

## **Study of place names from epigraphic sources with special reference to Thiruvananthapuram District.**

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The place names are often regarded as the fossilised form of History. Place name studies analyse various aspects of bygone human history. The present study mainly focuses on place names derived from various epigraphic records of Travancore, especially in Thiruvananthapuram District. Etymological study of the place names provide some insights into the socio-economic, cultural political and geographic condition encompassed within the historical ambit of the past.

The present study mainly derives its attention towards the epigraphical and inscriptional evidences envisaged in '*Travancore Archaeological series*'. A seven volume published primary record of Travancore, shedding light on the various inscriptional evidences from 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards. V.V.K. Valath's, *Sthalanama, Charithram of Thiruvananthapuram Jilla* provides much impetus to the present study. A close observation of these epigraphic sources provide ample evidences of old place names and their dynastic and historical linkages. Critical analysis of these epigraphical sources with analytical interpretation, help to arrive at certain fruitful conclusions. Particular place – names are brought under scrutiny and comparative method have been resorted.

Epigraphic records like Kilimanur records of 1168 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> Kollur Madam plates of Udaya Marthandavarma in 1189 A.D.,<sup>2</sup> Mithranandapuram Copper plates of 13<sup>th</sup> Century,<sup>3</sup> Inscriptional evidences from Navaikulam provide ample material for this study. Particular linguistic changes brought between centuries are also analysed in this study.

While analysing the earliest inscriptions available in this group is Navaikulam minor granite pillar edict in front of the Sankaranarayana temple, Navaikulam.<sup>4</sup> The epigraph clearly states about a perpetual lamp made by a person from Eranadu.<sup>5</sup> The name of donor appeared in this record is Kumarakandan. The record is in Vatteluthu script translates thus, "Hail Prosperity! Kumaran Kandan of Eranadu provided a perpetual lamp to the god of Navakkalam by the gift of sixty kalanju<sup>6</sup> gold. One uri of ghee by the measure holding three nali shall be supplied daily. Thread-wick shall be used. Those who are in charge of the lamp shall enjoy the pattam (of the land). Those who obstruct (this charity) and those who supported the obstructers (shall he liable to penalty of Mulikkala – Kachcham).<sup>7</sup>

Here the Kumaran kandan may be interpreted as a rich person perhaps belongs to the Chera ruling family belongs to Eranattu Kattu Muppi. The place name denoted as Navakkalathu tevar.<sup>8</sup> Navakkalam was the place name during 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>9</sup> At present the place is identified as Navaikulam. Navakkalam, was a 10<sup>th</sup> century original name, but after the decline of early cheras the place name underwent changes Nava+Ay=Kalam as it is identified from 1168 A.D.<sup>10</sup> Kilimanur record, the kingdom of Ays might added Navaikalam. So the existing place name becomes Navaykkalam. Analysing the Nava+Ay+kalam it is interesting to denote that the place name underwent no change during 1438-39 period.<sup>11</sup> Rama Marthanda Varma repairs of the Sankaranarayana temple, Navaikulam. Even during the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the temple was a place of educational institution. Later on during 15<sup>th</sup> century the temple was taken over by Desinganad. The Kalam retains its predominance. So the present name got its final change during 16<sup>th</sup> century as Navaikulam.

In 1438-39 inscription clearly states the place name as Navaykkalam. But Thiruvananthapuram Museum Copper plate of 1522 A.D.,<sup>12</sup> clearly mark the change in the place name as Navaikulam. Akavur

Brahmins of Iranikulam in present Ernakulam District<sup>13</sup> took over the administration of the temple. In their copper plate inscription the place name is clearly mentioned as Navaikkulam.

Epigraphic records from 10<sup>th</sup> century up to 15<sup>th</sup> century the place name Navakkalam had in prevalence, but after 1522 A.D, the place name underwent change and became Navaikkulam.

Apart from this copper plate and lithic records the Cudjan records or the Mathilakam records also attested the existence of Navaikkulam from 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>14</sup>

### **Buddhist influences**

Certain place names with its particular references to palli made it clear with Buddhist influences. In ancient times the Buddhist Chaithya – Viharas were popularly known as palli.<sup>15</sup> Our epigraphs of 12 and 13 centuries provide ample evidences of Buddhist relationship with place mentioned in epigraphs like pallikkal, Madavur and Chanthanapalli.<sup>16</sup>

The place name Pallikkal can be seen in south and central Kerala around 18/20 places. In these epigraphic references a place name referred as Madayur is presently known as Madavur.<sup>17</sup> Buddha was degraded in various names as Chathan, Puthan, Madayan, Madan etc.<sup>18</sup> Place name Chathanapalli was a once a Buddhist abode.

While analysing certain place names such as Venpaya Kunram is now identified as Vembayam, Thiruvananthapuram District mentioned in two epigraphs of 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>19</sup> A place name Sembalandinallur<sup>20</sup> occurred in Mithranandapuram plates is now identified as Chempazhanthy the birth place of Sreenarayana Guru.

Certain place names had connection with the Ay dynasty was represented in epigraphs of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century is Ayirurkodu and Ayilam.<sup>21</sup> Etymologically analysing these place names Ayirurkodu is now identified as Ayirur near Varkala. Ay-iru-ur kodu (place belongs to Ays). Otherwise Ay-illam is a hamlet in Chirayinkeezhu taluk is identified with the royal house of Ay dynasty.

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- [3]. *ibid*, Vol. III, PP. 1-24
- [4]. *ibid*, Vol. VI, 1927, P.83
- [5]. Eranadu, a place in present Malappuram district in Northern Kerala.
- [6]. Kalanju – a gold coin existed in ancient and mediaval Kerala.
- [7]. Muzhikkalakachcham refers to one of the earliest Kachchams or rules and regulations for the temple trustees or the uralers. P.N. Elamkulam Kunjan pillai considers the date of Muzhikkula Kachcham to AD 898.
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