

LEGENDARY MILITARY POTENTIAL OF THIRUMALAI NAYAKA FROM 1623 A.D. TO 1659 A.D. – A STUDY

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Abstract

Thirumalai Nayaka was the most prominent among the thirteen Nayaka ruler of Madurai He ruled the kingdom from 1623-1659 A.D., and was ruled about 36 years. He follows the foreign policy to liberate and become independent from the domination of Vijayanagar Empire and to extend the kingdom of Madurai Nayakas. He extended the Palayakarar system and enhanced number of Palayams from 72 to 82 in his region. He protected his country from various attack from neighbours with assistance of Dalavay Ramappayyan. He changed his capital from Tiruchirappalli to Madurai (1634 A.D.) in order to strengthen his position and safe guard the interest of the people. He fought five major wars against Mysore, Travancore, Vijayanagar and Ramanathapuram. Mysore army was defeated in the hands of Thirumalai Nayakar army. He subdued Unni Kerala Varman to pay tribute. By the efforts of Thirumalai Nayakar violation in Ramnad settled. By his efficient army Bijapur army was drove away. Through the war of noses Mysore army was defeated and Madurai was saved. He gave an efficient administration and security to his people. The present paper discusses especially Thirumalai Nayaka's legendary military potential in detail form.

Key Words: *Thirumalai Nayaka, Palayakarar, War of the Noses, Ilanthaikulam Copper Plate, Swarga Vilasam, Ranga Vilasam,*

1. Introduction

Thirumalai Nayaka (1623-1659 A.D.) was the most prominent of the Nayaka King of Madurai [1] in medieval Tamilnadu. He was born in 1584 A.D. He was also known as Maharaja-Manyaraja-Sri Tirumala Sevari Nyani Ayyalu Garru who was the younger brother of Muthu Virappa Nayaka. A son of Muthu Krishnappa Nayaka, he ascended the throne in 1623 A.D., after the death of his brother Muthu Virappa Nayaka.[2] His kingdom extended from Cape Comerin (Kanniyakumari, Tamilandu) to the very frontier of Senji in the North and from the East where it confined to the kingdom

of Tanjavur.[3] He was the overlord of Sethupathi region. 'He was the overlord of the Pearl Fishery Coast'. [4] He fought five major wars against Mysore, Travancore, Vijayanagar and Ramanathapuram. Two main aims of his foreign policy were to liberate & become independent from the supremacy of Vijayanagar Empire and to extend the kingdom of Madurai Nayakas.

2. Methodology

The study would be both descriptive and analytical. By the way of historical research methodology, various information's are collected from different kinds. In this research, both primary and secondary sources are used.

3. Objectives

The main aims of this paper are:-

- 3.1. To review the existing literature of the study area.
- 3.2. To analyse the responsibility of Palayakarars under Thirumalai Nayakas.
- 3.3. To investigate Thirumalai Nayakas relation with Vijayanagar Emperor, Tanjavur, Senji, Travancore and Ramnad.
- 3.4. To explore Thirumalai Nayakas War with Mysoreans.
- 3.5. To illustrate diplomatic war achievement of Thirumalai Nayakas.

4. Independent Thirumalai from Vijayanagar Emperor

4.1. Under Vijayanagara Emperor, Visvanatha Nayaka was assigned to as Madurai Nayaka in the year 1529-1530 A.D. Following Visvanatha Nayaka, other five back to back successors Madurai Nayakas, Krishnappa I (1564-72); Virappa Nayaka (1572-95); Krishnappa Nayaka II (1595-1601); Muthu Krishnappa Nayaka (1601-1609); and Muthu Virappa Nayaka I (1609-1623), were defacto rulers subordinated to Vijayanagar.

4.2. The seventh progressive leader of this origin, Thirumalai Nayaka (1623-1659) turned into a genuine sovereign leader of self-sufficient nature and had coordinate political and administrative control.[5] He did not want to drain his country's resources by paying tribute to the declining Vijayanagar Empire. He declared a sovereign himself and freed himself from the weak emperor and had to face directly the frequent attacks of the Maratha intruders and Mughal rulers.[6] To keep up his supremacy among the Nayakas of Tamil country, to safeguard the newly won independence from the sovereign and to extend his empire, Thirumalai Nayaka had to possess a vast army. He liked to mount his army with elephants and horses. These two important items of commerce were dealt with by the European Trading powers.

4.3. Several large territories under the rule of Thirumalai Nayaka were Tinnevely, a portion of Travancore, Madurai, Dindigul, Ramanad, Sivagangai, Kalla, Puthukottai, Manaparai, Coimbatore, Salem and Tiruchirappalli. The greatest parts of the lands constituting these several territories were held as military feuds by the palayakars.[7]

5. Extension of Palayams under Thirumalai Nayaka

5.1. Visvanatha Nayaka introduced a new system in Madurai Kingdom with the advice of Ariyanatha Mudhaliyar, his Dalavay and divided his region into 72 bastions which are called Palayams. Palayam ruled over by Palayakarars under Madurai Nayaka. 'During the time of Thirumalai Nayaka period, it was extended and maintained due to security the kingdom a number of Palayams enhanced upto 82'.[8] A list of the additionally included palayam underneath Thirumalai Nayaka is as under:-

5.1.1.	In Manapari Region	-	One palayam (Thokaimalai)
5.1.2.	In Coimbatore Region	-	Two palayams (Mannimai and Elamburam)
5.1.3.	In Tiruchirappalli Region	-	Two palayams (Sarralur and Perampalur)
5.1.4.	In Dindigul Region	-	Three palayams (Amattar, Kandumanayakkanur and Appachi)
5.1.5.	In Madurai Region	-	Three palayam (Vakami, Thottuppu and Sirumalai)

6. Military Divisions

6.1. The safety and stability of a nation depends on the strength of the Army it possesses. Only when the people are safeguarded from external threats they could lead a secure and happy life. Madurai Nayakas had maintained a strong powerful army. The Army consists of four divisions under the Nayakas and they were Infantry, Cavalry, Elephant and Camels.[9] Thirumalai Nayaka raised a military of (30,000) thirty thousand men. Dalavay occupied an important place in administration. He was the principal officer of the kingdom. He controlled all civil and military administration. At the time of peace, he was deeply involved in internal administration and commanded the army at the time of war, thus he enjoyed the powers of minister and Senapathi. He played a vital role in making the internal and external policies of the ruler. Below him

Palayakarars were powerful. The Kingdom was divided into Nadus, Nadus into Seemai and Seemai into Gramas.

6.2. Thirumalai Nayaka extended his territories with assistance of his Dalavay Ramappayyan. The Vijayanagar Empire was quick declining and also the forces of Bijapur and Golkonda were turning into progressively aggressive. The Nayaka of Thanjavur adopted a hostile policy, whereas the Wodayaras of Mysore vulnerable the Northern provinces. Within the east, the Setupati of Ramanathapuram and within the west the rulers of Kerala had become restive powers. Beneath these circumstance, Tirumala Nayakaa wanted to rule the nation with freedom and found it no additional necessary to drain and loss the resources of his country for paying (1/3) one third to (1/2) one half his revenue as tribute to the Vijayanagar Emperor. Therefore, he withheld payment of tribute to the Emperor and gained for Madurai. As Tiruchirapalli appeared a lot of exposed to the invaders from the north,[10] he shifted his capital from Tiruchirapalli to Madurai in 1634 A.D.[11] and created forts on the northern frontier and raised a military of (30,000) thirty thousand men.[12] Various reasons have been suggested by scholars for this transfer of capital. Some scholars attribute it to the geographical factor that Tiruchirapalli not centrally situated in the kingdom of Madurai. The experience of the last Nayaka rulers proved the fact that Tiruchirapalli was too near to the zone of war. It was not sufficiently central to control the whole kingdom. Due to political, offensive and defensive reasons, Tirumala Nayaka changed his capital from Tiruchirapalli to Madurai.

7. War with Mysoreans in 1633 A.D.

7.1. Palayakarars had to maintain a standing army and timely send to Nayakas as requirements. Urrukkuli Palayakarar, who controlled a small territory was capable of maintaining 5000 infantry and 100 cavalry and one elephant[13] Whenever there was a war, the Nayakas restore to collect the extra amount to Palayakarars to meet out the war expenditure. On hearing invasion of Dindigul by Mysoreans in 1633 A.D., Thirumalai Nayaka asked Ranga Nayaka, the Palayakarars of Dindigul to contribute sixteen thousand Chakra pons (gold) towards the expense of the army. But Palayakarars appealed that he was unable to pay such a huge amount, it was reduced to seven thousand pons (gold).

7.2. When Ramappayyan, the Dalavay of Thirumalai Nayaka, invaded Ramanathapuram to subdue Sadaikkatheva, all 72 Palayakarars and their forces supported them.[14] It is told that nearly 6,000 horses, 700 camels and 600 elephants proceeded to Ramanathapuram from Madurai.[15] The 32 Palayakarars of Tirunelvely sent 30,000

soldiers.[16] During his invasion of Ramanathapuram by Thirumali Nayaka under Ramappayyan, he asked an additional war material and soldiers from Palayakarars. The Puravipalayam Palayakarars agreed to give 235 elephants and 83,000 Travancore Chakrams as annual tribute. The Sukkampatti Palayakarar offered 1,500 Rajagopalipana,[17] Palayakarars of Eriyodu assigned a sum of 4,000 Kalipanam[18] and Thirumali Nayaka asked Ranganna Nayaka, the Palayakarar of Dindigul to contribute sixteen thousand chakra pons (gold) towards war expenses of the army, on hearing of the invasion of Dindigul by the Mysoreans. But when he pleaded that he was unable to pay such a huge amount, it was reduced [19] to 7,000 pons.[20] Kumara Muthula Nayaka, the younger brother of Thirumali, was engaged in operation against the Mysoreans.

8. Thirumalai Nayakar Palace

8.1. Thirumalai Nayakar Mahal was constructed by Thirumalai Nayakar around 1629 A.D., and completed at 1636 A.D in Madurai, Tamilnadu. This palace is considered the most marvellous secular building south of Bombay. According to tradition Thirumalai Nayaka is said to have had the help of an Italian architect in designing this building.[21] This palace is a classic fusion Dravidian, Rajput and Islamic styles. Thirumalai Nayakar as Shahjahan of Madurai '*Nayakdom*' he devoted his time and energy on constructing sacred and secular buildings for which he is still remembered. Unlike the palaces of earlier rulers of Tamilnadu, his magnificent palace withstands the ravages of the successors.[22] The building, which we can see today, was the main palace with huge entrance gate, in which the king lived. The original palace complex was four times bigger than the present structure and an area of more than five acres.[23] The grand palace was divided into two major parts, namely Swarga Vilasam (Celestial Pavilion has an arched octagon covered by a dome 75 feet high from the floor) and Ranga Vilasam.[24] The royal residence, theatres, shrine, apartments, armoury, palanquin place, royal bandstand, quarters, pond and garden were situated in these two portions. The palace security duty performed by whom palayakarar, plough not distinguishable due to unavailability of epigraphical record.

8.2. Swarga Vilasam measuring 75 x 52 meters constructed entirely of brick and mortar without the support of a single rafter or girder, is a marvel of Indo-Saracenic architectural style.[25] Among other striking features of the palace are the massive white pillars measures 20 meters height and have a circumference of 4 meters.[26]

9. Palace Security

As Thirumalai Nayaka had war with his neighbouring kingdoms, he had a well maintained army. The mighty army brought victory and laurels to the ruler. The copper plates of Thirumalai Nayaka attest the strength of the army. Dharmattupatti copper plate-I refers to the army,[27] Ilanthaikulam copper plate describes the army as an ocean consisting of elephant corps, cavalry, infantry and chariots.[28] A copper plate in the possession of Samudra Pandya Nayakkar of Porruppumettupatti in Usilampatti Taluk of Madurai district belonged to the reign of Thirumalai Nayaka of Madurai. It records in brief the elevation of a watch and ward (palace guard) member in Thirumalai Nayaka palace, Rengayyasamy from Vakaikulam[29] According to Vennivelempatti copper plate references a man Alagan Muththiri son of Tudi Algan Muththiri performed as a (soldier) *Kavalkars* duty in Thirumalai Nayaka palace and shown loyalty in south gate of the palace. Appreciated Thirumalai Nayaka appointed him as village head of Devan Kuruchi and Vannivelampatty.[30] The ordinary expenses of the Thirumalai Nayaka's government, as salaries of the officials, maintenance of the army, the police and judicial department did not constitute a serious drain on the public revenues. Large sums were expended on temples, for construction and maintenance and irrigation works.[31]

10. Man of Justice

10.1. Thirumalai Nayaka issued 26 copper plates have so far been recovered. Among them 25 copper plates are published by the Tamilnadu Department of Archaeology, Chennai and one copper plate grant has been published by the same department in the book entitled *Tamilaha Cheppedukal, Part I*. They narrate the personal tours and justice of Thirumalai Nayaka. The Mangarevu copper plate refers to Thirumalai Nayaka's tours as '*Seemai Paraka Vandirangi Iruntarkal*' at various parts of kingdom, met the people, heard their grievances and took remedial measures. This made him popular.[32]

10.2. The king was the fountain of Justice. Wherever he encamped, he acted as a judge and settled the cases which were brought before him. Two of his copper plates point out his sense of Justice. The punishment of the guilty is narrated in Bommai Gaundan Patti-I copper plate.[33] A dispute arose between Bommai Gaundan and Pappaya Gaundan regarding their right on the village Allinagaram (presently located near Theni city). (Kappiliya) Sinnak Gaundan met Thirumalai Nayaka when he encamped in Annanchi Palayapat. He explained the case and complained that their dispute was not settled by the poligars. The king analysed the case and gave the judgement in favour of Sinnak Gaundan. He restored the village Allinagaram to him and appointed him as the headman

(Natamai) of the same village. Since Pappay Gaundan falsely claimed the village, he was punished by the Thirumalai Nayaka by levying a fine on him.[34]

11. Royal Horses Trainer Routh Naickers of Cholavandan

11.1. Thirumalai Nayaka was a great benefactor and Cholavandan was under his special care. He specially cared the village and situated 25 Kilometres west of Madurai which was located at the left to river Vaigai. In Cholavandan village, Thirumalai Nayaka's royal attendants were called Routh Naickers and they lived in a separate street named after their caste division as Routh Naicker Street. During the reign of Thirumalai Nayaka, the Routh Nayakars who trained the royal horses lived there. Even today the street is called as Routh Naicker street and is in the right of Janaki Narayanaperumal temple.[35]

11.2. The Palayakarar levied the rate of assessment seemed to be half of the produced of their farmers. In turn, they paid the one-third as tribute to Thirumalai Nayaka; one third for the upkeep of the troops; and the one third goes to the Palayakar himself.[36] The Palayakarar paid the tribute in kind and cash(pons).[37] Nelson estimates the annual gross revenue of Thirumalai Nayaka yielding from the gross lands as 44,000 Ponus per annum. The value of the lands granted were at the rate of one thousand per lakh. So the revenues amounted to one hundred times the value of the grant, that is 44,00,000 pons per annum equal to 880,000 pounds. This revenue must have been from the palayams and that amounted to 189,000 pounds and other revenues amounted to 181,000 pounds. So the gross revenue totalled to 1,20,000 pounds.[38] Travancore appears to have given up her aggressive attitude and remained loyal subordinate to the Nayakas of Madurai.

12. The Invasion of Travancore

When Tirumala Nayaka was the ruler of Madurai, the relationship between Travancore and Madurai had been disturbed. Veynad was under the administrative control of the Vijayanagar rule. But after the battle of Talikota, Veynad was brought under the administrative control of Madurai. It paid tribute to Madurai Nayakas. But during the reign of Unni Kerala Varman, Veynad refused to remit the tribute. Tirumala Nayaka sent an army under the (ascended the throne in 1631 A.D.) command of Ramappaiya to Veynad. Tirumala's army met the Veynad forces at Kanniyankulam[39] in 1634 A.D.[40] According to the edicts of the king of Travancore, the invasion of Travancore by Tirumala Nayaka took place between October 1634 and March 1635 A.D.[41] In that battle, the Commander-in-chief of Veynad, Revikutty Pillai was killed in the battle field. Finally, the army surrendered to the Nayakas in 1635 A.D. [42] Though

the army of Tirumalai Nayaka invaded Nanchilnadu and returned it was not certain whether the arrears of tribute were collected.[43] Tirumalai Nayaka's invasion of Travancore seemed to have been successful and his gift of land to the Aladiyur Siva Temple in 1635 A.D. may have been in celebration of Travancore victory.[44] John Nieuhoff, in 1664 A.D., remarks that the king of Travancore constantly keeps a garrison of ten thousand Negroes to secure it against the Nayaka of Madurai whose power is much dreaded here.[45]

13. War with the Sadaikka II

13.1. The Ramand region was ruled by Maravas King who bore the of iok. During the period of the Madurai Nayaka's, they came under them and paid tribute to the Nayakas. Muthu Krishnappa Nayaka (1601-1609 A.D) credited with the foundation of the dynasty of the Sethupathi of Ramnadu. He appointed Sadayakka Teva as Sethupathi in 1605 A.D. to suppressed crime and protected the pilgrims of Rameswaram through the wild and inhospitable region.⁴⁶ When Thirumalai Nayaka was the ruler of Madurai, he had friendly relations with Kuttan Sethupathi. Sethupathi acknowledged the over lordship of the Nayak and paid the tribute regularly.

13.2. Sadaikka, the adopted son of Kuttan Sethupathi, became the next ruler. But he had a natural son called Thambi. Sadaikka II ruled peacefully for two year. Thambi claimed for the throne and asked the help of the Nayak that he was the legitimate heir. Thirumalai Nayak sent force under Dalvay Ramappayyan to support the cause of Thambi⁴⁷ in 1638 A.D. Sadaikka II was took refuge in the island of Rameswaram. A bridge was constructed over the Pamban to facilitate the movement of the army into the Island. Finally Sadaikka II was captured and taken prisoner to the capital.

13.3. In the war Portuguese supported the Nayaks. Thambi was made the Sethupathi which led to complete anarchy in the country. Taking advantage of this confusion Raghunatha Tevar and Narayana Tevar, nephews of Dalavay Setupati rebelled against Thambi. Again Thambi approached Thirumalai Nayak for help. This time Thirumalai Nayak realised the intention of Thambi, released Sadaikka II from prison and restored him to the power. He ruled for five years and died in 1645. Once again the country was in chaos. The dispute between Thambi and the nephews renewed. Thirumalai Nayak divided the kingdom into three parts and brought peace. This arrangement stopped the complication for the time being. When Tambi and Tanakka Teva died, Reghunatha Teva became the ruler of the whole of Ramnad and remained a faithful subordinate to the

Nayak of Madurai. For this valuable service, he was given some concessions like sharing the revenue from the pearl-fishery

14. Relation with Sriranga III

14.1. Relation between Thirumalai Nayaka and Venkata II was cordial. Dalavay Ramappayyan of Madurai was sent by Thirumalai Nayaka to help the Raya against Randaula Khan and Sriranga III during 1639-41. Dalavay Ramappayyan with assistance of Ikkeri, he defeated the Muslims and captured from them 1000 horses, 60 elephants and 50 camels.

14.2. When Venkata III died in 1642 A.D. Sriranga III became the ruler of Vijayanagara ruler. He tried to regain his kingdom with the help of Mysore. But Madurai Nayaka had suffered from the repeated aggression of Mysore earlier. So he was convinced that there was no use in pretending to support an empire which was particularly defunct. So conflicts are between Thirumalai Nayaka and Sriranga III. For consolidate his position, Thirumalai Nayaka assistance with the Nayakas of Senji and Thanjavur. But unfortunately Vijayaraghava Nayaka (1634-1673), the ruler of Thanjavur betrayed Thirumalai and joined the side of Sriranga III. He did not lose courage. Therefore Thirumalai Nayaka asked the help of the Sultan of Golkonda. The Sultan sent an army under Mir Jumla. The army besieged Vellore. Sriranga III with aid of Mysore and Thanjavur invaded Madurai. Sriranga failing in his attempt, found asylum in Mysore. Thirumalai Nayaka was knowingly unknowingly responsible for decline Vijayanagara ruler in south India under Sriranga III.⁴⁸

15. War of the Noses'

Thirumalai Nayaka had another conflict with Mysore towards the end of his reign. Kanthirva Narasa Raja, the ruler of Mysore, decided to take revenge on Thirumalai Nayaka for helping and inviting the Bijapur Sultan against Sriranga III of Vijayanagara ruler.[49] Kanthirva Narasa Raja sent his army under his general Hempaiya in 1656 A.D. The army marched upon Salem and conquered Sathyamangalam[50] without resistance. The Mysorean forces were defeated and chased beyond the province of Dindigul. Then they moved towards Madurai. They carried out inhuman atrocities of cutting the noses of the victims. So that, this war is known as the 'War of the Noses'.

16. Role of Rangunatha Setupati in War of the Noses'

Thirumalai Nayaka was in his sick bed. But he did not lose his courage. He requested Rangunatha Setupati for help. The Setupati collected an army of 60,000 men which included 25,000 men of his own force and 35,000 men of the Nayaka force and fought against Mysore. The Marava army of Madurai pursued them to Mysore upto Nanjangud and returned only after inflicting heavy damage to them. Each side they lost 12,000 men.[51] That victory saved Madurai from destruction. The campaign was known as the 'hunt for noses'. [52] A counter invasion of Mysore was under taken shortly afterwards under the command of Kumara Muthu Nayaka, the younger brother of Thirumalai was crowned with complete success.[53] This war is also known as "War of noses: since the Sethupathy forces cut off the noses of Mysore forces in that war.[54] Sethupathy troops fought gallantly and saved Madurai. Thirumalai Nayaka honoured Sethupathy for his meritorious service with the title "Tirumalai Sethupathi", and gave him many villages such as Tiruppuvanam, Tiruchuli and Pallimadai along with the possession of the "Lion Face Palanquin"[55] and also cancelled the tributes.[56] Also the same Sethupathy protected Madurai and was honoured with title the protector of the "Queen's Thali." [57] With the continuation of victory in wars Kumaramuthu Nayaka, the younger brother of Thirumalai Nayaka and army of palayakarar Arakanna Nayakar along with troops reached Mysore and ravaged the retreat Mysoreate forces.[58] The Mysore war came to an end in 1659 A.D. with the victory of Madurai Nayakas. But, Thirumalai died on 16th February, 1659 at the age of 75 [59] before his victorious the younger brother Kumaramuthu Nayaka return.[60]

17. Conclusion

Thirumalai Nayaka was a supreme ruler among the Nayakas of Madurai. He was the supporter of Vijayanagara Empire but he did not want to drain his country's resources by paying tribute to the declining Vijayanagar Empire. So, he declared a sovereign himself and freed himself from the emperor. His tenure was not a bed of roses and had to face many troubles from his neighbours. He suppressed all the troubles and emerged as victorious ruler. He fought five major wars against Mysore, Travancore, Vijayanagar and Ramanathapuram. However, he maintained cordial relation with Ramanathapuram Sethupathi and prised more. Despite his constant war, the legendary Madurai Nayaka Thirumalai Nayaka gave security to his people and maintained proper law and order during war and peace.

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