

# A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THOOTHUKUDI AND THE NAYAK RULERS

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to highlight the Nayak rule in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. Thoothukudi otherwise known as Tuticorin the coastal town and the headquarter of Thoothukudi district is situated in the extreme South of TamilNadu located in the gride of 8<sup>0</sup> to 48<sup>0</sup> latitude and 78<sup>0</sup> to 12<sup>0</sup> longitude.<sup>1</sup> It is about 540 Km. Southeast of Chennai and 50 Km east of Tirunelveli and Geographically located in the Gulf of mannar near Pamban passage and between the mouth of Thamirabarani and Veyppar and it is a terminal of the southern Railway.<sup>2</sup> Thoothukudi belongs to the Neithal land or costal and It is one among the five divisions of land of Tamils. Thoothukudi taluk is surrounded by Ottappidaram in the north, Srivaikuntam west and south, the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of mannar remain as the boundary in the east. It is well connected by land, sea, air and Rail routes.<sup>3</sup> This article focused the role of Nayak rulers in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu.

**Keywords :** Tuticorin, cape comerin, Palayams, Poligars, Visvanathanayak.

## INTRODUCTION

The Madurai country as organized by Visvanathanayak stretched from cape comerin in the south to Valikondapuram in the north and from Coimbatore, Erode in Western Ghats Rameswaram and the sea in the east according to the Mrity Unjaya Manuscripts translated by W. Taylor.<sup>4</sup> While VisvanathaNayak was engaged in the north his general and Co-Adjustor Ariyanathamudaliar was sent to the for south the Tinnevelly country to restore reace and order. He had to force the hostility of the minor chiefs who had strongly refused themselves in the country around kayattar and refused to recoginize any earthly as superior and ready to give

battle and they called themselves as Panchapandyas. His concifiatory methods failed and therefore he requested the help of Visvanatha who was said to have brought them round finally by his chivalry. He introduced administrative reforms by introducing the Palayam system. Madurai Nayakdam was divided into 72 Palayams in 1535 A.D.<sup>5</sup>

Each Palayam was placed under a Palayakar. Northern Puliyarpalayams were situated in the north western region of the Carnatic. The Southern Poligars had 34 Palayams. Except Ramanathapuram and Sivagangai the southern Poligars were totally called Tirunelveli Poligars. They were totally thirty two. The Thirunelveli Poligars divided themselves by the region and by the caste by region they divided into Western and Eastern Poligars. By caste they were divided as Marava Poligars and Nayak Poligars.<sup>6</sup> The Pollams from Sluagirite Elayirampannai were the Maravapollams and the Poligars of the region were generally the \*\*\*\* Western Poligars. The Pollams from Ettayapuram to Nagalapuram were the Nayak Pollams and the Poligars of the region were popularly called as Eastern Poligars. Eastern Palayams were situated in Thoothukudi region.<sup>7</sup>

The Nayak inscriptions in the Siva temple at Kulasekharapatnam and Krishna temple at Pazhayakayal are the evidence for the Nayak rule in the Thoothukudi region. The Krishna temple in Pazhayakayal was built during the rule of TirumalaiNayak and it is one of the examples of Nayak style of Architecture. The Kantheesuram temple in Alwarthirunagari on the northern temple of river Thamirabarani was also built during the period of TirumalaiNayak. A Copperplate of TirumalaiNayak in Alwarthirunagari documents, the grant of Thirumaluram village to the temple. The Nayak paintings are found in the Kallarpiran temple of Srivaikuntam and Adhinatha Alwar temple at Alwarthirunagari with depiction below them in Tamil and Telugu. Tenkasi Pandya remained royal fedutotries to Viswanatha. ViswanathaNayak was succeeded by his son KrishnappaNayak in 1564 A.D. He ruled upto 1572 A.D. In the year 1565 A.D. the Talaikkottai battle took place Krishnappa sent a huge army from Madurai under his Dalavay Ariyanathamudaliyar to support and help Ramaraya of Vijayanagar against the combined Bhamini Muslim sultans forces. Ramaraya was killed in the battle field and his army was routed out ThirumalaiRaja brother of Ramaraya brought Sadasivaraya with him from Vijayanagar to Penukonda, inspite of this incidents Krishnappa was loyal to Vijayanagar ruler. Two inscriptions belonging to Sadasivaraya period corresponding to 1565 A.D. and 1571 A.D. are found in the west end of the Northern wall of inner Gopura and the West end of Southern wall of inner gopura of Kallarpran temple at Srivaikuntam.<sup>8</sup> Visvanathanayak and his (1530 – 1564) and his son Krishnappanayak of Madurai (1564 – 1572 A.D.) constructed Rajagopura of SriKallarpiran temple at Srivaikuntam to satisfy the emperor Sadasivaraya of Vijayanagar (1542 – 1571 A.D.) and his general Ramaraya (1542 – 1565 A.D.)<sup>9</sup> Krishnappanayak is said to have conquered Ceylon and established his rule thone for a short while. In his invasion of Ceylone Alaganperumal Adhiveerarama Srivallabha helped the Krishnappanayak. In 1571 A.D. Tirumalairaya killed Sadasivaraya and became the emperor of Vijayanagar and laid the

foundation of Aravidu dynasty and ruled upto 1572 A.D. The empire was preserved by Tirumalairaya, Sriranga (1572 – 1589) and Venkatta II (1586 – 1614)<sup>10</sup>

Krishnappanayak was succeeded by Veerappanayak (1572 – 1595) Virappanayak continued the Policy of Subordination and loyalty towards the Vijayanagar rulers. Tirumalairaya, Sri Ranga I (1572 – 1589) and Venkatta II (1586 – 1614 A.D.) VirappaNayak had perfect controlover his feudatories the Pandyas of Tenkasi and Tirunelveli Veerappanayak reign seems to have been a period of peace and prosperity.<sup>11</sup>

VeerappaNayak was succeeded by his elder son, Krishnappanayak II (1595-1601). He recognised the sovereignty of Venkatta II (1586 – 1614) the emperor of Vijayanagar. His position with regards the Pandyas and Travancore was secure. His contemporary and tributely Varadanagar son of Parakramakulasekhara was crowned in the year 1588 A.D. Varadunga was the coruler of Adhiveerarama ruled the portion in and around Karivalamvanthanallur then he ruled Tenkasi from 1606 to 1614 A.D. In his period a struggle between Lingamanayak the chieftain of Vellore and Venkatta II in connection with the appointment of YachchamaNayak to the fief of changed Pat, Lingamanayak ensued the Yachchamanayak defying emperor but being supported by the southern Nayak and the KrishnappaNayak II remaining leyed the struggle ended temporarily incomplete victory of Yachchama. This was followed by a deep raid in the Tamil country by Venkatta II himself who finally captured Vellore from Lingama and made its his capital. KrishnappaNayak II was succeeded by his younger brother MuthukrishnappaNayak (1601 – 1609). He constructed the Tiruneelakamaleswarar temple at Kayattar. He recognized the sovereignty of Venkatta II (1586 – 1614 A.D.) the emperor of Vijayanagar II. He had three sons namely MuthuveerappaNayak (1609 – 1623 A.D.), TirumalaiNayak (1023 – 1659 A.D.) and Kumaramuthu. Muthukrishnappanayak ruled the Madurai Kingdom from 1601 – 1609 A.D. By that time the Nayaks seem to have left the coastal region. (ie.) Thoothukudi, Tiruchendur, Manappadu, Kayalpattinam and other towns open to the enter prises of foreign nations.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the open door trade Policy remained unchanged. Gradually however the establishment of an Independent authority at the book of their dominion was felt by the Nayaks to be prejudicial to their interest.<sup>12</sup> The Paravas of Thoothukudi converted themselves to Christianity and also became loyal to the Portuguese King by becoming his subjects. Which had enraged the Nayak rulers and they determined to expel the Pravan Christians from the caost. St. Francis Xavier in one of his letters to a colleague speaks of the Paravas as subjects of his Portuguese Majesty. The entire civil and criminal Jurisdiction of the fishery coast had been seized upon by the Portuguese and all dues and taxes including the valuable revenue arising from the pearl fishery had been assumed by the Governors appointed by the Portuguese viceroy. The Protuguese had not asked any native potentates consent to the formation of their settlements.<sup>13</sup> Thus Political disruption and financial spoliation seems to have followed in the wake of commercial and religious pancteretion. It was probably to counteract these hostile influences of

foreigners that Muthukrishnappa established a strong government in the Marava country of Sethupathis with headquarters at Ramanathapuram.

Muthuveerappanayak I who ruled from 1609 to 1623 A.D. Shifted the capital from Madurai to Tiruchirappalli in 1616 A.D. He maintained cordial relation with the Vijayanagar empire and the Pandyas of Tirunelveli and Tenkasi VaragunamaraKulasekhara ascended the Tenkasi Pandya throne in 1615 A.D. He was loyal to MuthuveerappaNayak and rendered assistance to him during his war with Tanjore Nayak. In Vijayanagar empire Venkatta II was died in 1614 A.D. and he was succeeded by his nephew, Ramas son Sriranga II. A group of people. Under Jaggadevaraya stood against the appointment of Sri Ranga II and infavour of Chingaraya and Suddenly captured Sri Renga II and the member of his family. YachchamaNayak the commander of Vijayanagar army stood against the atrocity Jaggadevaraya and recovered Ramadeva son of SriRanga II from Jaggadevaraya and enthroned him as the ruler of Vijayanagar empire. A Civil war was brokeout Tanjore Nayak alone supported YachchamaNayak and Ramadeva. MuthuveerappaNayak Varaguna Kulasekharapandya of Tenkasi and Nayaks of Senji were supported to the Chingaraya and Jaggadevaraya. In 1616 A.D. at the battle of Thoppur YachchamaNayak defeated Chingaraya Jaggadevaraya, Muthuvirappanayak, Varagunaramakulasekhara and Nayaks of Genji. Jaggadevaraya was killed Ramadeva become the emperor of Vijayanagar.

In Tenkasi VaradungaramaPandya was succeeded by Abirama Adhivirama, Kulasekhara SomesIyer (1700 – 1748) Varaguna Rama Gulasekhara, Davadhisaker (1748 – 1750) Abiramapandya (1750 – 1753) and Seevalavaraguna Raman.

MuthuvirappaNayak was succeeded by his younger brother TirumalaiNayak (1623 – 1659 A.D.). In Vijayanagar empire Ramadevaraya was died in 1603 A.D. He was succeeded by Venkatta III (1630 – 1641 A.D.) grandson of Ramaraya of Talaikkottai fame Venkatta III succession was disputed by TirumalaiTimmaraya elderbrother of SriRanga II and went on fighting for his imagined rights till 1635 A.D. TirumalaiTimmaraya was defeated and killed by the Nayak of Gingee. Golkondasultan invaded to the eastern territories and Venkatta III retired to the Jungles of Narayanapuram in Chittoor district where he died in Octobel 1641. His nephew SriRanga III who became the emperor find it difficult to persist on the throne in 1642. In 1645 A.D. SriRanga III made an expedition against TirumalaiNayak to compel to pay tribute. TirumalaiNayak sought the help of Golcondasultan and directed him to attack Vellore the capital SriRanga III Just to divert his attention. In 1645 Golconda forces conquered Vellore. SriRanga III was defeated by the Nayaks of Gingi, Tanjore and Madurai. In 1649 A.D. combined Muslim forces of Bijapure and Gulkonda defeated the Nayaks of Elingji and Tanjore and imposed their suzerainty on them.

To prevent the Muslim attack Tirumalainayak present huge amount of gold and wealth to the sultans. SriRanga III Left for Mysore where he lived obscurity till 1672 A.D. When he and

his empire perished. TirumalaiNayak was succeeded by MuthuveerappaNayak (1659) ChokkanathaNayak (1659 – 1682) RengaKrishnaMuthuVeerappaNayak III (1682 – 1689) RaniMangammal (1689 – 1707) VijayaRengachokkanathaNayak (1706 – 1732) and RaniMinakshi (1732 – 1736). In 1736 A.D. Chandasahib captured Madurai, Tiruchi, Minakshi weary of life took poison and placed herself beyond reach of her enemy.

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