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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD OF THE PEOPLE IN VILLUPURAM DISTRICT TOWARDS HERO  
STONES**

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**Abstract**

Villupuram is the museum to exhibit the ancient culture, political status, economical position, life and livelihood of the civilian's through the artifacts, antiquities, monuments, temples, mosques, churches, Jain beds, paintings, graffiti marks, epigraphical source, and coins. Indeed, this region has all kind of sources to compare with other districts. Moreover, this district have an quality of all kind of lands kurinji, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal and Palai, which refereed Sangam literature. Warriors were worshipped as Gods in Villupuram from the Sangam period to the Vijayanagara period. The hero stones have given a clue to the warfare and bravery in this region. The hero stones were not only memorable; they also represented the military history's historical identity. Hero stones are unveiled in Villupurm for men, women, even animals and birds. Warriors are revered and held in high regard in this region.

**Key words:** Hero Stones, Sangam period, epigraphical sources, Villupuram district, ancient culture

**Introduction**

The hero stone, generally referred to as *Nadukal* (erected stone), commemorates the memorable event. The first hero stone was discovered in Tamil Nadu during the Sangam period. The erecting of hero stones was prevalent in the Villupuram region from the Sangam period to the Vijayanagar period. Warriors, soldiers, and even kings who faced death while fighting for their motherland were honoured by erecting hero stones.<sup>1</sup> These stones have been

worshipped by the people over the years.<sup>2</sup> The local people called the hero stones "*Thorattikal*." In Villupuram there are lot of veneration methods attributed by the people from Archaic to modern period. However, the veneration of human in the form of erecting stones, after the death for the purpose of safeguarding the individual, groups, clan, village or region. This article has mainly focused to reveal the veneration of Hero stones in Villupuram District.

**Villupuram District**

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Villupuram District was composed with South Arcot districts. It is bounded on the north on chinglepet and North Arcot districts, on the east by the sea and the west by the Salem District.<sup>3</sup> Villupuram alias Vizhupuram is the 32<sup>nd</sup> district from Tamil Nadu which has been formed in 30<sup>th</sup> September 1993. Villupuram district, being a big district to bifurcate for the administrative convenience and new district has formed and named Kallakurichi, acted as headquarter too. Villupuram district situated between 11° 38' 25" North and 12° 20' 44" South 78° 15' 00" West and 79° 42' 55" East with covered area 3725 sq.kms.<sup>4</sup> it has surrounded the on the west by Kallakurichi district (bifurcated from Villupuram), on the north by Kanchipuram and Thiruvannamalai, then south and east as Cuddalore District.<sup>5</sup> Villages, 2 municipalities, 8 town panchayats with 13 blocks and around 693 village panchayats.

### Model

Regularly, the hero stones have three panels, but sometimes they are available in four or five. Panels are based on the events of that period. The upper panel depicts the worshipping of a deity, the middle layer depicts the hero, and the bottom of the panel describes the battle scene. Often, the inscription displays the bas-relief of the panel. More importantly, the panel emphasises the decoration figures and carved stones. The carved inscription of the panel, especially written on the back side of the panel, reveals the heroic action of the warriors, a battle scene, and the names of the kings who were involved in the actions. Hero stones were typically erected to honour the brave warrior, both an individual and a group of people who gave their lives in the service of a king, country, or society. In the mediaeval period, the hero stones were converted into folk deities.

### Hero stone in Nerkunam village

A stone was erected in memory of a person who died in the battle of the village, which took place in Nerkunam Village, Vikravandi at Villupuram. A group of people from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from Chennai formed a circle and identified a hero stone above it. The Hero Stone might belong to the period between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. The

paleographic analysis of the evidence, particularly epigraphical sources, indicated that it could be the period of the script's transformation from Brahmi to Vatteluttu script.<sup>6</sup> According to this source, the brave act performed in this region dates back to the fourth century.

### Sati Stone at Sendiyampakkam

This Sati stone was identified in Sendiyampakkam in Villupuram District. This stone dates from the sixth century A.D., possibly from the Pallava period. In the Sati stone, the hero is depicted at the center, holding the sword (Ganga style) in the right hand and a prominent shield in the left. He also has a dress beneath his hip and a kattar on the right side of his hip. His wives, who committed sati after the hero died, displayed both sides as well. The right side of the lady holds a toy pot, and the left side of the lady holds a flower. A lamp is also depicted on the left side of the lady's leg.

The two inscriptions shows the following description

1. *Ya Amur aa*
2. *Raisaru makkal*
3. *.....rummakatti*
4. *rukarupoosa*
5. *.....patta*
6. *Rugal*

The two inscriptions shows the following description

1. *.....Potha a*
2. *Raisaru makkal*
3. *trukuvvi*
4. *aarutharu puma*
5. *....kanna*

### Hero Stones at Navakandam

The hero stone was housed in Jambai's Temple Jambunathaeswarar. The navakanda nadukal (hero stone) was erected in honour of a hero in order to complete a mandapa at the temple. His brother was given land as Uthirapatti. The hero is depicted cutting his head off and holding the sword in both hands. This

could be a special feature of this Navakanda sculpture. In general, inscriptions would be inscribed directly on the hoof. But in this place; the inscription is recorded on the walls of the Sri Jambunatheswarar temple. The details of the sources said that this inscription belongs to the 13<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Koperunjanan, who had given the tax-free lands around 150 kuli to the thanathar, the younger brother of Atkondan. He could cut off his head so that the nirutha (dancing hall) mandaba in the temple of Tirutantonri aludaiya nayanar at Jambai could be completed. Atkondan is stated to be the younger brother of Perralvi, who is the temple maid servant residing in the village and becomes the voluntary sacrifice for the successful completion of a mandapa. This may not appear to be a war act, but rather a brave act.

### **Hero Stone at Mel Olakkur**

On this hero stone, three warriors are holding a sword and shield. The hero stone was erected to honour the three warriors who lost their lives in the war. One warrior holds his sword up while the other two point their swords down. These hero stones are the major source to understand the military history of the people in Villupuram district.

### **Hero stone at Karadi**

This hero stone held in Karadi, Thirukkivilur taluk in Villupuram district. This inscription belongs to the period 8-9<sup>th</sup> century A.D, which possessed two lines as “*Pulling Kottradai Nirai Neettu Pattan Iduru*”. There is an image showed in the hero depicted with warrior who may be going to war.<sup>7</sup>

### **Hero stone in Palappattu**

This stone inscription is held in the Palappattu in Villupuram district. A hero stone sculpture held in the side of lake. He looks straight to fight in the scene. He had bow and arrow in the hands, to ready for the fight. Also he had the bough to have the arrow in the shoulder. This hero stone might belong to the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>8</sup>

### **Hero Stone in Lake**

A hero stone inscription held in the lake, near the having five lines of epigraphical sources. A warrior scene not depicted in this place is different from other places. This letters depicted that belongs to the earlier period before Irulappatti. Also it is given that transformed from Tamil Brahmi to Vattezhuthu.<sup>9</sup>

1. *Pirayagam Yerintha*
2. *k Kallap Porutpa*
3. *ttan Therukkalla*
4. *Ru Magan Nilakanta (Raisa)*
5. *n kal*

Neelakandan, son of Therukkallaru who have died in the battle in Pirayagam, Therukkallaru may be the father name.<sup>10</sup>

### **Hero stone in Athippakkam**

Athippakkam is located near Tindivanam in Villupuram District. A stone sculpture in square slab scaled 107 cm. depicted the warrior A bow in held in the chest of the warrior who catcher the same on the right hand. Athippakkam having the three hero stones which literally known as *Navakanda Sirpam*.<sup>11</sup>

### **Hero stone Pakkam –I**

A Nadukal (Hero stone) is located in Sankarapuram taluk in Villupuram District. This hero stone having the epigraphical sources belongs to Simha Vishnu in the regnal year 574 A.D. A warrior killed in a ‘Cattle war’ named ‘Katti’ son of ‘Sedamu’. A seven line inscription depicted the news about the war sequence in this region.

### **The lines are:**

*‘Koliasaiya Singa Vinna Parumarku Irubathu  
Nangavathu Ivvur Koruk Konda Nandru  
Sodaru Makkal Katti erindhy Pattankal’*

### **Hero Stone in Pakkam – 2**

A Hero stone held in Kali temple in Kallakurichi taluk in Villupuram district. There are two

hero stones held in this region which depicted about the war sequence in the region.<sup>12</sup>

### **Hero stone in Kanangadu**

A hero stone is located in Kanangadu village in Villupuram district. This hero stone having epigraphical sources belongs to Mahendravarma I regnal year (15<sup>th</sup> year). A warrior is grasping a shield and sword depicted the war sequence. Megondrai King have made the expedition to Melur Kings Adhan killed in this incident, which held during the region of Mahendra Varama I.

The line are

*'Kolisaiya perumarki pathi raindavadu mee kondrai natta arasarai yotti na pusal lil pattan melur adhan'*

As per the epigraphically data which dated during the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This hero stone reflected the history of people in Villupuram District.

### **Conclusion**

Villupuram is the museum to exhibit the ancient culture, political status, economical position, life and livelihood of the civilian's through the artifacts, antiquities, monuments, temples, mosques, churches, Jain beds, paintings, graffiti marks, epigraphical source, and coins. Indeed, this region has all kind of sources to compare with other districts.

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