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THE NAYAKS ENDOWMENTS IN VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT - AN INSCRIPTIONAL VIEW

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ABSTRACT:

The present chapter on the study of Virudhunagar district under the "Nayaks" would be significant and the maiden attempt, before there is no reference that any historical research work pertaining to Virudhunagar district under the Madurai regime had been done. Though Madurai "Nayaks" ruled present Virudhunagar region (at that time was under the control of Sethupathis of Ramnad), the researchers have chosen various themes covering Madurai region alone. The reason may be Virudhunagar fell under the administrative unit of Ramanathapuram Sethupathies with a view to attest this fact the Nayak kings too had made direct contributions in Virudhunagar region. The study of the state department Archaeology proved that Nayak's contribution in Virudhunagar region was very less when compared to Madurai, Dindigul and Western Tamil country. As far as "Nayaks" inscriptions in Virudhunagar district are concerned there are only seven inscriptions identified and published by Archaeological survey of India and the state department of Archaeology. At the same time being strong Vaishnavite believers the Nayak rendered much more contribution directly to the Andal Temple located at Srivilliputhur in Virudhunagar district. History is nothing but the record of unchanging past with this statement, the duty of the researchers is to expose what they come across in their study with this note in this chapter will highlight the "Nayaks" inscriptional records in Virudhunagar district in a short way before taking view of the inscriptional study on the "Nayaks", it must be studied about the establishment of Nayakdom in Madurai and their important endowment activities. Since the "Nayaks" were alien to the Tamil land it is inevitable to have a short study on the Nayak kingdom and king for the better understanding of their endowment activities through inscriptional evidences in Virudhunagar.



KEYWORDS: Nayaks - Sethupathis of Ramnad - Archaeology - inscriptional records - endowment activities

INTRODUCTION

The Nayak rulers were involved in much of endowment activities in Madurai region. Apart from that they had granted endowments to poligari territories with the support of respective poligars. But as far as Virudhunagar district is concerned the Nayak rulers had not granted much endowments directly except Srivilliputhu, because of ardent Vaishnavite supporters they patronage Andal temple at

Srivilliputhur. There are several evidences in the form of buildings arts sculptures which are available in Srivilliputhur to prove the Nayak's endowment activities. Hence the succeeding paper highlight some of the endowment activities made by Nayak rulers in Srivilliputhur, importantly that the endowments recorded only in inscriptions are taken in this study.

There are 78 inscriptions which have been published by Archaeological survey of India in it ARE report, after that there no proper study has been carried out in this region. All these 78 inscriptions belonged to various chieftains which were carefully studied by the researcher. Among these various inscriptional sources the epigraphical records pertaining to Nayak period are taken into account.

The Telugu speaking "Nayaks" were strong devotees of Vaishnavite god, they contributed generously for the cause of devotion in temples. Mavali vanathirayan a Telugu ruler depicted an inscription on 1453 AD at Srivilliputhur. It contains the verses of Periyalvar's Thirumozhi, Natchiyar Thirumozhi as...

Poruppanna madam polinthu thonrum¹
Puthuvaiyar kon vishnusithan kothai²
Nallarkal valum naniyaranga p perunagrul...

So it is evident that the Telugu chiefs were used to inscribe the philosophical and devotional verses in the form of inscriptions. Mavali Vanadhirayan, being a staunch Vaishnavite devotee had renovated Andal Temple at Srivilliputhur; he rebuilt the temple into parts. Sadasivaraya the vijayanagar king also rendered a lot of endowments to this temple, the inscriptions belonged to dated 1550AD mention the details of land, jewels donations given by various Telugu chiefs of vijayanagar to Andal. There is a tradition in Hindu temples of serving food (Annadhanam) to the devotees and the temple servants. The "Nayaks" took special care on it, they donated umpteen volume of lands to the temples to serve food. During the time of festivals the number of devotees visiting to the temple increases manifold, so to meet the needs the Nayak kings gave priorities to build Madappalli in biggest circumference. Apart from this Nayak rulers endowed much amount of lands even village to the temples for Annadhanam purpose. On 1453 AD Mavali Vanathirayan granted village "Thidiyan" alias Thiruvaranga Nallur for meeting expenses at Madappalli. The food prepared from this donation is called as Kala Soru. The below inscription words proved the existence of Kala Soru in Andal Temple.

Nam kalatch chotril naali
Arichi sorum petru

According to this inscription this Kala Soru was given to guards and accountants of the Temple. To get the blessings of god, the Nayak kings rendered lot of donations and charitable activities in the name of gods. They considered giving donations and the charitable services in the temple would bring more blessings from the gods. Hence, the Nayak kings erected Kodimaramin vadapathrayi temple at Srivilliputhur. The below epigraphical words prove this fact,

Karthakkalukku punniyamaha³
Vadapatrasahi kodimaram
Thiruther pirathistai⁴ kala
Kuttiya pillai kumaran
Tirugnana sambanda pillai upayam.

The above inscriptions mention about the name of the donor i.e. Tirugnana Sambandar pillai, it is evident that the Nayak kings never showed any caste disparity on giving donations to the temple. In

addition to that Madurai Nayak ruler Muthu krishnappa Nayak (1601-1609 AD) endowed Thiruvengada Samudram⁵ as devathana village to this temple.

Muthu Virappa Nayak (1609-1623 AD) the notable Madurai Nayak ruler rendered Veppankulam located is Vembu nadu as devathana village⁶. This endowment was given to krishnan kovil located in Srivilliputhur Taluk. This inscription further mentions that the krishnan kovil was built by the Nayak king. There is another inscription unearthed at Srivilliputhur, it contains an extensive details about the grant of brahmadeya village to the both Andal temple and Vadapathirasayi temple at Srivilliputhur. The name of the king who donated this village is found missing, the style of script in this inscription proved that it belonged to Nayak period, this inscription could be read as

**thirualli nattu brahmadeyam⁷
srivilliputhur brahmanar peraiyur
parama padugai ivvur samharithu
vedamum sastramum poi padyatha ha**

The above mentioned lines give only details of brahmadeya but there is no mention about exact name of the village. Further it states that the king (name is not mentioned) changed this brahmadeya endowment as 108 chaturvedi mangalam.

During the period of Virappa Nayak (1609-1623 AD) there was a land border dispute between the administration of Andal temple and Padikkasu Vaiththarulia Nayanar temple at Srivilliputhur, the case was referred to the adjudicators they enquired about land details of the two temple accountants. According to the epigraphic records this issue had occurred on 1556 AD the adjudicators marked the statements of the accountants of both temples in an inscription as

**...Endru sollukayil⁸
Avargal padithum kannakkin
Padikkum avargalu mundana
Visaritha nalu vagaiyilum
Kandavartru...**

There is another peculiar inscription recorded in Srivilliputhur about tax rebatement given by Muthu Virappa Nayak (1609-1623 AD) to a barbar of Srivilliputhur. The reason for this rebatement is unknown, It may be that barbar may be a royal servant. Likewise another epigraphical record unearthed at Srivilliputhur showed the social conditions to be followed by the Parayas. The inscription found unearthed at krishnan kovil mentioned the details of subsidies given to vannars. It is important to mention that all vannars who were the royal servants could have received subsidies from the royal house.

During the time of festivals the need for drummers increased manifold, the Nayak king used the music instruments during the poojas and festive occasion to make the event pompous one. In Madurai there is a street called Melakkarak⁹. Teru was created by Nayak kings. So the "Nayaks" patronised them very much. In Srivilliputhur too they were patronised and given due respect the Nayak ruler (name is not given) increased the number of temple drummers from 45 to 50. Another inscription mentions that the temple administrator Kangeyan had issued an order on 1657AD to the temple servant not to utilize the oil and ghee purchased for poojas for other uses. Hence the officers of big temples were empowered to carry out certain orders. It is an apt example to know about that the "Nayaks" who were not power mongers for they decentralised their powers to the poligars, local heads, even to the small officers of villages.

The notable king of Madurai Nayak Thirumalai Nayak (1623-1659 AD) was an ardent devotee of Andal. He had constructed a palace in front of this temple for his stay during his visit. Among all the Nayak

king who gave endowments to Andal temple. Thirumalai Nayak was ranked first. He had built several mandapas, towers, pillars and erected sculptures in this temple. Due to his stupendous contribution the glory of Andal temple reached its present zenith. To attest his contributions to this temple the event like Parivattam Kattuthal¹⁰ is happened to the Thirumalai Nayak's statue located in the temple premises. It is annually carried out at the end of car festival which is usually held at the Tamil month Aadi. On this day the temple priest recites the donation and contributions of Thirumalai Nayak to the temple.

REFERENCES

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2. Kothai : **Andal is called Kothai**.
3. **Viruthunagar District Inscriptions**, Vol.I, No.189/2005
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8. Ramasamy.A., Ramanathapuram District Gazetteer, Government of Tamilnadu, Madras, 1972,
9. Madappalli is kitchen in temple where food for people, temple servants and sacrament for the devotees are prepared.
10. Kala Soru: **The food given to the Temple Servants**.
11. Kodimaram means flagpost which is used to hoist the Temple Flag to inform Festivals to the People.
12. **Pirathistai is a sanskrit word**, it Denotes Erection.
13. Parivattam Kattuthal: means tying of halo on the head. It is called as first respect in Pandya Country even today.
14. This car festival is conducted on Aadipooram day. Pooram was birth star of Andal.