



A STUDY ON THE UNIQUENESS OF RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS TIMELINE IN THE NILGIRIS

R. Revathi¹ and B. Magendran²

¹Ph.D., Research Scholar, Department of History, Government Arts College, Udthagamandalam, The Nilgiris, Tamilnadu, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of History, Government Arts College, Udthagamandalam, The Nilgiris, Tamilnadu, India.

Abstract

A monument promotes pride of our past and heritage make us unique in the world. A monument reminds our heritage. Any structure or work above or below, the surface of the land, and any cave or excavation. Stephen Rumbold Lushington eagerly felt the need of a church in Udthagamandalam exclusively for the British. In 1837 the first Catholic Church was estimated in Udthagamandalam. George Uglow Pope, Tamil scholar and translator of major literary works in Tamil, including the Thirukkural into English.

Key Words: Church, Monuments, Buildings, Nilgiris and Unique.

1.1 Introduction

A statue and other structures are erected to honour a notable person or event in life. It has become significant to a social group as a part of their recollection of historic times or cultural heritage, due to its historical, political, technical or architectural importance. Some of the first monuments were dolmens or menhirs. 'Megalithic' is combining two Greek words 'Megas' - large and 'Lithos'-stone. These structures of rudimentary character are built of large rough stones to build for religious or funerary purposes.¹ A monument includes statues, historical building, war memorials, archaeological sites and cultural assets. The public structures of any historical importance surviving that age are the rock-beds hewn out of natural rock formation.²

1.1.1 Dolmenoid Cist and Menhir

It is in the form of a table with one huge capstone covering the three or more upright stones. There are many subtypes of Dolmenoid Cist in Tamilnadu. An undressed monolithic slab or boulder erected as a memorial stone is called a Menhir. This is the rarest type of burial in Tamilnadu. It is confined to the Coimbatore District.³

1.2 Monuments

Monuments is a word comes from Latin word, Monument which means memorial, The word "Monumental" is frequently used in reference with something which as extraordinary size and power, as in monumental sculpture, but also to mean simply anything made to commemorate the dead, as a funerary monument. Any formation or works, above or below, the surface of the land and any cave or excavation, any

site consist of the vehicle, vessel or artifact or other movable structure. The Archaeological monuments also give more information for reconstructing the history of Tamilnadu.⁴

1.3 Significance of Monuments

An old building teaches us to know about the historical monuments and promotes the respect for those who lived in different times and different societies. An architectural monument cultivates pride of our past and heritage making us to be unique in the world. A monument reminds our heritage. They are like a treasure for our nation and symbol of pride of their civilization. They help us to understand our past and the level of development, knowledge and thoughts. This is a way that they show the life of our past ancestors.

1.4 Religious Monuments

People of all religions have built monuments, shrines and statues to worship their god. Sacred places for prayer, some religious monuments were extraordinary with their size and infrastructure.

1.5 Objectives

To study about the unique features of the religious monuments timeline in the Nilgiris.

1.6 Methodology

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem; it may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In this, we study various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying the research along with the logic behind them. It is necessary not only for the research but also the methods/techniques and methodology.⁵

1.6.1 Collection of Data

In order to study the uniqueness of the religious monuments timeline of the Nilgiris, secondary data was collected from various books, journals and published materials.

1.7 Timeline of Religious Monuments

1.7.1 St. Stephen Church, Ootacamund: 1829

Honourable Stephen Rumbold Lushington, the Governor of Madras from 1827 to 1835, who eagerly felt the need of a church in Ooty exclusively for the British, the foundation stone of that edifice was laid on 23rd of April 1829, to coincide with the birthday of King George IV. ⁶ St.Stephen's Church was consecrated by John Matthias Turner, Bishop of Calcutta, on 5th November 1830. The architect in charge was John James Underwood, Captain and Madras Regiment. Uniqueness of that church was John Sullivan's wife (Henrietta Cecilia) and daughter's (Harriet Anne) funerals were take place. Their graves can be seen even today.

1.7.2 St. Mary's Church, Ootacamund: 1837

It was the first Catholic Church in Ooty. In 1837 Rev. Fr.Bigot Beauclair visited Ootacamund. The original church was found inadequate and a larger one was constructed in 1870 by Rev. Fr.Fiarom which is the present church St.Mary's. In memory of the Golden Jubilee of the Diocese the busts of Cardinal Antony Padiyara and Arch bishop Aruldas James were erected beside the church. In 2012, a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe from Mexico was brought and installed in the church.

1.7.3 Holy Trinity Church, Ootacamund: 1844

It was the second oldest church in Ootacamund and originally was a small building built by Rev.Harper, who was the Chaplin of St. Stephen's Church. Until he was transferred to Tamil evangelical work in 1844. Till 1858, this building was used to conduct a school on week days and on Sunday for worships by Indian Christians. George Uglow Pope, Tamil scholar and translator of major Tamil literary works, including the Thirukkural, into English. Uniqueness of the church is the first Tamil church which was dedicated in year 1858 due to efforts of missionaries, chief among them was Rev.G.U.Pope, a Tamil scholar.

1.7.4 All Saints Church, Coonoor: 1851

All Saints Church is the oldest church in Coonoor. The foundation stone of the building was laid in 1851. This church is maintained and its appearance looks incredible. The Church has a dark wooden structure and distinctive roofing that attracts the visitors. In 1879 the foundation stone of the chancel was laid by the venerable Bishop Gell. It was formerly operated as part of a British Church. Uniqueness of the church is graveyard of those military people.

1.7.5 St. Joseph's Church, Wellington: 1864

St. Joseph's church in Wellington became a separate parish in 1865 with Coonoor. Until 1859, military troops used to come there for rest and convalescence. To cater the spiritual needs of the catholic military soldiers and the faithful of that area Fr. Joseph Louis Ravel constructed the first church in 1864.

1.7.6 St. Antony's Church Coonoor: 1867

In 1863, St Antony's parish, Coonoor was separated from St Joseph's parish Wellington with Rev. Fr. De Gelis the first parish priest who constructed the church in 1867. Fr. Bechu and Fr. Petit extended the two wings of the church and Fr. Vieillard built the two beautiful spires in 1911. The altar of the parish was renovated and consecrated in 2002.

1.7.7 St. Mary's Church Kothagiri: 1867

The St. Mary's church at Kothagiri was built in 1867, on a piece of land belonging to Mr. Redmond. It soon became a popular place of pilgrimage where people of all creeds, especially the Badagas pray to the Holy Mother of God under the title of Arokia Matha. In 1937 the church was extended by Fr. Morin. In 1940, a grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes was constructed by Fr. Gentinne.

1.7.8 St. Thomas Church, Ootacamund: 1867

St. Thomas church located near Ooty Lake is the scenic. The foundation stone was laid by Lt. Gen. H. Dowker, a senior lay trustee of St. Stephen Church on 1st May 1867, in the presence of Dr. G. U. Pope,⁷ It was built in the year 1870. The church is a part of the Diocese of Ooty and offers a great view of the Ooty Lake. The church houses were the memorial of St. Thomas which is one of the tallest structures in Ooty. The church also has houses the grave of William Patrick Adam, former governor of Madras.

1.7.9 St. George's Garrison Church, Wellington: 1885

The George's Garrison Church was built in the year 1885, and a place of worship for the British soldiers. It is the biggest church in the Nilgiris. The cross at the top of the church is clearly visible to people from a distance. The architecture of this church pulpit, oak choir-stalls and the brass altar-railings were imported from British. St. George's Church is known for its work of art and well-designed interiors

1.7.10 Sacred Heart Cathedral, Ootacamund: 1897

Sacred Heart Church was constructed in 1897 by Rev. Fr. Foubert. After the First World War Rev. Fr. Belysi built the bell towers.⁸ When Ootacamund was raised to a separate jurisdiction on its own power on 03-07-1955, Sacred Heart Church became the diocesan Cathedral to be the unique.

1.7.11 St. Michael's Church, Ketti: 1914

Ketti has beautiful valley and mountains. The missionaries started a venture in this village in 1914. Fr. Gudín volunteered to work among the Badagas and he was followed by Fr. Foubert in 1916, during 1922 Ketti was raised to the status of a parish. Fr. Tignous opened several schools in various Badaga villages and published a catechism in Badaga. Fr. E. Perie built the church and dedicated it to St. Michael, the Archangel.

1.8 Limitations

The main limitations faced by the researcher for the present study are secondary data, and the study covers only one district. The studies give significance and cover only few monuments in The Nilgiris. The rest of the monuments are not given attention in this study area. Interpretations of data have their own limitations with regard to reliability, diligence and accuracy.

1.9 Findings of the Study

1. St. Stephen Church, Udhamandalam, during 1829, Honourable Stephen Rumbold Lushington laid the foundation stone. John Sullivan's wife's Henrietta Cecilia and elder daughter's Harriet Anne funeral were held at the St. Stephen's church and the graves can be seen.
2. Holy Trinity Church, Udhamandalam, during 1844, Rev. Harper, Rev.Dr G.U.Pope worked in this Church.
3. St. Joseph's Church, Barracks, Fr. Joseph Louis Ravel constructed the first church in 1864, Fr.Joseph Louis Ravel R.C Fully Fledged Military Troops.
4. St. Thomas Church, Udhamandalam, 1867, Lieutenant General Dowker, The church also has houses the grave of William Patrick Adam, former governor of Madras.
5. St. Antony's Church, Coonoor, Rev. Fr De Gelis the first parish priest who constructed the church in 1867.
6. St. Mary's Church, Udhamandalam, in 1837, Rev. Fr. Bigot Beauclair R.C First Church in Ooty.
7. Sacred Heart Cathedral Church, was built in 1897, R Rev. Fr. Foubert.C and it's the Diocesan Catholic.
8. St. George's Garrison Church, Wellington, 1885, Place of Worship for British Troops.

1.10 Suggestion

1. The monuments must be well maintained by the Government and special attention should be given for renovation.
2. The tourists should allow to visit the monuments in this district.
3. A separate monument board should look after the historical monuments.
4. By providing financial assistance and architecture idea to modernize the religious monuments.
5. Experience and knowledge organization to look into the monuments to bring their manifestation of this area.

1.11 Conclusion

A monument promotes pride of our history and inheritance making us unique in the world. A monument reminds our heritage. Monuments are like resources for a nation and symbol of pride of the evolution. Community of all religions has built monuments, shrines and statues to worship their god. Sacred places for prayer, some religious monuments stand out as incredible due to their enormous size. Monuments attract the tourist to visit and countries earn foreign exchange for the development of a realm.

References:

1. D.H Gordon, The Prehistoric background of Indian Culture, (Bombay: N.M.Tripathi Pvt. Ltd, 1958), p.18
2. N.Subramanian, Social and Cultural History of Tamilnad Upto 1336 A.D, (Udumalpet: Ennes Publication, 2005), p.243
3. R.Venkartaman, Indian Archaeology, (Udumalpet: Ennes Publication,1985), pp.112-113
4. A.Swaminathan, History of Tamilnadu, (Chennai: Deepa Pathippagam, 2004), p.15
5. C.R.Kothari, Research Methodology, (New Delhi: Vikas Publication Ltd, 1998), p.11
6. Frederick Price, Ootacamund A History, (New Delhi: Rupa Publication India Pvt. Ltd, 2017), p.139
7. C.S.I Stephen's Church, 175th Souviner, (Ootacamund: The Nilgiris, 2005), p.8
8. Diocese of Ootacamund, (Ooty: Mariyam Bishop House, 2001), p.26