

## **The Spice Road ‘Vaṭakarai Zamīndārī’ Its Historicity and Architectural Remains<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The western part of the Maturai region adjoining the chain of hills is a neglected area in architectural research. It was the “Spice Road” during British Rāj for transporting spices from the cardamom hills. No thorough architectural survey has been undertaken yet. The present article presents a chip from a huge block, reflecting on the architectural remains and historical vestiges of Periyakulam. The dusty township is divided into two parts called Vaṭakarai and Teṅkarai, and is graced by the seasonal flow of a rivulet called Varākanati/Varāhanadī. A center of Śivaism and Viṣṇuism, it was the base of a *zamīndār* family beginning with Rāmabhadra Nāyaka (c. 1534 CE) that claims descent from the Nāyakas of Maturai. The entire landscape is dominated by temples for the Hindu divinities, particularly *grāmadevatās*, and the recently emerging churches and *dargaḥas*. The article presents a brief sketch of architectural history; mainly concentrating on the archaeological remains and their

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potentiality for future research (University Grants Commission approved 2014). The article is illustrated with photographic evidences and plans of the city and temples.

**Keywords:** Spice Road, Periyakulam, Nāyakas, Vaṭakarai, zamīndāri, Ramabhadra Nayaka and successors, Rājēndracōlīśvaram, Bālasubrahmaṇya, Kailāsanātha, *Mailaimēl*-Vaidhyanātha, Varada-rājasvāmi, architecture, *drāviḍa-vimāna*, iconography, Vīrabhadra.

Vaṭakarai means “northern bank” of a river and in case of the present study, it stands for the city that lay to the north of the river, Varākanati/Varāhanadī that flows from the Western Ghats; a tributary of Vaikai. Topographically the area is significant; the trade route that we may call “Spice Road” allowing passage to Kerala through the Kampam (slang Kumbam) passes. A vast stretch of land from Tiṇṭukkal (Anglicized Dindigul) or Koṭai/Kōṭai/Koḍai Road to Kampam passing through Gāndhigrāmam, Cempatti, Verrilaikkunṭu /Vatta-lakkunṭu, Kaṅkavārpatti/Gaṅgavārpatti, Kāṭṭurōṭu<sup>2</sup>/Ghat-Road, Deva-dānappatti, Periyakulam, Lakṣmīpuram,<sup>3</sup> Tēṇi, Ciṇṇamaṇūr (of the famous Pāṇḍya Copper Plates of Neṭuṇṇaṭaiyaṇ Parāntaka 765-815 CE), Uttamapālaiyam, Tēvāram and Kūṭalūr lay forming a semi-circle on the way, covering about 90-120 kms. All places, excepting Tiṇṭukkal (pillow-stone) and Koḍai Road fall on the foothills of the Western Ghats.<sup>4</sup> Kūṭalūr (meeting-place, cf. the historical Kūḍal-

<sup>2</sup> This word presents a strange phonetic variation of Ghat Road; ghat *kāṭṭu* (*kāṭu* “forest”) and road *rōṭu*. The *Webster’s New Dictionary & Thesaurus*, 171 (USA: Promotional Sales Books, 1995) says ghat is derived from Hindustani. However, in the *Oxford English-Hindi Dictionary-Aṅreji-Hindi Śabdakośa* p. 435 (eds. S.K. Verma & R.N. Sahai, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003) no word equal to “ghat” is found; *parvata* or *pahāḍ* “mountain” appears.

<sup>3</sup> We have nostalgia for writing this article, being the land of our mother’s birth; keeping in mind Thomas Pain’s captive words: “My country is the world, and my religion is to do good”. Mrs. Bhuvanesvari Kalidos, our mother is a scholar in oral history. She feeds us with data not found in books. Her reminiscences methodized in a thesis got for Jeyapriya Rajarajan her doctoral degree (*vide*, note 48).

<sup>4</sup> In geo-physical terms the Eastern and Western Ghats meet at Utakamaṇḍalam (Anglicized Ooty). It then moves a single chain via the Paḷaṇi hills up to Kanyākumārī. Kerala lay on the hills, linking the Western Ghats with its extension beyond Utakamaṇḍalam. Access from Tamilnadu to Kerala is by way of Pālakkāṭṭu-kaṇavāy (Palghat pass), Mūṇāru (via Bōḍināyakkaṇūr), Kumulī (via Kambam), Ceṅkōṭṭai (Tirunelvēli zone) and Nākarkōyil in Kanyākumārī.

Śaṅgama) is on the gateway to Kerala from where the mountainous path begins, leading to Kumūḷi. On the peaks, the hill-cities of Koḍaikkāṇal, Tēkkaḍi, Kumūḷi and Mūṇāru/Muṇṇār (three rivers) are situated. Today Kumūḷi is the deadline between Tamilnadu and Kerala; formerly part of the Madras Presidency. Tēkkaḍi, away from Kumūḷi on the hills is in Kerala, a wild animals’ reserve. Koḍaikkāṇal a hill-resort is in Tamilnadu; the discovery and mostly work of the British collectors of Maturai where one may find remnants of colonial architecture; e.g. the Kohinūr Palace. One views an enchanting sight during the monsoon while moving this way either from Tiṇṭukkal and Koḍai Road (a rail station close to Maturai from Chennai) or even Maturai to Kumūḷi amidst a vast stretch of paddy fields, millets, and sugarcane and coconut groves. Otherwise, the way from Tiṇṭukkal to Vattalakkūṇṭu is parched during the summer. The land is watered by the tributaries of Vaikai; e.g. Maṇjalāru (“Yellow River” with Silver Cascades, near Koḍaikkāṇal), Varāhanadī (flowing from Varāhamalai “Varāha Hill”), Pāmpāru (“Snake River” with a cascade, Kumpakkarai “brim of pitcher”), Mullai (close to Vīrapāṇḍi<sup>5</sup>), Periyāru (up above the hills in Ke-rala), Curuḷi (close to Kampam with waterfalls), Kirutamāl (close to Maturai) and Kuṭavanāru (close to Tiṇṭukkal bound northward to meet the Kāviri). Varāhanadī and Pāmpāru find a confluence at the eastern edge of Periyakuḷam. All the way one may find dry rivulets cutting the highway.

The venue of the study is Periyakuḷam (Map) that consists of two integral sections, called Vaṭakarai and Teṅkarai (southern bank).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> It meets Vaikai on the hills and the Mullai-Periyāru Dam across the river was the dream-work of Colonel Pennycuik. It was designed to divert the excess water emptied in the Arabian Sea to help agriculture in the dry western Maturai district. The projects helped reform the criminal Kaḷḷaṇ (literally ‘robber’) and bring them under the rule of law, called “Kallaṇ Reclamation”. Col. Pennycuick is a god to the people in the region. In recent times the Government of Kerala moves to demolish the Periyār Dam, creating a political turmoil. The British Governors-General and Governors left us 65 years ago. The good work done by them is nostalgically remembered today by many a patriot. These memoirs are erased from the pages of history. For example the portrait of the Prince of Wales and *Divan Bhadūr* Veṅkaṭa Rāmabhadra Nāyaka were kept in the Victoria Memorial School of Periyakuḷam. Today the portraits have mysteriously disappeared. It may not be a wonder if the name of the school is altered in the name of a contemporary *dādā*-politician in future.

<sup>6</sup> The city proper seems to have originated in Vaṭakarai and Teṅkarai grew with coming of the *pālaiyakkārar* (English polygar, *pālaiyam* called *pollam*) family of Vaṭakarai. The *pālaiyam* created by the Nāyakas, existed under English East India

The colloquial city-name means “big-tank”, *periya-kulam*. Surrounded by mountain ranges, Varāhanadī flows in the heart of the flimsy city;<sup>7</sup> one may have a glamorous view of the Kōṭai Hills from here and during nights we find twinkling little stars, studded on the hills.<sup>8</sup> During monsoon a high waterfall plunging into an abyss from the summit of the hill is viewed, which is unreachable and empties its water in a small dam raised on Mañjalāru. One travelling in a motor-car at a high altitude finds this dam a tub amidst hills at the foot of the Kōṭai Hills.

We are particularly interested in the present work because no historian thought of this vast strategic region while writing the histories of Pāṇḍyas and Nāyakas.<sup>9</sup> In view of this lacuna, the authors propose to undertake a project in the long run on “Art and Archaeology of the Upper Vaikai Bed”,<sup>10</sup> mainly to cover the temples on the upper reaches of the Vaikai River, west of Maturai. A number of Nāyaka and post-Nāyaka temples exist in the region that is totally “forgotten” (to aptly employ Robert Sewell’s word), excepting the Early Pāṇḍya structural temple at Ciṇṇamaṇūr of which T.S.

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Company down to the end of the eighteenth century. When liquidated, they were called *zamīndār*, holders of a *zamīn* “estate”. The *pālaiyakkārar* had an army. The *zamīndārs* were deprived of it. The Vāṭakarai *pālaiyakkārar* seem to have stood on the side of the British during the later eighteenth century “polygar wars” and were left unmolested.

<sup>7</sup> People are nostalgic of a proverb: *inḱiṭṭum aṅkiṭṭum ūru, naṭuvila āru, aṅcu tēru vantu pāru* “city to this side and that side, river in the middle, five temple cars, come and see”. Vide, Jeyapriya Rajarajan, *Rare Images in the Iconographic Profile of Nāyaka Art*, *Annali dell’ Istituto Universitario Orientale Napoli*, 69/1-4, (2009 in press).

<sup>8</sup> Koḍaikkāṇal is today the venue of an observatory, the Mother Teresa Women’s University and the oldest Archive and Library of the Jesuit Fathers. It accommodates several English schools of the yester aristocratic tradition. R.K.K. Rajarajan and his brother R.K. Vijaya Raghavan were schooled here for some time. Alas! Raghavan is no more today:

We dedicate this small piece of literature to Vijaya Raghavan *Naiḍugāru*.

<sup>9</sup> K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom* (Madras: Swathi Publications, 1972 [first ed. 1929]); R. Sathyanathaier, *History of the Nayaks of Madura* (Madras: 1914). Raju Kalidos 1989 listed and studied the temple cars in this region (*vide*, note 31).

<sup>10</sup> We hope to organize an international conference in this connection, inviting few experts from England, Italy and Germany. R.K.K. Rajarajan is on the research faculty of the Gandhigram Rural University. R.K. Parthiban completed his Masters in the Brandenburg Technological University, Cottbus and is Director of the Cheran School of Architecture, K. Paramathy (Karūr).

Thangamuthu 1982 came out with a thesis 25 years ago.<sup>11</sup> It is disheartening to note this temple finds no place in K.R. Srinivasan’s *Temples of South India* (New Delhi 1971) and K.V. Soundararajan in M.W. Meister & M.A. Dhaky eds. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. South India. Lower Drāviḍadeśa* 200 BC – AD 1324 (New Delhi 1999), Chaps. 3 & 6. T.V. Mahalingam has reported thirty-one inscriptions from the temples therein (*vide*, the author’s *A Topographical List...*, V, 208-15 – see note 37). Practically, no scientific work has been reported excepting Tāṭikkompu, close to Tiṇṭukkal.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the present article is of concern to scholars working on Nāyaka history and art because it remains obliterated from the pages of history. The history of Nāyaka art itself is a fertile field for further research (cf. Michell 1995, Rajarajan 2006, Jeyapriya 2009 & Rajarajan 2011 – see notes 7, 12 & 21).

The article consists of two sections; dealing with the quasi-history of the *zamīndārs* and the temples of Periyakuḷam; mostly based on oral memoirs and records of the living *zamīndār* family. The “Big Temple” is for Śiva, called Rājēndracōḷīśvaram. The Viṣṇu temple in Teṇkarai is for Varadarāja. The *zamīndārs* built a temple on a hillock that is called *Malaimēl*-Vaidhyanāthasvāmi (Lord Physician on the Hill). Several other temples for the village goddesses and gods such as Bhagavatī, Kālī (Fig. 12), Māri, Ellammā, Vīreśvara /Vīrabhadra, Pōttirāja, Kaṇuppu and so on are spread over an area that falls within a radius of 5-8 kms.<sup>13</sup> In fact the temples for these “little gods and goddesses” outnumber those of the “higher tradition” of which a detailed report is warranted keeping in mind Henry Whitehead’s *The Village Gods of South India* 1921.

<sup>11</sup> T.S. Thangamuthu, *Art and Architecture of the Ciṅṇamaṇūr Early Pāṇḍya Temple* (M. Phil thesis, Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University 1982). A contributor to the *East and West*, ISIAO Rome, he was a professor in the Madurai Kamaraj University and passed away in an accident recently. May his Soul Rest in Peace!

<sup>12</sup> S. Gopalakrishnan, The Raṅga-*maṇḍapa* of the Tāṭikkompu Temple. A Study of an Iconographic Programme of the Vijayanagara Tradition. *East and West*, 46/3-4 (1996), 415–31. This temple registers a donation of Rājādhirāja Rāja Parameśvara Rāmadeva *Mahārāya* 1618-30 CE (*South Indian Inscriptions*, VI, no. 291). Earlier founded by the Pāṇḍyas, it was rebuilt by the Āraṇḍu rulers through the Nāyakas of Maturai. See also R.K.K. Rajarajan, Dakṣiṇāmūrti on *vimānas* of Viṣṇu Temples in the Far South, *South Asian Studies*, 27/2 (2011), 131–44.

<sup>13</sup> The architectural drawings and photos were by the author from the field.

## I

“That Hindu India has had a severely underdeveloped sense of history is a common-place assumption. Unfavourably contrasts are made not only with the West, but with those most historical Asian civilizations, China, and with the Islamic world. Traditional Indian “historiography,” when it is referred to at all, is most often characterized as fabulous legend and religious myth, bearing no relation to the past succession of real events”.<sup>14</sup> This may not be a harsh judgment of India’s historical tradition; the truth is that the historian is bound to delve deep into the Indian mythological narratives and when he emerges to the surface he comes with a pearl and not stone; e.g. F.E. Pargiter: *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* 1922, cited in Vincent A. Smith’s *The Early History of India*, Oxford 1924, p. 6. One does not depend on these “fables” alone for writing history but other corroborative sources that are plenty in the form of artifacts (Mauryas<sup>15</sup>), epigraphy (Cōlas<sup>16</sup>), numismatics (Kuṣāṇas<sup>17</sup>), native Indian chronicles such as *Madhurāvijayam* (fourteenth century CE) and *Tiruvīlaiyāṭar Purāṇam* (two versions by Perumparrappuliyūr Nampi twelfth century CE and Parañcōti sixteenth century CE) and above all oral history favoured in the west today. These camouflaged histories deal with the Pāṇḍyas and Vijayanagara-Nāyakas.<sup>18</sup> This is true of the history of Vāṭakarai *zamīn*. We shall see how cogently the history of this *zamīndāri* could be retold with the sources available at our disposal. It is an adventure akin to searching for a pin in a haystack. We do get a fair picture of this neglected zone when we think of the optimistic saying something is better than nothing.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, The Past of a Pālaiyakkārar: The Ethnohistory of a South Indian Little King, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 41/4 (1982), 655 (655–83).

<sup>15</sup> F. Raymond Allchin, Mauryan Architecture and Art, In F.R. Allchin ed. *The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 222–73.

<sup>16</sup> K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlas*, (Madras: University of Madras 1935-37 first ed./1984). Cōla according to the *Tamil Lexicon* (III, 1676) should be Cōḷa.

<sup>17</sup> Giovanni Verardi, The Kuṣāṇa Emperors as Cakravartins. Dynastic Art and Cult in India and Central Asia: History of a Theory, Classifications and Refutations, *East and West*, 33/1-4 (1983), 225–94.

<sup>18</sup> For an examination of native chronicles see R.K.K. Rajarajan, *Art of the Vijayanagara-Nāyakas: Architecture and Iconography* (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2006), 23–38.

The founders of the Vaṭakarai *zamīndāri* were related to Kottiyam Nāgama Nāyaka of the Kaśyapa-*gotra*,<sup>19</sup> father of Viśvanātha (c. 1529-64 CE), the first Nāyaka of Maturai. They spoke Telugu.<sup>20</sup> Emperor Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya (1509-29) is said to have sent Nāgama to quell a rebellion of the Pāṇḍyas in Maturai and restore Vijayanagara over-lordship that Kumāra Kaṁpana established in 1371 CE and administered through *mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras*. He took into service his relative and a military leader, Rāmabhadra Nāyaka,<sup>21</sup> founder of the Vaṭakarai *zamīndāri*. After overcoming the rebellion in Maturai, Nāgama is said to have undertaken a pilgrimage to Kāśī, a *vratayātra* seeking progeny.<sup>22</sup> During his absence, Rāmabhadra Nāyaka and another associate were left to administer Maturai. On return he rewarded Rāmabhadra Nāyaka amply with the *pāḷaiyam* of Vaṭakarai. It took place around 1534 CE.<sup>23</sup> By tentative calculation, some 15-20 generations of *pāḷaiyakkārar/zamīndārs* must have ruled the fiefdom. A. Vadivelu gives a list of names, basing on oral traditions and *zamīndāri* records<sup>24</sup> that may be equated with that of the

<sup>19</sup> Most Nāyaḍu families have forgotten their *gotras*. Nowadays, identification is clarified with reference to their *kuladevatā*; i.e. bride and groom worshipping the same *kuladevatā* are not married.

<sup>20</sup> The persisting question among Kannaḍa and Telugu scholars is which language the Vijayanagara emperors spoke. Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya wrote his *Āmuktamālyada* in Telugu. The Maturai and Tañcāvūr Nāyakas spoke Telugu. The present Vaṭakarai *zamīndāri* family speaks Telugu. It is not clear whether the Vijayanagara emperors spoke both Telugu and Kannaḍa.

<sup>21</sup> Pioneers writing on Nāyaka history (R. Sathyanathaier 1914 [Madura], V. Vriddhagirisan 1942 [Tanjore]) employed the truncated dynastic designation, Nayak, which is replaced with Nāyaka; e.g. George Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India. Vijayanagara and Successor States* under 'New Cambridge History of India' I: 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). The pioneers spelt the place names Madura/Maturai, Tanjore/Tañcāvūr and Gingee or Senji/Ceñci (Srinivasachari 1943).

<sup>22</sup> A. Vadivelu, *The Ruling Chiefs, Nobles and Zamindars of India* (Madras: Government Press, 1915), 680. This work like Mackenzie's MSS is a collection of data from family records, oral history and rare inscriptions.

<sup>23</sup> In view of this the name, Viśvanātha, Lord of Kāśī was given to his son. *Vide*, R. Sathyanathaier, *Nāyaks of Madura*, pp. 48-49; R.K.K. Rajarajan, *Vijayanagara-Nāyaks*, I, 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> These records were available in the Palace in the early twentieth century when A. Vadivelu wrote his book. Later the Government procured them for the Madras Archives (Interview with the present *Zamīndārini*).

dates of the Nāyakas of Maturai (following Sathyanathaier 1924 – see note 9) as follows:

Vadivelu's List	Tentative equitation
Rāmabhadra Nāyaka I (beginning 1534 CE)	Viśvanātha c. 1529-64
Kumāra Nāyaka (Regent)	
Machi (sic? Mañchi <sup>25</sup> ) Nāyaka I	
Raṅgappa Nāyaka	
Mañchi Nāyaka II (contemporary of Tirumalai Nāyaka)	Tirumalai 1623-59
Revolt of Caṭaiyakka Tēvar Setupati (1635-45 CE)	
Nāraṇappa Nāyaka	Cokkanātha 1659-82
Kumāra Rāmabhadra Nāyaka	
(Regent: Baṅgārammā - mother)	
Koṇḍama Nāyaka I	> Mīnākṣī should come somewhere here <
Nāgama Nāyaka	> Era of Pāḷaiyakkārār Revolt – Kaṭṭabommaṇ <
Veṅkatasvāmi/Rāmabhadra Nāyaka	Governor of Madras: Lord Clive (1798-1803) <sup>26</sup>
(Charles Cornwallis 1786-93 - Permanent Settlement in 1783 CE)	
Koṇḍama Nāyaka II (1806-10)	
Mīnāyasvāmi Rāmabhadra Nāyaka (1810-24)	
Rāmabhadra Nāyaka III (1824-64)	
Veṅkatasvāmi Nāyaka <sup>27</sup>	
<i>Divān Bhadūr</i> Veṅkaṭa Rāmabhadra Nāyaka	
Nāgama Rāmabhadra Nāyaka (married 1920)	
Koṇḍama Rāmabhadra Nāyaka	
!	
A daughter & a son – family disputes and the end	

The above list of A. Vadivelu would suggest each *zamīndār* must have held office for not less than 28 years. Sixteen generations have gone down to 1920. Afterwards, the family got entangled in disputes and has virtually ceased to exist as caretakers of the *zamīndāri*. Nowadays nobody thinks of the benevolent works of the *zamīndār*.

<sup>25</sup> *Mañchi* in Telugu means “good”. Telugu-speaking people taking the name Mañchi (Tamil Nalla; *nalla* in Telugu means “black”, cf. Nallama Nāyaka) is in current usage. The Sanskrit original of Nāyaḍu (Telugu) and Nāyakkar (Tamil) is Nāyaka; Anglicized Naiḍu. *Vide*, R.K.K. Rajarajan, *Vijayanagara-Nāyakas I*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>26</sup> The Governors of Madras came in quick succession so that from 1803 to 1948 we find 57 of them (Lord William Bentinck to Sir A. Edward Nye).

<sup>27</sup> This was the time of Sir Charles Trevelyan. He is said to have visited Koḍaikkāṇal and honoured Veṅkatasvāmi Nāyaka.



The *kaḷḷaṇ* caste plays a leading role in the wretched contemporary politics.<sup>28</sup>

The part played by the *zamīndārs* down to the time of *Divān Bahadūr* Veṅkaṭa Rāmabhadra Nāyaka is shrouded in legends. A. Vadivelu (1915: 679-688a see note 22) presents a summary that finds no inscriptional support. He did not even consult the inscriptions that were tapped in the temples around 1907, which perhaps were not available for his research. These were later reported in the *Madras Annual Epigraphical Reports* (ARE *infra*). The events chronicled by the author may brief as follows:

- Rāmabhadra Nāyaka followed Nāgama Nāyaka from Vijayanagara to suppress a rebellion in Maturai.
- It was reported to the Vijayanagara Emperor Nāgama Nāyaka had plans to form his independent domain in Maturai.
- Nāgama was advised by Rāmabhadra Nāyaka to surrender to his son, Viśvanātha sent by the Emperor to imprison the rebel.
- Rāmabhadra Nāyaka was to begin with appointed Military Commander and Revenue collector of Maturai.
- It seems some problem arose in the Kampam area which Rāmabhadra restrained; maybe revolt of Tiruvitāṅkōṭu rulers in Kerala. It was primarily due to this reason that the Vaṭakarai *pāḷaiyam* was organized; added to it was the fertility of the region.
- In view of its strategic importance as gateway to Kerala, Rāmabhadra was appointed *pāḷaiyakkārar* of Vaṭakarai.
- During the British heyday a railroad from Bōḍi to Maturai was laid mainly to transport spices from the hills to the plains and thereby activate export. The spice country road now became spice railroad. This encouraged the laying of metal roads and transport through locomotives by giving up bullock-carts and horses.
- The temple for Śiva existed at that time at the western fringe of the village; further west within close proximity the Ghats stand.
- Mañchi Nāyaka II cleared the forests and promoted agriculture, a pioneer in agrarian operations and today we find the outskirts of

<sup>28</sup> The *kaḷḷaṇs* by ethos were opportunist. They pretend to be obedient as long as they serve a master. When power comes, it corrupts them absolutely. They are “good servants but bad masters”. *Vide*, Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras: Government Press, 1908), 8 vols, see under *Kaḷḷaṇ* and *Maṇavaṇ*.

the city full of paddy fields, coconut plantations and mango groves.

- Mañchi Nāyaka demonstrated his martial skill by shooting an arrow to cross over the *teppakkuḷam* in Maturai, a 300 yards square.<sup>29</sup>
- When Caṭaiyakka Tēvar, the Setupati of Rāmanāthapuram rose against the Nāyaka, an army marched against him under *Dalavāy* Rāmappaiyaṇ (told in a ballad called *Ramappaiyaṇ-ammāṇai*) and Mañchi Nāyaka. His valorous deeds terrified the *kallaṇs* to such an effect that they were alarmed on hearing Mañchi's name.
- Kumāra Rāmabhadra Nāyaka is said to have erected a *maṇḍapa* in the Śiva temple at Periyakuḷam.
- Mīnāyasvāmi Rāmabhadra Nāyaka gave liberal gifts to the Varadarājasvāmi temple.<sup>30</sup>
- Veṅkaṭa Rāmabhadra Nāyaka in the late nineteenth century was a noted Sanskrit scholar and associated with the following benevolent works:  
 Foundation of the Victoria Memorial High School and a Model Primary School  
 Patronage of the Madura College, Maturai  
 Introduction of scientific water works under the inspiration of Col. Pennycuik  
 Member of the Legislative Council, Madras  
 Member of the Council of State, Delhi  
 Leader of the *zamīndārs* of the Maturai district  
 The *Kumāra Zamīndārs* of Vaṭakarai and Kurupam were pages to Lord T.D. Gibson-Carmichael 1911-12 (Fig. 11)  
 Chairman, Periyakuḷam Municipal Council  
 Patronage of the *Malaimēl* Vaidhyānāthasvāmi temple  
 Member of the Rāmeśvaram *Devasthānam* Committee  
 Instituted a Gold Medal for the first-come MB & BS student, University of Madras  
 Foundation of the Public Library in Periyakuḷam

<sup>29</sup> According to the *Tiruppaṇimālai* this tank was the work of Tīrumalai Nāyaka. *Vide*, R.K.K. Rajarajan, *Vijayanagara-Nāyakas*, I, 26.

<sup>30</sup> *Mīnāyasvāmi* means "Lord who is the Fish", i.e. *Matsyāvatāra* of Viṣṇu; a rare personal name of a ruler after *Matsya* (Tamil *Mīṇ* in Periyālvār's *Tirumoli* 1.6.11, 3.3.7). *Mīṇ* is the root of *Minākṣi* (one with fish-like eyes).

Built a Public Hospital, named after the Prince of Wales that was acknowledged by His Majesty a letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 1922

Founder of the *Baliḥa Sabhā*<sup>31</sup>

The British Government conferred on him the honorary titles of *Rao Bahadūr* 1908 and later *Divān Bahadūr*

Stood with the Empire during the First World War and donated funds collected from the *zamin* for War Fund at the request of Hardinge II (1910-16),

He was one among the chief dignitaries to receive when the Prince of Wales visited Madras in 1922 (Vadivelu 1915: 679–88a).

The *rājas* of Anegoṇḍi used to send them gifts on occasions of marriage in the Vaṭakarai *zamīn* family that continued down to the time of Nāgama Rāmabhadra Nāyaka (Vadivelu 1915: 688a). This is to establish their affinity with the Vijayanagara royal family through the ages.

Koṇḍama Rāmabhadra Nāyaka was educated in the Madras Presidency College that was meant for the princes of those times, a dignity that the *zamīndārs* wanted to keep abreast of the aristocratic tradition of the British.<sup>32</sup>

Besides, the *zamīndārs* as custodians of their fiefdom must have stood behind the Ghat Road laid to reach Koḍaikkāṇal and development of its township under British inspiration. The making of Kumpakkarai as artificial waterfalls seems to be their handwork.

The data bearing on Veṅkaṭa Rāmabhadra Nāyaka is ample because when A. Vadivelu started compiling his book (see note 22), the officiating Nāyaka must have been his contemporary. The *zamīndār*'s son Nāgama Rāmabhadra Nāyaka was Lieutenant in the Eleventh Battalion, Third Madras Regiment of the Indian Territorial Force and

<sup>31</sup> It stands in support of the view that the Nāyaka families of Maturai and Periyakuḷam belonged to the *Baliḥa* group Nāyakas. The Nāyakas consisted of septs such as *Gavara* or *Baliḥa* (Maturai Nāyakas), *Kamma* (Ilaiyātaṅkal and Kuruvikuḷam *zamins*), *Toṭṭiya* or *Kambalam* (Kaṭṭabommaṇ), *Velama* and so on. The *Baliḥas* were of the *kṣatriya* cadre.

<sup>32</sup> A. Vadivelu, *Ruling Chiefs*, 688. For a case study of how the *zamīndārs* loved western education see Pamela G. Price, 'Warrior Caste 'Raja' and Gentleman 'Zamindar': One Person's Experience in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, 17/4 (1983), 566-70 (563–90).

served to satisfy the *zamīndāri* tradition. He had a son by name Koṇḍama Rāmabhadra Nāyaka. Koṇḍama had a son and daughter who were wrought in inheritance disputes and the family went into oblivion after 1950.

## II

Four temples are historically viable in the city (Map). The first known as *Periya Kōyil* “Big Temple”, the historical Rājēndracōlīśvaram is today called Bālasubrahmaṇya/Murukaṇ.<sup>33</sup> The original temple is likely to have been built during the Cōla occupation of the Pāṇḍya country and does not appear in the list of S.R. Balasubrahmanian.<sup>34</sup> Very few inscriptions have been reported and few are unreported fragments. The name of Māravarmaṇ (alias *Tribhuvanacakravartī*) Sundara Pāṇḍyadeva appears in two inscriptions dated in 1231 CE (ARE 1907, nos. 411-412). Another record is of Māravarmaṇ Sundara Pāṇḍya I (1235 CE). These inscriptions do not carry any historically sensible message. Sundara Pāṇḍya is said to have performed the *vīrābhiṣeka* (ibid., nos. 413, 414). Another record gives the name, Rājēndracōlīśva[ram-ṭaiyā-nāyaṇār (ibid., no. 409). This is a clear pointer of the Cōla origin of the temple. The name of the place is Ālaṅkuḷam in Mēṇḍuṅgalanāḍu; cf. *ālāṅkuḷam* means “deep tank” and *periyakuḷam* “big or vast tank”. A local epigraphist, T. Rajagopal now 70 years old had estampages of the fragmentary records 25 years ago and now he has lost them.<sup>35</sup> He says nothing historically significant was found in these fragments. From the available epigraphical sources it might be understood a temple built during the pre-Pāṇḍyan Empire II continued to evolve down to the Nāyaka time

<sup>33</sup> Raju Kalidos, *Temple Cars of Medieval Tamiḷaham*, (Madurai: Vijay Publications, 1989), 269. The old car having gone out of order, a new *tēr* has been substituted in 2006.

<sup>34</sup> *Vide*, the author’s *Middle Chola Temples* (Faridabad 1978) under the three Rājēndras. See also Sita Narasimhan, *Śaivism under the Imperial Cōlas as revealed through their Monuments* (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2006), 24–25, 29–30. The three Rājēndras built temples; the total being 30+ (23 under I, 3 under II and 4 under III).

<sup>35</sup> When persistently contacted he sent the following booklet: T. Rajagopal, *Periyakuḷam Ūrppērāyvu* in Tamil (Periyakuḷam: Place Name Research), (Periyakuḷam: Tamiḷ Ilakkiya Maṇṇam, 1994). It has nothing to say on the unreported inscriptions.

and the *zamīndārs* of Vaṭakarai. The *zamīndārs* are likely to have added the *maṇḍapa* opposite the shrine of Rājēndracōḷīśvara. The sculptural pillars therein are likely to be later Pāṇḍya that were reinstalled by the *zamīndārs*.

There is a Śiva temple on the top of a hillock to the northwest of the village. It is today called Vaidhyanātha; under hereditary trusteeship of the *zamīndārs*. The temple lay on the top of a barren hill called Tailārammaṇ-karaṭu (Map 3); Tailārammaṇ maybe Devī Taiyalnāyaki. The *vāhanas* and *tēr* of the temple are under control of the *zamīn*.<sup>36</sup> A small architecturally significant wooden temple car is kept closed near the palace, datable in the eighteenth century CE.

To the south is found another hillock that accommodated a temple for Kailāsanātha. No trace of any temple is found today. Two inscriptions are reported from the debris of a temple that existed in 1907 when ARE survey was undertaken.<sup>37</sup> The temple seems to have existed at the time of Māṇavarmaṇ Sundara Pāṇḍyadeva I “who took the Cōḷa country and was pleased to perform the *vīrābhiṣeka* at Muṭikoṇṭacōḷapuram (i.e. Paḷaiyārai)”. The inscription recording this event is dated in 1235 CE. The record registers the donation of land to the temple that is called after Tirumalaiyil-nāyaṇār (the Lord on the Sacred Hill). It was situated in the Vēḷakulārāmanallūr in Mēṇe-ḍuṅgalanāḍu (ARE 1907, no. 416).<sup>38</sup>

The two temples, Rājēndracōḷīśvaram and Kailāsanātha are said to have existed in different villages (i.e. Ālaṅkuḷam and Vēḷakulārāmanallūr) but fell within a close range of about 5 kms in the same territorial division, called Mēṇeḍuṅgalanāḍu. In between the two lay the *periyakuḷam* “big tank”. Spoken with reference to the modern *tāluka* and district formation, Periyakuḷam falls within the

<sup>36</sup> This chariot is listed in Raju Kalidos 1989: Temple Cars (see note 31). For an analytical report see the same author's ‘Wood Carvings of Tamilnadu: An Iconographical Survey’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1 (1988), 98–125.

<sup>37</sup> T.V. Mahalingam, *A Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Tamil Nadu and Kerala States*, Vol. V (New Delhi: ICHR Project, Chand & Company, 1989), 207–208.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Mēṇeḍuṅgalanāḍu (ARE, nos. 1907, 416) was a territorial division; Neḍuṅgalanāḍu stands for a vast stretch of agricultural fields; *mē[l]* “upper”, *neḍu* means “vast” and “long”.

Tēṇi district (formerly Maturai).<sup>39</sup> The hillock on which the Kailāsanātha temple rests is called Kailāsanāthar-*karaṭu*.<sup>40</sup> Today no historical monument is to be found on the hill but the people in and around used to visit it and worship stray images installed on the hillock. The authors' uncle Jayarām Naiḍu used to regularly visit the venue and made some donations for temporary installation of images and the patronage of a *sanyāsin*. This is to prove the descendants of the Nāyakas look after its patronage. Today within a short span of two years the temple has been rebuilt due mainly to the influence of the AIADMK politicians under direction of the Chief Minister, J. Jeyalalitha, the Finance Minister Pannirselvam and his brother, Raja.

The fourth temple is for Viṣṇu in the heart of congested city of Periyakuḷam. The *agrahāra* exists to the west of the Varadarāja temple, which means it was for the Vaiṣṇavas. No inscription has been reported. The temple is likely to have been added during the Nāyaka time when the *zamīndārs* arrived on the site, they being Vaiṣṇavas. Excepting the central *maṇḍapa* of the temple with lion-capital in typical Nāyaka style, the *vimānas* for Varadarāja and Tāyār seem to be post-Nāyaka (casually noted in Rajarajan 2011, see note 12). The main *vimānas* and other structures seem to have undergone renovation and rebuilding from time to time. Few portrait images are found on the Nāyaka period *maṇḍapa*, like to be those of the *zamīndārs*.

### Rājēndracōḷīśvaram

It stands on the southern bank of Varāhanadī (Fig. 1). To say precisely, the waters of the river flow touching the northern wall of the temple. The temple appears on a high tableland; therefore there is no threat by inundation. Within the inner core, the *brahmasthāna*, three *vimānas* stand adjusting in the south-north, meant for Devī, Śiva and Murukan/Bālasubrahmanya. The temple is in two *prākārās* that are not so strictly demarcated. The space is vast and architectural work

<sup>39</sup> When the old Maturai district was trifurcated in 1996, there was a problem in fixing the headquarters of the new district, Tēṇi. Otherwise Periyakuḷam should have been the district headquarters (Informant: R. Vijayakumar taking a leading role, representing Periyakuḷam). Local politicians hailing from the Tēṇi region played tricks and moved the headquarters to Tēṇi.

<sup>40</sup> *Karaṭu* means a barren hill. It is left with the least possible vegetation and a natural spring amidst rocks.

less (Plan 1). Three *vimānas* stand in close proximity in the inner *prākāra* that are dedicated to Rājēndracōlīśvara – middle, Aṛamvaḷartta-nāyaki “Mistress who nurtured *Dharma*” – south and Bālasubrahmaṇya – north (Fig. 2). Though inscriptions support a Cōḷa origin, no vestiges of the Cōḷas or Later Pāṇḍyas (Empire II) are found in architectural setting. The *prastara* of Śiva’s sanctuary seems to be of later Cōḷa origin which means a fallen temple was given new life by the *zamīndārs*.

All three temples are uniformly of the same pattern of *drāviḍa-ṣaṭaṅga-vimāna*. In the longitudinal (west-east) they are fitted with the *garbhagrha*, *ardhamaṇḍapa* and *agramaṇḍapa*. The Śiva temple alone is provided with *devakoṣṭhas*; housing the images of Dakṣiṇāmūrti (south), Liṅgodbhava (west) and Brahmā (north). The images in the aedicule are post-Nāyaka and might have been added by the *zamīndārs*. The sanctuaries of Śiva and Devī are *alpavimānas*. The shrine for Bālasubrahmaṇya need not have existed at the time of Cōḷas and is likely to have been added by the *zamīndārs*; maybe in the seventeenth-eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup> It is *dvitala*. Architectural members such as *karṇakūḍus* and *śālapañjaras* decorate the *vimāna* elevations. The chapels for Śiva and Devī stand on raised platforms, called *māṭakkoyil*. Both are likely to have originated during the time of any one of the three Rājēndras. K.R. Srinivasan confirms chapels for Devī were added in temples for Śiva during and after the time of Rājēndra I (1012-44 CE).<sup>42</sup>

The antique part of the temple is the *maṇḍapa* that lay opposite the *garbhagrha* of Rājēndracōlīśvara. Two rows of five pillars are found here. Nandi, the *balipīṭha* and the *dvajastambha* are interlocked within close range of the first three pillars. The same type of pavilion in the Sundareśvara enclave, Maturai is called *kampattaṭi-maṇḍapa*; *kampattaṭi* = *dvajastambha*.<sup>43</sup> The other four pillars accommodate the

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the temple for Murukan that is in the Bṛhadīśvara complex of Tañcāvūr. In this case the chapels for Devī (south facing), Murukan and Nandi-*maṇḍapa* were added by the Nāyakas. They are not the handwork of Rājarāja I (986-1014 CE). Portrait images of Tañcāvūr Nāyakas (Vijaya Rāghava 1634-73 CE) appear on the pillars of the Nandi-*maṇḍapa*.

<sup>42</sup> K.R. Srinivasan, *Temples of South India*, (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1971), 148.

<sup>43</sup> The same type of pavilion in the Sundareśvara enclave, Maturai is called *kampattaṭi-maṇḍapa*; *kampattaṭi* = *dvajastambha*.

following images: a two-armed hero (Dakṣa?), Kālī, Śiva performing *ūrdhvatāṇḍavam* and Vīrabhadra. Kālī and Urdhvatāṇḍavamūrti juxtaposed (e.g. Maturai) or opposing (e.g. Tāṭikkompu, Pērūr) is not a new programme in Nāyaka temples.<sup>44</sup> The images in the temple under study are found on opposite pillars. The images are set in following pattern:

	west	
	+ Nandi	+
	+ <i>balipīṭha</i>	+
	+ <i>dvajastambha</i>	+
Kālī +		+ Śiva-ūrdhvatāṇḍavam
Hero +		+ Vīrabhadra
+ Pillar		

The hero, maybe Dakṣa is *dvibhuja* and carries the *dhanus* and *bāṇa*.<sup>45</sup> Kālī is fierce with *jvālas* that halo her head (Fig. 3). She is *caturbhuja*; carrying *triśūla*, *pāśa*, *kapāla* and *khetaka*. Śiva performing *ūrdhvatāṇḍavam* includes new iconic traits. He is *caturbhuja*; carrying *taṅka*, *mṛga*, *ḍamaru* and the front right hand holding in grip the *ūrdhvapāda* (Fig. 4). Raju Kalidos has reported several images of *Ūrdhvatāṇḍava*-Śiva and in none such a posture is discerned.<sup>46</sup> This is a rare mode. Kālī and *Ūrdhvatāṇḍavamūrti* are found trampling a demon; cf. *Apasmāra* in Naṭarāja. Vīrabhadra is *Aṣṭabhuja*mūrti,<sup>47</sup> fitted with a mustache. He holds the *taṅka*, *mṛga*, *khetaka* and other wea-pons. He strikes with sword a demon fallen at his feet.

Vīrabhadra is a common idiom in Nāyaka art.<sup>48</sup> His presence in a Nāyaka art gallery would suggest he was the War God of the Vaṭa-

<sup>44</sup> Raju Kalidos, *Ūrdhvatāṇḍavam in the Art of South India, East and West*, 46/3-4 (1996), 371-413, figs.5-6; S. Gopalakrishnan, Raṅga-maṇḍapa of Tāṭikkompu (see note 12), figs. 12-13.

<sup>45</sup> The goat-headed Dakṣa appears on the threshold of the Vīrabhadra temple in Keḷadi. Vide, R.K.K. Rajaraja, *Vijayanagara-Nāyakas*, II, pl. 311.

<sup>46</sup> Raju Kalidos, *Urdhvatāṇḍavam*, figs. 1-5, 7, 8-11; S. Gopalakrishnan, Raṅga-maṇḍapa of Tāṭikkompu, fig. 12; R.K.K. Rajarajan, *Vijayanagara-Nāyakas*, pls. 249, 252.

<sup>47</sup> The *Śrītattvanidhi* (1.3.4-5) citing the *Śivatattvaratnākara* talks of *Dvātrimṣaṭbhuja* Aghora and *Daśabhuja*-Aghora.

<sup>48</sup> Jeyapriya Rajarajan, *Terrific manifestations of Śiva: Vīrabhadra*, (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2009), Chap. VII.



karai *pālaiyam* (Fig. 5). We may note here there is a separate temple for Vīreśvara (cf. Aghoreśvara in Ikkēri) in Periyakuḷam. The temples of Vīrabhadra in Vijayanagara (e.g. Muduvīraṇṇa and the one on top of Mātaṅga-*parvata*; see Settar n.d.: 24 – *infra*, note 51), stray images in the site museum and the Shimoga museum (Rajarajan 2006: II, pls. 87, 89–92, 245–247, 250 – *vide*, note 18) may be noted here for the importance attached to the Vīrabhadra cult by descendants of the Vijayanagara ruling families.

The other structures in the temple are insignificant and seem to have been added from time to time. An incomplete *gopura*, called *moṭṭaigopuram* (cf. one close to the *Putumaṇḍapa* in Maturai) of small dimension stands at the entrance (Fig. 1). On the northeast corner a four-pillared *maṇḍapa* close to the water course is present; maybe for performance of *śrāddha* ceremonies. Outside the wall on the northeast are two small chambers; one for Nāgadevatā. The second *prākāra* on its northeast reserves a chamber for Bhairava. Behind the three main chapels, falling within the first *prākāra* on the west are chambers for Gaṇapati, Ēkāṃreśvara/L. (L. Liṅga), Jambhukeśvara/L., Arṇācaleśvara/L., Kāśī-Viśvanātha/L. and Murukaṇ along the wall, facing east. Close to the image of Vīrabhadra the Navagrahas are installed. The second *prākāra* is almost an empty space. On the southwest corner a chamber for Gaṇapati and on the northwest corner a chamber for Sarasvatī and Gajalakṣmī are found. These are post-Nayaka images and installations.

An isolated piece of *zamīndāri* architecture is a four-pillared *maṇḍapa* on the northeast corner outside the temple that was perhaps meant for *śrāddha* rituals. This venue is famous for offerings to *pitṛs* (manes) during the meant days and months of the year. Hundreds of people throng to the venue even today and offer obsequies to their ancestors. Unfortunately, this mini-*maṇḍapa* of historical value remains deserted now. Rites take place below a 200-year old tree, very close to the *maṇḍapa*.

### Varadarājasvāmi

The temple for Varadarājasvāmi is in the market of Tenkarai. It is a square that accommodates houses for Varadarāja and Bṛhan-

nāyaki/Lakṣmī.<sup>49</sup> This is a rare example of Lakṣmī given such a name in Vijayanagara religious tradition. Both the shrines consist of *garbhagrhas* and *ardhamandapas*. The two separate *vimānas* for Viṣṇu and Devī are *drāviḍa-ṣaṭaṅga* (Plan 2, Fig. 6). Though the *adhiṣṭhāna*, *bhīṭṭi* and *śikhara* are well marked no detailed programme is discernible excepting the *vimāna* that is fitted with *karṇakūḍus* and *śālapañjaras*. The *devakoṣṭhas* in low relief do not accommodate images. The *vimāna* sections provide for some interesting stucco images of *sthānaka*-Viṣṇu, Gopīvastrapaharaṇa, Trivikrama, Nṛsiṃha, Devī in various postures and so on. The northeast corner provides a venue for the Navagrahas. The pillars in the *mahāmaṇḍapa* bearing lion-capitals, common to both shrines illustrate interesting miniature relief such as a five-headed divinity, Pañcavaktradevatā (Fig. 7) carrying a balance in hand.<sup>50</sup> This part of the temple alone seems to be old as early as the seventeenth century, likely to be handwork of the *zamīndārs*.

### **Malaimēl Vaidhyānātha**

The location of the temple recalls minding the Śivālayas on the cliffs of Badāmī and Mātaṅga-*parvata* in Vijayanagara.<sup>51</sup> Three temples of the *drāviḍa-ṣaṭaṅga-vimāna* for Vaidhyānātha and Taiyalnāyaki (east facing) and Murukaṇ (west facing) exist with no medieval sculptural remnants whatsoever (Plan 3, Fig. 10). The architectural pilasters on the *bhīṭṭi* of Taiyalnāyaki shrine are nicely executed in Nāyaka style (Figs. 9-10). Small chambers for Gaṇapati, Jvarahadeva, Gajalakṣmī-s (two) appear behind the main temples. The images of Gaṇapati, Jvarahadeva, Gajalakṣmī-s and seated Durga (on a *devakoṣṭha*) seem to be recently added by the *zamīndārs*. Renovated recently, it is almost a deserted temple in a deserted village. We get a panoramic picture of the surrounding landscape standing on summit of the hill (Fig. 8). Other temples in the area need to be surveyed (cf. note 10).

<sup>49</sup> Means “Mistress of the Cosmos”; cf. Bṛhadāmbāl in Tirukōkaraṇam (Putukkōṭṭai) and Bṛhadīśvara in Tañcāvūr and Kaṅkaikoṇṭācōḷapuram. These names take their origin in Vijayanagara-Nāyaka tradition.

<sup>50</sup> Jeyapriya Rajarajan has reported two such images in the new *tēr* of the Big Temple. *Vide*, her article cited in note 7.

<sup>51</sup> S. Settar, *Hampi. A Medieval Metropolis*, (Bangalore: Kala-Yatra, n.d.), 24; For a view of the temples on hills in Badāmī see Raju Kalidos, *Encyclopaedia of Hindu Iconography: Early Medieval*, Vol. I Viṣṇu, pl. XVI; Vol. IV, Pt. I, pl. V.1.

The *zamīndārs* of Vaṭakarai arrived on the site somewhere in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century CE. They found a petty village amidst a vast and fertile forest zone and added to its development. The temples that already existed must have been at the waning phase. They took charge of not only the withering temples, but also the township during days of the British *Rāj*. The governors of Madras and collectors of Maturai stood with them in good stead in the progressive activities in view of its proximity to Koḍaikkāṇal, Tēkkaḍi and other summer resorts and wild animals' reserves that allowed them leisure for hunting and holiday; and mainly because it was the "Spice Road" by way of Kerala. With the *zamīndars* they spent not only memorable holidays but also holydays, taking active part in public benefaction. Vāṭakarai saw its golden days under the British. Fall was imminent with the eclipse of the British Empire and intra-feuds within the *zamīndār* family. The extra-caste groups, subservient to the Nāyakas who came here for a living as field labourers added to the rhythm of disintegration. More than 50% of what the dwellers of the city own today were the gift of the *zamīndārs*. For example, the *agrahāra* today is occupied by mostly influential local politicians of non-*brāhmaṇa* castes. Due to their family wrangle the surviving members of the *zamīndāri* are no more interested in any public work. They live and let live others. This is the sad tale of two cities (Vaṭakarai and Teṅkarai), the history of which and the region around remains in historical oblivion.

The advent of Muslims and Christians in the area has added a new scenario to the landscape. What was once studded with temples for village gods and goddesses (Fig. 12) is reset with a number of churches/basilicas (Fig. 13) and mosques/*dargahs* (Fig. 14). An underlining feature of the inter-religious activity in the region is that there is no terrorism and religious dispute of any kind. The Hindus receiving *briyāṇi* from the Muslims on *Ramzan* day or sweets from the Christian on New Year day is very common. The Hindus reciprocate the same on days of their religious festivals such as *Dīpāvali*. The Muslim population in the city is considerably high when compared with the neighbouring places. A number of Arabic/Persian loan-words are employed by the Hindus. For example the word *Bāvā* is common to both the religions; that means a dignified person (Fig. 14). The Hindu/Nayakkar-Naiḍu use the word to address their sister's husband. Muslims and Naiḍus addressing each other

*māmā* (uncle) and *bāvā* is very common. Impact of Arabic/Persian terminologies in official and legal dictionaries is considerable.<sup>52</sup> Another important feature of religious harmony is that the Hindus visit their temples to celebrate the Christian New Year Day even if they have their own New Year Day falling in the middle of March-April, Tamil *Cittirai*. The educational institutions in this area are under control of all three religious groups and the services rendered by the Christian Missions needs to be earmarked.<sup>53</sup> In view of their service to education the Tamilnadu Government set up the Mother Teresa Women's University on the Kōḍaikkāṇal Hills that is 50 kms away from Periyakulam. What was once the Spice Road is today the meeting place for Hindu/Christian/Muslim cultural interaction. Scholars proficient in Christian and Islamic theology should come forward to study their institutions and social life in this region. It is a virgin area for research in cultural history.

Post-script: The author is not familiar with archival material.<sup>54</sup> Interested scholars may take up a study of the Vaṭakarai *zamīndāri* by examining the archival sources. Several Indian Scholars working on British India are not that scientific. They are not up to the mark when compared with Prof. Peter Schawk or Nicholas Dirks 1982.

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<sup>52</sup> K.M.A. Ahmmad Zubair, Arabu-Tamil: An Islamic and Cultural Language of the Muslim Tamils of Asia, *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXIV: 2 (2007), pp. 35–59. See also R. Jaibunnisa, *Status of Muslim Women in Tamilnadu with special reference to Madurai* (Ph.D. thesis, Mother Teresa Women's University), Kodaikanal. Chap. I of the thesis have an annexure on Ārvi, Tamil-Arabic words. I am thankful to the author for permitting me to have a glance of the thesis when it reached Prof. Raju Kalidos for consultation.

<sup>53</sup> Emphasize is added to this idea because I and my brothers, including my father had our education in Missionary Schools. My uncle took his first degree in an Islamic College at Uttamapālaiyam. My father was professor and Chairman in a Catholic College. He and my elder brother have published a number of research articles from Rome and Naples and the Sapienza University of Rome invited them for a conference in Rome, which they attended and the papers are in press, Rome 2012.

<sup>54</sup> See for example the following works: Nicholas B. Dirks, The Past of a Pālaiy-kkārār (see note 14); Pamela G. Price, Warrior Caste 'Raja' and Gentleman 'Zamindar' (see note 32); F. Fawcett, The Kondayamkottai Maravas, a Dravidian Tribe of Tinnevely, Southern India, *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 33 (1903), 57–65. For family records of the *zamīndārs* of Tirunelvēli Maṛavas see S. Kadhivel, Sources for the History of Tamil Nadu, *Studies on Agrarian Societies in South Asia*, 5 (1980), 1–81.

## Illustrations

**Map** The Periyakuḷam city on the River bed of Varākanati (developed on Google map)

## Plans

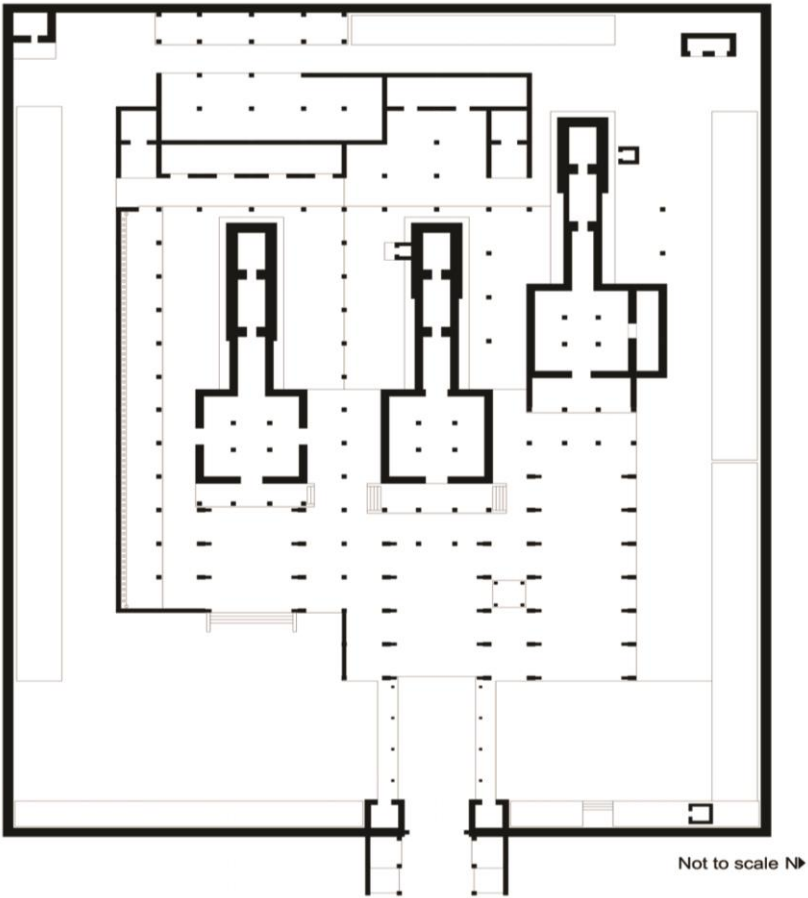
1. Ground Plan, Rājēndracōḷīs̥varam, Periyakuḷam © author
2. Ground Plan, Varadarāja temple, Periyakuḷam © author
3. Ground Plan, Mailmēl Vaidhyanātha temple, Periyakuḷam © author

**Photos** (All by R.K. Parthiban, excepting no. 11)

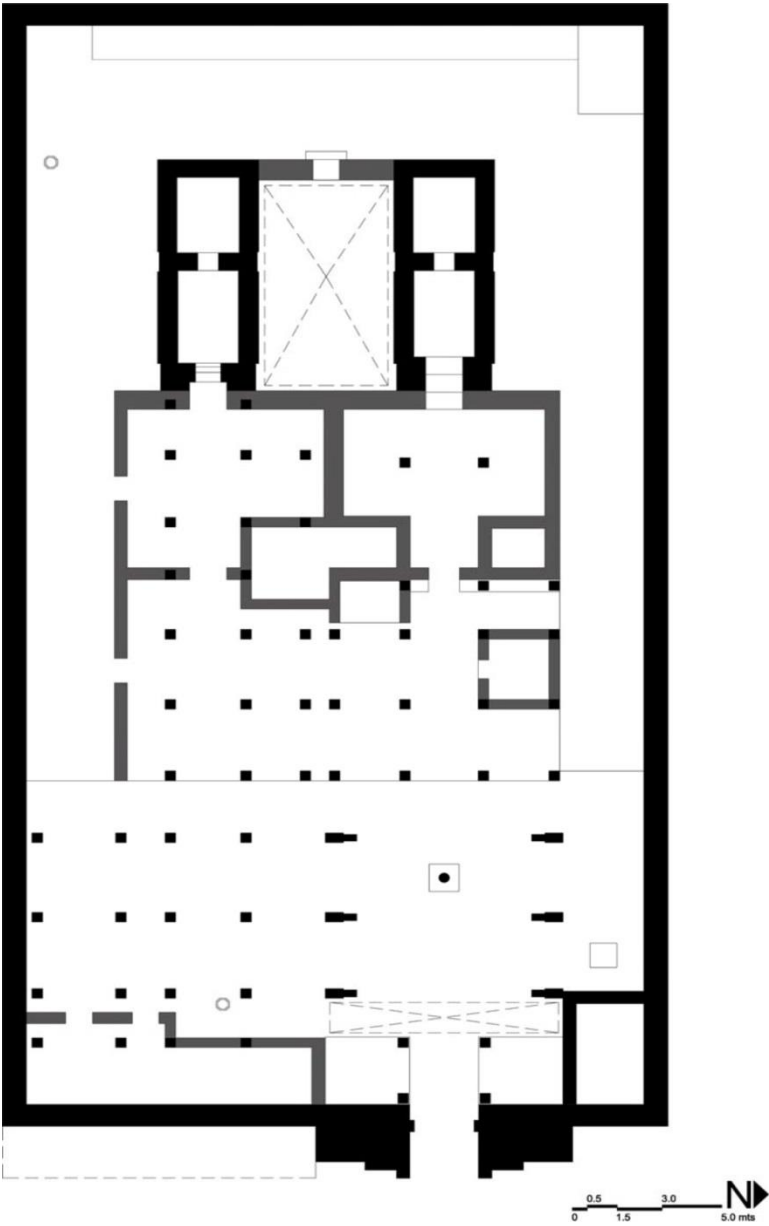
1. Frontal view of the temple, Rājēndracōḷīs̥varam
2. *Vimānas*, Rājēndracōḷīs̥varam
3. Kālī, Rājēndracōḷīs̥varam
4. Śiva-ūrdhvatāṇḍavam, Rājēndracōḷīs̥varam
5. Vīrabhadra, Rājēndracōḷīs̥varam
6. *Vimānas*, Varadarāja temple, Periyakuḷam
7. Pañcavaktradevatā, Varadarāja temple, Periyakuḷam
8. Temples on Tailārammaṇ-karaṭu, *Malaimēl* Vaidhyanāthasvāmi, Periyakuḷam
9. Detail of Fig. 8
10. Detail of Fig. 8
11. *Kumāra Zamīndārs*, pages to Lord Carmichael (Photo from A. Vadivelu 1915)
12. A Roadside Temple for Kālī, Cempaṭṭi-Verrilaikkunṭu Highway
13. A Roadside Basilica, Aṭaikkalamātāpuram (close to Cempaṭṭi)
14. A Roadside *dargaḥ*, Periyakuḷam



Map. The Periyakulam city on the River bed of Varākanati (developed on Google map).

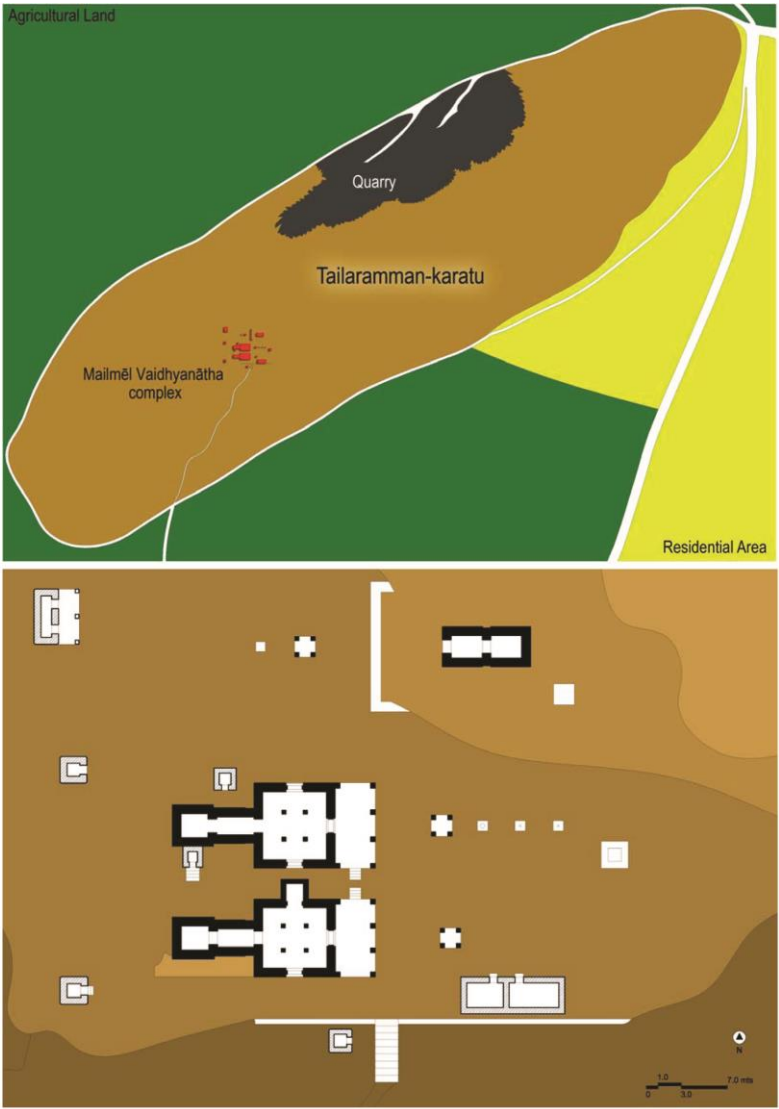


Plan 1. Ground Plan, Rājēndracōḷīśvaram, Periyakuḷam © author.



Plan 2. Ground Plan, Varadarāja temple, Periyakulam © author.





Plan 3. Ground Plan, Mailmēl Vaidhyānātha temple, Periyakuḷam © author.



Figure 1. Frontal view of the temple,  
Rājēndracōḷīśvaram.



Figure 2. *Vimānas*, Rājēndracōḷīśvaram.



Figure 3. Kālī, Rājēndracōḷīśvaram.



Figure 4. Śiva-ūrdhvatāṇḍavam,  
Rājēndracōlīśvaram.



Figure 5. Vīrabhadra,  
Rājēndracōlīśvaram



Figure 6. *Vimānas*, Varadarāja temple, Periyakuḷam.



Figure 7. Pañcavaktradevatā, Varadarāja temple, Periyakuḷam.

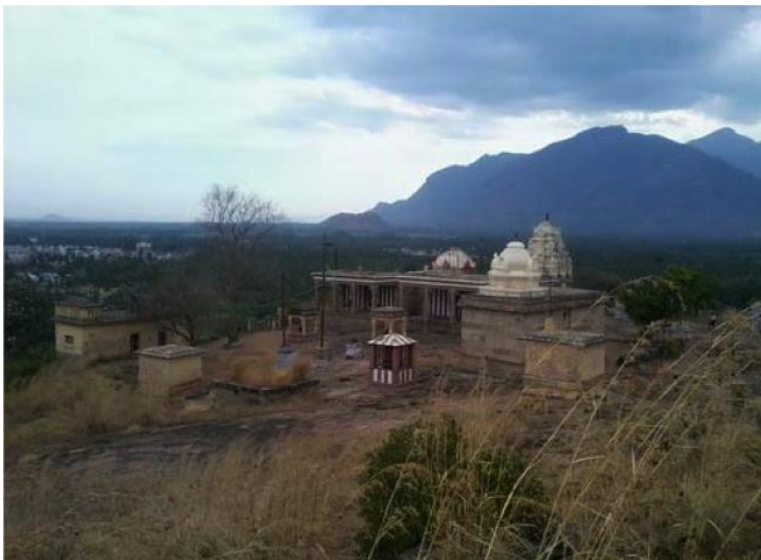


Figure 8. Temples on Tailārammaṇ-karaṭu, Malaimēl Vaidhyanāthasvāmi, Periyakuḷam.

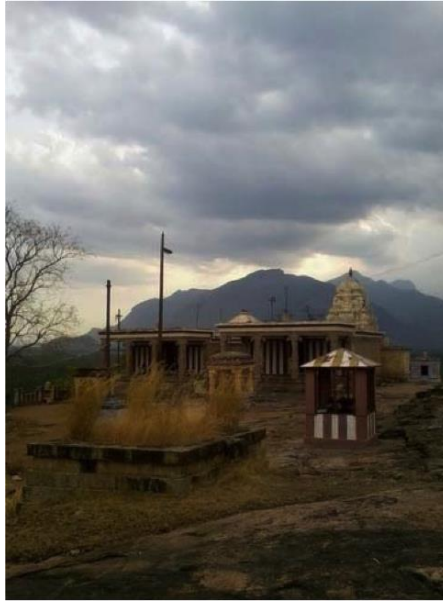


Figure 9. Detail of Fig. 8.

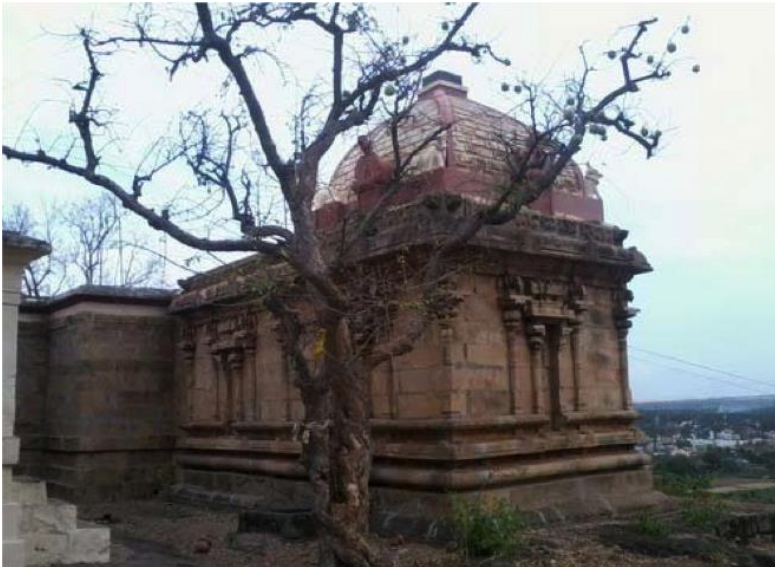


Figure 10. Detail of Fig. 8.





Figure 11. *Kumāra Zamīndārs*, pages to Lord Carmichael (Photo from A. Vadivelu 1915).



Figure 19. A Roadside Temple for Kālī, Cempatti-Verrilaikkuṇṭu Highway.



Figure 13. A Roadside Basilica, Aṭaikkalamātāpuram (close to Cempaṭṭi).



Figure 14. A Roadside *dargah*, Periyakuḷam.

