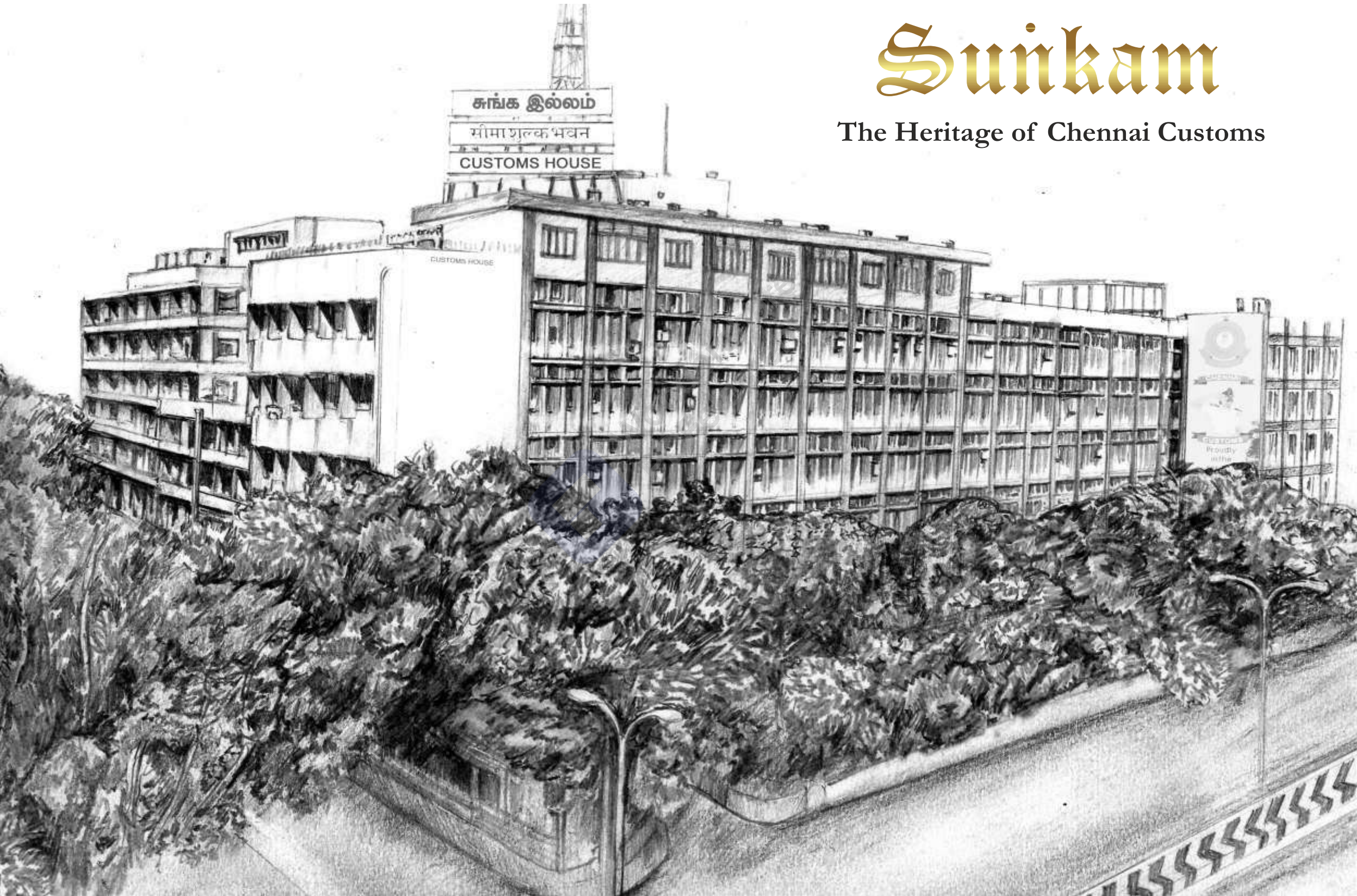


Sunkam

The Heritage of Chennai Customs



கிழகம்

சென்னை சுங்கவரித்துறையின் பாரம்பரியம்



“India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grand mother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only”.

- Mark Twain



Suikam

The Heritage of Chennai Customs



Published by
Chennai Custom House
2019

© All rights reserved

Imprint by :

Chennai Custom House,

No. 60, Rajaji salai,

Chennai - 600 001.

Book Name :

Suñkam - The Heritage of Chennai Customs

(A Coffee - Table Book)

First Edition - November, 2019

Printed at :

Total Solution

13/7 Kamaraj Colony 1st Street,

Kodambakkam, Chennai – 600024. India.

Ph : 044 – 24800010 / Mob : +91 9894896633

Email : tots.print@gmail.com

Website : www.totsprint.in

ISBN : 
9789353469139

Dedicated to the first Man who mooted the idea of a 'customs' levy coz' this idea had served and saved the Treasuries of various Kingdoms and Republics of the bygone age to the 'nations' of this Modern World





FOREWORD



SHRI. P. K. DAS
CHAIRMAN, CBIC.

Our heritage is our identity. It also defines our past, present and future. A nation's culture and heritage resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people. It is a commendable effort that Chennai Customs Zone has come forward to record the varied and rich heritage of Tamil Nadu and her maritime trade history, with special emphasis on the collection of customs duty from ancient to the modern times.

It is well known that the ancient Tamil people had extensive trade contacts with the rest of the world on the one hand and had developed excellent infrastructure such as harbours, lighthouses, and warehouses to promote overseas trade, on the other. Customs duty had played a major role in these developmental works.

Hearty congratulations to the officers and staff of the Chennai Customs Zone on this academic and literary accomplishment. This will further help document the history of Customs duty as it evolved in south India, particularly in the area covered by present day Tamil Nadu. My sincere wish is that the Chennai Customs Zone lives up to its wonderful heritage.

Yours Sincerely,

(P.K.DAS)



FOREWORD



SHRI. RAJ KUMAR BARTH WAL
MEMBER, CBIC

I am glad to know that Chennai Customs Zone has attempted to recapitulate the history of levy of Customs Duty in the southern states of India, with greater emphasis on the areas in and around the city of Madras now called Chennai. Tamil Nadu has a rich history. Tamil literature has records of an established system of taxation and collection of revenue since ancient times.

This book is an excellent attempt to bring to life the history of the levy of Customs duty in the Tamil Land in the most interesting way. I am happy that Chennai Customs Zone has continued with the ancient tradition of being a forerunner in the realm of trade facilitation and ease of doing business.

I congratulate the Principal Chief Commissioner and his team of officers involved in the publication of this book. It will help not only departmental officers but also the general public to understand the evolution of tax from the ancient to the modern times in the southern states, and to look back at the department's rich heritage with pride. I hope rediscovering its strong roots will help the officers rededicate themselves in the service of trade and the public at large.

Yours Sincerely,

(RAJ KUMAR BARTH WAL)



FOREWORD



SHRI. ASHOK KUMAR PANDEY
MEMBER, CBIC.

Our rich heritage has a vibrant connection to our cultural, educational, aesthetic and economic domains. It is also the foundation on which our nation is built.

The ancient Tamil land India is known for her cultural heritage. It had also gained great economic prosperity due to foreign trade. Literary, archeological and numismatic sources confirm the trade relationship between Tamilakam and the west. The much sought after exports from the Tamil country included pepper, pearls, ivory, textiles and gold ornaments, while the imports were of luxury goods such as glass, coral, wine and topaz.

Chennai Customs Zone has proved time and again that the old glorious tradition has also enriched its present role as a trade facilitator. So it is little wonder that the Zone has brought forward this exceptional book with so many carefully collected pictures of the past and modern periods as a wonderful source of inspiration and tribute to her roots. My heartfelt greetings on this venture and I wish them well in all their endeavours.

Yours Sincerely,

(ASHOK KUMAR PANDEY)



FOREWORD



SHRI. M. AJIT KUMAR
PRINCIPAL CHIEF COMMISSIONER
CHENNAI ZONE

India's rich and varied cultural heritage forms the foundation of our beloved nation. Our Former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, stated that "We will be remembered only if we give to our younger generation a prosperous and safe India, resulting out of economic prosperity coupled with civilisational heritage". Tamil Nadu is the cradle which saw the development of one of the most ancient language of the world i.e. Tamil. Its ancient culture permeates the way of life of its people even today. So, it is befitting that Chennai Customs Zone has chosen to bring forth this Coffee Table Book on the heritage of Customs in South India, especially in and around the present day Tamil Nadu.

The modern history of the Chennai Customs, is two centuries old. It was in Fort St. George that the British East India Company first collected Sea Customs duties and Lord Edward Clive who was the Governor of Madras Presidency during 1798-1803 ordered the transfer of the Custom House from Fort St. George to its present site. But the actual archaeological history of Customs in Tamizhagam may be traced back to 600 AD when the seaport of Mamallapuram flourished under the rule of the Pallava King, Mahendra Varma while the earliest literary evidences showing the collections of customs duty dates back to the Sangam era : 500 BCE - 300 CE.

The making of this book has been an incredible journey for me and my team, whose tireless efforts and research opened our eyes to an amazing and remarkable cultural heritage showcasing the maritime eminence of Tamizhagam. It was fascinating to know that Roman and Greek traders frequented the ancient Tamil country, securing trade with the sea faring Tamil states of the Pandya, Chola and Chera dynasties and established trading settlements. These events showcased the reality of the Sanskrit phrase

'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' found in the Maha Upanishad which means that the whole world is one single family. People of the world have always been welcome to come stay and be part of our daily life right from those ancient times. The readers will also be equally interested to know that the ancient ports of Korkai, Poompuhar, Arikamedu, Mamallapuram had active trade, commerce and cultural exchanges with the Southeast Asian countries, Sri Lanka, China, Egypt, Greece and Rome.

From ancient Sangam Tamil Literature we learn that there was a customary practice to collect a toll called "ulgu" from the traders, which stands for customs duty. The commodities taxable were called by the name ulgu-porul. The "Pattinappalai", a Sangam poem written by Kadiyalur Uruthirangkannanaar, talk in praise of the tax collectors thus:

".....நல் இறைவன் பொருள் காக்கும்,
தொல் இசைத் தொழில் மாக்கள்,
காய் சினத்த கதிர்ச் செல்வன்
தேர் பூண்ட மாஅ போல,
வைகல்தொறும் அசைவு இன்றி,
உல்கு செயக் குறைபடாது..."

"Tax collectors
.... protect their fine king's goods on the big
streets near the seashore
They work every day without idling or taking
breaks, like the horses tied to the chariot of the
scorching sun with rays, and collect taxes."

I wholeheartedly applaud my team of Officers and staff who toiled tirelessly behind the making of this fascinating Coffee Table Book. I would also like to place on record my gratitude to our senior service member Shri. S. Manickavasagam, Member - CAT (Retd.) for his tireless guidance to the team during the entire course of the preparation of the book. I fervently hope that the readers will find the same intensity of joy and inspiration we achieved in creating this book.

Yours Sincerely

(M. Ajit Kumar)



CONTENTS

PAGES

| | | |
|--------|---|-----|
| (I) | 'Suñkam' - From its roots | 1 |
| (ii) | Introduction | 2 |
| (iii) | From antiquity - Ancient literature and artefacts | 3 |
| | (a) Ancient Ports of Tamil Nadu | 9 |
| (iv) | The Cheras | 19 |
| (v) | The Pallavas | 20 |
| (vi) | The Cholas | 26 |
| | (a) Tamil influence - Beyond Borders | 37 |
| (vii) | The Nayaks | 40 |
| (viii) | Madras - the epitome of antiquity | 45 |
| (ix) | The Advent of the Europeans | 48 |
| | (a) The Portuguese | 50 |
| | (b) The Dutch | 52 |
| | (c) The French | 57 |
| (x) | The British | 60 |
| | (a) Madraspatnam and Chennapatnam - origin of the names | 67 |
| | (b) The first Custom House | 69 |
| (xi) | Chennai Customs in Independent India | 90 |
| | (a) New Custom House | 95 |
| | (b) Air Customs | 105 |
| (xii) | A salute to Martyrs | 120 |



"SUṆKAM" - FROM ITS ROOTS

"Suṅkam", the word denoting 'tax' in ancient times has an umbilical connection with Customs. We find the mention of the terms 'sulka' in Sanskrit and 'sunka' in Pali language to imply customs and transit duties.

"Ulgu" is the oldest known term of reference for customs duty in Tamil language. 'Ulk' or 'ulg' should have been its "root" word. The term 'ulgu' gradually gave way to 'suṅkam' starting from the post-Sangam period. The medieval literary commentator Nachinarkkiniyar in his commentary on Pattinappaalai explains the term 'ulgu' by using the term 'suṅkam' as a synonym. Similarly, another medieval literary commentator Parimelazhagar in his commentary on Thirukural (756) also explains the term 'ulgu' by using the term 'suṅkam'. Hence, it appears that suṅkam prevailed over ulgu in the medieval period. However in an interesting medieval inscription, both the terms suṅkam and ulgu occur together. There are similar references of both 'sunka' and 'sulka' in the economic history of the Deccan, one being quoted as contemporary to the other. This word "sulka" is in vogue till date in various languages with slight variations in pronunciation.

Suṅkam is now the singularly prominent word in the Tamil language denoting Customs duty and hence this documentation on the rich heritage of Chennai Customs is befittingly titled "Suṅkam".

INTRODUCTION

The mention of the word 'Customs' evokes a vivid imagery of an officer dressed smartly in his white uniform, who keeps a strict vigil on goods and passengers as they move through an International Airport. This image is a more recent one. This book attempts to bring to life the story of the evolution of customs duties in the State of present day Tamil Nadu with particular reference to Madras or Chennai as it is presently known.

It takes us back to the era of kings and chieftains in the areas of South India also known as Tamilakam when the fledgling states were coming to terms with international commerce. Brave men and women from different parts of the world took up the challenge of traversing the unknown oceans attracted by stories of trade in exotic goods that could bring them wealth; of people and states that welcomed such 'yavana' traveller traders and allowed them not only to trade but made things hospitable for them to stay in this country; of how flourishing trade necessitated the patronage and protection of the state, which began to exact a payment for protection service it provided against theft and pilferage, while goods moved across the land for safe-storage till their disposal.

The modern state has travelled a fair distance on the taxation route. But from a bird's eye view the difference appears to be more in procedure than in content. Modern day customs law continues to deal with the collection of taxes and duties. Customs officials are also responsible for regulating the import, export, storage and clearance of such goods as in the past. They are now seen more as facilitators of trade. The security provided and the clearance procedures adopted have become non-intrusive and sophisticated, but security of the supply chain continues to be its major focus along with the collection of revenue all so important for the financial health of the State, as it has been over the ages.

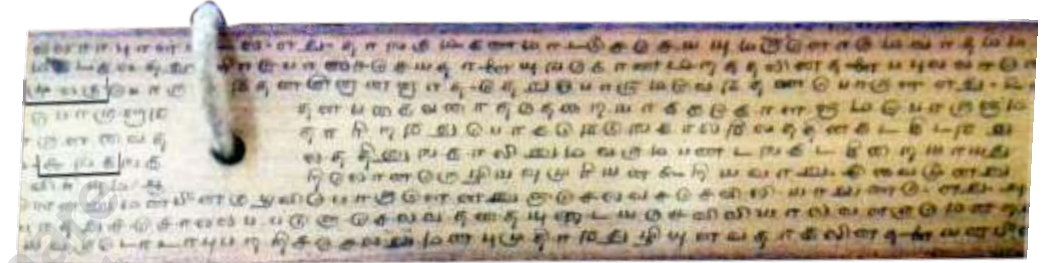
This book seeks to take its readers on a time travel and a fascinating journey of discovery of the customs procedures as it evolved from the early to the modern days at and around the port city of Madras, now renamed as Chennai.

FROM ANTIQUITY - ANCIENT LITERATURE AND ARTIFACTS

Foreign trade and customs share a great affiliation with the southern peninsula of India, since the men living in this part of the subcontinent learnt to master the art of sailing which dates back to pre-Christian era. Ancient ports along the coast of Tamil Nadu like Kaveripoompattinam, Korkai, Arikamedu were important centres of trade in India with the Mediterranean and with South East Asia. This was the time that 'Money' started being used. Customs levy had been a part of the developing mercantile society since those ancient times.

Thirukkural: Customs as Imperial Revenue

Kural, as the Thirukkural in its short form is known, is one of the oldest works now extant in Tamil literature in its entirety. This treatise is considered as one of the greatest works ever written on ethics and morality. It is also a very important source for the origins of the practice of collecting customs duty by the kings of yore. Couplet number 756 enlists the three major heads of revenue for the king. It is interesting to find customs duty as one among the three sources of imperial revenue even in those ancient times.



Parimel Azagar Commentary with the script
'Sunkam Kalathinum Kaalinum Varum Pandankatkiraiyayathu.'

Thirukural couplet 756 under the chapter 'Ways of accumulating wealth' reads thus:

**“உறு பொருளும் உல்கு பொருளும் தன் ஒன்னார்த்
தெறு பொருளும் வேந்தன் பொருள்.”**

**(Uruporum ulguporum thannonnar
Theruporum vendhanporul)**

“Wealth that falls to him as heir, wealth from the customs duties, and the spoils of slaughtered foes; these are the crown money.”

In this couplet the term 'ulgu' is used to mean customs duties. In his commentary to the couplet 756, Parimelazakar explained the term Ulgu as a tax on the merchandise coming through ships and legged carriers. Couplet 756 categorises Ulgu as a permanent source of imperial revenue. It also implies that customs duties were a major source of revenue for the kingdoms of the Sangam period.



Statue of Thiruvalluvar at Kanyakumari



Ilampooranar Quoting Thirukkural No.756.

Sangam literature is a treasure when it comes to references about customs. Perumpanatrupadai is a 500 lines long Sangam idyll which roughly belongs to the period 100 BCE - 100 CE. It is written by Kadiyalur Uruthiran Kannanar. The long poem is sung in praise of the king Thondaiman Ilanthiraiyan, the ruler of Thondai Mandalam with his capital at Kanchipuram.

Perumpanatrupadai: Customable Highways



Perumpanatrupadai Palmleaf Manuscript MS No. 24 published by U Ve Saminatha Iyer.

Perumpanatrupadai gives glimpses into the land customs administration in the days of Thondaiman Ilanthiraiyan. The ancient State earmarked men and material for the protection of caravan trade and in return collected land customs duties.

“...மிரியல்
புணர்ப்பொறை தாங்கிய வடுவாழ் நோன்புறத்
தணர்ச்செவிக் கழுதை சாத்தொடு வழங்கும்
உல்கு உடை பெரு வழி கவலை காக்கும்
வில்லுடை வைப்பின் வியல் காடு இயவின்”

“They travel on wide roads having customs posts
Their laden donkeys with lifted ears and scars on backs
That carries loads of pepper sacks,
well positioned
Like jackfruits with small segments
Borne by the short, thick trunks of curved trees.
The wide forest trunk routes for caravans
Being protected by those with bows.”

The tradition of Ulgudai Peruvazhi seems to be continued during the medieval period also. Interestingly, a milestone in the Adhiyaman Peruvazhi assignable to 12th century was found at Padhikal Pallam in Dharmapuri District. The milestone served to indicate the exact distance to the place called Navarr Thavalam in the native unit of distance 'Kaadham'(1 kaadham =4.191 miles, approx.). Thavalam refers to a place of rest for caravan traders. The milestone mentions the distance symbolically as well as in tamil numeral system. To denote 29, it uses the Tamil numerals 'U Ya (and) yE'. For the benefit of those who were unable to understand the numeral system, there is a pictorial representation with two broad pits (20) in the first row below which three small pits occur in three rows (3*3=9). The inscription depicts the status of development of commercial infrastructure and the role of the State in trade facilitation in olden days.



Adhiyaman Peruvazhikkal
Courtesy - District Archaeological Museum
Dharmapuri



Sangam era Tamil poem quoted by Hon'ble Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget Speech on July 5, 2019

புறநானூறு - 184
யானை புக்க புலம்!

பாடியவர்: பிசிராந்தையார்.
பாடப்பட்டோன்: பாண்டியன் அறிவுடை நம்பி.

“காய்நெல் அறுத்துக் கவளங் கொளினே,
மாநிறைவு இல்லதும், பன்நாட்கு ஆகும்;
நூறுசெறு ஆயினும், தமிழ்துப்புக்கு உணினே,
வாய்ப்பு வதனினும் கால்பெரிது கெடுக்கும்;
அறிவுடை வேந்தன் நெறியறிந்து கொளினே,
கோடி யாத்து, நாடுபெரிது நந்தும்;
மெல்லியன் கிழவன் ஆகி, வைகலும்
வரிசை அறியாக் கல்லென் சுற்றமொடு,
பரிவுதப எடுக்கும் பிண்டம் நச்சின்,
யானை புக்க புலம்போலத்,
தானும் உண்ணான், உலகமும் கெடுமே.”

Purananuru 184

The song of Sangam era poet Pisiranthaiyar as an advice to the King
Pandian Arivudai Nambi

If you reap ripe paddy and mash it into balls for the feeding of your elephants, less than what grows on a maa will be enough for many days. But an elephant let loose to feed by itself will trample a thousand maa of grain that will never touch its mouth! When a wise king is conscious of the right path and he then taxes as he should, his country will offer him as much as ten millions and it will still flourish! But if he is a ruler without backbone, who has no idea of the right and each day desires things which he simply takes without love while his corrupt followers do the same, then as if he were the field that an elephant invades, he will not even feed himself and the world will collapse! - as translated in the Purananuru (Four Hundred Songs of War and Wisdom) by George L. Hart and Hank Heifetz.



Government art gallery



Ancient Ports of Tamil Nadu

Kaveripoompattinam, the celebrated Chola port city, is located at the confluence of river Kaveri with the Bay of Bengal. Pattinam is a general suffix used for denoting the names of port towns in Tamil. Aptly named as Kaveripuhumpattinam, meaning the city where the Kaveri river meets the sea, the shoreline of the city also served as the meeting point of the ships of various nationalities. It is considered as the second capital of Sangam Cholas. The Sangam idyll Pattinappaalai is a long song on this port city and it also derives its name from this city. Kaveripoompattinam provides the earliest direct reference to customs clearance in port cities. This early historic site, also known as Poompuhar, is now located in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu.



T Shaped Wharf. Excavated Site.
Kaveripoompattinam.
Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India



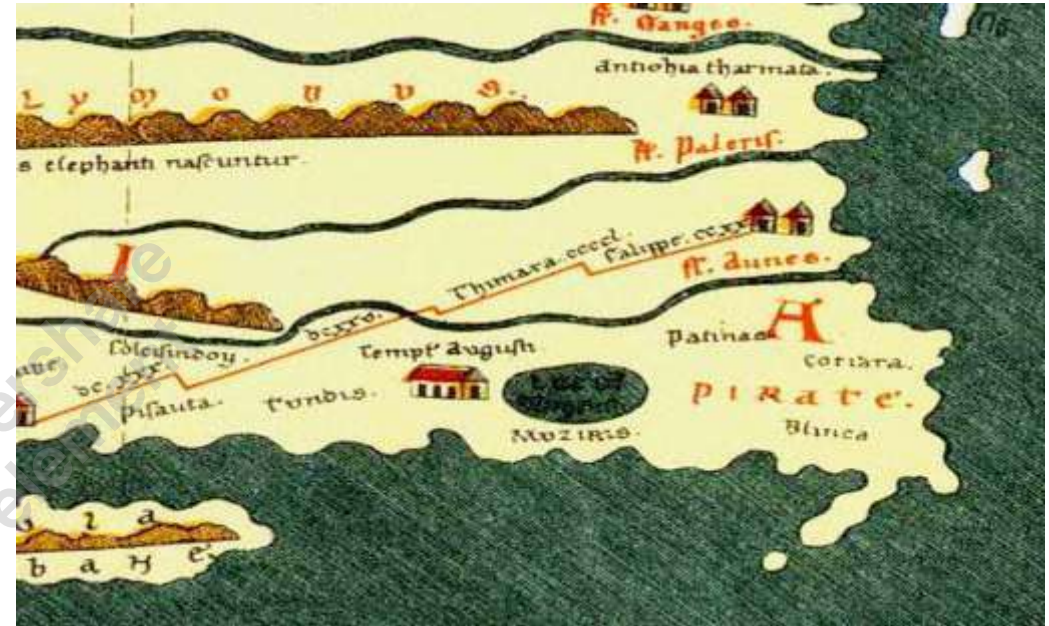
Underwater exploration,
Kaveripoompattinam.
Courtesy: National Institute of Oceanography.

Arikamedu

Arikamedu, now in the Union Territory of Puducherry, is an ancient archaeological site which is believed to have been occupied around 1st century BC. It is identified as the port of Podouke, which is mentioned as an "emporium" in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and Ptolemy. Excavations have found Roman Amphorae, lamps and glassware confirming that Arikamedu was a Yavana trading settlement that traded with ancient Rome.



Muciri (Muziris) Entrance to the Arikamedu Site



Muziris, as shown in the Tabula Peutingeriana.

Muciri, the much-celebrated port of the Chera dynasty, was located on the northern bank of the river Periyar in the Malabar coast during ancient times around the 1st century BC. The port city finds its prestigious place in Akananooru and Purananooru verses of Sangam literature and the immortal Muziris Papyrus. The Pattanam excavations carried out by the Kerala Council of Historical Research had brought out a repository of information about the flourishing Indo-Roman trade contacts along the ancient Malabar coast.

Korkai

Korkai is regarded as the birthplace of the Pandya dynasty and served as their princely capital and principal port of trade. The port site was located at the confluence of the river Tamaraparani with the sea coast, forming a natural harbour around 3rd century BCE. Due to drift and sedimentation, the sea had receded about 6 km to the east. The glory of the site is well recorded in Sangam literature and it finds mention in the accounts of geographers as an important centre of pearl fishery.

Sunkam and Merchant Guilds

Potsherd with the Brahmi inscription 'Nigama'. Nigama refers to a guild of merchants. Taxing the cross-border movement of goods was considered a sovereign function. Taxation through guilds was an indigenous innovation of ancient India and it provided an effective alternative to periodical leasing out of tax collections to individual bidders in exchange for a fixed sum as reported in other parts of the ancient world.

Provenance: Kodumanal, Erode District.



Thondi

Thondi was an ancient seaport and harbour-town mentioned in the Sangam works, Akanaanooru and Purananooru. It is mentioned in the ancient Greek writings, such as the Periplus Maris Erythraei, as Tyndis. Thondi seems to have been a port of great longevity. The place is mentioned in the great Tamil epic Silappadhikaram, which belongs to the post Sangam period, as a thriving port of Pandyas. Thondi is now a coastal town in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu.

The Yavana settlements are frequently cited in Sangam literature so much so that they could be considered as an integral part of Sangam economy. The Sangam State welcomed foreign merchants to settle in their homeland in furtherance of trade and commerce. The strong patronage given to trade by the ruling dynasties was reciprocated by the merchants through prompt remittance of taxes.



Graffiti Pottery.
Archaeological Excavations.
Korkai.

Pattinappaalai is the most often quoted text on ancient customs which belongs to the Sangam Age roughly between 300 B.C.E and 100 C.E. It has around 301 lines written by the poet Urithiran Kannanar in praise of the early Chola King "Karikala"

The verses of Pattinappaalai hail the existence of Yavana settlements on the Coromandel Coast two millennia ago. The same idyll hails the untiring efforts of the customs officials in clearing cargo for international trade. In fact, it is the first literary evidence of the contribution of customs functionaries in ancient times on the Coromandel Coast. Pattinappalai serves as a historical record on how customs duties, called ulgu, were levied and collected by the early Cholas. The seal, called pori, bearing the tiger crest (the Chola royal emblem) was affixed on the merchandise as a mark of customs clearance. The seal acted as a proof of duty payment.



The service performed by customs officials is counted as an ancient and glorious one. Kadiyalur Uruthiran Kannanar writes, "The customs officials sleep on the sand dunes formed by the Kaveri river in order to protect the goods from pilferage. The sand dune is pure and is smelling fragrant as the water carried flowers and is bounded by Thazai. Sand dunes formed by flood waters are called Ekkar." It is needless to say that by keeping vigil from a higher vantage point enables better visibility over low lying areas and longer distances.

The Pattinappalai inform us that customs officials work like the horses tied to the Sun's chariot. They do not get tired during their work. There is no loss of revenue when they collect Ulgu ! Lines 126-141 of Pattinappalai help us to construct the history of Customs further. After describing the work of customs officials, the author describes the customs seals used, the type of goods that were imported and exported as well as customs procedures. The author compares the water cycle (the movement of water from sea to land and back to sea) and the movement of goods at the port. Goods coming from distant lands are laden for export on the ships floating on sea and the goods from abroad are unloaded from the ships berthed on the sea shore. The cargo was cleared only after stamping of the Customs seal. The cleared goods were heaped up in a mound outside the Customs House.

Cargo lying outside the Customs Warehouse was imprinted with the tiger insignia of Cholas. Only consignments having the tiger seal were cleared for import or export. Those without the seal mark could not cross the Customs area during the Chola era. This is an example of the regulation of export and import trade along the ancient Coromandel Coast.

வாலிணர் மடற்றாழை
வேலாழி வியந்தெருவின்
நல்லிறைவன் பொருள்காக்கும்
தொல்லிசைத் தொழில்மாக்கள்,
காய்சினத்த கதிர்ச்செல்வன்
தேர்பூண்ட மாஅபோல
வைகல்தொறும் அசைவின்றி
உல்குசெயக் குறைபடாது

“ With the pleasant smell of the wide bank of Kaveri
Lined with the petals and clusters of the silverly thazai
There works the cadre of the glorious ancient profession
On the adjunct broad-way of the deepest sea-shore
Protecting the goods bonded under the custody of the king
Like the horses moving the chariot of the scorching sun every day
They collect customs duty, without any loss, and without leisure
As the volume of goods show no signs of reduction” (lines 116-125)

“நீரினின்றும் நிலத்தேற்றவும்
நிலத்தினின்றும் நீர்ப்பரப்பவும்
அளந்தறியாப் பலபண்டம்
வரம்பறியாமை வந்தீண்டி
அருங்கடிப் பெருங்காப்பின்
வலியுடை வல்லணங்கினோன்
புலி பொறித்துப் புறம்போக்கி
மதி நிறைந்த மலிபண்டம்
பொதி மூடைப் போர் ஏறி”

“Like the sky gains the sea that fall as rains on the land
And like the rains on the land that flow to fill up the sea
Akin to a rainy season
The goods from [the ships of] the sea falls on the land
The goods of the land flow into [the ships of] the sea
Immeasurable number of goods ; the flow being boundless.
In the well-guarded capacious customs house
The awful customs officials affix the tiger mark
On the cleared goods and pass them aside
Now kept in heaps those cleared goods packed in sacks”

Thus from the lines of Pattinappalai, it can be seen that the recorded history of customs activities on the Coromandel Coast dates back to the time of Karikala Chola i.e 2000 years ago. Pattinappalai is one of the surviving records for import and export trade in early times. It is the earliest literary evidence for the existence of customs seals being put on goods.

It is heartening to read about the existence of such features in the Custom House of the ancient period. The protection and care given by the customs officials two millennia back might have been an important factor promoting trustworthiness and hassle-free business for traders.

KANNAGI, THE EMBODIMENT OF CHASTITY



Kannagi (Kannaki) a legendary Tamil woman is the central character of the South Indian epic Silapathikaram. The story starts at Puhar, then moves to Madurai and ends at Vanji, the capitals of Cholas, Pandyas and Chera respectively thus connecting the entire Tamil land. Legend has it that Kannagi took revenge on the King of Madurai, for a mistaken death penalty imposed on her husband Kovalan, by cursing the city with disaster. Due to her chastity the curse came true and Madurai burned.

The story forms the crux of Silapathikaram, "the tale of an anklet", written by poet Ilango Adigal of the Chera dynasty. Kannagi or Kannaki Amman is eulogized as the epitome of chastity and is worshiped as goddess Pattini in Sri Lanka by the Sinhalese Buddhists, Kannaki Amman in Tamil Nadu and by the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and as Kodungallur Bhagavathy & Aatukal Devi in the South Indian state of Kerala. It must be noted that Kannagi is also viewed as a brave woman who could demand justice directly from the King and even dared to call him an "Unenlightened King". The point here is that while she was a house wife going about chores, she was no meek woman that would brook injustice in the administration of the law.

The story is also very important in understanding the customs procedures during those times. The chapter in the Silapathikaram on the famous Indra festival celebrated in the port city of Puhar speaks about the foreign trade and the customs procedure in vogue then. It informs us that the foreign traders who were new to Puhar had their names stamped on their consignments (வம்பமாக்கள்தம்பெயர்பொறித்த). Both cargo and baggage were stamped with had the stampings of numbers and symbols (கண்ணெழுத்துப்படுத்தஎண்ணுப்பலபொதி) and deposited in warehouses.

In contrast to the protected warehouse in Puhar as depicted in Pattinappaalai, the Silapathikaram depicts a warehouse which was neither protected by the State guards nor by the merchants themselves, nor secured by lock and bolts during the celebration of Indra Festival. Instead, it speaks about the fear of punishment that prevented the pilferage of goods from the warehouse. Those who stole bonded goods under the custody of the warehouse had to walk around the city of Puhar with the stolen goods on their head after which the goods were confiscated from them. This interesting reference suggests that from offering protection the State had now progressed to the stage of having penal provisions for customs offences.



Statue of Ilango Adigal (c. 2nd century CE), the son of the great Chera King Neduncheraladhan, and the author of Silapathikaram

Place: Poompuhar

Terracotta seal impressions: Stamping of symbols on consignments was a practice used as a means of identifying cargo by a cursory look. For goods in transit during ancient period, identification of cargo through symbols was easy even for those who could not read. These artefacts with the seal impressions of symbols corroborate the description given in the Silapathikaram about the traditional practice of stamping of imported goods with the symbol of traders.



Terracotta Impressions -
Mangudi and Arikamedu excavations



Seal on the Karanthai Copper Plate

In the centre of the seal is the Chola tiger with its mouth open. Two fishes (the Pandya crest), a bow, two lamps, two ankusas, two spears, two flagships, two chamaras, a drum, a varaha, a swastika, tripod and a parasol are figured in the relief on the copper plate. The legend on the outer circle is a Sanskrit verse (Grantha script) running around in clockwise direction: "Rajad-Rajanya makuta sreni ratnesu sasanam/etad Rajendra Cholasya Parakesarivarmana:// .ie:- "this is Parakesarivarmana Rajendra Chola's edict (to be borne) on the glittering jewels of the row of the royal diadems (to be respected by them)"

The seal with its relief figures depicts the might of the Cholas under Rajendra- I.

Sunkam: Seals and Seal impressions

Customs clearance procedure has been in vogue in the region from the age of clay seals to the present day electronic seals. The immortal words of Kadiyalur Uruthiran Kannanar in Pattinappalai in this regard are, 'Puli porithu puram pokki mathi niraintha mali pandam ulgu seya kurai padathu.' The ancient text Pattinappaalai mentions about the stamping of the State emblem of the Cholas (tiger insignia) on the parcels and baggages as a mark of customs clearance. The archaeological findings of seals and seal impressions of the type mentioned in the literary record, Pattinappalai, were recovered from the Kaveripoompattinam area a quarter century ago.

Copper seal of Sangam Cholas:



Standing Tiger with raised paw facing left. The mark of distinction between the seals of Sangam Cholas and Later Cholas is considered to be the position of the tiger insignia. Weight: 2.30 gram. Provenance: Kaveripoompattinam. Period: 1st century CE.

Clay seal impression of Sangam Cholas:



Considered to be the oldest seal impression of Cholas. Standing Tiger facing left. Auspicious lamp in front and Growing moon above. Terracotta. Weight: 10.5 gram. Provenance: Kaveripoompattinam. Period: Early 1st century CE.

Clay Seal of Sangam Cheras



Various seals used by sangam Cheras depicting their state emblem bow and arrow in each of them. Provenance: Karur (Amaravati riverbed) and Perur.



Clay seal impression of Later Cholas:

Seal impression. Seated Tiger. Terracotta. Provenance: Patteeswaram near Kumbakonam. Period: 11th Century CE



Bronze seal of Later Cholas:

Seated Tiger. Facing right. Auspicious Lamp and Growing Moon. Paws kept on ground. Majesty. Weight: 1.6 gram. Provenance: Gangai Konda Cholapuram. Period: 11th century CE.

Copper seal of Later Cholas:



Seated Tiger with raised paw facing left. Standing tiger represent Sangam Cholas. Seated position represent Later Cholas. The same can be corroborated from the evidences from Sangam and later Chola coins too. Weight: 6.150 gram. Provenance: Kaveripoompattinam. Period: 10th century CE.

Bronze Seal of Later Pandyas

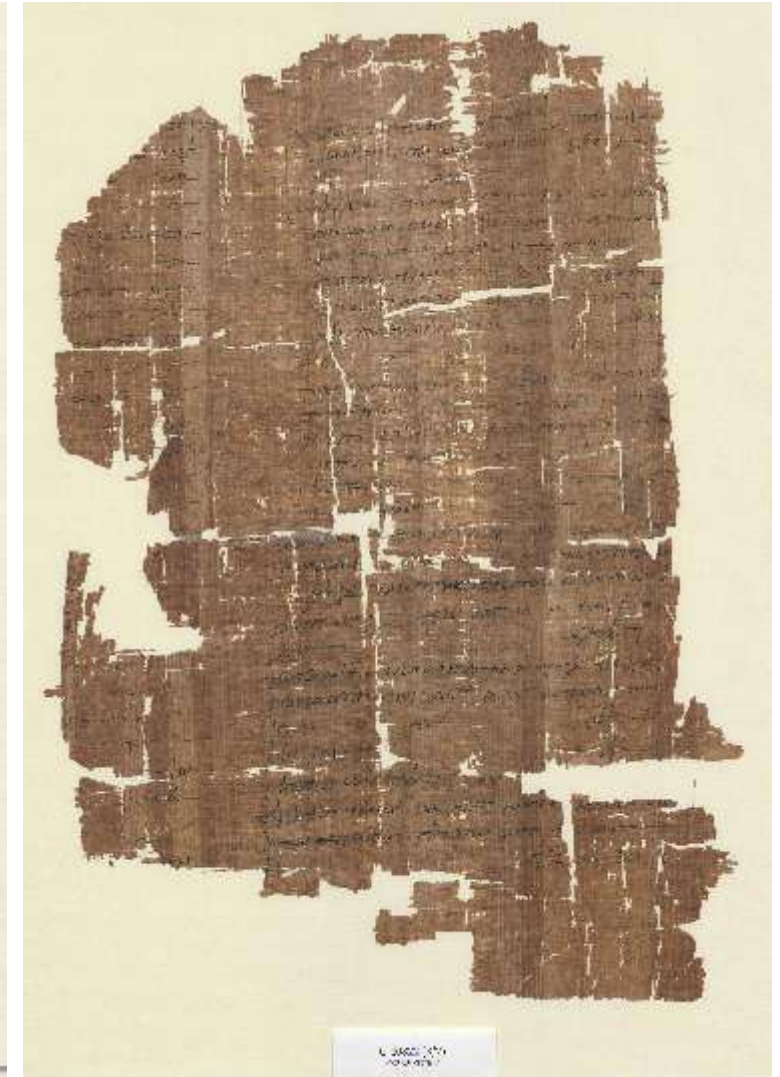


Weight: 11.5 gram. Provenance: Madurai. Period: 11th Century CE. The State emblem of Pandyas consisted of Two fishes with the Sceptre in the middle. The same emblem is represented in the inscriptions, copper plates and coins of Pandyas.

THE CHERAS

The Chera dynasty was one of the principal lineages in the early history of the present day states of Kerala and Tamilnadu. Together with the Cholas of Uraiyur and the Pandyas of Madurai, they formed the political triumverate of ancient Tamilakam (Tamil land) in the Sangam age. The Cheras owed their importance to the exchange of spices and other products with Middle Eastern and Mediterranean (Graeco-Roman) merchants.

Muciri, near Ernakulam in Kerala, was the famous port of Cheras and its fame is recorded in many ancient documents including the Sangam literature, the first century annals of Pliny the Elder and the book, *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. It was the chief port on the ancient maritime spice route.



A Papyrus known as the Muziris Papyrus, or the Vienna Papyrus, which was a trade agreement between a trader in Alexandria and a trader in Muciri, was discovered in the 1980s. The papyrus is dated to mid-2nd century CE and is now housed in the Vienna Museum (Papyrus Vindobonensis G 40822). It was a commercial contract for the shipping of ivory from Muciri to the Red Sea, then to Coptos (Egypt) and then across the Nile to Alexandria. The Papyrus is also a surviving evidence showing the settlement of Mediterranean merchants, called Yavanas on the Malabar coast.

THE PALLAVAS

The Pallava dynasty came to prominence after the Kalabhra Age (the dark age of Tamil history as it is called) i.e by the end of sixth century C.E and they ruled until the end of the ninth century C.E.

The Custom House of the Pallavas was known as Mandapika. The earliest mention of Mandapika is found in a Prakrit Grant of Pallava King Sivaskandavarman (Hirehadagalli plates). Eminent historian D.C. Sircar notes that "saulkika" was the collector of sulka or customs, similar to the Mandapika of Hirehadagalli plates [of Sivaskandavarman]". Buhler interprets Mandapika mentioned in the copper plate grant as customs house.



Fig. Coins of Pallavas. Serving as a testimony to the glorious maritime trade, ancient shipping and navigation under the Pallavas.



Mamallapuram, a Pallava period UNESCO heritage site near Chennai, is also understood to be a sea-port right from the beginning of the contemporary era. Roman coins belonging to the period of Theodosius (4th century CE) found at Mamallapuram corroborate the fact that it had contact with the west. Seen here is its famous shore temple.



Owing to its rich cultural heritage and trade connections from ancient times, Mamallapuram was chosen as the venue for the second India - China informal summit held between the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri. Narendra Modi and the Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of China Shri. Xi Jinping on 11-12 October 2019



India's oldest lighthouse, built around 640 AD by Pallava king Mahendra Pallava is in Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu. Mamallapuram was a busy port under the Pallavas as early as the 7th century AD. Bonfires were lit on rocks and then on this light house during those olden days to aid the mariners.

The Pallava era lighthouse is a protected monument, maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India. The modern light house found adjacent to the old light house was commissioned in 1887. The lighthouse with a circular masonry tower made of natural stone became fully functional in 1904.

BHAKTI HYMNS: VANKAM AND SUNKAM

During the ninth century, there was a religious reformation movement in the Tamil land called the "Bhakti" movement. We find volumes of Tamil literature sung by many saints like the Nayanmars (devotees of Lord Shiva who were 63 in number) and the Alvars (devotees of Lord Vishnu who were 12 in number) in praise of Gods which is also a rich repository of historical information about the life and society of people in those times.

It is quite surprising to find a mention of 'sunkam' in one of Sundarar's Bhakti hymns. That too eloquently with rhyme! On import of gold and camphor into Nagapattinam, he has sung,

“பருவன்கனகம்கற்பூரம்பகர்ந்தமுகந்துபப்பரவர்
தெருவில்சின்தும்தெந்நாகை.” (Hymns 7.101.5)

"It is a common scene in the streets of Nagapattinam that the imported gold and camphor spill during transit". These lines show that there was a flourishing foreign trade in Nagapattinam.

He further sings,

“தொள்ளைஆம்நல்கரத்துஆனைசுமந்துவங்கம்சங்கம்இடத்
தொள்ளும்வேலைத்தெந்நாகை” (Hymns 7.101.8)

"The ships of the type Vankam pay Sunkam in Nagapattinam for their trade in elephants".

The bigger cargo ships of Bengal and Odisha are called Vankam. In contemporary Tamil, Vankam refers to Bengal even now. Sundarar in his hymn above provides a vivid description of the Vankam ships trading in elephants entering the port of Nagapattinam and paying Sunkam. There are sculptural evidences from Odisha showing the transshipment of elephants in freight ships. The fact that elephants were carried as freight in ships help us to understand the astonishing cargo carrying capacity of Vankam ships. The ebullient description of Customs related activities at Nagapattinam harbour deserves attention because it minutely describes the export and import trade in the port town. Sundarar had sung that during the medieval period Nagapattinam had a fort and a port.



Sculptural panel of Vankam ship in Jagannath temple in Puri



Thanjavur Brihadeeswarar Temple

THE CHOLAS

The Chola dynasty was one of the longest ruling dynasties in history, the earliest reference of which is from 3rd century B.C.E (Asokan edicts). As one of the three kingdoms of Tamilakam, the dynasty continued to govern over a vast territory until the 13th century C.E. The Maritime trade was at its peak during the Chola rule especially around the 10th and 11th centuries B.C.E. The Bay of Bengal came to be called as the "Lake of Cholas" owing to the greatness of the formidable Navy of the Cholas. Customs duties was a major source of revenue to their treasury. The Coromandel Coast in peninsular India is named after Cholamandalam. Historical evidences indicate trade exchanges between the Chola empire and China (Chinese texts on Zhu-nian), Indonesia (Barus inscription, Sumatra), Sri Vijaya, Malay Peninsula (Kedahram) and Cambodia (Chidambaram inscription)



Name of Rajaraja Chola in an inscription at
Brihadeeswara temple,
UNESCO World heritage Site, Tanjore



Portrait of Rajaraja Chola and his
Guru Karuvoorar.
Mural Painting. Brihadeeswara temple,
UNESCO World heritage Site, Tanjore



Rajaraja Chola

Rajaraja I, born Arulmozhi Varman, is considered as the greatest Chola emperor. Between 985 and 1014 CE, he transformed the Chola Kingdom into an empire covering Sri Lanka in the south to Kalinga in the north-east. He had shown great interest in the promotion of trade and commerce. The medieval trade route Rajakesari Peruvazhi connecting the east and west coast of India bears testimony to the efforts made by the Rajakesari Rajaraja Chola towards the safety and maintenance of popular commercial highways.

King Rajaraja Cholan

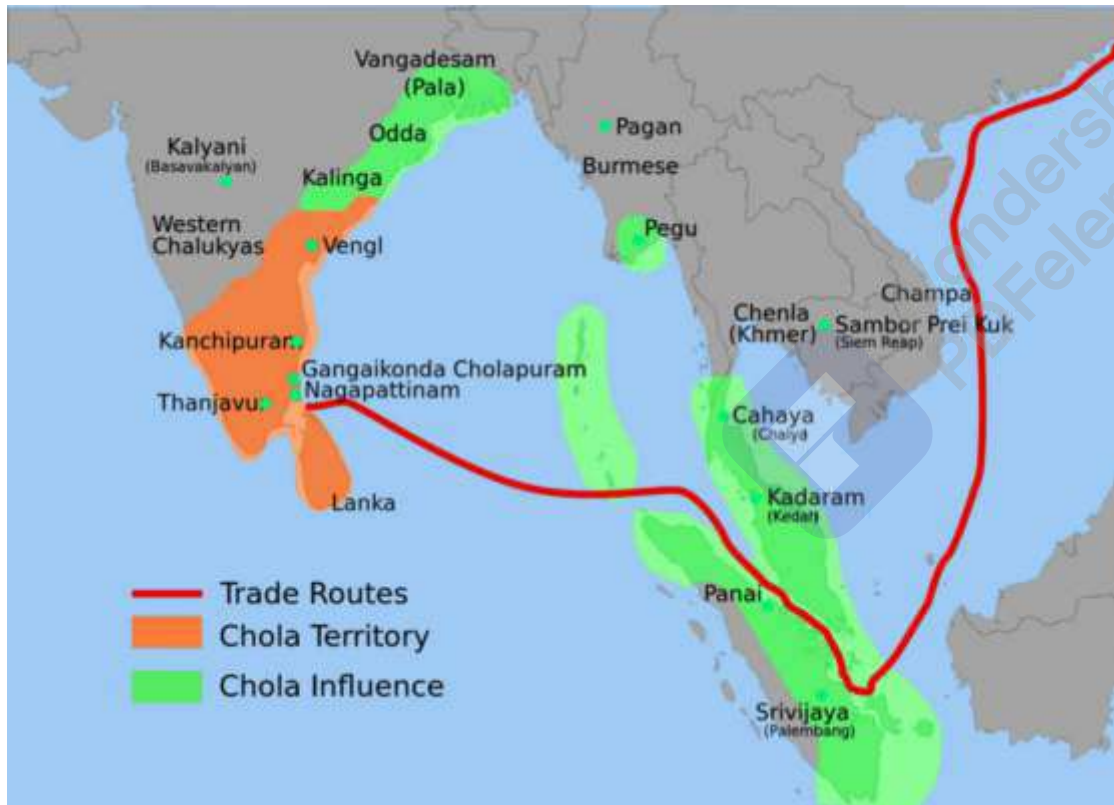




Chola light house in Nagapattinam

Rajendra Chola

The Chola empire reached the height of their imperial status during the reign of Rajaraja I and his son Rajendra I. Rajendra I, who ascended the throne in 1014 C.E (1012-1044 C.E., regnal years), further extended the Chola influence to the Gangetic Delta and South East Asia. Historical records speak about his victories in parts of northern India and some countries of South East Asia. To commemorate his conquests, Rajendra assumed titles such as Gangaikonda Chola and Kadaram Kondan.



Map showing the extent of Chola empire and its influence beyond mainland India



Mythological depiction of the coronation of Rajendra-I by Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi Gangaikonda Cholapuram

Kulothunga-I (1070 - 1120 C.E) , the great grandson of Rajaraja-I, was fondly christened by the people as "Sunkam Thavirtha Chola" (the king who abolished customs duty) and was the first ruler in recorded history credited with the total exemption of sunkam in the region for promoting foreign trade. Tax exemptions are considered as an aspect of benevolence and are remembered in popular culture. Probably this act of the king was aimed to win the hearts of the citizens of his country.



A Chola Commemorative Coin for Sunkam

Kulothunga Chola, the King who earned a sobriquet in the name of customs duties had issued a commemorative gold coin to proclaim his act of exemption of customs duty.



500

2015

हिन्द महासागर और राजेन्द्र चोल 1
Indian Ocean and Rajendra Chola 1



A commemorative postage stamp on the Indian Ocean & Rajendra Chola 1

Thiruvallangadu Copper Plates

Tiruvallangadu copper plates issued by emperor Rajendra Chola are a set of 31 copper plates secured end to end by a heavy circular copper seal inscribed with the royal Chola emblem. These plates record the donation of the Palaiyanur village by Rajendra Chola to the Tiruvallangadu Siva temple, now located in Tiruvallur district. They also provide information about taxation matters. Not surprisingly, *Ulgu* finds mention in the copper plates!



Thiruvallangadu copper plates and the plate with inscription of the term 'ulgu'



Karanthai copper plate with the inscription of the term "Ulgu"

Karanthai Copper Plates

Karanthai copper plates are the biggest bunch and the largest volume of copper plates found anywhere in the world so far. They are a set of 86 plates held together by a ring fastened with a heavy circular copper seal inscribed with the royal Chola emblem. These plates were also issued by Rajendra Chola dated 1020 C.E. Ulgu finds mention in Karanthai copper plates too!

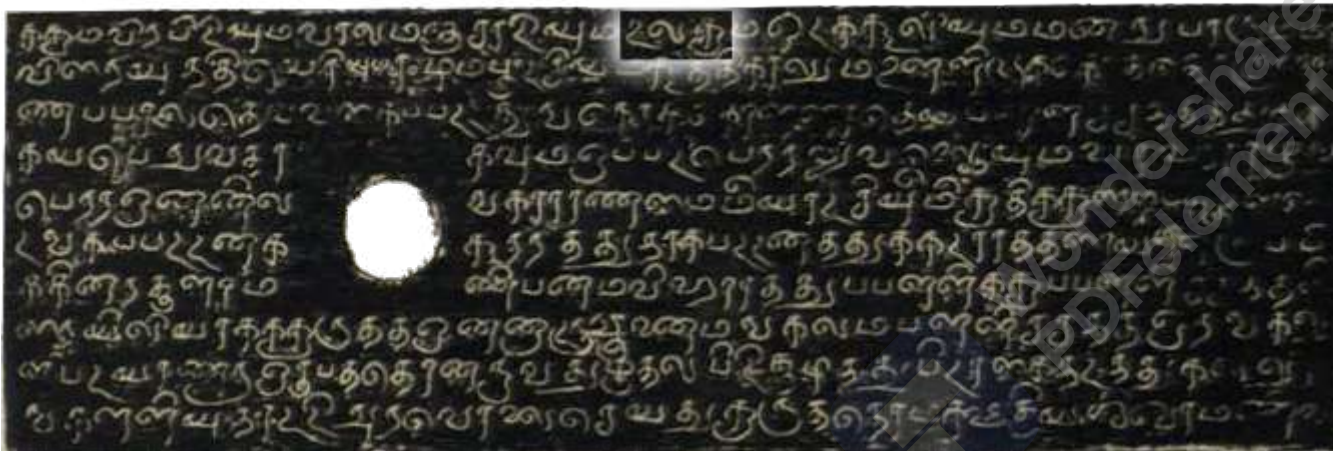
The plates from Tiruvalangadu (in Tiruvallur district), Karanthai (in Thanjavur town) and Esalam (near Tindivanam) all use the term ulgu. This indicates the fact that ulgu, the customs duty, was an ubiquitous tax in the Chola empire.



Karanthai copper plates

FROM ANAIMANGALAM TO LEIDEN - GLIMPSES OF PAST GLORY

The Anaimangalam Copper plates are a pair of twenty one large plates and three small plates. The large plates were issued in honour of the great Chola King Rajaraja's grants to a Buddhist vihara built at the Chola port town of Nagappattinam in Tamilnadu by Chulamanivarman, the Sailendra King of Southeast Asia. The great Sailendra kings ruled over parts of Malaya, Java, and Sumatra. The Larger plates use the term ulgu for customs; the smaller plates use the term sunkam. It appears that Kulothunga Chola, supposedly a descendant of the Eastern Chalukya dynasty, preferred the term sunkam which was widely prevalent in Deccan at that time. Thus sunkam has taken over the place of ulgu.



Leiden Larger Copper Plates
Fig. Charter of King Rajaraja Chola I.
Courtesy: Epigraphia Indica,
Archaeological Survey of India.

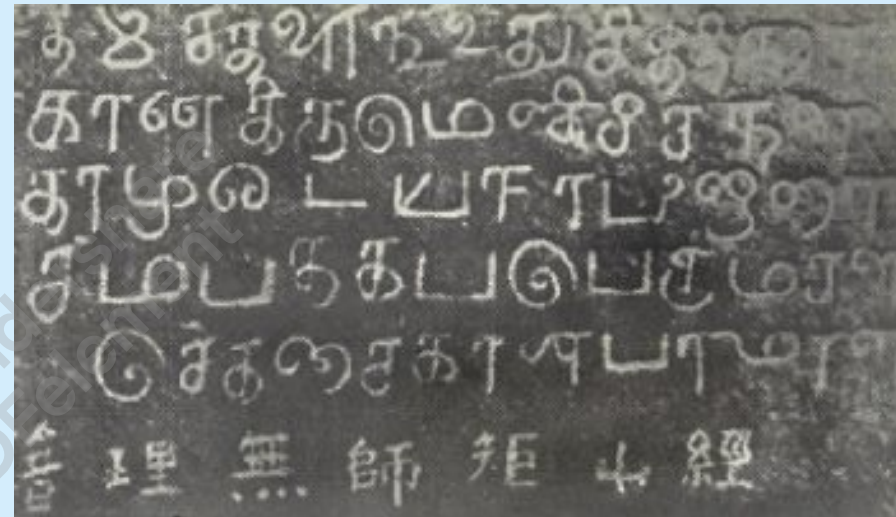
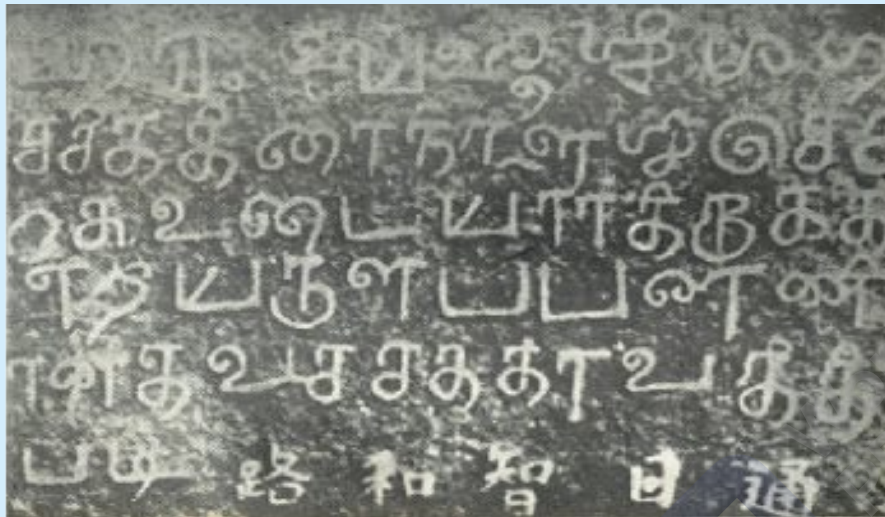
Leiden Small Copper Plates
Fig. Charter of King Kulottunga Chola I.
Courtesy: Leiden University Libraries,
Netherlands Or. 1688



TAMIL INFLUENCE - BEYOND BORDERS

Quanzhou, China

The Tamil mercantile community had crossed the Pacific during the medieval period and had a trading settlement with a population wealthy enough to support the construction of a temple and perform daily worship in Quanzhou region in China. A bilingual (Tamil & Chinese) inscription in China dated Saka era 1203 (1281 CE) mentions the erection of deity Thirukkaniccuramudaiyar by one Sambandapperumal for the well being of Chinese Emperor Cekacaikan.



Nainativu Tamil inscription. Sri Lanka

A 12th century Tamil inscription attributed to Sinhala King Parakrama Bahu was discovered in Nainativu island, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The inscription promulgates certain regulations relating to foreign trade: "Foreigners should land and remain at Urathurai, that they must be protected; that foreigners landing at new ports should come and gather in this port; if the vessels bringing elephants and horses unto us get wrecked, a fourth share of the cargo should be taken by the Treasury and the other (three) parts should be left to the owner; and, in case of wreckage of other vessels laden with merchandise, an exact half should be taken by the Treasury and the other exact half should be left to the owner." This edict records that it is promulgated by the King Deva Parakramabahu, the overlord of all Sinhala.



Barus Inscription, Sumatra, Indonesia

A 12th century Tamil inscription belonging to the medieval mercantile guild Disai-Ayirattu-Ainnurruvar (the Five Hundreds of a Thousand Directions) was discovered in 1873 in the village of Lobu Tua, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. This inscription was reported in the Madras Epigraphy Report of 1891-1892 by E. Hultzsch.



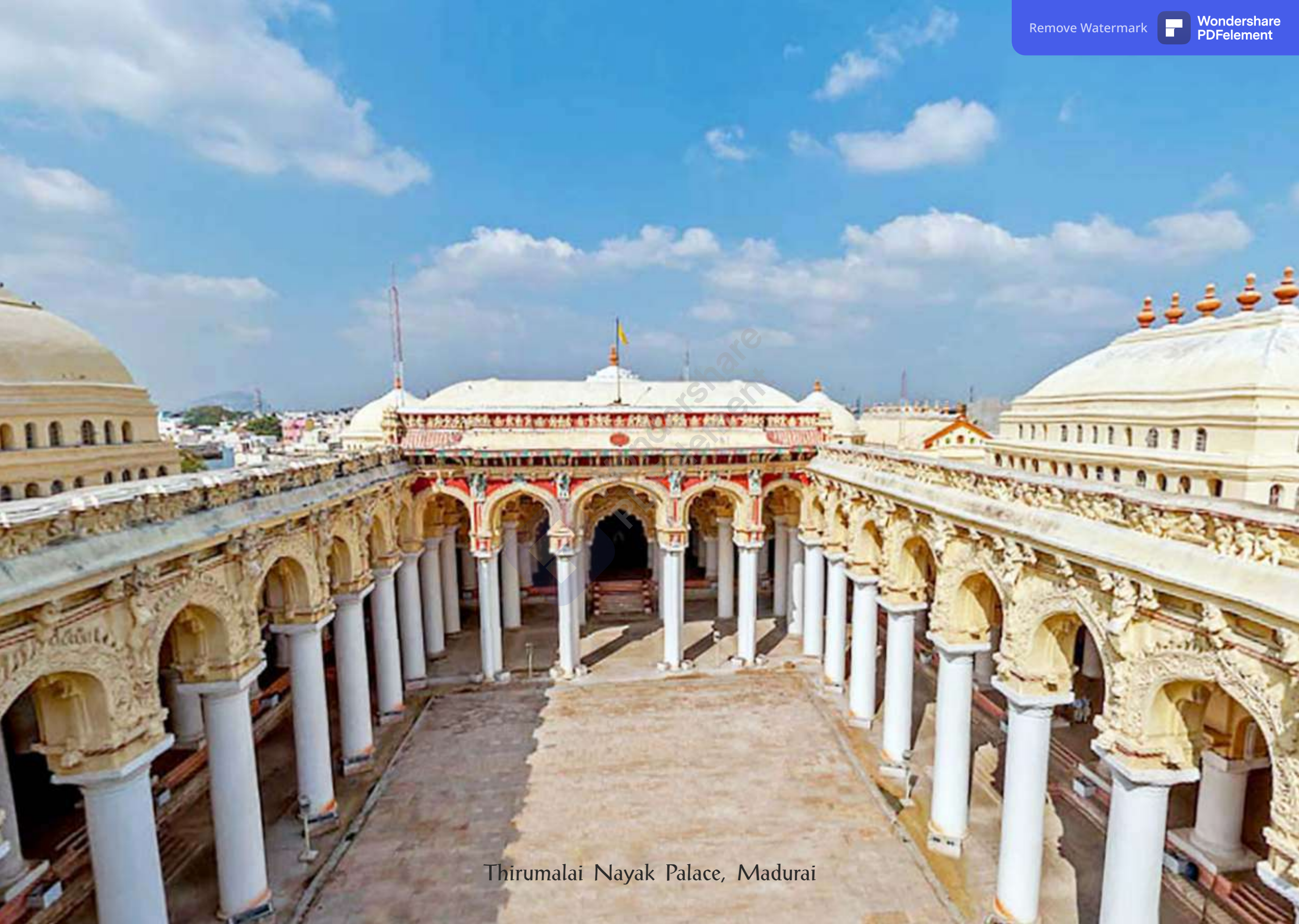
Barus Inscription



Takua Pa Inscription

Takua Pa inscription, Thailand

An ancient Tamil inscription in Pillava Grantha script datable to the period of Pallava King Nandivarman was found at Khao Phra Narai, Takua Pa in Southern Thailand. It is the earliest Tamil inscription found in South East Asia so far. The other Tamil inscriptions in South East Asia were found at Pagan in Myanmar, Khuan Lukpat in Thailand, Neusu Aceh, Batu Bapahat and, Porlak Dolok in Indonesia. The short inscription in Takua Pa records an artificial lake named Avani-naranam dug by Nangur-Udaiyan and placed under the protection of the members of the Tamil merchant guild Manikkiramam.



Thirumalai Nayak Palace, Madurai

THE NAYAKS

By the end of 14th century, there was chaos in the southern peninsula as the three great empires of Tamilagam had lost control over their territories. The invasion of the south by the kings of the Delhi Sultanate also led to anarchy in the Deccan region. There arose by 1336 C.E , a new kingdom in the south, the Vijayanagara Empire. Nayaks were the local governors of various provinces under this kingdom. The Nayaks later became independent from the Vijayanagara Kings. This period in the history of Tamilnadu is often referred to as the Nayak Period. The Nayaks were known for their excellent administrative skills especially that of finance. Customs has been the greatest source of revenue for their treasuries which is evident from the frequent notification of tax rates by the state.

From Palm-leaf to Gold-leaf: Customs under the Nayak Period



Agreement between Ove Gedde (Danish) and Ragunatha Nayak on goldleaf. The agreement contains reference to adjudication and imposing of penalty on the Portuguese. The agreement allowed for erection of Tranquebar Fort by the Danish merchants and for export of pepper and other items.



A Copper coin with the legend 'Sri Veera' in Telugu and 'Kumpini' in Tamil. Sri Veera legend is a common inscription in the coins of Madurai Nayaks. Kumpini refers to Company (East India Company).



Mural painting at Tiruppudaimarudur, Tirunelveli depicting a scene showing the import of horses in an arab dhow. A medieval ship, its decks and mast is seen. During the Nayak period, foreign trade was mainly conducted with the Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch and the Danes. This painting bring to mind the vankam ships transporting elephants during the earlier times.



Copper plate Customs Notification of the Nayak period:

In the customs tariff and concessions notified by the Chieftain Miras Pupati to Velappa Chettiayar, the word Sunkam in Tamil could clearly be seen. A sun and half-moon motif of Nayaks can be seen in the beginning of the inscription. "Tax is applicable for bronze and not applicable to panjalogam(an alloy made of five metals), punjai(semi-dry agricultural lands) and nancai (naturally irrigated agricultural lands). It also has details regarding honour (mariyatai) rendered by Miras Pupati to Velappa Chettiayar."

Courtesy: Project EAP689: Constituting a digital archive of Tamil agrarian history (1650-1950) - phase II, Collection EAP689/4: Arjunan Collection, Endangered Archives Programme, British Library.



Remains at Dhanushkodi

Customs administration in Ramanathapuram



Mural Painting, Ramalinga Vilasam.

European traders paying tributes to Sethupati with due reverence (folded hands). A Courtier is seen extreme left.

The history of foreign trade in Ramanathapuram dates back to antiquity. The ancient Indo-Roman trading port, Alagankulam, is situated in Ramanathapuram district of Tamilnadu. Eighteen kinds of taxes were recorded in the copper plates of the Sethupati kings of Ramanathapuram. Sunkam and Aranmanai Theervai were chief among them.

During the reign of Sethupati kings, Custom Houses were established in a number of harbours. Thondi, Keelakarai, Pamban, Dhanushkodi were among the various harbours under the jurisdiction of Sethupati rulers. As these harbours were located on the passage between mainland India and Sri Lanka, the Custom Houses supervised a significant portion of trade. The functioning of Pamban Custom House is well documented in the British records of the period.

Even after Independence, a Customs Station functioned in Dhanushkodi till the devastating Rameshwaram cyclone of 22nd -25th December, 1964. Before the devastating cyclone, a boat mail service was operated by the Southern Railway and connected Chennai with Dhanushkodi. A ferry service, started by the British, further connected Dhanushkodi at the tip of Pamban island with Talaimannar in Sri Lanka.



Tanjore Marathas: Sunkam and Mahal Sunka

There were a number of customs stations in Tanjore under the Marathas. The customs duties payable to the Tanjore Marathas is classified as customs (sunkam) and transit duties (mahal sunkam). Mahal sunkam was imposed on goods in transit within the domestic territories under the jurisdiction of Tanjore Marathas. Mahal sunkam was assessed on the basis of the weight of the goods and the distance of transit. Sunkam was applied on cross-border movement of goods.



Manora was built by Thanjavur Maratha king Sarafojy - II in 1814 CE in Commomeration of victory of the British over Nepoleon. The hexagonal eight storeyed tower served as the light house also.

The advanced state of revenue administration of the Tanjore Marathas is reflected in their customs accounts. It appears that credit notes and debit notes were used in the customs administration under the Tanjore Marathas. Whenever exemption from customs duty was granted on ad-hoc basis, the exemption and the quantity of goods exempted is duly accounted by making credit entries in the customs accounts.

Ukkadam and Chungam

Both ulku and sunkam exist in the names of localities in Coimbatore. Ukkadam is a neighbourhood of Coimbatore in the western part of Tamil Nadu. Scholars are of the opinion that the name of Ukkadam is derived from two linguistic stems ulku and idam (ulku+idam=ulkidam). As the noun 'Idam' refers to a place, Ulkidam refers to the place for collection of duties.

Palakkad gap, the mountain pass in the Western ghats, lies between Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) and Palakkad (Kerala). It is an important trade route connecting the Malabar and Coromandel coast.

Inscriptions on Konku Peruvazhi or Swasthi Sri Ko Rajakesari Peruvazhi bear testimony to this aspect. Geographically, Ukkadam might have been the best place during historic times for the collection of Customs duties as Palakkad gap is a choke point on the trade route. The existence of the place Chungam in Coimbatore lends further credence to this.

Sunkam Pallivaasal:

Place names are sometimes an indication of the old glory of a place. In Madurai, a customs station existed on the southern bank of the river Vaigai. An old mosque existed near the customs station and is one of the oldest mosques in Madurai. Now the remnant of the name of the customs station is prevailing in the name of the mosque. The mosque is even now called as 'Sunkam Pallivasal' (Customs Mosque).



A plaque in the Mosque premises with the name 'Sunkam Pallivasal'

MADRAS - THE EPITOME OF ANTIQUITY

The word "MADRASI" even to the present days denotes a person from the southern part of our country sometimes to the dismay of a person so addressed. It is to be understood that the etymology of such a nomenclature has its roots from the "Madras Presidency" which then encompassed most areas of all the five South Indian States. It is a matter of pride to the city that the Presidency as a whole got to be named after the city "Madras" which has been rechristened as "Chennai" from 1996.

FROM THE BYGONE AGE

The Madras region has an important place in the prehistory of our country. The prehistoric relics discovered by archaeologists like Robert Brucefoote, Dr. William King Rea and others prove that the Madras region along with Chengalpet as a whole had been rightly described as 'the classic ground of Early Paleolithic Culture in South India' and 'the key site for Indian Paleoliths'.



A recent discovery in Israel pointed to the possibility that modern humans migrated out of Africa some 180,000 years ago. But stone tools unearthed in Attirampakkam near Chennai have been found to be 385,000 years old pushing back 'Out of Africa' exodus date.

HISTORIC TIMES

One of the earliest literary references to the present city of Chennai is by Ptolemy, the Graeco – Roman Geographer. The term “Thondaimandalam” is equated to the territory extending between the Rivers South Pennar and North Pennar named after Tondaiman Ilanthirayan, a contemporary of Karikala Chola and can be ascribed to 2nd century C.E.

The rise of Pallavas happened in the beginning of the 7th century with Kanchi, a town close to the present Chennai, as capital. The architectural marvels of Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram, a suburb of Chennai are standing testimony to the heritage of this part of the subcontinent. Mamallapuram was a bustling port from ancient times up to the pre-modern period of our history.

During the late 9th century, the Cholas rose to be powerful and had conquered most parts of the present-day Tamil Nadu. The reign of Cholas continued till the 13th century which then witnessed the rise of Pandyas. Pandyas had conquered the Thondaimandalam region for a brief period. Later came the Vijayanagara rulers in the 14th century with the Nayakas as their vassals and later as suzerains. This continue till the mid-18th century when the English East India Company gained control over the politics of the region. One must be aware that by the start of the 16th century CE there was a huge impetus given by the Governments of European nations to the maritime explorers to move far and forth to various countries for development of trade and commerce, which enriched their coffers.



Present Structure of Mylapore Temple built around 15th century CE

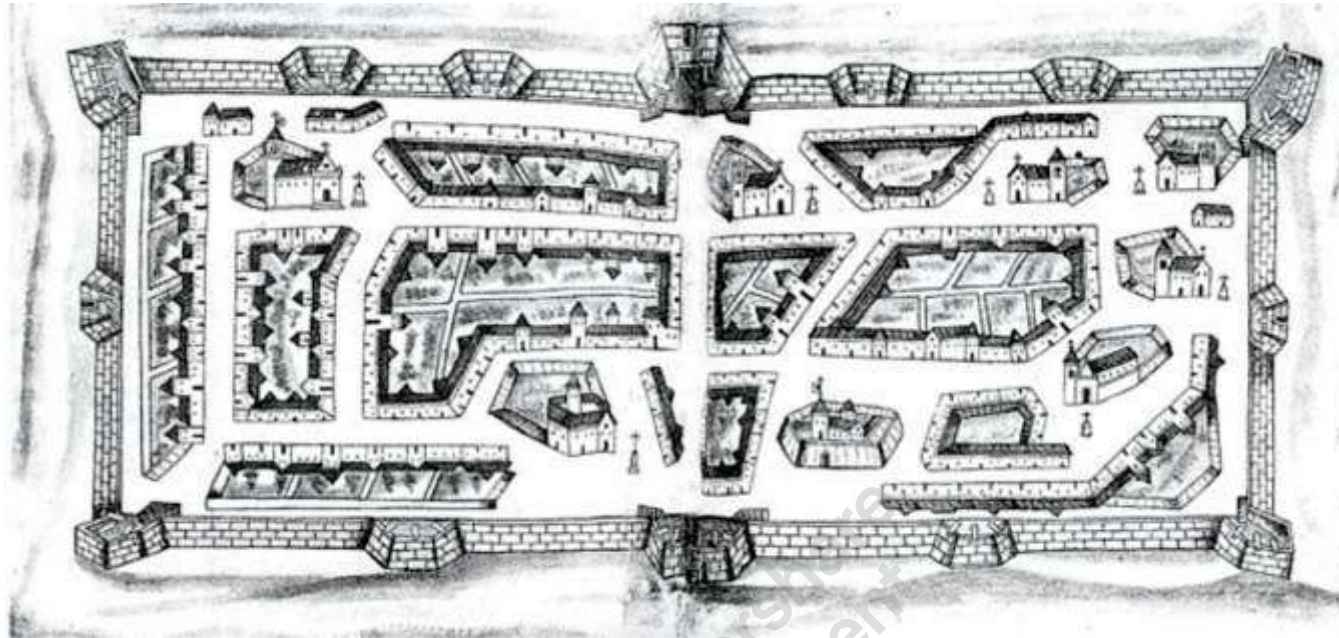


THE ADVENT OF THE EUROPEANS

There was a race for trade and territories by the end of the 15th century in the European continent, which, following the Renaissance, helped in nation-building. Most of the major nations took to exploring new lands outside Europe. The advent of Europeans into India began with the coming of the Portuguese adventurer and voyager Vasco Da Gama, who landed in Calicut (Kozhikode) in 1498. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, the British, the Danes and the French in that order.



THE PORTUGUESE



San Thome Map by De Rezende

The Portuguese settlement of Sao Tome de Meliapor was an autonomous nucleus of the pre-existing city of Mylapore, now a locality of Chennai. It preceded the English settlement at Fort St George by more than a hundred years. According to Portuguese accounts, in 1507 C.E. Don Francisco De Almeida, the Portuguese viceroy at Goa heard from the native Christians that the house or Chapel of Apostle Thomas existed in the Coramandel Coast and sent his men to enquire about it. Ten years later, two Portuguese, Deigo Fernandes and Bastiao Fernandes, visited Santhome via Pulicat and saw an ancient Church which was believed by them to be the sepulchre of the Saint. A series of people then followed suit and Santhome (Saothome) began to develop into a busy settlement of the Portuguese. References to the factory settlement of independent merchants are available in periods as early as 1517. San Thome was a walled settlement. The economic viability and mercantile activity of San Thome depended on the settlements of weavers outside the walls producing cloths for the export market. The Portuguese records show that the Governor of the Vijayanagar Empire resided in a town near San Thome and farmed out the collection of customs and port dues.

The Portuguese subsequently lost their customs contract as tributary obligations could not be fulfilled. English records indicate that Chinna Venkadatri was able to avail a cowle (written order) from the native ruler for the lease of San Thome, its adjacent territory and customs in 1688. San Thome was incorporated into Madras in the year 1749.

SANTHOME

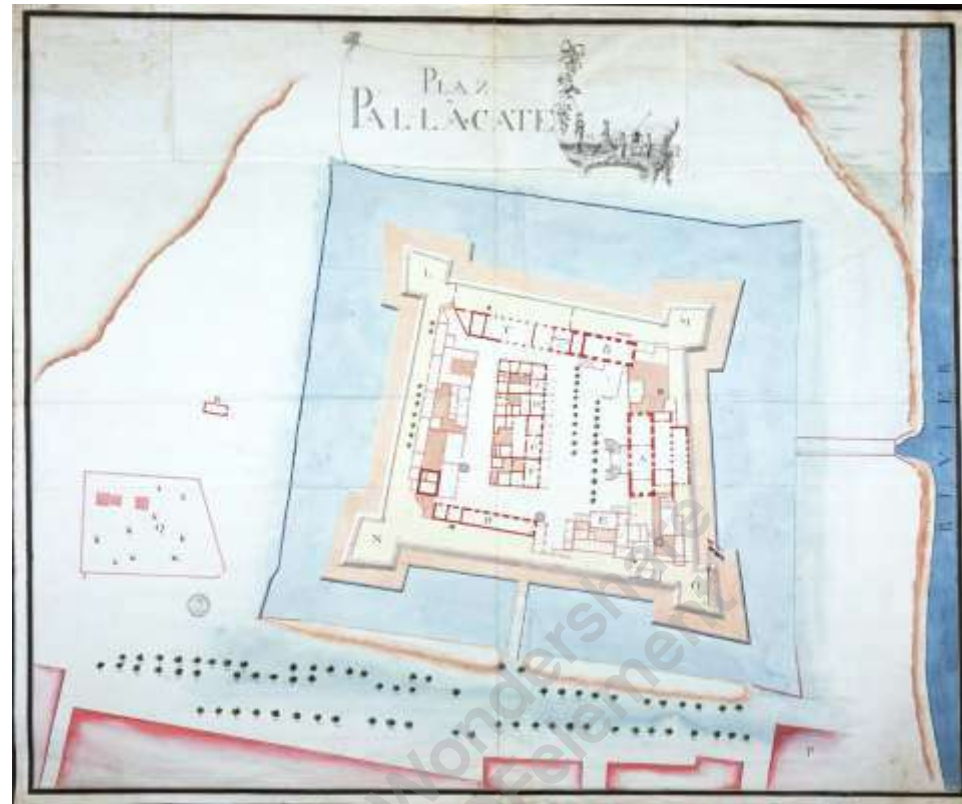
According to the Christian tradition, St. Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ is presumed to have come to an area near present day Mylapore in Madras (now Chennai) after preaching in Malabar and other places and founded a Church here. He is believed to have breathed his last at the present day St. Thomas Mount (Parangimalai – Parangi – Foreigner, Malai – Mountain;) which has become an important pilgrimage center.

In 1547, the Portuguese are said to have found on the mount, a famous bleeding cross (a stone cross bearing old inscription as well as some blood-stains, said to be those of the apostle) and built a Church at the present location of the Santhome Basilica where the mortal remains of St. Thomas is believed to have been buried.

In 1893, it was rebuilt as a Church with the status of a Cathedral by the British. It was designed in Neo-Gothic style. This Church is one of the only three known Churches in the world built over the tomb of an apostle of Jesus, the other two being St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City and Santiago Cathedral in Spain.



THE DUTCH



The Hollanders - the Dutch - came over to the Coromandel Coast when the trade system was well established. They had to face a strong European rival, the Portuguese. The Dutch appeared on the Coromandel Coast when the native rulers were in search of a strong power to counter the Portuguese. The Dutch Fort Geldria in Pulicat was established in 1609. Pallacate or Pulicat, situated at a distance of 53 km from Madras, was a Dutch settlement in Pazhaverkadu. Pazhaverkadu Kaipithu (Account of Pulicat) is a local manuscript describing the history of Pulicat after the advent of Dutch.

Kaipithu refers the Dutch as Hollanders (Ulanders). This manuscript is written by Kuppayyar and Venkatachala Chetti and the period of the account starts from period as 1616 CE. It states that the Dutch had built a fort in Pulicat after availing permission from Sadasivaraya in Vellore and from the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Golconda. Five villages with the revenue potential of thousand varakans were granted to the Dutch by the Badshah. The number of weaving units in Pulicat recorded by the manuscript is one thousand and two hundred.

The Dutch played a prominent role in the 17th century in the export of Textiles from the Coromandel Coast to Batavia, Pegu and Japan. The Kaipithu provides a short note on the Customs administration and tariff under the Dutch regime in Pulicat.

The Chennai Custom House launched a Department vessel named 'Pulicat -I' in April 30, 1987 in memory of the famous 17th century trading settlement.





TRANQUEBAR: DANISH FORT AND CUSTOMS HOUSE

The Danes started their trade ventures in India by establishing a fort at Masulipattam, in the present day Andhra Pradesh. Initially they faced failures due to financial constraints and a lack of support from their motherland. But they later revived the trade with India. Tranquebar fort (Tharamgambadi) and port were strengthened by them.

The Fort Dansborg (Tharangambadi Fort) which is the second largest Danish fort in the world, facing the vast Bay of Bengal and standing barely 100 metres from the beach, was built in 1620.



Nagapattinam has a continuous maritime history from the ancient times to till date. The Custom House, known as "BINNY BUILDING" here is a European legacy.

The Main Building in the front was constructed before the year 1900. The customs department had acquired the land and building during the year 1975 from M/s Binny Limited and hence the name.

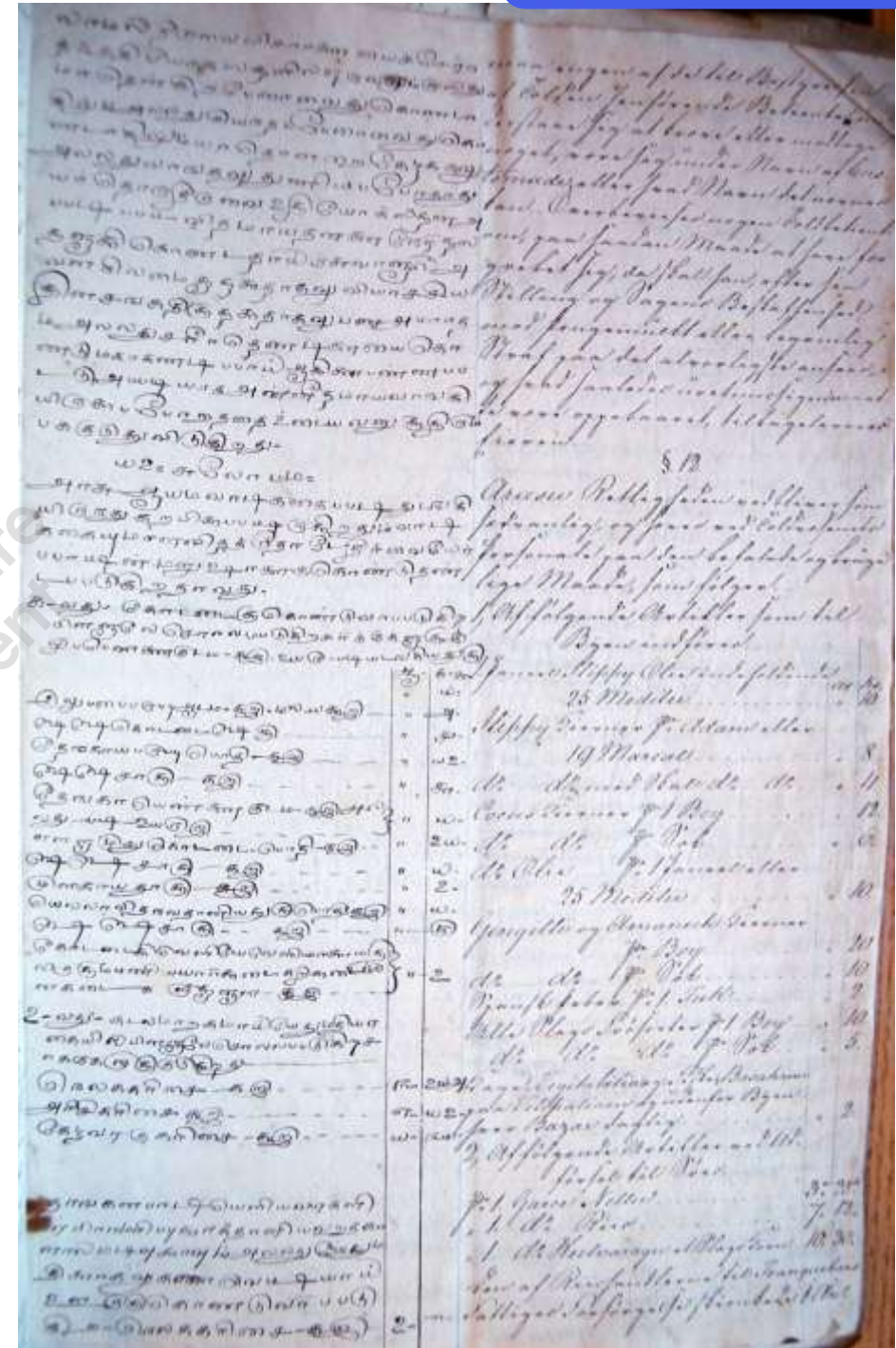


Tranquebar (Tharangambadi) was a Danish trading settlement in Nagapattinam district. The gold leaf agreement of 1620, now housed in the Royal Archives, Copenhagen, shows that a portion of Tharangambadi was granted to the Danish settlers and also a provision was made for collecting taxes. This is further attested by an old handwritten bilingual tariff document in Tamil and Danish.

For nearly 225 years, Tranquebar was under the Danish East India Company from 1620 to 1845 CE. From Denmark, the ships took almost half a year to reach Tranquebar. To celebrate the arrival of a Danish ship after a long voyage, the Danish settlers of Tranquebar issued coins with the inscription of the name of the ship on it. The Danish fort had a warehouse and a customs station functioned in Tranquebar.



Copper Coin issued by the Dutch with the inscription 'Nagapattinam' in Tamil



Old handwritten bilingual tariff document in Tamil and Danish

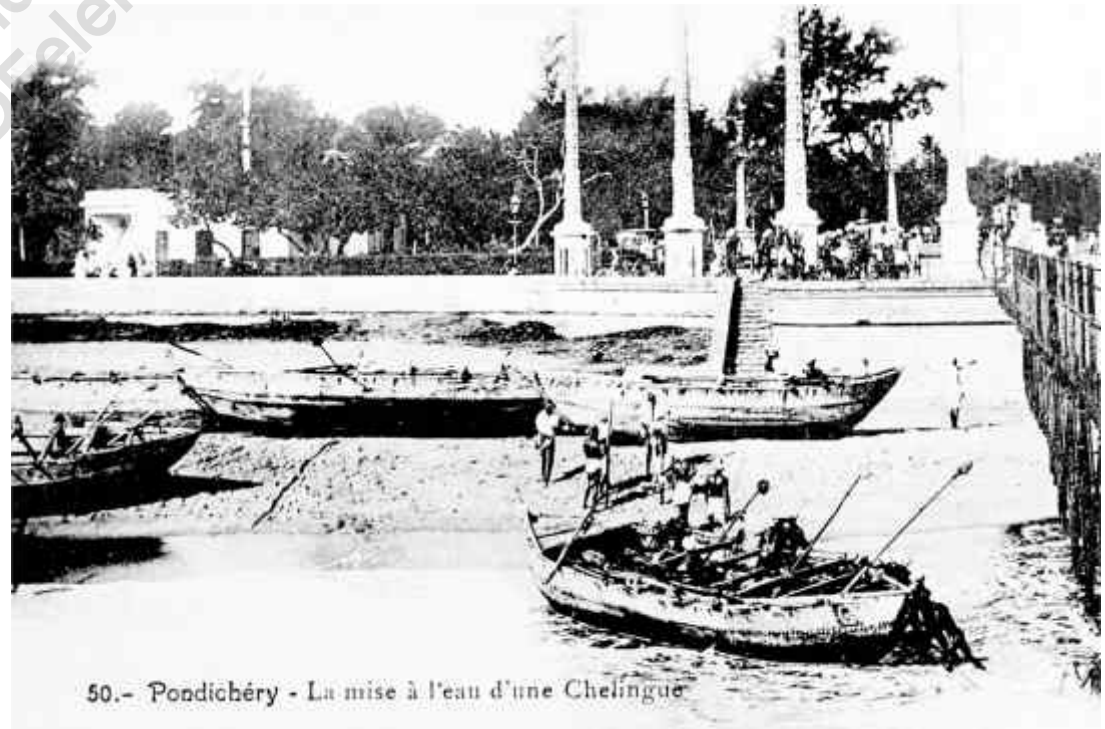
THE FRENCH

The French were the last of the European nationals who came to India with the purpose of trade. In 1664, during the reign of King Louis XIV, the French East India Company was formed and it received the permission to trade with India. The French established their first factory at Surat in Gujarat. Francois Martin, the French Governor in 1674 obtained a village called Pondicherry from the Sultan of Bijapur and founded a prosperous city on that site. Pondicherry, thus, became the main stronghold of the French in India. The French company established its factories in different parts of India, particularly in the coastal regions. Mahe, Karaikal, Balasor, Qasim Bazar etc., were a few important trading centres of the French East India Company.



Pondicherry Douane Customs - then and now.

Photo on the left Courtesy: Institut Francais de Pondichery / Ecole Francais d' Extreme-Orient



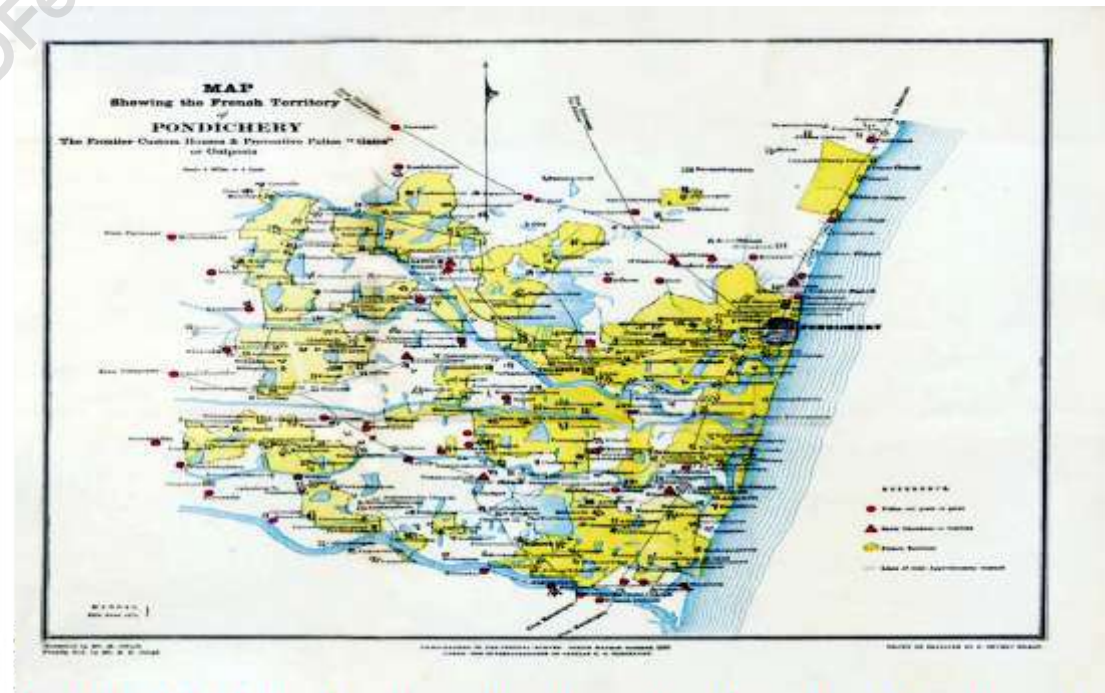
The Port of Pondicherry with its pier and the landing scenes at the port during its early years



Pondicherry – Villupuram Railway connectivity was specially developed and notified as a route for conveyance of goods into and out of French territory. Opened in 1879-1880. 5 Customs Chowkies (3 in British India+2 in French India) were established .

Photo Courtesy: Institut Francais de Pondichery/ Ecole Francais d' Extreme-Orient.

The Map of Pondicherry showing various customs posts for collecting customs levy for movement of goods between British Indian and French Indian territories. The concept of customs borders between countries was as small as shown in this map due to colonisation by various European Powers.



THE BRITISH

The British came to India in 1600 C.E. They tried and established a few factories in the east coast at Pulicat and Armagon which proved to be not so conducive for trade. Francis Day, an English administrator from the Masulipattam factory of the East India Company was sent to survey the possibilities of acquiring land for a factory down the east coast. "Madrasapatam" a place, 3 miles north of Santhome, was bought by then from Damarla Venkatappa Nayak, the local Governor.

On 22nd August, 1639, a grant was issued to the English by Damarla Venkatappa Nayak permitting them to build a fort and form a settlement at Madraspatnam.



The view of Fort St. George from the sea. The old light house of Madras which is now located in the Madras High Court premises is seen in the background.

Francis Day, after getting this grant arrived along with Andrew Cogan at Madraspattam on 20th February, 1640 and started erecting the fort immediately. The Inner part of the fort was completed on St. George's Day (i.e) 23rd April, 1640, and so the fort was named as St. George's Fort. Thereafter, Madras became the most important English factory on the East Coast of India.

The English East India Company continued to dominate the politics of the Tamil region and the country as a whole upto 1858 when the Crown of England took over the governance of Company ruled areas. The rule of the British crown lasted another one hundred years almost, until India gained Independence in 1947.

After Independence, Madras was made the Capital of the Madras Presidency. After the re-organization of states in 1953, the Madras State (renamed as Tamil Nadu in 1969) was formed and the city of Madras was made its capital.

Madras is now a metropolis and a large cultural, commercial and industrial centre. It is also an important Customs station having three ports and an international airport. This major city serves as the gateway to south India. Chennai is also called "the Automobile Capital of India" as nearly 40% of the automobile industries have their base here. For this reason, the city is also known as "Detroit of South Asia". It has also become a major centre for outsourced IT and financial services from abroad. It has a rich cultural heritage and owing to its musical and cultural traditions, UNESCO has included Chennai in its list of "Creative cities Network".



Embarking at Madras: Europeans with their luggage embarking in small boats assisted by numerous Indians, Sailing vessels were anchored at a distance & masula boats carried the passengers and cargo from them. Native officers and other Indians engaged in various activities in the beach and numerous buildings can be seen.

MADRAS TO CHENNAI



Rajaji salai also known as First Line Beach, then and now



Mount Road junction, then and now

MADRAS TO CHENNAI



Spencer Plaza, then and now



Ripon building (MADRAS CORPORATION), then and now

MADRASAPATTINAM

Two persons, Francis Day and Andrew Cogan, decided to buy a strip of land. For them, it seemed a gamble. Now, three centuries and more later, we look back and find that the gamble did pay off.

August 22, 1639, South of Pulicat, Tamil Nadu

Two men were standing on a sandy strip by the beach. The afternoon sun was scorching, but they didn't seem to mind the heat — considering they were Englishmen, obviously unused to such temperatures.

"So, you are satisfied, then?" asked one, his shoes scrunching in the sand.

"Rather a silly question to ask now, don't you think?" replied the other, shielding his eyes as he stared across the sand to the choppy sea. "After all the endless haggling and arguing and signing of the required documents."

"And that is when one always begins to question one's decisions," sighed the first man.

"I thought this place might be right if "

"I thought the choice of location was mine," cut in his companion.

"Yes it was, Mr. Day," Andrew Cogan smiled slightly. "And that fact will go down for posterity, never fear. Let it be known, henceforth that Mr. Francis Day of the Honourable East India Company, having looked upon several sites to establish a factory "

"And setting one right at the feet of the Dutch in Armagon, upon which we got on each others' nerves." Day put in with a grin.

" for some very strange reason decided upon this sandy strip, some three miles long and one mile wide, south of a fishing kuppam "

"Because this site offers us long cloth that's cheaper than anywhere by almost 20 per cent. Excellent trade prospects, wouldn't you say?"

Cogan carried on, as if there had been no interruption. "But choosing the site, ladies and gentlemen," he informed his imaginary audience. " was only the beginning. Then began a protracted process of gaining an audience with the Nayak king who ruled these parts."



"Wandiwash and Poonamallee."

"And who went by the name of " Cogan stopped. "I don't think I'll ever get used to their names. They break my teeth."

"Damarla Venkatadri, and Damarla Ayyappa Nayak, governors of the stretch of land between Pulicat and San Thome, and representatives of the Vijayanagara Empire. Beri Thimmappa, my dubaash, certainly had his work cut out," Day added, helpfully. "I think they want Persian horses and military protection. Why else would they let us in here, when the Dutch and Portuguese have already established trade?"

"Blahblahdeblah and you even managed to convince me, just going about my work in Masulipatnam, to persuade our superiors to set up our factory on this beach, bounded on two sides by rivers and the sea on the third."

"It's pretty here, isn't it?"

A bargain?

Cogan stared around him. At the broad, sandy beach, leading right down to crashing, frothing waves.

Beyond stretched a restless blue-green sea, heaving and tumbling in the mid-day sun. Random fishermen dotted the shores, staring at them curiously, while the fishing hamlet lay sleepily, hazy in the distance. It was not really pretty, from a conventional point of view. But Cogan understood what Day meant. This little place was now theirs.

They stared out at the beach together, thinking, making plans, about trade and about what — if anything — they could achieve here.

"Do you think we'll ever make a success out of all this?" Cogan asked, finally.

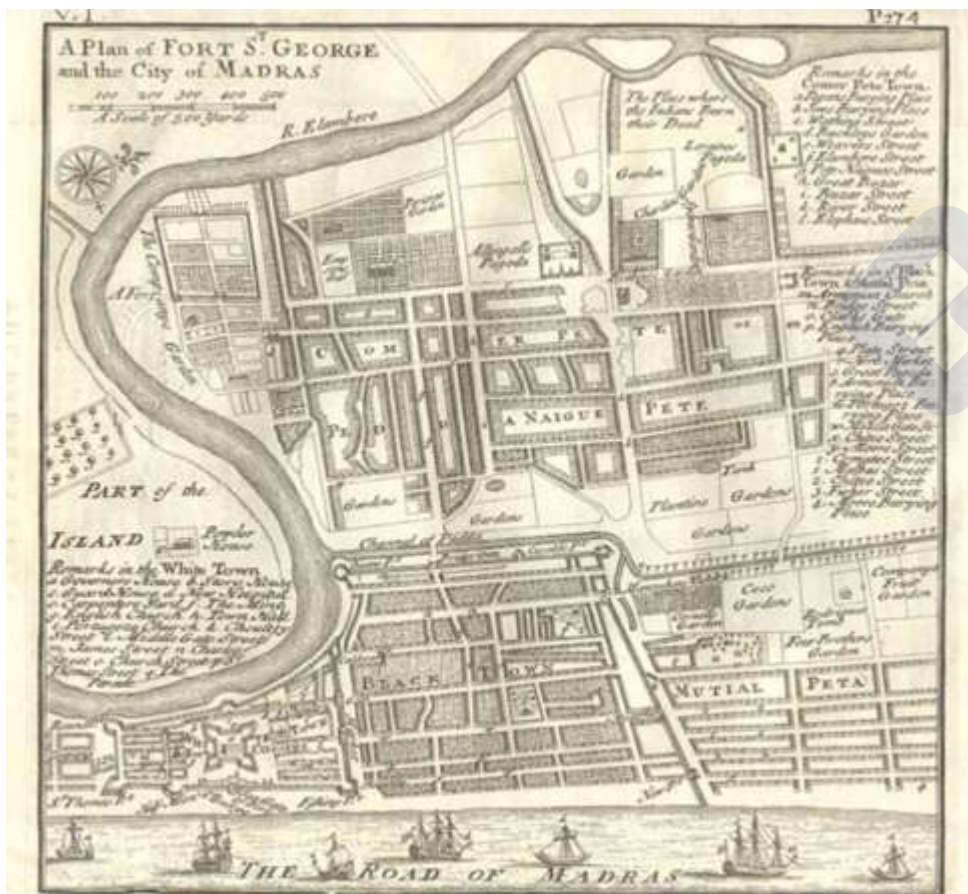
"To tell the truth, I have no idea," Day admitted. "This is the wildest gamble I've ever indulged in."

"You never know," Cogan countered. Suddenly, he grinned. "This might become a bustling, thriving city at some point."

"To the city of new beginnings," Day mused. "Madras."

WOODEN SEAL OF EAST INDIA COMPANY

Obverse: With the inscription Kumpini Sarrkkarr (in Tamil) meaning Company Sarkar. Reverse: Trishul. Length: 25 cm. Provenance: Tirunelveli. Reportedly used as a 'Chaap' or mark for sealing gunny bags containing paddy and grains as a mark of customs clearance.



A Plan of Fort St. George and Black Town in 1726.

MADRAS: THE CITY OF FIRSTS

- Corporation of Chennai is the first Corporation outside Europe, formed in 1688, only after the London Corporation.
- Oldest standing Railway Station in the Country is Royapuram, in Chennai. In fact the first Railway Company was the Madras Railway Company.
- College of Engineering, Guindy is one of the Oldest Engineering Colleges in the World.
- Madras Cricket Club was formed in 1846.
- First Anglican Church in India is St. Mary's Church inside St. George's Fort.
- The city boasts of the oldest Book Shop in the Country 'Higginbothams' and one of the oldest Libraries in the world, "Connemara".
- The city is one of the most sought after for medical tourism.
- First Public zoo was established in Chennai in 1855.
- Spencer Plaza, built in 1863 – 1864 is the first ever shopping mall in the Country.
- First Physical Education College in Asia is Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) established in 1920.
- The World Bank, Chennai is the extension of the World Bank, headquartered in Washington, DC.
- Koyambedu Bus Terminus is the largest bus terminus in Asia.

And the list of Chennai's importance goes on...!

MADRASPATNAM AND CHENNAPATNAM – ORIGIN OF THE NAMES

The growth and development of Madras ever since the arrival of the British as well as the origin of the names like 'Madras' and 'Chennapatnam' have been fully dealt with by scholars like Foster, Henry Davison Love and C.S. Srinivasan. The fact that the place called Madraspatnam, as written in English records, existed even at the time of the founding of the British settlement there, cannot be denied, for the name appears even in the grant made by the Nayak to Francis Day in 1639. An inscription of Vijayanagara period dated to 1369 C.E found in Penneswaramadam, Krishnagiri district also mentions about Madarasanpattinam.



The origin of the name Chennapatnam is fortunately not shrouded in mystery as is that of Madraspatnam. A contemporary Telugu work, *Ushaparinayam*, written by Anka, a brother of Damarla Venkatappa, who gave the grant of Madraspatnam to the English in 1639, informs us that his brother Ayyappa built the town (Chennapatnam) named after his father, Chennappa, with the special object of interposing a town belonging to the emperor between Pulicat (prajayakaveri) and Mylapore (San Thome) and thereby to prevent the Dutch and the Portuguese of those places from fighting. Chennapatnam was the name given to the new town that grew immediately round the Fort St. George while the older plot called Madrasapatnam lay to the north of it. Later on, however, "the intervening space between the older northern site of Madraspatnam and the new southern plot of Chennapatnam came to be quickly built over with houses of the new settlers as the town expanded so that the two villages became virtually one town. The English preferred to call the two united towns by the name of Madraspatnam with which they had been familiar from the beginning, while the Indians chose to give it the name of "Chennapatnam". In course of time, the exact original location of the two towns came to be blurred and even reversed meaning that Madraspatnam was regarded as the site of the Fort and Chennapatnam as the Indian town to the north.



THE FIRST CUSTOM HOUSE - THE SEA GATE OF FORT ST.GEORGE:

Custom houses were traditionally established at the landing places of goods or geographical choke points. It was in Fort St.George that sea customs duties were first collected by the British. The "Sea Gate" of the Fort was the site of arrival of goods from the ships on the sea and is intimately connected with the history of the Madras Custom House. Madrasapatnam became a Presidency in 1654 and began to be known as Madras. For 23 years, the Agent of the East India Company, the Governor, was in charge of collection of revenue in the Presidency. Later on, a Council of Members was appointed to run the company affairs in Madras, with the Governor as President of the Council.

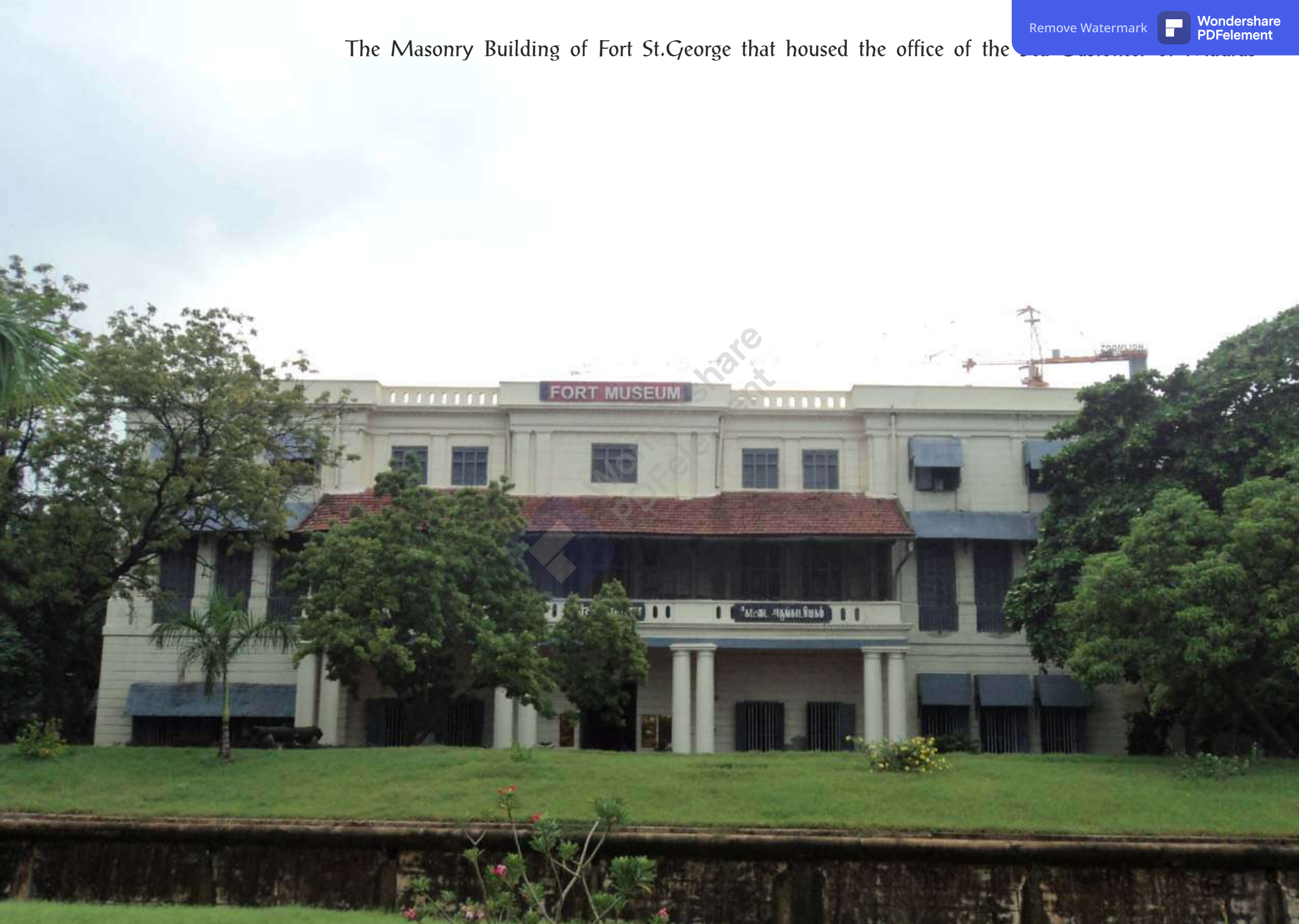
In 1677, during the Governorship of Lord Streysham Master, each member of the Council was given an individual charge to look after. The 4th Member of this Council was given the charge of Judicial work and Customs revenue collection. He was designated as the Choultry Justice and Customer.



The sea gate of the Fort St.George that stands for over 350 years now

During the early half of the 17th century, the distance between the Sea Gate and the shoreline was less than 500 metres. The front yard of the Sea Gate was the meeting point of merchants, brokers and consumers. The Office of the Sea Customer (the officer in charge of Customs duties) was located adjacent to the Sea Gate; the warehouse of the Sea Customer existed by the side of the Sea Gate; a weighing space was erected nearby; bales of goods were often piled upon the beach in front of it; auctions for the sale of goods were held regularly and important announcements on trade and governance was also made from the Sea Gate. The scene of commerce before the office of the Sea Customer in Madras was vibrant and thriving.

The Masonry Building of Fort St. George that housed the office of the



In 1685-86, Mr. John Nicks was the last Customer to be in charge of both Land and Sea Customs Revenue. On 29th August, 1687, Lord Elihu Yale took charge as Governor of Madras Presidency. He separated Sea and Land Customs work. Mr. Robert Freeman was the first "Sea Customer". In the year 1688, the Fort house was rebuilt with three floors and the Custom House was at the top floor. The working hours of the Custom House in the year 1689 were from 8 a.m.-11 a.m. in the morning and 2 p.m.-4 p.m. in the afternoon.

After the constitution of the Board of Trade in 1785, the Sea Customer reported to the Board instead of the Executive Council as before. The custom house functioned from a masonry building near the sea gate of Fort St. George which is presently the main gate of the Fort. It is the same building which presently houses the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.

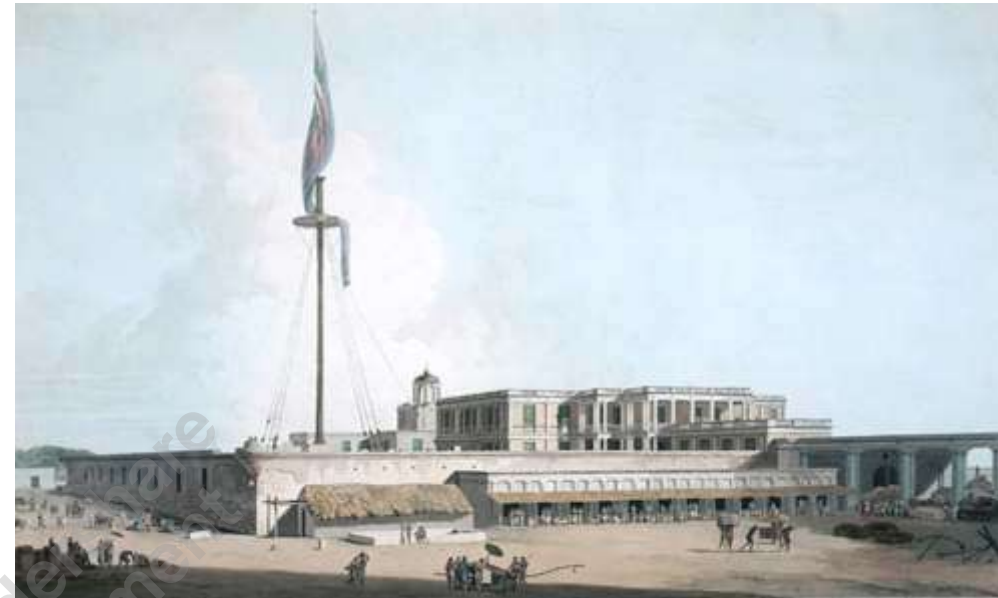


View from the sea of Fort St. George and the masonry building from where custom house functioned. It may be noticed that the distance between the shore line and the Fort gate is far less compared to the present times.



Wondershare
PDFelement

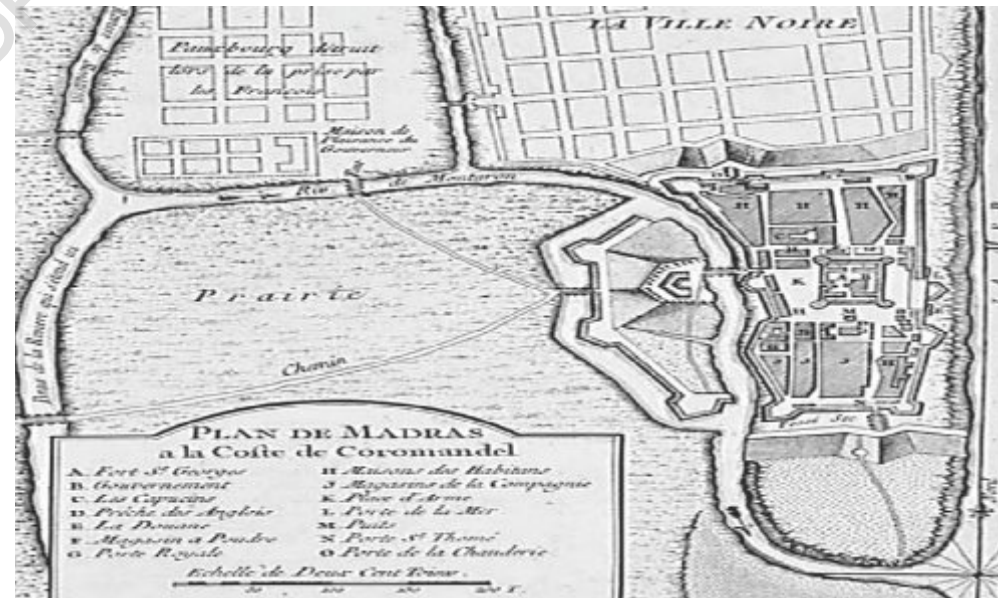
St. George's Fort



Fort warehouse and office of the customer



Fort St. George in 1900



A Map of the Fort 15 years after French Occupation. Custom House (Douane) marked in the picture.

In the later years when the customs office building showed signs of decay, there was a series of correspondence as to where the custom house should be located as trade kept expanding. Capt. Lennor of Madras Engineers in early 1798 suggested the construction of a pier of solid masonry, which could subsequently be developed into a closed harbour at the Esplanade area of the Black town.

Capt. Lennor also suggested that a spacious building opposite the port be rebuilt so that it could be used as a Custom House, Master Attendant's Office and Exchange. The Government appreciated his plan but due to "the enormous amount" required for its implementation, it decided to transfer the Custom House to the northern Esplanade of the Black Town. This structure, a large square pile of 300 ft each side, built around an interior court or a quadrangle, was the old North Granary or Paddy Godown which had been occasionally used as a place of confinement for prisoners of war. In 1798, Lord Edward Clive (the eldest son of Robert Clive) ordered the transfer of the custom house to the northern Esplanade (the present site) which also marked the removal of all shops and commercial establishments from the Fort St. George to Black Town.



Painting by John Gantz. The beach and Custom House, Madras

The Custom House was open for the transaction of business everyday (Sundays and certain holidays excepted) from 10 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon. On Saturdays it close at 2 P.M., though provision was made for the despatch of urgent business. Goods and merchandise for which a permit had been given could be landed and shipped between sunrise and sunset, under the superintendence of Customs Officers.



Water colour drawing of Board of Trade (left) and Custom House (right) at Chennai (Madras) by John Gantz, 1824.



*To the Right Honourable the Commissioners of His Majesty's Customs,
This Project of the the Custom House is humbly Proposed by your Most Obedt Servant*

The New Custom House of Madras was built In the design of the London Custom House

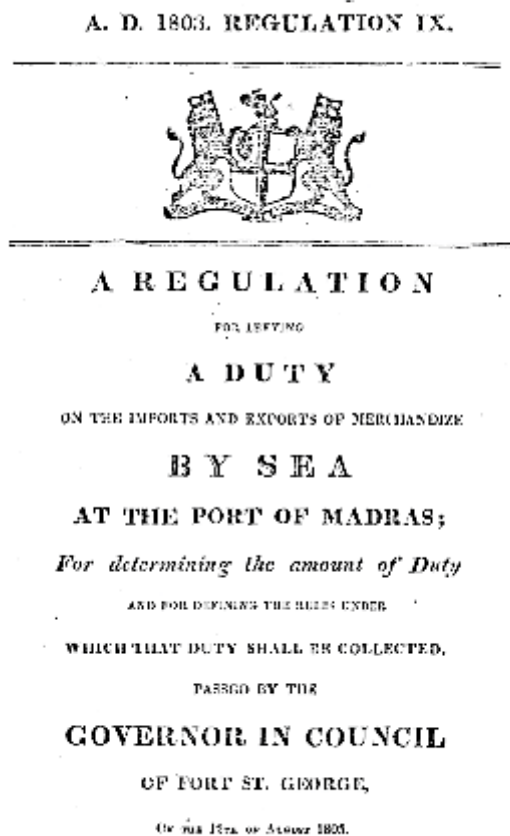
CUSTOMS POOJA AT TRIPPLICANE SRI PARTHASARATHY TEMPLE

It has been a part of the tradition in Sri Parthasarathy Temple Triplicane for more than half a century now, that on the 4th day of RamaNavami that falls in the Tamil month of panguni (In mid - April), a Pooja is conducted in the name of the Customs department. The contribution for the expenses of the pooja is made by the officials of Chennai Custom House and officials of the department are honoured at the temple on that occasion.



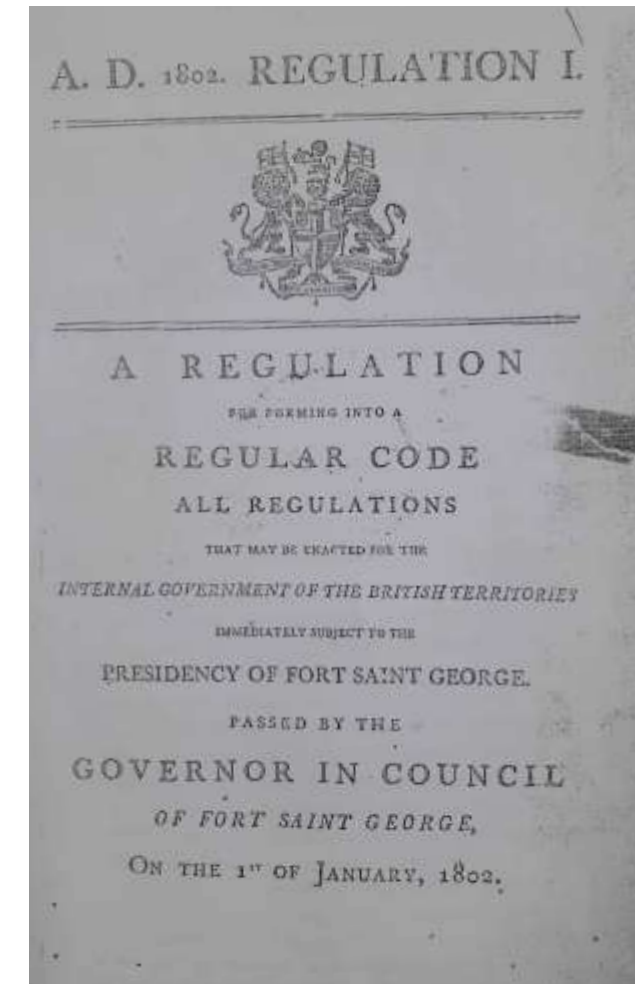
EVOLUTION OF MODERN CUSTOMS : LAW & PROCEDURE

It was also during Lord Edward Clive's period that the first legalised Sea Customs Regulation was passed in India. Section 2 of Madras Regulation I of 1802 was passed which legalised orders by the Governor in Council of Fort St. George regarding the administration of justice, the imposition or levying of taxes, or of duties on commerce, the collection of land revenue etc and those were directed to be recorded in the Judicial department and then to be framed into regulations and printed and published thereafter.



A separate Regulation, i.e. Madras Regulation IX of 1803 was framed and issued 'for levying a duty on the imports and exports of merchandise by sea at the port of Madras; for determining the amount of duty and for defining the rules under which that duty shall be collected' by the Governor in Council of Fort St. George on the 12th of August, 1803.

The Regulation describes the powers of Collectors, the Board of Revenue, the working hours of the Custom House, the tariff for duty collection, the proforma for import manifest, export manifest, bills of entry, shipping bills, invoices etc. It also describes the procedures for verification of marks and numbers, auction of goods, division of proceeds, exemption of duty, duty free imports, transshipment of goods, unaccompanied baggage, adjudications etc in detail. The blow-by-blow description of all the customs procedures (standard operation procedures now), Rules & Regulations etc, during those days leaves us awestruck



INDIAN SEA CUSTOMS MANUAL 1928

INDIAN SEA CUSTOMS MANUAL

Containing

Rules and Notifications made under those provisions of the Sea Customs Act, 1878 (VIII of 1878) that empower the Governor-General in Council or the Chief Customs authority to make such rules and notifications; and Resolutions of the Government of India. (Together with a Chapter (IV) containing extracts from and orders under other Acts relating to the Customs Department and also 3 Appendices containing (1) Customs forms; (2) List of ports in India; and (3) concessions granted to Consular officers.)



Compiled under the provisions of Section 204 of the Sea Customs Act, 1878 (VIII of 1878).

FIRST EDITION

Corrected up to 1st March 1928



CALCUTTA: GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CENTRAL PUBLICATION BRANCH
1928

A.
Ship's Manifest.

GOVERNMENT SEA CUSTOMS HOUSE,
Madras, 187 .

Manifest of the Cargo of the
from to
Date Commander mode

| No. of Crew. | Tonnage. | Water. | Pass- engers or Crew. | Declar- ation of Goods. | Place of Origin. | By whom and when cleared. |
|-----------------|----------|--------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| E. N. | | | | | | |

Note.—The last column shall be filled up by the Collector or Assistant Collector of the Port of Madras.

I, do hereby declare that this Manifest contains, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a true and correct account of all Goods, Tonnage, and Merchandise imported in the ship for the Port of Madras.

Declared before me at Madras this day of 187 .

Collector of Sea Customs.

Note.—This document may be given in duplicate.

B.
Import Boat Note.

Section 41,
Act 17 of 1868.

Boat Note to be filled up by the Officer Commanding, signed, and sent on shore a boat No.

| Marks and Number. | Quantity and description of Packages. |
|----------------------|--|
| Total. | |

Officer Commanding.

C.
Landing Permit.

To
The COMMANDER,
Ship

You are hereby permitted to land the Cargo of the under your Command.

Ammunition, Chemicals, Earth Oil or Mineral Naphtha, Fireworks, Fulminating Powder, Loaded Cartridges and Ballist Cases, Gun Cotton, Gun Powder, Kerosine Oil, Lucifer Matches (Congreve), Nitro Glycerine, Picric Acid, Pitch, Sulphuric Acid, Tar, Turpentine, and other dangerous substances, if landed without a Special Permit granted by the Customs House on your application, will be summarily sequestered.

Collector of Sea Customs.

D.
Bill of Entry.

To
The COLLECTOR OF CUSTOMS,
Ship

Please permit to pass the undermentioned goods imported per Ship from under Colors, viz.—

| Marks and Number. | Number and nature of Pack- ages. | Units of Goods. | Quan- tity. | Value in Rupees. | Rate of Duty per centum. | Amount of Duty. | Rate of Duty. | Amount of Duty. |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | | | | | |

I do hereby declare that the contents and value are truly stated.

(Signature)

Note.—The total value, whether "Marked" or "Tare" weight and quantity, must be entered in words as well as in figures.

L.
Port Clearance.

No. Port Clearance

For the Captain of the Ship under Tonnage and color bound for

This is to certify, to whom it may concern, that the owners of the above-mentioned and Export cargo, and have complied with all the Regulations of this Port.

Collector of Sea Customs.

| Sorts of Goods. | Marks or Numbers. | Quantity. | Remarks. |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|
| | | | |

M.
Guarantee for the payment of duty, &c.

To
The COLLECTOR OF SEA CUSTOMS,
Ship

In consideration of your granting a Port Clearance to the and permitting her to leave the Madras anchorage without having fully complied with all the provisions and requirements of the Customs Laws, Rules, and Orders in respect of her last entry towards the Port of Madras, and her present entry Outwards therefrom, or either of them, we hereby guarantee payment to you on behalf of the Government of Madras of all duties, fees, penalties, and charges of every description for or to which the Owner and Master of the said vessel or either of them now are or is liable, or shall or may become liable in respect of any non-compliance with such provisions as aforesaid, or any breach thereof on the occasion of the vessel's last entry towards or in any way connected with or arising from the said entries or either of them.

We have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servants,
Agents for the

Note.—This form to be on one Rupee Stamped Paper.

Act IV of 1844 was passed which provided for the presidency to control the Land and Sea Customs Revenue. This was followed by the series of acts like Customs Duties Act, 1859; Act IV of 1863 which were later replaced by the Indian Customs Duties Act, 1867 and the Indian Customs Duties Act, 1870 and so on. In the year 1924, the Government of India formed the 'Central Board of Revenue' for uniformity in Taxation and Customs procedures all over British India.



Board of Revenue at Chepauk Palace

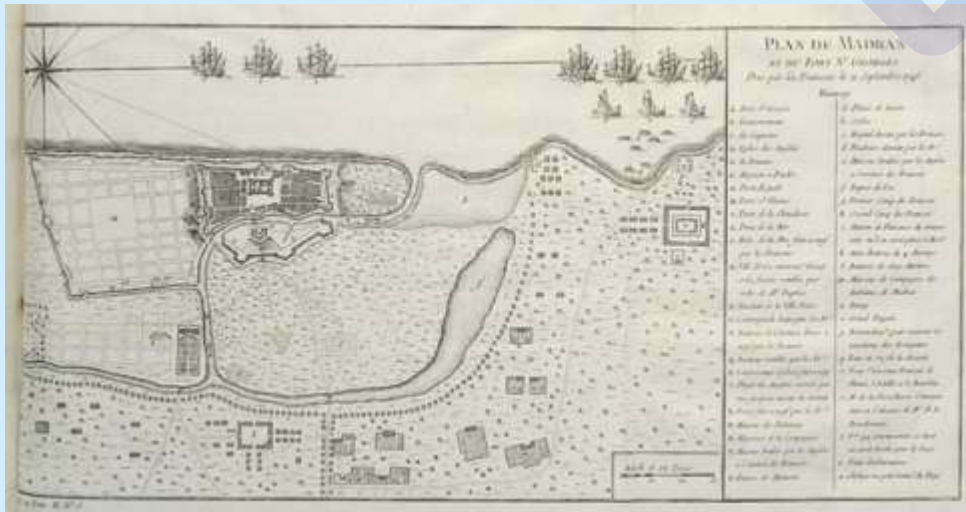


Fig. Plan of Madras. A French Map of Madras and Fort St. George. 1746. Serial No. E marks 'la Douane' or the Customs House in French. Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

The Anglo-French Rivalry of Europe echoed in their Colonies too and Madras was not an exception. Fort St. George fell to the French forces in 1746 and was under their siege till the captured territories were exchanged between the English and the French under the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748.



Line of Customs and Port authority buildings north of Fort St. George.
Chromolithograph print. Artist: William Simpson, Year 1867.

Board of Trade (later converted into Chennai Collectorate after Land and Sea Customs were bifurcated) and Custom House.



Board of Trade and Customs House. Photograph taken by Fredrick Fiebig in 1851.

In the 19th century, Madras was one of India's major ports and handled high volumes of import and export trade with Britain and other countries of the world. The Custom House stood on the harbour foreshore at George Town. It was one of a number of handsome colonial buildings built in the early 19th century. A flagstaff can be seen mounted in front and boats used to transport passengers and cargo to shore are drawn up on the beach.

THE CUSTOM HOUSE AND SCREW PILE PIER

Madras was one of India's main ports and handled high volumes of import and export trade with Britain and other nations of the world. However it had no natural harbour and passengers and cargo had to be ferried to land through continuous surf using special local craft. This disadvantage was remedied by the construction of the pier, which extends seawards from the custom house. Designed by Frederick Johnson, work was begun in 1858 and the pier opened to the public in January 1862. The construction of a harbour was subsequently begun in 1875. In 1879 two parallel masonry breakwaters were created, enclosing the pier to the north and south. Work on the harbour was completed in 1896.



Photograph of the screw-pile pier under construction at Madras in c.1861.



The pier of Chennai port as seen from the sea with the Chennai Custom House in the background



Elephant transported in a raft in front of Chennai port pier being built



Before the pier was built - masula boats were used



The tram to Custom House

Fg 9747
MADRAS ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS.

| 1/2 ANNA 1/2 | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| UP | DOWN |
| Custom House | Royapuram Terminus |
| Pachasappas | Custom House |
| Central Station | Parry's Corner |
| Esmore Terminus | Central Station |
| Round Tanna | Round Tanna |
| Harris Bridge | Ice House Road |
| Ice House Road | Royapettah Hospital |
| Barbers Bridge | Kosapet Siding |
| Royapettah Police Station | Eleph'nt Gate Police Station |
| Lox Church Road | Choolai Post Office |
| Mylapore Terminus | Washermanpet Terminus |
| Eleph'nt Gate Police Station | Government Royapuram |



Map of 1883 showing Custom House



Customs Godowns in 19th century



The view of First Line Beach - present day Rajaji salai

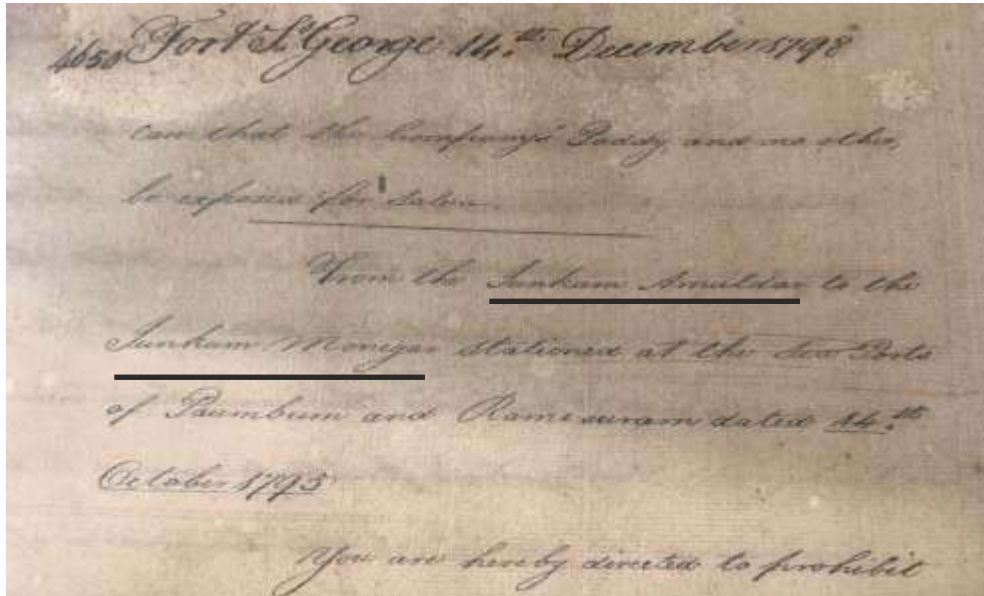


Landing Places - A View in 1885

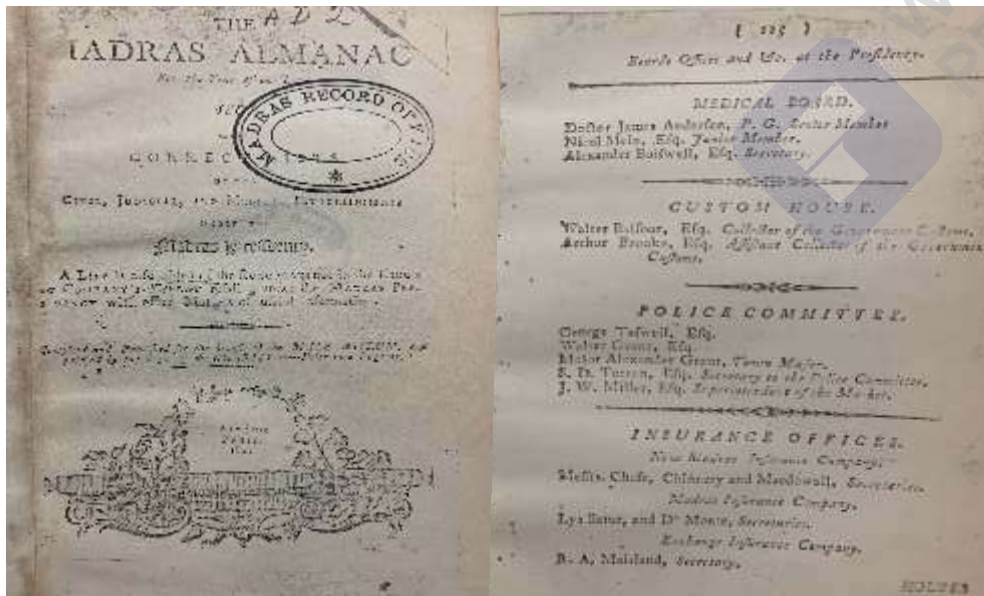
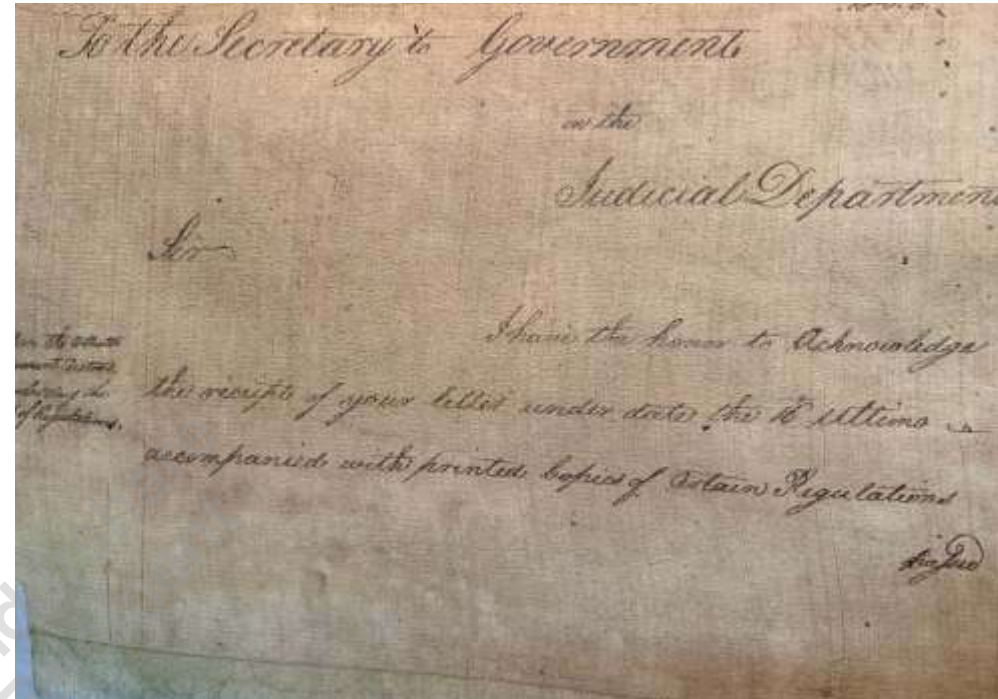


A View in 1877

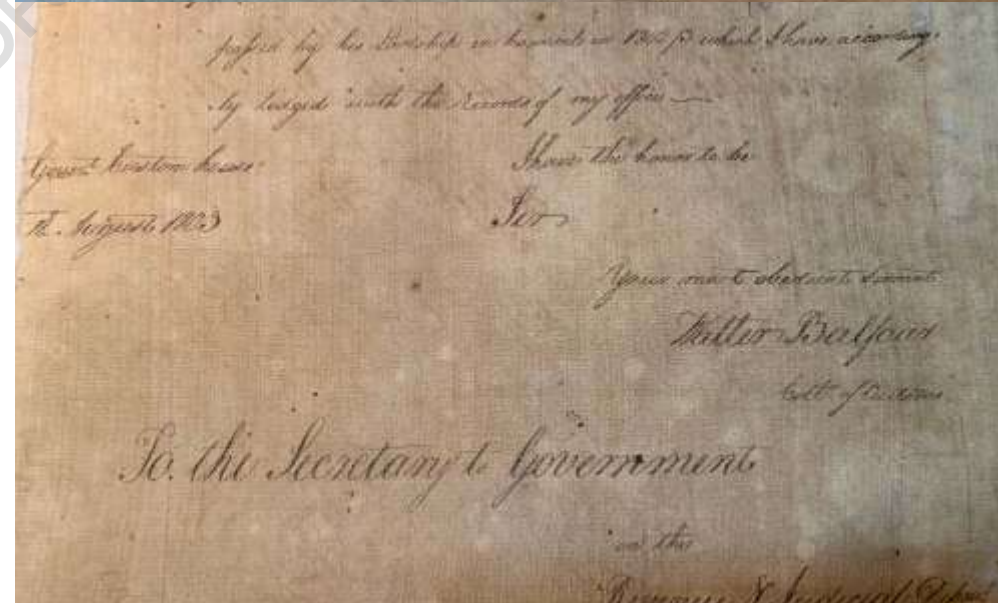
TREASURES FROM THE ARCHIVES



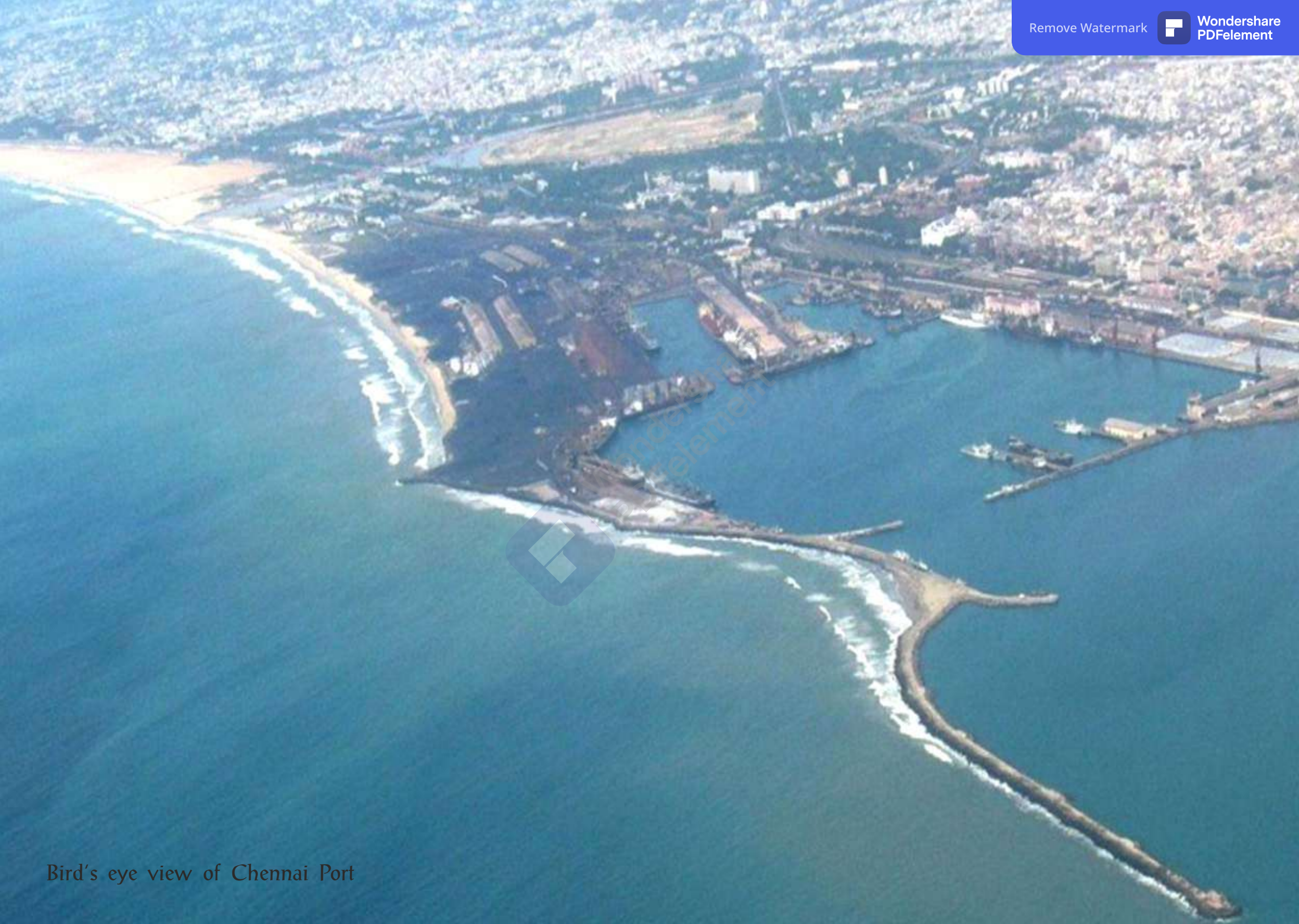
Archived Record of 1798 using the term "Sunkam" to denote Customs



Madras Almanac of 1801 showing the names of Customs Officers



A letter by Walter Balfour (first Collector of Customs) to the Secy. to the Government



Bird's eye view of Chennai Port

Custom House from 1800 to 1957



As the activities of the Custom House and the work of the various departments accommodated in the building increased due to the expansion of trade, the need was felt for a better and bigger Office accommodation. It was decided in the year 1939 to demolish the Old Custom House, which had become too old and was certified as unsafe for human occupation. But due to the need for observing economy and conserving all available finances for the Second World War effort, the work of demolition was postponed till the war was over.

CHENNAI CUSTOMS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

Remove Watermark

Wondershare
PDFelement

Custom House at Present



A passer-by on Rajaji Salai cannot miss the coruscating tri-colour lights over a high-rise building reading "Chennai Custom House" in three languages and a majestic mural on a side plank of the building for its full height, depicting a uniformed Customs Officer saluting the nation, with the potraits of the saint poet Thiruvalluvar and the shore temple of Mamallapuram in the background.

This main building was inaugurated in 1963 by the then Collector of Customs B.N Sen and serves as an important landmark on the famous Rajaji salai of Chennai city for over half a century.

The Chennai Customs, headed by the Chief Commissioner, is now housed in three blocks of six storeys each, encompassing in it the functions of 9 commissionerates (including two Appeal commissionerates) in all. The Chennai Customs Zone jurisdiction covers the ports of Chennai, Ennore (Kamarajar Port) and Kattupalli (a minor port), the Anna International Airport, the Air Cargo complex, 32 Container Freight Stations and 2 Inland Container Depots.



The Mural on the main building of Chennai Custom House inaugurated on 15th August 2018 by the Chief Commissioner Shri. M. Ajit Kumar





The Heads of the Custom House were called as "Collectors of Customs" till 2002 after which the nomenclature changed to "Commissioners of Customs". The Airport and Air Cargo Complex had become a separate Commissionerate in 1998. The Chennai Customs Zone was formed in the year 2000 comprising Commissionerate of Customs (Air), Commissionerate of Customs (Port Import) & Commissionerate of Customs (Port Export). Now after the latest reorganization in August 2017, the Chennai Customs Zone has nine Commissionerates headed by the Chief Commissioner of Customs.

1. Commissionerate of Customs –I - Airport
2. Commissionerate of Customs –II - Imports
3. Commissionerate of Customs –III -Preventive
4. Commissionerate of Customs –IV - Exports
5. Commissionerate of Customs –VI -Audit
6. Commissionerate of Customs –VII - Aircargo
7. Commissionerate of Customs –VIII - General
8. Commissionerate of Customs – Appeals I
9. Commissionerate of Customs – Appeals II

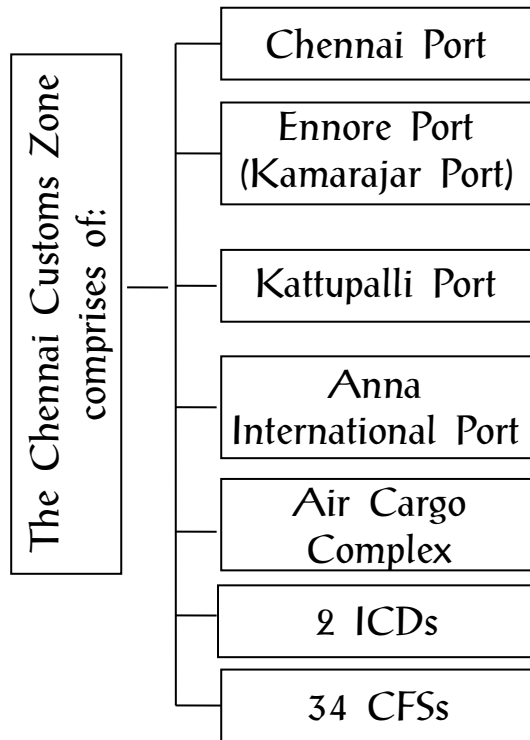
The creation of separate Import (II) and Export (IV) Commissionerates in the sea customs as well as creation of Air Cargo Commissionerate has resulted in reduction in dwell time of customs clearances. Similarly a separate Commissionerate for Airport has resulted in quick screening and clearance of passengers and their baggage and also had led to a number of remarkable seizures due to focused monitoring and Intelligence gathering.

COLLECTION OF REVENUE

The revenue collections of Madras Customs dates back right from the beginning of the early years of English settlement in the 17th century. In the early years and until 1677, the major collections of revenue was from trade of goods. The first Customer, Mr. Timothy Wilkes collected the revenue in Madras Pagodas(1 pound = 2 ½ pagodas) the money that was in official use in those years in the Madras Presidency.

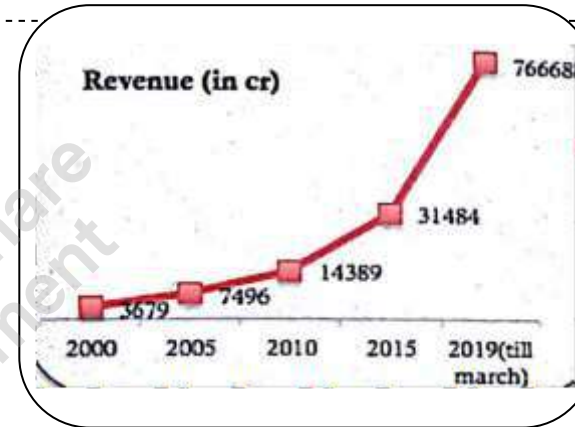
It is to be understood that the ports of the entire Madras Presidency were under the control and supervision of the Collector of Customs, Madras Custom House even after Independence. Cochin Customs was placed under the Administrative control of the Madras Custom House in 1949 (bifurcated under a separate collector in 1956) and Vishakapatnam was added in the year 1956. Presently there are two customs zones in the state of Tamilnadu each headed by a Chief Commissioner of Customs. The annual sea customs collection in the year 1678 was 2343 pagodas. Considering these humble beginnings , it is noteworthy that the Chennai Customs Zone has contributed a whopping Rs.76628.21 crores in the year 2018-19.

JURISDICTION



REVENUE

Chennai Customs Zone is one of the major Customs formations in the country contributing about 24.79% of the total Customs revenue.



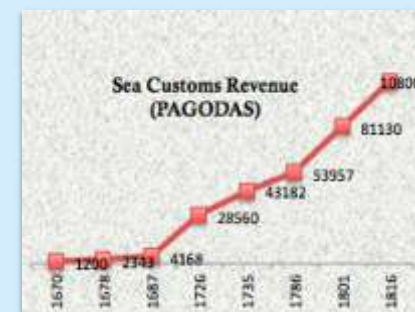
Historical Fun Fact : Pagoda

Before 1818, the currency of account in Madras was the (gold) pagoda, subdivided into forty-two or forty-five (silver) fanams, with one fanam being eighty (copper) cash.



The most valuable was the star pagoda, 100 of them were worth 350 rupees, issued by the East India Company at Madras.

The pagoda was replaced in 1818 by (silver) rupee.



NEW CUSTOM HOUSE

As part of the Second Five year plan, work was taken up to construct a six-storied building to accommodate the Custom House with all its connected departments. The old Custom House was demolished and the Custom House was temporarily accommodated from February 1957 in the Mysore Bank buildings on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Road. As the accommodation was found to be insufficient, a part of the building at No.88, Armenian street was also hired. The Manifest Clearance Department and the Statistical Department functioned there. The new Custom House building was completed in 1963 and was inaugurated during the period of Shri.B.N.Sen, Collector of Customs.



TWIN REVENUE: TWIN BUILDINGS

Land revenue and customs were the two chief revenue sources to the State from time immemorial. Land revenue contributed much of the revenue to the British as their colonial customs tariff was suited to boost imports from their home country.

Sir Thomas Munro stated, "The land revenue in India is what the excise and customs are in England."

Not surprisingly, the two sovereign edifices which have overseen the revenue administration in Madras were located next to each other. It is recorded that an in-house bridge connecting the two buildings existed till the 20th century since the Imperial Customs Service was constituted only in 1906 and the posts of Collector of Land Revenue and Collector of Sea Customs were most of the times held by the same officer of the Indian Civil Service. The salary for the combined post was debited in the proportion of two-thirds to customs and one-third to land revenue.

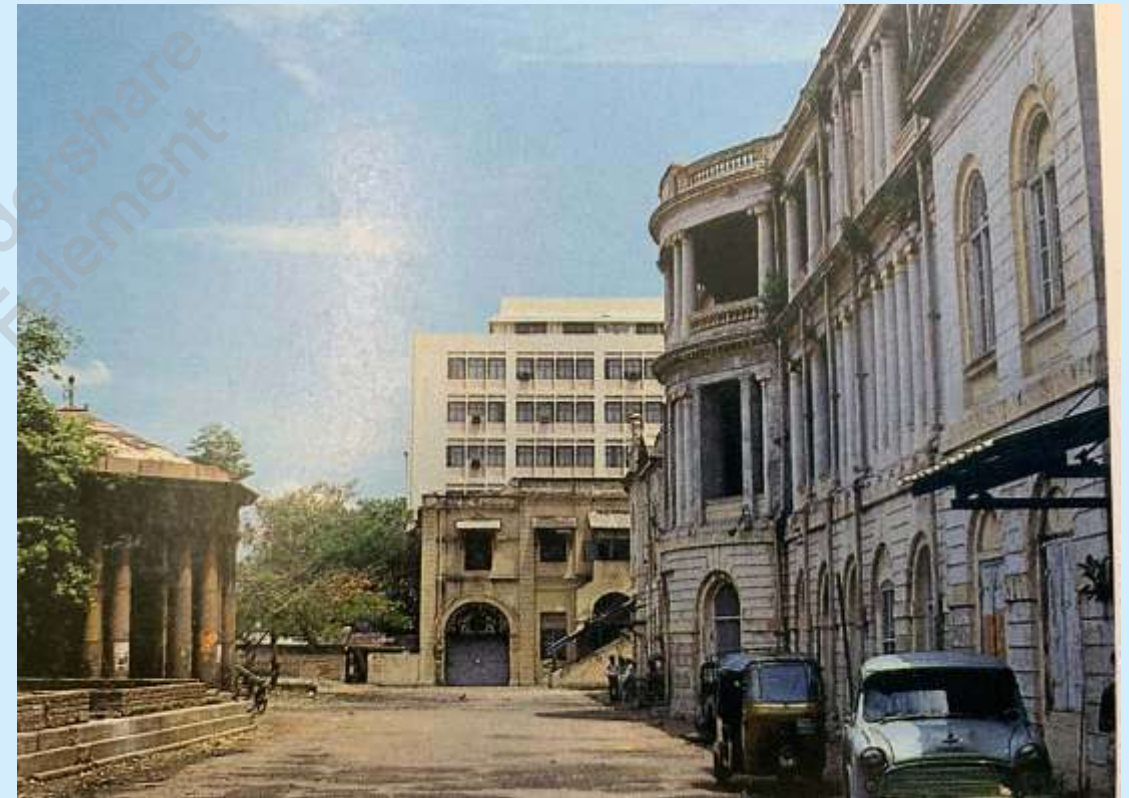


CENOTAPH

The Cornwallis Cenotaph is a lasting monument amidst the new buildings on Rajaji Salai. It is a historical landmark that has helped identify the location of the Bentinck Buildings and the adjoining Custom House. Without this monument, it would be difficult for the present generation to associate the twin buildings catering to the twin revenues for centuries. The Cenotaph was built after the death of Cornwallis on 5th October 1805 at Cāzhipore. The Cenotaph was originally built on Mount Road near the present Cenotaph Road. It was later shifted to Bentinck Buildings complex in late 19th century where it stands till today.



Cenotaph at present



Cenotaph before the demolition of Bentinck Buildings



Board of Trade (Bentinck building) later converted into Chennai Collectorate

ROYAPURAM: A BUSTLING OFFSHOOT OF THE NEW CUSTOMS HOUSE

In the absence of a natural harbour, the services of the boatmen were integral to the landing of cargo in Madras. When Fort St. George was constructed in 1640, these boatmen had settlements at the north of the fort and later at Chepauk. Their services were utilised in transporting bales of goods by 'masula' boats from Madras roads (anchorage area for big ships) As the Sea customs and Master Attendant office were shifted from Fort St. George to Black Town, the Boatmen made a representation to the Madras Government for transfer of their settlement to a more convenient place. Subsequently, around 60 acres of land was allotted to them at a distance from the northern ramparts wall of Black Town. They were also compensated by the Government for evacuation of the huts and for erecting new huts in the allotted area. The occupation of the new settlement was over by 1799. St. Peters Church was subsequently built in the area. St. Peters was revered as Rayappar in Tamil. The settlement therefore was called as Royapuram. After the development of Madras port, Royapuram continues to thrive as a fishing harbour.



The Corporation of Madras (presently known as Chennai Municipal Corporation) was inaugurated on 29 September 1688 under a Royal Charter issued by King James II on 30 December 1687. It is the oldest municipal body outside Great Britain functioning successfully for more than three hundred years. The founder Francis Day conceived this city as a trading port city and the city has also done justice to her founder by growing into a major port. The bustling trade activities associated with the port has made relationship between the customs and the city similar to that of an umbilical relationship between a mother and child.

The city has also recognized the contribution of the customs department towards its development and named two important roads of city in the name of two renowned Collectors of Customs i.e Mr.G.J. Hadow and Mr. William Harrington. A locality near Saidapet is also named after a Customs Collector by the name Mr.C.G. Todhunter as Todhunter Nagar.



Hadow's Road then and Now

Harrington Road Now

Collectors of Sea Customs

Before 1800

From 1639 to 1677 the Agent or the President or the Governor had collected the Customs Revenue.

1677-The fourth Council Member Mr. Timothy Wilkes, as in charge of Judicial and Customs Revenue, with a designation 'the Choultry Justice and Customer'. He could be construed the first person to have performed the duties of a Collector of Customs.

1687-Mr. Robert Freeman became the first Sea Customer.

1697-Mr. Charles Barwell-Sea Customer

1701-Mr. Mathew Emson-Sea Customer

1708- Mr. William Martin- Sea Customer

1712- Mr. Mathew Weld- Sea Customer.

1714- Richard Horden-Sea Customer

1724- Mr. John Emmerson- Sea Customer

1729-31 Mr. Randal Fowke-Sea Customer

1755-Mr. Henry Powney- Sea Customer

1770-Mr. Henry Brooke-Sea Customer

1785-Mr. Robert Barclay became first independent Sea customer under Board of Trade.

1798-Mr. James Call, the Sea Customer.

1800-Mr. William Balfour was the Collector of Customs

| Sl.No. | NAME | PERIOD | Sl.No. | NAME | PERIOD |
|--------|----------------------|-------------|--------|------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | WALTER BALFOUR | 1801 - 1809 | 26 | L.R. BURROWS | 1884 - 1885 |
| 2 | WILLIAM COOKE | 1810 - 1815 | 27 | R.W. BARLOW | 1885 - 1889 |
| 3 | WILLIAM HARINGTON | 1816 - 1821 | 28 | G. MCWATTERS | 1890 - 1891 |
| 4 | G.J. HADOW | 1822 - 1835 | 29 | W.P. AUSTIN, I.C.S. | 1892 - 1894 |
| 5 | J.C. WROUGHTON | 1836 - 1841 | 30 | E. TURNER | 1895 - 1896 |
| 6 | W.E. UNDERWOOD | 1842 - 1846 | 31 | W.P. AUSTIN, I.C.S. | 1896 - 1897 |
| 7 | T.L. BLANE | 1846 - 1847 | 32 | JOHN. G. KERMAN | 1898 - |
| 8 | H. MORRIS | 1847 - 1848 | 33 | J.N. ATKINSON, I.C.S | 1898 - 1899 |
| 9 | W.E. UNDERWOOD | 1848 - 1851 | 34 | H. BRADLEY, I.C.S | 1900 - 1901 |
| 10 | ROBERT H. WILLIAMSON | 1852 - 1853 | 35 | A.G. CARDEW, I.C.S. | 1901 - 1902 |
| 11 | W.E. UNDERWOOD | 1853 - 1860 | 36 | J. TWIGG, I.C.S | 1902 - 1904 |
| 12 | W.E. COHRANE | 1861 - 1862 | 37 | D.D. MURDOCH, I.C.S | 1905 - |
| 13 | C.J. SHUBRICK | 1862 - 1863 | 38 | A.R. CUMMING, I.C.S | 1906 - |
| 14 | C.A. ROBERTS | 1863 - 1864 | 39 | C.G. TODHUNTER, I.C.S | 1907 - |
| 15 | E.G.R. FANE | 1864 - | 40 | J.S. HEANEY, I.C.S | 1908 - |
| 16 | J.H. BLAIR | 1864 - 1867 | 41 | C.G. TODHUNTER, I.C.S | 1909 - |
| 17 | J.W. CHERRY | 1867 - 1867 | 42 | G.A. THOMAS, I.C.S | 1910 - |
| 18 | J.H. BLAIR | 1868 - 1872 | 43 | A.S.A. WESTROPP, I.C.S | 1911 - |
| 19 | D. ARBUTHNOT | 1872 - 1873 | 44 | G.A. THOMAS, I.C.S | 1911 - |
| 20 | J.H. BLAIR | 1873 - 1877 | 45 | A.S.A. WESTROPP, I.C.S | 1912 - 1913 |
| 21 | R.J. MELVILLE | 1878 - 1881 | 46 | P. ECCLES, I.C.S | 1914 - 1916 |
| 22 | C.S CROLE | 1881 - 1882 | 47 | C.W.S. COTTON, I.C.S | 1916 - 1917 |
| 23 | R.J. MELVILLE | 1882 - 1882 | 48 | P. ECCLES, I.C.S | 1917 - 1919 |
| 24 | C.A. GALTON | 1882 - 1883 | 49 | H.H. HOOD, I.C.S | 1920 - 1921 |
| 25 | R.W. BARLOW | 1883 - 1883 | 50 | A.M. GREEN, I.C.S | 1921 - 1922 |

| Sl.No. | NAME | PERIOD |
|--------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 51 | A.E. BOYD, I.C.S | 1923 - |
| 52 | C.R. WATKINS, C.I.E. | 26.11.1923 TO 29.10.1925 |
| 53 | T.A. STEWART, I.C.S | 30.10.1925 TO 16.05.1928 |
| 54 | C.R. WATKINS, C.I.E. | 17.05.1928 TO 26.02.1930 |
| 55 | F. BUCKNEY | 27.02.1930 TO 19.10.1930 |
| 56 | C.R. WATKINS, C.I.E. | 20.10.1930 TO 07.09.1932 |
| 57 | P.N. CHANDAVARKAR | 08.09.1932 TO 07.10.1932 |
| 58 | C.R. WATKINS, C.I.E. | 08.10.1932 TO 05.04.1934 |
| 59 | G.N. BOWER | 06.04.1934 TO 05.04.1935 |
| 60 | F.J. KERAKA | 06.04.1935 TO 02.12.1935 |
| 61 | G.N. BOWER | 03.12.1935 TO 01.04.1936 |
| 62 | W.J. WARD | 03.01.1937 TO 19.01.1939 |
| 63 | S.C. SATYAWADI | 20.01.1939 TO 01.09.1940 |
| 64 | F.A.I. RICHARDSON | 02.09.1940 TO 15.05.1941 |
| 65 | M.E. RAHMAN | 16.05.1941 TO 07.04.1943 |
| 66 | MATHEWS, I.C.S. | 08.04.1943 TO 18.04.1944 |
| 67 | F.A.I. RICHARDSON | 19.04.1944 TO 01.04.1946 |
| 68 | M. LIMUDDIN | 02.04.1946 TO 14.12.1946 |
| 69 | R.K. VAISH | 15.12.1946 TO 03.01.1947 |
| 70 | F.A.I. RICHARDSON | 04.01.1947 TO 09.09.1947 |
| 71 | R.K. VAISH | 10.09.1947 TO 01.05.1948 |
| 72 | E.S. KRISHNAMOORTHY | 02.05.1948 TO 25.04.1950 |
| 73 | R.K. VAISH | 26.04.1950 TO 22.11.1953 |
| 74 | O. KRISHNAN | 23.11.1953 TO 14.06.1955 |
| 75 | D.P. ANAND | 15.06.1955 TO 05.06.1956 |

| Sl.No. | NAME | PERIOD |
|--------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 76 | A.C. WHITCHER | 06.06.1956 TO 11.03.1957 |
| 77 | B. SEN | 12.03.1957 TO 15.09.1957 |
| 78 | A.C. WHITCHER | 16.09.1957 TO 01.06.1958 |
| 79 | JASJIT SINGH | 02.06.1958 TO 17.09.1959 |
| 80 | S.K. BHATTACHARJEE | 18.09.1959 TO 23.11.1960 |
| 81 | C.T.A. PILLAI | 05.12.1960 TO 23.04.1962 |
| 82 | B. SEN | 24.04.1962 TO 31.07.1966 |
| 83 | M. RAMACHANDRAN | 01.08.1966 TO 16.10.1966 |
| 84 | B. SEN | 17.10.1966 TO 14.01.1968 |
| 85 | S. VENKATARAMAN | 01.08.1966 TO 12.04.1970 |
| 86 | D.N. MEHTA | 13.04.1970 TO 12.02.1973 |
| 87 | C. CHIDAMBARAM | 13.02.1973 TO 25.02.1973 |
| 88 | KAUSALYA NARAYANAN | 26.02.1973 TO 31.05.1973 |
| 89 | C. CHIDAMBARAM | 01.06.1973 TO 03.01.1974 |
| 90 | G. SANKARAN | 04.01.1974 TO 20.12.1976 |
| 91 | M.G. VAIDYA | 05.01.1977 TO 10.08.1978 |
| 92 | A.C. SAIDANHA | 11.08.1978 TO 21.05.1983 |
| 93 | C. BHUJANGASAMY | 21.05.1983 TO 19.08.1985 |
| 94 | R. JAYARAMAN | 19.08.1985 TO 30.06.1988 |
| 95 | S.N. KHARKHANIS | 01.07.1988 TO 14.09.1988 |
| 96 | S.A. GOVINDARAJ | 15.09.1988 TO 05.04.1990 |
| 97 | R. GOPALNATHAN | 06.04.1990 TO 23.04.1992 |
| 98 | SUKUMAR SHANKAR | 24.04.1992 TO 01.09.1993 |
| 99 | S. MANICKAVASAGAM | 01.09.1993 TO 02.06.1994 |
| 100 | S. SENTHIVEL | 03.06.1994 TO 28.01.1997 |

| Sl.No. | NAME | PERIOD |
|--------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 101 | A.K. CHHABRA | 28.01.1997 TO 18.05.1997 |
| 102 | S. MANICKAVASAGAM | 19.05.1997 TO 10.09.1998 |
| 103 | N. RAJAGOPALAN | 11.09.1998 TO 28.09.1998 |
| 104 | A.K. CHHABRA | 29.09.1998 TO 19.05.1999 |
| 105 | N. RAJAGOPALAN | 19.05.1999 TO 28.03.2000 |
| 106 | M.V.S. PRASAD | 28.03.2000 TO 23.04.2001 |
| 107 | JOSEPH DOMINIC | 23.04.2001 TO 30.06.2002 |

| CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS CHENNAI CUSTOMS ZONE | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Sl.No. | NAME | PERIOD |
| 1 | M.V. REDDY | 29.03.2000 TO 26.03.2001 |
| 2 | P.R.V. RAMANAN | 26.03.2001 TO 04.01.2002 |
| 3 | M.V. REDDY | 05.01.2002 TO 30.04.2002 |
| 4 | P.R.V. RAMANAN | 30.04.2002 TO 10.11.2002 |
| 5 | T.R. RUSTAGI | 11.11.2002 TO 16.12.2003 |
| 6 | J.K. BATRA | 16.12.2003 TO 18.09.2006 |
| 7 | A.K. SRIVATSAVA | 18.09.2006 TO 30.07.2007 |
| 8 | SUBHASH CHANDER | 30.07.2007 TO 13.04.2009 |
| 9 | G.V. NAIK | 13.04.2009 TO 27.10.2010 |
| 10 | J.M. SHANTI SUNDHARAM | 28.10.2010 TO 12.09.2011 |
| 11 | MALA SRIVASTAVA | 12.09.2011 TO 05.11.2013 |
| 12 | S. RAMESH | 05.11.2013 TO 16.03.2016 |
| 13 | P. K. DAS | 16.03.2016 TO 14.07.2017 |
| 14 | M. AJIT KUMAR | 14.07.2017 TO TILL DATE |

SMS EMDEN - THE NIGHT OF TERROR

The morning of September, 22, 1914, was the third day of Navaratri festival. The World was torn by a raging war, but Madras was going about its Golu (toys) exhibitions as it always did. The SMS EMDEN, a German warship piloted by Captain Karl Von Muller, sneaked into the waters near Madras aided by the city lights. After entering the Madras Harbour area, Muller illuminated six large oil tanks belonging to the Burmah Oil Company with his searchlights firing a volley of shots at a range of 3000 yards. After ten minutes of firing, Emden had hit five of the tanks and destroyed 346000 gallons of fuel. The cruiser then successfully retreated.



SMS EMDEN



Plaque at Madras High Court (Parrys Corner)

Shrapnels hit the Madras High Court), Sailing club, General Hospital, Vepery, Haddows road in Nungabakkam, Poonamallee High road, the Gun battery in Royapuram, Casa Major road and George Town. It also hit the Customs House damaging the goods piled up before the building for examination and clearance owing to its proximity to the pier at the Harbour.



Burning Oil tanks belonging to the Burmah Oil Company

The light house of Chennai at present is about 6 kms away from the Old light House.

It is a famous landmark on the Marina Beach in Chennai. It was opened in January 1977. It is one of the few lighthouses in the world with an elevator. It is also the only lighthouse in India within the city limits



The Old Chennai Light House now situated inside the High Court Campus, is one of the primary reasons for attracting the attention of the German warship SMS Emden during World War I. The lighthouse was the main target of the attack in which the High Court campus was bombed on 22 September 1914.



The 17,000-tonne ocean liner MV Chidambaram was originally the MV Pasteur and was built in Dunkerque, France, for Messageries Maritimes' South American services and served in this capacity from 1966 to 1972 before she was sold to the government-owned Shipping Corporation of India and renamed as Chidambaram in honour of Tamil Nadu shipping pioneer V.O. Chidambaram Pillai.

Both to and fro, the ships were halted at Nagapattinam. The vessel usually reached Nagai Port at 6 AM and left at 6.P.M. In the initial years the Customs Preventive Officers reached Nagapattinam by road or rail for duty. In later years only one Officer went from Chennai and the Officers of Nagapattinam and nearby Ports did the job. As there was no wharf for berthing, the Customs Officers made use of the boat service to reach the vessel at outer Anchorage. The Officer from Chennai reached by the first Boat to the Vessel to verify the details as on Board Officer and then took the list of Passengers and crew, handed them over to the Section Officer of Nagai. Then the team of officers took the Passengers with Baggage to Nagai Port and after verification by Customs Officers, the clearance were completed. However, one Customs Officer would go in the vessel up to Chennai as Escort. At Chennai the vessel usually berthed at North Quay by 6 AM.



M.V. Chidambaram

Likewise, an escort officer went up to Nagapattinam on the return trip so as to ensure that no unfair activities were carried out by any of the passengers. The escort officer of Chennai was the last man to exit the Vessel and return on the last Boat.

Unfortunately the Chidambaram was to last only 13 years in the Straits Service. On Feb 12, 1985, she was carrying 702 passengers and a crew of 186 when she caught fire 500km off the Malabar coast. The stricken liner was a heart-rending sight when she finally limped into Madras harbour with bodies floating on her waterlogged deck. The toll was 34 dead with 13 Malaysians among them. It proved to be her demise, too, and the once majestic Chidambaram was sent to the breakers and ended up as scrap in Mumbai. It also proved to be the end of the Straits Service.

'CYCLONIC' RIDE OF CUSTOMS OFFICIALS ON SS RAJULA

Meteorologically, the year 1966 was unique as Madras was hit by two November cyclones. Earlier that month, a low cyclonic depression which formed over the south Andaman sea moved westwards. As it got closer, the wind wreaked havoc over Madras and thousands became homeless. The force of the wind even sent the Rameshwaram passenger train off its tracks. Telephones, radio and power supply lines were disrupted. Dhanushkodi town was completely washed out. SS Rajula with 1,323 passengers from Singapore tried to play safe by berthing in Nagapattinam. But port authorities refused to disembark passengers. However, 22 Customs Officials boarded the ship.

Surprisingly, the cyclone at 150/200 km SSE of Madras moved north and Rajula was moving literally hand in hand with the storm. It was caught in the cyclone at 10 miles off the Madras coast. Captain Toby Blackett tried to get the ship to steam away from the coast but the wind was too strong. She was driven for thirty miles along the coast in screaming winds and huge steep seas.

The ship rolled heavily, the glass windows disintegrated, Life rafts were blown off and one anchor with its cable was lost. Many a time, Rajula was moments away from going aground.

Meanwhile all the ships within the harbour were bobbing up and down and their ropes and wires were snapping like strings of twine. Sadly, seven other ships were not so fortuitous and were driven ashore and wrecked. The Panamanian cargo ship, "Progress," carrying U.S. wheat from Madras to Calcutta was heavily pitched with her propeller rising in the air, killing 25 Chinese crew members. S S Stamatis, jostled violently by the storm, was dragged near Marina and beached near the mouth of the Cooum River and "Mari Hora" off the Port Trust marshalling yard. The 120-ton vessel "Vaigai" belonging to the Madras Port Trust suffered damage and the roofs of some of the sheds in the harbour were blown off.

Fortunately SS Rajula berthed in Madras without casualties on the fourth morning amidst cheer from the passengers and onlookers to a great relief. This proved her amazing seaworthiness in dramatic fashion.

FESTIVITY IN PENANG

When ocean liners such as S.S. Rajula, M.V. Chidambaram, used to call at Penang fortnightly on their 'Straits Service' between Madras, Penang, Port Klang and Singapore, there was certainly a lot of excitement on the island.

Two or three days prior to the ship's departure, the port area and "Little India" (the Indian enclave of Penang Street, King Street, Queen Street and Church Street) turned festive as passengers and their relatives converged here in a celebratory mood to do their shopping.

The popular items usually snapped up were mengkuang mats, jamukallam (thick cotton sheets), pillows, tins of biscuits and Milo, gold ornaments, Raleigh bicycles, perfumes, nylon sarees, veshtis, lungis, children's clothes, baby products, toys, transistor radios, cameras, watches, clocks, luggage trunks, bags, shaving items and tins of cigarettes.

"Among popular items usually brought by India-bound passengers were National transistor radios, Titoni watches, Big Ben alarm clocks, gold chains, bracelets and rings, tins of saffron and biscuits such as Huntley & Palmers Marie biscuits and Jacob's cream crackers, perfumes such as London Night, 4711 Eau de Cologne, Nacet razor blades and Tiger Balm.

The journey by sea took six days from Penang to the Indian port town of Nagapattinam.



Settlers at Andamans are seen awaiting to embark S.S. Andamans on July 12, 1959 at the Madras Port



Madras port docks and import of food grains in early 1960s

AIR CUSTOMS

While we are at present seeing a modern world class airport at Chennai, how many of us were fortunate to use the majestic pre-modernist Le-Corbusier building which has now been converted into the air-cargo complex. It was a unique experience to be at the airport to receive and see off guests. To be able to climb the stairs and watch the flights arrive or take-off was a one of a kind experience. And if one could see one's guests waving at you while they walked into or off the flights, it left one thrilled with joy.

Chennai International Airport is one of the busiest airports in the country. The airport had handled over 20 million passengers for the fiscal year 2017-18, handling about 35 thousand passengers and more than 400 aircrafts daily. The domestic and the international terminals are named after the former Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu K. Kamaraj and C.N. Annadurai respectively. It is the first airport in India to have domestic and international airports adjacent to each other. The airport also serves as a regional headquarters to the AAI for its south India operations comprising the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Kerala, Puducherry and Lakshadweep.



Madras Airport till 1985

The first passenger terminal was built at the north-east side of the airfield, which lies in the suburb of Meenambakkam due to which it was referred to as Meenambakkam Airport. A new terminal complex was subsequently built at Tirusulam, further south near Pallavaram to which, passenger operations were shifted. The new domestic terminal was commissioned in 1985 and their international terminal was commissioned in 1989. The old terminal building is now used as cargo terminal. On 23 September 1999, a centre for flowers, fruits and vegetables was commissioned at the cargo terminal. The present international departure terminal was commissioned in 2003.



Chennai Airport till 2008



The New look of Chennai International Airport

The Air Cargo Complex (ACC) was commissioned on 01.02.1978 when all regulatory and facilitating agencies were brought under one roof for faster processing and clearance of international cargo, to cater to the air cargo movement in the southern region. Processing of import, export of transshipment cargo, in addition to unaccompanied baggage was done here making it the second gateway air cargo terminal in the country after the one at Kolkata airport.

The air cargo complex at Chennai is a bustling cargo terminal with her share of contribution to national exchequer exceeding 23000 crores of rupees in the year 2018-19.



The Old Airport now as Air Cargo Complex



Baggage Examination in 1975



Seizures by Chennai Customs



Seizures of wildlife by Chennai Customs



Officers of Chennai Customs



Hon'ble Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman's visit to Chennai to address Officers of the Department of Revenue.

VINTAGE VIGNETTES



Dr. R. Venkatraman, Ex President of India visiting Chennai Custom House.
Mr. A.C. Saldanha, Collector of Customs is seen speaking to him.



Dr. M.G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of
Tamil Nadu at Chennai Customs



Dr. Sivaji Ganesan attending
golden jubilee celebrations of Independence
at Chennai Custom House.
Shri. Manikavasagam Collector of Customs is also seen

VINTAGE VIGNETTES



Container Freight using Bullock carts in Olden Days



Fourth India - Sri Lanka Customs Conference. Shri. Saldanha and Shri. Dissanayake Seen In The Picture



WCO and Chennai

MEMORABLE MOMENTS



Inauguration of new Aircargo complex by Shri. Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of Finance at Meenambakkam, Chennai on 23rd Jan 2011



Inauguration of Container Scanning Division at Chennai port on 16th Sep 2016



Inauguration of Direct Port Entry Facility in Tiruvottiyur on 18.09.2018



Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Chief Commissioner of Customs Pranab K. Das seen at the Regional Editors Conference of Southern States in Chennai on September 2, 2016.



Achievement of sports persons in international events being honoured

A SALUTE TO MARTYRS

India Crash Site Probed by Crews

NEW DELHI (AP) — As grieving relatives watched, policemen and firemen picked through the rubble of a crashed Indian Airlines Boeing 737 today searching for the remains of the last of 48 victims.

Hospitals reported that some of the 17 survivors of the crash Thursday night were suffering critical burns and other injuries.

Foreigners Listed

Among the dead were four Americans, three Britons and a Yemeni woman. Three Americans and two Japanese survived, according to the airline and diplomatic officials.

The survivors included M. Bruce Sterling, an employee of a fertilizer concern in Madras, his 18-year-old son, Leo Allen, and Marine Lance Cpl. George M. Larson of Minneapolis, assigned to the U.S. Embassy here.

Sterling's wife and two daughters and Harold N. Ribber, a missionary with the Lutheran Church of America in Madras, were killed. Ribber gave his U.S. address as New York.

Bodies Recovered

By noon, 47 bodies had been recovered. Few were identifiable, officials said, but relatives of Mohan Kumaramangalam, an Indian government minister and confidant of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, positively identified his body by a pen and hearing aid.

The son of Gurnam Singh, India's high commissioner-designate to Australia, identified his father's body from a ring.

Rescue officials said the survivors were seated in the front of the aircraft, a twin-engine jet, when it crashed about three miles from New Delhi Airport one minute before it was scheduled to land.

Mishap Described

Survivors said the 38 passengers were fastening their seat belts when the plane appeared to break apart and pitched into the earth.

The plane, Indian Airlines

flight 440 from Madras, was demolished from the impact and the fire that followed.

It was unclear what caused the crash, which occurred in a driving dust and rainstorm in a rocky, desolate area about 1½ miles from an upper class residential

Mrs. Kaushalya Devi Narayanan, a gifted bharathanatyam dancer figuring in books on Indian classical dance written between the 1940s and 1960s, was the first woman to head a Revenue Department under the Government of India. She was Collector of Customs and Central Excise in Tamilnadu. She was an eminent writer of her times and has written many books and articles in leading dailies.



On May 31st 1973 while flying from Madras to New Delhi by Indian Airlines Flight 440 for an official meeting in North Block, the aircraft carrying her met with an accident. As the flight approached Palam international airport in driving dust and a rainstorm, the aircraft struck high tension wires during an NDB approach with visibility below minimal. The aircraft crashed and caught fire which claimed her life along with 47 of 65 passengers and crew, tragically cutting short a very promising career. Mr. M.C. Das, Director of Inspections, another Customs officer and Mr. Mohan Kumaramangalam, the then Union Minister for Steel and Mines were other important persons who perished in the same air crash.

Airline crash in New Delhi

NEW DELHI (UPI) — An Indian Airlines Boeing 737 crashed into a residential area while approaching New Delhi's Palam Airport Thursday night, killing 48 of the 65 persons aboard. Two Indian officials were among the dead.

No injuries or damage on the ground were reported.

M.B. Sterling of Edinburg, Tex., on board with his wife and their three children, said, "All I know is that we were down low and the pilot seemed to be circling and we suddenly hit."

"My boy broke an arm and a leg in the fall and I got banged around pretty much," Sterling said. "The only thing I'm worried about is finding where they've taken my wife and daughters. I guess they're in another hospital."

Sterling's wife and daughters were not on the list of the 17 survivors.

THE BOAT TRAGEDY:

On 15 April 1983, the customs department received credible information regarding smuggling of gold amounting to Rupees two crore by sea. Immediately, a team of customs officers was formed for rummaging the suspect vessel. The officers hired a private boat as there was no customs boat available at that time. The sea was very rough on that day and there was no fishing boat at sea because of inclement weather. In spite of the rough weather, a team of eleven officers proceeded to intercept the suspect vessel. Tragically the hired boat capsized due to turbulence caused by the weather. Out of eleven officers, seven officers sacrificed their life in the line of duty and only four could be rescued. The officers who lost their lives were :

V.Mahendran- Preventive Officer
P.Arockiasamy – Preventive Officer
C.Prabhakar – Preventive Officer
K. Thavamani – Preventive Officer
V.Natarajan – Preventive Officer
K.Ponraman – Sepoy
V.Anbazhagan - Sepoy

BOMB BLAST:

A bomb blast occurred at Meenambakkam International airport on 2nd August, 1984, killing 33 people and injuring another 27. Caught in this tragic bomb blast, two Preventive Officers and a Sepoy lost their lives while on duty.

They are :

Shri. Augustine Thomas – Preventive Officer
Shri. R.Damodharan – Preventive officer
Shri .S.L.Alexander – Sepoy.

Custom House takes pride in remembering its officers who made a supreme sacrifice of their lives to defend the interests of department. A Martyr Memorial has been erected in honour of those heroes.

The memorial was unveiled on December 28th 2018, by the Chairman of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Shri. S.Ramesh.



Gratitude

To

*All souls living amidst us and in our hearts for being the building
blocks and binding brethren of Chennai customs*

Bibliography

I.Primary Sources

Palm-leaf Manuscripts

1. Tholkaappiam, Ilampooranar Commentary, Tamil Virtual Academy , Government of Tamil Nadu.
2. Thirukkural- Parimel Azagar Commentary, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Centre, Chennai.
3. Perumpanatrupadai, Tamil Virtual Academy, Government of Tamil Nadu.
4. Pattinappaalai, Tamil Virtual Academy, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Paper Manuscripts

1. Muziris Papyrus, Papyrus Vindobonensis G 40822, Vienna Museum, Austria.
2. Pazhaverkadu Kaipithu (Account of Pulicat), Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Centre, Chennai.

Copper Plates

1. Hirehadagalli plates, Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai.
2. Leiden Small Tamil Virtual Academy Copper Plates, Leiden University Libraries, Netherlands.
3. Thiruvalangadu Copper Plates, Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai.
4. Karanthai Copper Plates, Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai.
5. Arjunan Collection, Endangered Archives Programme, British Library.
6. Sethupati Seppedukal (Copper Plates of Sethupati), Pulavar Se. Rasu, Tamil University, Thanjavur, 1992.

Texts

1. Devaram, Sundarar hymns

Archaeological Sources

1. Excavation Reports (various sites), Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu
2. Epigraphia Indica (various volumes), Archaeological Survey of India.
3. Select Inscriptions of Tamil Nadu, T.S. Sridhar, Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu, 2006.

Archival Sources

A) Records

Records under the custody of Tamil Nadu Archives & Historical Research, Egmore, Chennai -8

B) Photo Archives

1. Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu
2. Department of Museums, Government of Tamil Nadu
3. Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar
4. Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata
5. Photo archives, Chennai Customs House
6. Own Work by Team Members
7. The Hindu archives, The Hindu Newspaper
8. Institut Francais de Pondichery/ Ecole Francais d' Extreme-Orient
9. British Library, London, United Kingdom
10. Tamil Virtual Academy, , Government of Tamil Nadu
11. Wikimedia Commons

Numismatic Sources

1. Tagavalaatrupadai, Tamil Virtual Academy, Government of Tamil Nadu.
2. Coins, Seals and Signet Rings of Tamil Nadu), Shri Arumuga Seetharaman.

II. Secondary Sources

Books

1. Vestiges of Old Madras, Henry Davison Love, Published for the Government of India, London, 1913.
2. Ancient and medieval Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions, Noboru Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa, Manohar, 2010
3. Maritime History of South India, G. Victor Rajamanickam and V.S. Arulraj, Tamil University, Thanjavur, 1994.
4. Seminar on Marine Archaeology, Natana. Kasinathan, State Department of Archaeology, Madras, 1992.

5. Trade, ideology, and urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300, R Champakalakshmi, Oxford University Press, 1996.
6. The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant: Evolution of Merchant Capitalism in the Coromandel, Kanakalatha Mukund, Orient Longman, 1999.
7. Revenue System of the Cholas, P. Shanmugam, New Era Publications, Madras
8. Tamil Cultural Connections across the World (upto 1600 CE): Archaeological Evidence from Outside Tamil Nadu, Dr.V.Selvakumar, Tamil University, Thanjavur, 2010.
9. Nigamam-Essays on Trade and Guild (in Tamil), Dr.N.Adhiyaman and Dr.A.Tulasendran, Tamil University, Thanjavur, 2010.
10. A Guide to Fort St. George, Sriram V, Palaniappa Brothers, 2017.
11. Tholliyal Nokkil Sangakalam (in Tamil), Dr. K. Rajan, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai, 2010.
12. Pazankaala Thamizar Vanikam (in Tamil), Mailai Seeni. Venkatasamy, New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, Seventh Edition, 2014.

Journals

1. Dakshin Jyothi, Chennai Customs House publication
2. ICE Quarterly, CBIC

Manuals

1. Manual of Administration of the Madras Presidency, C.D. Maclean, 1893
2. Indian Sea Customs Manual, Government of India, 1928

Online Sources

www.tharangampadi.dk

MAKING OF THE BOOK

During an informal meeting with a retired officer Shri. P. G. Prabakaran, AC, in 2018, Principal Chief Commissioner Shri. M. Ajit Kumar, who is very passionate about preserving the old heritage of Chennai Customs, broached the idea of his collaborating in documenting the history of Chennai Customs, so as to bring the glory of the custom house, to the knowledge of the common people and to install a sense of pride among the officers. A committee was set up for this purpose and the journey of collecting the data began. Shri. T. Samayamurali, JC, lead the team with Shri. D. Ranjit Kumar, JC, Shri. Prabakar, JC, Smt. D. Jayapriya, DC, Smt. Raaja Sheelaa Raajaraajan, DC, Shri. P.G. Prabakaran AC (Retd.), Shri. Chelladurai, Superintendent and Smt. Anuradha Ramesh, Superintendent, as members of the Committee. Dr. G. Kanaga Subramanian, who was part of a history book published by NACIN, Faridabad was also brought in to the core team for this purpose.

During the first meeting the project was expanded to cover the levy of customs duty from the ancient times in Tamizhakam, with special focus on the Madras/Chennai area. Fervent efforts were made to collect valuable inputs and information from various historical, archaeological and archival institutions. Revenue records during British time, records of the Port Trust, informations and images related to collection of Customs Duty in Tamil Land were examined. Image of seals, Sealings and coins of Chola period were collected from Shri. Arumuga Seetharaman, numismatic Scholar from Thanjavur. Shri. P.G. Prabakaran AC (Retd.) has met historians like Mr. S. Muthaiah, Chronicler of Chennai to collect data's regarding Chennai Customs.

Many rounds of discussions with retired Customs Officers like Shri. S. Manickavasagam, Collector of Customs (Retd), Shri. Veeraiyan, Commissioner (Retd.) and Shri. D.V. Venkataramani, Examiner (Retd.) were held and each page was structured carefully. Both Dr. Kanaga Subramaniam and Smt. Raaja Sheelaa Raajaraajan have tirelessly worked hard to bring all the historical evidences about Customs Duty (Sunkam) in this Book. Each member of the Committee has whole heartedly put their effort in collection of data/information and in the publication of this Book.

With the constant monitoring & invaluable guidance by the Principal Chief Commissioner Shri. M. Ajit Kumar and the continuous efforts of the team members lead by Shri. T. Samaya Murali, Joint Commissioner, the book reached its final shape. An Idea conceived during an informal meeting, has become a reality with the publication of this Coffee Table Book in a short time.



Sitting from the left : Shri. T.Samayamurali - Jt.Commissioner; Shri. S.Manickavasagam - Member CAT (Retd);
Shri. Muttoli Ajit kumar - Principal Chief Commissioner;
Shri. D.Ranjith Kumar - Jt.Commissioner;

Standing from the left : Smt. Raaja Sheelaa Raajaraajan - Dy.Commissioner; Smt. Anuradha Ramesh - Supdt;
Dr. G.Kanaga Subramanian - Asst.Commissioner;
Shri. P.G.Prabhakaran - Asst.Commissioner (Retd); Shri. Chelladurai-Supdt;
Smt. D.Jayapriya - Dy.Commissioner;



