
Protection and Preservation of Monuments: Endeavors of Department of Archaeology, Kerala State

Sumitha S. S.¹

¹. Department of History, University College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala – 694 034, India (Email: itsmesumiss@gmail.com)

Received: 19 July 2021; Revised: 30 September 2021; Accepted: 03 November 2021
Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 9 (2021-22): 565-581

Abstract: Conservation of Archaeological monuments and relics are very significant with regard to the ethical principles of archaeology. As far as the initiatives taken by Department of Archaeology, Kerala State in this area were concerned, it helped a lot in the maintenance of so many historical monuments in the state. A Conservation Laboratory was set up for the protection and preservation of monuments. The department follows internationally accepted guidance for the preservation of monuments. Protection and preservation of Padmanabhapuram palace, Sreepadam palace etc. and chemical conservation of Sakthan Thampuran palace deserve special mention in this context. The Department follows the direction of international organization like UNESCO in the protection of archaeological sites and monuments.

Keywords: Archaeology, Conservation, Preservation, Monuments, Heritage, Protection, Maintenance

Introduction

Archaeology is the branch of knowledge that restores and preserves the vestiges of the past of countries and cultures, thus enabling us to cull out a clear picture of the phases and milestones of development of societies. Archaeology assists in a scientific way to procure and preserve the past. Archaeological sources are reliable evidence to the historian for study of the past particularly in the case of states like Kerala with regional variations and innumerable vestiges of cultural pasts. The Department of Archaeology, Kerala State, officially started its work in 1962, after an integration of two departments such as Travancore Archaeology Research Department and Cochin Archeology Research Department. The Department was envisaged from its outset to protect the artefacts, objects and institutions related to the past history and culture of the region to hand over them to the next generations. An Act of the year 1986 referred as the 'Act of Protection of the Puranic, Historical institutions and their upkeep, maintenance and the rules' made thereunder has helped to an extent in the maintenance and upkeep of magnificent buildings and monuments.

Archaeological remains are found throughout the world in areas of past and current human habitation. Archaeological explorations uncover artefacts found in wide-

ranging places, from objects buried deep under the sea and in the most extreme environments that humans have explored, to materials found practically in our own backyards. Consequently archaeological conservators work all over the globe: in the field as well as in museums, collections and in private practice (Krishnaraj Pers. Comm). While excavation allows us to learn a great deal about the past through studying archaeological remains and their context, exposing artefacts that have been buried can cause rapid and irreversible deterioration. Archaeological conservators work to stabilize and preserve the material remains of the past, as well as to investigate how things were made, used, and disposed of. Working with other archaeological professions (e.g. bio-archaeologists, paleo botanists, architects, archaeo-chemists, art historians, etc.), conservators contribute to a better understanding of the past (Krishnaraj Pers. Comm).

Archaeological conservation is a profession devoted to the preservation of the archaeological records including large-scale features such as sites, structures, and landscapes, as well as artefacts. Archaeological conservation is guided by ethical principles that derive from the understanding that these materials are "primary resources for understanding and interpreting the past (Krishnaraj Pers. Comm). State and local governments often have funds available for preservation of objects and in most states Humanities Councils will also fund collections care program (McIntosh 2011 53). Under the Department of Archaeology, A preservation and Conservation Department and the Department of Scientific conservation have always been working to carry out repairs and other conservation works on protected monuments (Administration Report 1973-74 1975: 4).

Setting up of Regional Conservation Laboratory

There was a direction from the government of India that each department should start small laboratories for conservation. Kerala State government received a circular from the government of India to set up a centralized conservation Laboratory for all departments, mainly museums, Archaeology department, Archives etc. That was how the Regional Laboratory begins (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.). It was during the period of 1976-1980 that the situation for a regional Laboratory in Kerala arose. Although the Regional Laboratory was started under the leadership of the conservation officer in the Department of Archaeology, Kerala state the government of Kerala did not accept the idea that it was an independent laboratory and it could function in all departments. Therefore, although known as the Regional Conservation Laboratory, its work was limited to the Department of Archaeology, Kerala State (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.).

The Regional Conservation Laboratory under the Department has been modelled on the institution named National Research Laboratory for Cultural Property, (NRLC) set up by the Central Government for the scientific protection of archaeological and historical structures. This Laboratory carries out the chemical preservation activities that preserve the antiquities, archaeological sites, historical monuments and archeological remains. This institution is under the responsibility of officers with

technical experience in the relevant field and is headed by a Conservation officer (Administration Report 2000-2001 2004: 7). The Regional Conservation Laboratory at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala was established on the model of the NRLC established by the Government of Kerala for the scientific preservation of cultural objects. The former operates under the direct control of the Department of Archeology (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.).

The laboratory started under the Department of Archaeology caught great attention in this field and acquired in due course the tools needed for maintenance works. In 1974, according to the advice of the India government, the laboratory under the department of Archaeology was expanded so as to be useful for all the private institutions in Kerala and was given the status of Regional Conservation Laboratory. It is to be remembered in this scenario that the first Regional Conservation Laboratory, in any State to be established on the advice of the Government of India, is in Kerala. The Regional Conservation Laboratory is conducting research on the preservation of palm leaves and museum exhibits under the supervision of conservation officer with expert training in this field. This has helped in the presentation of international standard papers in various forums and has garnered expert acclaim. Under the leadership of the said laboratory, the scientific conservation work of many other institutions besides the Department of Archaeology has been undertaken and the services of this institution of national importance have been extended to benefit not only government departments but also independent institutions and individuals.

Preservation of Monuments

The Department of Archaeology, Kerala State paid much attention to the scientific preservation of the ancient monuments that had been declared protected by the Kerala Government under the Kerala Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act (1968 Act). A pre-monsoon inspection of the monuments was ordered to be conducted so as to take precautionary measures to avert the possible damage by heavy rain in 1981 (Administration Report 1981-1982 1985: 9). Preservation of monuments in literary, archival or museum collection involves understanding spiritual and ritual perceptions and value for specific objects, and ensuring these values are maintained and respected (Pushkar 2013 129).

During recent years, having acknowledged the complexity of restoration and conservation and the need for further studies, testing and research activities, an increasing involvement of out side research centres is needed (Elliot 2013 146). The preservation assistant after training in chemical conservation at Dehra Dun and Delhi will be put to the cleaning of murals and wood carving spread over the temples of Kerala (Administration Report 1973-74 1975: 4). The preservation assistant on the staff of the department went round the museum to a treatment with the chemicals (Administration Report 1973-74 1975: 4). All the features and ornaments of the sculptures had presented a better appearance since they were subjected to chemical cleaning (Administration Report 1973-74 1975: 4). coating preservatives were also

given to prevent deterioration of the quality of the objects (Administration Report 1973-74 1975: 4).

The Department of Archaeology, Kerala State has included Conservation Department and Scientific Department. Conservation Department mainly deals with the preservation of structures of the historical monuments. Mainly structural conservation is done by making small changes (minimal intervention) in the actual shape, where as different types of chemicals are used for chemical conservation of monuments. The facility, located 52 km from the capital city, is now a protected monument of Department of Archaeology under the state. However, to go ahead with a further renovation on the buffer zone, both the governments should reach a consensus. Meanwhile, officials at the Directorate of Archaeology said it is impossible to mention the deadline of the work as it is a time-consuming process (The New Indian Express, published 1st July 2019).

Structural Conservation

The Department makes extra efforts to scientifically protect heritage structures. Aging always leads to the destruction of a heritage building (Ajith Kumar Pers. Comm.). This type of damage can lead to the destruction of heritage buildings if left unresolved over time (Ajith Kumar Pers. Comm.). A civil Engineering Department operates in the Department of Archaeology, Kerala State as a part of the scientific restoration work of the protected monuments. This section consists of a conservation engineer and staffs. This section is responsible for the preservation of various protected monuments under the Department of Archaeology, Kerala State. The Department has studied and followed the directives of international organizations like United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) on how to preserve heritage structures (Hemachandran Pers. Comm.). According to the Conservation Engineer of the Department of Archaeology Bhupesh. S, the conservation works must be carried out with extra care as most of the buildings and murals are in a delicate state. "Only after finishing the construction work can we comment on the exact cost required for the same. The style of architecture is an ancient one and there are multiple layers. Each needs to be studied before it is put for renovation," he added. Across the State, the department preserves and protect a large number of the heritage structure, complying to the internationally followed rules.

Chemical Conservation

Chemical Conservation is crucial to prevent decay in objects of archaeology. In 1979, the Department set up Regional Conservation Laboratory under the directives of the Central Government. A number of manuscripts, artefacts, paintings, wooden carvings, metal works, etc., are being preserved by the lab. The rare murals across the State are also under the care and preservation of the lab (Jaikumar Pers. Comm.). The Department has also given great importance to the scientific and chemical conservation of Archaeological monuments, archeological sites and other objects of artistic value

subject to various forms of decay. The aim of chemical conservation is to study the cause of their decay and to prevent decay as much as possible and prolong its life to the maximum by chemical application and thereby hand over them to the coming generation. The chemical transformation fundamental for the prevention of decay depends on the structure of the composition of materials used for the substances and the surroundings in which it is located.

Chemical conservation has been done in many museums. The preservation activity was held at the Shaktan Thampuram palace in Thrissur. The pot found during the Thalakkalappalli excavation is still conserved at the excavation site without being taken off the ground. This pot is estimated to be a thousand years old. This conservation was the great achievement of Regional Conservation Laboratory (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.). Microscope and variety of analytical instruments can be found in the conservation Laboratory. The main purpose of chemical conservation is to make minimal interference, that is, to use chemicals only to preserve the substance. When we conserve an object, it almost always makes a minimum intervention to keep it intact. That is, the minimum interference can be made on the object of dissociation as complete (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.). If we apply some chemicals we should know what for we are doing that whether it is absolutely essential or not. Because we want to keep these feature assets as such, without any type of intervention. The conservation officer is like a doctor for cultural property, that is when a doctor gives a medicine to a patient, that medicine should not have a side effect on the patient's body, just as a chemical is used to protect an object. A conservation officer must have a vision and full knowledge of what to do with the object to be protected and how to do it (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.). Only then will conservation be effective.

Chemical conservation against attack of insects and fungus were done on various museums and monuments under the control of Department of Archaeology, Kerala State. A scientific study on this is still pending. For example, when using a chemical in a pottery that should be reversible (the first principle of conservation is that whenever we use it should take it back for future time). Not all chemical treatments are 100% possible but a stand called 'minimum intervention' is used. For example, if there is a fungus on a piece of paper, an ordinary person will use a fungus killer chemical and the paper will be destroyed (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.).

Chemical conservation is now routinely done every five years (Jaikumar Pers. Comm.). Both traditional methods and modern methods are used to conserve woodwork. Traditional method used to conserve is mainly CS oil (Cashew shell oil), extract from the shell of the cashew nut. Surface consolidation is carried out to repair the damage caused there of by rain and sunlight (Jaikumar Pers. Comm.). Treatment that is normally very exciting cannot be done, only a very thin conservation should be done. Chemical conservation of each substance is done in a way that is not harmful to the human body. Different combinations of chemicals are used to conservation (Jaikumar Pers. Comm.).

Structural and Chemical Conservation of Padmanabhapuram Palace

An aspect of archaeological work which had not received due attention till recently is the conservation of ancient monuments (Administration Report 1936-1937 1938: 10). As a result of correspondence on the subject, Government were pleased to pass Regulation 1 of 1112 for the preservation of ancient monuments and of objects of archaeological, historical and artistic interest. The necessary rules for working the regulation have since been published. The usual conservation of historical monument Padmanabhapuram. Attention was concentrated during the year 1936-1937 the conservation of the ancient Palace at Padmanabhapuram, where museum of antiquities is proposed to be started to house relics of archeological, historical and artistic importance.

Kerala is a state known as the land of palaces. The palaces built by the innumerable princes who ruled in different eras are later considered as historical monuments. Like the palaces of other states, the palaces of Kerala are alien to pride and luxury. The mastery of these buildings is the architectural skill that is in tune with the nature and simplicity of the Malayalam land. It is believed that there were more than eighty palaces in Ananthapuri and its suburbs. Of these, the Padmanabhapuram Palace, which was the capital of Travancore, is a major historical site. Padmanabhapuram Palace is one of the fascinator's destinations in the map of the tourist of the world. The most attractive feature of this palace is the wood carving and the historical background of Travancore associated with it. The Archaeological Survey of India has been preserving this historical monument in the most scientific manner in accordance with the Archaeological Conservation Act. Padmanabhapuram Palace is an ancient historical monument representing the indigenous architectural features especially in the traditional style of southern Kerala (Pillai 2001 22). Padmanabhapuram palace, one of the most attractive wood palace of the world is a renowned monument under the protection of Department of Archaeology, Kerala State (Premkumar 2015 7). The preservation and protection of the internationally famous Padmanabhapuram Palace by the department is truly commendable.

Padmanabhapuram Palace, located in the Kanyakumari district is today a protected historical monument of international renown. The palace complex, which is reminiscent of centuries of history is a crowning example of Kerala's unique architectural style. This royal palace which is a play of carpentry, architecture, mural art and history have been protected as per the Archaeological conservation Act without losing even a bit of it's uniqueness and sculptural beauty and visual elegance by the the Department of Archaeology, Kerala (Figure 1). The rediscovery of the artistic value of Padmanabhapuram Palace began in 1935 as the unexpected result of a search for possible remains, of wall paintings on the suggestion of Her Highness Maharani Setu Parvathi Bayi (Cousins 1941 2). Opinions differ as to the date of paintings. Historical records are silent on the subject. Documents contemporary with the paintings were

probably destroyed less than half a century ago in an incurious bout of clearing-up. Others that may have been removed from Padmanabhapuram to Trivandrum (Cousins 1941 6). In front of Padmanabhapuram Palace complex, on the site of the old horse stable, a new building has been constructed in style without any damage to the palace and an archaeological museum has been set up there. The important exhibits in this museum are wooden sculptures, ancient sculptures, stone sculptures, copperplates, coins, weapons, copies of wall paintings etc. (Administration Report 2000-01 2004: 7). A heritage home is set up in a *Panthrandukettu* building on the south side of the palace complex and exhibits household items modelled on old house to revive the Kerala cultural heritage (Administration Report 2000-01 2004: 7). Today, it is a historical marvel, attracting thousands of people every day.

The carved doors and pillars, the arching wooden grills along the veranda, the exquisitely carved brackets supporting the veranda, are some of the architectural features characteristic of this regional style resplendent at Padmanabhapuram. Padmanabhapuram palace is the palace of the Travancore rulers at Padmanabhapuram is also famous for murals and wood-works in the interior (Sarkar 1992 5). Located within a fortified area, roughly square in outline, the buildings inside the palace-complex do not show any well-knit ground-plan (Sarkar 1992 5). Special features like the large Bay Window called *Ambari Mukhappu* (or the Howdah shaped window), supported by elaborately carved *Vyala* figures (a Hindu mythical creature), the remnants of the semi-transparent shell decorations of the windows, later restored with coloured mica, the Manimalika or the clock tower, of which the movement is regulated by weights are some of the unique features of the Palace (Hemachandran Pers. Comm.). The *Uttupura* or the Dining Hall, adjacent to the Council Chamber has two floors, measuring 72 x 9 m each, large enough to accommodate 2000 people at a time on occasions of free feeding. The *Uppirikkamalika* or the four-storeyed building, constructed in 1750 CE, includes the treasury chamber on the first floor, Maharaja's resting room on the second floor, and the revered prayer room on the third floor the walls of which are replete with traditional mural art work, so specific to Kerala. A long corridor leads to the Indravilasam Palace, constructed in the 18th century for the reception of foreign delegates. More recently this long corridor was enlivened with the installation of historical paintings depicting important epochs in the life of Travancore king Martanda Varma. The *Thekkekkottaram* (literally the palace in the south) is the most attractive building in the Palace Complex, with elaborately carved wooden pillars, doors beams and ceilings (Radhadevi 1997 5).

The *Thai Kottaram*, the first structure to come up in this palace complex is a double storied traditional *Nalukettu* structure (a house with a central courtyard open to the sky, with rooms on all four sides), with a mortar-less chiselled granite base, timber super structure and steeply sloping timber roof covered with terracotta roof tiles. The imposing *Padipura* or Main Gate, display exquisite wood work and leads to the *Poomukham* or the main reception with traditional gabled entrance and ornamentations. The wooden ceilings and carved granite pillars with floriated corbels are samples of

excellent craftsmanship. The *Mantrasala* or the Council Chamber on the first floor of the reception hall has features like wooden louvers to admit air and light, that helps maintain a pleasant temperature indoors.

The 14 different features including palaces and other ancillary structures were gradual additions to the initial *Thai Kottaram* or first Palace. The later additions showcase the changing styles in architecture with the influence of the colonial. The uniformity of style is maintained throughout, while variety is achieved in differences in the details of decorative motifs. The murals on the four walls of the topmost 3rd floor of the multi-storeyed building or the *Uppirikkamalika* of this magnificent palace display the stylistics of the 17th and 18th century architecture of Kerala. The murals at the Padmanabhapuram palace are the best preserved in the State and are executed in the traditional style invoking rich and vivid realism and infusing grace and beauty of the figures.

Interestingly, the marvellously sculpted granite structures of the *Navarathri Mandapam* (Dance hall) and the Saraswathy Temple, constructed in 1744 CE, with decorated pillars and graceful figurines is in stark contrast to the simplicity of the rest of the wooden structures in the Palace complex. These are reminiscent of Vijayanagara style (14th – 17th century, Karnataka) of architecture. The flat sloping ceiling of closely fitted single piece granite cross beams supported by monolithic pillars is not common to this region. In 1993, a Museum building was set up in the Southwest corner of this Palace complex, and houses numerous invaluable stone inscriptions and copper plate inscriptions, sculptures in wood and stone, armoury, coins, paintings, and household objects pertaining to the history and heritage of the region. The *Thekkekkottaram* structure within the Palace complex houses a Heritage Museum, with a display of household articles and utensils, showcasing life and living of a bygone generation in Kerala society (Hemachadran Pers. Comm.).

An effort was made for conservation of the monuments during the year 1969-1970. Conservation works were done in the case of the monument of Padmanabhapuram palace (Figures 1 and 2). A considerable impetus is proposed to be given to conservation as a part of archaeological work in the state in future, and steps are being taken to declare protected under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Regulations the old temples, palaces and other relics having a historical, archaeological or artistic importance, in the hope that, after their protection they will be treated under the regulation with due regard to their proper maintenance (Administration Report 1936-37 1938: 11). At the palace at Padmanabhapuram over forty-five items of work necessary for its proper conservation were carried out in 1936-37. Of these, the room containing the mural paintings received the great attention, where the necessary repairs to the ceiling and to the floor were carefully attended to without any obliteration of their ancient charm. Secondly the *Navaratri Mandapa* and the sculptured pillars were removed (Administration Report 1936-37 1938: 11). Thirdly, the mica panes of the windows of the palace were replaced by fresh ones. Similarly lacquered

railings on the walls were restored. All the wood work in the palace showing signs of decay was attended to. Lastly, the railings of the balcony under the clock tower, which had fallen away, were properly repaired and their gable supports strengthened. A police watch has also been arranged for the palace: and two fresh panels of mural paintings were copied in their original size and coloured. One of them relates to Krishna and Gopis and the other to the marriage of Siva and Parvati (Administration Report 1936-37 1938: 11).

Other works carried out as part of the conservation include setting up of new laws, maintenance of old clock, television that enables the differently-abled visitors to view the place and toilet facilities (The New Indian Express, published 1st July 2019). Though the property lies in Tamil Nadu, the 6.5 acres of the Padmanabhapuram Palace Complex was retained under the custodianship of the Kerala Government as per the State Reorganisation Settlement in 1956. A sum of Rs 3 crore has been spent till date for the conservation works of Padmanabhapuram Palace since it was added to the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, said sources at the Directorate of Archaeology in Thiruvananthapuram (The New Indian Express, published 1st July 2019). The major conservation works carried out at the palace include conservation of *kammattupura*, *palpuramalika* and *uppirikkamalika*. The proposal to acquire the tag of World Heritage Sites was submitted to UNESCO in 2014 under the Cultural category (The New Indian Express, published 1st July 2019).



Figure 1: Padmanabhapuram palace before conservation
(Courtesy: <https://www.archaeology.kerala.gov.in>)

Cuprinol was also used in the conservation of the Padmanabhapuram Palace. It was a disaster and the woods were blackened. An inspection report prepared by the Director

of the Madras Museum, which examined the conservation work at the Padmanabhapuram Palace, states that cuprinol was used as chemical protective coating (Ajith Kumar Pers. Comm.). After cuprinol, a chemical called Polyvinyl Acetate has been used in wood as part of structural conservation (Ajith Kumar Pers. Comm.). Conservation of the painting has been done at Padmanabhapuram Palace. Painting conservation has taken place in many monuments. Treatment of wood carvings have been taken place (Velayudhan Pers. Comm.). The perishable frames of the decorative doors and windows were replaced. The tiles of the roofs were replaced. The tiles on the floors were fixed wherever need. Walls were plastered with cement, and cuprinol was used wherever necessary. The conservation work of various parts of the Padmanabhapuram Palace has been completed. The strengthening of the interior walls was also completed. *Manimeda, Indravilasom, Chandravilasom, Madappalli* conservation works near the Devi temple were started in the palace complex (Administration Report 2003-04 2004: 15).



Figure 2: Padmanabhapuram palace after conservation
(Courtesy: <https://www.archaeology.kerala.gov.in>)

Conservation of Heritage Structures in Thiruvananthapuram

In 1964, the East Fort and the fortified walls of Thiruvananthapuram were declared as protected monument by the department of Archaeology, Kerala State (Premkumar 2013 180). In 1964, the department declared East Fort and other forts in the city of Thiruvananthapuram as Protected Monuments. The fort was in a dilapidated condition when it was taken over by the department of Archaeology, Kerala State. During 1983-84, the department started the conservation work of the for (Premkumar

2013 180). It was during this time that the foundation of the fort, which had been weakened over time, was laid down. The lost area was plastered and restored. In 2003, 26 more monuments inside the fort were declared protected and it became a heritage site (Premkumar 2013 180). A grand plan has been drawn up and put into practice to preserve this heritage area and monuments Premkumar 2013 181). Received the International Heritage Award in 2004 (Premkumar 2013 181). East fort was selected by the Union Ministry of Tourism in 2005 as the best tourist-friendly historical monuments in the country (Premkumar 2013 181). The face of Thiruvananthapuram can be further enhanced by more conservation work and preventing the street vendors inside the fort from inadvertently using the heritage, I think So.

The buildings inside fort around Padmanabha Swamy Temple with the financial assistance of the Eleventh Central Finance Commission and the Central and State Tourism Departments' East-Fort-Thiruvananthapuram-Improvement in surroundings and Public Amenities-Thiruvananthapuram project under the upgradation and Special Problem Grant for 2000-2005 (Administration Report 2003-04 2004: 14). Conservation and conservation activities are carried out in accordance with the scientific preservation judgment.

Conservation at East Fort

In the first phase, the preservation and restoration work of the East fort and the fort walls were restored. The next phase was the preservation of the protected monuments Rangavilasam Palace, Sripadam Palace, Valiya koyikkal, Nitya Chelav Bungalow and Sundaravilasam palace , Bhajanapura palace. In addition, the excise office building is being maintained by the old buildings inside the fort, the building where the Central Archives is located and the Anantashayanam Palace. The *Padma Theertha kulam* in front of the Padmanabhaswamy temple is also undergoing repairs. The east fort was beautified with granite on both the inside and outside. Similarly, on the south and north sides of the eastern fort, the shops attached to the fort wall were removed more than one meter from the fort wall and a granite path was built on the south side. The four adjoining preserved monuments to the left of the east gate of the main fort were evacuated (Administration Report 2003-04 2004: 14). The shops that were functioning for decades on either side of the East Fort, (East and West), a total of twenty seven were vacated by in construction with the shop owners by the Department of Archaeology, Kerala State (Hemachadran Pers.Comm.).Theywere provided with new shops on the south western side of the East Fort (Hemachadran Pers. comm.). The new shops were constructed in heritage style by covering the roofs with terracotta tiles (Hemachadran Pers. Comm.). A three meter wide granite walkway was constructed on either side of the road. The Heritage Street was inaugurated on September 1, 2003 by the then Minister of Water Resources and Archeology, TM Jacob. The fort, a heritage site of the East Fort, is undergoing renovations that will change the face of the fort. Preliminary steps were taken in 2003-2004 to preserve the school as a protected monument inside the fort, which also witnessed unforgettable moments in the history of Travancore

(Administration Report 2003-04 2004: 15). A power outage has been imposed at the East Fort fort gate in front of the Padmanabhaswamy temple in Thiruvananthapuram district (Administration Report 2010-11 2014: 9).



Figure3: Sreepadam palace before conservation
(Courtesy: <https://www.archaeology.kerala.gov.in>)



Figure 4: Sreepadam palace after conservation
(Courtesy: <https://www.archaeology.kerala.gov.in>)

Sreepadam Palace

The oldest among palaces is *Sreepada Theertha Kara Kandu Kondedath* which was called the Sreepadam palace. Sreepadmanabha, lying with head on south and foot on north,

has this palace close to the foot of Padmanabhaswamy's anointed water is let to flow into the holywater body/*Theerthakulam* in this palace. It is on this basis that the palace is called *Sreepadatheertha Koyikkal*. The *Kandukonedath Koikkal* palace which was mentioned in many achieves from 16th century onwards was home to many kings and royalty who came to take part in the temple rituals. Latter, it became the house/building for Attingal queens and family members. Sreepadam has been changed. Sreepadam palace includes two to four blocks, seen were rebuilt by Marthandavarma. It must be him who constructed the nearby *Padmatheertham* with a construction of granite/stone. The main palace was built by the end of the 19th century with giving weightage to the European style . the two storeyed banglow was built according to the plan by the Engineer of the British army captain for Rani Parvathi Bai, to be used as office. The queen was made to understand that no other building in India was as excellent as it. The palace was set with a balcony and space for halting horse cart in front with circular Italian stone pillars giving a majestic appearance. Beautiful Italian tiles are paved in the upper rooms of the palace. The abode of queen Lakshmi Bai and Parvathy Bai as queens were in Sreepadam Koyilkkal (Figure 3) During the year 2008-09, conservation works was done on the four blocks of the Sreepadam Palace in Thiruvananthapuram (Figure 4).



Figure 5: Rangavilasom palace before conservation
(Courtesy: <https://www.archaeology.kerala.gov.in>)

Rangavilasam Palace

The Rangavilasam palace just behind the Kuthiramaalika was built by Swati Tirunal. The building of which began during the reign of Swati Tirunal and ended at the time of Aayilyam Tirunal, is of architectural beauty. The *Hajjoor kacherii* (Secretariate) of Thiruvananthapuram as also built at the time of Aayilyam tirunal. Rangavilasam palace was built with giving importance to southern model of architecture (Figure5).

The height of rooms of the palace, big windows and doors and the variety coloured glasses between the arches all add to the beauty of the palace. The two storeyed palace has a hall in the front of the upper floor with paintings in the walls and pillars glowing in beauty (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Rangavilasom palace after conservation
(Courtesy: <https://www.archaeology.kerala.gov.in>)



Figure 7: Sundaravilasom palace before conservation
(Courtesy: The Directorate Department of Archeology, Kerala State)



Figure 8: Sundaravilasom palace after conservation
(Courtesy: The Directorate Department of Archeology, Kerala State)

Sundaravilasom Palace (Valiyakoyikkal)

Sundaravilasam palace was built in the late 19th century at the time of Sreemulam Thirunal for the royal family members (Figure 7). The young king, Aswathy Thirunal Marthanda Varma, demised in 1900, lived in Sundara vilasam palace. The Directorate of the Department of Archaeology, Kerala State is situated in this palace (Figure 8).

Conclusion

Hundreds of privately owned heritage monuments are being lost day by day. Scientific explorations and excavations are very rare. There are similar crisis in historical resources. The Central Archaeological Department is in charge of the first preserved monuments related to the preservation of antiquities and heritage in Kerala and the Department of Archaeology, Kerala State is in charge of monuments of local importance. The Padmanabhapuram palace in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu is also under the care of the Department of Archaeology, Kerala State. The Central Archaeological Department has a Thrissur based administration to protect our monuments. The scientific conservation and preservation of many of the monuments, palaces and forts of Kerala are in progress under the Department of Archaeology,

Kerala State. Greater Governmental initiatives, financial support and the utilization of more experienced and qualified preservation technicians and engineers and officials are to be brought for in this field realizing the great significance of these heritage centres for posterity.

References

- Administration Report* 1936-1937. 1938. Department of Archeology, Travancore. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Administration Report* 1973-1974. 1975. Department of Archeology, Kerala State Thiruvananthapuram.
- Administration Report* 1981-1982. 1985. Department of Archeology, Kerala State. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Administration Report* 2000-2001. 2004. Department of Archeology, Kerala State. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Administration Report* 2008-2009. 2014. Department of Archeology, Kerala State. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Administration Report* 2010-2011. 2014. Department of Archeology, Kerala State. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Ajith Kumar, C. S. 2021. *Personal Communication* – 16-08-2021.
- Bhupesh, S. 2021. *Personal Communication* – 23-07-2021.
- Cousins, J. H. 1941. Padmanabhapuram Palace : A Treasure House of Art. *Travancore Information*. 1-9.
- Elliot, C. K. 2013. *Heritage Management*. Random Publication. New Delhi.
- Hemachadran, S. 2021. *Personal Communication* – 02-08-2021.
- Jaikumar, S. 2021. *Personal Communication* – 07-08-2021.
- Krisharaj, K. 2021. *Personal Communication* – 23-07-2021.
- Manmathan, M. R. 2007. *Archaeology in Kerala Past and Present*. Farook College Publication Division. Calicut.
- Marshall, J. 1990. *Conservation Manual*. Asian Educational Services. New Delhi.
- McIntosh, J. (ed.). 2011. *Preservation and Archiving Challenges and Solutions*. Apple Academic Press. Canada.
- Menon, A. S. 1978. *Cultural Heritage of Kerala*. DC Books. Kottayam.
- Menon, A. S. 2016. *A Survey of Kerala History*. DC Books. Kottayam.
- Pillai, R. C. 2001. *Protected Monuments of Kerala*. Department of Archaeology, Government of Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Pillai, V. R. P. 1963. *PracheenaLikhithangal (mal)*. Government Press. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Pothuval, R. V. 1943. *PurathanaVasthuGaveshanam (mal)*. Government Press. Thiruvnanthapuram.
- Premkumar, G. 2013. *Kerala Puravasthu Vakupp. Samskarikam (mal)*. Kerala State Institute of Encyclopedia. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Pushkar, R. K. 2013. *Encyclopedia of Museology*. Centrum Press. New Delhi.

- Radhadevi, P. S. 1997. *Puravasthu Vakupp - Innale, Innu* (mal). Publication wing.
Department of Archaeology, Kerala State. Thiruvananthapuram.
- Rajeshkumar, R. 2021. *Personal Communication* – 23-07-2021.
- Sarkar, H. 1992. *Monuments of Kerala*. Archaeological Survey of India. New Delhi.
- Velayudhan Nair, M. 2021. *Personal Communication* – 23-07-2021.