

The Memory of Captain De Lannoy

Dr. C. Shoba

Assistant Professor in History, T.D.M.N.S. College, T.Kallikulam

Abstract

Most of the forts in India are actually castles or fortresses. But when the British Government in India were cataloging them in the 17th–19th century they used the word forts as it was common in Britain then. All fortifications whether European or Indian were termed forts. Thereafter this became the common usage in India. Three major methods were used for the construction of ancient Indian forts. The first consisted of earthen ramparts. Often they were constructed of the sand which was dug out of the ditch surrounding the fort. The second of rubble with earth on the outside which was more sturdy. The third type of construction was with stone and masonry work. The last was the strongest. Often materials from demolished forts were reused in the building of new forts. At the latter site huge walls of burnt brick, which look like they have been battered. Udayagiri fort and Vattakottai fort is famous forts in Kanyakumari District.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Udayagiri forts covers an area of about 90 acres, with an area of about 90 acres, with an isolated hill 260 feet high, the fort contains an old boundary which was used for casting guns. The fort is built of massive granite blocks around an isolated hillock. This was the most important military barracks of the Travancore rulers, when Padmanabhapuram was their capital.¹ Prisoners captured in the campaign against Tippu sultan were confined in this fort for some time. Vattakottai is a sea side for near Kanyakumari, TamilNadu the southern tip of India. It was built in the 18th century as a coastal defense fortification and barracks in the erstwhile Travancore kingdom.²

History of Udayagiri Fort

Udayagiri fort is an ancient fort which constructed in 1600 A.D. It was later re-built by the Travancore king Marthandavarma between 1741-1744. Udayagiri fort was an important garrison town for the Travancore kings. Later it came for the control of the East India company in the 19th century.³ The fort in TamilNadu is located fourteen Kilometers from Nagercoil in Thucklay town, Kanyakumari District on the Thiruvananthapuram Nagercoil national highway of Pulioorkurichi. This was the most important military barracks of the Travancore rulers, When Pandmanabhapuram was their capital.⁴

During the reign of Marthandavarma, Udayagiri fort was known by the name D Lannoy's fort of De Lannoy Kottai. De Lannoy was a Dutch general who was defeated by Marthandavarma in the battle at Vattakottai fort.⁵ He became the trusted general of Marthandavarma and remained loyal to him for 37 years. Udayagiri fort encloses the tombs of Delannoy, inside a chapel. The tombs of Delannoy's wife and son can also be seen here. A foundary for casting guns can also be seen in the fort. The fort also encloses a biodiversity park where visitors can see deer, ducks, birds and more than 100 varieties of trees.⁶

The fort was rebuilt during the reign of Marthandavarma, between 1741-44, under the supervision of Eustachius De Lannoy's, a Flemish naval commander of the Dutch East India Company, who later served as the chief of the Travancore Army. In the early days, the fort was of strategic importance. Prisoners captured in the campaign against Tippu sultan was confined in the fort for same time.⁷ In 1810, the East India Company's Army under Colonel Leger marched into Travancore through the Aromboly pass to quell a rebellion under the leadership of Velu Thampi Dalave. In the later years, English East India Company troops were stationed at the fort until the middle of the 19th century. A foundary for the manufacture of guns, mortars and cannonballs was established within the fort under the supervision of the resident general.⁸

Architecture

The fort is built of massive granite blocks around an isolated hillock. The tombs of the Dutch Admiral Eustachius De Lannoy and of his wife and son can still be found inside a partly ruined chapel in the fort.⁹ De

Lannoy's body was buried within the fort and a chapel was built at his burial site. De Lannoy's tomb stone lies within the walls of the ruined chapel. The inscriptions on his stone are both in Tamil and in Latin. His wife and son were buried by his side. Presently, the fort has been turned into a biodiversity park by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, with sites of historical importance, such as De Lannoy's tomb, remaining as protected archaeological sites under the Archaeological Department of India.¹⁰

Vattakottai Fort

Vattakottai fort is around seven kilometers away Kanyakumari. It is located in the Agasteeswaram taluk. Tourists can hire a cab for Kanyakumari, and reach the fort without a hassle. For those who want to travel by buses, there are also many buses that operate from Kanyakumari to Vattakottai. Spreading over an area of 3.5 acres, the Vattakottai fort is one of the must-visit attractions of Tamil Nadu. Located seven km north of Kanyakumari in the Agasteeswaram Taluk, this fort truly enhances the beauty of Tamil Nadu as it rests on the coast of the magnificent Bay of Bengal.¹¹ Even though the aesthetics and architecture of the fort are renowned, the primary purpose of erecting this fort was utterly different. The historical significance of the mighty fortress, combined with its perfectly scenic location, has made it an actively visited tourist spot. A panoramic view of the Bay of Bengal sea on one side and the other decorated with the majestic hills of the Western Ghats, bright blue skies with cotton clouds and plains of beaches with sparkling black sands makes this place mesmerizing.¹²

Vattakottai Fort is a sea-side fort near Kanyakumari town in Kanyakumari District. Vattakottai fort was constructed in the 18th century as a coastal defense for the former Travancore Kingdom.¹³ It was constructed under the supervision of Captain Eustachius De Lannoy, an ex-Dutch Naval officer of the Dutch East India Company, who became Commander of the Travancore Army in the 18th century, after he earned the trust of the Travancore King Marthandavarma. It is rectangular and covers an area of three and a half acres. The fort is enclosed by walls 25 feet high, including the parapet, 29 feet thick at the front, 18 feet at the corners and 6 feet in the rear.¹⁴

The fort is made of granite blocks and, today, a part of the fort extends site under the Indian archaeological department. A major renovation of the fort was undertaken recently by the department, and the site is now a popular tourist spot. Vattakottai fort commands a picturesque view of both the sea on the one side, and the hills on the other. Another interesting feature near the site is a beach of black sands. The view from a top the fort is stunning on all sides. The calm and soothing sea that shimmers against the horizon, the little river that trickles near the fort, the bustling city that glitters at a distance and a brilliant hue of green valleys and trees that sway in a rhythmic motion is a sight to behold.¹⁵

A small river joins the sea on one side of the Vattakottai fort. It is possible to walk to this side of the beach via a small road located a few meters from the fort entrance. During rainy season, it may not be easy to cross the river to go to the beach. The experience of being on this old stronghold in both peaceful and capable in the meantime. The beach or bounds is gravelly and one has got to use caution to not get slipped by the beach sand. However, because of its comparatively a deserted place, it conjointly manages to stay peaceful and quiet creating it an ideal place to induce removed from the hustle and bustle of life style.¹⁶

Architecture

Vattakottai fort is an imposing seaside fort in Kanyakumari District in Tamil Nadu. The fort was constructed with granite blocks and today, a section of it extends into the sea. Vattakottai translates into circular fort in Tamil. The fort is a protected site under the Archaeological Department of India. Contrary to the name, Vattakottai fort, which means circular fort, the stage of this fort is rectangular. This rectangular-shaped fort is spread across an area of around 3.5 acres of land. The fort is surrounded by majestic walls 25-26 feet high. The front walls of the fort have a thickness of around 29 feet, while on the side thickness is around 18 feet and at the back it is 6 feet. Vattakottai fort, presenting an impressive architecture, within its strong walls has watch towers, weapons rooms, and many other sections to explore and admire. The walls of the fort are carved with motifs of fish.¹⁷

The fish motif was extensively used by the Pandya Kingdom. As per various archaeologists, this fort must have been under the rule of the Pandyas for some time. It is also said that in earlier days one can clearly see the Padmanabhapuram palace from the top of Vattakottai fort. There was also a secret path through a tunnel of around four feet wide, connecting Vattakottai fort to Padmanabhapuram palace. However, eventually the path was closed. There is a small pond in the centre of the fort, presenting an ideal location to sit and enjoy the view of the ocean in front. The raised parade ground of the fort is the best place to get a view of the surrounding area and the sea.¹⁸

II. CONCLUSION

Udyagiri and Vattakottai forts are ancient fort in Kanyakumari District. Now a days people go this place and entertained . Many foreigners visited for research purposes and recreation. This forts expose the memory of captain De Lannoy. The specialty of the Udyagiri fort is De Lannoy Chappel. The fame of Vattakottai fort is defense place for Travancore Kingdom.

END NOTES

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