



**DOCUMENTATION ON THE CANNONS IN THE
GOVERNMENT MUSEUM
CHENNAI (MADRAS)**



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Government Museum, Chennai – 600 008.**

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FRONT COVER

A model of the State Gun of Hyder-Ali and Tippu Sultan of Mysore. The swell of muzzle of the mounted gun is shaped like the conventional head of a lion. There are Urdu inscriptions on the stock of carriage on one side. The rest of the inscriptions on the stock are in English and runs thus- "For Major John Maitland, Superintendent of the Gun Manufactory, Madras. M.H.A.

*'This Captured by His Excellency Lieut.General Harris K.C.B. 1799.
Hyder Ali and Tippoo Sultan's State Gun.'*

W.I.GAGE & CO
HOOMHOON."

Accession No.1889 (Anthropology, Government Museum, Chennai) Length: 41.5 cm Brass

BACK COVER

'Old cannon representing the earliest known methods of making cannons. An inner lining of the wrought iron longitudinal bars arranged like the staves of a cask is strengthened externally and the bars kept in position by wrought iron rings.'

Serial Number: 23

Accession Number: 1940 (Anthropology, Government Museum, Chennai)



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Government of Tamilnadu, Fort St. George,
CHENNAI – 600 009.**

FOREWORD

The Documentation on the Cannons in the Government Museum, Chennai, (Madras) with colour plates is the first effort of its kind. It is learnt that a similar effort is being made by the British Museum. The Indian army is also attempting to document Guns in its Artillery Regiment.

The book gives full information about the cannons in the collection of the Madras (Chennai) Museum. Nearly forty cannons are a very large number and would be among the largest collections in the World. These cannons were collected by the British during the course of the wars they fought in different parts of the Indian sub-continent and in Asia.

They were deposited in the Government Museum, Chennai. Some of these cannons have been lent on a long-term basis to the Archaeological Survey of India for display in the Fort Museum, Chennai and at Sri Ranga Patna. Details of location also are given in this book.

The authors have done exhaustive research by visiting the Officers Training Academy of the Indian Armed Forces at Madras, the Library of the Archaeological Survey of India and the Connemara Public Library.

I feel that the publication of this work which is on par with international standards in presenting full information, attention to detail and excellence of presentation, will enhance the prestige of Chennai Museum.

**FORT ST. GEORGE,
CHENNAI – 600 009,
DATE 9-12-2000**


(S. RAMAKRISHNAN, I.A.S.)

PREFACE

The history of the cannons in the Government Museum, Chennai (Madras) shows the extent and spread of the British Empire. These cannons have been collected in the battles the British fought in various parts of the Indian subcontinent and in Asia. Through these one can visualise the common thread of the paramount interest of maintaining Pax Britannica through out the world in the halcyon days of the British Empire.

Through out history superiority in the art of warfare has made the difference between survival and extinction of a people, their religion and culture.

In the First Battle of Panipat, (1526 AD), though Babar had a small army he possessed cannons which the Delhi Sultanate army did not. This meant the defeat of the huge Delhi Sultanate army at the hands of the Moghuls(Schulberg Lucille, 1991,p.159).

In 1760 AD, at the Battle of Wandiwash and in 1752 AD at Trichnopoly, the British cannons made a great difference between victory and defeat (Smith V.A., 1984, p.464).

Most dramatically at the Battle of Plassey, (1757 AD), the British cannons enabled Lord Clive with a small band of English soldiers to rout the army of Nawab Siraj Ud Daula, though it was numerically much superior. The treachery of Mir Jaffar, was of course, a major cause (Marshall P.J., 1998, p.499).

The English East India Company realised the crucial role of cannons in maintaining their military superiority. Long distance fire from cannons resulted in huge enemy casualties while they themselves sustained light losses only. They also realised their importance in destroying the hitherto impregnable forts of the Indian rulers in Rajasthan and elsewhere. In Tamilnadu, cannons played a vital role in suppressing the Poligars. Marudu Pandiyar, Kattabomman and Puli Thevar had their forts razed to the ground due to the firepower of the Company's cannons (Rajayyan, Dr.K, 1974,p.239).

They allowed the native Indian states to keep only the Six-Pounder cannons and the bigger Twelve and Twenty Pounder cannons were with the British. This ensured longer range and more destructive firepower for the East India Company's forces. This played a very significant role in the First War of Independence (1857) in enabling the subjugation of the native Indian princes (Martineau.H.,1857, p.179).

A combination of force of arms, subsidiary alliances and other not so savoury tactics thus enabled them to subdue the entire country.

From the above, the role of cannons in moulding history can be easily deduced. In the Government Museum, Chennai some of the pieces from these historic wars are kept. There has been no documentation on these so far. In the following pages, this lacuna is attempted to be filled in.

DOCUMENTATION ON THE CANNONS IN THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM CHENNAI (MADRAS)

ORIGIN OF CANNONS

Gunpowder invented in China was used for fireworks. Marco Polo took it to Europe where it was transformed into a weapon of war. The term Cannon is from the French 'Canon' derived from the Latin 'Canna' meaning a reed or tube.

Artillery has played a significant role in wars and conflicts that have marked the evolution of modern nations and states for the past 800 years. There is documentation from the early part of the thirteenth century on cannon artillery. This weapon of war was first experimented during this period. Cannons of the period were crude, imperfect and never uniform and were also very heavy and were used as siege guns to shatter castle walls.

The first step toward the art of gunnery could have been the mobile cannon, which could move in the battlefield. Early manuscripts inform us that Seville was defended in 1247 AD by cannons throwing stones, and that a cannon dated 1258 AD was preserved in the castle of Coucy in France. It is learnt that at the beginning of the 14th century, the cannon was first made-up of circular bundles of iron bars surrounded by circular rings or hoops that were driven over the bars while red-hot and shrunk into their place as they cooled. They were called as 'bombards'. It took the name from Italian "bambo et ardore" meaning thunder and lightning. It was called as Voghleen by the Dutch and Flemings (Powers P.W., 1982, p. 719).

One such early cannon is available in the Chennai Government Museum. It claims to be the first cannon of the Chinese Army. The fourteenth century may be accepted as the true beginning of the era of gunpowder and cannon in military affairs. Municipal and commercial records of the city of Ghent in Belgium describe cannon [Bussen] as being invented by a German monk in 1313 AD and exported to England in 1314 AD with supplies of gunpowder. Another early name for cannon was 'Cerbotain' (Powers P.W., 1982, p. 721).

SCIENCE OF GUNNERY

Niccolo Tartaglia, an Italian Mathematician in 1537 AD, published the first scientific treatise on gunnery. During the next 10 years, he invented the gunners "Quadrant" and demonstrated that cannon shot farthest when elevated to an angle of 45°. Luis Collado, a Spanish mathematician and engineer computed five tables, and recorded many of the firing techniques, that contributed towards a broader understanding of the elements of gunnery. It was in 1550 AD that the French invented the limber, a two wheeled vehicle to which the gun trails were attached for transport. The front end of the limber, in turn, was attached by poles to the horses. Later, a two-wheeled ammunition carrier, the Caisson, was attached to the limber (Powers P.W., 1982, p. 722).

The second period [1600 AD – 1800 AD] opened with the significant contributions of the "father of modern warfare" the Swedish King and warrior Gustavus Adolphus [1594 – 1632 AD]. He made certain changes combining the powder charge and projectile into a single cartridge. It superseded the old method of loading the powder into the cannon and increased the rate of fire. He used the lighter cannons as battalion pieces and the heavier ones as regimental weapons. By the seventeenth century the classes of cannon were clearly established in relation to their trajectories: flat trajectory or long range guns; high trajectory mortars for siege purposes; and the new "howitzer" whose trajectory was in between the first two. In 1693 AD, the wheel mounted field piece was developed and classified by the Dutch (Powers P.W., 1982, p. 723).

In the following pages the cannons in the collections of the Government Museum, Chennai are catalogued since it has not been done till now. Most of the cannons were made between 1602 and 1800 AD and were captured in historic wars. Sl. No. 10 and 12 are two copper cannons which were brought from China with inscriptions in Chinese which state that those were the first and second cannons that were placed at Amoy. The name of the foreman is also given as "Lin Mao Chou".

CATALOGUE OF THE CANNONS IN THE CHENNAI MUSEUM

Sl No	Photograph / Location	Accession No.	Dimensions & Metal	Description
1	 <p>Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai. (Archaeological Survey of India)</p>	1919 of Museum & 47 of ASI	Length 257.5 cm. Gun metal	<p>Old European cannon captured at Mandalay, during the III Burmese War [called Anglo Burmese War] in 1885 AD. The British Government had begun aggression and ordered Gen. Prendergast to advance upon Mandalay. King Thaibaw and his army surrendered at Mandalay on Nov.28, 1885 AD. This cannon was cast in Holland in 1602 AD and bears the coat of arms of the House of Orange and motto 'IE-MAINTENDRAY' [I will maintain].</p> <p>A Burmese inscription on the cannon states that it was taken at Dwaravaty, Capital of Siam [Present Thailand] in 1128 [1766 AD] when this country was subjugated by Simbyuyin, King of Burma.</p>
2	 <p>Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai. (Archaeological Survey of India)</p>	1918 of Museum & 46 of ASI	Length 295.5 cm Gun Metal	<p>Old European cannon captured at Mandalay, during the III Burmese War [called Anglo Burmese War] in 1885 AD. The British Government had begun aggression and ordered Gen. Prendergast to advance upon Mandalay. King Thaibaw and his army surrendered at Mandalay on Nov.28, 1885 AD. This cannon was cast in Holland in 1602 AD and bears the coat of arms of the House of Orange and motto 'IE-MAINTENDRAY' [I will maintain].</p> <p>A Burmese inscription on the cannon states that it was taken at Dwaravati, Capital of Siam [Present Thailand] in 1128 [1766 AD] when this country was subjugated by Simbyuyin, King of Burma.</p>



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1920
of
Museum
& 43
of
ASI

Length
361 cm
Gun metal

Old cannon with a Persian inscription, which has been translated "This is a cannon of the Government Factory of Mir Murad Ali Khan Bahadur Mahabat Jung, 1244 A.H" (1828-1829 AD). He was one of the rulers of the Central portion of Sind in the Bombay Presidency. It is not known how this cannon came to Madras.



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1921
of
Museum
& 44
of
ASI

Length
288.5 cm.
Gun metal

Siamese cannon captured at Mandalay during the Third Burmese war in 1885 AD. A Burmese inscription on the cannon states that it was taken by Simbyuyin, King of Burma, at Dwaravati, capital of Siam [Present Thailand], on the 8th March, 1766 AD. There are two Siamese inscriptions which state that it belonged to the great right division of the Siamese Body Guards of the King of Siam and that the casting was commenced, probably by Thai Sra, King of Siam, on the 10th April 1728 AD.



Shifted to Museum at Srirangapatna (A.S.I.)

1923
of
Museum
& 28
of
ASI

Length
77 cm.
Gun metal,

Cannon captured during the operations against Tipu Sultan of Mysore. It is probably of French manufacture.

6



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai
(Archaeological Survey of India), located inside
Army Garrison, opposite to ASI office

1939
of
Muse
um

Length
175.5 cm.
Iron

Cannon received with No.1938 from the Central Jail at Trichinopoly. It is also believed to have been taken from the French by the English in the place stated above. The cascabel is intact in the case of this cannon but the muzzle is slightly injured.

7



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1942
of
Muse
um
& 39
of
ASI

Length
188 cm.
Copper

Maratha cannon similar to No.1941 with the same inscription on it.

8



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1937
of
Muse
um
& 38
of
ASI

Length
141 cm.
Iron

Old cannon found in the Gethimudaly tank, Namakkal division, Salem District. There is the letter 'P' incised on it as also the numbers '6-0-14'.

9



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1941
of
Muse
um
& 39
of
ASI

Length
186 cm.
Copper

Maratha cannon captured during the Second Maratha War, 1803-1804 AD. The Persian inscription on the cannon has been translated - "The cannon was made by Ajutaprasad, at Bhavanpur in the year 1218 A.H. (1803-1804 AD) in memory of Sarkar Maharaj Dharaj Ali Jha Jaswant Rao Holkar Subedar Bahadur Nusrat Jung". This inscription is in a brass medallion.



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1934
of
Muse
um
& 48
of
ASI

Length
83.5 cm
Iron

Cannon with a brass plate on it with the following inscription "From Verula Fort, captured by General Campbell 1800 AD mounted by B. Macleod Esq. 1903."



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1929
of
Muse
um
& 34
of
ASI

Length
157.5 cm.
Copper

Copper cannon exactly similar to No.1927 with this difference in the inscription on it in Chinese that this is the "First Cannon placed at Amoy" while No.1927 is the 'Second'.



Shifted to Fort
Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1927
of
Muse
um
& 33
of
ASI

Length
149.5 cm.
Copper

Copper cannon brought to Madras by troops who were engaged in the First China War in 1842 AD. It bears an inscription in Chinese which has been translated "In the fifth month of the 21st regnal year of Emperor Tao Kuang (corresponding to June 1841), Yen, the Viceroy of the Min-Che province, and Lin, the Governor of Fuchien, made this cannon weighing 500 catties, which is the second cannon placed at Amoy, the Foreman being Lin Mao Chou".



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1925
of
Muse
um
& 27
of
ASI

Length
116 cm
Brass

Brass cannon captured at the battle of Mehidpur, Indore State, Central India, where Holkar was defeated by Sir John Malcolm on the 19th December 1817 AD. Near the muzzle is inscribed in Telugu, 'Sri Venugopala', a designation of Krishna.

14



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1943
of
Muse
um
& 35
of
ASI

Length
186.5 cm.
Copper

Danish cannon bearing the cypher of Christian VII, King of Denmark. On the base ring there is the inscription "7 FRIDRICS WAERCK. 7".

15



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India) located at
Army Garrison, opposite to ASI office

1938
of
Muse
um

Length
210 cm.
Iron

Cannon received from the Central Jail at Trichinopoly and believed to have been taken from the French by the English troops, Europeans and native, commanded by Major Stringer Lawrence, on the 21st September 1753 AD at the Battle of the Sugar Loaf Rock. The rock so designated by Orme is now known as the Golden Rock. The trunnions of the gun are not to be found and a piece of the cascabel is broken.

16



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1944
of
Muse
um
& 37
of
ASI

Length
300 cm.
Copper

Danish cannon made in 1787 AD. It was obtained when Tranquebar was ceded to Britain in 1845. It bears the cypher of Christian VII, King of Denmark from 1766 to 1808 AD.

17



Shifted to Fort Museum, Chennai.
(Archaeological Survey of India)

1945
of
Muse
um
& 36
of
ASI

Length
188 cm.
Copper

Danish cannon made in 1776 AD. It was obtained with No.1944. It bears the cypher of Christian VII.



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1922
of
Museum.

Length
231 cm.
Gun metal

Old European cannon captured at Mandalay, during the Third Burmese War in 1885 AD. It bears the Coat of Arms of the House of Orange and the blundered motto (mirror image) for 'IE MAINTIENDRAI' (I will maintain). A Burmese inscription on the cannon states that it was taken at Dwaravati, capital of Siam in 1128(1766 AD) when this country was subjugated by Simbyuyin, King of Burma.



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1924
of
Museum.

Length
98.5 cm.
Gun metal

Dutch cannon with the monogram of the Dutch East India Company, V.O.C. for "Vereeningde Oost Indische Compagnie" (United East India Company) surmounted by the letter 'A' for Amsterdam. The inscription "ME.FECITC: ENISEESTAMSTELODAM A° 1785," states that the cannon was made at Amsterdam in 1785 AD.



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1926
of
Museum.

Length
126 cm.
Gun metal

Cannon with the mark of United East India Company. The inscription on the base-ring states that this cannon was made by W. Kinman in 1781 AD.



Reserve collection
Government Museum, Chennai

1928
of
Museum.

Length
254 cm.
Brass

Breech loading cannon with the mark of the United East India Company. The inscription on the base ring states that this cannon was made by W. & F. Kinman in 1786 AD.

22



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1930
of
Muse
um.

Length
152 cm.
Gun metal

Cannon captured during the operations against Tipu Sultan of Mysore. It is probably of French manufacture. Tipu Sultan was defeated on 4th May 1799 AD. The distinguishing mark on this cannon is the ornamental work on it including the figures of two heads of animals (dogs perhaps) on two rings. Sir Arthur Wellesley says "Our principal ally, the Nizam was restored to us, the French State growing in the Peninsula of India was destroyed. Our formidable native enemy Tipu, the ally of the French was subdued". (A selection from the Wellington despatches – Owen, S.J. p.10).

23



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1931
of
Muse
um.

Length
115 cm.
Gun metal

Cannon captured during the battle of Mehidpur, Indore state, Central India, where Holkar was defeated by Sir John Malcolm on 19th December 1817.

24



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1932
of
Muse
um.

Length
104.5 cm.
Gun metal

Cannon captured during the operations against Tipu Sultan of Mysore. It is probably of French manufacture. Ornamental chains are worked near the muzzle and the base and there are two heads of the lion worked on the two rings. Perhaps this is the one selected by the Superintendent of the museum from the Madras Arsenal in 1894 AD.



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1933
of
Muse
um.

Length
75 cm.
Gun metal

Cannon captured during the operations against Tipu Sultan of Mysore. It is probably of French manufacture. This is similar to No.1923 in size and shape.



Reserve Collection
Government Museum, Chennai

1935
of
Muse
um.

Length
154 cm.
Gun metal

A cannon shaped long barrel with an iron piece with an aperture projecting from the base. The following is inscribed on it – "Riviere, 121, Oxford Street, London".



Reserve Collection
Government Museum, Chennai

1936
of
Muse
um.

Length
104.5 cm.
Iron

Old cannon from Kurnool. It is shaped like a thick barrel with a smaller one projecting from it. Of the four iron rings on it, one is broken and missing. This is perhaps cannon from Kurnool mentioned in the list of arms



Arms Gallery,
Government Museum, Chennai

1940
of
Muse
um.

Length
272.5 cm
Iron

Old cannon representing the earliest known methods of making cannons. An inner lining of the wrought iron longitudinal bars arranged like the staves of a cask is strengthened externally and the bars kept in position by wrought iron rings.

37



Near the Old Connemara Library Building,
Government Museum, Chennai

1955
of
Muse
um.

Length
305 cm.
Gun metal.

Cannon without carriage. There
is a ring near the cascabel.

38



Near the Old Connemara Library Building,
Government Museum, Chennai

1956
of
Muse
um.

Length
327 cm.
Iron.

Cannon similar to 1955. There
is the British crown and G.R.
The cypher of King George IV
on it.

39



Near the Old Connemara Library Building,
Government Museum, Chennai

1957
of
Muse
um.

Length
333 cm.
Iron.

Cannon similar to No. 1956 but
without a ring near the cascabel.

40



Near the Old Connemara Library Building,
Government Museum, Chennai

2419
of
Muse
um.

Length
337 cm.
Iron

Treasure-trove cannon from
Villupuram. It is made of iron.
The centre mouth is 115 cm.

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Postscript:

We noticed an inscription on the barrel of Sl.Nos. 29 & 31 (Accession Nos.1946 & 1948) as follows : 'SUB MINISTERIO COMITIS DE SCHIMELMANN'. On the undercarriage is inscribed 'JOHN STURGEST & CO., BOWLING, YORKSHIRE'. This is not noted in the Accession Register prepared Circa 1920 AD.

