
Silent Symbols of Travancore Royalty: Amma Veedukal in Thiruvananthapuram

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Abstract: *Amma Veedukal are houses of the wives of the Kings of Travancore. The major four Amma Veedukal are the Arumana, Vadasseri, Thiruvattar and Nagarcoil Ammaveedu. It was during the end of the eighteenth century that these four Amma Veedukal got prominence, and they were relocated from Kanyakumari to Thiruvananthapuram. The study mainly focuses on listing out Amma Veedukal in Thiruvananthapuram, and it mentions not only the four major Amma Veedukal but also other houses that have earned Amma Veedu status through their alliances with either Kings' brothers or similar royal connections. Thus, for the convenience of the study, these houses are categorized as major and minor, considering whether their marriage alliance happened with the Travancore Kings or their brothers, respectively. The information presented in the article is collected through personal interviews, literary references and site visits.*

Keywords: Amma Veedu, Travancore Heritage, Matrilineal System, Thiruvananthapuram, Colonial Style, Nair Community, Historical Memory

Introduction

Heritage and memory emerge as two determining components as far as a place is concerned. A site can be designated as a heritage site if they possess outstanding universal value because of its homogeneity, architecture, historical, and aesthetic richness. This can be from the point of view of art, history or even science. The sense of difference that a heritage site makes from other places is by virtue of the vividness of experience and the sense of the past it provides to the visitor. But the experiences alter as each site possesses its own individuality. It is not merely the tangible structures that impart identity to a site, but it is also due to the intangibility that envelopes the poetics of the space. Here, sites also become a manifestation of memory – a record and a reminder.

It is in this context that Amma Veedukal emerge as sites that hold a strain of Travancore heritage and memory. Amma Veedukal are the houses of the wives of the Kings of Travancore. The major four Amma Veedukal are the Arumana, Vadasseri, Thiruvattar and Nagarcoil Ammaveedu. It was during the end of the eighteenth

century that these four Amma Veedukal got prominence, and they were relocated from Kanyakumari to Thiruvananthapuram. This relocation happened during the reign of Karthika Thirunal (1758-1798). He married four women at different points in time from these Arumana, Vadasseri, Thiruvattar and Nagarcoil and built Amma Veedukal in Thiruvananthapuram for them. Thereafter the Kings who followed and their brothers also took consorts from these houses. As time passed, royalty gave way, and these buildings now remain in silence alongside the Aaraattu road of West Fort, echoing a strand in the history of Travancore. As buildings of architectural significance and as spaces that hold a segment of Travancore history, these Amma Veedukal become heritage sites that crystallised memories regarding the lives of the associated community. Therefore, it is interesting to study these buildings as part of the heritage and related memory.

Methodology

The select Amma Veedukal in Thiruvananthapuram will be taken as the primary texts for the study. These include Arumana Amma Veedu, Nagarcoil Amma Veedu, Vadassery Amma Veedu, Vadassery Padinjare Amma Veedu or Thanjavur Amma Veedu, Thiruvattar Amma Veedu, Eraniel Amma Veedu or Pulimootil Amma Veedu, Bunglavil Amma Veedu, Karamana Puthumana Amma Veedu, Kallampalli Amma Veedu, and Muppadikka Amma Veedu. They would be studied by adopting a combined methodology of field research, interviews, and textual analysis.

Review of Literature

Though the history of Amma Veedukal is a prominent strand in the history of the Travancore dynasty, the *Travancore State Manual* and the *Palace Manual* provide only limited details. These historical records found in the archives give insights into the architecture of these houses, the cost of their constructions, and the expenditure for marriage ceremonies and other activities that took place in Amma Veedukal. *Pattum Parivattavum* (2018), a historical text written by Prathap Kizhakkemadom, a historian and member of one of the four major Amma Veedukal, gives insights into the history of these Amma Veedukal. Dr R. P. Raja's *Irayamman Thampi: Kaviyum Kaalavum* (2014), which talks about Irayamman Thampi, gives insight into the history of one of the Amma Veedukal called Puthumana Amma Veedu. A chapter in Manu S Pillai's *The Courtesan, the Mahatma and the Italian Brahmin*, and a few articles written by Sharat Sundar Rajeev and Sasi Bhushan, also give insights into Amma Veedukal.

Historical Context

During that time, Kings married women outside the Nair community also. After marriage, these women were identified by the title Karyathura. However, women from the Nair community who were married to kings later changed this name to Panapillai Ammachi. They built their *naalukettu* in Thiruvattar and Arumana regions. Venad kings had marriage alliances from these places during Sree Veera Ravi Varma Kulashekhara (1592-1609) (my trans. Kizhakkemadom 18-19). These led to the

emergence of the four prominent Amma Veedukal in Kanyakumari, now a part of Tamil Nadu. Thus the roots of the present-day Amma Veedu buildings can be traced back to Kanyakumari. The names that these structures retained reflect their ancestry and act as evidence of their place of origin.

The shift of Amma Veedukal from Kanyakumari to Fort premises in Thiruvananthapuram is linked with the inception of Thiruvananthapuram as the capital city. Earlier, the capital of Travancore was in Kalkulam, also known as Padmanabhapuram. Later, when the capital was relocated to Thiruvananthapuram, these Amma Veedu families also moved to Thiruvananthapuram. However, it was during the reign of Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma (1758-1798), the successor of Marthanda Varma, Thiruvananthapuram became a full-fledged capital city with better infrastructure. For the convenience of the King and their wives, the new Amma Veedukal were built in Thiruvananthapuram. Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma (Dharma Raja) constructed four Amma Veedukal at the end of the eighteenth century for his four wives in Thiruvananthapuram. They were hailed from Vadassery, Arumana, Thiruvattar, and Nagarcoil. The emergence of Amma Veedukal can be considered a political strategy to maintain a rapport between Kings and other influential groups and as a gambit to keep the assets and ruling power within the royal family itself. It should be noted that Travancore Kings followed the matrilineal system. Therefore, the children of the sisters of Kings will inherit the crown. The marriage of Kings will be from the affluent Nair families (earlier, it included Mudaliyar and Saiva Vellala Pillai, but later from the reign of Sree Moolam Thirunal onwards, all of them were from the Nair community). These women married by Kings will not be considered Queens but rather Ammachis. Several privileges are granted to them, including a separate house in honour. This political tactic of the royals to get the support of socially dominant communities led to the emergence and growth of Amma Veedukal.

Amma Veedukal in Thiruvananthapuram

The four major Amma Veedukal are located around the West Fort premises of Thiruvananthapuram. These were built during the reign of Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma, and they are known as Arumana Amma Veedu, Nagarcoil Amma Veedu, Vadassery Amma Veedu and Thiruvattar Amma Veedu. Karthika Thirunal had four wives from these Amma Veedukal. His first wife, Kali Amma Nagamani Amma, was from Nagarcoil. The second, third, and fourth were from Vadassery, Arumana, and Thiruvattar. Another equally important Amma Veedu in the same locality is Thanjavoor Amma Veedu, also known as Vadassery Padinjare Amma Veedu. It includes two buildings – an old ettukettu and a grand double-storied building. Though Thanjavur Amma Veedu seems to hold a unique status, it is part of the extensive Vadassery complex. Even though these are the major Amma Veedukal, there are other less notable Amma Veedukal. These are located outside the West Fort area and are the houses of the wives of the King's brothers. These houses can be considered minor Amma Veedukal. These include Eraniel Amma Veedu or Pulimootil Amma Veedu,

Bunglavil Amma Veedu, Karamana Puthumana Amma Veedu, Kallada Amma Veedu, Kallampalli Amma Veedu, Sreevaraham Thalikulath Amma Veedu and Muppadiikka Amma Veedu. Most of these buildings are either dilapidated or rebuilt in ways that alter their original architectural design to fit modern needs.

To speak about the heritage value of the Amma Veedus mentioned above, how they become heritage buildings should be discussed first. A heritage building falls into the category of cultural heritage. UNESCO's definition of "cultural heritage" encompasses monuments, groups of buildings and sites of "Outstanding Universal Value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view" ("Operational Guidelines" 21). However, this single idea will not always help grasp how this phenomenon works. "Outstanding value" - the essential criteria needed for a site to be included in the official lists of heritage sites seems problematic. This call for universality creates imbalance and questions the individuality of each site. Despite this, the main Amma Veedus (Arumana, Vadassery, Thiruvattar, Nagarcoil, and Thanjavur) managed to be heritage buildings in the district-wise list of heritage buildings through their architectural grandiosity and association with Travancore history. The Nagarcoil, Arumana, Thiruvattar, Thanjavur and Vadassery Amma Veedukal managed to be in the heritage properties acknowledged by the Kerala Government through their rich architecture and history that helped them to contribute to the overall streetscape of the Aarattu road. The document prepared by the Department of Town and Country Planning on February 2008 proves this claim.

The heritage associated with Amma Veedukal is also linked with the customs and rituals practised by their members. They followed the conventional traditions of the Nair caste. The significant ritual that can be considered part of the tangible heritage of Amma Veedukal is the *pattum parivattavum* ceremony. *Pattum parivattavum* ceremony is unique because, unlike traditional marriage, the bride and her family will go to the royal household to perform the wedding. In this ritual, the King will accept a tray with gold, silver, and flowers from the bride and give her *pattu* and *parivattam* (fabric). "Tempered with sobriety, the bestowal of *pattum parivattavum* symbolised the wedding rituals of a Prince" (Maheswari 173). In the book *Pattum Parivattavum*, the writer explains the procedures of the marriage ritual. The bride will be adopted to any one of the four major Amma Veedukal and her close family. The woman married to a King will be known as Panapillai Amma or Ammachi. The daughter born for them will be given the title "Kochamma" and the son as "Thampi". The term "Thankachi" refers to the daughters of other Lords (mostly the daughters of the brothers and relatives of the Kings will be called by this title).

One among the major Amma Veedus, "the Arumana Amma Veedu was the residence of the consorts of Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma (1758-1798), Avittom Thirunal Balarama Varma (1798-1810) and Sree Vishakam Thirunal Rama Varma (1880-1885)" (*Heritage Series* 18). As the name indicates, the origin of this Amma Veedu and its ancestry belong to the Arumana family at Aattoor in Vilavankodu Taluk of

Kanyakumari District. “What makes Arumana Amma Veedu distinct from other Amma Veedus is that it had the custom of worshipping historical men as a god. Arumana Amma Veedu had an idol of Iravikutty Pillai, and the family members worshipped him as Ilangathu Appupan (grandfather of Ilangathu). Iravikutty Pillai is believed to be the son of Ravi Varma Kulashekara who ruled Kalkulam” (my trans. Kizhakkemadom 33-34). In the personal interview taken as part of the research with Prathap Kizhakkemadom, a member of Arumana Amma Veedu says: “This kind of *vechupooja* invoking the spirits is not found in any other Amma Veedus except Arumana. When this Amma Veedu in Vilavancode taluk was alienated, these idols were brought to the Ganapathy Temple at Arumana Amma Veedu in Perunthanni” (Kizhakkemadom). This temple was built in 1078 CE by Rama Varma Valiya Koyi Raja, popular as Poonjattudaya Perumal Pandya Bhoopathi. Also known as Madathil Ganapathy, this temple is considered as old as the Arumana, which is understood from some Hajur records which mention the Arumana Amma Veedu in Thiruvananthapuram as Perunthanni Madam (my trans. Kizhakkemadom 34). Situated at Perunthanni near West Fort, the building stands in its quintessential appearance, with the three-storey main building facing Aarattu Road (Figures 1 and 2). The central building is modelled in colonial style with arch entrance gates. The tile-roofed annexure building is a typical Kerala-style construction. Thus the architecture of Arumana Amma Veedu is a blend of British and Kerala styles of architecture.



Figure 1: Arumana Amma Veedu (Present Villa Maya Restaurant)



Figure 2: Photograph of Arumana taken through the window of Thanjavur Veedu

Vadassery Amma Veedu consists of a large area with complex structures. It was the residence of the wives of the Kings Dharmaraja (1758-98), Balarama Varma (1798-1810), Swathi Thirunal (1847-1892) and Sree Moolam Thirunal (1886-1924). It was built more than one hundred and fifty years ago. The main building is a double-storey tiled roof inspired by the Kerala style of architecture. Located at Perunthanni, a part of it is presently owned by the Nair Service Society and functions as a Women’s College (Figure 3). “At the time of freedom struggle, Jawaharlal Nehru chanced to stay here, as he was not permitted to enter inside the Fort” (Heritage Series 169). The other buildings that belonged to Vadassery are Padmavilasom Palace, Madhava Mandhiram

and Sree Padmam Auditorium. Vadassery Padinjare Amma Veedu, or Thanjavur Amma Veedu, was earlier a part of the sprawling Vadassery Amma Veedu (Figure 4).



Figure 3: A roadside view of Vadassery Amma Veedu



Figure 4: Sprawling Complex once part of Vadassery Amma Veedu

Thanjavur Amma Veedu is comparatively a newly built one. It is also known as Vadassery Padinjare Amma Veedu. Presently owned by Mithranikedhan, a non-governmental organisation focusing on rural development, its compound has two buildings – an old *ettukettu* (Figure 5) and a more recent double-storey building (Figure 6) (collectively known as Vadassery Padinjare Amma Veedu or Thanjavur Amma Veedu). This building was constructed on the Western side of the old Vadasseri Amma Veedu. This is an *ettukettu* in the traditional South Kerala architectural style. Swathi Thirunal built it for his wife, Sundara Lakshmi, a dancer who came to Thiruvananthapuram from a Mudaliyar family of Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. After her demise, the building was bought by Sree Moolam Thirunal (1885-1924) for his son Narayanan Thampi. Thampi built a grand double-storied *malika* in front of the *ettukettu* as in Thanjavur style in remembrance of Sugandha Parvathy and Sundara Lekshmi (sisters from Thanjavur), and he named it Thanjavur Amma Veedu (my trans. Kizhakkemadom 65). Sharat Sunder Rajeev, a historian and conservation architect, mentions in the article “The Travancore - Thanjavur Connection,” dated on Jan 26, 2017 states that the building is a harmonious blend of various architectural influences, including British colonial, Gothic, Thanjavur and Kerala patterns. The colonial-style use of coloured glass, louvred shutters, arch openings, fluted pilasters, and hefty cornice with ornate floral motifs add charm to the building. At the same time, the presence of Kerala-style large gables and two Thanjavur bay windows on the first floor make the building even more unique in construction (Rajeev). The building functions as Mithranikedhan’s main city office and performs multiple roles, including acting as a marriage reception venue, spaces for photo shoots and art performances, and

accommodation facilities. Positioning Thanjavur Amma Veedu in the classification of the major Amma Veedu is somewhat tricky due to its complex history. Whether considering it as part of Vadassery Amma Veedu's property or treating it as a separate one is a matter of confusion. King Moolam Thirunal bought it from Vadassery Amma Veedu's family for his son, who belonged to Nagercoil Amma Veedu. However, the son's wife belonged to Arumana Amma Veedu. As they followed the matrilineal system, the next generation was considered to be the descendants of Arumana Amma Veedu. Thus the puzzling question is whether Thanjavur Amma Veedu should be regarded as part of Vadassery, Nagarcoil or Arumana Amma Veedukal.



Figure 5: The old *Ettukettu*
(Vadassery Padinjare Amma Veedu)



Figure 6: Thanjavur Amma Veedu

Nagarcoil Amma Veedu was the home of the wives of five kings, namely Sree Karthika Thirunal, Avittom Thirunal, Uthram Thirunal, Ayilyam Thirunal and Sree Moolam Thirunal. The first marriage of Sree Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma was from Nagarcoil Amma Veedu. The next successor Sree Avittom Thirunal married Nagamani Ananthalakshmi, the daughter of Karthika Thirunal. Uthram Thirunal, who came after the Regent rule, adopted a woman named Kali Madhavi to Nagarcoil Amma Veedu to marry her. Ayilyam Thirunal married Kalyanikutty Amma, and Sree Moolam Thirunal married Anandalekshmi Ponnamma (the daughter of Kunjulekshmi Amma, who is the daughter of the elder sister of Kalyanikutty's mother). Both of them were adopted into Nagarcoil Amma Veedu. These alliances hint at the social prominence that Nagarcoil Amma Veedu held and how instrumental in royal decisions they might be during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Built more than a hundred years ago in Eenchakkal, this Amma Veedu consists of a central two-storey tiled roof building (Figure 7), a *naalukettu*, a small temple, and a pond. The two structures comprised, the main building and the *naalukettu* are linked with corridors. Now standing as a heritage site in ruins with the dilapidated pond, *kavu*, and posters pasted on the walls by outsiders, the building and its surrounding landscape serve as visual evidence of the earlier glory of the once-influential family.

Thiruvattar Amma Veedu – the residence of Dharmaraja (1758-1798) and Swathi Thirunal (1829-1847). Built using laterite stone and mortar in typical Kerala

architectural style with a double-storied tiled roof, this building has a wooden staircase, wooden ceiling and many halls. The building (fig.8) is located at Perunthanni and is more than hundred and fifty years old (*Heritage Series* 157). It was during Swathi Thirunal's time that this Amma Veedu gained more importance. His first wife, Narayani Pillai, was adopted into Thiruvattar Amma Veedu. In historical records, the name of this house is mentioned as Thiruvattar Nanthavanathu Ammaveedu. The building had an *arapura* and a pond which was later demolished. Earlier in the Seventies, it was the office of magazines like *Kumkumam* and *Keralashabdham*. The old building is now a commercial space run by "Saga Department Stores" for selling antique products.



Figure 7: Nagarcoil Amma Veedu



Figure 8: Thiruvattar Amma Veedu

Karthika Thirunal built the four major Amma Veedukal in typical Kerala *ettukettu* and *naalukettu* styles. But transformations happened to them during the rule of Ayilyam Thirunal. Later, the Kings like Ayilyam Thirunal, Vishakom Thirunal and Sree Moolam Thirunal built Amma Veedukal in their interests. During the reign of Swathi Thirunal's mother and her sister, the influence of European colonial architecture crept into these constructions. However, after Swathi Thirunal's rule, Amma Veedukal had a blend of both native and colonial architecture. The modernisation of Thiruvananthapuram had begun with Lt. Horsely, an English Engineer who brought European Engineering art to the city. The colonial style of architecture was much more evident in the buildings of Thiruvananthapuram during the period of Ayilyam Thirunal (my trans. Kizhakkemadam 37-39).

Apart from the above-mentioned Amma Veedukal, there are also other less-known Amma Veedukal in Thiruvananthapuram. These are the ones who got the status of Amma Veedukal indirectly through marriage alliances with the brothers of the Kings. These houses, considered Amma Veedukal by the public, were families in Thiruvananthapuram with high social standing due to their royal marital partnerships. Women from these houses were adopted to one of the main Amma Veedukal before the marriage. Thus these ancient houses of the wives of the King's brothers come under the category of Amma Veedukal. Many are either dilapidated, refashioned or

demolished, thereby making the task of finding and locating these heritage buildings challenging. Furthermore, the remnants in the sites suggest disregard and the presence of erased or forgotten episodes of the past.

Eraniel Amma Veedu is one such example whose tangible presence had been wiped out. Also known as Pulimootil Amma Veedu, it had been located just outside the West Fort gate. The traces of the old double-storied *maalika* and *naalukettu* are nowhere to be found now. The roots of this family are in Eraniel in the Kanyakumari district. Their last kinship with the Travancore royal family dates back to the latter half of the nineteenth century. In a telephonic interview with Sharat Sunder Rajeev, he describes how it became Amma Veedu. “A brother of the Kings Ayilyam Thirunal and Vishakom Thirunal married a lady from Eraniel house. Through this marriage and related alliances, the house attained the position of Amma Veedu” (Sundar Rajeev). The old Amma Veedu was knocked down and replaced with a modern home and a medical shop. The site now acts as a reminder of the old structure that is currently non-existent. Thereby it also becomes a trace of an absence.

Kallampally Amma Veedu is located between Neithasheri and Muttavila Madoms on the Kallampally road on the South West side of the Fort. Unlike other Amma Veedukal, this one is inside the Fort. In the telephonic interview with Sharat Sunder Rajeev, he mentions that the Kallampally house members were the managers of the royal treasury. Velayudhan Thampi (1888-1961), the family's last patriarch, served as the Thiruvabharanam Superintendent associated with Padmanabha Swamy Temple. It was he who enlarged the *meda* into a courtyard house. (Sundar Rajeev). Kallampally house became an Amma Veedu through an alliance with royalty. “V. Narasimhan Thampy, in his book *Travancore Royal Family and Valiyakottaram*, states that Kallampally Narasimhan Thampy (1775-1871), a son of Dharma Raja, was a well-known ancestor of the family. V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, a reputed historian, notes that after the death of Velu Thampy, the extensive landed properties and other assets of the late Dalawa's family were granted to Kallampally Amma Veedu through adoption” (Sundar Rajeev). This incident probably made Kallampally a more affluent house and bestowed it with the Amma Veedu designation. Now almost demolished, Kallampally Amma Veedu had an *ettukettu*, pond, *thekkethu*, sacred grove and a *naalukettu*. A pond and a sacred grove that once acted as personal and mystical spaces had immense value as natural heritage. Before the demolition, road construction during the reign of Chithira Thirunal had already separated the structures that lie on the East and the West.

In the same vicinity of Kallampally Amma Veedu stands Bunglavil Amma Veedu. It is on Punnaickal road in West Fort Street. An interview with Sharat Sunder Rajeev observes that the building is of mid-nineteenth-century origin, and it gained prominence only in the 1830s and 1840s. The building was earlier named Kaithavilakom Bungalow in the land records. Later in the 1960s and 1970s, the current occupant, Uma Thampuram's father, Parameswaran Thampy, changed its name to Bunglavil Amma Veedu (Sundar Rajeev). But among people, it came to be known as

Munglavil Amma Veedu. The current occupant Uma whose full name is Uma Parvathy Pillai Kochamma, hails from Amma Veedu since her mother was an Ammachi who belonged to Thiruvattar Amma Veedu. Bunglavil Amma Veedu also has a connection with Kallampally Amma Veedu since Parameswaran Thampy (Uma's father) is a member of that family. These close ties with similar reputed families may have elevated their social status in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Bunglavil Amma Veedu was under the receiver's rule because Uma's father lost his parents early, and its properties were thus managed and preserved. In a conversation with Uma Parvathy Pillai Kochamma, she recounted how her mother had lost many valuables. She also mentions a robbery that happened many years ago in which the precious nose ring of Bunglavil Ammachi and many other treasures were lost.

Similarly, there is Kaipally Veedu at Palkulangara, whose prominence rose during the reign of Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma (1729-1758). In *The Hindu* newspaper, an article by Sharat Sunder Rajeev mentions that the women from this family added "Durga" as a title in their names. A woman was chosen amongst the many to supervise *nivedhyam* preparation during the *bhadradeepam* ceremony in Padmanabhaswamy Temple. The chosen woman was from the Kaipally family, and the King called her Durga (Sundar Rajeev). Thus, the family inherited this name. The recorded history of another Amma Veedu called Kaipally Amma Veedu begins with Kaipally Lakshmikutty Amma. Her husband, Nadavarambathu Krishnan Nair (later Krishna Pillai), from Irinjalikuda, shifted to Thiruvananthapuram because this marriage became Vicharppukaran or the manager of Nagarcoil Amma Veedu. They had three daughters and a son, and the eldest was Karthiyayini Pillai. Karthiyayini was adopted as a child of Nagarcoil Amma Veedu for the childless widowed consort of Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma. The major incident that raised the status of this house to the position of Amma Veedu was Karthiyayini's marriage with Sankaran Pillai, who was later known as Sankaran Thampy and was the favourite of Sree Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma. However, the marriage broke off due to an affection developed in the King with her. This led to their marriage in 1899, and Karthiyayini Pillai became Sree Moolam Thirunal's consort by adopting her with her family to Vadassery Amma Veedu. Later Karthiyayini Pillai got the official Vadassery Ammachi Panapillai Amma Srimathi Lakshmi Pillai Karthiyayini Pillai Kochamma. Thus due to these complex royal alliances, Kaipally Veedu became Kaipally Amma Veedu. The old Kaipally Amma Veedu was reconstructed at the end of the nineteenth century with a new ettukettu, other connected structures, gateways and a private pond (Sundar Rajeev).

In contrast to Kaipally Amma Veedu, Muppadiikka Amma Veedu stands as a building handed over by the family to outsiders. It is a branch of Thiruvattar Amma Veedu since the lady of that house was adopted to the Thiruvattar Amma Veedu as part of the marriage. Situated near the Uppadamoodu Bridge, the old building was almost demolished and reconstructed in the nineties. Architects claim that it was constructed during the reign of Sree Karthika Thirunal. The erased building can be considered a symbol of an erased heritage. The transformed version, with the inclusion of modern

facilities, tarnished the authenticity and slumped its value as a heritage building, making it another example of lost heritage. A marble tablet is erected in front of the building with “Muppadikka Amma Veedu” inscribed on it – a historical marker seemingly installed deliberately to help their current usage of the site as a heritage resort – to retain and voice out its heritage image.

Aandiyirakkathu Puthumana Amma Veedu, located at Karamana, stands apart from all the above-discussed Amma Veedukal. “All the other Amma Veedukal are known by the place names from which these Ammachis came. On the contrary, Puthumana Amma Veedu is known by the house from which Ammachi came” (my trans. Raja 43). The house is associated with Irayamman Thampi (whose original name is Ravi Varma Thampi) and Ummini Thampi Dalawa. The root of Karamana Aandiyirakkathu Puthumana Amma Veedu is in Kizhakke Kallada, Kollam.

Dr R. P. Raja, in his book *Irayamman Thampi: Kaviyum Kaalavum*, states that Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma’s brother Makayiram Thirunal Ravi Varma married two sisters of Karamana Puthumana Amma Veedu (who came to Karamana from Kallada Puthumana Veedu) – Lakshmi Pillai Thankachi and Kali Pillai Thankachi. Karamana Puthumana house was built for the women by Venad King, and thus it came to be known as Puthumana Amma Veedu. Irayamman Thampi is the grandson of Lakshmi Pillai Thankachi, and Ummini Thampi Diwanji is the grandson of Kali Pillai Thankachi. Irayamman Thampi’s father, Kerala Varma Shastri Thamban, was from Cherthala Naduvilel Kovilakam, and his mother, Parvathy Pillai Thankachi, (was the daughter of Lakshmi Pillai Thankachi) belonged to Aandiyirakkathu Puthumana Amma Veedu. (Raja 272-273). The tracing of Puthumana Amma Veedu’s prominence from Makayiram Thirunal or Irayamman Thampi may diminish the stature of Puthumana Amma Veedu because there are records stating that the family had a marriage alliance with Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma.

According to Sasikala Pillai Thankachi (who belongs to the sixth generation of Irayamman Thampi), Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma married Seetha Ananthamma of Puthumana Amma Veedu in the Malayalam Era 933, which she proves with the old *Mathilakom Record* Churuna dated on 1003, Churuna No. 156. Malayalam Era 933 will be 1757 in the English calendar, a year before the ascension of Karthika Thirunal to the throne (1758-1798). If then, Puthumana has to be considered one of the major Amma Veedukal. It will be a matter of debate and still needs further examination. The old building was destroyed by fire, and in that place, a *naalukettu* was constructed, which later changed into a modern house.

Conclusion

This article tried to present the available history of Amma Veedukal located after a series of research and interviews with historians, architects and Amma Veedu family members. Some of these heritage buildings could withstand the changing times, but some now have different natures and textures. Undoubtedly these tangible buildings

act as the embodiment of the intangible histories of Amma Veedukal. This romanticisation of the past may, on the periphery, seem unproductive, but “to survive, we must tell stories,” and the histories are stories that help these buildings to survive. It is not simply about the glorification of the past; instead, it creates and reinforces the identity of the whole place. These buildings and the heritage associated with them are a part of Thiruvananthapuram city’s collective history.

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