,

pearls and silken and cotton goods, teak and sandalwood, rice, ivory, indigo, metals and several interesting items had been carried on, bringing in turn a huge profit to the country. In the pre-independence era, it was an important centre for the commercial, religious and political activities of the Dutch, Portuguese and the English.

Tirunelvēli is also renowned for academic excellence. Nammāl̥vār, a native of Āl̥vār Thirunagari in the Tirunelvēli district was one of the twelve Vaishnavite Saints (Āl̥vārs) who composed the *Nālayira Divya Prabandham* (The Four Thousand Hymns). Umaru Pulavar, a Muslim by religion and a native of Eṭṭayapuram in the Tirunelvēli district was the author of the Islamic Epic *Śīrāpuranam*.

Fr. Beschi, a Catholic Missionary popularly known as *Vīramāmunivar* has also done remarkable services in the Kamanayakkanpatti Mission. He is credited with the famous Christian Epic called *Tēmbāvani*, composed in highly sophisticated Tamil. Fascinated by the poetic beauty of *Tiruvāṣagam*, G.U.Pope of the Society for the Propagation of Gospel (S.P.G.) Missionary in Tirunelvēli, has translated it into English. His services in the Sawyerpuram Mission are remarkable.

H.R.Krishna Pillai, a native of Reddiarpatti in Tirunelvēli district, was the author of *Ratchanya Yatriham* adopted from John Banyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

K. A. Nīlakanta Satri, a renowned historian who has made immense contribution to the South Indian Historical Scholarship, was a native of Kallidaikurichi, a small town in Tirunelvēli District. Another great son of the soil was Rao Bahadur Vaiyapuri Pillai, who edited and brought out the first Tamil Lexicon. With a definite aim to impart education to all, Christian Missionaries of both Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches have established colleges in the Tirunelvēli district. St. Xavier's College and St.John's college at Palayamkottai in the Tirunelvēli District have been serving as institutions of higher learning. Palayamkottai is even now acclaimed as the 'Oxford of South India'.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century C.E, Tirunelvēli became the birth place of militant Tamil nationalism and hot bed of extremist politics. Subramania Bharathi, who was the native of Ettayapuram in the Tirunelvēli District played a dynamic role in the Indian National Movement. His myriad poems kindled the patriotic fervor and richly contributed to Tamil national awakening.

V.O.Chidambaram Pillai another great patriot of Ottapidaram in the Tirunelvēli district was a militant nationalist and a strong disciple of Bala Gangadhar Tilak. He founded the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company, which operated ferry services from Tuticorin to Colombo, in spite of threats freely held out by the British Imperialism.

Vanchi Nathan, the hero of Maniyatchi took up guns for the cause of India's freedom. His bullets put at rest the life of Ash, the Collector of Tirunelvēli in a railway compartment at Maniyachi junction in 1911. V.V.S. Iyer, a veteran freedom fighter, founded a *Gurukulam Ashram* at Cheranmahadevi, which was sponsored by the Indian National Congress.

## EPIGRAPHICAL SOURCES

Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions, and the term 'inscription' means writings engraved on any object or some materials. In India, rocks, stone, metallic, earthen or wooden pillars, tablets, plates and pots, also bricks, shells, ivory plaques and other objects were generally used for incising inscriptions. Coins and seals usually produced out of moulds, and also records painted on cave walls or written in ink on wooden

tablets are regarded as inscriptions, although these writings have not actually been engraved on those objects.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Like the study of the history, the archaeology of a country will never reach completeness till it is systematically undertaken to decipher, translate, interpret, convey and understand the ancient epigraphical sources. The most important aid to the study of the history is by means of a search after inscriptions, many of which, hitherto unnoticed and unknown, they will find inviting their attention on the walls of the temples in almost every village in the interior. The only ancient Indian history worthy of the name is that which has been spelled out from inscriptions and coins.

## **TAMIL – BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS**

### **MARUGALTHALAI**

Tamil - Brahmi inscription engraved on the face of the rocky cave reads as 'venkasipankutupitakalkanchanam' which means this stone structure was caused to be given by Venkasipan. This record is found engraved on the brow of the cave

on the Puviludaiyarmalai hill. The characters deployed here are very large in size compare to other record in Tamil Nadu. The date of this record is assessed to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE by Iravatham Mahadevan. The term Kanchanam means the land and gold.<sup>xxv</sup>

## SINGIKULAM

On the central shrine of the Bhagavathi Amman Temple, one Thirthankara figure is chiseled out with an inscription which furnishes the name of the Jain *palli* as ‘*Niyayapaipalanaperumpalli*’ (the place where justice is rendered). The name of the hill is known as Jinagiri and the village is named as Raja Rajanallur alias Thidiyur which was included within Mullinadu. The Thirtankara figure is named in the inscription as ‘*Enakku-Nall-Nayakar*’.

## INSCRIPTIONS

The Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy which is published by ASI has published the inscriptions of Nāṅgunēri taluk. The inscriptions are discussed below. The inscriptions and their number in ARE volumes is shown in the below table. Also the inscriptions

published in South Indian Inscriptions (SII) by the ASI are also listed in the table below.

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Place / Temple</i>	<i>Inscription Nos.</i>	<i>Year of ARE</i>	<i>SII No.</i>
1.	Nāṅgunēri	1 – 27	1927	-
2.	Nāṅgunēri	250 – 268	1927 – 1928	-
3.	Ervadi	306 – 605	1915	Vol.14 No.41,129
4.	Kalākkadu	129 – 132	1905	-
5.	Singikulam	225 – 270	1940 – 1941	-
6.	Valliyur	598 – 602	1915	-

Table 2: Inscriptions of Nāṅgunēri taluk published in A.R.E.

## INSCRIPTIONS NO. 250 – 254 OF ARE 1927-28

These inscriptions were engraved in Tamil on the south wall of the central shrine in Vanamamalai Perumal temple, comes under the period of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year of *Maravarman Pāṇḍiyaṇ*. Recorded about the remission of taxes by the king at the request of *Kalingarayar* on the land at the *Sivaramangai*

*Chaturvedimangalam* given to the temple at *Sivaramangai* by *Tiruvayakkulamndaiyan Vanamalai Pichan* of *Velliyur* living at *Parantakanallur* and it registers the order for *Sivaramangai Chaturvēdimaṅgalam* giving effect to the above grant. The endowment for the sacred bath of God *Vānamalai-Emberumāṇ* on the day of *Puram* in *Adi* which was the star of *Kaman* alias *Sengabagapperai-Nayar* of *Malai Mandalam*.

Another inscription inscribed on the north wall of the Mandapa in *Vanamamalai Perumal* temple in *Tamil* language during the period of *Maravarman Pandaiyan*. It deals about the information gift of 1 *achchu* by *Velan Ariyan* for *Tiruvadirai* festival in the temple of the God *Rajasimheswaram Udiyar* at *Kurungulam*, further, it explain that the *ashtabandanam* to God *Rājasimhēswarem Udaiyār* was done in the presence of *Travancore* kings in that place. On the south wall of the central shrine in *Vanamamalai Perumal Temple* is a *Tamil* inscription that records about the collection of taxes in the region during the period of *Kulaśēkara Pāṇḍiayan I* (A.D. 1275). An epigraphy engraved on the eastern *Gopuram* in the same temple informed that the gift of land to the temple priest in the year of A.D. 1284. An inscription record in year of A.D.1305 during



the period of *Māravarman* state that gift of money to sculpt the image of *Sadagopar*. Another one engraved in the same place in Tamil language registers that in the year of A.D. 1305, the king made a gift of 20 ma of tax free land under the *Solapandyaperya Eri* for the expenses of providing offering and worship at specified scales of God *Tirungiswaramudaiyar*.<sup>xxvi</sup>

## INSCRIPTIONS OF JATĀVARMAN SRIVALLABHA

In the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the king is engraved in slightly later script in Tamil language, this record re-copied later at the time of some renovation in the Tirunagesvara temple at Dalapatisamudram of Nāṅgunēri tāluk. It explain the king is stated to have been seated on the *pallikkattil* called *Pāṇḍyarājan* in the *Alagiya-Pāṇḍyan* hall in the palace at Madurai when, on the petition of a certain Ayyar of *Anabharanamangalam*, he made tax-free some lands belonging to the temples of *VaragunaIsvaramudaiyar*, *Tirunagesvaramudaiyar* and *Puravuvarisvaramudaiyar* and *Puravuvarisvaramudiayar*, at *Perumbalanji Nattarruppokku*.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Srivallabha an inscription engraved in Tamil language on the south wall of the Rajagopalasvami Temple at Vijayanarayanam of Nāṅgunēri tāluk is incomplete and refers to some

transactions made in the 31<sup>st</sup> year of *Kulottunga-Chōladeve*, who took Kollam, relating to the temples of Varaguna Vinnagar Alvar, Sathagop-vinnagar Alvar and Sri Raghavachakravartigal. Vijayanarayana-chaturvedimangalam is stated to be a *brahmadeya* in *nattarruppokku* and a certain *Sankaran Vasudevan* of *Turuttimangalam* is said to have been a person of note in the place.<sup>xxviii</sup>

A stone record called *Vaniyan Kallu* near a tank in Vijayanarayanam village of Nāṅgunēri tāluk, this record dated in the 12<sup>th</sup> reginal year Jatavarman Srivallabha related to the breaching of the tank called *Manomayaneri* at *Vijay-narayana-chaturvedimangalam* and to its being closed by a certain *Nambi Sankaran Vasudevan* of *Turuttimangalam* who was in charge of the village under *Iravi Kodaivarman*, the ruler of *Venadu*. This agent is also stated to have made an endowment of land so that from its income the bund of the tank may be repaired and maintained every year. The channel, which was also repaired by him, got the new name of *Vasudevapperaru*. This record is of interest as it gives the information that the Venadu ruler Ravi Kodai was a contemporary of Jatavarman Srivallabha.<sup>xxix</sup>

On the south wall of the central shrine in the Adinathaperumal temple, Vijayanarayanam of Nāṅgunēri tāluk, an inscription dated in the 17<sup>th</sup> year and relating to the temple of *Varaguna-vinnagar-Alvar* at Vijayanarayana-chaturvedimangalam, the king was staying at his camp in that place. This inscription is incomplete. Some gift for worship to god *Sathakopa-vinnagar-Alvar* is also referred in this record.<sup>xxx</sup>

## INSCRIPTION OF THE EARLY PĀNDIYAS

A damaged inscription in Vatteluttu characters belongs to the time of Sadiya Maran and is dated is some year opposite to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of his reign. It refers to the stone temple of *Raja Singechchuvaram* at *Karungulam* and to the gift of something for a perpetual lamp to be burnt in it. The temple must have been built by Rajasimha, after whom the god appears to have been so name.<sup>xxxi</sup>

On the south wall of the *Manomanisvara* temple an inscripitional record is dated in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the king and refers to a gift of sheep for burning a lamp in the temple of God *Manonmanisvara* at *Vijayanarayanam* of Nanguneri taluk, whose name is given, namely, Manomayanisvaram at Viayanarayana-

chaturvedimangalam. It is not known whose title 'Manomaya' was; but it already occurs in the time of *Sadiya-Maran*. It may be remarked that the regnal year which had been cited as some year opposite to the 4<sup>th</sup> up till the 11<sup>th</sup> year is now quoted as only one year, as the 12<sup>th</sup> in this record. This practice was in vogue up till the 15<sup>th</sup> year, when with that year as constant, the further years are quoted as 15 + 4 and 15 + 5 however cites the year 13 + 1. The significance of this is not clear.<sup>xxxii</sup>

The reign of *Vīra-Pāṇḍiya*, the regnal year is first, he to donate a gift of sheep for a lamp to be burnt apparently in the temple of Vijayanārana-chaturvēdimaṅgalam a Brahmadēya in *Nattarruppokku* by a certain *Narayanapiran-devan* of *Perumarundur* in *Salagramam*.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

This long inscription in *Vaṭṭeluthu* characters is dated in the 6<sup>th</sup> year opposite to the 35<sup>th</sup> year and 69<sup>th</sup> day of the reign of king Maranjadaiyan, the record consists of two separate endowments made by a certain *Vēlaṇ* of *Irambadu* in *Karaikana-nāḍu*. One of them was a gift of 50 sheep to maintain a lamp in the rest house called *Rajakkattannir- perumbandal* erected by him at *Perumbalanji* in *Nattarruppokku* while a gift of land

and a well were also made for it. The other gift of sheep was for maintaining a lamp in another rest-house name *Munnurruvapperumbandal* instituted by him in the same village; and a gift of land for the caretaker who supplied water to this water-shed was also made. The two rest-house were apparently erected, one in the name of 'Rājakkār' of *Tirukkottaru* and the other in the name of the *KoyirpillaigalMunnurruvar* whose constitution is not clear. These charities were left under the protection of the *Nāyakanmār* ruling the district.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

A record dated in the 43<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of Maranjadaiyan comes on a boulder in the *Irattaippottai* rock at Eruvadi of Nāṅgunēritāluk. This is the highest regnal year found for Maranjadaiyan for whom records in the 35<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> year have been found elsewhere. The rock on which this epigraph is engraved is very much weatherworn and the record is therefore defaced. It appears to register a gift of land by *Irambattu-vēlanSattan* as *Pallichchandam* to the *Bhatara* of *Tiruviruttalai-Aruvalam* in *Nattarrupokku*, and a gift of sheep for a lamp. A Tamil verse at the end of the record, stated to have been composed by the donor himself contains an exhortation to all to offer worship to *Aruhan* on the hill. The donor *Irambattu-velan* has figured in another record from *Dalapatisamudram*

dated in the 35 + 6<sup>th</sup> regnal year of the king *Maranjadaiyan*.<sup>xxxv</sup>

This record dated in the 2 + 17<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Sadaiya-Maran is built in at the end and its purport is not therefore clear. It appears too related to a gift of money made to the god *Karrali-Perumanadigal* of the *Manomaya-Isvaram* temple by a certain *Tiruvengada Erichchi* in the name of *Puvanavan Tirumaladhikarigal* of *Valainjiya-Kurichchi*. The *Perunguri-sabha* of the village which met in the temple on a day of the solar eclipse in that year invested this amount in the purchase of land 6 mā in extent. As the month in which the solar eclipse occurred has not been specified, the year cannot be calculated.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

## GREEK NOTICES OF THE PĀNDIYAS IN TIRUNELVĒLI REGION

Megasthenes, who was sent as an ambassador from Seleucus Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's successors, to the court of Chandragupta, king of the Prasii (Prachyas or easterns) at Palibothra (Pataliputra), near the present day Patna, about B.C.E 302, speaks of a country in India Heracles, that is, of Krishna. It may be interesting to give here in Megasthenes own words,

as quoted by Pliny, the strange mixture of truth and error he accepted and handed down.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Indian king who sent an embassy to the Emperor Augustus, was not Porus, but Pandian, the king of the Pandion, called in Tamil the Pāṇḍiyaṇ. The earliest account of the embassy is given by Strabo (C.E. 20). More is known about Korkai from the Greeks than from Native writings or traditions. It is mentioned by the author of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, the circumnavigation of the Erythraean or Red Sea (by which we are to understand the whole Arabian Ocean from the mouth of the Red Sea to the Bay of Bengal), and an intelligent Greek merchant who visited India probably about C.E. 80. It is mentioned also by Ptolemy the Geographer C.E. 130 by these it is called “Kolkhoi emporium”.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

There are certain geographical stanzas current in Tamil which give the boundaries and extent of the three Tamil kingdoms the Chēra, Chōḷa, and Pāṇḍiya. These stanzas are regarded by the Tamil people as classical and authoritative. According to the stanza relating to the Pāṇḍiya kingdom its boundaries were the river Vellāru to the north, Kumari (Cape Comorin) to the south, sea (i.e. Gulf of Maṇār and Palk Strait or the Bay of Toṇḍi) to the east, and “the great highway” to the west. Of these boundaries the eastern, viz., the sea,

calls for no remark. The river Vellāru, which is represented in the Pāṇḍiyaṇ stanza as the northern boundary of the Pāṇḍiya country, is also represented in the Chōla stanza as the southern boundary of the Chōla country. The boundary line between two such restless, bellicose nations as the Pāṇḍiyas and Chōlas must have been continually shifting. We know indeed that at one time the whole of the Pāṇḍya country was incorporated into the Chōla country.

## **EARLY HISTORY OF NĀṆGUNĒRI REGION**

The history of Tirunelvēli region is reflected in the Sangam literature. Irayanar Ahapporulurai mentions some of the names of the Pāṇḍiya kings and poets such as Kadumgon and Ugrapperuvaludi. They are found in inscriptions and it was the authentic records showing it. During the Saṅgam Age the Tamil country was divided among three crowned monarchs of the Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍiya lines and a number of minor chieftains who according to the political conditions of the time owned allegiance to or fought for one or other of these monarchs or else led an independent existence. The area now comprising the Tirunelvēli District formed part of the Pāṇḍiya country



right from the *Saṅgam* Age. It was popularly known as Thenpandinadu.

Ays were the *Vēl* chieftains who ruled the country in and around the Pothigai hills. The Greek geographer, Ptolemy referred to 'Ays' ruling the country which included Cape Comorin and Mount Bettigo (Podhigi hills).<sup>xxxix</sup> The Sangam literature *Thiruvilayadal Puranam*, *Purananuru*, *Paripadal*, *Agananuru*, *Nattrinai*, *Kurunthogai* also refer to the *Sangam* Pandya rulers Vadimbalamba Nira Pāṇḍiyan, Nediyan, Nilamtharu Thiruvin Pāṇḍiyan, Palyakasalai Mudhu Kudmi Peruvazhuthi, Mudathirumaran, Ollaiyurthantha Bōtha Pāṇḍyan, Arya Padaikadantha Nedunchezhiyan and Thalaiyalamkānathu Cheruvendra Nedunchezhiyan.<sup>xl</sup> Chithramadathu Thunjiya Nanmaran, the brother of Aryapadaikadantha Nedunchezhiyan was the head of the 'Korkai', the second capital of the Pāṇḍyas and the present Tirunelvēli District. It has been within the jurisdiction of the Korkai division of the Pāṇḍiya administration. On Nedunchezhiyan's death, his brother proceeded to Madurai from Korkai and took the mantle of the Pāṇḍiya Kingdom.<sup>xli</sup>

Another difficulty under which the early history of Tirunelvēli labours is that in early times this district

had no separate existence, but formed merely the southern portion of the Pāṇḍiya country, and this was the position it occupied under the Chōlas, the early Muhammadana, and the Nāyakās, as well as under the Pāṇḍiyas themselves.

It was not till the incorporation of the kingdom of Madura, including its various district and dependencies into the territories under the rule of the Nawab of Arcot, about C.E. 1744, that the district of Tirunelvēli came to be regarded, at first for revenue purpose alone, as independent of, or at least as distinct from, the District of Madura. The only name in classical Tamil which looks like a name for Tirunelvēli, as distinct from Madura, is Ten-Pāṇḍi, the Southern Pāṇḍiya country; but this is represented as the name of the twelve district in the Tamil country in which non-standard dialect Tamil (*Kodun-tamiḷ*) is spoken; and it is evident that it could not have been intended that the whole of Tirunelvēli should be denoted by this name. The interpretation of some is that by Ten-Pāṇḍi it is meant that a portion of Tirunelvēli which lies to the south of the Thāmiraparani river.<sup>xlii</sup> Thus the Tirunelvēli District has been a place of historical significance.



## **CHAPTER 4**

# **POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

The Tamil people, or as they are called in Sanskrit, the *Derāviḍas*, were divided in ancient times into three great divisions, the *Chērās*, *Chōlas*, and *Pāṇḍyās*. The arrangement of the names is climactic and denotes that the *Pāṇḍyās* were supposed in the times to have the preeminence, a supposition which appears to be in accordance with the facts of the case.

According to Tamil legends Chērān, Chōlan and Pāṇḍiyan were three brothers who at first lived and ruled in common at Koṛkai, near the mouth of the Tāmraparṇī. The lands held by all three in common were at Mukkāṇi (the three properties) near Korkai. Eventually a separation took place. Pāṇḍiyās remained at home. Chērān and Chōlan went the north and west.

We have a similar representation, perhaps merely an echo of the Tamil tradition, in the *Harivamśa* and several *Purāṇas* in which *Pāṇḍiya*, *Kērala*, *Kōla*, and *Chōla* are represented as the four sons of *Ākrīḍa*, or of *Dashyanta*, the adopted son of *Turvāsu*, a prince of the Lunar line of *Kshatriyas*. Who the *Kōla* referred to here was is not clear. *Kōla* is said to be identified by the

*Kērala Mahatmaya* with Kōlam, Kōlattunāḍu or North Malabar.<sup>xliii</sup>

Since, there is no separate lineage of the rulers of Nāṅgunēri region can be traced before the Vēnāḍ ruler of Udayamārāṇḍa Varma. Also this town had always been a part and parcel of Vēnāḍ kingdom, speaking of tis dominion in the history. It had been the headquarters of the Travancore ruler, Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma.

To determine the political history of the Nāṅgunēri, the study concentrated on the epigraphical evidences found in this tāluk in and around Nāṅgunēri namely Kaḷakkāḍu, Valliyūr, Vijayanārāyanapuram, Karuvēlankuḷam, Tirukkurṅguḍi, Tirupḍaimarudūr and Mēlaseval which are located in the Nāṅgunēri *tāluk* except Tirupḍaimarudūr and Mēlaseval which are located in Chēramādēvi and Ambāsamudram *tāluk* respectively. These epigraphical sources contain a lot of information about the names of rulers which was ruled in this region, temples grand, lands, society, religious information, etc., these information was very useful to the present study, particularly to contain in this chapter.

## SAṆGAM PERIOD

Āy chieftains of *Saṅgam* period have rule the area covering Podihigai hills and southernmost part of Western Ghats. *Puranānūru* mentions the Āy king who named as Āy-andiron ruled this region. This chieftain was mentioned in the foreign accounts of Ptolemy, Greek geographers as “Āioi”, whose kingdom includes Cape Comorin and Mount Bettigo<sup>xliv</sup>, which is the present Kanyakumari and Podigai hills respectively. After having defeated by the Pāṇḍiyās, they struggled to regain the supremacy over the Podiyil region. But Āy Tiṭṭiyan II was driven back by Talayālaṅgānthu Ceru Venra Neḍuṁjeliyan which became the end of Āy chieftains in this region at this point of time.

## EARLY PĀNDIYĀS

Nāṅgunēri tāluk was under Pāṇḍiyan kingdom from the early historical period and geographically it had close contact with Chēra country. Tirunvelvēli is popularly called as *Tenpāṇḍi Nāḍu*<sup>xlv</sup>, since it is located on the southern side of the Pāṇḍiya capital, Madurai. After Saṅgam period ancient Tamil country was ruled by Kalabaras. Their rule was put to end in Madurai during the last quarter of 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. by Pāṇḍiya

king, Kauṅgōṇ. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE the region was again ruled by Āy, a contemporary of Kōchaḍaiyāṇ (c.700 – 730 C.E). But a revolt by Āy was unsuccessful and it was suppressed by Kōchaḍaiyāṇ. Again the descendent of this Āy king waged war against Varaguna I in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and faced defeat.<sup>xlvi</sup>

## IMPERIAL CHŌLAS

In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E., the entire Pāṇḍiya kingdom was under the imperial Chōlas. After the annexation of the region with the Chōlas, kingdom the viceroy who was appointed by the Chōla monarchs was called as Chōla-Pāṇḍiyās. Kaḷakkāḍu village of Nāṅgunērītāluk known as *Sōlakulavaḷḷipuram* which has a clear prefix of the name Chōlas, is mentioned in epigraphs after the imperial Chōlas rule, shows that this village was controlled by Chōlas and most probably the name must have assigned to the village at this point of time in the history of Tamil country.

An inscription found in Nārumpunāthar temple, Tiruppuidaimarudūr gives the epithet of RājarājaChōla I dated to 985 C.E. This region was under the control of Chōlas up to the last quarter of 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E but



only a few inscriptions of Chōlas were found around the region.<sup>xlvi</sup>

## LATER PĀṆDIYĀS

After the Rājārāja II (1146 – 1173 C.E.), the Pāṇḍiyās regained their region from the Chōla overlords as it is inferred by the fact that Saḍayavarman Kulasēkara ruled the Pāṇḍiya region between 1190 – 1216 C.E. He was a brother in law of the Chēra prince, Kōthai Ravivarman. He donated the village Rājagambīra Chaturvēdi to *Brāhmanās* in 1214 C.E. The Chōla supremacy came to an end in the Pāṇḍiya region during the times of Māravarman Sundara Pāṇḍiya. Sundara Pāṇḍiya concentrated in religious activities in Tirunelvēli like never before in the region. These activities can be found in the inscription at Ādithanēsvara temple, Mēlaseval and Sokkanāthar temple, Valliyūr in the year 1221 C.E. and 1230 C.E. respectively. These religious and social activities were continued by his successors.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Māravarman Sundra Pāṇḍiya died in the year 1268 C.E. The successors of Māravarman Sundara Pāṇḍiya are Māravarman Kulasēkara Pāṇḍiya and Vīra Pāṇḍiya. After Māravarman Sundara Pāṇḍiya, the country was

ruled Māravarman Kulasēkaran Pāṇḍiya. He defeated Hoysala Rāmanāthā and his ally, Rājendra III in 1279 C.E. He suppressed a local revolution in Travancore. His inscription is found in Nārumpunāthar temple, Tiruppuaimarudūr. Vīra Pāṇḍiya was the younger son of Māravarman Kulasēkara Pāṇḍiya who ascended the throne after his father. The inscription of Vīra Pāṇḍiyan, whose reign period cannot be exactly determined in the inscription found at Valliyūr but he is known to have ruled the Pāṇḍiya country in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

Inscriptions of Vanamalai Perumal temple, comes under the period of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Maravarman Pāṇḍiyan. We come known this region ruled by Māravarman Pāṇḍiyan.

On the south wall of the central shrine in Vanamamalai Perumal Temple is a Tamil inscription records about the collection of taxes in the region during the period of Kulasekara Pāṇḍiyan I (C.E. 1275). An epigraphy engraved on the eastern Gopuram in the same temple informed that the gift of land to the temple priest in the year of C.E. 1284. An inscription record in year of 1305 C.E. during the period of Māravarman state that gift of money to sculpt the

image of Sadagopar.<sup>xlix</sup> Therefore, Nāṅgunēritāluk comes under the region of Kulasēkara Pāṇḍiyan I during the period of C.E. 1275 - 1284.

Srivallabha's inscription gives the message about the 31<sup>st</sup> year of Kulottunga-Chōladēve, who took Kollam, relating to the temples of Varaguna Viṇṇagar Ālvār, Sathagop-viṇṇagar Alvar and Sri Raghavachakravartigal. Vijayanarayana-Chaturvēdimāṅgalam is stated to be a *Brahmadeya* in Nattarruppokku and a certain Sankaran Vāsudēvan of Turuttimangalam is said to have been a person of note in the place.<sup>1</sup>

Vaniyan Kallu near a tank in Vijayanarayanam village of Nāṅgunēri tāluk, this record dated in the 12<sup>th</sup> regnal year Jatavarman Srivallabha, this record is of interest as it gives the information that the Venāḍu ruler Ravi Kodai was a contemporary of Jatavarman Srivallabha.<sup>li</sup>

A damaged inscription in Vatteluttu characters belongs to the time of Sadiya Maran and is dated in some year opposite to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of his reign in this region.

## CHĒRAS OF VĒNĀD

The Chēra territories are Tenkāsi, Valliyūr, Thirukkanāṅkuḍi, Kaḷakkāḍuand Chēra Mahā Dēvi. All these territories were the principle towns of Chēra country which are located in the borders of Chōlas and Pāṇḍiyas territories.

In 14<sup>th</sup> century C.E., Ravivaram Kulasēkara, claimed himself as Chēra king know from *Tiruvaḍi* inscriptions. The area of Chēramā Dēvi was under the control of Chēras. The southern portions of Chēras country were annexed with the Travancore kingdom.

## VĒNĀD RULERS

Travancore kingdom was called as Tiru Aḍi Dēsam, to establish the sanctity of the kingdom. The name Travancore is derived from *Srivālumcode* or *Thiruvārumcode* corrupted into Thiruvancode which was later derived into English as Travancore. The rulers of Travancore called their kingdom as *Vānavan Nāḍu* known from the inscriptional sources.<sup>lii</sup> The name Venad is believed to be derived from Vēḷ + nāṭu meaning the territory of the Vel chieftains.

## VIJAYANAGARA AND NĀYAKĀS

Immediately after the rulers of Vēnāḍ, it can be trace the rule of Vijayanagar which dominated the region around 1546 C.E. Vitthala invaded Travancore during 1544 – 45 C.E. and also have sent his agent Rāmappa Nāyaka to Kaḷakkāḍ village of Nāṅgunēri tāluk in the following year 1546 – 47 C.E.

The Krishnāpuram plates also mentions that Sundāśiva campaign against Tiruvaḍi country. Krishnappa Nāyaka, son of Viśvanātha Nāyaka, relation with Pāṇḍiyās of Tenkāsi who were the feudal kings are known from the title of *Pāṇḍyakulastābanāchāryā*. Also he is known as lord of the southern ocean, which clearly indicates his par against campaigning Travancore country.<sup>liii</sup>

## POLITICAL TERRITORY

The names of political territory can be traced from the epigraphical evidence, the following names collected from the inscriptions of Nāṅgunēri tāluk.

- *Malai Mandalam* (ARE.250/1927-28)  
- Maṇḍalam

- *Karaikand-Nāḍu, Irambadu (village)*  
(ARE.12/1929) - Nāḍu
- *Tiruvengada Perunguri-sabha*(ARE.11/1927)  
- ūr
- *Valainjiya-Kurichchi* (ARE.11/1927)  
- ūr
- *Turuttimangalam*(ARE.27/1927)  
- ūr
- *Vijayanarayana-chaturvedimangalam*  
(ARE.21/1927) - ūr
- *Sivaramangai-Chaturvedimangalam*  
(ARE.254/1927-28)- ūr

The political territory division established by the king with geographical boundaries with names as, *Maṇḍalam* divided many *Nāḍu*, and further the *Nāḍu* divided as *ūr* in villages with the habitation sites for respective social groups.

The above information gives clear picture of the political condition of the Nāṅgunēri tāluk. Moreover this study turns from history to geography and examines how these historical processes are reflected in the religious, social and economic geography of Nāṅgunēri tāluk in following chapters.

## **SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

Social structure in sociology is the distinctive, stable arrangement of institutions whereby human beings in a society interact and live together. Social structure is often treated together with the concept of social change, which deals with the forces that change the social structure and the organization of society. In the social sciences, social structure is the patterned social arrangements in society that are both emergent from and determinant of the actions of the individuals.

On the macro scale, social structure is the system of socio economic stratification (e.g., the class structure), social institutions or, other patterned relations between large social groups. It is the structure of social network ties between individuals or organizations.

On the micro scale, it can be the way norms shape the behavior of individuals within the social system. Social norms influence social structure through relations between the majority and the minority. Because those who align with the majority are considered normal while those who align with the minority are considered abnormal, majority-minority

relations create a hierarchical stratification within social structures that favors the majority in all aspects of society.<sup>liv</sup>

## FOURFOLD CASTE SYSTEM

In ancient India the people lived in a society as a social group with names. Generally, the text of *Purushsukta* talks about the *Varna* system. *Varṇa* is a Sanskrit word which means type, order, colour or class. The term refers to social classes in Brahminical books like the *Manusmṛiti*. These and other Hindu literature classified the society in principle into four *varnas*. The *Brahminas*: priests, scholars and teachers; the *Kshatriyas*: rulers, warriors and administrators; the *Vaishyas*: agriculturalists and merchants; the *Shudras*: laborers and service providers. Communities which belong to one of the four *varnas* or classes are called *savarna*. The Dalits and scheduled tribes who do not belong to any *varna*, are called *avarna*.

This quadruple division is a form of social stratification not to be confused with the much more nuanced *Jāti* or the European term 'caste'. The *varna* system is discussed in Hindu texts, and understood as idealised human callings. The concept is generally



traced to the *Purushsukta* verse of the Rig Veda. The commentary on the *varna* system in the *Manusmriti* is often cited. Counter to these textual classifications, many Hindu texts and doctrines question and disagree with the *Varna* system of social classification.<sup>lv</sup> As per record of epigraphs the society of the Nāṅgunēri region also followed the cast based social structure. The terms of social groups are traced from the temple records.

The following caste terms traced through the inscription of Kaḷakkāḍu: *Brahinan*, *Aiyar*, *Vaishnava Aiyankar*, *Vēḷḷālar* (*Caiva Pillai*), *Otuvr* (devotional singers), *Caiva Cetiyaīr*, *Kottanar Pillai*, *Mel Geval*, *lonar* (Shepherds), *Acari* (Goldsmiths, Blacksmiths, Carpenters, Stonemasons), *Vaniya Cettlyar* (Oil Pressers), *Paravar* (Fishermen), *Iluvan* (Weavers), *Natar* (Toddy Tappers), *Vannan* (Washermen), *Maruttuvar* (Barbers), and the *Paraiyar*.

## SETTLEMENTS ON THE BASIS OF CASTE

### SIVARAMANGAI CHATURVĒDIMAṆGALAM

Inscription of Maravarman Pāṇḍiyaṇ. Recorded about the remission of taxes by the king at the request of Kalingarayar on the land at the Sivaramangai

Chaturvedimangalam given to the temple at Sivaramangai by Tiruvayakkulamndaiyan Vanamalai Pichan of Velliyur living at Parantakanallur and it registers the order for Sivaramangai Chaturvēdimaṅgalam giving effect to the above grant.<sup>lvi</sup>

## VIJAYANARAYANA-CHATURVEDIMANGALAM

In the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Srivallabha inscription states that Vijayanarayana-chaturvedimangalam is to be a *brahmadeya* in nattarruppokku and a certain sankaranVasudevan of Turuttimangalam is said to have been a person of note in the place.<sup>lvii</sup>

## BRAHMADEYA - CHATURVĒDIMAṅGALAM

An epigraph found in Kaḷakkāḍu deals about the Brahmadeya-Chaturvēdimaṅgalam. Venad king Viramartanda Raja founded in his name a *chaturvedimangalam* at Kalakkāḍu around C.E. 1500. Apart from building there a palace for himself he is also credited with the construction of temple dedicated to Siva and Parvati in the form of Sri Sathyavāgīswarar and Komati Ampal, the Varataraja Perumal Koyil dedicated to Vishnu and the Viramartanda Pillaiyar Koyil dedicated to Siva's son Vinayakar. Kalakkāḍu

therefore exhibits a number of classical topographical features shared with similar *bramhinadeyas* founded in the area around the same time; its topography is, for example, very similar to that of Melaseval, which was also founded by a Venad king. In contrast to many other towns the Siva temple is not located in the centre of the town, as for example in Madurai, but in its north-east corner; this follows *sastra* prescriptions for the construction of temples according to which Siva is the Lord.

In the centre of the town the two dominant and highest ranking castes, the *Brahmans* and *Vēllālaré* live in and around the rectangle of streets which constitutes the original *brandeya* around which all temple processions pass. There are two *Brahinar* streets to the south of the temple: *Jiata Viti*, immediately adjacent to the temple, in which the temple servants live and which is the first street through which all processions pass when they encircle the temple before they encircle the town, and South Car Street (Big Street), the main *Agraharam* inhabited by *Aīyar*. A third *Brahman* street in the west close to the Varataraja Perumal temple is said to have formerly been occupied by Vaishnava *Aīyankār*, though today of its inhabitants are also *Aīyar*.

Just below *Brahmans* in the caste hierarchy rank the *Vēḷḷālar*, who are usually called *Caiva Pillai* in Kaḷakkāḍu, and smaller groups of the closely related castes of *Tikar* (priests to the *Caiva Pillai*), *Otuvr* (devotional singers), *Caiva Cetiyiār* and *Kottanar Pillai*. These are mainly concentrated in the area around West Car Street and Middle Street, and the northern part of what would elsewhere be called East Car Street.

The alliance between *Brahmans* and *Vēḷḷālar* played a pivotal role in medieval South-East Indian society, which is expressed spatially in their central position in the *Chaturvēdimaṅgalam*. Around this central core of the original *Chaturvēdimaṅgalam* constituted by the four car streets, live the various craft and artisan as well as trading and service castes in a very similar pattern to Melaseval. The east side of the town is inhabited by the *lonar* (Shepherds) and the *Acari* (Goldsmiths, Blacksmiths, Carpenters, Stonemasons), who live in *Viswakarma* Street. Further removed from the centre live the lower ranking *Vaṇiya Cetṭiyār* (Oil Pressers) and beyond them in the south-east corner of the town the Roman Catholic *Paravar* (Fishermen).

At the opposite, western side of the old *Chaturvēdimaṅgalam*, close to but still within the town boundaries, live the two traditional service castes of *Vaṇṇāṇ* (Washermen) and *Maruttuvar* (Barbers). Beyond these, and therefore outside the town proper, are the separate settlements of the lowest ranking castes: the *Iluvan* (Weavers) and *Nātār* (Toddy Tappers), who occupy New Street (*Pitllteru*). Beyond these are the colonies (*ceri*) of the various untouchable castes, namely the *Paraiyar*, not far from the cremation ground on the river bank in the south-west, and the even lower ranking *Kuravar* (Basket makers) and *Cakkiliyar* (Leather workers).

Most of the villages and hamlets in the surrounding countryside are inhabited by *Nātār* and *Paraiyar*. All major caste groups have their own street (*teru*; *veeti*) and within it or nearby a collectively owned caste temple. For the latter they usually jointly employ a priest (*pūcari*) to perform regular worship and celebrate the annual festival (*kotai*). The maintenance of the temple is usually financed by a tax levied on each household.

The arrangement of the streets and temples in relation to the centre, is a spatial expression of the

hierarchy of castes. This pattern remains relatively strong even today in the oldest areas of settlement. Virtually all *Brahmans* live in a *Brahman* street, and most *Vēļļālar* live in *Vēļļālar* streets.

At the other end of the caste hierarchy the lowest ranking and untouchable castes streets have also remained homogenous, although by no means all members of these castes live in them; many *Jatar* in particular have moved to other streets. The religious and social geography of Kaḷakkāḍu is therefore an expression of the caste hierarchy.

The centre of the town corresponds to the apex of the hierarchy and is occupied by *Brahmans* and *Vēļļālar*. Around this core is a circle of middle ranking castes, such as artisans, craftsmen and traders, and at the outer margin of the town's boundary live the various service castes.

Outside its boundaries are the lowest ranking and untouchable castes at the bottom of the hierarchy, who live in separate settlements in the rural hinterland of which Kaḷakkāḍu is the centre. In this way the layout of the town reflects the worldview of its inhabitants.<sup>lviii</sup>

## ECONOMIC CONDITION

Probably, the Nāṅgunēri tāluk comes under the Pāṇḍiya Nāḍu; it was one of the three main territories of Tamil Nāḍu. It seemed to have possessed a distinct and separate geographical entity despite its boundaries subjected to changes from time to time, since the *Saṅgam* period down to the period when it was brought under the control of the Nayak kingdom.

The Pāṇḍiya country had been endowed with a good river water system for which the Vaigai and its tributaries formed the chief source. It had been endowed with rich mineral resources of different varieties and some of them were in great demand in foreign countries during ancient and medieval times.

The history of Pāṇḍiya Nāḍu and the culture of its people were to a large extent determined by the geography of the land and its natural resources which helped agriculture, trade and commerce to grow. Culturally the inhabitants of this region were slightly different from others. People belonging to different castes and communities, and professing different trade activities lived here. Tamil language was spoken by a large majority of people in the region. Since ancient

times down to the end of the medieval period, the Pāṇḍiya region had been geographically expanding and reducing its size in accordance with the conquests and defeats sustained by the rulers of Tamiḷ Nāḍu.

The whole of present districts of Madurai, Ramanadapuram, Tirunelvēli and part of Pudukottai constituted the Pāṇḍiya country. The first and second period Pāṇḍiya kings, on account of their power, wealth and charity, occupied supreme position in the state as well as in the society. Though they enjoyed absolute sovereignty, they were not autocrats. They had to act in accordance with the *Dharma sastras*. Further, the threat of exodus from the kingdom by the aggrieved stood in the way of the exercise of the powers by the kings to behave in an autocratic manner.

Most of the Pāṇḍiya rulers were *Saivites*, they were tolerant towards other religions and extended their patronage to all religions. It is worthy of note that not even a single Pāṇḍiya king of the period was a religious fanatic. The pomp and splendour of the kingship was maintained by a large number of personal staff and the body guards.



Agriculture was the primary occupation of the people and they were called peasants. During the medieval period *Vēḷḷālers* were considered as peasants. In the inscriptions they were referred to as the rulers of the land. During the Pāṇḍiya period, *brahmins* were highly respected by kings and the people. The learned *brahmins*, enjoyed all the privileges in the state and their *agraharam* or residential places received new names such as *Nagarams*, *Chaturvedimangalam*, *Brahmadeyas*.

Inscriptions of the later Pāṇḍiyas are the concrete supporting evidences to testify this fact. The other community was the *Paraiyas* who belonged to the downtrodden caste and were employed as beaters of drums, agricultural labourers, and domestic servants. Since the records reveal that the *paraiyas* also had signed documents, it may be presumed that some of them were literates.

The chief source of revenue for the Pāṇḍiya state was the royal tax on all cultivable lands. The Pāṇḍiya kings acted as real authority for levying of taxes and for exempting taxes. The above said power was carried out by the officers of the state and it facilitated the easy execution of king's order.

## CLASSIFICATION OF LAND

The classification of land was of three forms: wet land, dry land, garden land. Such classification of land is found under the medieval Pāṇḍiyas and various names of crops cultivated in the Pāṇḍiyaṇ country indicated the fairly satisfactory economic condition of the state and the people.

## LAND TAXES

Some of the names of the land dues levied on cultivated lands were *kaḍamai*, *accu-vari*, *vetti-pattam*, *Kariyavaricai*, *Panjupili*, *tari-irai*, *sekkirai*, *invari*, *iḍaivari*. During the period under study, public revenue was derived mainly from land tax and collected in kind or in cash or in both by the local authorities and by royal servants. Failure to pay the land revenue involved the sale of the land in question, not excluding temple lands.

On the other hand, we have evidences to show that there was slackness on the part of the government in the collection of tax arrears. The state's demand of land tax varied from one-sixth to one-fourth of the

gross produce. This proportion was fixed according to the fertility of the soil and irrigation facilities. Some additional charges were also collected from the cultivators.

Tax for mining coins, temple maintenance, marriage and death, besides salt-tax, toll-tax, penalty-tax, headland tax were levied from the traders. A tax was levied on the articles of merchandise, exported and imported in ships and carts, which is to say from across the seas and the interior. Despite a number of taxes imposed on them, the traders did not seem to have been felt the burden of taxes.

## **REMISSION OF TAXES**

Relief from the burden of taxation was granted to the cultivators in case of failure of monsoon, floods or certain other unexpected calamities. The land tax was periodically revised by the state. There were two methods in the revision of taxes. In the first method, the state reduced the rates of taxation. In the second method, the rates of taxation remained unaltered but revision was effected by increasing the length of the unit of measurement. The other items of public income were customs and tools, various kind of professional

taxes, tributes from feudatories, taxes on houses etc. The chief items of public expenditure were maintenance for the king and his court, army and navy, civil administrative staff, construction and maintenance of roads and irrigation works.<sup>lix</sup>

During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Maravarman Pāṇḍiyan remission of taxes by the king at the request of Kalingarayar on the land at the Sivaramangai Chaturvēdimaṅgalam given to the temple at Sivaramangai by Tiruvayakkulamndaiyan Vanamalai Pichan of Velliyur living at Parantakanallur and it registers the order for Sivaramangai Chaturvēdimaṅgalam giving effect to the above grant.<sup>lx</sup>

## TEMPLE LAND AND IRRIGATION

An inscription of Maravarman Pandaiyan deals about the information gift of *1 achchu* by Vēlaṇ Ariyan for *Tiruvadirai* festival in the temple of the God Rajasimheswaram Udiyar at Kurungulam. *Cōla Pāṇḍyaperya Ēri* in the year of C.E. 1305, the king made a gift of 20 *mā* of *iraielinilam* (tax free land) under the *Cōla Pāṇḍyaperya Ēri* for the expenses of providing offering and worship at specified scales of God Tirungiswaramudaiyar.<sup>lxi</sup> The above mentioned

cultivable lands are getting irrigated through the Cōla Pāṇḍyaperya Ēri.

## MEASURES OF LANDS

This record dated in the 2 + 17<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Sadaiya-Maran states that the *Perunguri-sabha* of the village which met in the temple on a day of the solar eclipse in that year invested this amount in the purchase of land 6 *mā* in extent.<sup>lxii</sup>



## **CHAPTER 5**

# **RELIGIOUS CONDITION**

Religion in India is characterized by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices. India is a secular state with no state religion. The Indian subcontinent is the birth place of four of the world's major religions; namely Hindus, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism. Throughout India's history, religion has been an

important part of the country's culture. Religious diversity and religious tolerance are both established in the country by the law and custom, the constitution of India has declared the right to freedom of religion to be a fundamental right.<sup>lxiii</sup>

Tirunelvēli is an important place in the context of religion from the ancient times. The Nellaiappar temple at Tirunelvēli, Sankaranainar temple at Sankarankoil, Kasi Viswanathar temple at Tenkasi and Vanamamalai Temple at Nāṅgunēri are the land marks of the Tirunelvēli signifying the religious culture and importance.

Palayamkottai has many Christian missions and Athankaraipallivasal and Pottalpudur Darga are the important sacred places of worship for Muslims.

Following are the places of religious importance in Tirunelvēli : Swamy Nellaiapper – Kanthimathi Temple at Tirunelvēli; Krishnapuram Vishnu Temple; Thirukutralanathar Temple at Courtallam; Kurukkuthurai Murugan Temple - Tenkasi; Thirumalai Kovil – Tirukkurungudi; Thirupudaimarudur - Thiruvenkatanathapuram; Sri Sorimuthu Aiyandar Temple at Kani Kudiyiruppu – Sankarankovil; Ayikudi



Sri Balasubramaniasamy temple; Holy Trinity Cathedral at Palayamkottai; Athankarai Pallivasal; Pottalpudur Dargha; Agasthiyar Hills.

The present study focuses on three places of Nāṅgunēri taluk in the aspect of religious condition.

## VĀNAMĀMALAI PERUMAL TEMPLE

Vānamāmalai temple in Nāṅgunēri is constructed in the *Dravidian* style of architecture. The temple is glorified in the *Naalaayira Divya Prabandham* - the early medieval Tamil canon of the *Āzhwar* saints from the 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. It is one of the 108 *Divya desam* shrines dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is worshipped here as Vānamāmalai Perumal and his consort Lakshmi as Varamanagi. The temple is believed to have been built by the Pandyas, with later contributions from Vijayanagar kings and Madurai Nāyaks.

The temple covers an area of 5 acres (20,000 m<sup>2</sup>) and has a five-tiered temple tower. The temple is one of the eight *Sywayambu Kshetrams*, the eight temples associated with Lord Vishnu that manifested on its own. Vānamāmalai is believed to have appeared to

Ādisēshaṇ and Garuda. Six daily rituals and a dozen yearly festivals are held at the temple, of which the chariot festival, celebrated during the Tamil month of *Chittirai* (March–April), is the most prominent. The temple is maintained and administered by the Vanamamalai Mutt.

The details about the presiding deity find mention in *Brhmananda Purana*, *Skanda Purana* and *Narasimha Purana*. Sage Narada got the narration about the features of Thodatri and Sargunamangai from Lord Shiva. As per the legend, Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu is believed to have born at this place as Srivaramangai (meaning lady) and hence the place came to be known as Varangunamangai.<sup>lxiv</sup>

## CHETRU THAMARAI PUSHKARANI

When Lord Vishnu destroyed the demons, Madhu and Kaidaba, the bad odour from their body spread polluting the whole earth. Mother Earth lost her natural purity. She came to this place for cleansing. Lord appeared before Bhōmadēvi (Earth) and said, “Pollution set on you is washed off”, according to the *Sthala Purana*. (Figure 8)

## ADISESHA

As per another legend, Adisesha, the serpent performed penance at this place to seek the grace of Vishnu to lay on him. Vishnu was pleased by his devotion and rested on the serpent. Garuda, the eagle also performed penance and was granted a wish to be guarding Vaikunta, the residence of Vishnu.

As per local legend, a childless king named Kaarya worshiped Vishnu at this place. Vishnu directed him to Nāṅgunēri under the earth. The king dug up the earth to see blood oozing from the place. To stop the blood, the king was asked to perform ablution on the presiding deity with oil every day. Blessed with children, the king constructed the temple.

The temple has many inscriptions, the earliest of which is from 1236 C.E. The inscription is from the period of Sundara Pandiya I and indicates a gift from him on the occasion of *Adi Puram*. Another inscription from 1275 C.E. from Kulasekara Pandiya I indicates the details of tax collection in the region. The inscription on the Eastern Gopuram from the period of Sundara Pandiya II in 1284 C.E. indicates gift of land to the temple.

The gift of Vikrama Pandiya III is inscribed on the northern wall in 1299 C.E. From the Vijayanagara rulers, the temple came under the administration of kings of Travancore. A *sanyasi* named *Pushpanjali* was entrusted with the donations from the kings. During the year of 1447 C.E., the temple came under the administration of Vanamamalai Mutt. The first pontiff of the temple arranged for the installation of the idol of the consort of Vanamamalai from Tirupathi. The Namboodris were also replaced by the priests from Tirupathi during the period.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century C.E., the then pontiff sought the help of the ruling Nayak king to resolve local disputes. During 1794 C.E., the Nawab of Carnatic, Abdul Umra, endowed extensive lands to the Mutt. The presiding deity is called Devapiran as he is believed to have married Varamangai, the daughter of the pontiff of Vanamamalai Mutt. The temple is maintained and administered by the pontiff in modern times.

The temple is one among the eight *Sywayambu Kshetras* of Lord Vishnu where the presiding deity is believed to have manifested on its own. Seven other temples in the line are Ranganathaswamy temple at

Srirangam, Bhuvaraha Swamy temple, and Tirumala Venkateswara temple in South India and Saligrama temple, Naimisaranya temple, Pushkar temple and Badrinath temple in North India. The temple is revered in *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*, the 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Vaishnava canon, by Nammazhwar in ten hymns.

As per the accounts of the Jeeyar, the head of the Vanamamalai Mutt, Janakapuri in Nepal, where Rama (an avatar of Vishnu) got married to Sita also has a place called Nāṅgunēri, similar to the Vāṇamaalai temple.<sup>lxv</sup>

## PŌJAS AND FESTIVALS

The temple priests perform the Pōja (rituals) during festivals and on a daily basis based on *Vaiksana Agama*. As at other Vishnu temples of Tamil Nadu, the priests belong to the *Vaishnavaita* community, a *Brahmin* sub-caste. The temple rituals are performed six times a day: *Ushathkalam* at 7 a.m., *Kalasanthi* at 8:00 a.m., *Uchikalam* at 12:00 p.m., *Sayarakshai* at 6:00 p.m., *Irاندamkalam* at 7:00 p.m. and *Ardha Jamam* at 10:00 p.m.

Each ritual has three steps: *alangaram* (decoration), *neivethanam* (food offering) and *deepaaranai* (waving of lamps) for both Vanamamalai Perumal and Thayar. During the last step of worship, *nagaswaram* (pipe instrument) and *tavil* (percussion instrument) are played, religious instructions in the *Vedas* (sacred text) are recited by priests, and worshippers prostrate themselves in front of the temple mast. There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly rituals performed in the temple.

The major festival, the twelve-day *Brahmotsavam* is celebrated during the Tamil month of *Thai* (January - February). Vishnu is considered as *alankarapriyar* (one who prefers decoration), and Shiva as *abishekapriyar* (one who prefers ablution). Vanamamlai temple is one of the few Vishnu temples where ablution is done for the presiding deity on a daily basis. At around 7 a.m. every day, ablution is performed on the presiding deity with milk, curd and other *Pōja* items. The ghee used for ablution is poured in the oil well in the temple, which is considered sacred. During the festival occasions, the festival idols are brought to the Vāṇamaalai Mutt located outside the premises of the temple.<sup>lxvi</sup>

## SRI SATHYAVĀGĪSWARAR TEMPLE

Sri Sathyavāgīswarar Temple in Kaḷakkāḍu is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture. The temple has three precincts. Shiva is worshipped as here as Sathyavāgīswarar and his consort Parvathi as Gomathi.

A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all its shrines. The temple has a 135 ft. (41 m.) gateway tower containing stucco images. There is no mention to any name of the rulers who caused for the construction of this temple or its patrons in the inscriptions. The inscriptions in this temple are of the endowments and gifts made towards the temple which helps understand the administrative setup prevailed therein. The existence of the temple can be traced to 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. known as *Vaipputalam* in 6<sup>th</sup> *Tirumurai* of *Tēvāram* sung by Thirunāvukkarasar. On the basis of this evidence this temple can be assigned to the times of Varaguna Pāṇḍiyā.

The temple has beautiful paintings in the inner side of the *Rājakōpuram* of the temple which are murals. The *Rājakōpuram* is nine tiers and the presence of the paintings is found in all tiers. The temple also

has a granary made of masonry, which is believed to be commissioned during the 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E. There is a hall of musical pillars, commissioned by the king of Travancore, Boothala Veera Udaya Marthanda Varman during the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The temple is open from 6 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 4 - 8 p.m. on all days except during festival days when it is open the entire day. Four daily rituals and three yearly festivals are held at the temple, of which the *Vaikasi Visakam* festival during the Tamil month of *Vaikasi* (May - June) being the most prominent. The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Inscriptions from the temple from the 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E. indicate that the place was called *Cholanadu Vallipuram* and *Vanavan Naadu*. The inscriptions also indicate that the temple worship services and gifts to the temple were endowed by Marthanda Varman, while he was residing at the Virapandiyan Palace. The Vijayanagara Empire and Nayaka kings commissioned pillared halls and major shrines of the temple during the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E. There is also an image of the king of Travancore, Boothala Veera Udaya Marthanda Varman from the 16<sup>th</sup> century



C.E. He is believed to have commissioned the musical pillared halls in the front portion of the temple.

## PŌJAS AND FESTIVALS

The temple follows *Saivite* tradition. The temple priests perform the *Pōja* (rituals) during festivals and on a daily basis. As at other Shiva temples, the priests belong to the *Saivite* community, a Brahmin sub-caste. The temple rituals are performed four times a day: *Kalasanthi* at 8:30 a.m., *Uchikalam* at 11:30 p.m., *Sayarakshai* at 6:00 p.m., and *Sayarakshai* between 8.00 – 8.00 p.m. Each ritual has three steps: *alangaram* (decoration), *neivethanam* (food offering) and *deepaaradanai* (waving of lamps) for both Sathyavāgīswarar and his consort Gomathi. There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly rituals performed in the temple.

The temple is open from 6 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. - 8.30 p.m. on all days except during new moon days when it is open the entire day. The *Vaikasi Visakam* festival during the Tamil month of *Vaikasi* (May - June) being the most prominent. During the festival, the temple chariot is drawn around

the streets of Kaḷakkāḍu, with the festival images of Sathyavāgīswarar and Gomathi housed in it. Other festivals like *Sivarathri*, *Thirukalyanam* (sacred marriage) and *Kanthasasthi* are also celebrated.

## THIRUKURUNGUDI NAMBI TEMPLE

Thirukurungudi is located at the foothills of the Western Ghats. Village life revolves around agriculture and the Nambi Rayar Temple. It is one of the 108 *Divya Desam*, temples that are sacred for the *Vaishnavites*. The temple is located in the centre of the town flanked by four big *Mada Veethis* (*Agraharams*) and at the outer square by four broad and lengthy *Ratha Veethis* (Car Streets). The presiding deity of this *Divya Desam* was sung (*Mangalasanam*) by four *Azhwars*, namely Thirumazhisai Piran, Nammalvar, Periazhwar and Thirumangai Azhwar. The temple has several unique sculptures.

The walls of the temple resemble a big fort and the village has been formed around these walls in a very organized manner. The interiors of the main temple tower is covered with wood sculptures of teak depicting most of the deities as well as other secular scenes. There are five *Nambis* in this *Kshetram*. They

are *Ninra Nambi* (Standing posture), *Irundha Nambi* (Sitting posture), *Kidandha Nambi* (Sleeping posture), *Thiruparkadal Nambi* and *Thirumalai Nambi*.

Thiruparkadal Nambi Temple is located very near to the River Nambiyaru which is one km from the main temple. Thirumalai Nambi Temple is on the hills of Mahendragiri which is 8 km from the main temple. In Tamil language the word '*nambi*' means personification of all virtuous and righteous qualities blended with beauty and grace.

## KAISIKA PURANAM

Thirukurungudi is a very ancient village referred in *Varaha Purana* and *Brahmanda Purana*. *Kaisika Puranam* is within *Varaha Puranam* and was narrated by Varaha Nainar (The third incarnation of Lord Mahavishnu) to Sri Bhoomi Devi. Nampaduven (Madangar) was a great devotee of Lord Nambi, though he was born in a very low class society. He used to sing in praise of the Lord Nambi.

One day, on *Sukla Ekadasi* night in the month of *Karthigai* (*Vrichikamasam*), he was going to the temple crossing through the dense forest, he was encountered

by a *Brahma Raksha* (demon) who was hungry for many days. On seeing Nampaduvan, *Brahma Raksha* was very happy and told him that he wanted to eat him immediately. Nampaduvan was not terrified, but told the *Brahma Raksha* that he would finish his duty first, that is to sing in praise of Lord Nambi and would return without fail. Nampaduvan made many promises, but *Brahma Raksha* was adamant. Ultimately Nampaduvan had made a promise that if he did not return, he would get the sin of those who equate Lord Maha Vishnu with other deities.

On hearing this promise *Brahma Raksha* was very much satisfied and allowed Nampaduvan to do his duty and return. After singing in praise of the Lord Nambi in the *ragam* (tune) Kaisikam Nampaduvan was returning to see *Brahma Raksha*. On the way Lord Nambi in the guise of an old man stopped Nampaduvan and asked him where he was going. Nampaduvan told the truth. The old man advised him to escape in some other route and not to get in the clutches of *Brahma Raksha*.

But Nampaduvan reiterated that he would not deviate from his promise. The old man showed his original image (Lord Nambi) and blessed Nampaduvan. Then Nampaduvan went to *Brahma Raksha* and offered

himself to be eaten by *Brahma Raksha*. *Brahma Raksha* was very much moved by the behavior of Nampaduvar and told him that his hunger had vanished and prayed him to give the fruits of his song sung in the praise of Lord Nambi and persisted him several times. Nampaduvar did not budge an inch, but ultimately offered him the fruits of his song since *Brahma Raksha* totally surrendered.

After obtaining the fruits of the song, the sin of *Brahma Raksha* disappeared suddenly and he got his original image. He worshiped Nampaduvar and thanked him by saying that he was a *Brahmin* by name Soma Sarma in his previous birth and because of some irregularities while performing *yagna* he was cursed to become a *Brahma Raksha* and now he had been redeemed by Nampaduvar.

This episode is being enacted in the temple premises every year on the *Ekadasi* day of *Suklapaksha Karthigai* by the traditional performers who observe *viratha* for ten days. On the next day in the early morning of *Dwadasi*, *Kaisika Puranam* is read out in front of Lord Nambi.

## MALAI NAMBI TEMPLE

Malai Nambi temple is a beautiful mountain, 8 km from Thirukurungudi village. It is a small mountain and a few steps will take to the temple entrance. Small waterfall makes devotees fresh before going to the temple. Lord Nambi with Bhoo Devi and Sri Devi shows grace on the devotees in standing posture. Mahendragiri Mountain near Thirukkurungudi has abundant medicinal herbals.

This mountain is mentioned in the First Chapter of *Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam Sundara Kanda*. Hanuman while going to Sri Lanka in search of Seetha set his feet here and then travelled by sky route. There are many *Siddha Purushas* living in this mountain observing penance.

## FESTIVALS

The following festivals are celebrated every year: *Panguni* (March - April) -*Brahmotsavam*; *Chiththirai* (April - May) - *Vasantotsavam*; *Vaikasi* (May - June) - *Jyeshthabishekam*; *Avani* (August - September) - *Pavitrotsavam*; *Purattasi* (September - October) - *Navarathri*; *Aippasi* (October - November) -

*Dolotsavam*; *Thai* (January – February) - float festival. In addition, during the month of *Karthikai* (November - December) a well-known festival unique to this shrine is called *Kaisika Ekadasi* (with elaborate music and dance) and is celebrated on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the bright half of the lunar cycle.

## LEGENDS

It is believed that the lord obtained initiation into *Srivaishnava* tradition from the *Sri Accarya Ramanuja*, in the guise of a disciple and hence he is accorded the name *Vaishnava Nambi*. It is also believed that Lord Vishnu in his *Varaha avatar* shrunk his form and took abode here after rescuing *Bhumi Devi* from the demon *Hiranyaksha*. Such a shrunk form is believed to be the forerunner for the subsequent *Vamana avatar* later. Accordingly the shrine got the name of *Vamana Kshetram*.

Another story that is told concerns the *Accarya Sri Ramanujar*, when he went to *Thiruvananthapuram* from *Thriukkurungudi* the *namboodiris* there thought there would be trouble for them and hence appealed to Lord *Padmanabha* for help. It appears that the Lord ordered *Garuda* to carry *Sri Ramanujar* and deliver him

back at Thirukkurungudi overnight. This supposed incident is cited as the reason for the absence of Garuda in Thiruvananthapuram.

It is also believed that *Nammazhwar* was born to his parents through the grace of the Lord at Thirukkurungudi when they prayed there. He promised that he himself would be born to them as a child in Azhwar Tirunagari (also known as Tirukkurugur).

## JAINISM

Jainism rock beds and Tirtankaras are found in Ervadi hill and Singikulam hill respectively.

## SINGIKULAM

In Melaseval - Kalākkadu road this tiny village Singikulam is located. On a small rock at this place a small shrine is constructed as facing south. This south facing temple today is worshiped by the nearby people as Bhagavathi Amman, a village goddess. Bhagavathi is a misnomer for the Ambikayakshi figure carved here. On the central shrine located on the western side of this *yakshi*, one Thirthankara figure is chiseled out with an inscription which furnishes the name of the



jainpalli as Niyayapaipalana perumpalli (the place where justice is rendered). The name of the hill is known as Jinagiri and the village is named as Raja Rajanallur alias Thidiyur which was included within Mullinadu. The Thirtankara figure is named in the inscription as ***Enakku Nall Nayakar***. This shrine is now worshiped by the nearby devotees as Bhagavati Amman.

## ERUVADI

On a rock called Irattai Poththai at Eruvadi village two inscriptions are engraved in *vatteluthu* script which is datable to 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Below the images of Thiruthankaras, one of the records furnishes that the figure was the creation of Accanathi. Another record mentions only Nattarru Pokku Sabha who assured to protect the Jain figure.<sup>lxvii</sup>



## **CHAPTER 6**

# **ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

Temple is a conception of divinity while it is both natural and necessary for the image to be projected into a spatial arrangement and concretized by a structural monument. Gods appear there in various forms imagined by their worshippers. These forms are

embodied in sacred images which constitute the most important part of Hindu art.<sup>lxviii</sup>

A Hindu Temple should be designed to maintain its ancient aesthetics, mysticism, philosophy, design principle, components, quality, nature and comfort. This can be done with incorporating the Vaastu in building Hindu Temples.

### **VĀNAMĀMALAI PERUMAL TEMPLE, NĀṆGUNĒRI**

This temple is constructed in Dravidian Architecture<sup>lxix</sup>, the temple has a large five-tiered *gopuram* (gateway tower) and a large temple compound having two prakarams (closed precincts of a temple). There are various pillared halls in the temple. The presiding deity, Sri Vānamāmalai Perumal is seen seated on the Ādisēshaṇ, the serpent deity. Sridevi and Bhodevi, the two consorts of Perumal are seen on either sides of the presiding deity. (Figure 1)

The shrine of the presiding deity is located axial to the entrance gateway *gopuram* and approached through Ardhamāṇḍapa and Mahamāṇḍapa, 16 pillared halls. There are three precincts in the temple, with the shrine of Thayar located in the second precinct. There

is a festival hall in the second precinct in the temple facing south that has sculpted pillars indicating various legends of the *Purnas*. The most notable of them being a legend of Mahabharata where Bhima attacks a lion legged person with his club. The second precinct has pillared halls that has smaller sculpted representation indicating various avatars of Vishnu. (Plan 1)

## THOTHADRI NATHAR

Presiding Deity is called as Deivanathan / Vānamāmalai / Thothadri Nathar. Mother is called as Varamangai Thayar. Sthala Vriksham is Mango Tree. Theertham is Setru Thamarai.

While traditionally temples have only one Swayambumurthy, this is one with 11 Swayambumurthis – Lord Thothadri Nathar in the sanctum sanctorum, Mother Sridevi and Bhoodevi, Sun, Moon, Maharshis Brugu and Markandeya, dancers of the celestial world Urvashi and Thilothama.

Of the eight Vishnu Swayambumurthis, the one in Badrinath in north is covered by fog for six months. Here, the Lord is available for the devotees throughout the year. Gingelly oil abishek is performed to Lord

Thotadrinathar throughout the year. The *vimana*-tower above the sanctum is of Nandavardana design. Lord Brahmma, Indira, king of Sindhu, Garuda Baghwan, Urvasi, and Thilothama were blessed with the *darshan* of Lord in the temple.

This is the only temple where Perumal graces with his royal attire in *Durbar* with Mothers Sridevi and Bhodevi. One of Lord's hands point to his feet and the other on his lap as an assurance that the devotee surrendering at his feet will have a place on his lap. Perumal also holds the *Prayoga Chakra*. Those worshipping the *Chakra* will have no enemies at all in life. (Figures 3 to 7)

## PRAKARA AND MANDAPA

This grand temple has two *prakara*<sup>lxx</sup> (closed precincts of a temple) ornamented with the Pandal Maṇḍapa, Jayanthi Maṇḍapa, Srivilli Maṇḍapa, Kulasekhara Maṇḍapa and the Veerappa Maṇḍapa. An imposing 7 tiered *Rājakōpuram* adorns its entrance. There are also shrines to Varamangai Thaayar, Andal, Lakshmi Narayana, Lakshmi Varaha and Venugopala. The oil used in ablution ceremonies here is considered to be of medicinal value.

On the entrance of the Temple is the Pandal Maṇḍapam and along the side, we can find very big *Maṇḍapams* where Golden Chariot and Golden *Chapparam* (another kind of *perumal vahanam*) are kept. These are taken out during the *Utsavam* done in *Panguni Uthiram*. On the north side, we can find the Vaanamamalai Jeeyar Madam.

When entering into the main temple, we can find Sevvanthi Maṇḍapam which is built by Sevvanthi Nayakar. In this *maṇḍapam* only, the Utsavar gives his *Seva* during *Utsava* times. On the left side of this *maṇḍapam*, we can find Veerappa Nayakar *maṇḍapam*, in which all the pillars are beautifully sculptured with numerous shapes. When passing through this *maṇḍapam*, *sannidhis* for Lakshmi Narayanan, Lakshmi Varagar, Venugopalan and Dasavatharam are found.

### KODI MARAM (DWAJASTHAMBAM)

After crossing the Kodi maram, we can find Kulasekharan maṇḍapa. Here Vadakku Nachiyar, Therku Nachiyar, Manavala Mamunigal, Udayavar, Pillai Ulaga Asiriyar and except Nammalwar, all the Alwars are found in separate *sannidhis*. Nammalwar is

found as "*Sadagopar*" in "*Sadari*" as "*Sadagopar Sadari*" in *Utsavar sannidhi*. Also, separate *sannidhis* for Sri Ramar, Sri Kannan and Sri Chakkarathalwar are found.

After crossing all these, we can reach towards the main *moolavar sannidhi* and can find Thothadri Nathan in Veetrirunda Thirukolam and opposite to him is the Garudalvar. Moolavar is found along with two *pirattiyaars* in Veetrirunda Kolam and Rambhai, Thilothama who are called the Deva Loka women who serve the Perumal. The Ādisēshaṇ, serve as the umbrella for Thothadri Nathan, he is giving his *Seva* to the *bhaktas*.

## SRI SATHYAVĀGĪSWARAR TEMPLE, KALAKKAD

The main shrine is divided into *mōlaṣṭhanam*, Ardha Maṇḍapa, Maha Maṇḍapa and the front side *maṇḍapa*. The moderate sized Shiva Linga idol named Sri Sathyavāgīswarar is located in the *mōlaṣṭhanam* (sanctum sanctorum). The entrance of Maha maṇḍapa has Dwarapalas and Anugnai Vinayakar. It has a sub-shrine where so many metal *Utsava* idols are placed which importantly includes Nataraja-Sivakami. The maha maṇḍapa is also full of artistically beautiful pillars.<sup>lxxi</sup>



A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all its shrines and bodies of water. The temple has ane-tiered 135 ft. (41 m) gateway tower containing stucco images in the outside, while there are murals from the inside. The nine tiers can be climbed through a flight of steps inside the tower.

The image of Sri Sathyavāgīswarar in the form of Lingam is housed in the sanctum. The shrine of his consort is housed in a west facing shrine. The sanctum is approached from the gateway through a flag staff hall, a Mahamaṇḍapa and an Artha maṇḍapa. There are shrines of Vinayaka and Subramanya on the Mahamaṇḍapa.

The first precinct around the sanctum has images of Dakshinamurthy, Vishnu, Durga, Chandikeswara and Navagrahas. The flagstaff hall has a flagstaff, an altar and an image of Nandi, all axial to the sanctum and the gateway tower. There are also halls in the temple having *yali* pillared halls.

The temple also has a granary made of masonry, which is believed to be commissioned during the 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E. It is unique that usually temple granaries

are made of wood. The outer *prakara* is an open area with full of trees and plants. The *Sthala Vriksham* is the *Punnai Tree*; *Theertham* is *Sathya Theertham*. (Plan 2)

## RĀJAGŌPURAM

The east facing magnificent temple has a gigantic 135 feet nine tiered tower. The tower has around 1500 stucco images of various deities and saints. In addition to that there are about 200 ancient mural paintings adorn the inner walls of each of the nine tiers.

The nine tiers of the gopuram, built of bricks, are accessible by a flight of steps. The inner wall is covered with lime plaster on which drawings were first made and then the murals were done with vegetable colours and minerals. (Figure 9 and 10)

The paintings depict scenes from *Ramayana*, *Periyapurana*. Apart from this beautiful tower, there is one more tower. The entrance of the tower has the idol of Gopura Vinayaka. The areas between these two towers have many pillars and the ceiling is covered. The *Bali peetha*, Nandi maṇḍapa and flag staff is located in the maṇḍapa that is found after the inner tower.

## MUSICAL PILLAR MANDAPA

The front side *maṇḍapa* reveals the exquisite workmanship of those days. The *maṇḍapa* has many *Yazhi* pillars; the base of the mega sized *Yazhi* have different small sculptures such as elephant, soldier, girl, monkey are found. The stone sculpture of Bheema fighting with Purusha Mrugam is a highlight of this hall. There is a big sculpture of Cheraman Perumal with his friend Sundarar. The king Veera Marthanda Varma who built this temple is also found in the form of a beautiful sculpture in this hall.

The main highlight of the hall is musical pillars which produce different musical sound (*sapta swaras*) on tapping them. This *maṇḍapam* leads on to another altar with the idol of Goddess Gomathi Ammai (also known as Avudai Nayaki, the consort of Sri Sathyavāgīswarar). To the left of this *maṇḍapa* is a pillared hallway; every pillar has a unique pattern sculpted onto it, no two pillars have the same pattern. (Figure 11)

After exiting the hallway, on the right is a small enclosure which have small statues of the 63 *Nayanmars* (*Shaivite* devotional poets). The *maṇḍapam*

floor has various games and inscriptions carved onto it. One particular inscription is in Kannada, which reads '*Ramanpura*'. And also the stairs that lead to the raised *maṇḍapams* have beautiful *makaras* carved on either side.

## NANDI MANDAPA

The Nandi *maṇḍapa* leads to another *maṇḍapa* which in turns leads to the Sanctum sanctorum or the *Garbhagriha*. On either sides of the door that leads to the altar, are sculptures of a Kings and Saints. On the left is the sculpture of king of Travancore or Venadu, 'Boothala Veera Udaya Marthanda Varman' who is supposed to have commissioned the making of all the sculptures in this temple (in circa 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E.).

On the right are the sculptures of two steadfast friends, Cheraman Peruman Nayanar and Sundarar, the Tamil *Saivite* saints. There is a small sculpture of a horse at the base of Cheraman Peruman's sculpture and a small sculpture of an elephant on the base of Sundarar's sculpture. According to legend Cheraman Peruman and Sundarar reached Kailash, the abode of Siva, on a horse and an elephant.

## GODDESS SHRINE

The Goddess of the temple is Gomati. She is found in a separate east facing shrine located on the left side of the main shrine. She is tall and found with two arms. This shrine has its own pillared front side *maṇḍapa*, flag staff, Nandi and Bali peetha. At the entrance, the small idols of Ganesha and Kartikeya are located.

## INNER PRAKARA

The inner *prakara* which surrounds the main shrine has the sub-shrines as follows: Nālvar, Shaṣṭa-Pōrna-Pushkala, Chitraputrar, Puṇṇaivana Nāthar - Shiva, Amman, Ganesha and Nandi under a *Punnai* tree, Navanētha Krishna - a big shrine with the beautiful front-side *maṇḍapa*, Valampuri Vinayakar, Subramanya-Valli-Dēvasēna, Gaja Lakshmi, a big Kankalanathar along with three *Ganas*, Tiruchitrambalam shrine - the old mural paintings of Natarāja and Kali are being worshiped here, Chandana Sabhapati - Natarāja and Sivakami made of sandalwood, Sanīēsvara, Bhairava, Stone sculptures of Natarāja with the Tamil letter 'Om' written in the background and Sivakāmi, Saṅkaralingam, Gomati,

Shankara Nārayanā and Ganesha, Vishwanathar – Vishālākshi, Annapōrani, Chandikēswara. (Figure 12)

Similar to the mega sized sculptures in the front side maṇḍapa of the main shrine, there are few beautiful sculptures located near Nandi *maṇḍapa*. The sculptures of Arjuna, Karna, Bheema and Purusha Mrugam are all very lively. The pillars that are found across the temple have very interesting carvings and sculptures. Near the second temple tower, there is a *maṇḍapa* named Chekkizhar *maṇḍapa* which is full of pillars with beautiful sculptures. The temple tank is located near this *maṇḍapa*. Nandi *maṇḍapa* itself is intricately sculpted and looks extremely attractive. (Figure 13 and 14)

## GRANARY

Behind the temple building, within the temple walls is a huge masonry granary made of tiny bricks. Granary bins found in temples and palaces in this part of southern Tamil Nadu are usually made of wood, but this one is a masonry granary. The granary could have been used to store paddy during times of drought or when the temple was used as a fortress to fight battles. (Figure 15)

## THIRUKURUṆGUDI NAMBI TEMPLE

Thirukkurungudi *Dhivya Desam* consists of Thiruvattaparai Temple, Thirumangai Alwar Tiruvarasu Temple, Azhagiya Nambi Temple, Thirupaarkadal Nambi Temple and Malaimel Nambi Temple. Main Temple is Vaishnava Nambi Temple, located in Thirukkurungudi. The temple has a flat entrance tower and a five-tiered *gopuram* (gateway tower). The temple has five *praharas*, closed precincts of a temple and all the shrines are enclosed in the first two enclosures. The temple occupies around 18 acres (7.3 ha). There are a number of halls that have sculpted pillars from the Nayak period. There is a shrine to Shiva in the temple, which is an unusual feature in Vishnu temples. There are two other temples namely Thirupaarkadal Nambi located half a mile away from the main temple and Malai Nambi temple located uphill.<sup>lxxii</sup>

There is a festival hall in the second precinct in the temple facing south that has sculpted pillars indicating various legends. The most notable of them being a legend of *Mahabharata* where Bhīma attacks a lion legged person with his club. The walls of the

temple resemble a big fort and the village has been formed around these walls in a very organized manner. The interiors of the main temple tower are covered with wood sculptures of teak depicting most of the deities as well as other secular scenes.<sup>lxxiii</sup> (Figures 17 to 24)

## MOOLAVAR NINDRA NAMBI

*Moolavar* Nindra Nambi or Azhagiya Nambi is also called as ‘Sundara Paripoornam’, meaning ‘Perfect and complete beauty’. He is beauty personified and simply stunning. It is difficult to take one’s eyes off the deity. The deity is present along with two *Piratiyar*, Markandeya Maharishi and Brighu Maharishi.

Also there are separate shrines for Veetrituntha Nambi called as Vaikundhanadhan and Kidantha Nambi. Close to the Nambi’s legs, the head of Mahabali is found. These huge idols are carved of stone with the application of natural colours and decorated with gold leaves as per the *agama* rituals. Shri Vaishnava Nambi is the prime *Utsava* deity of the temple. All the *utsavas* are performed only to him. He stands with four hands, two of them carrying the *Sangu* and *Chakra*, third with *Varada hasta* and the fourth in the *Yoga mudra*. He



wears *Kasturi tilaka* on his forehead and the sacred *Yagnapaveeda* on his body. Also the sacred *Vaijayathi mala* occupies his chest. Swami Nammazhwar sees everything on the eternal body of Sri Vaishnava Nambi and picturized them in his *Veda Sara 'Thiruvaimozhi'*.

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Lord Shiva is given equal place in this temple as Mahendragiri Nathar and *poojas* are performed in both the shrines at the same time. The Bairavar shrine is also present. A hanging bell can be found in Kulasekara Maṇḍapam which is offered by a king of Thiruvīdhangodu.

## THIRUVATTAPARAI TEMPLE

This temple, also part of the Thirukkurungudi *Divya Desam*, is located at 1.7 kms to the South-West of the main temple and about 900 mts from the Thiruparkadal Nambi temple on the bank of the river Nambiyar. It is located at the outskirts of the village. As per the legend, Lord Vishnu disguised himself as a student of Ramanuja. In this temple the relief image Ramanuja along with Vishnu seated in lower seat is found. It is a rare temple dedicated to Guru Ramanuja.

Here there is a rock image of Sri Ramanujar. The *brindavan* of Thirumangai Azhwar is also present.

This is the place where Sri Ramanujar was unconsciously shifted from Kerala overnight and where Lord Himself became a disciple to him. Sri Ramanuja begged his pardon, but the Lord requested the *Acharyan* to preach him the *Thirumanthiram* or *Mahamanthiram*. Accordingly Ramanuja sat on a pedestal befitting his dignity and the Lord seated himself at a lower level in an obedient posture with his right ear just below the mouth of Sri Ramanuja. Even today we can see the great teacher and the Lord in this position here. Here the *Nambi* advised a *Brahmin* and a tribal man who were fighting regarding their rights to have a dip in this place.

## THIRUPARKA-DAL NAMBI TEMPLE

This temple is also part of the Thirukkurungudi *Divya Desam*, is a small *Chathram* located at about 700 meters South West of the main temple at Vattakulam road on the banks of the river Ksheerapti or Thiruparkadal. It is believed that Vishnu after taking the form of Trivikrama shrunk himself back into the form of Vamana (short man) in this site. Hence, this

site is named as Kurunkudi (meaning the abode of short person). There is a small temple dedicated to Vamana in this village. It is the original temple and the village got its name based on this. The main deity of the temple is Vamana - a short idol found with four arms holding conch and discus. Apart from the main deity the idols of Garuda facing him and Vishwakshenar on the side and a bas-relief of Narasimha are found in this temple.

### **MALAIMEL NAMBI TEMPLE**

This temple is also part of the Thirukkurungudi *Divya Desam*, is located at about 8 kms west of the main temple on top of a hillock amidst forests and a refreshing stream in a picturesque location. Malaimel Nambi resides along with Sridevi and Bhooma Devi Naachiyars facing eastern direction. Lord Hanuman is believed to have leaped to Lanka to search for Sita from this mountain top.

### **AZHAGIYA NAMBI TEMPLE**

This is the main temple of the village. This gigantic temple spread across 18 acres is located at the center of the village. The entire village is formed

around this temple. This temple is an architectural marvel and there are a lot of beautiful sculptures and carvings found in this temple. The east facing magnificent temple tower is although incomplete and without any tier, it raises over a flight of stairs.

There are so many sculptures beautifully carved on the walls of the tower as well as on the fort-like entrance walls. This tower which is called as *Chitra Gopuram* has many outstanding wooden sculptures too apart from the stone sculptures. One of the interesting aspects of the sculptures in this temple is that there are many sculptures related to *Saivite*. It is rare to find such kinds of sculptures in a Vishnu temple. The 30 feet tall entrance doors too have so many interesting intricate carvings.

## **AZHAGIYA NAMBI SHRINE**

The main deity of the temple is Sundara Paripoornam aka Azhagiya Nambi aka Nindra Nambi. The deity is tall with four arms holding his usual weapons of discus, conch and mace. He has his consorts Sree Devi and Bhoo Devi on his either sides. All the deities are stucco images and are colorfully painted. Nambi and Bhoo Devi are painted in green color

whereas Sri Devi is painted in golden yellow color. All the three images which are found in the standing posture are outstanding. The main deity is flanked by the stucco images of sages Markandeya and Bhrigu. The metal Utsava idol Vaishnava Nambi along with four Goddesses Sri Devi, Bhoo Devi, Kurunkudi Nachiyar and Andal is also located in the *moolasthanam*. The ardha *maṇḍapa* section of the main shrine has two large *Dwarapalas*.

Also there is a sub-shrine with so many metal *Utsava* idols such as Rama, Lakshman, Sita, Hanuman, Krishna-Rukmini-Bhama, Vishnu-Sri Devi-Bhoo Devi, a rare image of Narasimha with eight arms and in the sitting posture and other idols. The maha *maṇḍapa* has a lot of carved pillars with lion faces on top. There is an exterior *maṇḍapa* where Garuda, again a stucco image, is found facing towards the main deity. A big hanging bell is found on the top. The entire main shrine is built as per the '*maada kovil*' architectural style.

## KURUNGUDI NACHIYAR AND ANDAL SHRINE

Kurungudi Nachiyar is the Goddess of the temple. Her shrine is found on the right side of the main shrine in the first *prakara*. Her shrine is big and has a front side *maṇḍapa* with pillars full of sculptures. She is

found in the form of sitting posture with four arms. Andal is the other Goddess. It is not usual to find her with four arms. In this temple, she is found with four arms similar to Lakshmi. Her shrine is located in the same *prakara* but to the left side of the main shrine.

## FIRST PRAKARA

The first *prakara* has *thinnai* like raised platforms and a lot of pillars with carvings. The back side wall of the main shrine has so many bas relief images. The following sub-shrines are also located here: Narasimha with Lakshmi on his lap, Dasavathara - 10 Avatars of Vishnu, Srinivasa - Sri Devi - Bhoo Devi, Lakshmi Varaha, Kanni Vinayakar (Ganesha), Kidanda Nambi.

There is a shrine dedicated to Pallikonda Nambi aka Kidanda Nambi. Here, Vishnu is found in the reclining posture. All the deities in this shrine are also colorful stucco images. Nambi and Bhoo Devi are in green color. Nambi is flanked by two sages Markandeya and Bhrigu. Both his consorts Bhoo Devi and Sri Devi are also present in this shrine.

An additional deity found here is Brahma. At the entrance of this shrine the red colored stucco image of Kala Bhairava which looks ferocious. (Plan 3)

## IRUNDHA NAMBI SHRINE

There is a shrine dedicated to Veetrirunda Nambi aka Vaikuntanatha. Here, Vishnu aka Nambi is found in the sitting posture. He is again found here with his two consorts and two sages. All the deities are colorful stucco images.

Next to this shrine, there is a shrine for Maha Bali. Here, *Bali* is found in the form of a *Peeta* (symbol) and not in the form of usual figure.

## LORD SHIVA SHRINE

It is unusual to find Lord Shiva in a Vishnu temple. However, in this temple, Lord Shiva is found in the form of Shiva Linga called as Mahendra Girinathar in a separate shrine.

In the same shrine, the metal *Utsava* idols of Shiva Linga, Ambal, Nataraja and Sivakami are all found.

## ALWARS SHRINE

Towards the end of the inner *prakara*, there is a very big shrine found along with the front side *maṇḍapa* and *prakara*. The *maṇḍapa* is full of circular shaped pillars. Two mega sized stone sculptures of Hanuman and Garuda with folded hands are found in the *maṇḍapa*. The shrine has the colorful stucco images of all the Alwars; Kulasekhara Alwar alone is found in green color; importantly he is not holding any weapon but found with his hands folded.

## MANAVALA MAMUNIGAL SHRINE

Next to Alwars shrine, the Manavala Mamuni shrine is found. In the shrine the Alwar is found as a small stucco image. The sculptures are so lively and some of the sculptures found here are: 12 *Yāzhi* pillars, Naraśimha with eight arms fighting with the demon, Naraśimha killing the demon by tearing of his demon, Hanuman and Garuda with folded hands, Vāli and Sugrīva ready to fight with each other, Gypsy lady carrying a short man on her shoulder, Bheema and Purusha Mrigam ready to fight with each other, Gypsy



kidnapping a lady, Few *Yāzhis* in different postures, Gypsy and his wife carrying kids.

## **AZHAGIYA SINGAR MANAVĀLAR SHRINE**

Near to the inner tower there is a shrine dedicated to Azhagiya Singar and Manavālar. This shrine has a long front side *maṇḍapa*.

## **YAZHI MANDAPA**

Near the Azhagiya Singar shrine, there is a *maṇḍapa* named Yazhi *maṇḍapa*. There are so many beautiful *Yazhi* (the mythological animal) pillars are found in this hall.

## **BALI PEETHA MANDAPA**

The flag staff and Bali peetha are all majestic in this temple. Near Bali peetha, there are two *Maṇḍapams*. One is called as Bali peetha *maṇḍapa* and the other hall does not seem to have any specific name. Both the halls are long and have so many pillars in square or octagonal shapes. Each of the pillars has a lot of beautiful carvings and sculptures. The second and

third *prakaras* of the temple have so many pillars with intricate carvings, bas relief images and sculptures.

## **NARASIMHAR SHRINE**

The Narasimhar shrine is located on the bank of the temple tank at the end of the Sannidhi Street just in front of the main Nambi temple.



# CONCLUSION

This book entitled “NĀṆGUNĒRI AND ITS ENVIRONS THROUGH THE AGES” is come to an end after the discussion of the the Nāṅgunēri region and its influence in the record of history. This book traces the records of the Nāṅgunēri region from pre historic period to Vijayanagara Nayaka period. The evidence found in and around the Nāṅgunēri Tāluk, such as Ālavandānkuḷam, Vāgaikuḷam, Valavankōṭṭai, Sidapārapanallur and Kilambūr reveals the existences of pre and proto historic culture of the place. In Ālavandānkuḷam one can notice the middle Paleolithic tools such as flake tools considered to be the earliest prehistoric vestiges in the region.

Micro lithic was found in Vāgaikuḷam village of Nanguneri taluk. In Valavankēṭṭai and Sidapārpanallur micro lithic in Tirunelvēli taluk and Kilambur in Ambāsamudram taluk where one can notice Neolithic celt. The iron age of Kaḷakkāḍu near Nanguneri can be revealed by the megalithic burial remains in places like

Chingikulam,                      Devanmallur,                      Vagaikulam,  
Rajakalmangalam and Melaseval.

Only three sites were referred in Nanguneri taluk viz., Cingikulam, Devanallur and Rajakkalmangalam, the Iron Age Urn in this place with the following antiquities found Black-and-Red ware, Red ware, and Black ware. In this place as the Iron Age Urn site with the following antiquities found Black-and-Red ware, Red ware, and Black ware.

The legend story and some historical records give the information about the toponymy of the Nāṅgunēri which is bounded four by reservoir, and the center of place is called in Tamil as Nāṅgu + Eri = Nāṅgunēri; Nāṅ + Kur + Eri = Nāṅgunēri.

The second chapter gives the information about the historical background and source of the Nāṅgunēri region especially epigraphy and literature. From the early times this region had no separate existence, but formed merely the southern portion of the Pāṇḍya country, and this was the position it occupied under the Chōḷas, the early Muhammadana, and the Nāyakās, as well as under the Pāṇḍyas themselves. It was not till the incorporation of the kingdom of Madura, including its

various district and dependencies into the territories under the rule of the Nawab of Arcot (C.E. 1744).

To determine the political history of the Nāṅgunēri by epigraphical evidences found in this tāluk in and around Nāṅgunēri namely Kaḷakkāḍu, Valliyūr, Vijayanārāyanapuram, Karuvēlankuḷam, Tirukkurṅguḍi, Tiruppḍaimarudūr and Mēlaseval which are located in the Nāṅgunēri tāluk except Tirupuḍaimarudūr and Mēlaseval which are located in Chēramādēvi and Ambāsamudramtāluk respectively.

The epigraphy of the Nāṅgunēri tāluk gives about the kingdoms which were rule in this region viz., Āy chieftains of Saṅgam period, Early Pāṇḍiyās, Imperial Chōlas, Later Pāṇḍiyās, Chēras of Vēnāḍ, Vēnāḍ Rulers and Vitthala invaded Travancore during 1544 – 45 C.E. and also have sent his agent Rāmappa Nāyaka to Kaḷakkāḍ village of Nāṅgunēri tāluk in the following year 1546 – 1547 C.E. The following political division existence in this region i.e. *Malai Mandalam*, *Karaikand-Nāḍu*, *Irambadu*, *Tiruvengada Perunguri-sabha*, *Valainjiya Kurichchi*, *Turuttimangalam*, *Vijayanarayana-chaturvedimangalam*, *Sivaramangai Chaturvedimangalam*.

Social structure classified the society in principle into four varnas, the following cast terms traced through the inscription viz., *Bramanas*, *īiyar*, *Vaishnavaiīyankar*, *Vēļļālar* (*Caiva Pillal*), *Otuvr* (devotional singers), *Caiva Cetiyiār*, *Kottanr Pillai*, *lonar* (Shepherds), *Acari* (Goldsmiths, Blacksmiths, Carpenters, Stonemasons), *Vaniya Cettlyar* (Oil Pressers), *Paravar* (Fishermen), *Iluvan* (Weavers), *Nātar* (Toddy Tappers), *Vaṇṇāṇ* (Washermen), *Maruthuvar* (Barbers) and the *Paraiyar*.

Agriculture was the primary occupation of the people in Tamil country and were called peasants. During the medieval period *Vēļļālars* were considered as peasants. In the inscriptions they were referred to as the rulers of the land. The classification of land was of three forms, viz., wet land, dry land, garden land. Such classification of land was found under the medieval Pāṇḍyas and various names of crops cultivated in the Pāṇḍyan country indicated the fairly satisfactory economic condition of the state and the people.

Religious condition of this region Before C.E. 1565 the Hinduism practiced by the society after the invention of the Mughals slowly Islamic and Christian culture to rising, also the aerial measurement of the art

and architecture of the region also discussed in this study. Mainly the objective of this study to widely open the eye of regional study like the other region of Tamil Nāḍu in future to reconstructed the real history of Tamil country.





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## GLOSSARY

<i>agama</i>	-	ritual book, dealing with pujas utsavas, temple
<i>alpanasikara</i>	-	an architectural embellishment, half nasika appearing at the corners of vimana or gopura
<i>ardha</i>	-	half
<i>ardhamandaba</i>	-	half mandaba, initial posture in dance recital
<i>ashisthana</i>	-	second layer of plinth in dravida
<i>brahmadēyam</i>	-	tax free lands to brāhmaṇas
<i>chakra</i>	-	disc, emblem of Vishnu and Devi

<i>chaturvēdimāṅgalam</i>	-	tax free cultivable lands
with settlement place to		
<i>chēri</i>	-	part of ūr (village)
<i>chittiramēli</i>	-	guild for cultivators
<i>gopuram</i>	-	massive gateways in south
Indian temples		
<i>griva</i>	-	neck
<i>kalasa</i>	-	pitcher, finial of the
Indian temple		
<i>kudu</i>	-	horse shoe shaped arch
<i>kumbha or panjara</i>	-	pitcher, pot like relief
<i>kumuta</i>	-	water lily a plinth molding
in dravida vimana		
<i>mā</i>	-	scale for land survey
<i>maḍam</i>	-	temple charity
<i>mahamandapa</i>	-	spacious or big pavilion
<i>mandapa</i>	-	pavilion

<i>pada</i>	-	foot
<i>padaiyal</i>	-	holy food
<i>padma</i>	-	foot palms rested on stage
with widened knees		
<i>pithi or patha</i>	-	wall section of a temple or edifice
<i>pōja</i>	-	ritual worship
<i>puram</i>	-	city – township
<i>raja</i>	-	king emperor
<i>sakthi</i>	-	goddess
<i>upana</i>	-	a member of the plinth
<i>upapita</i>	-	lower part of the plinth,
employed to increase the various talas		
<i>vēli</i>	-	land survey scale
<i>veḷḷi-kalañchi</i>	-	a kind of silver ornament
in respect of god		
<i>veḷḷi-taligai</i>	-	silver plate

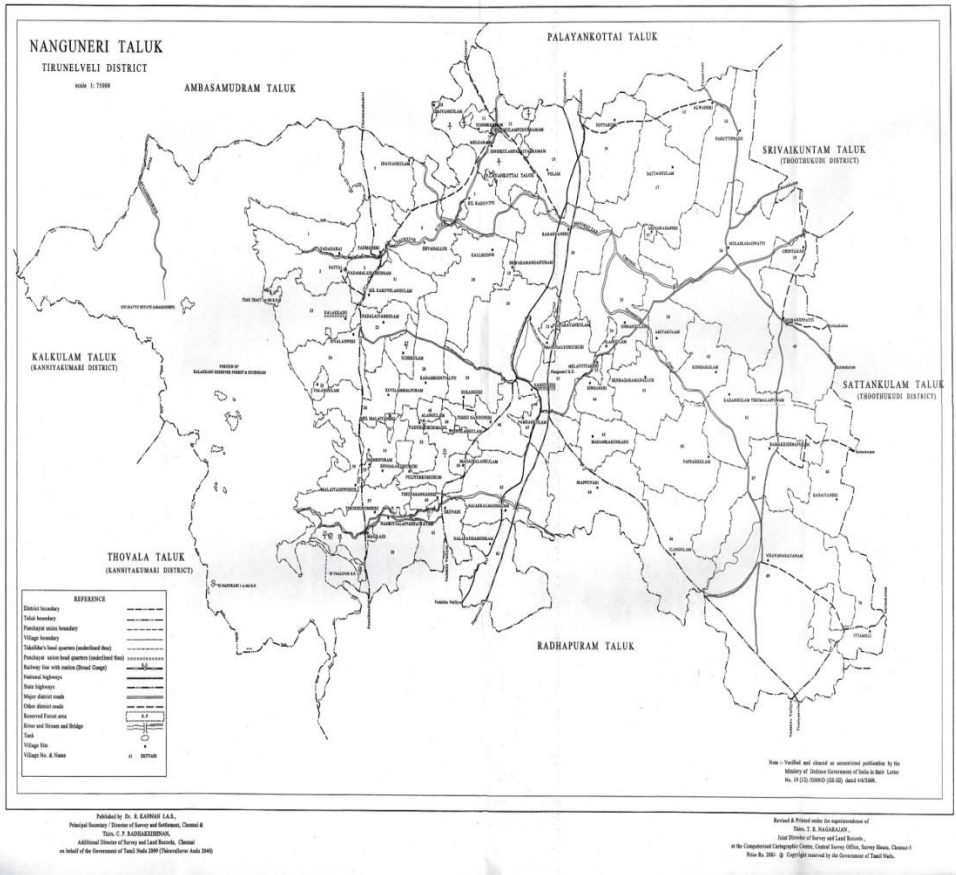


# ILLUSTRATIONS

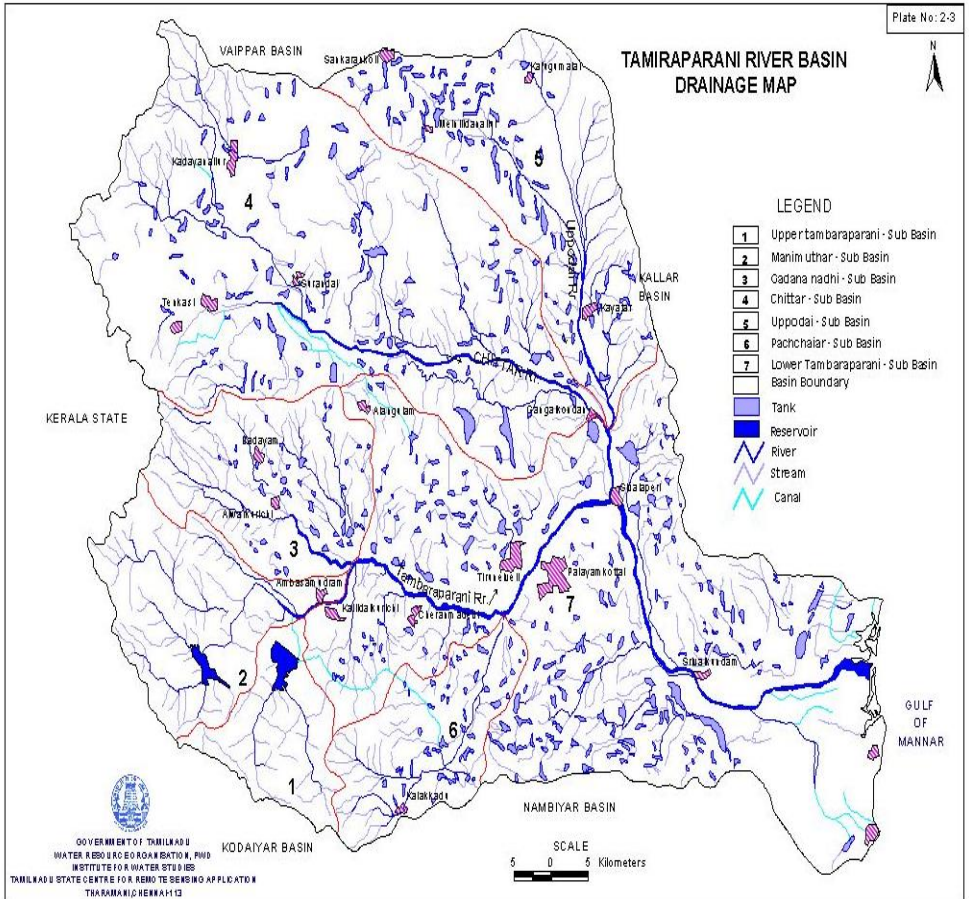
# MAPS



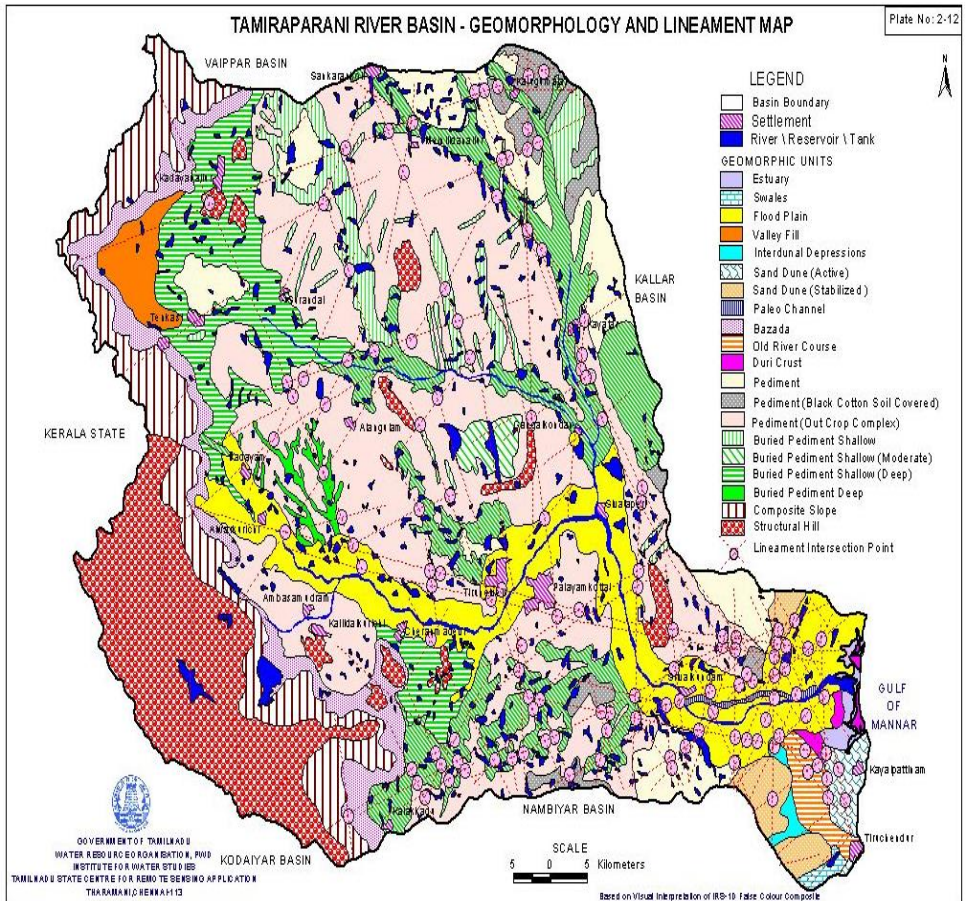
## NĀṆGUNĒRI AND ITS ENVIRONS THROUGH THE AGES



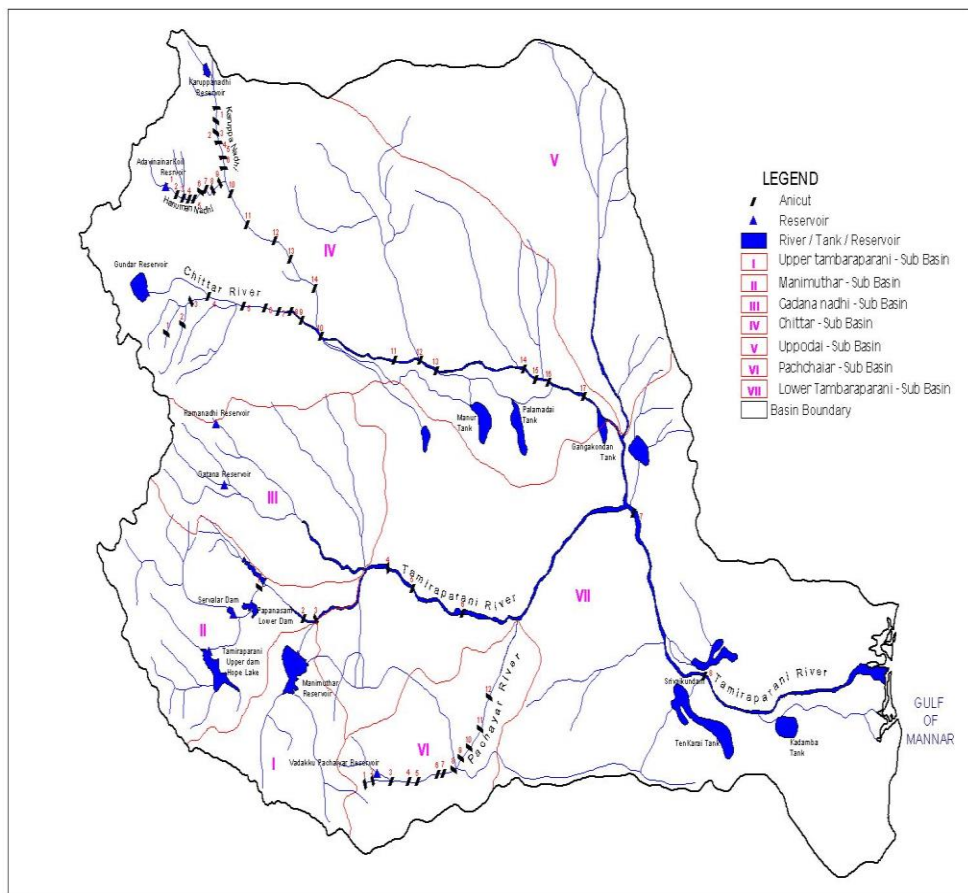
**Map 2 : Nāṅgunēri Tāluk.**



**Map 3. Thāmiraparani River Basin.**



**Map 4. Thāmiraparani Geomorphology.**



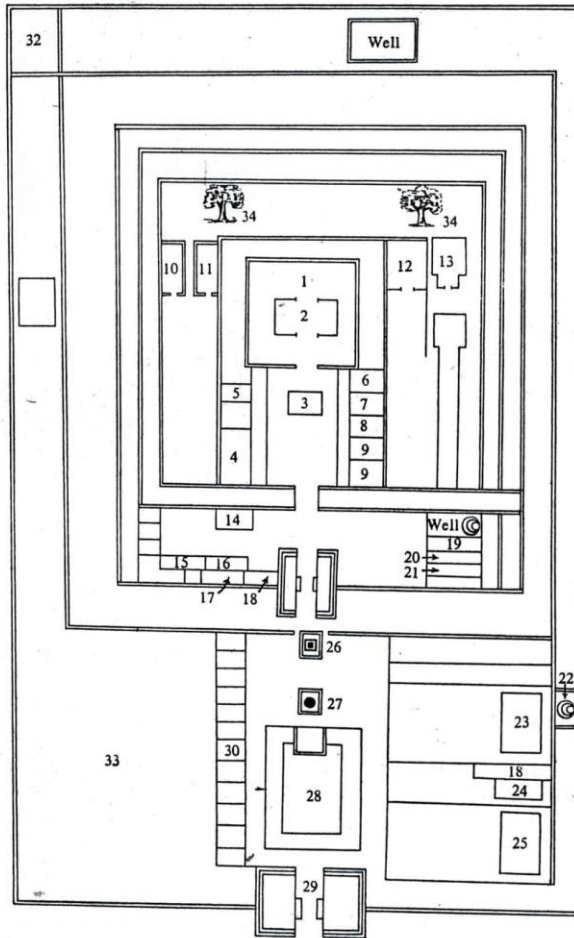
### Map 5. Thāmiraparani and sub-basins.

## **PLANS**





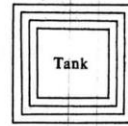
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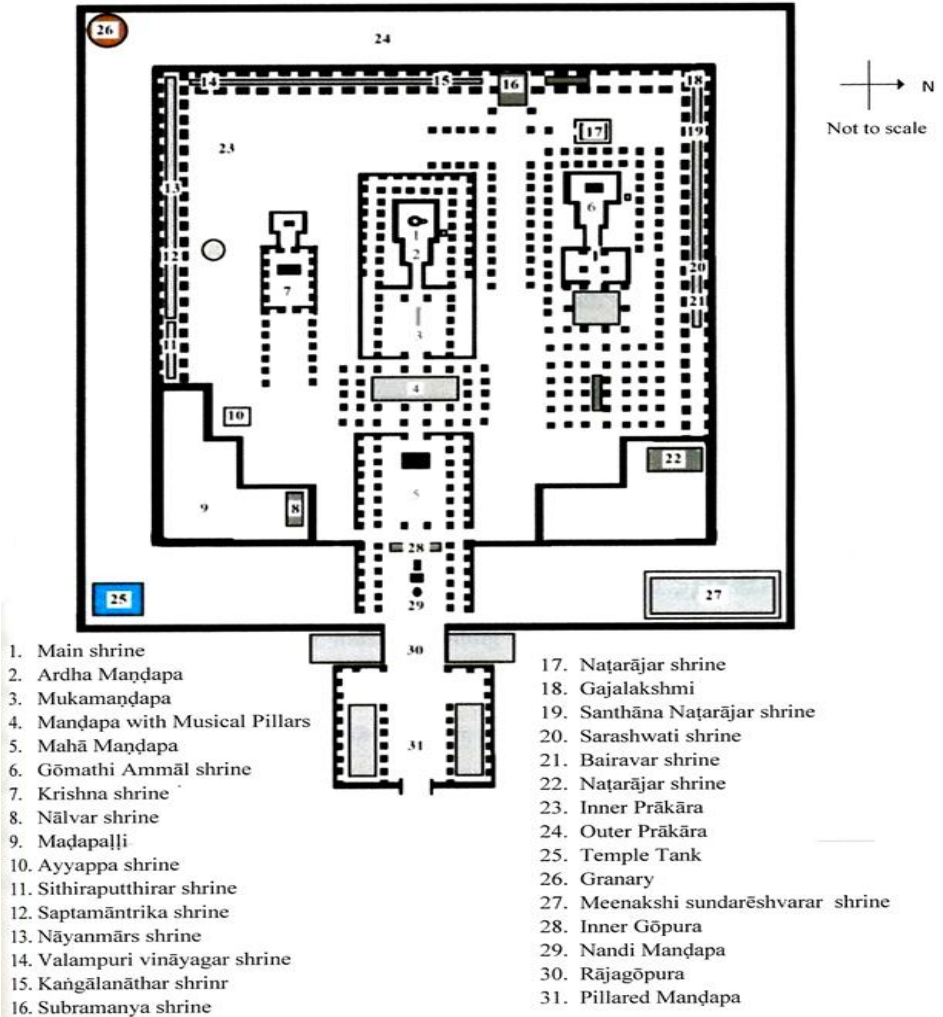
- 1 Vanamamalai Perumal (Moolavar)
- 2 Artha Mandapam
- 3 Garudan
- 4 Chakkaratnalwar
- 5 Palliarai
- 6 Lakshmi
- 7 Ukshakesar
- 8 Thirukarunainambi
- 9 Karuvoolam
- 10 Nachiyar
- 11 Yagasalai
- 12 Ramaswamy
- 13 Andai
- 14 Kulasekhara Mandapam
- 15 Madapalli
- 16 Store Room
- 17 Keni Perumal
- 18 Pattapuram Kattalai
- 19 Alwar
- 20 Udayavar

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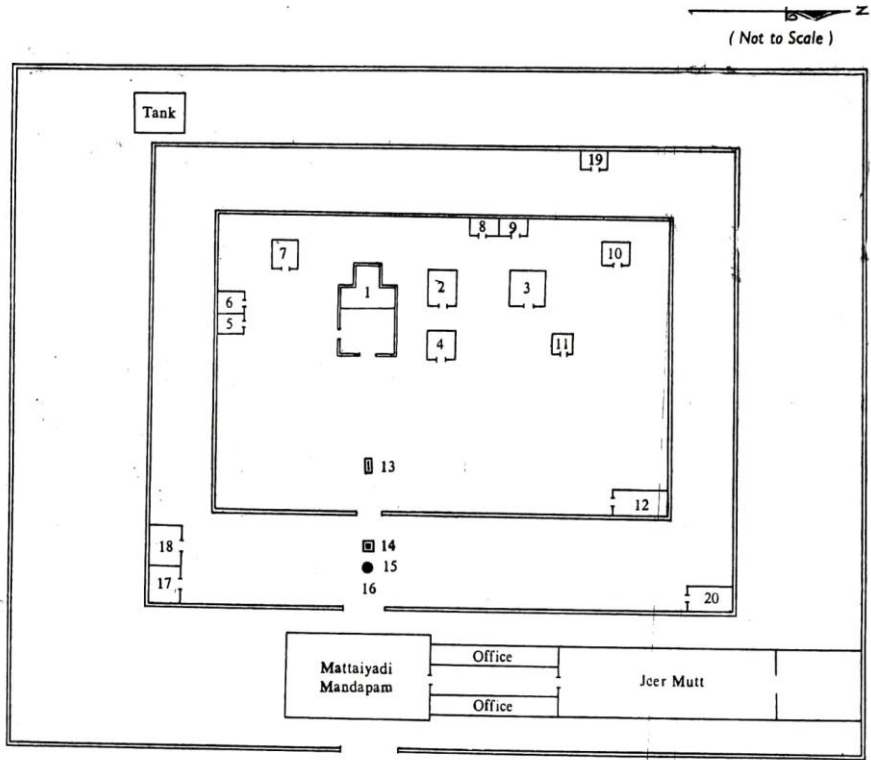


- 21 Pillaipagasariyan
- 22 Oil Well
- 23 Veerappa Naicker Mandapam
- 24 Venugopalan
- 25 Manavalamamuni
- 26 Dwajasthambam
- 27 Balipeedam
- 28 Sevanthi Mandapam
- 29 Entrance
- 30 Vahana Godown
- 31 Mandapam
- 32 Granary
- 33 Garden
- 34 Sthalaviruksham

Plan 1: Vānamāmalai Perumal temple in Nāṅgunēri



Source: *Paintings of Sri Satyavagisvara Temple, Kalakkadu – A Study*  
by M.Ramesh (unpublished M.Phil.Dissertation)  
Plan 2: Sri Sathyavāgīswara Temple, Kaḷakkāḍu



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| 2 Nambirayar (Sitting)   | 12 Ramanujar         |
| 3 Nambirayar (Lying)     | 13 Garudan           |
| 4 Umamaheswarar          | 14 Dwajasthambam     |
| 5 Lakshmi Narasimhar     | 15 Balipeedam        |
| 6 Lakshmi Varagaperumal  | 16 Abisbega Mandapam |
| 7 Kuruogudiavalli Thayar | 17 Madapalli         |
| 8 Dasavadaraperumal      | 18 Kaisika Mandapam  |
| 9 Srinivasaperumal       | 19 Krisbnaan         |
| 10 Andal                 | 20 Manavalamamunigal |

**Plan 3: Thirukurungudi Nambi Temple, Thirukkurungudi**



## **FIGURES**



**Fig. 1 : *Rajagopuram* (Main entrance), Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**



**Fig. 2 : Ther (Temple car), Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**



**Fig. 3 : Mother Sridevi and Bhoodevi, Sun, Moon, Maharshis Brugu and Markandeya, Dancers of the celestial world Urvasi and Thilotham, Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**



**Fig. 4 : Festival Hall in the Second Precinct,  
Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**





**Fig. 5 : Side view of Prakara,  
Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**



**Fig. 6 : Kulasekharan Mandapam,  
Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**



**Fig. 7 : Yali Pillar and Vadakku Nachiyar, Therku Nachiyar, Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**





**Fig. 8 : Setru Thamarai Theertham,  
Vānamāmalai Perumal Temple, Nāṅgunēri**



**Fig. 9 : Natural Background View of  
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**Fig. 10 : *Rajagopuram* (Main entrance) of Sri Sathya Vageeswarar Temple, Kalakkāḍu**



**Fig. 11 : Musical Pillar of Sri Sathya Vageeswarar Temple, Kaḷakkāḍu**





**Fig. 12 : Inner Prakara of Sri Sathya Vageeswarar Temple, Kalakkāḍu**



**Fig. 13 : King Vēeramārthāṇḍar, Sri Sathya Vageeswarar Temple, Kaḷakkāḍu**



**Fig. 14 : Bōōthala Vēera Udaya Mārthānda Varman, , Sri Sathya Vageeswarar Temple, Kaḷakkāḍu**



**Fig. 15 : Granary at Sathya Vageeswarar Temple, Kaḷakkāḍu**





**Fig. 16 : Paintings on Maha Mandapa, Sathya Vageeswarar Temple,  
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**Fig. 17 : Main Entrance of Thirukkurungudi Nambi Temple,  
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**Fig. 18 : Narashima Avathara of Lord Vishnu on the Pillar,  
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**Fig. 19 : Sculptures on the Mandapa Wall related Mahabaratha Story, Thirukkurungudi Nambi Temple, Thirukkurungudi**



**Fig. 20 : Sculptures on the Mandapa Wall legend of Mahabharata Where Bhīma attacks a lion legged person with his club, Thirukkurungudi Nambi Temple, Thirukkurungudi**





**Fig. 21 : Micro Size Sculptures on the Pillar,  
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**Fig. 22 : Sculpture of Kannan at Ayarpāḍi stolen the ghee from Uri, Thirukkurungudi Nambi Temple, Thirukkurungudi**



**Fig. 23 : Sculpture of the Lord Vishnu on the head of the Garuda,  
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**Fig. 24 : Sculpture of Bull and Elephant,  
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