

Relevance of Shakthan Thampuran Museum in Thrissur

Project submitted to the University of Calicut in

partial fulfillment for the award of the degree

of

Bachelor of Arts in English and History

by

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Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled **Cultural Heritage of Shakthan Thampuran Museum** is a record of research work carried out by Ms. Naija AS under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature submitted to the University of Calicut.

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Declaration

I, Naija A.S, hereby declare that the project entitled, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English & History, is a bonafide record of original research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of B.A. English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Introduction

Local history is the study of regions in the past. The region under study generally tends to be geographically small city, town or village. The writing of local history enriches the life and times of the community of the particular place by providing information related to historical sites and societies. The local history collection can help the students, researchers, historians, local administrators, social workers and writers by giving them the past history of that locality and this collection can be used in community information service. A large number of various types of document like maps, punthis and paintings are to be considered as the information sources for local history writing. Library can play a big role for local history collection. It may collect, organise and disseminate right information about local history of a place to the place to the right time for solving their queries.

Good local history is one of the most enduring contributions that can be made to social science. It gives veritable information of all kinds to several sections of population. For centuries people have attempted at preserving and documenting the events of their lives. These collections can serve not only the individual who made them but also the entire community. They focus on people and places. It has been practised in different cultures for different purposes. Local history is the study of regions in the past. The region under study generally tends to be geographical small-city, town or village.

Local history is reservoir of facts and myths. The writing of local history of cultural heritage of Shakthan Thampuran Museum is significant as it would bring out the

details of the history of the region as well as the importance of museum. The study has tried to incorporate multifarious available information both published and unpublished.

Shakthan Thampuran Museum is very clean and calm place at the heart of the city, Thrissur, my homeland, one of the district and city of Kerala. The place itself is quite big and very well maintained. There is lot of stuff to see and each one has a history behind it. Also it is good place to pass some time. Because of its historical value it has a famous tourist attraction. Shakthan Thampuran palace popularly known as vadakekara palace (constructed in 1795), it dated back to the time of the King of Cochin named Rama Varma Thampuran, a generous ruler whose reign was known as the 'Golden Age of Kochi'. This is a beautiful palace with an amalgamation of Kerala and Dutch style of architecture. There have large collection of historic chariots, coins and tools used during olden times where the palace holds historic, cultural, and archaeological importance and is converted into a heritage museums in 2005 by State.

Interaction with the constituent community and promotions of their heritage is an integral part of the educational roll of museum. For centuries, museums have played an important role in societies around the world. They are cultural institutions in which people are able to come, learn, and enjoy art. Some museums have gained a reputations for their collection of art. An examination of the evolution of the museums from their early years leading up to the present will be used to reveal their impact on society and to explore how museums can and do play a role in cultural diplomacy, most notably through art exhibitions.

The history of Shakthan Thampuran museum teaches about our heritage, enlightens and informs us about past struggles. Shakthan Thampuran was the man behind the activity of transforming. Shakthan Thampuran reign witnessed the emergence of

several commercial and trading centres in Thrissur. He reforms the revenue civil and military department of his kingdom. During the early period of his rule, he proved himself as a good ruler through his abilities. He declared that, the duty of a king was to protect the country from enemies, protect peace and wealth.

He practiced this thought out of his life based on this statement we can understand that, many of his actions were merely for justice. Indeed, by studying and reflecting on the actions of historical groups of individuals, we may be able to gain knowledge about what course of action to pursue in present. Museums educate people, about how people of the past reacted to their environment and the effects of those reactions to our past, present, and future.

Sources

The study is based on primary and secondary sources of data. For further details online websites are also used to gather information regarding the topic.

Methodology

Historical methodology used in this study. It is mainly based on the historical analysis of data, including documents and reports. The work is based on the available primary and secondary sources and also local history has been used for this study.

Objective of the study

This project aims to understand the historical background of the Shakthan Thampuran Museum in Thrissur.

To explore the history of the museum.

To analysis the significance of the Shakthan Thampuran Museum.

Chapterisation

This project is divided into five chapters, Introduction followed by first chapter and it will deals with origin and different types of museums. Second chapter deals with Shakthan Thampuran Museum and the third chapter about Museum as an medium of education and as a preservation of knowledge, followed by conclusion.

Chapter 1

Origin and Types of Museums

A museum is an institution that a collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance and great importance to researchers. The word *museum* has classical origins. In its Greek form, *mouseion*, it means “seat of the Muses” and designed a philosophical institution or a place of contemplation. Use of the Latin derivation, *museum*, appears to have been restricted in Roman times mainly to places of philosophical discussion. Use of the word *museum* during the 19th century and most of the 20th century denoted a building housing cultural material to which the public had access. Later as museums continued to respond to the societies that created them, the emphasis on the building itself became less dominant.

Open-air museums, comprising a series of buildings preserved as objects, and eco-museums, involving the interpretation of all aspects of an outdoor environment, provide examples of this. In addition, so-called virtual museums exist in electronic form on the internet. Although virtual museums provide interesting opportunities for and bring certain benefits to existing museums, they remain dependent upon the collection, preservation, and interpretation of material things by the real museum.

Museum have long history going back to the 3rd century B.C. the museum culture has spread to nearly every part of the world and today it has museum uncommon to find any country that does not have a museum, no matter how small it may be. This implies that the concept of the museum has become a global concept that has survived the 20th century. The traditional role of museum is to collect objects and materials of cultural, religious and

historical importance, preserve them, research into them and present them to the public for the purpose of education and enjoyment.

Museums do promote unity in the society by using their resources to ensure understanding and appreciation for the various groups and cultures that exist in that society. Peace is essential for happiness and joy in the family, in the community, in the society in the nation and in the world.

The largest museums are located in major cities throughout the world, while thousands of local museums exist in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas. Museums have varying aims, ranging from serving researchers and specialists to serving the general public. The goal of serving researchers is increasingly shifting to serving the general public.

There are many types of museums, including art museums, natural history museums, science museums, war museum and children's museums. The world's largest and visited museums include the Louvre in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the National Museum of China in Beijing, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the British Museum and National Gallery in London, and the Vatican Museums in Vatican City. According to the international council of museums, there are more than 55,000 museums in 202 countries.

Museums in India

India is a charming country of rich architectural beauty, culture, traditions and historical past. Being ornamented with historical monuments, it has a majestic past of Mughals and British that speak of the history. In each destination of India, travellers can come across a museum that displays the magnificent past of the region. And no tour to India is complete without paying a visit to a museum of the city that reflects the culture and history

of ancient India in a most beautiful way. There are many popular museums in India that unfold lots of unheard truth of a bygone era.

Popular museums in India

National Museum

One of the largest museum of India. It was constructed in 1949 on the corner of Janpath in the lively city of Delhi. It is a best place to visit as one gets to know about the luxury coaches of trains, which were a long time back used by the great kings. It houses a variety of collections that include jewellery, painting, armors, decorative arts and manuscripts. There is also Buddhist section where one can find head of a Buddha statue, and Buddha Stupa having remnants of Gautama Buddha, constructed in 3rd century BCE by Sovereign Ashoka.

Indian Museum

Established in 1814 by Asiatic Society of Bengal in Kolkata, Indian Museum has a unique collection of armors, skeletons, Mughal paintings and ornaments. It possesses six sections containing five galleries of creative and scientific work of arts that is archaeology, geology, economic beauty and art. Being one of the oldest museums in the globe, it is one of the most sought after places of India that one must not give a miss on holidays in Kolkata.

Government Museum

Also hailed as Madras Museum, Government Museum is positioned in Egmore, which is among the busiest spots of Chennai. It was established in 1815 and exhibits different varieties pertaining to geology, zoology and anthropology and botany. The museum has excellent sections showcasing the main south Indian times encompassing, Chaulkyas, Cholas and Vijaynagar. There are separate sections for children also.

Chhatrapati Shivajii Vastu Museum, Mumbai

Positioned in proximity to the Gateway of India, Mumbai, Chhatrapati Shivaji Vaastu Museum Mumbai was erected in the starting of the 20th century. It comprises of three main sections such as the archaeology section, natural history section and art section. Each section shows a variety of work of arts dating back to Guptas and Chalkyas era.

National Rail Museum

The National Rail Museum has a great collection of more than 100 genuine size displays of Indian Railways. It is situated in Chanakyapuri over an area of 10 acres of land. There is a toy train that tenders rides of the site on daily basis. Some of the other collections put on sight are antique furniture, working models, historical photographs, singling tools and more.

Calico Museum

One of the most admired tourist attractions in Ahmedabad city, Calico Museum was started by the Gautama Sarabhai and his sister Gira Sarabhai in the year 1949. It has a mind-blowing collection of fabrics ranging from pre-historic cloth paintings to the gorgeous Indian fabrics; one will definitely be fascinated by the spectacular work of art displayed at the Calico Museum.

Napier Museum

Constructed in the 19th century, Napier Museum is the oldest museum perched in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala. It has got the name from Lord Napier, who was the Governor of Madras. It houses a great collection of historic artefacts such as the kathakali puppets models, musical instruments, Kerala chariots and bronze idols of gods and goodness.

Museums in Kerala

The museums in Kerala are a gateway to art, history, science, and culture of south India. Visiting a museum is always better than reading a history book. There is so much to see and explore in real.

Popular museums in Kerala

Hill Palace Archaeological Museum

The Hill Palace Archaeological Museum is at Tripunithura, Kochi. It is one of the most significant archaeological museums in Kerala, built in 1865 and comprises 49 buildings in the traditional architectural style sprawling over 56 acres of land. The Heritage section puts on a bejewelled display of ornaments, intricately carved beds, weapons, coins, marble sculptures, paintings & exquisite artefacts from the king's era. Precious stone-studded gold crowns & ornaments would dazzle you. The campus is used for cultivating rare medicinal species apart from housing a deer park.

Kerala Folklore and Culture Museum

The Folklore Museum aims at providing education & knowledge to art lovers, researchers, and travellers from all over the world. This museum is the only museum that is built with exquisite architecture in the whole of Kerala. This museum was erected by the concerted efforts of 62 supremely skilled carpenters over seven years.

Arakkal Kettu Museum Kannur

Arakkal Museum is located in Avikkara, a small coastal village near St. Angelo Fort, at a distance of around 3 km from Kannur. The Arakkal Museum has a deep connection with the Arakkal family. It was the only royal family in Kerala. The palace is an interesting piece of artwork carved out in wood and laterite stones that combine traditional Kerala and classic English styles of architecture. The palace's structure comprises a vast courtyard, several

independent units, mosques, long verandas, durbar halls, wooden floors and windows with coloured glasses.

Napier Museum Trivandrum

Trivandrum's Art and Natural History Museum came into existence in 1880. The Gothic roof and minarets remind one of the Anglo-Saracen architectural styles. It has a rare collection of archaeological and historical artefacts, ancient ornaments, bronze idols, ivory carvings and a chariot. The museum is named after the former Governor-General of Madras, Sir John Napier. The Sir Chitra Art Gallery inside the Napier Museum features a rare collection of paintings by Raja Ravi Varma, Nicholas Roerich and some fascinating works from the Rajput, Mughal and Tanjore schools of paintings, paintings from Japan.

Indo Portuguese Museum

Established in 1910 in Kochi town of Kerala, is a fusion of both Indian and Portuguese culture. Joseph Kurethra built the museum, a former Bishop of the city, to preserve the rich Christian heritage. There are five major sections within the museum: Altar, Treasure, Procession, Civil life and Cathedral.

Kerala Science and Technology Museum

Established in 1984, Kerala Science and Technology Museum is located at Thiruvananthapuram. It has ten galleries exhibiting items related to a particular discipline of Science and Engineering. The museum also has a planetarium called Priyadarsini Planetarium.

Archaeological Museum Thrissur

Archaeological Museum is housed in the building constructed in 1940 by the Raja of Kollangode for his daughter. This building is built in an eclectic style, blending traditional and western architecture. This museum is an art and archaeological museum situated in Thrissur, established in the year 1938 as Sree Mulam Chitrasala under Cochin's auspices. It is famous for all its collection of murals and relics for almost entire Kerala. One of the essential

features of this museum is manuscripts written on dry palm leaves known as the Olagrandhangal'. The most attractive belongings of this museum can be a rare collection of Veerakallu or stone engravings and carvings of figures and weapons utilized by brave warriors of the region discovered at the forests of Wayanad and Thrissur.

Chapter 2

Shakthan Thampuran Palace

The Shakthan Thampuran Palace is a famous historical building of the erstwhile Maharaja of Cochin, king Rama Varma Shakthan Thampuran, who is also the founder of Thrissur town. The word 'Shakthan' means powerful, a strong man. The festival Thrissur pooram is considered to have been first started by him. His palace in Thrissur City preserved as a monument. He is considered the architect of the city of Thrissur. He is considered to be responsible for the development of the Thrissur City and also making it the Cultural Capacity of Kerala.

The present day 'Thekkinkadu Ground' the Vadakkumnatha Temple was dense forest, mainly consisted of teak trees. There was many wild animals living inside and people feared to go to the temple after the dusk. Although, Shakthan Thampuran used to stay at Tripunithura, the capital city, he used to visit Thrissur frequently.

It is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Thrissur, visited by thousands of tourists every year. The palace holds historic, cultural, and architectural importance and is converted into a heritage museum to give tourists a traditional tour of Kerala. The palace is about 300 years old. Historians consider the reign of King Ramavarma Shakthan Thampuran as the golden era of Kochi. During his reign, he maintained cordial relationships with European powers and also with rulers of neighbouring regions of Mysore and Travancore. Though he ascended the throne rather late, he was extraordinarily talented and focused even as a young man. After he became the ruler, he maintained good relations with the British who wielded enormous power in those days, and also with other South Indian kingdoms like Travancore and Mysore. He played a significant role in eventually making the city of Thrissur the cultural capital of Kerala.

The Shakthan Thampuran Palace, earlier known as Vadakkechira Kovilakam, was originally belonged to the Perumpadappu Swaroopan dynasty, the ruling dynasty of Kochi for a very long time. After the king Rama Varma Shakthan came into power, he renovated the entire structure of the palace and gave it his name. He ruled from 1790 to 1805 and it is said that his rule was the golden era for Cochin Dynasty, as there were not many major battles during his reign. Also, he emerged victorious in almost all the battles he fought.

The Vadakkechira Palace was also constructed probably by the Dutch. The specialities of the Dutch architecture were the thick walls, broad and high doors and windows, seating on the bottom of the windows etc. this palace has a portico like projection in the middle of the building which had become the style of many buildings in Thrissur and surrounding areas. The palace can be divided into two sections, the western half having a two-storeyed western style building and the eastern half having traditional style architecture. The entrance hall has rectangle columns on both sides which support a high wooden ceiling with heavy rafters and flanks.

The eastern half of the building is a traditional nalukettu with a broad nadumuttam. There is a rectangular peedam of laterita stone and plastered with lime mortar in the middle of the nadumuttam, where the idols of Pazhayannoor Bhagavati had been worshipped. The southern side of the nadumuttam one side open hall with a low roof which had been used for auspicious ceremonies. In the north-western corner is the kitchen and in the north and east are rooms without windows. The original floor of the entire ground floor of the building is lost and at present paved with terracotta tiles and cement tiles. There are some single-storeyed buildings adjacent to the main palace. The urappura (work area), ootupura (dining hall) etc.

there is a modern building in the Eastern end of the palace compound built in 1980. It is now converted as a gallery of the archaeological museum.

There was a fortification surrounding the palace with a deep trench on the outside. Fortification except the western and eastern gateways is completely lost. Of the two gateways, the eastern gateway is more impressive. The palace and the Thrissur town had been occupied for a brief period by Tipu Sultan during the war in 1789. The flagstaff installed by Tipu Sultan in the middle of the fortification is now kept near the western gateway.

There is a serpent Grove or Sarpa Kavu is a snake shrine built for worship of serpent gods like *naga raja* (king of the snakes) and other snake deities, which is believed to bring prosperity to the royal family. Apart from the occasional prayers and ritualistic feeding of milk to the snakes to please the serpent gods, human interventions in these places are nil. The snake deities worshiped in serpent grove in the place in *Naga Raja* and *Nagayakshi*. They are located in the palace garden and can be found under a saptarna tree located on the southern side of the Shakthan palace is the heritage garden. Set up recently to exhibit and preserve some of the indigenous varieties of plants and trees of Kerala. The gateways, the three tombs, the sacred grove and the flagstaff had been declared as protected monument form 1936. Shakthan Thampuran Palace along with its 6 acres of land was declared as protected monument in 1987.

A museum is situated in Shakthan Thampuran Palace, the museum consists of a Bronze Gallery, Numismatic Gallery, Epigraphy Gallery, History Gallery, Sculpture Gallery and Megalithic Gallery. The Bronze Gallery has a good collection of bronze statues dating back to the period from the 12th to the 18th century. The coins displayed in the Numismatic Gallery are mainly of the erstwhile kingdom of Cochin, together with the coins from some of the neighboring kingdoms. The granite statues of the Sculpture Gallery are mainly from the

9th to the 17th century. Epigraphy is the study of writings and their meanings, and the gallery here tracks the development and fruition of many early writings.

The displays in the History Gallery focus on the contribution and achievements of the rulers of Cochin, and the Megalithic Gallery, as the name implies, has got specimens dating back to the Stone Age. There is even a gallery that showcases the kitchen appliances and utensils used by the former rulers of Kochi. In short, the galleries have recreated much of the Kochi that has vanished behind the curtain of time. On the south side of the palace is the heritage garden, called so because it houses many special local plants and trees. The Archaeological Garden at the north-eastern side has collections of locally-found specimens dating back even to the Stone Age.

There is an office of Football Association just inside the front gate of the museum, which affects the security, beauty and the normal functioning of the museum. The said existence of the office is a clear violation of the Kerala Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1968.

The Shakthan Thampuran Archaeological Museum is headed by a Curator. There is one post each of Field Assistant, Museum Assistant, Senior Clerk, Head Gardener, 4 Office Attendants, two posts each of the Gardeners and PTS. In addition to this, there are 18 contract staff including 8 Museum Guide Trainees. There is no prescribed staff and persons are seen engaged on daily wage basis without any criteria. Proposed as a Grade Museum, the existing staff strength is not sufficient for the effective functioning of the museum. Moreover, there is recommendation that the proposed Northern Regional Deputy Director Office is to be functioned in this museum. The staff pattern recommended for the proposed; Grade Museum may be sanctioned to this museum. Once such staff pattern is implemented, the services of the personnel engaged on daily wages may be dispensed with.

There are Recommendations for museum from archaeology department; urgent steps shall be taken to evict the office of the Football Association from the premises of the museum.

Chapter 3

Museum – An Agency Of Education

The purpose of modern museum is to collect, preserve, interpret, and display objects of artistic, cultural, or scientific significances for the education of the public. From a visitor or community perspective, the purpose can also depend on one's point of view. To a museum professional, a museum might be seen as a way to educate the public about the museum's mission, such as civil rights or environmentalism. Museums are, above all, storehouse of knowledge. Museums do effectively bring new knowledge to school children, through new vocabulary, spaces, and objects that they might never have encountered before.

Museums provide people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to learn and explore different cultures. Museums also offer children of any age the chance to learn interactively about a particular subject, which enhances their drive to take an interest in it. These spaces can be invaluable for parents and educators because simply talking about a time period in history pales in comparison to actually showing artifacts and artwork from the era; most children would much rather see a gigantic dinosaur skeleton in person than read about it. Children can benefit the most from museums because they are at a unique advantage to see things with a sense of creativity and inspiration. These spaces can foster a sense of wonder and boost self-esteem when paired with interactive learning exhibits that teach kids about leadership, sharing, and going things for themselves.

Museum artifacts can help figures from history come to life as visitors glimpse clothing, tools, furniture, and replicas of home life for people who lived many generations ago. Seeing those things in person allows us to connect with the figure in a way that's difficult to do within the pages of a book.

Museum purposes vary from institution to institution. Some favour education over conservation, or vice versa. Generally speaking, museums collect and preserve our objects and materials of religious, cultural and historical value. These museums help to conserve and encourage our cultural heritage. Museums help teach the state and local curriculum, tailoring their programs in maths, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civic, and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies (AAM).

Museums are considered a more reliable source of historical information than books, teachers, or even personal accounts by relatives, according to a study by Indiana University. Students who attend a field trip to an art museum experience an increase in critical thinking skills, historical empathy and tolerance. For students from rural or high poverty regions, the increase was even more significant. Museums provide more than 55 million instructional hours annually for educational programs such as guided tours for students, staff visits to schools, school outreach through traveling exhibits, and professional development for teachers (IMLS study).

Museum can have a right conclusion of the history and can have a comparison with the present society. For example, in the 1970's the Canada Science and Technology Museum favoured education over preservation of their objects. They displayed objects as well as their functions. One exhibit featured a historic printing press that a staff member used for visitors to create museum memorabilia. For a society to survive and progress, each generation must pass its knowledge, skills, and values on the next. Passing on knowledge is to vital that most countries have established formal systems of education for teaching children, by sending them to schools and colleges.

Functions of museum

Acquisition of material

Every new object that a museum adds to its collection is called Acquisition. Museums acquire objects in several ways, of which field collection is one of the most useful. The scientists and technicians go outside to gather specimens which are within the scope of the museum.

Recording of material

Each acquisition is listed carefully by specialist staff. As soon as objects are received, the data, the source, the method of acquisition and other available information are entered in the record register.

Documentation

Documentation is a significant function of any museum, whether it holds only a few hundred objects or many millions of items. The documentation system also may include records to facilitate the museum's interpretative and other work.

Preservation of material

The primary purpose of museum is to preserve selected objects, curators (person's in-charge of museums) know that no specimens will last forever. What museums undertake to do is to prolong the life time of the objects.

Research

Because they hold the primary material evidence for a number of subjects concerned with an understanding of humankind and the environment, museums clearly have an important role in research. Many museums publish scholarly journals, series of papers and books to make available the results of research on their collection. Many museums provide facilities, apart from those used by casual visitors, for researchers to study collections and associated documentation.

Exhibition

Various members of the museum staff prepare the acquisitions for exhibition. The specimens selected for exhibition are put on view in numerous ways. The choice of approach and technique depends largely on the purpose of exhibit. Exhibitions organized for national circulation are also increasingly common.

Educational services

The contribution that museums can make to education is widely acknowledged. The majority of their clientele learn by looking at exhibitions and displays. There has been, however, a long association with schools, and many museums provide services specifically designed to meet school's needs. Services include facilities for use both in the museum and at the school, many of which are administered by separate departments of museum education employing teachers for purpose. By allowing the study and handling of objects from its collections, the museum can give substance and form to the bare facts of art, history, and science. Some museums build special collections for this purpose. Teaching may be undertaken by the museum's educational staff or, more often, by the schoolteacher, who will have been advised and instructed by the staff. As a better-educated adult population with increased leisure time seeks purposeful outlets, museums are well placed to provide activities. Many museums offer lectures, courses, demonstrations, field excursions, and extensive travel-aboard opportunities.

Information services

A museum acts as an information centre for its community. In addition to its displays and exhibitions, its data banks publications, it has a staff of specialists, who in most cases are available by appointment to provide information on request. Museums publications may be educational or cultural or may be designed for a popular market. It provides an awareness of local discoveries and holdings that aids the museum's efforts to build up a picture of its area of responsibility. At the same time it provides an informed opinion as a public service. Museums

rarely provide valuations, however, and some, to avoid conflicts of interest, decline to have any connection with the antiques trade.

Conclusion

Historians consider the reign of king Rama Varma Shakthan Thampuran (AD 1790-1805) popularly known as Shakthan as the golden era of Kochi. The palace of Shakthan Thampuran located in the district of Thrissur is a landmark in the annals of the perumpadappu Swaroopam, the former ruling dynasty of Kochi. The palace located in the heart of Thrissur town is a major attraction, especially for those with a special interest on rulers and dynasties. Museums are to inspire, engage, and educate visitors. Shakthan Thampuran museum, hardly a kilometre away from the roundabout in Thrissur town and located close to the Vadakechira pond, the Shakthan Palace exudes a predominantly white exterior.

The Shakthan museum is managed by the state Archaeology Department and is one of the best preserved palaces in Kerala. Formerly known as Vadakkechira Kovilakam the palace was renovated by Rama Varma Shakthan Thampuran to acquire its present form. Historians consider the reign of king Rama Varma Shakthan Thampuran (AD 1790-1805) as the golden era of Kochi. At a very young age itself, Shakthan Thampuran demonstrated extraordinary intelligence and bravery. During his reign, he maintained cordial relations with European powers including the English and also with rulers of neighbouring regions like Mysore and Travancore. Museums ensure understanding and appreciation for various groups and cultures. They promote better understanding of our collective heritage and foster dialogue, curiosity and self-reflection.

Going by the territorial expanse of erstwhile Kochi dynasty, the Shakthan Palace marked the northernmost point. The palace, built in the Dutch and Kerala style of architecture belongs to the few structures of its kind in Kerala. The palace houses a traditional Kerala style Nalukettu with a two storeyed structure. The palace structure is marked by high roofs, extra thick walls, spacious rooms and floors paved with finely smoothed Italian marbles.

The interior of the palace, because of its unique construction, offer comfortable and pleasant living conditions irrespective of the prevailing weather conditions. A visitor to the palace can find references to the rulers of Mysore, who have stayed at the Shakthan Palace at various point of time. It is also believed that Tippu Sultan entered the palace with his troops, and the flag mast that he erected can still be seen close to the palace compound wall, near to the entrance of the palace. The resting places of Rama Varma Shakthan Thampuran, one of the Zamorins of Kozhikode and that of another ruler of Kochi can be found inside the palace premises.

The traditional role of museums is to collect objects and materials of cultural, religious and historical importance, preserve them, research into them and present them to the public for the purpose of education and enjoyment. Museums are institutions created in the public interest. They engage their visitors, foster deeper understanding and promote the enjoyment and sharing of authentic cultural and natural heritage. Museums acquire, preserve, research, interpret and exhibit the tangible and intangible evidence of society and nature. At the Shakthan Thampuran Palace, one can come across and understand several interesting and remarkable aspects of the erstwhile rulers of Kochi.

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