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The Development and Characteristics of Forts in Tamil Nadu with Special Reference to Thagadoor

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Abstract

Thagadoor is one of the old geographical subdivisions of South India that has experienced massive changes in terms of geopolitics and administration over the years. Historically, the region has been linked with other districts, such as Dharmapuri, North Arcot and Salem with a small part of it being moved to the modern Andhra Pradesh. Thagadoor Nadu was a part of the Nolambambadi province during the Nolamba rule and under the Chola rule, became a part of the Nikirili Chozha Mandalam. After the Sangam period, the region was renamed Ganga Nadu due to it being ruled by the Ganga rulers who were also known by the name Mutharaiyars. The Thagadoor Nadu has changed in terms of its territorial location across the dynasties; the historical records suggest that the Thagadoor Nadu was located to the north of the Kongu Nadu, west of the Thondai Nadu, south of the Vadugar Nadu and east of the Erumai Nadu. The major settlements in the region were Adhiyamankotti and Athakappadi. The political, cultural and administrative dynamics in the historical development of the region manifest in the dynamic changes of the Thagadoor territorial identity.

Keywords: Thagadoor Nadu; Sangam period; Nolamba dynasty; Chola Mandalam; Ganga Nadu; Tamil history

1. Introduction

1.1 Fortifications

Among the sixty-four arts of ancient Tamils, the scholar Mayilai Seen. Venkatasamy classifies five arts as aesthetic arts: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry. aesthetic arts have the property of awakening emotions in the human mind and providing pleasure. Man creates aesthetic arts with his knowledge, temperament, and imagination, and through them experiences emotion, beauty, and pleasure. It is explained that aesthetic arts are those that are seen with the eyes, heard with the ears, and felt with the heart ^[1].

Architecture is like a mother to all arts. It combines space and form and becomes a clear expression of culture. Therefore, architecture is classified as the primary art among the aesthetic arts that are seen with the eyes, felt with the heart, and enjoyed. There is no evidence today of show the architectural development that the Tamils had during the Sangam period, however When classify them through the Sangam literature, can be see that we have we they developed into the following three categories.

1. Domestic Architecture
2. Temple and Royal Buildings Architecture
3. Fort Architecture or Defence Architecture

The following are mentioned in the Nedunalvadai, 'Perum Peer Mannarg Koppa Manaivaguthu', which indicates that there was a custom of allocating houses according to the wealth of each person, and that the houses had courtyards and rooms, and that there were various windows according to the direction of the wind built and that they were called Kaladhar (meaning the way the wind came in). It can be seen from the Nedunalvadai that the houses had paintings on their floors and that some houses were built as attics.

Since the external and internal decorations of the buildings were almost the same, the word temple has become a general term for both the royal residence and the royal residence. In this, the temple was the residence of the king and the palace was the residence of the king. The buildings related to the king's administration and defense did not develop into fort

architecture. In this fort architecture, the techniques of setting up traps in the walls and bastions for the security of the country were used, so fort architecture developed into a military branch of defense architecture called military engineering ^[2].

2. The antiquity of the art of fortification

The forts of the Tamils are not just buildings. They are revered as an ancient art that has grown along with their lifestyle. In the Sangam period of Tamil Nadu, two thousand years ago, many cities such as Uraiyur, Madurai, Karuvur, Vanchi, Kanchi, etc. were surrounded by fort ramparts, and there were mansions, towers and palaces inside those forts, as narrated in the ten-part and eight-part texts.

Similarly, during the reigns of the Pallava, Chera, Chola and Pandya dynasties, the cities of Kanchipuram, Thanjavur, GangaikondaCholapuram and Madurai were cities with moats. During the Nayaka period, it seems that there were imperial forts in the capitals of Madurai, Ginji and Thanjavur, and small forts in the areas governed by the *Palaiyakars* under them. After them, European rule came to Tamil Nadu, and the forts built by Europeans were also remind in Tamil Nadu. The *Danish fort* was built in Tharangambadi, the *French fort* in Puducherry, and the *English forts* in Chennai and Cuddalore.

If we read the histories of these forts in literature and history books, we will be disappointed if we go to see them with that interest. All we can see are some European forts built in the 18th century. What happened to all the rest of the forts?

In some towns, forts are only in the names of the towns. But no traces of the existence of forts have been found in those places. Literature and epics such as *Akananuru*, *Purananuru*, *Pathiruppattu*, *Silappadhikaram*, *Manimekalai* etc. indicate the existence of forts. But even the ruins of them are not found today. Temples built by the Pallavas, Cholas, Cheras, Pandyas etc. can be seen. But the place where the palaces where they lived and the fort ramparts that provided protection were located is not known.

3. The Techniques of Fort

When we look back at our history, we are struck by the wonder of the greatness we have lost. How did we lose so much territory to so many small countries. How much did the short-term sleep of disunity have. If we consider the destruction of foreign rule, then South India suffered more than North India. Ruling the North and subjugating the South became the norm. The invasion of foreigners was a real eye-opener there. Look! The forts that existed were also razed to the ground, their wealth was looted, and they were turned into barracks for the army.

The ancient splendor of today's South India shines not only in its cultural traditions but also in its heroic sentiments. Let us see the southern forts that are witnesses to those heroic scars in these historical windows. Kings were keen on building natural and artificial forts. There would be many forts around the fort where the king resided. They are divided into five categories: Mathilaran, Nilavaran, Niraran, Kataran and Malayaran.

3.1 Mathilaran

Mathilaran is divided into four types: Madil, Eil, Inji and So. Purisai is the common name for these. It is believed that the goddess will settle on the wall and seek victory. The book *Pattinapalai* says 'Thiru Nilayya Perumannail'.^[6] The

wall of the fort rose like a mountain and touched the sky. The walls of the fort were built by including the mountains that rose naturally. There was also a custom of inserting copper plates between these walls to strengthen them. Many rare traps were set in the walls. The old Tamil *Vendras* used the best Yavana warriors in swordplay to guard the gates of the walls.

*'kadimathil vaayil kavir sirantha
Adalvaal yavanarkku ayaraatha'* ^{kukku} [7]

The *Silappadhikaram* says.

There were many rooms on the walls where one could hide and shoot arrows at the enemy. These were called 'Gnayil'. The walls were surrounded by ditches. The area surrounded by the ditch was called a *gidangil*. The book *Malaipadukadam* shows a *gidangil* with a ditch full of crooked-legged crocodiles roaming around in search of prey.

The Madurai Kanchi mentions a 'gidangu' which was quite deep in the ground and had water of the color of sapphire. At night, the lamp of the village guard attracts the shadow! The poet Marokkathu Napasalaiyar says that it is a very large ancient fort with a wall as if made of copper, surrounded by water-filled ponds (*madu*) where crocodiles gather.

Nalliyak Kodan of Oima had built a large walled fort in his country. That is why the name Appatinam was given to Eilpattinam. Since the fortification was not fortified, they built a wall with moats and moats. This was called *Sovaran*. A wall made of copper and made of black stone is called *Inji*.

*'Sembu Punanthietriya senedu purisei
Uvera veegai thuvarai yaandu'* ^[8]

This is described in the *Purananuru* as,

In the capital of Venda, there are several walls, one above the other. We know that the 'outer wall' is built by bending the mountain peaks and the 'Agamathil' inside is surrounded by a large space, where arrowheads are placed.

The poet Palak Gautamanar has mentioned the fort called 'Agappa' in the *Purananuru*. It has a wide space for two armies to fight against each other. It has gates made of thick wood. It has rare machines like *Iyavidhulam*. It has a guard house, a deep warehouse, and long walls to protect the enemy from approaching. He called this fort 'Agappa' He said.

3.2 Nilavaran

Nilavaran is located in two levels. The land outside the outer wall so that the enemy does not reach it, and the 'tannadai' land left inside the wall so that the occupants can grow the food they need when the enemy's siege is prolonged. Both are *nilavaran*.

*'Mani neerum mannum malaum ani nila
Kaaum udaiyathu'* ^{aran} [9]

'Mathir purathu marutha nilam pakaivar aran patramai porittu' [10]

Says of Parimelazhagar

To the inscription '*Naadu kandana kanai thunju vilangal*', K. Duraisami Pillai says, '*Agantra nattai kandar poola porida'hthai agathee Konda ambukattukal porunthiya idamathil*'.

The ancient writers have also said that the fields and ponds that have been cultivated for a long time and have been well-prepared for the harvest are like a mountain where arrows can rest. There are natural and artificial walls, and rivers and seas can also serve as natural defenses. There are

also artificial water bodies called moats or warehouses that can be used as defenses. Sangam literature mentions that warehouses were located so deep that they could form a screen.

3.3 Kataran

Kataran is a place where the army can hide without the enemy knowing and where the enemy cannot enter in groups. Natarans are located around the wall and separately. These forests are also called 'Umbhatkadu'¹¹ because of the abundance of elephants in these forests ^[11].

Mountain Range

Mountains are built by connecting mountains to form a high point that the enemy cannot climb. It is worth mentioning here that many kings of the Sangam period made many mountains their own. When the three of them besieged Parambu Hill in Bari, Kapila's description of the resources of Parambu Hill shows the greatness of the mountain range ^[12].

Fort Gates

The fort gate was wide and high. With umbrellas raised above two elephants, with a hopper on their backs, it was a large gate of sufficient height and width for both the elephants to enter at the same time. Various types of paintings were carved on the doors, and the doors had the royal emblems ^[13].

They were decorated. There were traps to close and open these doors. Barricades were installed across the inside and outside of the doors like a latch. The innermost barricade was called 'seep' and the outermost barricade was called 'eazhu'. Rolling leaves were placed at the gates of the wall to prevent others from entering, and a 'Naamperuvayil' was placed across them. Such gates were guarded by skilled Yavana warriors.

There was also a separate gate for special days such as festivals. It was called 'Nam Peru Vaayil'. Urban Structure. The city was built around protective walls. Sangam literature depicts the city as a lotus flower and the various quarters within it as the various petals of that flower.

The palace where the king resided was the center of the city like the bud of the lotus flower. The residences of the ministers were next to the palace like lilies surrounding the bud. Next to them were the residences of the scholars, appearing as inner courtyards. The merchant streets surrounding these were like beautiful petals matching the petals of the grass. The outer courtyards were the streets of the Vellalars, resembling the petals of the Marungi grass. The prostitutes' shanties next to these looked like the outer petals of the flower. The city, surrounded by the vast army shanties that surrounded the city, was like a lotus floating on a pond.

Streets

The streets inside the forts were as wide and long as rivers. They passed through the city one after another. On both sides of the road were houses as if they filled the hills. The streets were lit up with lamps. The long streets were called Nadettueru and the narrow streets were called 'Konam'.

The city had temples, arundavapalli, aravoor mandar, and arukana temples. There were also dance halls, market streets, music halls, lecture halls, educational institutions, and gambling halls. There were separate dining halls for

five types of animal food: katipana, baruguvana, vilunguvana, nakkuvana, and suivapana. Independent women's living quarters, the crowded slums of baraathaiyar, the slums of padamaravar, elephant kennels, and horse kennels were located on one side. Merchants of many nationalities speaking different languages lived on one side of the city. That place was called 'desigappadi' or 'desigach cheri' ^[14].

There were art galleries, water pavilions, beauty parlours, public halls, arenas where soldiers fought chickens, circular arenas where elephants were trained, streets where horses were galloped, arenas where warriors trained, places where martial arts were practiced, forts built by monks, places of sacrifice for Brahmins, etc.

Shops

The market street was long and always full of noise. Shops that operated during the day were called 'Pagalankadi' or 'Nalanankadi', and shops that operated at night were called 'Allankadi'. In the evening, the doors of shops selling accessories etc. were closed and flower shops were opened. The women of the market streets collected saffron, flowers, lime etc., which were scattered by the people living in the market streets, and sprinkled the streets with sandalwood water to prevent entry. Later, they spread colorful flowers on the streets and in the courtyards of shops.

Padichcheri

This is a major military base on the outskirts of the city. The place where the soldiers stayed was called 'Batik Kotil' and the soldiers were. The place where the blacksmith who made tools stayed was called 'Muttigai Cheri', the place where the blacksmith worked was called 'Kammavalayam', and the place where the commander lived was called 'Thanaichcheri'. All the dwellings here were like temporary huts.

In the army barracks, the Yavana warriors, the Tamil Nadu warriors and the Milaichcha warriors lived separately. According to the names of their respective countries, those places were called Yavanacheri, Tamilacheri and Milaichcha Cheri ^[15].

Palace

The king's palace was circular in shape. It was surrounded by a wall in an angular structure. The palace had a tower.¹⁶ Around the palace were the guard groves of lavender and groves of young trees. Around the palace were the armory and grain warehouses.

There were gardens in the palace. There were hidden cisterns and wells with water traps. The Waterfalls were made to fall from the tops of the hills. Since they were artificially made, they were called 'Sengkundugal'. Here, all the natural resources were artificially made of stone and made to look natural. Ponds were set up to collect the waterfall water coming from the top. People would play water games in these ponds.

There were steps to reach the top of the hill. A large monster was stationed in the form of a swallow on those who came to the top. It was composed by the Yavanas.

Dead-End Paths

Paths that appear like paths but then lead to a bewildering end are called 'dead-end paths'. There were dead-end paths in the forests and forests surrounding the palace. Kalla

Bhoomi. The Bhoomi, which looked like the earth on the surface but was hollow inside, were also located in the area surrounding the palace.

Andhapuram

The area where the wives of the kings, the women of the family and the women who served them lived was called 'Urimamanagar' or 'Urimapalli' or 'Andhapuram'. Except for the king, no other men were allowed to enter there. The eunuchs who had lost their virility or were removed guarded here.

On one side of the Andhapuram, there were separate rooms for the virgins to stay. They were called 'Kanni Madam' ^[17]. The Kanni Madam was always fragrant with the smoke of agarwood, sandalwood and flowers.

The Kanni Madam was very secure. Therefore, it was also called 'Kadimanai', and near the rooms there were small pools where the virgins could play. Even children were prohibited from entering these pools. Pillars were erected near the entrance of the oasis, stating that no one except virgins could enter the oasis and that those who trespassed would be punished. They were called 'Kazharukal'.

Thirumani Ambalam

The place in the palace where the king welcomed his loved ones and conferred with them. It is also known as the Nalvini Ambalam.

Porkottam Balam

In this hall of the palace, surrounded by learned scholars, the king would sit and consult.

Mantra Madam

The place where secret messages were discussed was called Mantra Madam (Mantra Counseling Hall) ^[18]. The king would consult here. It is very controlled so that no outsider can enter.

Atthani Mandapam

The Atthani Mandapam is the place where the king's seat was located inside the palace. The king conducted royal affairs from this place. The hall where the large assembly gathered and functioned was called 'Perathani', and the Olaka Mandapam ^[18] where a small group gathered was called 'Nerathani'.

Pothiyara

There were underground chambers (underground prisons) called 'Arumpilam', ^[19] which were used to confine enemies and escape. They were not well ventilated and could cause severe suffering to those inside.

Isai Mandara

The place where musicians sang melodies was called Isai Mandara. On one side of the Isai Mandapam, ^[20] variously colored curtains were inserted into the temple and made into pavilions. The royal family sat in them and enjoyed the music.

Dance Hall

The places where dancers danced were called "Adampalam" ^[21].

Koothapalli

The place for drama was Koothhapalli, which was located in

the Pozhilid ^[22]. It was decorated with sculptures from the Koorchara country.

Palliyarai

The palliyarai were very specially arranged. Bright pearl garlands and garlands of flowers swayed at the gates. Smoke filled the room. Inside the room, which was filled with incense, was a bed of various beads with delicate patterns ^[23].

Ulamandapam

There were halls for strolling within the palace itself. These were decorated with moonlit courtyards.

Sentu Veli

The playground for playing games on elephants and horses was called 'Sendu Veli' or 'Vari' ^[24].

Dindha Mandam

There was a luxurious and artistic palace where the kings who came as guests stayed and surrounded it with a pavilion. This was called 'Virundu Mandapam' or 'Virundu Koil'.

Tunnels

There were chambers with tunnels in the palaces. There were mechanisms to operate the doors that covered the tunnels. Such chambers were called 'Poriyamai Madams' ^[25]. The mechanisms that operated the doors that covered the tunnels were artistically decorated. They are placed in such a way that they look like a sculpture on the wall, like a deer's head or a globe, and are not visible to others as a trap. Except for those who are used to it, no one can realize that there is a trap in that room.

Deity Shrines

The places of worship for worship within the palace were called 'Deity shrines'. Here, the king's family deity was usually installed and worshipped.

Mansions

There were mansions of great officials around the palace. The mansions were built with artistic beauty. The mansions were made of lime mortar.

It was painted with. Therefore, it was called Nallil in the form of a white stone. They had built walls of red color around the palaces. The palaces were as big as the sky.

The walls of the palaces, which were like a 'sea of coral' where the moon was crawling, and the objects there were decorated with various beads and shone. The seven-level palaces also adorned the city.

They decorated the pillars of the palace with painted curtains. The palace above the gate was called the gate palace. It was seen in various shapes. The palace made like a tiger's face was called the tiger-face palace. The chambers built around the palaces to hide were called 'hiding rooms'. The palace halls were made of lacquer. In the palaces, seats made of tiger and deer skins were placed on golden boards.

The courtyards that extended beyond the boundary walls and were roofless in the palace grounds were called Nila Mutras or Nila Madangals Silabathikaram ^[23]. The describes this as 'a long Nila Mutra for the use of the Niva'. The Nila Mutras were adorned with various paintings. On the edge of these courtyards, rows of golden canes were arranged and

between them, planks with bells were placed as barriers. Ladders were arranged in rows along the walls taken as a guard on the side of the houses. The women of the house could climb these ladders and watch the scenes going on in the streets. These were called Nagarkan Ladders. These are common features of the South Indian forts of the Sangam period.

4. Conclusion

Tamil architecture can be said to be the mother of arts. Tamils created their thoughts and what they saw and felt with their eyes into arts. They began to express those arts through architectural arts built for public use and personal life. Later, forts were built to protect themselves from other peoples. This article is designed to explain how those forts were built and what their construction techniques were.

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