

Early History of Travancore

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Abstract:-- The accounts left behind by the foreign travelers in India and the Tamil Sangam works throw much light on the ancient history of Travancore. The Phoenicians who were sometime the masters of the Mediterranean were attracted by the sandal-wood and spices available in this area and its surroundings. Therefore, they extensively travelled in Travancore and they were the first among the foreigners to make mention about Travancore. It is mentioned in the accounts of Eratosthereas who visited India in about 276 B.C. An anonymous author in his book named 'Periplus of Erythrean Sea' refers to Travancore. Ptolemy was the next European visitor who had referred to this region in his book 'Geography', which was compiled in 140 A.D. According to him the kingdom of Ays flourished to the south of Chera kingdom and it extended upto Kanniyakumari.

Keywords:-- SEM, EDAX, AFM , Photocatalyst

EARLY HISTORY

The Brahmins who assembled at Tirunavoy, resolved to appoint a king. They empowered the four selected villages to choose the king. Their first choice fell on 'Kenya Perumal' of Keyapuram in the country east of the Ghats. He was brought to Travancore and installed as the first of the 'perumals' in the year of Kali Era corresponding to 216 A.D.

Ays

The antiquity of the Ays dates back to about 250 B.C. and possibly still earlier. The important Ay kings who ruled over Travancore were Ay Andiran, Titiyan, Atiyan, Titiyan II and Nanchil Porunan, Karunandakkan and Vikramaditya Varaguna.

Pandyas

There are sample evidences in literature and inscriptions to show that Pandyas were always in contact with Travancore. Kandungan, Maravarman, Sendan, Kochadayan, Maravarman, Rajasimha, Jatila Parantaka Nedum Sadayan, Sri Mara Sri Vallaba, Varaguna Varma II, Parantaka Vira Narayana, Maravarman Rajasimha II were the important rulers who ruled from 765 A.D to 1290 A.D.

Cholas

In the beginning of the 10th century A.D., certain portions of Travancore were annexed to the Chola empire by Parantaka I (907-955 A.D). From 985 A.D. to 1122 A.D., Raja Raja the great, Rajendra I, Rajathi Raja Rajendra Deva II, Vira Rajendra, Adhi Rajendra, Kulottunga I ruled over Travancore.

The Rulers of Vijayanagar

It was during the reign of Bhutala Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma (1516-1526 A.D) a major war broke out between Travancore and Vijayanagar. The second invasion of Travancore by the Vijayanagar forces took place during the rule of Sri Kerala Varma (1544-1545 A.D).

Nayaks

Following the death of Achuta Raya in 1542 A.D., the Nayak chief of Madurai asserted his independence. In 1553, Visvanatha Nayak, who founded the Nayak dynasty needed the border lands of Travancore. The year 1623 A.D. was the advent of Thirumala Nayak. He came with his forces to Nanchilnadu. In 1655 A.D., Kalkulam or Padmanabhapuram became the seat of Thirumala Nayak. During the latter half of the 17th century, certain places of Nanchilnadu were under the sway of Madura Nayaks.

The Nawabs

After the extinction of the Madura Nayak dynasty, the Nawab of Arcot came to suppress the domination of the Nayaks of Madura. Even during the period of Nayaks, Travancore had constant disputes with them. The Nawab of Carnatic who succeeded the Nayaks of Madura in power also continued this dispute. Anwardin was the first Carnatic Nawab who invaded South Travancore. His successors were Maphyuzhkan, Yasufkhan, Hyder Ali, Tippu and others. By the treaty of alliance with the Nawab of the Carnatic in 1766 A.D. Travancore Government had been paying an annual tribute of Rs.6,000/- and a quinquennial tribute of five elephants.

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