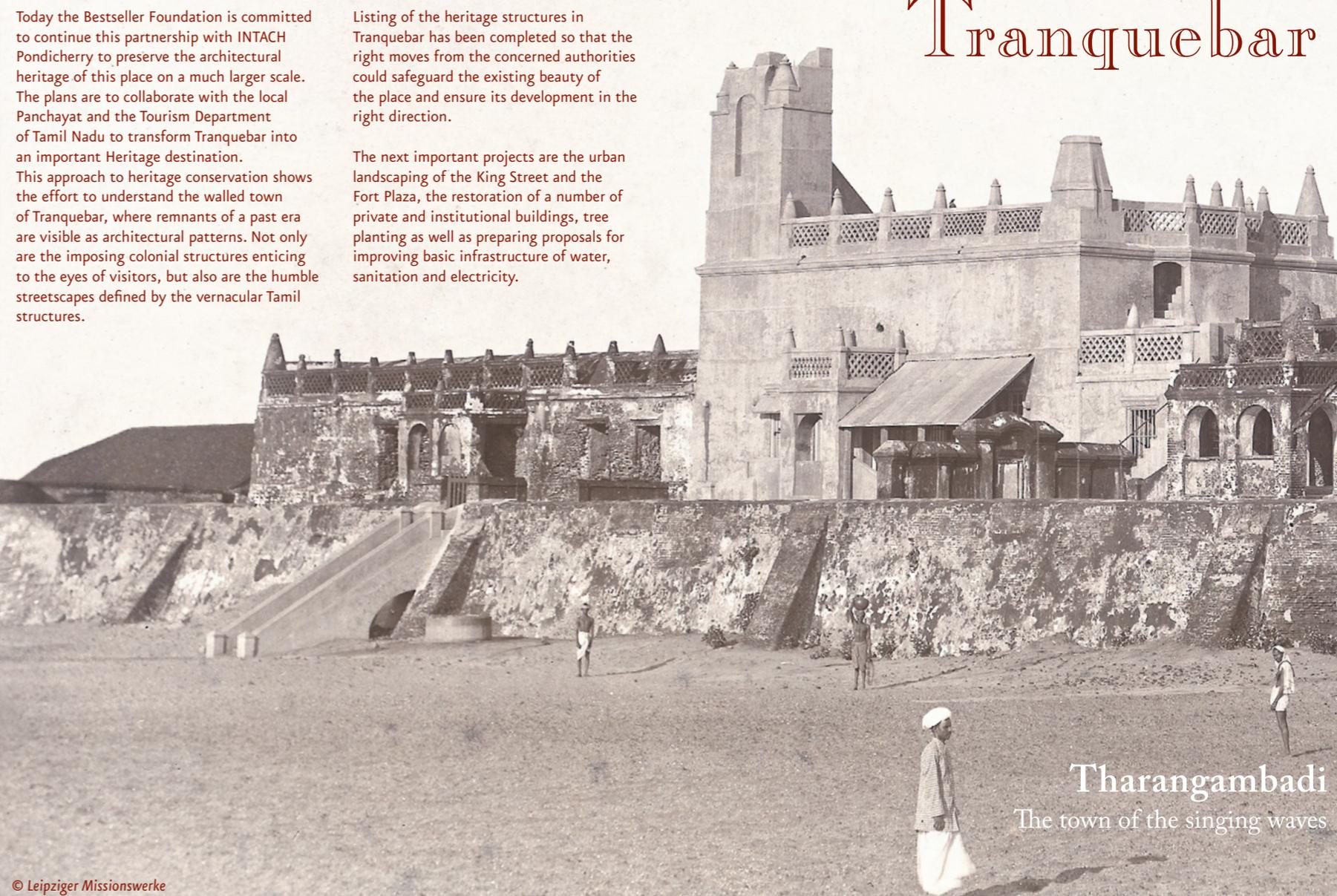


Heritage Walk Map

Tranquebar



Tharangambadi
The town of the singing waves

Future Development as a Heritage Destination

Today the Bestseller Foundation is committed to continue this partnership with INTACH Pondicherry to preserve the architectural heritage of this place on a much larger scale. The plans are to collaborate with the local Panchayat and the Tourism Department of Tamil Nadu to transform Tranquebar into an important Heritage destination. This approach to heritage conservation shows the effort to understand the walled town of Tranquebar, where remnants of a past era are visible as architectural patterns. Not only are the imposing colonial structures enticing to the eyes of visitors, but also are the humble streetscapes defined by the vernacular Tamil structures.

Listing of the heritage structures in Tranquebar has been completed so that the right moves from the concerned authorities could safeguard the existing beauty of the place and ensure its development in the right direction.

The next important projects are the urban landscaping of the King Street and the Fort Plaza, the restoration of a number of private and institutional buildings, tree planting as well as preparing proposals for improving basic infrastructure of water, sanitation and electricity.

Preservation of Architectural Heritage

One of the characteristics that sets Tranquebar apart from the neighbouring towns and villages is the Danish colonial architecture - the houses, villas and the fort that remind the visitor of their former presence. The town is perceived as unique because of this architectural setting which is an outcome of a synthesis between Danish and local Tamil vernacular. However, this unique architecture today stands endangered because of development pressures and lack of sensitivity and appreciation. But this is changing...



The five houses in the Goldsmith's Street after the tsunami in 2005. This foundation wanted to help Tranquebar overcome the disaster of the tsunami by starting a number of social and educational projects, coastal protection planting, solid waste management and other employment generating schemes. To house some of these activities they decided to buy some derelict and damaged Tamil houses in the Goldsmith's Street and partnered with INTACH Pondicherry to restore them. Thus five Tamil vernacular houses were returned to their former glory. One is now a guest house, two are housing the INTACH office and a permanent exhibition on Tranquebar history and architecture. The other two will be devoted to development of crafts.

The movement to preserve and restore this heritage began with the restoration of the Dansborg Fort, the citadel of the old Danish trading post, by the Tamil Nadu State Archaeological Department in collaboration with the Tranquebar Association in 2002. It now houses a museum.

The next important step was the restoration of the utterly neglected and desolate former British Collector's Bungalow in early 2005. Today it is a Neemrana Group heritage hotel called the 'Bungalow on the Beach'. Another old

Street elevation King's Street



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A quick glance into History

1306 The Masilamani Nathar Kovil temple was built by Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandian in a small fishing & trading village called Kulashekharapattinam; also referred to as Sadangambadi, Thayangambadi and Tharangambadi.

1350's Muslim Traders arrived in Tharangambadi and build a Mosque.

1620 After failed attempts to reach an agreement in Ceylon, the Danish trading expedition arrived at Tharangambadi under the leadership of Governor Roland Crappé and Admiral Ove Giedde. A treaty between the Company and the Nayak Raganatha of Thanjavur granted the Danes trading rights and the right to establish themselves at Tharangambadi.

1624 Construction of the Dansborg completed.

1701 Zion Church constructed.

1706 German protestant missionaries, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, arrived at the order of the Danish King.

King's Street



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1715 First printing press capable of printing a Tamil translation of the New Testament.

Christmas Eve in Tranquebar



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1718 A Protestant church, the New Jerusalem Church, was constructed by the mission.

1730 Silver & copper coin minting began.

1776-1784 Governor's Bungalow constructed.

1732 The Danish Asiatic Company was dissolved. The power passed on to the Danish State. Around 15 surrounding villages were annexed with Tharangambadi as the capital.

1789 First gold coin introduced.

1792 'Landporten' or the Land Gate reconstructed in its present shape

1845 Tharangambadi sold to the British for 12.5 lakhs Rupees. It remained the British Collector's Headquarters till 1860.

1860 New facilities like District and Session's Court, Post Office, etc. introduced.

1861 Railway line to Nagapattinam diverted attention away from Tharangambadi and commerce slowed down.

1947 India gains independence.

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Heritage Buildings

- 1 Governor's Bungalow
- 2 Commander's House
- 3 Zion Church
- 4 Zeigenbalg Spiritual Centre
- 5 New Jerusalem Church
- 6 Van Theylingen's House
- 7 St. Theresa Convent
- 8 Rehling's House
- 9 Ladies Hostel
- 10 Old Danish Cemetery
- 11 Post Office
- 12 Masilamani Nathar Kovil
- 13 Chinta Durai Pillaiyar Kovil (Shivan Kovil)
- 14 Vinayakar Kovil
- 15 Angalamman Kovil
- 16 Mühlendorff's House
- 17 Gründler's House
- 18 Perumal Kovil
- 19 Zeigenbalg Museum
- 20 Church Hall
- 21 Zeigenbalg's Printing Press
- 22 Plütschau's School
- 23 Dargah
- 24 New Mosque
- 25 Old Muslim School
- 26 Norway Bastion
- 27 Denmark Bastion
- 28 Remnants of Fort Wall
- 29 Prins Jorgons Bastion
- 30 The Five Tamil Houses
Crafts Centre
INTACH Heritage Centre
Tropical Park

Places to stay in Heritage Buildings

- 31 The Bungalow on the Beach
- 32 Gate House
- 33 Nayak House

A short read on some important buildings



The Town Gate.

The Town Gate

'Landporten', as the Town Gate is called in Danish, is part of the fortifications built around the town of Tranquebar in the 1660's. In 1791 the original gate, which was in a deteriorated state, was demolished and replaced by a new one designed by the then governor, Peter Anker and executed by the engineer, Mühlendorff, in 1792. The flanking guard posts are missing from the original plan.

Dansborg and the Parade Ground

The construction of the fort began immediately after the arrival of the first Danish trading expedition and the establishment of a treaty regulating trading rights between the Nayak Ragunatha in Thanjavur and the Danish East India Company in 1620. Until the end of the 17th century the fort was used for residential and storage purposes; later, increase in population forced the Danes to move out and occupy surrounding areas as well. The Parade Ground adjacent to Dansborg once held a number of storage buildings and was the scene of official parades, processions and bustling trade activities.

The Zion Church

Consecrated in 1701, it is the oldest protestant Church of India. Prominent with its combination of colonial and Indian architectural

features, its construction together with the fortification of the town marked the moving out and spreading of the Danish population into the surrounding settlement. The structure went through several reconstructions, refurbishments and "facelifts" before it was brought to the present form.

The New Jerusalem Church

Built after the arrival of German missionaries, Bartolomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, when the existing mission Church proved too small for the growing Christian population. Its architecture expresses an interesting synthesis of indigenous Indian features and traditional European church building tradition.

The Bungalow on the Beach

A beautiful and imposing seaside structure, it used to be the summer residence of the British Collector. When bought in November 2002, the building was in an advanced state of disrepair. The restoration was completed in March 2004 and it is now functioning as a heritage hotel managed by the Neemrana Group.



The Bungalow on the Beach

The Governor's Bungalow

Constructed as the private residence of the Governor David Brown between 1776 and 1784, it was made the official Danish

Governor's Bungalow following the Danish state purchase of the building in 1784. Several additions and alterations have been carried out subsequently during the British rule. It housed the Session's Court for some time. The building lies unattended to at present.

The Commander's House

Also called 'Halkier's House', it dates back to the 18th century. It served as a mission hospital for some time before hosting the TELC Teacher's Training Institute.



Rehling's House.

Rehling's House

One of the stateliest buildings in King's Street, it can be traced to the first half of the 18th century. The second storey was added in the second half of the century; the portico, around the turn of the century. Two governors resided in this building during the Danish period, Peter Hermanson and Johannes Rehling – the latter giving name to the building. Originally built with a pitched roof, it was altered to a flat terraced roof in the second half of the 18th century and verandahs and porches were added to adapt to the tropical Indian climate. The elegantly decorated white colonnaded facade provided the building with a touch of worthy monumentality that stood well with the self-representation of the colonial upper class.

The Old Danish Cemetery

Presumably laid out in connection with the erection of the fort in the 1620's; due to the high mortality rates of the European settlers, the establishment of a cemetery must have been necessary from the very beginning. In the 1600's it was connected to the Dansborg Chapel and after 1701, to Zion Church. To this day the names of several Danish colonial officials and tradesmen can be found carved into the headstones.

Masilamani Nathar Temple

The construction of the temple can be dated precisely from an inscription once embedded in its Eastern wall (now exhibited at the Dansborg Museum). The inscription states that King Maravarman Kulasekara Pandian granted land for the erection of a temple in 1306. Today the temple is heavily eroded and threatened by the encroaching sea.



Masilamani Nathar Temple.

The Ziegenbalg Museum Complex

Ziegenbalg's House on Admiral Street was bought in the 18th century to accommodate the growing Lutheran mission. The complex consisted of Ziegenbalg's Residence, which is the oldest building, a prayer hall, the missionary buildings and living quarters, and a small building called 'the first printing press' though the original was housed in the Mission House on King's Street.