

HISTORY OF PADMANABHAPURAM PALACE

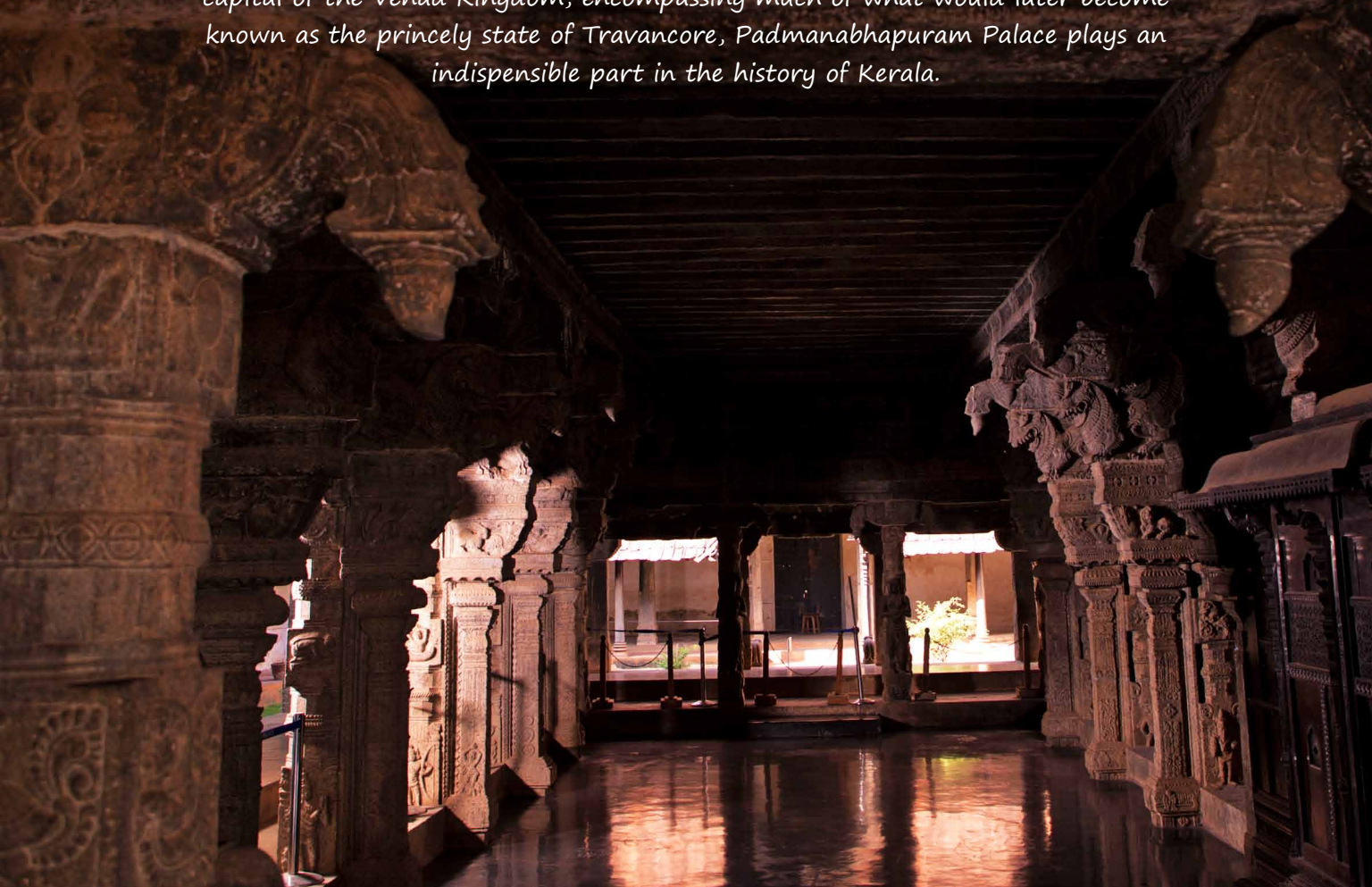
Through the annals of time



Padmanabhapuram Palace History

Shielded by the fierce embrace of the Western Ghats, Padmanabhapuram Palace stands tall as the quintessential tribute to Kerala's architectural accomplishments.

It is located in the quaint town of Padmanabhapuram, part of Kanyakumari District, and plays a significant role in the history of the land. Once the flourishing capital of the Venad Kingdom, encompassing much of what would later become known as the princely state of Travancore, Padmanabhapuram Palace plays an indispensable part in the history of Kerala.



CONTENTS

Origin	01
Palace Complex	02
Historical Significance	03
Decline	04
Reclamation	05



Origin

The mighty Venad kingdom ruled over most of Southern Kerala and established numerous strongholds in the South. Remnants have been found in nearby locations like Valliyur, Veerakeralaeswaram (also known as Veerakeralapuram), Eraniel, Thiruvithamcode, Charode and Puliyoorkurichi (Udayagiri) of settlements, palaces, ancient trappings and eminent temples that predate the foundation of Padmanabhapuram. Subsequently, the Venad royals chose Padmanabhapuram as the ideal settlement site due to its strategic location, along with its fertile lands, abundant water supply, and protection offered by virtue of its proximity to the Western Ghats. Thus, Padmanabhapuram, originally known as Kalkulam, became the prosperous capital of the Venad Kingdom.



House of Veluthampi Dhalava



Udayagiri Fort



Arappalli



Palace Complex

The sprawling Padmanabhapuram Palace complex was constructed within the ancient Kalkulam fortifications and acted as the administrative headquarters for the Venad kingdom. Ancient records state that the Kalkulam forts were established during the reign of Iravi Varma Kulasekharan (r.1592-1609), just before 1600 C.E. The first palace he established in Kalkulam was *Kalkulathu Koikkal*, which underwent numerous additions and renovations as time passed on. Each subsequent ruler redesigned the palace according to the architectural trends of their time. This has led to the new blocks of the palace reflecting myriad architectural styles, from traditional Kerala structures to those with pronounced colonial influences.



Historical Significance

The backdrop of Padmanabhapuram Palace is highlighted in many prominent episodes in the annals of Travancore history. A royal proclamation issued from Padmanabhapuram in 1696 abolished regressive caste rules like *Mannapedu* and *Pulappedu*. Around 1750, the palace and fort were rebuilt by Anizham Tirunal Marthanda Varma (r.1729-1758). The palace was then submitted to the royal family's patron deity, Sree Padmanabha Swamy and hence forth came to be known as *Padmanabhapuram*. Karthika Tirunal Rama Varma (r.1758-1798), Marthanda Varma's successor, deemed Padmanabhapuram Palace as the principle royal seat. The palace fortifications were eventually captured and utilised by British soldiers in 1809, during the reign of Avittam Tirunal Balarama Varma, in their quest to quash the rebellion led by Veluthampi Dalawa, the prime minister of Travancore State.



Decline

With the emergence of a fortified settlement around the Padmanabha Swamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Padmanabhapuram lost its prominence. Although the subsequent rulers preferred Thiruvananthapuram as their royal abode, the *Navarathri* festival was held at Padmanabhapuram until the reign of Swathi Tirunal Rama Varma (b.1813-d.1846). In the 1850s, the decline of the Padmanabhapuram Palace became accelerated, with the public being unable to access the complex and widespread rumours of the palace being haunted.



Reclamation

In 1934, the combined efforts of Sree Chithira Tirunal Balarama Varma, the last Maharaja of Travancore, Sethu Parvathi Bayi, the Queen Mother, and Dewan Sir. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, led to the palace coming to the notice of J.H. Cousins, the Art Advisor to Travancore Government and R. Vasudeva Poduval who headed the Archaeology Department. With the aid of the royals, the palace was converted into a museum complex in 1935. A slight hiccup arose when the Indian states were reorganised on the basis of linguistics, leading to the severing of Kanyakumari District from Kerala. Due to timely intervention, the historic Padmanabhapuram

Palace and its rambling grounds came under the direct control of the Kerala State Government.

Today, the Padmanabhapuram Palace is a beloved tourist destination. Visitors from all around the world throng to marvel at the beauty of its structures and experience the history enmeshed in its every nook and cranny. The threads of time are interwoven into the very foundations of the palace in such a way that it transports every visitor to an ancient past and leaves them spellbound.