The Rishi of Time Change

Tharangambadi – Tranquebar
A Journey Through the Ages

Illustrations - Emanuele Scanciani
Text - Tina Suchanek & Rune Clausen

Including a DVD featuring an animated children’s series in three parts about the history of Tharangambadi.
Tharangambadi - Tranquebar has a special history as a meeting point where Indian and Danish history has been entangled for centuries. An entanglement which has formed the present town – a town we are working to preserve as a living memory of this shared history – and information is an important part of this work.

We hope that “The Rishi of Time Change” will make you dive into a magical and fantastic world following the siblings Ravi and Mala – full of great surprises, ideas, illustrations, exercises and gain a new insight of the town of Tharangambadi - Tranquebar and our common history.

The Bestseller Fund, Denmark

ISBN 978-87-993725-0-8
The Rishi of Time Change

Ravi and Mala are brother and sister. They are 7 and 9 years old and live in a small South Indian town in the state of Tamil Nadu called Tharangambadi. The town is very close to the Bengal Sea, in fact the name of the town means: “The Place of the Singing Waves”. Tharangambadi is a very special town with many kinds of old houses and buildings that tell the story of the different people and times that have shaped the town over the course of time.

Tharangambadi

Tharangambadi grew around the shores of two important water bodies - the Uppanar River which is connected to the larger Cauveri River, and the Bay of Bengal. The town is probably more than 1,000 years old. It is first mentioned when the king of the Pandyan realm Kula Sekara allowed a temple – the Massilamani Kovil – to be built 700 years ago. In Tharangambadi and its surroundings people have always lived from fishing, farming and trading.
The Magical Coins

In Tharangambadi people lived in different areas according to what they did for a living, which gods they worshipped, and how rich or poor they were. The town’s nearness to the river and the sea made it a good place for fishing and for trading with different goods. Food, spices and textiles were in demand, many places and the fertile flatlands of the east coast of South India – also called the Coromandel Coast – were already home to a number of old trading centers of differing size and importance.

The two children Ravi and Mala get very lucky one day, and find a pouch with old magical coins. A friendly old man called Rishi explains to them that the coins have magical powers which can make Ravi and Mala travel in time. By using the coins Ravi and Mala can visit other times many hundreds of years ago, just as if they were visiting friends or family in another town.
THE VILLAGE AND THE WORLD

Can you see the bird flying high above the village? From the sky everything below it looks tiny. If you look at a village through the bird’s eye the houses resemble boxes of different sizes and the roads and rivers look like lines with different widths and colours. On a map this is how a village is shown.

If you were sitting in an airplane and fly higher things would look even smaller. You would be able to see the neighbouring villages and towns and the big roads and railways connecting them to each other. You would still be too close to the earth to see the whole state of Tamil Nadu. However, if you could fly even higher you could see the states and even the whole of India.

Only astronauts in special spacecrafts have gone far enough into space to be able to see a lot of different countries at once. Just like all the different states make up the country India, all the different countries together make up the world.

What an interesting perspective!

1. Where is the river?
2. Where is the fort?
3. Where is the ocean?
4. Find the city gate!
5. Find Queens Road!
6. What else do you see?
After flipping a magical coin in the sun, Ravi and Mala are puzzled when they are suddenly transported far back in the time to when the oldest temples in Tharangambadi were built. Everything looks rather strange and very different. All the things they are used to see in their village are missing – no two-wheelers or cars, no TV or cell phones, no plastic garbage can be seen. Many of the things Ravi and Mala are used to haven’t even been invented yet 700 years ago. Everything is still done by hand or with the help of animals, even by elephants.

**Time Travel**

What is wrong here?
1. Find 5 objects which don’t belong to this time-period - 700 years ago.
2. From which time are they?
3. How do you know?
A young Mahout passes by and invites them for an elephant ride. He shows them around the foreign yet strangely familiar place. They are delighted, but find it hard to imagine that over the centuries this village will develop into their hometown as they know it. When they get off the elephant for a rest they find the old man again.

The Rishi creates a model in the sand and points out how, over time, the ocean has eaten deeper and deeper into the land. It had been washing away earth and sand, coming up closer and closer to the temple. Today the outer walls and a big piece of the temple are gone, and only a small portion of what it was is left for us to see. On an impulse, Ravi flips a coin again.
Human beings have always needed water to survive. Ever since the first humans set foot on earth they have needed to drink and eat. Water met their needs both in the form of clean sweet water to drink and in the form of fish and other water-living creatures that they could catch then cook and eat. When people learned to grow plants for food, water was also necessary for crops like rice and maize. Humans also learned to build boats, and the sea, rivers and lakes were used like big floating roads — that's why they are called waterways — where food and goods could be moved over long distances, from one place to another.

Ravi and Mala travel in time again, but on this occasion they find themselves 400 years back in time. The land they had just been sitting on had been washed away and is now part of the sea. With a splash, they are plunged into the salty waves of the ocean. Luckily a passing boat fishes them out of the water and takes them to the shore. The huge Danish trading ships that came here regularly at that time set anchor in the deeper waters. Small boats were used for rowing the goods up the Cauvery river behind the fort, where the goods were unloaded.
A prayer for every belief!

1. Name the temples you know!
2. When were they built and by whom?
3. Is there a mosque in your town?
4. Do you know any churches?
5. What are the differences between mosques, churches and temples?
6. Explore Tharangambadi and find as many temples, mosques and churches as you can.
7. Make a painting of a church.
8. Draw a mosque.
9. Make a sketch of a temple.

Churches, Temples and Mosques

Like many other places in India people believe in different Gods in Tharangambadi. Inside the old town Tharangambadi has several Hindu temples, one mosque and two Christian Lutheran churches. The Hindu temples are the oldest. About 1,000 years ago Muslim merchants travelled to the south of India. Sometime during that period Muslim merchants also settled in Tharangambadi and probably built their first mosque then. In the 1500’s Portuguese traders brought the Catholic Church, and with the arrival of Danish traders in the 1600’s the Christian Lutheran Church was introduced in Tharangambadi.
For thousands of years merchants and tradesmen from many different places have visited India’s shores – they came from distant places like China, Persia, and eventually from Europe. Different Indian kings followed each other as rulers in the area around Tharangambadi. There were many different kingdoms named the Pandyas, Cholas, Pallavas and Vijayanagars which came to control the area in course of time.

The last Indian rulers in the area of Tharangambadi were called Nayaks and had a large town with many temples and palaces called Tanjore. The Indian kings were very interested in trading with different parts of the world because it made their kingdoms wealthier. Trading with far-away places was a very old tradition in this part of India, but 500 years ago new types of merchants arrived. They came in big wooden ships from Europe from countries like Portugal, the Netherlands, France, England and Denmark. The Indian kings permitted European companies to stay in India and trade, but they had to give money and gifts to the king every year if they wanted to stay.
In 1620 a trading company from a small country in the North of Europe - Denmark – was allowed by the Indian king in Tanjore, the Nayak Ragunatha, to start a trading colony and build a fort in Tharangambadi. The people from the Danish company couldn’t speak Tamil, and called the town Tranquebar. Around 400 years ago, European companies were competing to come to India, buying spices and beautiful textiles and sending them back to Europe.

As a security measure against pirates and thieves, the town had been fortified with a high wall all around it. Back on land, Ravi and Mala run along the huge town wall and finally reach the brand-new town gate. They are very happy to see something they recognize. With great relief they walk around the town. Some of the huts have been replaced by churches and stone buildings. The main road looks much more familiar to them now. When the kids reach King Street they get really homesick.

On the beach in Tharangambadi one can’t possibly overlook the huge yellow building by the sea. The building was constructed 350 years ago by people from the Danish trading company and was called Dansborg. Dansborg is a Danish name and means the castle of the Danes (people from Denmark are called Danes). For many years people from the company lived there. They even had a small church inside. It was also used to store trading goods and could protect the people living there from being attacked by others.

King Street

Spices and Textiles

The Fort
 Colonies, Colonialism and Empire

A colony is when one country takes control of another area or country and uses its resources – like food, spices and textiles – to make the colonizing country richer. If a country has many colonies it is sometimes called an empire: England and all its colonies were called the British Empire.

When England made India into a colony and controlled its resources directly, England made a lot of money and became a richer country. England also had colonies in other parts of the world as well, especially in Africa.

The British Period

With the help of the coins and a spark Ravi and Mala travel in time again, but soon find out that they are still not back to their own time. They land in the middle of a military parade in a time when the British are ruling the town. The two look quite out of place in their school uniforms and with a bewildered look on the face. A passing soldier becomes suspicious of the two. He takes away their coins and brings the kids to the tax collector’s house.

Find out more details! (eg ask a teacher)

1. How did early traders reach Tharangambadi?
2. Take a world map and try to find out which route they took.
3. Find the route which is used today
4. Which goods is India exporting today?
5. What is being imported from other countries?
COLONY AND INDEPENDENCE

The Danes believed that running a trading station was like running a business – if you can’t sell enough goods and if you spend more money than you earn you have to close the shop. By the 1800’s the Danish trade in India had almost stopped, and in Denmark they thought it was too expensive to keep sending people and ships. Eventually they decided to sell Tharangambadi to England in 1845. Denmark received a lot of money from the sale. At the time nobody thought of asking the people in Tharangambadi what they wanted, and they didn’t get any of the money from the sale. Denmark had begun their trading efforts in India much in the same way as England and a number of other European countries, but 200 years ago England began controlling large parts of Indian territory directly.

In some places the English had convinced Indian rulers to support them and in other places they had conquered the areas with their army and replaced the original Indian rulers with their own people. Eventually all of India became an English colony. When India became an English colony England was becoming richer and richer, but in India many people were still poor and were not allowed to decide for themselves. Many people in India didn’t think this was fair, and they fought against the English several times to make them leave India. It was a long hard struggle but finally in 1947 the Indians succeeded and the English left India – this is also called the time of independence.
OLD BUILDINGS AND HISTORY

In Tharangambadi there are many old buildings that give us a hint of what life was like many years ago. They remind us of who we are and where we come from. They teach us how people have lived and which things they thought were important. It can even help us understand why we do things the way we do today.

Because of this some of the buildings are repaired and looked after – that’s why it’s important to think about which buildings are torn down and which ones are repaired.

Let’s Go Home

Mala and Ravi get really scared about losing the coins and with them the chance of going home. But Ravi stays calm and manages to trick the officer. He flips a coin in a fading sunray and in a blink they travel for the last time.

The Collector’s house turns into the Heritage Hotel close to the beach. By the familiar sound of traffic and modern life, they can tell that they must finally be back. Relieved, the children run home in the last light of the day, and find their mother already waiting for them. Ravi and Mala are very excited about their journey. They tell their mother all about their great adventure, while she helps them with their evening bath.

Let’s look at our town!

1. Do you know any old buildings in Tharangambadi?
2. What do they show about the history of the town?
3. Who built them and what were they used for?
4. Draw a building which fits the old style.
POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The areas that we know as India today – Tamil Nadu and all the other states – have been under the rule of many different rulers. Some ruled over large areas, some over smaller ones. When India first became a colony she was ruled by people, kings and emperors from countries far away – like England, Portugal and France. When India became independent from the British in 1947 it became a democracy.

DEMOCRACY

Democracy is an old Greek word meaning power to the people. In a democracy all people are considered free and equal. The majority of a population has full political power and decisions are made by leaders elected by the people. This means that people living in a democracy have the right and freedom to choose who they want to rule their country and how they want it to be ruled.

TSUNAMI & AID

In 2004 an underwater earthquake created a series of tsunamis that reached shores around the Indian Ocean. In some places the waves reached heights of up to 30 metres – 10 metres higher than the steeple of the Church of Zion in Tharangambadi. The village of Tharangambadi was also hit by the tsunami creating a wave of around 10 metres high. Many people lost their lives and many homes and buildings were destroyed. After the tsunami many different people came to the area to help the local population recover from the devastation and rebuild the village. Many fishermen were supplied with new boats and new houses, schools and hotels were built in and around the village.

TSUNAMI

A tsunami is a huge ocean wave created by the sudden movement of a lot of water in connection with underwater earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, explosions or landslides. A tsunami can sometimes travel over a large distance, and when it hits the shore it can be very destructive, killing people and animals, destroying homes and other buildings. Tsunami is a Japanese word meaning harbour wave. In the Tamil language it is called ‘Aazhi peralai’.
Environment and Waste Management

Every time you empty a plastic bag or eat a banana you probably throw the bag and the banana peel away. When people live together in villages and towns a lot of waste is generated in this way. But throwing garbage in the streets and in rivers and ponds doesn’t make it go away. It just builds up slowly and steadily. You have probably noticed that it doesn’t look nice, it is smelly and without proper disposal waste also pollutes the surroundings. Water becomes dirty and can make animals and humans sick. The piles of waste in the streets attract rats and other animals that might do a lot of damage and can spread diseases. In Tharangambadi a system of keeping the town clean is now in place. The garbage is collected and sorted. But it is still important that everybody helps to keep the village clean by not littering the streets with their waste material.

For General Information on Tranquebar

please visit the web site: www.tranquebar.in

For information in specific fields of development in Tranquebar please contact the following centers:

Crafts and Trades:
Tranquebar Craft Resource Center
Ph.: +91 4364 289160
E-mail for queries: tranquebarproject@upasana.in

Heritage and Reconstruction:
INTACH,
Ph.: +91 4364 289299
E-mail for queries: intachtranquebar@gmail.com

Education and Development:
St. Joseph’s Development Trust
Ph.: +91 9442642486
E-mail for queries: edsjdt@rediffmail.com