

Nallūr Kingdom and Jaffna Fort - A Review

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ABSTRACT : Most of the present day forts found in Sri Lanka has first been built during the Portuguese rule and later renovated and changed during the Dutch and British rule. However, there are evidences in the Pali, Sinhala and Tamil literatures and inscriptions that forts of local rulers existed even earlier than the advent of the Portuguese. Culavamsa says about a circular fort built with clay in Northern Sri Lanka in 11th century A.D. Further, Tamil and Sinhala literatures which tell about the Jaffna kingdom mention about the presence of the forts in the kingdom. Though Nallur had been the capital of the Jaffna kingdom, Portuguese records reveal that the major battle between two forces took place at Pannai area where the present fort stands now. Recent archaeological artifacts found in Jaffna fort area reveal that before the Portuguese the present fort, there were ancient settlements and they had commercial ties with North India, Tamil Nadu, Rome, Arabia and China from the Christian era. Further, the inscriptions, coins and temple ruins discovered during the recent excavations suggest that the site was a trade center during the Chola rule, perhaps a capital. The relevant evidences from Tamil and Sinhala literatures and the coins and the ruins, found in the area suggest that the fort belonging to the Nallur Kingdom might have existed on the above site. These evidences suggest that the fort of the Jaffna kingdom might have existed on the same vicinity, before the advent of the Portuguese. The main objective of this research is to prove above fact with recent relevant Archaeological evidences found in the fort area.

Key Words:- Laxmicoir, Raman, Chirese and Islamic wares, Chola inscriptions coins of chonese, chola and Jaffna kingdom, 'Ruins of Hindu Temples'

Introduction

In south Asia, Sri Lanka is one of the countries which have an ancient and continuous history. With the advent of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in about the 3rd century B.C. an oral trend of passing the history from generation to generation has been maintained, especially by the Buddhist monasteries. As a result, the ancient Pāli literatures and literary works such as Tīpavaṃśa, Mahāvāṃśa and Culavaṃśa have become the main sources of historians who venture to study and write the ancient and medieval history of Sri Lanka. As the above Pāli literary works give prominence to the Theravada Buddhism, these literary works do not reveal the history of other races and religions of ancient Sri Lanka with an impartial historical approach. As such, the later period history books reflect the reviews of the Pāli literary works. However, these Pāli literary works mention the Northern Sri Lanka as "Nāgatīpa" and "Uttaradesa" before this region gained the names "Yālpāṇam" and "Vaṇṇi". Like the Pāli literary works, other historical sources also identify the uniqueness of the Northern Sri Lanka.

Pāli literary works refer that one sect of ancient people who lived in Sri Lanka before 6th century B.C. were “Nāka” people. Dr. Deraniyagala who points out several similarities of the Megalithic cultures of Sri Lanka and south India, opines that the Nāga people introduced the Megalithic culture to Sri Lanka (Deraniyagala 1992:735). Professor Indrapala who complies with the opinion of Dr. Deraniyagala says that with the advent of Buddhism and Prakrit language and the people swelled into big tribal groups, by absorbing Nāga and other people, while the Nāga people of the North and the East spoke Tamil and remained as Tamils (Indrapala 2005: 172-73).

Mahāvamsa which is one of the first Pāli historical works that give prominence to the Anuradhapura kingdom mentions that Lord Buddha had settled a dispute between two Nāga kings in their struggle for the throne when he visited Sri Lanka in the 6th century B.C. (Mahāvamsa 8:54). However, even if we consider the visit of Lord Buddha to Sri Lanka as a legend, we may infer that the region north of Anuradhapura was called as “Nāgatīpa”

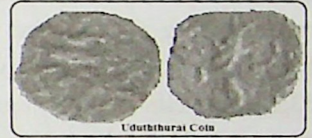
Further, a Brahmi inscription belonging to the 1st century B.C. discovered North of Anuradhapura mentions about “Nākanakar” (Karunaratne 1984:82). The word convey the meaning as “the land of Nākas”. On the inscription, the word appear in Tamil as “Nākanakar”, instead of “Nāgana gara” in Prakrit language. Dr. Ragupathy opines that this word “Nākanakar” might have been the capital of Kantarōṭai or refers to Kantarōṭai itself, (Ragupathy: 1991). Dr. Nicolas, referring to the word from an inscription, belonging to the 9th century A.D. says that the word “Nākanakar” on the Brahmi inscription refers to a city to the North of Anuradhapura, (Nicolas: 1963:81). The inscription confirms that the Nākas lived in the city were Tamils, irrespective of the exact location of “Nākanakar”.



In the ancient Times, next to India, Sri Lanka had frequent commercial ties with Greek and Rome. Ports of Northern Sri Lanka played an important part in these commercial ties. The Greek and Roman coins, pottery and wine jars, discovered at Mātōṭṭam, Kantarōṭai, Pūṇakary and Cāṭṭi provide adequate evidences of the ties. Records and maps of Ptolomy, belonging to the 2nd century A.D. mention “Nāgatīpa” as an important coastal town of Sri Lanka. On his map, Nāgatīpa was marked in the Northern region of Sri Lanka (Weerakody 1997:87). As such, scholars believe that the region Nāgatīva, mentioned in the Pāli texts

refers to the Northern Sri Lanka. Further, the gold inscription belonging to the 3rd-4th centuries A.D. discovered at Vallipuram in 1936, mentions about a Buddhist Vihara at Nāgatīva (Paranavitana 1982:79-80). There is no doubt that the word “Nāgatīva” mentioned in the Pāli texts is the same as “Nāgatīpa”.

A coin, belonging to the 2nd century A.D., discovered at Uṭuttuṟai in the Teṇṇmṛācci region, strengthens the view that Northern Sri Lanka was called as Nāgatīpa. On the obverse of the coin the word “Nākapūmi” and on the reverse the word “Polam”, are found. The words “Bumi” and “Nākapūmi” are found on some Sri Lanka Brahmi inscriptions, (Paranavitana 1982:168-9). On these coins the word “Nākapūmi” was written in Northern Brahmi which belongs to the Prakrit Language. But on the Uṭutturai coin, the word “Nākapūmi” has striking variation in that the word was written in Tamil Brahmi script (Pushparatnam 2003:116-119). This variation suggests that the region mentioned as “Nāgatīva” might have been called as “Nākapūmi” in Tamil.



There are evidences that the Northern Sri Lanka which was called as “Nāgatīpa” in Pāli and as “Nagadiva” in Prakrit might have been called “Nākanāṭu” in Tamil in Northern Sri Lanka. “Maṇimēkalai”, one of the two great Tamil epics which were written after the 6th century A.D. in Tamil Nāṭu, mentions that Nākanāṭu is one of the regions over the sea. A copper plate of the Pallava period, discovered at Velurpālayam reveals that a Pallava king married a Nāka princess (Balasubramaniam 1998). Jeyamkoṅṭar the author of the Tamil literary work of the Cōla period “Kaliṅkattuparaṇi”, in his descriptions about the Cōla royal traditions, mentions about the marriage of Kiḷḷivaḷavaṇ, a member of the Cōla royal clan to a Naga princess. The scholars who analyzed the above evidences and other relevant historical aspects are of the opinion that the Nāgatīpa in Pāli texts refers to the Nākanāṭu in Northern Sri Lanka (Rasanayagam, C.,1926, Sitrampalam 1991 : 67-80).

Northern Sri Lanka which was called as “Nāgatīpa” and “Nākanāṭu” in the ancient times was called as “Uttaradesa” after 6th century A.D. However, there are no clear evidences in the relevant texts so as to know whether the different names refer to the same region or about the boundaries of the regions. But, the historical occurrences of these regions from various different sources indicate that all these different names refer to the same region. For example, Cūlavaṁsa says that in 835 A.D., when the Pāṇṭiyaṅ king Srimara Srivallapaṅ came and stayed in Uttaradesa with a view to invade the Anuradhapura Kingdom. The Tamils of Mātōṭṭam joined forces with the Pāṇṭiyaṅ king and defeated the Anuradhapura king, (Cūlavaṁsa 50:12-42). Professor.Velupillai says that the temple at Mātōṭṭam was called as “Ketēswarem” in the hymns of “Nayanmars” because it was the temple of the Naga people (Kethu is considered to be cobra representing the Nagas. Velupillai 2001:154). Cūlavaṁsa says that a South Indian King Vallapan invaded Nāgatīpa in the 10th century A.D. (Cūlavaṁsa 53:12-16). Here, the Nāgatīpa was identified as a distinct region in the 10th century A.D, by the Cūlavaṁsa.

The Sinhala literature “Rajavaliya” of 13th century A.D. mentions the Northern Sri Lanka as “Manināgatīpa”. Professor Godakumbara opines that the above region may be “Kantarōṭai (Godakumbara 1968:7). A Tamil literary work “Maṭṭakkaḷappumaṅmiam” says that Kaliṅgamāgaṅ invaded Sri Lanka and landed in Jaffna and met a Nāka king in about the same period (Maṭṭakkaḷappumaṅmiam: 54). The above evidences confirm that the Northern Sri Lanka, including Jaffna might have been called as “Nāgatīpa”, “Nākanāṭu” and “Nākapūmi”, at least till the 13th century A.D.

Though the Pāli texts refer to the Northern Sri Lanka as a distinct region, the political, social, cultural and economic aspects of the region had been cloudy till the European period, when compared to those of other regions. However, the Pāli texts which describe about the relations and ties of the Anuradhapura and, Pollanaruwa kingdoms with the distant regions in the Southern Sri Lanka, has not given adequate information about the Northern region though it is comparatively closer. Though there has been some information about the Northern Sri Lanka in the Pāli texts after 7th century A.D, all the information is relevant to the invasions made from Jaffna on the Anuradhapura and Pollanaruwa kingdoms. The above evidences indicate that the Northern Sri Lanka was not within the cultural influence of the Anuradhapura and Pollanaruwa kingdoms, because since the 1970's, reliable evidences relating to

the ancient people of Sri Lanka, their cultural development, foreign ties and state formation have been discovered at Kantarōtai, Mātōṭṭam, Āṇaikkōṭṭai, Kārainakar, Cāṭṭi, Pūṇakary, Iraṇaimaṭu, Verṇilakkēṇi, Ampraṇai, Kuṭattaṇai, Nākarkōvil and Vallipuram. The similarities in the Archeological evidences, discovered in Northern Sri Lanka and Tamil Nāṭu suggest that Northern Sri Lanka was the gateway to the ties and relationship between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nāṭu. At this juncture, the recent archaeological research and evidences from Jaffna Fort since 2010 strengthen the above fact. As the evidences from Jaffna Fort reveal the background of the Fort, especially the importance of the site before the advent of Europeans, the objective of the research is to bring out all possible archaeological evidences available regarding the site.

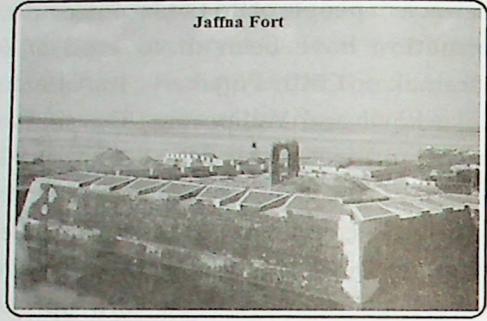
Northern Sri Lanka under the European Rule

When the Portuguese won the Nallūr kingdom in 1621, Northern Sri Lanka came under the Portuguese domination. Though the Portuguese had influence in some parts of the Northern Sri Lanka, it came under their complete domination after their victory over the Nallūr Kingdom King Sankili- II. Following the 37 year rule of the Portuguese (1621 to 1658), the Dutch (1658 to 1797) and the British (1797 to 1948) dominated Northern Sri Lanka. Though the Portuguese and Dutch could not dominate the Vaṇṇi region, their influence was felt along the coastal regions of Vaṇṇi. As such, the historians attribute that the Northern region was under the European rule for about 327 years. With the European rule, a new chapter in the history of the Jaffna has dawned in that Catholic and Protestant religions and Portuguese, Dutch and English languages and new educational, social and cultural trends, and new dresses, art and architecture and eating style and habits have been introduced to the Tamils. As a result of the alien rule, a change in the culture has appeared among the natives. The Archaeology Department of Sri Lanka has proclaimed some of the monuments, structures and symbols of the European rule as national heritage. The Jaffna Fort is also included as one of the national heritage.

The Jaffna Fort

The Jaffna Fort is considered as a significant symbol of 327 years of European rule in the Northern Sri Lanka. This 2nd largest Fort in Sri Lanka is located in the Southern region of the Peninsula along the lagoon. In 1619 A.D. the Portuguese built this Fort with sand and stones in a circular shape. But, the present Fort was renovated by the Dutch during their 139 year rule (1658-1796

A.D.). During the British rule, they made slight changes in the Fort, but the Dutch character is dominant in the Fort. As such, the Fort is called as the Dutch Fort. The Portuguese Fort had 4 walls, but the Dutch rebuilt the Fort in the shape of a star with 5 walls, which is unique among the Forts in Sri Lanka. The Fort area occupies 62 acres. The outer walls are 30 feet high.



The bottom of the wall is 40 feet broad. The upper part of the wall is 20 feet broad. The outer parts of the walls are slant in shape to detect the enemies. There is a deep moat around the outer wall. On the four sides of the Fort, there are huge Ramparts, Sentries, Gun Points and Tunnels. The Portuguese records reveal that there was a sentry post manned with 200 Portuguese and native soldiers, at a distance of 2 miles outside the walls of the Fort for defense purpose. The structure of the Fort itself covers 34 acres. Inside the structure, there were administrative buildings, barracks, tunnels, a Dutch church, Hindu temple, prison houses and the Governor's Bungalow, among others. During the Dutch rule, the Forts at Colombo and Galle acted as towns, whereas the Jaffna Fort acted as military and administrative centers. The Jaffna Fort is estimated as a beautiful, majestic Fort with superior art and architecture when compared to the other Forts in the countries of the Indian Ocean region.

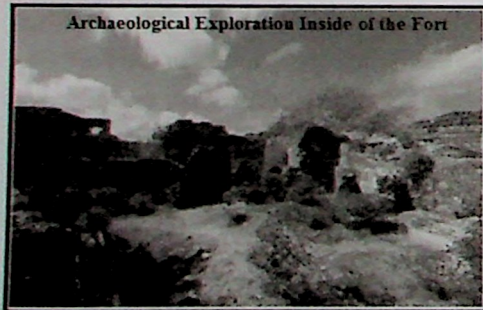
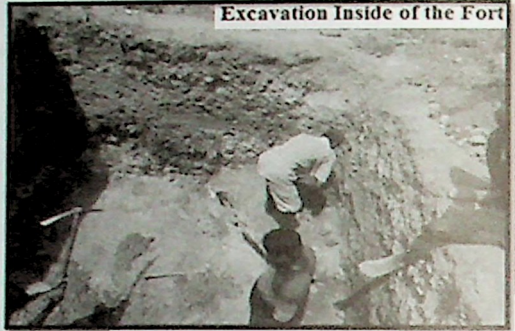
In 1984, Dr. Nelson who studied about the Dutch Forts in Sri Lanka praises the Jaffna Fort as having a superior architectural technology which can be compared with the best Forts in England, (Nelson 1984). Unfortunately, this majestic Fort has lost its luster and majestic beauty after the independence of Sri Lanka in 1948, especially during the last three decades due to the ethnic conflict. Though the huge outside walls makes one think that it is a Fort, almost all the inner structures and buildings are in ruins. The Portuguese and Dutch records reveal the history of the Jaffna Fort. The records reveal that the coral stones needed to build the Fort had been brought from neighboring regions such as Vēlaṇai, Naiyiṅāṭivu, Eluvaitīvu and Aṅalaitīvu. Further, hundreds of natives were made to stand in queues up to Kāṅkēcaṅturai and to pass stones from Kāṅkēcaṅturai to the Fort site by hand. Every Kaṭṭumaram (or vessel) which brought coral stones from the nearby sea was paid three Paṅam (money). One who collected stones and loaded the vessel was paid a half Paṅam (money). An

official who escorted the vessel was paid thirteen Paṇam (money), per month. Native masons who worked with the Portuguese masons were paid one Paṇam (money) for head mason and a half Paṇam (money) for assistant mason per day respectively. A laborer was given 70 spoonful of “Cāmi” grains per year for food. A “Paṇṭāram” who supervised the construction was paid eight Paṇam (money) per month. Further, several lime kiln were established at various places in the Peninsula to make necter which was used in the construction of the Fort. It was taken to the coast of “Paṇṇai”. Bags of jiggery which were used to mix with the were lime brought from Goa, in India. Clay was collected from ponds and tanks. The above evidences from the Portuguese and Dutch records evidences indicate that the Fort was built with coral stones. But, the excavations conducted in the Fort and the survey of the dilapidated Church, reveal a lot of lime stones and granites of various sizes and shapes with the coral stones. The striking point about these stones are that the coral stones which were used to build the outer walls of the Fort were of uniform sizes (10”x6”) cut and polished whereas the lime stones and granite were of different sizes and shapes.

Further, many such stones bear figures and decorations which are characteristics in the structure of Hindu temples. The Portuguese and Dutch records do not contain any details as to from where these stones were obtained. However, there are records that about 500 temples and big houses were demolished and their stones were used to build the Fors. Further, the Portuguese records mention that the big temple at Nallūr after their victory over the Nallūr kingdom was demolished and used the stones in the construction of the Fort. So, it is appropriate to take the above matter into account when we try to find how these stones became mixed up with the coral stones in the construction of the Fort. At this juncture, the Archaeology Department has embarked on renovating the Fort in a 3 year plan supported by the governments of Sri Lanka and the Netherlands. Hundreds of people, such as the scholars of the Archaeology Department, Archaeology Graduates of the University of Jaffna, various technical hands and laborers, are employed in the venture. As the preliminary work, they conduct excavations at selected places, in and out of the Fort, and archaeological surveys at dilapidated buildings and ruins. These activities and evidences will not only bring out the history of the Fort but also throw new light in the history of the region.

Archaeological Survey at Fort

So far, typical excavations were conducted at three places. During the survey at the entrance of the Fort on 2011, some evidences were discovered which belong to the pre-Portuguese period. As a result, the first excavation was conducted between the entrance of the Fort and the coastal road where the present church is situated. First, a pit measuring 10' long and 6' wide and 2.5' deep was dug. Three cultural sand layers were identified here. Though several pieces of pottery of various sizes were discovered, the 3rd cultural sand layer consisted of a lot of Chinese pottery and human skeletons. As these potteries belong to the period between 10th and 13th centuries A.D., the period of the 3rd cultural sand layer must be 300 years before the advent of the Portuguese. However, as excavation had not been proceeded to reach the natural soil, older and ancient evidences could not be excavated. The second excavation was conducted inside the Fort, the front of the tunnels. The excavation was led by Dr. Nimal Perera, Assistant Director of Archaeology Department. A pit measuring 6' long and 6' wide was dug till the natural soil.



Though the result of the excavation has not been published so far, Dr. Nimal Perera, in a report to the press, said that the evidences discovered belonged to the 5th century A.D., i.e. 1200 years before the advent of the Portuguese. The third excavation was conducted in front of the warehouse. It was not a pre-planned excavation. When a pit was dug at the particular

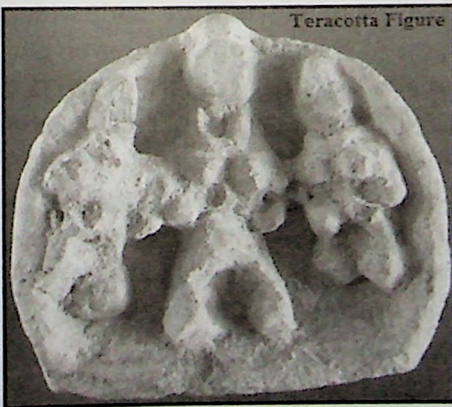
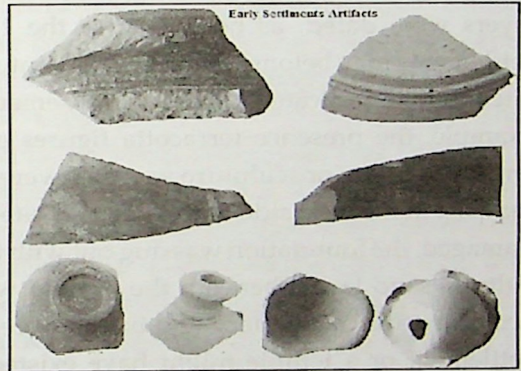
site, measuring 6' long and 6' wide and 7' deep, for some other purpose, valuable archaeological artifacts were found in the sand. It led to carry out an excavation on the particular site. Though the cultural sand layers were in a messed up state, the artifacts and evidences belong to Romans (1st century A.D.), Arabs (7th-10th centuries A.D.), Cōlas (10th 13th centuries A.D.), Europeans and Jaffna Kingdom. Further, the recent overall survey of the inside of the Fort deserves much attention. The Fort suffered and sustained severe damages during the 3 decades

of ethnic war before 1995. Though a general view of the Fort from outside identifies it as a Fort, the Christian church, the graves and tombs of the soldiers and administrative officers, memorials, Queen's House, barracks, administrative buildings, prison complex, tunnels and ramparts inside the 34 acre area are badly damaged or in ruins. During the renovation project since 2010, these ruins were removed and the sites were surveyed, and studied. As a result, not only the European period structures, pottery, inscriptions and coins, but also pre-European local and foreign pottery, various coins, statues, and remnants of Hindu temples were discovered. The above evidence suggest that the site of the Fort and its vicinity has had a significant history for not less than 2000 years.

Ancient people of the Fort area

When one traces the antiquity and history of Jaffna town, one gives prominence and priority to the Fort built by the Portuguese who were aliens to Jaffna. However, the evidences discovered so far from the Archaeological study here since 2010, we can infer that this site has had a long and continuous history. Because of this background, the

Portuguese might have chosen the site to build their Fort. It is appropriate to bear in mind that the Pennsylvania University scholar and archaeologist Vimala Berkley who did extensive research at Kantarōṭai, points out the similarities between Kantarōṭai Megalithic culture and the Megalithic culture of Tamil Nāṭu. Further, she opines that the megalithic culture people of Kantarōṭai might have migrated from Tamil Nāṭu or the people of Kantarōṭai might have had close ties with the Tamil Nāṭu people. When excavations were made in front of the places used by the



Europeans, Roman pottery belonging to the 1st century A.D. were discovered. Among the cultural sand layer further below, remnants of early human settlements were found. A lot of Roman potteries were discovered during this excavation. Presence of sea water beneath this sand layer obstructed a full scale study of the sand layer. However, several



pieces of pottery were discovered along with the Roman pottery. Some of them are black and red potteries which are characteristic of megalithic culture. The pieces of pottery were unpolished when compared to the pieces of pottery of early megalithic culture. As the Roman Roulette Wares discovered in the upper layers were dated, as belonging to the 1st century A.D., the earlier human settlements may belong to the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Evidences discovered in the later period indicate that these settlements existed here continuously. For example, the presence terracotta figures of rural deities is noteworthy. This terracotta figure or sculpture was discovered at 4.5' below the foundation of the rampart in the west side of the Fort on "site- 8". As the rampart was completely damaged, the foundation was dug out with the help of a machine. As a result, the cultural sand layers beneath the ground were messed up. However, with the sculpture, various pottery and bricks were discovered. It shows that a human settlement or a temple might have existed there. Miss Rahini, who was the research supervisor of the activity, identified and cleaned and handed over the sculpture to the Archaeology Department. The sculpture is of terracotta figure (baked clay), measuring 6.3 cm tall and 6.6 cm wide and 2.5 cm in circumference. The nature of the sculpture indicates that it is a low relief sculpture made with a mould. The baked clay was circular in shape and three figures appear on one side. Two are female figures. Professor. Ragupathy says that the third was a male figure. The bottom is flat in shape so as to keep it on a place for worship. The top is in the shape of a "tiruvāci" and a small crown is on it. In Tamil Nāṭu, from 7th century A.D. temples, statues of Gods and sculptures were made of stones in Agamic tradition. Before 7th century A.D., people worshipped statues and sculptures made of baked clay. The baked clay figures discovered at Māḷikaimēṭu, Arikkmēṭu and Māmallapuram during excavations confirm the above fact. Ancient Tamil literatures also confirm the above fact.

There are evidences to show that the same trend was followed in the Hindu art tradition in contemporary Sri Lanka. Recently similar terracotta figures were discovered at Cāstirikūlarikuḷam in the Vavūṇiyā District. As such, we may infer that the above mentioned terracotta figure discovered at site- 8 in the Fort, might have been worshipped as rural Gods by the ancient people who lived in the Fort area before the advent of the Europeans.



Terracotta Figures Found in Vavuniya



Laxmi Coin Found in Fort

Among the evidences discovered in the ancient human settlements in Sri Lanka, rectangular coins deserve much attention. These coins were in various sizes and shapes and it was estimated that these category of coins had been in use from 3rd century B.C. to 5th century A.D. This category of coins were found in abundance in the ancient human settlements of Northern Sri Lanka. Discovery of baked clay moulds in the ancient settlements which were used to make these coins show that these coins were issued in Sri Lanka. It is believed that these coins must have been issued by the chieftains or traders units. Paul Peiries who did field research at Kantarōṭai in 1917 found this category of coins and name it as “Laxmi Coin”, as there was female figure standing on a lotus flower. The named “Laxmi Coin” is still in usage up to now. Such coins were found in the Archaeological survey in Jaffna Fort. This evidence shows that ancient human settlements existed here in the ancient times.

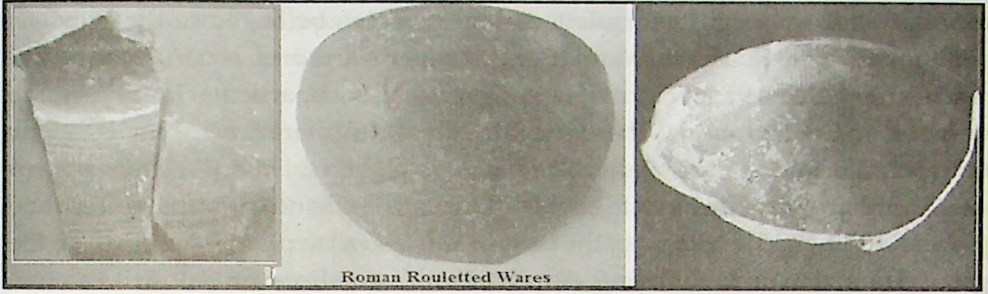
Fort Area and Foreign Ties

The location of the Jaffna Fort which is adjacent to the Jaffna lagoon is in close proximity to South India, especially to the Tamil Nāṭu. Though the Sri Lankan history has been influenced by the Indian culture, evidences show that the ancient and medieval culture, politics and economy of Sri Lanka has been influenced more by the Tamil Nāṭu. As the Northern Sri Lanka, especially Jaffna has been the first region to absorb the cultural changes that occurred in Tamil Nāṭu. As the several islets between the Jaffna Fort area and Tamil Nāṭu acted as a linking bridge, it is probable that the influence of the Tamil Nāṭu must have been

felt in Jaffna. Pāli texts which reveal the ancient history of Sri Lanka, tells that the foreign ties of Sri Lanka took place via “Mātōṭṭapaṭṭiṇam” and “Jambukōlapaṭṭiṇam” which are in the Northern Sri Lanka. Pāli texts which name the other ports of Sri Lanka as “Toṭṭa”, mention the above two ports as “Paṭṭiṇam”.

We come to know that the site of the Jaffna Fort occupy a vital position in the foreign ties of Sri Lanka, especially in commercial ties. The site of the Jaffna Fort must have been a vital place of the mutual exchange in the overseas trade of Sri Lanka with Indian, Roman and Arabian countries in the west and with South East and South Asian countries in the east. The evidences discovered at the Jaffna Fort support the above views. The location of Sri Lanka and its natural wealth and resources has been the main causes of these overseas commercial relations. Pottery, beads and metal wares and other finds discovered at Māntai, Pūṇakary and Kantarōṭai confirm that the overseas ties of Northern Sri Lanka began with the Megalithic culture or Early Iron Age Culture. Tamil Nāṭu occupies a prominent place in the above trade. But, the evidences discovered at the Jaffna Fort, so far, have not revealed any clues about the overseas trade ties during the Megalithic culture. However, there are evidences to confirm that this region had commercial ties with Rome from about 1st century A.D. A Greek book entitled “Periplus”, belonging to the 1st century A.D. reveals that the Roman traders in the beginning obtained the Sri Lankan goods from South Indian ports without visiting Sri Lanka. During the Christian era, the political harmony in the Roman Empire and the wealth of the Romans and the discovery of “Utpalas” monsoon created a great demand for the spices of the eastern countries among the western countries. As such, the Roman traders increased the frequency of their visits to Tamil Nāṭu, Andhra and Sri Lanka. Tamil literatures, namely the “Paṭṭiṇappālai” and “Maturaikkāñci” give adequate accounts of the trade ties of Tamil Nāṭu with Rome,

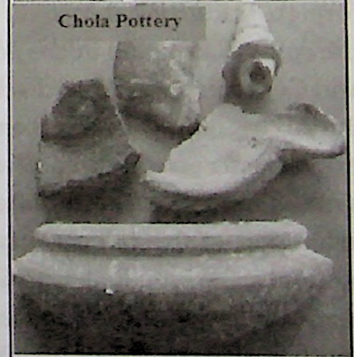
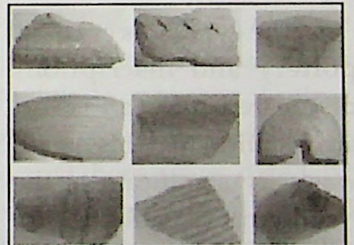
Archaeological evidences, discovered at Arikkamēṭu, Uṇaiyūr, Karuvūr, Kāvērippūmpaṭṭiṇam and Kañcipuram confirm the above facts. There are references of the Tamil Nāṭu Rome trade ties in the records of Ptolomy and Pliny. In the beginning, the traders of Tamil Nāṭu obtained cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, pearls, gems, elephants and elephant tusks from Sri Lanka and sent them to Rome and other countries through South Indian ports. Likewise, horses, certain food items, pottery metal wares and wine were brought to the south Indian ports and later sent to Sri Lanka. But, this trend underwent a change from



1st century A.D. the Roman traders traded with Sri Lanka directly. The evidences of Roman coins, pottery, and glass wares discovered at Anuradhapura, Pomparippu, Kantarōṭai, Māntai, Pūṇakary, Pollanaruwa and Trincomalee, reveal that these commercial activities lasted till 5th century A.D. the evidences discovered at the Jaffna Fort confirm that these trade activities took place at the site of the Jaffna Fort during the same period. The Roman Rouletted Wares discovered at the site of the Fort confirm the Roman trade activities might have started from 1st century A.D. Scholar Codrington in his book published in 1924, mentions that some gold coins were discovered in a clay pot. Romans issued copper coins, following the gold coins. As the copper coins are supposed to belong to the period after 2nd century A.D., the gold Roman coins in the clay pot



suggest that the Roman ties might have begun in about 1st century A.D. Though several pieces of Roman



Rouletted Wares were discovered during the general Archaeological survey inside the Fort, the Rouletted Wares discovered during the excavations of European dwelling places and residences need special attention. In the 5th cultural layer of the excavation pit, several pottery were

found, mixed up with the Rouletted Wares which belonged to the previous settlement. The Roulette Ware, the Arretine ware and the Amphora Jar, discovered here need special mention. Romans used a particular jar to preserve wine, oil and other liquids. These jars are called "Amphora Jars". They are made with soft clay and appear in ash color. There is a lid on the mouth. There are two ears on either side of the neck to enable the user to hold and carry the jar from one place to another. The bottom of the jar is pointed so as to plant the jar firm on the ground or soil to prevent falling. Amphora jars were discovered at Arikkamēṭu, Vasavacammuttiram and Karuvūr in Tamil Nāṭu. Though complete amphora jars were not discovered during the Fort excavations, some broken pieces and the bottom parts of the Amphora jars were discovered here. As these jars belonged to Romans, we may suppose that the Fort site was one of the regions where the Romans had direct trade ties. As the Roman trade ties with South India and Sri Lanka dwindled from 5th century A.D., the growth of trade activities and influence of Arabs in the west Asia was felt in these regions.

The evidences discovered at Māntai, Pūṇakary and Kantarōṭai in Northern Sri Lanka and Arikkamēṭu and Maḷikaimēṭu in Tamil Nāṭu confirm the Arab trade ties. Several evidences of Arab potteries discovered at Mātōṭṭam confirm that it was one of the significant ports during the Arab trade. Some contemporary evidences of Arab potteries discovered during the Archaeological survey and explorations at Fort confirm the Arab trade ties in the Fort area.

The evidences of coins, pottery and inscriptions discovered in the Jaffna Fort area confirm that this region was very significant in the Northern Sri Lanka for its foreign trade ties. Most of

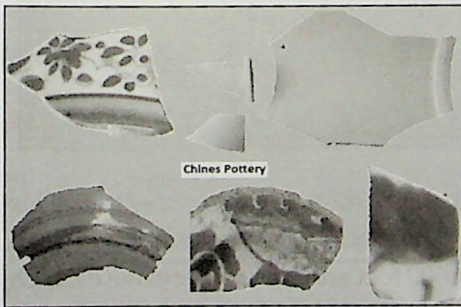


the coins discovered in the Fort region, belong to the Cōlas. In addition, Pāṇṭiya and Cēra coins were also discovered here. Some of the pottery discovered during the Archaeological survey and explorations belong to the Cōla tradition. These pottery are similar to those which were discovered at Taṅjavūr and Kumbakōṇam in Tamil Nāṭu. An inscription discovered in the Fort in 1970's, belonging to the 11th century A.D. speaks about the donations to a temple at Nallūr by the king Rajendra Cōla I. However, one is not sure whether the Nallūr temple mentioned on the inscription refers to the present day Nallūr temple or to another place by the of Nallūr in the vicinity of the Fort region during the Cōla

period. Professor K. Indrapala and Professor V. Sivasamy mention that when the above inscription was discovered another Granta inscription belonging to the 10th century A.D., was noticed in the west side of the Fort. The above evidences suggest that the Fort region might have been not only their trade centre but also their dwelling place. When Pollanaruwa was the capital of the Cōlas in Sri Lanka from 993 A.D. to 1070 A.D., their political military, economic and cultural influences were mostly noticed in the Northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka. Professor K. Indrapala says that before Rajaraja Cōla I conquered the Anuradhapura Kingdom in 993 A.D., the Cōlas' dominant center was in Jaffna or Trincomalee. His comment makes one to correlate it with the recent evidences from the Jaffna Fort.

Chinese texts tell about the commercial and cultural ties between Sri Lanka and China from 5th century A.D. though these texts do not give a clear and detailed accounts of the ties with Northern Sri Lanka. The Chinese coins, pottery and glass wares discovered at Māntai, Pūṇakary and Kantarōṭai confirm the trade

ties of Northern Sri Lanka with China. The recent evidences discovered in the Fort region indicate that the trade and cultural ties might have taken place at the Fort region or through the Fort region. Further, several Chinese pottery and glassware were discovered not only during the Archaeological excavations but also during the Archaeological survey of the Fort region. As the Chinese coins discovered here were dated as belonging from 10th century A.D. to 13th century A.D., one can infer that the Chinese had close ties with the Fort region during the above period.

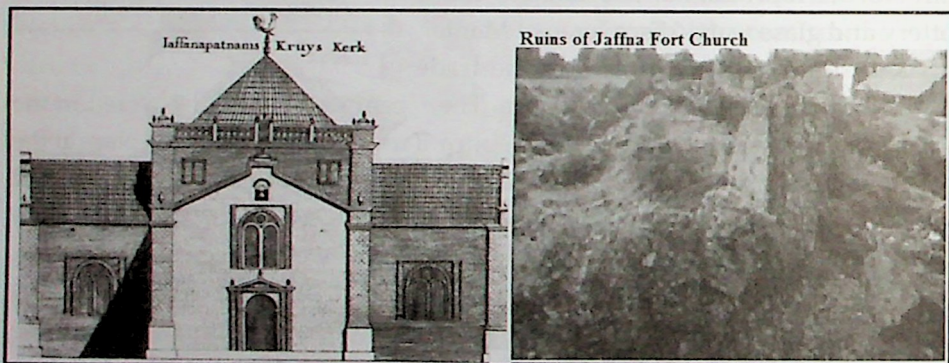


Pāli text Cūlavāṃsa says that during the contemporary period, the Pollanaruwa Kingdom had political and commercial ties with South India and South-East Asian countries such as Burma through the Kayts Port. A Tamil inscription of Parakramabahu I, belonging to 12th century A.D., discovered at Nayiṇāṭivu, confirm the comment of the Cūlavāṃsa. The above inscription bears instructions to the Kyats port officials as

to the arrangements to be given to the foreign traders and about the tax to be levied on them. Further, many Pollanaruwa kingdom period coins were discovered in the Fort region. It shows that the Jaffna Fort region might have played an important part in the foreign trade during the Pollanaruwa Kingdom period.

Hidden Ruins of Hindu Temples in the Fort

The ruins of Hindu temples which belong to the period before the present Fort was built in the 16th century A.D., are one of the valuable discoveries. Portuguese and Dutch records reveal that corals stones from the nearby islands had been used to build the present Fort. But, granite and lime stone pillars which had been used for some other structures were identified with the coral stones. These stones seem to belong to the Hindu temples as the shapes, designs and the art on these stones indicate so. Among these unusual stones, the stones discovered among the ruins of the Christian church which was first built by the



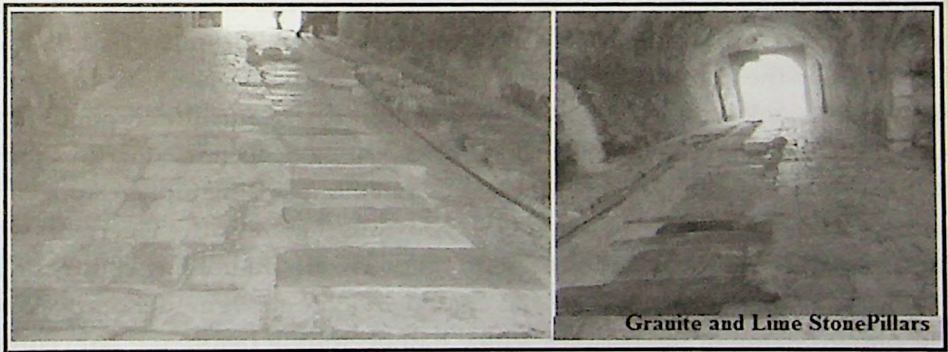
Portuguese and later transformed by the Dutch, deserves much attention. This Church which was completed in 1730 during the Dutch rule, was in the shape of a Christian cross. Its circumference was about 600 feet and had two entrances, each 50 feet wide. Though the Church looked small from outside, it had a decorated and spacious prayer hall and a theatre, built according to the Dutch architecture. It is said that the Church used a Dutch Church bell as well as a Portuguese bell. Further, commemorative stones and inscriptions of dead Portuguese, Dutch and British soldiers and high officials were also discovered near the Church. These evidences show that the Portuguese built a Catholic Church first and later, the Dutch and the British transformed it into a Protestant Church and used for their



worship. Unfortunately, at the moment the Church has been reduced to ruins and seems to be a heap of stones, so that it is difficult to know the complete picture and the architecture of the Church in detail now. The evidences from the ruins reveal that the Church was built with Coral stones, Bricks and Cutai. But, unusual granite and lime stone pillars were also discovered here. All these evidences were discovered during the general survey of the ruins. If a complete research is



done at the site of the Church, there are possibilities to discover more evidences. The granite and limestone pillars deserve much attention. The two granite pillars might have belonged to the inner sanctum of Hindu temple or to the front hall of the temple. On the middle part of the polished pillars, a lotus flower on one granite pillar seems to be a “Bötikai” form which is characteristic of Dravidian architecture. The other limestone pillar is 5 feet long and 1½ feet wide and is polished and looks like a plank. This pillar might have been placed at the entrance of the temple or placed



on the “Gabōtam”. Stones belonging to Hindu temples were also found at the entrance of the Fort during the renovation work. Tunnel shaped long pathway was constructed with coral stones in an arc shape and its entrance portion was built with granite and limestone pillars which had belonged to Hindu temples. About hundred of this pillars of different sizes, shapes and with different designs and decorations indicate that these pillars had been used earlier in the construction of Hindu temples.

Bastions on the upper parts of the ramparts were built with uniform coral stones of particular sizes. But, hard pillars belonging to the Hindu temples and other stones were used to construct the places where the cannons were fixed (or fitted or placed). The bastions were almost in ruins. When the entrances of the bastions were dug during the restoration work, evidences of limestone and granite pillars were discovered, in addition to the coral stones, in the upper and lower parts of the excavated pits. Of them, two limestone pillars were cut in the middle in a square shape and one side bore one hole and the other side bore two holes and both the ends of the pillars bore inscribed decorations. It seems that both the pillars were joined together through the holes and used in a previous structure. Further, some limestones, discovered at the bastions, were cut in a curved shape with three steps inside

to fit with the other stones. It seems that these limestones might have been used on the pillars of Hindu temples as "Goṭuṅkai". Several granite planks with a depression in the middle part were discovered at the bastions. Of them, one is a big granite plank with a depression in the middle. It seems that it might have been the "Āvuṭai" in the inner sanctum, or might have been used as an altar to keep the statute of a deity. There is no doubt that the above mentioned stones and stone pillars belong to Hindu temples. It is obvious that the European rulers who are adherents of Catholic and Protestant religions, would not have built Hindu temples from 16th century A.D. So, it is evident that the above evidences of stones and pillars belong to the temples which had been built before the 16th century A.D. however, whether these temples were built at the present site of the Fort or outside the Fort, is a matter for future research.



Historical Background of the Jaffna Fort

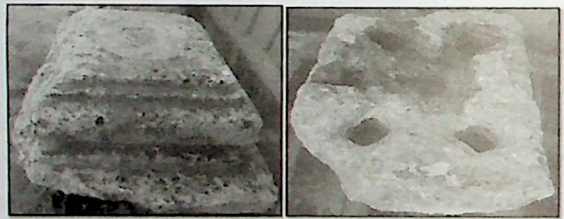
Most of the present Forts, found in the eastern countries were built from the 16th century A.D., by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British whose main objective was trade. If we trace the evolution of the civilization in the ancient past, we come

to know that Forts were built in different shapes and sizes with a view to protect Royal dynasties and the rulers. These Forts were called by several names according to the languages of the respective countries. There are archaeological and literary evidences that proto-type Forts existed during the Mohenjodaro and Harappa and Vedic period civilizations in South Asia. In Tamil Nāṭu, the Caṅkam period literatures and inscriptions speak of Forts. Archaeological evidences reveal that huge temples served not only as places of worship but also as palaces of kings and as Forts for defense, during the Cōla rule in Tamil Nāṭu. The Tamil Dictionary gives the meaning of the word rampart, as forest, inner house and parivaṭṭam (Fort) as Kōṭṭai (heap of hay). Most of the present Forts in Jaffna were first built by the Portuguese and later transformed by the Dutch and the British, according to their traditional architecture. These Forts are found at Colombo, Galle, Matara and Kalpiṭṭy in Southern Sri Lanka and at Trincomalee, Maṅṅār, Pūṅakary, Iyakkacci (Elephant Pass), Jaffna, Kayts and Delft. Though these massive/huge Forts were built from the Portuguese period, there are evidences of small Forts in Sri Lanka from the 3rd century B.C, according to the ancient literatures and Brahma inscriptions of Sri Lanka. Pāli literary text Mahāvaṃsa mentions about a Fort to the South of Anuradhapura when describing the war between King Ellālāṅ and Tuṭṭakāmiṇi in the 2nd century B.C. A contemporary Brahma inscription of Eastern Sri Lanka bears the word Koṭavēḷ. Professor A.Velupillai interprets the word as Kōṭṭaivēḷ. 21 Brahma inscriptions, discovered in Sri Lanka, bear the Tamil word vēḷ. The above word vēḷ is similar to the words vēḷ and vēḷir used as a title by the chieftains of Tamil Nāṭu during the “Caṅkam” period. Professor Romila Thaper is of the opinion that the word “ vēḷ ” conveys the same meaning of the Sanskrit title word “Rāja”. Further, the Mahāvaṃsa mentions the word vēḷnāṭu. So, there is a probability that the word Koṭavēḷ of the Eastern Sri Lanka Brahma inscription may be considered as “the Fort of the one who bears the title vēḷ.

Pāli and Sinhala literary works speak about the Forts during the Pollanaruwa Kingdom. Cūlavaṃsa says that the Cōla period military unit “Vēḷaikkārappaṭai” which protected Buddhism during rule of Vijayabahu - I in the 11th century A.D., were stationed at Mātōṭṭam and Maṭṭikavaṭṭatirtta in the Northern Sri Lanka. The word “Mātōṭṭa” refers to Mātōṭṭam in the Maṅṅār District. Though the place Maṭṭikavaṭṭatirtta could not be identified. There is an assumption that the palace refer to Maṭṭuvilnāṭu in Pūṅakary. Dr. Ragupathy who agrees with the assumption, says that it might have been a round shape Fort built with clay (Maṭṭiclay ;Vaṭṭaround shape). Pāli and Sinhala texts confirm that

after the fall of the Pollanaruwa kingdom, when the Sinhala kingdom moved towards South to Tambatēṇiyā, Yāpakūva, Kurunākal and Kōṭṭai, Forts were built for defense. When these Sinhala kingdoms were formed, a Tamil kingdom was formed in Northern Sri Lanka by Kaliṅgamāgaṇ and Cāvakaṇ. Pāli and Sinhala texts such as Cūlavaṁsa and Rajavaliya mention that the soldiers of this kingdom were stationed at Maṇṇār, Maṇṇārappaṭṭiṇam, Mātōṭṭam, Kōṇa, Paty, Pulaccēri, Valikāmam and Ūrātuṭṭai (Kayts). Earlier and later, these places seemed to have ports and Forts. For example, the inscriptions of Pallavarāyaṇpēṭṭai and Tiruvālaṅkāṭu in Tamil Nāṭu, Rajathiraja Cōla II, belonging to 12th century A.D. say that the victorious Cōla forces captured the soldiers and elephants at Maṭṭivāḷ, Pulaccēri, Valikāmam and Ūrātuṭṭai. In Northern Sri Lanka and took them to Tamil Nāṭu. Among them, we find Forts built by Portuguese at Kayts and Mātōṭṭam. The place Maṭṭivāḷ refers to the place “Maṭṭuvilnāṭu” in Pūṇakary. Here, a Fort built by the Portuguese and later rebuilt by the Dutch is seen now.

As such, there is no doubt that the Portuguese chose the present site of the Jaffna Fort, considering the traditional importance of the place as an overseas trade centre when they captured Jaffna. The recent



Archaeological evidences, discovered at Fort confirm that before the Jaffna kingdom, the Cōlas might have used this site as trade and defense centers. Prof.S.Pathmanathan who did research about the ancient Hindu temples of Sri Lanka, says that the Jaffna rulers used lime stones to build temples whereas the Cōlas used granites for temples. The evidences of the Jaffna Fort ruins reveal the presence of both granites and limestones. A Cōla inscription says about the donation to a temple at Nallūr. The capital of the Jaffna kingdom was “Ciṅkai”. Only from the latter part of 13th century A.D., the name “Nallūr” came into use. The inscription discovered at Fort which bear the name “Nallūr” belonged the 11th century A.D. During the Cōla rule, it is called as “Ainūrṟuvaṇvaḷavu”. There are evidences that the “Ainūrṟuvaṇ” traders clan established independent cities and built temples for their worship. Considering the above evidences, one may suggest that the granite ruins discovered at Fort might belong to the temples built by the Cōlas.

A considerable amount of evidences discovered at Fort belonging to the Jaffna kingdom. Among the coins discovered at Fort, the “Cētu” coins issued by the Jaffna kings are greater in number. The limestone ruins may belong to the temples built during the Jaffna kingdom. There are evidences of the Fort of Jaffna kingdom period in Tamil Literary works such as “Yālp̄p̄p̄n̄avaipavamālai”. The Sinhala text “Rajavaliya” which describes about the invasion of “Ceṇpakaperumāl” on the Jaffna kingdom, tells



about the sentries and Forts in Jaffna. An inscription discovered at Koṭṭakama in Southern Sri Lanka, issued by the king of Jaffna, bear the phrase “Poṅkolil Ciṅkainakar”. It shows that the important administrative centre of Jaffna kingdom was in close proximity to the seashore. Paṇṇaittuṛai is indicated as one of the battle fronts of the Jaffna Kingdom forces and the Portuguese forces which invaded Jaffna over the sea. The present Fort is in the Paṇṇaittuṛai zone. Though the Portuguese records reveal that Nallūr was the capital, Paṇṇaittuṛai played an important part in the political and commercial activities. The Tamil word Paṇṇai means “sea-faring vessels” and “storage centre” among others. When the Portuguese came to Jaffna, the site of the present Fort was called “Paṇṇaittuṛai”. It shows that the Fort and the Jaffna kingdom had very close links. As such, it is probable that the Portuguese and Dutch built the present Fort at the same place where Fort existed earlier during the Jaffna kingdom period which had been built with clay and wood. Further, Archaeological research in the future may bring out more facts and historical truths about the background of the present Jaffna Fort.

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