
RAMNAD SETHUPATHIS AND FORT

Article Particulars

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Abstract

Ramnad region was one of the holy land in Hindu people. This region was related to epic Ramayanam. Ramnad area 17th and 18th century ruled by Sethupathi ruler. Sethupathi kingdom was established by Madurai nayak king Muthu krishnappa nayak. So Sethupathi ruler under the control of Madurai nayaks. Later than 17th century one of the Sethupathi ruler Kilavan Sethupathi declared independent ruler. He was annex some area in nearest rulers region. So safeguard of his region captured and constructed some forts. Next ruler Vijaya Ragunatha Sethupathi constructed some forts in Sethunadu.

Keywords: *Ramnad, Sethupathi, Fort, Vijaya, Brahma Hathi*

Introduction

The Ramnad region was 17th and 18th century ruled by Sethupathi ruler. This ruler ruled by area called Sethu Nadu. Sethupathis ruled two centuries from 1605 to 1795 played a significant role in the socio-economic and cultural transactions of South India. The Ramnad region formed an integral part of the Madurai Nayak kingdom. The Madurai Nayak kingdom established by Krishna Deva Raya of the Vijayanagara Empire under the command of his general Venkatappa Nayak in 16th century. One of the Madurai ruler Muthu krishnappa was Ramnad region divided from Madurai Nayak kingdom. Muthu krishnappa nayak appointed new ruler in Ramnad area. Sadaikka Thevarl was first ruler of Ramnad. Sadaikka Thevar recognized the sovereignty of the Nayak king over his lands. When the power of the Nayak kings of Madurai began to decline in the late 17th century, the Sethupathis' of Ramnad asserted their independence. In the late 17th century, Raghunatha Kilavan Sethupathi crowned himself the king of Ramnad. Kilavan Sethupathi shifted his capital from Pogalur to Ramnad. He erected massive fortifications to protect his capital. Vijaya Ragunatha Sethupathi period constructed some forts. Sethupathi rulers safeguard of them region near and enemy rulers so constructed many fort constructed. I write this research article out comes in Ramnad Sethupathis fort.

Ramnad

The term Ramnad traces its origin from the Ramanathaswamy temple in Rameshwaram. It is believed that Sri Rama carried out the construction of the Rama Sethu Bridge with the support of his followers to cross the ocean in his conflict against Ravana, the ruler of Srilanka. There after Sri Rama consecrated a temple at Rameshwaram for the worship of Lord Siva to expiate the sin of **Brahma Hathi dosam** in slaying Ravana and left the the protection of the pilgrims and the temple under hereditary charge of the Maravar chieftains of the region. Lord Rama's faithful servant, Guha built a town near the Rama Sethu. The town was called Ramanathapuram.

Sethupathi

The Maravars who formed the chief inhabitants of the Sethupathi region and perhaps the oldest caste in the country and four or five hundred years ago they must have been by far the most numerous, as they were undoubtedly the most powerful of all the castes in the Pandya country. History shows clearly that the kings of Ramnad in the seventeenth century held a very respectable position amongst the sovereigns of the south.

Sethupathis acted as the guardian of the Isthmus (Ramasethu). So the rulers were called as Sethupathis. Then the town appears to have been very near the sea and even now it is occasionally referred to as Mugavai. This town was later known as Ramanathapuram. The Sethupathis, the guardian of the Cape of Rameshwaram became the rulers of the Sethu Nadu. The protector of Sethusamudram was called as Sethupathi.

Kilavan Sethupathi

Kilavan Sethupathi (1674 AD to 1710 AD) was the greatest ruler among the Marava kings. He was the seventh king of Ramnad. He was helpful to Chokkanatha Nayak. The Nayak king conferred him a title Para Rajakesari (Lion to alien kings). He annexed some territories of Madurai Kingdom that included Aranthangi, Thirumayam and Piranmalai. He opposed the spread of Christian missionary activities. Kilavan Sethupathi liberated the Marava country from the control of Madurai Nayak. After defeating Rani Mangammal's army, he declared independence of the Marava country in 1707.

Ramnad Fort

Kilavan Sethupathi who ruled over the Sethu Nadu shifted his capital from Pogalur to Ramanathapuram. After demolishing the fort made of mud at Ramanathapuram the Kilavan Sethupathi constructed a fort made of stones. This fort was constructed with a height up to 27 feet and with a breath of five feet to accommodate during war

fare small and big tanks for keeping at 44 **kothalankals**. **Kothalam** is the sloping part of the rising stage ending by the side of the fort wall which would help to attack the enemies from the unreachable height. Out of them, the **kothalam** at the south west corner was still found to be in a damaged condition and people called it as Moolaikothalm.

Thirumayam Fort

Kilavan Sethupathi constructed a hill fort at the boundary of the northern side at Thirumayam for the safety and security of the people in Thirumayam in 1687. During his reign Sethu Nadu being very vast and extensive, he constructed very strong forts for the safety and security at Aranthangi, Keelanilai Kottai, Anumanthakudi and Piranmalai.

Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi

Kilavan Sethupathi died without an heir. His death was followed by succession dispute which threatened the solidarity and independence of the Marava Country by inviting the Maravas to interfere in their affairs. Kilavan Sethupathi not blessed with a legitimate son, nominated his illegitimate son Bhavani Sankara Thevar born to a concubine living in the palace as his successor. The nomination was not in line with the Marava tradition.

Therefore, the nomination was not acceptable to the Maravas and after the death of Kilavan Sethupathi, Thiru Udaya Thevar alias Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi succeeded to the throne. Amidst ceremonial pomp he was crowned on a Vijayadashi day and this accounts for the prefix "Vijaya" in his second name. He was constantly troubled by this rival Bhavani Sankaran.

Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi and Forts

Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi had to keep his forces in constant readiness for any military undertaking though this challenge to his position considerably regarded the growth of administrative institutions, Sethupathi was able to introduce some reforms. He had first to turn his attention to the welfare of his country, accurate accounts of the villages began to be prepared while the whole kingdom for easier administration was first divided into eight Revenue Districts. For purposes of external war he had divided the country into seventy – two military divisions appointing feudal chieftains as heads of each division, which was granted to them free of any tribute so long as the service was up held. Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi under his reign constructed many forts for the safety and security of the territories such as Thirupathur, Oriyoor, Rajasingamangalm, Bamban and Kamuthi.

Kamuthi fort

The fort at Kamuthi was constructed with round shape in stead of rectangular shape at the northern banks of Gundaarua with walls like a border in the midst of hills. This fort was constructed with a design made by a French expert engineer in 1751.⁶⁴ This type of the round fort was designed by Denois, a Dutch captain for the king of Travancore Raja Marthanda Varmana at Uthayagiri. He had a number of forts built, including one at Kamuthi. He was ruled a vast territory between Thiruvavarur in the North and Thirunelveli in the South.

Conclusion

Sethupathis ruled Ramnad region in 17th and 18th century. Ramnad region was one of the rural area in Tamilnadu. But ruler was constructed some forts. They were used in construction scientific and innovative method. This research article find out past one of the ruler of Sethupathis gave wonderful architecture and construction in present engineers and Tamil society.

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