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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENDOWMENTS OF NAYAKS TO TEMPLES AS GLEANED FROM INSCRIPTIONS

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Abstract

The period of 16th century marked the zenith of territorial expansion and political sway of Vijayanagara rulers in the Tamil country. There were fifty-eight Nayaks ruled from 1371 A.D. to 1530 A.D. in the Tamil country. The Nayakship of Madurai was founded by Visvanatha Nayaka son of Nagama Nayaka, who was an influential officer in Krishnadevaraya's government in Vijayanagar. The land to be donated was clearly demarcated in the records, and details, about the land were mentioned. The donated land was clearly fenced and demarcating stones were laid on the four corners of it. The inscriptions state that the demarcating stones are engraved with the symbol of Siva and Visnu according to the temple to which the land is donated.¹⁰⁷ The order declaring the royal land donations was usually addressed to the local authorities for implementing it. The land donation by individuals mainly non-brahmans, are in some cases made after getting the reigning king. This article deals with the endowments of Nayaks to temples as gleaned from Inscriptions.

Keywords: Endowments of Nayaks, Land donation, Vijayanagara Empire, Tamil country, territorial expansion

Introduction

The period of 16th century marked the zenith of territorial expansion and political sway of Vijayanagara rulers in the Tamil country. There were fifty eight Nayaks ruled from 1371 A.D. to 1530 A.D. in the Tamil country.¹ There was an

extension of Vijayanagar rule to Madurai, Tanjore and Ginjee but failed to recognise the forms of authority involving different principles in state formation. The inscriptional texts record Nayaks as *kariyakarttar* or *kariyattu kattavar*.² These expressions literally indicate that Nayaks were the chief of actions and executor of transactions who

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probably derived the independent rights from the king.³

There are many inscriptions of Vijayanagar period, which are inscribed on the walls of the various temples in Tamilnadu about the land donations of the Nayak rulers.⁴ The accession of Krishnadevaraya to the throne of Vijayanagar took place when the Nayak chieftains in Tamilnadu were not quite pleased with the affairs of the imperial government. So the new monarchs sent a force to control the Nayaks. Vaiyappa Nayaka was a leader of such forces and he controlled Tondaimandalam with his army.⁵ After this achievement the Tondaimandalam was organised as a Nayakship with Senji as its capital. The old system of *Mahamandalesvaras* was superseded by the new organisation of Nayakships under Amara Nayaks. The inferior Nayaks were local chieftains known as poligars and they possessed the *palaymas*.⁶

The Nayakship of Madurai was founded by Visvanatha Nayaka son of Nagama Nayaka, who was an influential officer in Krishnadevaraya's government in Vijayanagar. After the death of Krishnadevaraya in 1529 A.D.⁷ Visvanatha improved the Madurai Nayakship as a powerful Kingdom. The Tanjore Nayakship was founded by Sevappa Nayaka and obtained Tanjore as dowry which brought his wife Murtimamba, the sister of Varadamba, wife of Achutharaya. The Vijayanagar rulers bestowed Tanjore on this Sevappa and converted it into a separate Nayakship and he ruled over the Cholamandalam and parts of Tondaimandalam.⁸

According to inscriptions Nayaks were initially appointed by Vijayanagara rulers to look after the revival and conduct of regular worship and restoration of lands and property of temples in the Coromandel region during the fourteenth century.⁹ Several inscriptions of this period show many instances of misappropriation of temple properties, by protectors of the temple. They were

deprived of rights in temple worship and management of temple lands. Nambisivappaya, an officer of the temple misappropriated the jewels of the deity.¹⁰ He received punishment of confiscation of his house and house site. It was during this period that decision to place Nayaks in temples by Vijayanagara rulers was taken to prevent corruption.¹¹

In this gradual process, the Nayaks directly shared the administration of temples in particular localities. Achyutappa Nayaka of Thanjavur obtained many temple villages, protectorship of temple treasury, and also had share in the administration of Srimushnam temple.¹² Kattisura Nayaka of Pataivitu became the Secretary, Supervisor and Chief Executive of Devikapuram temple. Krishnappa Nayaka of Gingee controlled the affairs of Chidambaram temple.¹³

Tirumalai Nayaka, ruler of Pataivitu was the temple authority for assigning temple lands to individuals. As the temples also had large agricultural lands, villages and income, the Nayaks as protectors of temples under their claim, controlled the local institution of temples. The proper maintenance of temple accounts became essential.¹⁴

The duty of writing and maintaining local accounts was distributed to a group of four Nayaks who were held responsible individually for different functions. They maintained the local accounts under two heads of revenue called income and expenditure.¹⁵ These evidences prove that the interests of Nayaks had centered around the revenue of temples. Thus earlier inscriptions record that Nayaks were appointed as local accountants in temples for writing the accounts.¹⁶

Later epigraphs mention that accountants were appointed by Nayaks for writing temple accounts of Devikapuram, and Tiruttani during 1533A.D. and 1560 A.D.¹⁷ The reason for such a development is seen in the *Amuktamalyada* where

Krishnadevaraya mentions the need for a separate revenue administration of temples and subordinate Nayak rulers, since there was possibility of mixing the income of temples and subordinate rulers and adjust the revenue by sending it to the royal treasury for the loss caused by the revenue collectors.¹⁸ The fact that a separate revenue system insisted to be maintained by temples and rulers was certainly to help the collection of revenue. Even if the revenue collector had indulged in misappropriation, it was possible that only some part of the revenue would alone be ruined.

The process of managing the affairs of temples directly by Nayaks began to change in course of time substantially. They began to appoint *atikaris*, *rayacam*, *srikaryam*, *maniyam*, *samprati*, servants, dancers, enquiry officers, accountants, superintendents and various others in temples.¹⁹ Inscriptions record that temples at Tirupati, Kalakhasti and Kanjipuram had two superintendents while earlier superintendent appointed by the temple had continued, new superintendent was posted by the Nayaka ruler with specific privileges, duties and responsibilities.²⁰

Inscriptions prove the fact that many Nayaka treasuries functioned at a various localities in the Coromandel region. An inscription from the Arumugasvami temple of Tiruttani records the existence of a treasury at Chandragiri.²¹ Another inscription from Srirangam mentions that a treasury functioned at Tiruchi. Further a treasury existed at Nannilam in Tanjavur district. The main officer of the Nayak's treasury was known as *Toshikhana Atikari*.²² Various other *Atikaris* and *Talayaris* appointed at the village level, directly carried out the orders of Nayaks and had appointed *Ayyakarans* called tax-collectors chiefly responsible to collect revenue in locality.²³

When the Kings of Vijayanagar made donations of revenue to temples they

communicated the royal orders to local Nayaks who ruled the region emphasizing that the king's orders should not be trespassed and that this amount of revenue would be adjusted or deducted against the payment due from Nayak's share as found in an epigraphical text.²⁴

Use of a particular term called *Rekhai* is noticed in the popular practice of collecting the revenue which includes a variety of sources from village including its many hamlets. This suggests the introduction of revenue farming system which in turn necessitated the Nayaks to adopt this pattern at the village level. This introduced a system of government wherein grant of *Nayakattanam* was associated with the administration of the territory, and collection of the revenues and remission of a part of the revenue to Vijayanagara kings.²⁵

The term *Amaram* referred to troops has not generally formed suffix along with the usage of Nayankara in the Coromandel epigraphs of the 16th century. The fact that these titles were given to them as chiefs of their community in the locality is inferred from the epigraphs. Therefore, it is correct to consider the term '*Nayak*' indicating chiefs or leaders which is commonly found and used in a wide variety of instances.²⁶

The usage of the word *Nayak* to denote warrior cheftain may not be a suitable one and probably *Senatipati* or *Talavai* could be equated with warrior chieftain; some exaggeration had crept in applying the military aspects of Vijayanagar rulers with reference to appointment of Nayaks.

It may be true that the Nayaks were asked to assist the Vijayanagar rulers at the time of war as loyal subordinates, but military duty played only a minor role in the selection of a Nayak by the Vijayanagar rulers.²⁷ There is no details of the strength of the army maintained by the Nayaks in the Coromandel reign except a few. But there is

only references to soldiers called *Ekangiviras* who were conferred with honour and privileges for their participation in war by the Vijayanagar kings in this period.

According to evidences Sevappa Nayaka was appointed as Nayak at Tanjore through matrimonial alliance with Vijayanagar ruling family receiving Tanjore as dowry.²⁸ Allasani Pethanna was granted Karivacciceemai as a member belonging to the nobility. Vithala Chinna Timma was given Chingleput on account of blood relationship. Therefore it is suggested that some specific principle involving extended kinship was followed by Vijayanagar rulers, but no inscriptional evidences supporting the grant of Nayakattanam on military tenure.²⁹

By using the original inscriptional text to describe the nature of polity also required careful treatment to assess the relationship among Nayaks and also with the Vijayanagar rulers. The frequent occurrence of a phrase "*punniyam untakum patiyaka*" in the epigraphs dealing with the transactions among the Nayaks and Vijayanagar rulers.³⁰ The Vijayanagar rulers had made gifts for their own merit. Similarly the Nayaks had also made donation for their own merit. King Achutharaya made a gift of village for the merit of Vasava Nayak during 1534 A.D.³¹ Some inscriptions record that grants were made for the merit of father, mother, brother, wife, family, ancestors and other individuals. There is an inscription which records the usage of a prefix called *swami* for whose merit the gift was made through addressing the person in the most respectable form.³²

According to the Hindu dharma, the gift which was made for the merit of a person helped the individual to secure a coveted place in heaven and this gift absolved all his sins accumulated by the man in his life advertently or in-advertently. The property of land and money were gifted to gods for the merit of persons to attain *Swarga*³³ has

also been gleaned from epigraphs. Since the phrase was used under this widespread belief with merit accruing out of gifts, the interpretation offered regarding the phrase to feudalism may be ignored.

Grants made by the Kings

The Nayaks were always ready to confer benefactions on the temples, granting tax-free lands, remitting taxes providing for its services etc., royal grants to temples took many forms. But the most common grant was land and sometimes whole villages for the benefit of the temple. Like the Vijayanagar rulers, the Nayaks were the great patron of temples. The Nayaks used to visit temples and make gifts on all the important occasions like, celebration of the coronation, celebration of victories over their enemies, in memory of the warriors in order to gain spiritual solace for them in the other world and during the festival times.³⁴ Gifts were made on a lavish scale on such occasions. The festivals used to be celebrated with much greatness and the expenses were met by the king. There was also a provision in the royal grant for rendering some service in the temple on the day of his natal star.³⁵

An inscription dated 1533 A.D. found on the south wall of the second *prakara* in the Arulalapperumal temple at Little Kanchipuram records a gift of land donated to the temple of Varadarajaperumal and Ekambaranatha equally on the occasion of the coronation of king Achyuta. The grant was made by Saluva Krishnappa Nayaka for the daily offerings in the same temple.³⁶

Another inscription found on the south wall of the same temple at Little Kanchipuram in Kanchipuram taluk, states that after conquering Manneyal he levied tribute on *Tiruvadi* kings and took the daughter of the Pandya for marriage. He also visited along with the queen Varadadevamma and Komara Venkatadri to the Ekambaranatha temple and performed the *Tulapurusha dana* with

pearls and endowed a plot of land for worship and made various other offerings.³⁷

Another Nayaka whose inscription found on the north wall of the Krishna temple at Andal Shrine in Srivilliputtur, registers the gift of land in the village Tiruvenkadasamudram to the god Krishna in the same temple by Visvanatha Nayaka for the merit of Krishnappa Nayaka.³⁸

The inscription on the entrance of the Kumbhesvara temple at Kumbakonam in Tanjore district records the gift of land in the Brahmin village Tirumalairajapuram to the same temple by Sevappa Nayaka to maintain a *nandavilakku* and daily offerings to the deity.³⁹

An inscription dated 1485 A.D. found on the wall in the central shrine of the Venkatachalapati temple at Krishnapuram records a gift of land in Ariyakulam and Puttaneri Village donated to the temple of Tiruvenkadanathadeva by Krishnappa Nayaka for the merit of his father Visvanatha Nayaka. It is stated that the gift was made for the offerings and daily *pujas* in the same temple and the villages were known as *Amaranayakam*, granted by Ramaraya.⁴⁰

An epigraph dated 1498 A.D. found on the north wall of the central shrine in the Vishnu temple at South Pallipattu, Polur taluk, North Arcot district, records a gift of land in the Village Ramachandrapuram to the temple of Varadarajaperumal at Pallipattu for daily worship and services in the temple made by Sevappa Nayaka.⁴¹

Another inscription belongs to 1504 A.D. registers the gift of a plot of land situated in Kuricheniparru, granted to the Adivarakaperumal temple at Perundurairai. The gift was made by Kondama Nayaka son of Vaiyappa Nayaka for the sacred bath of the deity, maintenance of lamps and flower gardens in the temple.⁴² For food offerings and to maintain a perpetual lamp in the Alagiya

Nachchiyar temple, an endowment of land was also given by Ramappa Nayaka. It was stated in the inscription found on the Jambunatha temple at Jambai in Tirukoyilur taluk.⁴³

A record of the gift of 10 *kulis* of land in the village of Tirumalapuram in Amurthaguna Valanadu was made to the temple of Ekatalingesvara in Tirunagari Vada Kantisvaram for the early morning services and food offerings to the deity by Tirumalai Nayaka in 1559 A.D.⁴⁴ An inscription at Nedunguntam in Wandiwash taluk, records the gift of 2 *ma* of land to the temple of Isandar Isvarar for the conduct of puja regularly in the temple.⁴⁵ The gift was made by Singama Nayaka the agent of Vijayaraghava Nayaka. Another inscription found in the same place registers the gift of 3 *kani* of land in Torrumpattu village granted to the Ramachandrapuram temple by Raghunatha Nayaka for conducting puja during the festival in the month of *Vaikasi* (April-May).⁴⁶

An inscription dated 1451 A.D. found on the south wall of the Agasteesvara temple at Urattur, states that a land grant was gifted to the temple of Tiruvagathisuvamudaya Tamibiran in Jeyankondacholamandalam by Narasinga Nayaka for the offerings in the same temple.⁴⁷

An epigraph found on the east wall of the Kailasantha temple at Brahmadesam dated 1472 A.D. records the gift of a land grant with all its income to the temple of Kailasamudaya Nayanar in Raja Raja Chaturvedimangalam a *Brahmadeya* in Mullinadu by Ramappa Nayaka for the merit of the Mahamandalesvara Vithalesvara Maharaya.⁴⁸

An inscription dated 1631 A.D. at Kudiraimoli in Tiruchendur taluk records the grant of Kayalkulam to a deity Varahappilan at Palayakayal for the merit of Visvanatha Nayaka and Tirumalai Nayaka.⁴⁹ The Nayaks were also great builders of the temples with *mandapas*. They extended voluntary support and made grants

to the temples. An inscription records the gift at instance of Sevappa Nayaka 7 *velis* of land in the village of Narasikottai belonging to an individual to the Ayyanar temple.⁵⁰ The grants made by the Nayaks consisted of the habitat, the arable land barren land, pasture land and forestland.

There is an inscription found on the northern wall of the central shrine of the Sthalasayana Perumal temple at Mahabalipuram in Chingleput district. That registers the grant of the village Kunrattur in Perumbakkam to the Perumal temple for the offerings and festivals in the temple by Tirumalai Nayaka.⁵¹

During the reign of Krishnadevaraya, Krishnappa Nayaka made a gift of the Village Sirunattur in Kiliyur Kottam to the goddess Kamakshidevi at Kanchipuram for food offerings for the merit of the king.⁵² Some of the Royal grants describe the measurements of land in villages and give detailed account of the revenue in paddy, gold and money that could be derived from the villages.

An inscription records the gift of lands purchased from Parameswara Bhatta Ratnagirinathar of Melaiperungavur and made for offerings to the deity Chokkirayar during the *Teppa Urchava* (floating festival) by Venkatappa Nayaka.⁵³

Another inscription registers the grant of lands in Perungavur by Venkatappa Nayaka to the Tirumangai Alvar temple at Valangiri Malanadu for the oil expenses of lamp and offerings of food to the deity on the 3rd day of the festival in the month of Masi (Feb).⁵⁴ An endowment probably of land made by the same ruler to the Srikaiyam officer of Tirumangai Alvar temple and refers to the recitation of *Divyaprabandam*.⁵⁵ Visvanatha Nayaka granted a gift of lands in Mayanallur situated in Tirusirapura for the purpose of rendering various services to the god and goddess in the temple at Chandragiri.⁵⁶

There is an epigraph dated 1518 A.D. that refers the gift of lands in Mayanallur situated in Tirusivapuram for rendering various services to the god and goddess in the temple by Krishnappa Nayaka.⁵⁷ Another inscription found on the south wall of the Chandramandapa in Srirangam temple, Tiruchirappalli taluk, Tiruchirappalli district dated 1447 A.D. records a gift of land made for offerings on the occasion of some specified procession of the god by Veerappa Nayaka, son of Timmappa Nayaka.⁵⁸

During the period of Sriranga Deva Maharaya many land gifts were made to the Srirangam temple. An inscription found on the second *prakara*, west wall of the Verandah behind the Nayak images, Srirangam Ranganatha Swamy temple, Tiruchirappalli taluk, Tiruchi district refers to the inscription commences with an invocation to god Ranganatha swamy in Sanskrit verse. The inscription records the gift made by Achutappa Nayaka to god Ranganatha swamy.⁵⁹ It registers the grant of 25 villages situated in Tiruchirappalli district for various services on several specified occasions to the deity.

An inscription issued during the reign of Devaraya Maharaya refers to a gift of 6 *velis* of land purchased for 600 *pratapapon* from the temple officials of Sriranga Narayanajiyar Uttama Nambi and Chakaraya by Veerappa Nayaka for the purpose of making certain offerings to the god.⁶⁰ In 1470 A.D. during the period of Sadasivadeva Maharaya on inscription records a gift of the village Melappakkam in Solasingapuraparru *assarvamanya* for conducting certain festivals on 16th day of the asterism, *Asvati* by the son of Sevappa Nayaka. The donor is given the epithet Vedamarga Pratishta Pancharaya.⁶¹

The Nayaks of Madurai donated many gifts to the temples in Madurai. An inscription found on the wall of Sri Subramaniaswamy temple Devasthanam, Tiruchendur, register a gift of land for worship connected with Udayamarthandan

Kattalai instituted in the temples of Subramanya swamy at Tiruchendur by Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka of Madurai.⁶² Another inscription found on the west and south walls of the west *gopura* of the Ayyarappan temple, Tiruvadi, Tanjore taluk, Tanjore district records a gift of land made by Vijayaragunatha Nayak of Tanjore to the god of Panchanandisvara in the temple at Tiruvaiyaru.⁶³

There is a reference from the inscription dated 1426 A.D. and it records the gift of a plot of land called Mandalapurushapattu to god Singisvara by Kasaviraya son of Mahamandalesvara Saluva Tippayadeva Maharaya during the reign of Immadi Timmappa Nayaka.⁶⁴

Another inscription found in Kovilkuppam village Tiruvallur taluk, states that Bommuraja, the son of Mahamandalesvara Saluva Malayadeva - Maharaya granted the plot of land called Varadrajaputtu to god Singisurasi for the expenses of worship and offerings.⁶⁵ An inscription found on the northern wall of Soundaryanarayana temple at Pattaraiperumbudur, Tiruvallur taluk, registers a gift of land for various services and to meet expenses for the monthly festival to Alagaperumal temple for the merit of Tirumalaideva Maharaya by the agent Margarasr.⁶⁶

An inscription found on the south base of the Kayanirmalesvara temple at Attur, in Salem district registers that the Chief Akki Timmappa Nayaka, who was ruling Maladu alias Jananatha valanadu granted the village called Villavarayanattam to the deity of Mallesvara temple for daily *pujas*.⁶⁷ The granted village received the surname Akki-Timmappa Nayaka Chaturvedimangalam after the donor. Another inscription dated 1473 A.D. found on the north, west and south walls of the central shrine in the Kudal Alagar temple at Madurai records the gift of 3 villages to the temple of Kudal Alagiya perumal

for offerings and festivals by Timmappa Nayaka for the merit of Ramaraya Vithaladeva Maharaya.⁶⁸

Another inscription dated 1544 A.D. found on the northern wall of the central shrine in the Adhikesavaperumal temple in Tirukoyilur, Tirukoyilur taluk, registers the grant of land to the temple for providing offerings during the procession of the idols on festive occasions.⁶⁹ The gift was made by Rangappa Nayaka, the son of Rayappa Nayaka and the grand son of Venkatappa Nayaka.

There was a revenue department known as *Attayani* presided over by the minister for revenue in the capital. Inscriptions prove the existence of *karanikkam* as a revenue account representing the interest of the king appointed at the headquarters of *Nayakatanams* to maintain the revenue accounts of the Nayaks.⁷⁰

An epigraph dated 1457 A.D. records the gift of land made by Nagama Nayaka to the Ellaiamman temple in Tiruvannamalai district for the merit of Settiyappa Nayaka Venkadatri.⁷¹ Another inscription found on the Northern wall of the Bhakta Vitaleswara temple at Tirukkalukunram dated 1328 A.D. registers the gift of land made to the temple of Tirukkalukunramudaiya Nayanar for repairing the main *sannathi*. The gift was donated by Bommappa Nayaka for the merit of Tirumalai Nayaka.⁷²

During the reign of Sadasivadeva Maharaya son of Saluva Narasingadeva Maharaya, granted the village of Suttamalligai to the temple of Jambunatha at Jambai for the merit of the king.⁷³ The village was granted by Ramappa Nayaka. An inscription dated 1562 A.D. found on a rock at Kuchchikkadu in Ramnad district records the endowment of land to provide for a perpetual lamp, food offerings, sacred bath and flower offerings to the deity Chokkanathaswamy by

Visvanatha Nayaka. The gift was to be maintained by Koneriyappan the ruler of Venkatapatideva Maharaya of Penugonda.⁷⁴

Another inscription found on the south wall of the Alagapperumal temple at Vaniyambadi, Vaniyambadi taluk, records the gift of lands for conduct the festivals in the temple. The gift was donated by Mahamandalesvara Nayaka deva of Madurantaka Chaturvedimangalam for the merit of the King Sadasivaraya.⁷⁵ Vaiyyappa Nayaka, who belongs to the Nayaks of Tanjore made a land grant to the deity Miramindanayanar in the temple of Kannalam, Gingee taluk, The inscription also states that Nallappa Nayaka, the agent of Vaiyyappa Nayaka under whose orders the endowed land as manya (free gift) was made for the worship and the maintenance of a flower garden.⁷⁶

The Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy is a store-house of evidence that throws light on the land grants made by the Nayaks to the temples. As for the authorities who had given the grants to the temples that appear in inscriptions carry the names of several Nayak rulers, Tirumalai Nayaka, Sadasiva Nayaka, Kandama Nayaka who donated more land grants to the temples.⁷⁷ In the inscriptions of the Devikapuram temple which also record the donation of land and other items made by other Nayaks as the donors.

Many of the Nayaks whose names appear in the inscriptions are mentioned as belonging to the regiment of Kannadiya Nayaks who stayed in Marudarasar Padaividu. Marudarasar seems to be a title borne by some high officer, and Padaividu which literally means the residence of the army, may well be identified with the present Padaveedu.⁷⁸ The inscriptions trace the relation between these nayaks and the central power. In an inscription Tirumalai Nayaka is stated to be the agent of Narasa Nayaka of the Tuluva dynasty.

An inscription found on the south wall of the Tirukamesvara temple at Villiyanur in

Pondicherry registers a gift of 10 *ma* of tax-free land at Villiyanur granted to the same temple for the expenses of taking god in procession for bath in the sea during the month of *Panguni* (March).⁷⁹ The grant was made by Sevappa Nayaka for the merit of Krishnadevaraya. Another inscription found on the Kamatchiamman temple, Kanchipuram, records the gift of land in Ekambaranathacharyapuram donated to the goddess Durga Paramesvari in the temple for conducting the *pujas*.⁸⁰

An inscription dated 1420 A.D. found on a cave at Kunnatur rock hill in Varichiyur, Madurai district records a gift of land in Malaikudi Pulangulam as *devadana* to god Veerabadra Nayanar granted to the temple of Kunnatur by Narasanayaka for the special *pujas* in the temple during the festive occasions.⁸¹ The inscription found on the south wall of the *mahamandapa* in the Pushpavanesvara temple at Tiruppundurutti in Tanjore district registers a gift of 10 *ma* of free land to the temple for daily offerings. The grant was made by Vijayaraya Maharaya.⁸²

A gift of 60 *kulis* of land granted to the god Ilayanayanar at Tachambadi in Polur taluk, for providing cake offerings to the deity by Virupakshadeva Maharaya.⁸³ The inscription found on the eastwall of the Ratnachalesvara temple at Ratnagiri in Kulitalai taluk refers the gift of 20 *ma* of land was made in Mikadunadu, a sub division of Tenkarai - Rajakambira Valanadu by Timmappanayaka, an agent of Ramaraya Maharaya for the morning offerings to the temple of Tirumanikkamalai Udaya Tambiranar.⁸⁴

An epigraph dated 1476 A.D. found on the fourth *prakara*, south wall of Sriranganatha temple at Srirangam in Trichy district records that the Mahamandalesvara Obalaraya, son of Konneri Ayar of Atreya-gotra granted a plot of land at Ramapuram and Akilandapuram to the Sriranganatha temple for the worship of god when the deity halted into *mandapa* on the occasion of

the 5th day of festivities in the month of Chitirai.⁸⁵ The land grant was made for the merit of the ruler Sadasivaraya Maharaya.

A gift of land donated to the temple of Jambunatha at Jambai in Tirukoyilur taluk for the daily offerings to the deity.⁸⁶ The grant was made by the Mahamandalesvara Sadasiva Maharaya. Another inscription found on the south wall of the 4th *prarakara* of Sriranganatha temple in Srirangam records a grant of 13/8 *veli* of land in Vikkiramangalam as Tiruvidaiyattam and assessed to yield 18 *pon* annually by Sadasivaraya Maharaya to the temple for the offerings during the Adi-Brahma festival.⁸⁷

Another inscription found on a stone at Arappakkam near Vellore records 10 *ma* of lands to Jalakandesvara temple in Vellore in the year 1488 A.D. during the reign of Sadasiva Deva Maharaya. They record grants which were made to the Vellore temple at the request of Sinna Bommu Nayaka of Vellore by the Mahamandalesvara Tirumalaya Deva Maharaya for the performance of special pujas in the temple during the festivities.⁸⁸

The lands given to temples were leased out to certain people, the Nayaks and some institutions. It is stated that the land was leased to a certain scholars as *irayili* as well. At the same time, however, it is stipulated that the temple which leased out the land was to be responsible for the payment of *Kanikkai*.

For the long life and victory of the Vijayanagar emperors, the Nayaks made many land grants donated to various temples. An inscription issued by Devaraya Maharaya in 1405 A.D. registers a gift of land to the Azhagia Nayinar Madappalli for providing food and milk offerings to the god at Tirumangai Alvar temple at Tirukoyilur.⁸⁹

The inscription found on the north wall of Ranganayaki shrine at Srirangam in Trichy taluk, Trichy district states that a grant of 8 *kulis* of land at Nochchiyam, an Amara village in Melamuri in Vadakarai, Malainadu for the worship and offerings of the deity Nachchiyar was made by Devaraya Maharaya.⁹⁰ Another inscription seems to record about a grant of taxfree land in Idaiturai donated to the goddess Ranganayaki in Srirangam for the daily offerings by Devaraya I.⁹¹

An inscription of Konerideva Maharaja dated 1497 A.D. registers a grant of 18 *ma* of land gifted to Ranganayaki temple in Srirangam by Chekka Narasa Nayaka son of Narasa Nayaka towards garlands and food offerings for the god.¹⁰⁸ The grant was made on the occasion of a lunar eclipse on Jan. 18, 1497 A.D.

The inscription found on the south side basement of the *mandapa* called Sundarapandyan Kuradu in the Satyagirinatha Perumal temple at Tirumayam in the Tirumayam taluk, Pudukottai district records a gift of land by Sevappa Veera Narasingaraya Nayaka to the Tirumeyyadevar temple at Tirumayam for the daily offerings to the deity. It was stipulated that from the grant 3/5 of the share should go to the Vishnu temple and 2/5 to the Siva temple at Tirumayam.⁹²

Another inscription available on the west wall of the central shrine in the Agastisvara temple at Nelvasal in the Tirumayam taluk, records a gift of land made by Vairava Nayinar Visayalayadeva son of Pallikonda Perumal to the Agastisvara temple towards offerings for the deity. The grant was made for the merit of Krishnadeva Maharaya.⁹³

An inscription dated 1593 A.D. found on the slab set up on the bank of a tank called Periyeri in Somathaesvara temple at Mamandur, records the gift of lands in the village Mavandur alias Rajasekara Kamparayapuram as *devadana* by Bommu Nayaka, the ruler at Vellore for

conducting the daily and periodical worship of the deity Kailasanatha swamy of Arani for the merit of his father Nagama Nayaka.⁹⁴ It is said that the above village situated on the north side of the Kunriyaru in Kalavaiparru in Meyyurnadu, a division of Jeyankondacholamandalam.

There is an inscription on the south wall of the Bhavaraha Perumal temple at Srimushnam in Chidambaram taluk, records the gift of 20 *ma* of land in the village Yalamangala to the servants of the temple of Adimurti at Srimushnam and the gift was granted by Venkataraya, the agent of Krishnappanayaka for the merit of Virapratapavenkatapatti Devamaharaya, who was ruled from Penugonda.⁹⁵

The character of the donar is defined as such the significant of the fact that the Nayaks appear in the inscription as the donors or the agents allows to see the area and location of the lands in the wider context of state economy and politics. It is generally believed that in the heyday of the Vijayanagar empire, the Nayaks were placed under the full control of the central power.⁹⁶ The territory in which they could claim their lordship was limited and they had to send to the central government a half of the revenue of their assigned territory.

But in the later period some of the Nayaks increased their power remarkably. The reason was the rise of the Nayaks due to the political situation that developed at the time, like the pressure and invasion of the Muslim kingdoms to the north of Vijayanagar and the subsequent decline of the central authority.⁹⁷

A Tamil inscription found on the north wall at the central shrine of Kalahastisvara temple in Tiruppattur taluk records the gift of land made to the Tirukkalahastisvaramudayar temple by Varada Nayaka, the agent of Narasa Nayaka for

conducting festival and maintaining lamps in the same temple.¹¹⁹ Another inscription in the same temple refers to the gift of 2 *kuli* of land made to the same temple for the same purpose by Immadi Narasa Nayaka.⁹⁸

The Tamil inscription belongs to 13th century, found on the Mahamandapa of Nattam Tvarahesvara temple at Tiruppattur the gift of 22 *ma* of land as *Madavilagam* and *Sarvamanya* to the same temple for conducting daily worship and car festival in the same temple.⁹⁹ The endowment made by Achyutaraya Maharaya for the merit of his royal family members.

A damaged Tamil inscription found in Kaliyattur, Tiruppattur taluk, North Arcot district records the gift of lands made tax-free to the deity Angakaripuramudayar of Bhuvanarama Chaturvedimangalam in Tirumadappalli in Adaiyur-nadu, a sub division of Ganganadu in Nigavili Cholamandalam.¹⁰⁰ The grant was made by Narasa Nayaka, the Pradhani of the king.

A Tamil Vatteluttu badly damaged inscription dated 1412 A.D. found on the Gopalaswami temple at Hosur in Dharmapuri district seems to record a gift of 7 *ma* of land for the purpose of daily worship and offering *naivedya* to the deity of same temple.¹⁰² The land was granted by Macheya Nayaka probably as administering Hariyanadu and Marasanadu.

An incomplete Tamil inscription found at Kuvalayakavundan Pudur Mukkanisvara temple in Avanas taluk, Coimbatore district records the grant of land in the village Sevir in Vadaparisara Nadu and in Chittarur as *sarvamanya* to meet the expenses of the recitation of the veda and of the worship of the deity Mukkanisvarar by Valayadeva, an agent of Rasarasapurattchaturvedi mangalam in Kongu mandalam and Mallarasar, the agent of Nayakar Kottai Chaturvedimangalam for the merit of Krishnadevaraya Maharaya.¹⁰³

In 1329 A.D. a gift of land at Puteri in Ponnur parru in Singapura Nadu of Venkura - Kottam in Jeyankonda Cholamandalam granted to the temple of Nilakantesvara at Vedal by Bhupatiraya son of Viradevaraya for *sandi* puja and for maintaining a lamp in the same temple.¹⁰⁴

An inscription found on a pillar in the Mariamman temple at Mangadu registers a gift of land donated to the temple of Parama Nayinar at Mangadu for the merit of Viranarasingaraya Nayaka who appears to have been called Sellappa.¹⁰⁵

Another inscription found on the north wall of the central shrine in the Kamakshiamman temple at Mangadu states that a gift of land to the temple of Aaludaiya Nachchiar in Mangadu alias Alagiyasolanallur in Mangadu nadu, a subdivision of Puliur Kottan alias Kulotungachola Valanadu.¹⁰⁶ The land grant was made to the temple by Pratapadevaraya for the maintenance of a flower garden and for a perpetual lamp in the same temple.

The land to be donated was clearly demarcated in the records, and details, about the land were also mentioned. The donated land was clearly fenced and demarcating stones were laid on the four corners of it. The inscriptions state that the demarcating stones are engraved with the symbol of Siva and Visnu according to the temple to which the land is donated.¹⁰⁷ The order declaring the royal land donations was usually addressed to the local authorities for implementing it. The land donation by individuals mainly non-brahmans, are in some cases made after getting the reigning king.

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