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Editorial

In the labyrinth of history where the time has perhaps eroded the tangible evidences of past, epigraphy emerges as a beacon guiding us through the depth of antiquity. Epigraphy, the study of inscriptions, encompasses more than just deciphering ancient texts. It serves as a gateway, connecting us to the thoughts, beliefs, and societal structures of cultures and civilizations of long past. Epigraphy as a branch of social science had immensely strengthened Indian history in the past. There were many luminaries who relentlessly worked hard which brought out great sagas of ancient Indian history. The official historians and professional epigraphists had conducted numerous explorations and expeditions all over India to collect and document the remnants of India's past. Even though they had been greatly motivated by their colonial interest to recognise and enumerate the land and people, the effort rendered by them had a positive impact in Indian history and culture. Inscriptions with unknown scripts and languages had been located even in the remote areas of India by British officials turned epigraphists. Eventually all those inscriptions were scientifically retrieved and scholarly compiled with the support of the colonial government. The establishment of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) further systematised the venture. The publications of inscriptions and research articles regularly in the journals of the organisation indeed popularised the epigraphy as a scientific discipline among the academicians.

The colonial patronage indeed spurred the epigraphical studies in South India too. The establishment of a regional centre of Archaeological survey of Indian in Madras further accelerated the scholars to pile up the treasure house of inscriptions from every village and street of South India. Thus, not only unknown scripts and languages were identified but many unknown kingdoms, empires, organisations, and way of life of the people also came into the lime light of the present. The establishment of Travancore Archaeological Department was a turning point in the history of Kerala. The directors of this institution took up leading role in compiling large number of Vattezhuthu, Tamil and Inscription in Grantha scripts. The publication of Travancore Archaeological Series (TAS) was considered a trend setting initiative in the history of epigraphy as well as in the history of Kerala. There are many veterans such as Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, M.G.S Narayanan who have successfully made use of the Travancore Archaeological series in the later years to study the history of Kerala.

So, we are proud in bringing out one more theme specific volume of Social Orbit now. In this issue of Social Orbit, the contributors showcase various aspects of society through the lenses of epigraphy. It further proves that inscriptions would always be a solid source material especially for the practising historians to reconstruct the past. The volume is reminded of the enduring significance of epigraphy in our

quest to understand the past. Present issue of the Social Orbit contains six research articles and also one book review included at the end of the journal. Bhaskar Bordoloi's research sheds light on the vast repository of epigraphical evidence in Assam, encompassing rock inscriptions, copper plates, and the enigmatic manuscripts of Sanchipāts. Despite the abundance of such material, only a fraction has been studied, deciphered, and analysed by epigraphists, leaving a significant portion unexplored. Bordoloi highlights the urgent need for scholars to delve into Assam's epigraphical heritage, particularly focusing on the unexamined evidence dating back to the 10th century, which holds immense importance in understanding the evolution of Modern Indian Script. Furthermore, the discovery of symbols resembling those of the Indus Valley seals within Assam's rock inscriptions raises intriguing questions about the region's connections to ancient civilizations. Bordoloi emphasizes the pressing need for scholars to prioritize the dating and thorough examination of Assam's epigraphical evidence, recognizing its invaluable contribution to our understanding of Indian script, language, and history.

In the rich historical and cultural heritage of Kerala, epigraphy and literary accounts serve as invaluable windows into the past. The latest issue of Social Orbit is a testament to this, featuring a diverse array of research articles that illuminate various aspects of Kerala history, geography, and socio-political dynamics. Dr. M.P Manju's article titled 'Understanding Early Travel Account of Kerala: The south Indian pilgrimage of a Malayali in 1842' takes us on a literary pilgrimage through the manuscript "Yatrakurippu," authored by an unknown Malayali traveller in 1842. Through a meticulous analysis of the manuscript, Dr. Manju traces the traveller's route, offering a vivid depiction of geographical and cultural features during the 19th century. Similarly, Dr. K.P Rajesh's article titled 'Political Geography of Kolathunadu: Reading the epigraph of early medieval period' gives us insightful ideas gleaned from epigraphic evidence. By examining five key epigraphs, Rajesh unveils the transformation of political power from the Mushika lineage to the Swarupam polity of Kolathiris. In addition, Dr. Rajesh also analyses the role of Perinchellur Brahmin settlement as a crucial factor in shaping the region's political landscape. Dr. Krishnaraj K. has deciphered a Tamil inscription discovered within the Sreepadam Palace complex in Thiruvananthapuram. This inscription, dating back to M.E. 799 (1624 C.E.), sheds light on the historical significance of the palace and its surroundings, offering enticing glimpses into Kerala's royal past. Dr. Arun Mohan's exploration of the Ranni Church inscription, a kolezhuth inscription, provides valuable insights into the struggles and reforms undergone by the Jacobite congregation during the colonial period. By deciphering this Kolezhuthu inscription, Dr. Arun Mohan offers an interesting analysis of Kerala's religious and socio-cultural history. In addition to the above articles, an Arab inscription also included in this volume.



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Epigraphical Evidences of Assam: A Study from the perspective of Indian Script, Language and History

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Abstract-

Like other places of India, Assam can also boast of epigraphical evidence. The number of epigraphical evidences of Assam studied, discovered, deciphered, and published till date is 232. This figure is constituting Rock Inscription (RI) and Copper Plate (CP) only. There are thousands of manuscripts written in Sānchipāts found in the custody of various Satras and Nāmghars of Assam. It may be pertinent to note that lots of copperplate and manuscript of 'Sānchipāt' are preserved in the custody of various individuals, most of which are yet to be recorded, deciphered, and identified. The un-deciphered rock inscription and copperplates as well as un-identified manuscript of Sānchipāt still contain many unexplored information of Assam till this date. Interestingly, out of these 232 epigraphical evidences of Assam only 7.33% has been studied till now by the epigraphists. Even these studied epigraphical evidences have not examined properly from the perspective of Indian script, language, and history. What needs to be pointed is that the epigraphical evidence up to the 10th century's Assam, have been left unexamined; which are the most important from the angle of Modern Indian Script (MIS). Notably, among the epigraphical evidences of Assam, there is one RI, four letters of which match with the symbols of Indus valley seals. It is a matter of serious concern that the dating of epigraphical evidences of Assam has not been the serious concern of the scholars till this date.

Keywords: Assam, Assam history, History of Assam, Assamese script, Indian script, epigraphy, epigraphical evidences, Modern Indian Script, Indic script.

Introduction

The actual data of Indian script, language and history is yet to be explored. Every narrative in these fields is precariously hanging mostly on belief and academic teaching instead of the proper examination of excavated archaeological evidences. The true history has been suppressed while the altered and manipulated history has been presented

to us. The narrative which grew prior to 1826 has not been replaced with due evaluation of epigraphical evidences of Assam. Instead of proper necessary examination in terms of epigraphical evidences, the script, language, culture, and history of Assam have been concluded exclusively from the North Indian narrative. Imposing any conclusion by suppressing, altering, and manipulating the facts must always be intentional, prejudiced and hence, ill motivated. On the contrary, serious engagements on the basis of evidences would always strengthen the growth of epigraphical studies in India.

The epigraphists have already put conclusion on MIS; consequently, we find specific evolution charts of Assamese, Bengali, Devanāgarī, Gurmukhī, Kannada, Keithī, Oriya, Sarada, Tamil script etc. The conclusion of these language and scripts has been presented to the Department of Official language, Govt India; and in the process, these got recognition from the government. Under the circumstances, one can argue, though wrongly, that new study of script based on epigraphical evidences of Assam is not important. Would it be right to skip the field treating it as completely studied? Is not it necessary to study from newer perspective? In such matters none can say the final word and therefore no study ends once for all. The 7.33% study has done so far of epigraphical evidences of Assam strongly calls for study of Indian script, language, and history from a different perspective. It hardly needs to be underlined that conclusion thus derived from incomplete study is definitely a serious issue. The epigraphical evidences of Assam and the conclusions based on only 7.33% study appears to be not accidental but deliberate, prejudiced, and intentional.

The narrative of '*Brahmi Script*' is imaginary as it is not at all based on epigraphical evidence. Thus, the name and the classification of Indian scripts are not factual. The inclination towards '*Brahmi Script*' nomenclature is palpable; but admitting the epigraphical nomenclature of script must be scientific. Ignoring the epigraphical nomenclature of script thus is a serious consequence of either an incomplete study or ignoring attitude towards in-depth study. The Indian scripts are the consequence of evolution, thus noncognitive; so sacrificing epigraphical nomenclature in support of its cognitive narrative is blunder. The study of Indian script, language and history which includes entire epigraphical evidence is thus indispensable to get the actual picture. Any scientific study in this field based on secondary and tertiary data only instead of primary data smacks of dishonest scholarship.

It is conclusive that for script, language and history of India or any of its territory, epigraphy is basic and the most reliable tool. How-

ever, it is often discussed that the history of India has been written based on archaeology, linguistic evidences, notes of foreign travelers and the contemporary written records. The archaeological evidence includes structure & sculptures, terracotta, seals and epigraphical records. Of these the epigraphy might be called a small tool of history but it is the most authentic source. In compilation of Indian history or any of its part epigraphy provides solid base. Without epigraphy archaeology only provides a basis for some creative imagination of the past. In absence of epigraphy, therefore, history is weak, and in absence of archaeology history turns into a mere story; but in absence of both, history is superstition.

Origin of Indian Script

The summation of structure, sculptures, terracotta, seals and epigraphy is archaeology. The history minus archaeology is story. In support of the narrative ‘Brahmi Script’, not even single epigraphical evidence has been discovered till this date. “*Gupta Lipi kā hi nahi.. Brāhmi ke bibhāgon ke Jo nām rakkhe Gaye hei ve bhudhā sav hi kalpit aur akṣaronki ākriti, desh yā un lipiuse nikli hui vartmān lipiun ke nāmu se hi unke nāmo ki kalpanā ki gayī. Isi tarah uske liye jo samay mānā gayā hei vah bhi anumānik hī hei.*” (Ojha 1971:60)

This quotation is in Hindi. It can be read as- not only the Gupta script, but also the names of various divisions of Brahmi Script are also imaginary; the shape of the letters and their names were imagined from the names of the places and script from which these were evolved. Likewise, the ascertained times for each script were also imaginary. So, designating Brahmi as the mother of all the Indian scripts is merely a story. As far as script is concerned- story is not valid, for its scientific study epigraphical evidence is must.

Epigraphical evidence supports that all the Indian scripts have evolved from Indus symbols. In course of its evolutionary path, it was called ‘*Dhammlipi*’ during Asokan period. Those who study the origin of Indian scripts from Asokan period can conclude ‘*Dhammlipi*’, not Brahmlipi, is the mother of all the Indian scripts. The nomenclature ‘*Dhammlipi*’ can be in Asokan edicts. In Girner rock edict of Asoka we find ‘*Īyam Dhammlipi*’, in Śvāhbāzgarhi rock edict we find ‘*Dhammlipi*’. In Delhi-Topra, Delhi-Merrut, Radia and Rampurua pillar rock inscription, we find ‘*Īyam Dhammlipi*’. The Pali term *Īyam* ‘*Dhammlipi*’ means, ‘this is *Dhammlipi*’. The Epigraphical record confirms that the script is ‘*Dhammlipi*’- so Dr. Rajendra Prasad Singh pertinently raised the question, “Jab samrāt Ashok ne apne abhilekho kī lipi ko dhammlipi kāha hei, tav āp use brāhmilipi kahnewalā koun

hei” (Singh 2020:61). This Hindi quotation says, while the great Asoka called the script of its edicts ‘Dhammlipi’ then who are you to call it ‘Brahmi Script’? There is another conclusion in this regard, Asoka has called the script of its edicts Dhammlipi, but the literature of our country written after several centuries later replaced it with Bambhi or Brahmi nomenclature. (Mule 2018:25)

Epigraphical evidence of Assam

It is a fact that “*inscriptions constitute the principal source for the history of pre-Islamic India, providing a large majority of the total information available*” (Salomon1998:226) Therefore, the fact derived from the epigraphical evidences should be accepted for use in any present-day study. As such if any important epigraphical record is left out or omitted from study, it can have adverse impact on the conclusion and thus lead the history towards erroneous tract. It needs to be reiterated that there are 232 numbers of epigraphical evidences of Assam which have been left out from study and thus, the conclusion based on epigraphical study of India is incomplete and erroneous.

In any scientific study of history mere claim is never enough and at the time of claim, its supporting evidence must be appended. After all it is essential of a scientific study. Assam has 191 numbers of epigraphical evidences which were published in 1974 (Neog 1974); there were 34 more other epigraphical evidences which came to light in collective form in 1978 and 1981 (Sarma 1978 & Sarma 1981). Remaining 7 epigraphical evidences have been brought to light in 2020 (Bordoloi 2020). These are the discovered, studied, and deciphered epigraphical evidences of Assam till this date. Surprisingly this is only the estimation of rock inscription and copperplate. There are thousands of manuscripts and lots of copperplates which are yet to come to light.

The above stated rock inscriptions and copperplates were also published in various journal of India since 1834. Among the 232 epigraphical evidences of Assam, some of the important RI and CP which are important from Indian script, language and history have been tabled below:-

Scriptologically important Epigraphical evidences of Assam					
Serial by time of inscribe			Serial by time of publication		
Sl	Rule or inscription	Inscribed	Sl	Rule or inscription	Inscribed
1	Nagjari Khanikargoon RI	1 st century AD	1	Harzarvermān, TRI	1897
2	Surendravermān, RI	2 nd -3 rd AD	2	Balavermān-III, NaCP	1897
3	Bhutivermān, BRI	2 nd -3 rd AD	3	Ratnapāl, SCP	1897
4	Bhāskarvermān, DCP	593-640 AD	4	Indrapāl, GCP	1893
5	Bhāskarvermān, NCP	593-640 AD	5	Bhāskarvermān, NCP	1913
6	Harzarvermān, TRI	829-20 AD	6	Dharmapāl, KCP	1941
7	Balavermān-III, NaCP	9 th AD	7	Bhutivermān, BRI	1941
8	Ratnapāl, SCP	1036 AD	8	Bhāskarvermān, DCP	1954
9	Indrapāl, GCP	1058 AD	9	Surendravermān, RI	1957
10	Gopālvermān, GaCP	1080 AD	10	Gopālvermān, GaCP	1968
11	Mādhavadeva, NCP	1090 AD	11	Nagjari Khanikargoon RI	1973-74
12	Dharmapāl, KCP	1090-1136 AD	12	Mādhavadeva, NCP	1974
13	Rātunuchi, CP	1339 AD	13	Rātunuchi, CP	1974

NB-RI=Rock Inscription, CP=Copperplate, BRI=Bargunā Rock Inscription, DCP=Dubi Copperplate, NCP=Niditpur Copperplate, TRI=Terpur Rock Inscription, NaCP=Nagān Copperplate, SCP=Salikuchi Copperplate, GCP=Guwahati Copperplate, NCP=Nisāhal Copperplate, KCP=Khasimāhā Copperplate.

Fig-1

Epigraphical Evidences of Assam

During examination, it has been noticed that in the above given copperplates viz. Nagajari Khanikargaon RI, Surendravermana's RI and Bhutiverman's RI have not properly been dated. "*The letters of Nagājari khanikargāon RI such as ka, kha, ja, da, pa, ba, bha, ma, ra and ha are much older and mostly similar with the letters of Hāthigomphā RP*" (Choudhury 1952:3-5). As the time of *Hāthigomphā* RI is in between 2nd century BC to 1st century AD and its letters are matching with Nagājori Khanikargāon RI; the time of Nagājori Khanikargāon RI cannot be later then 1st century AD.

The comparative analysis of evolution charts of various scripts also points to some important angles. From the comparative analysis of evolution chart of Assamese script and the evolution chart of Eastern Indian script i.e. Bengali script and Northern Indian script i.e. Nagari script it has been found that the letters of Nidhanpur copperplate were used in Eastern India in 12th century AD and in Northern India in 11th century AD. This is almost 500/400 years later. The same can be examined in the following table-

Assamese letters and its adopted form in latter century in other parts of India											
Assamese letters of 7 th century				Eastern Indian letters of 12 th century				Northern Indian letters of 11 th century			
ক	খ	গ	ঘ	क	ख	ग	घ	क	ख	ग	घ
a	i	u	ka	a	i	u	ka	a	i	u	ka
ক্খা	গ্গা	ঘ্ঘা	চ্চা	क	ख	ग	घ	क	ख	ग	घ
kha	ga	gha	cha	kha	ga	gha	cha	kha	ga	gha	cha
জ	তা	না	সা	ज	त	न	स	ज	त	न	स
ja	ta	na	sa	ja	ta	na	sa	ja	ta	na	sa
দা	ধা	না	পা	द	ध	न	प	द	ध	न	प
da	Dha	na	pa	da	Dha	na	pa	da	Dha	na	pa
ফা	বা	ভা	মা	फ	ब	भ	म	फ	ब	भ	म
pha	ba	bha	ma	pha	ba	bha	ma	pha	ba	bha	ma
যা	রা	লা	সা	य	र	ल	स	य	र	ल	स
ya	ra	la	sa	ya	ra	la	sa	ya	ra	la	sa
শা	সা	হা		श	स	ह		श	स	ह	
sa	sa	ha		sa	sa	ha		sa	sa	ha	

Fig-2

In the same manner another notable point has been observed. The Suchunia RI has been dated at 4th century but after having same letters in Surendraverman's Umachal RI and Bhutiverman's Barganga RI, these have been placed at 6th century AD. As the letters used in Assam found to be used up to 400 years later in Nagari script, the Surendraverman's RI and Bhutiverman's RI cannot be dated not later than 2nd -3rd century AD. The comparative analysis in this connection has been tabled below for ready reference:-

Similarity of letters of Umachal-Barganga-Chuchunia RI											
Letter	Umachal	Chuchunia	Barganga	Letter	Umachal	Chuchunia	Barganga	Letter	Umachal	Chuchunia	Barganga
Sri				ma				ha			
ra				m				dhi			
ja				ba				pa			
i				dan				kr			
nu				ga				ta			

Fig-3

The study unveils that not only in the case of dating but also in the case conclusion; the Indian scriptologists did not examine the epigraphical records of Assam. The conclusions arrived at the epigraphical evidences here show just the opposite picture given by the Scriptologists, *“In the North-East, the Bengali alphabet was adopted in Assam where not only in the Kumauli grant of Vaidyadeva, but also in other inscriptions, Bengali characters have been exclusively used.”* (Bandopadhaya 1919:4). Likewise, one can find utterly wrong conclusions such as-*“Assam had no separate script of its own. The late inscriptions found there followed the style of Bengal.”* (Dani 1963:110). Another scriptologist who studied the ancient script of Assam also concluded wrongly that *“epigraphs show that the Assamese script can seek their parentage to the Brāhmi script which later on developed in North India in proto-regional script, popularly called by the paleographers Kutila or acute angle or Siddhamatrika script. This in due course of time developed in to proto-Nagari and Nagari. The Assamese happens to belong to this family of scripts.”* (Verma 1976:31). Surprisingly we can find yet another wrong conclusion, *“Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarma marks the expansion of the Kutila script in Assam region.”* (Singh 1991:54)

The above stated conclusions of the are completely incorrect. While we check the study of these conclusions based on published epigraphical evidences of Assam as mentioned in the Fig-1, we find nobody examined the epigraphical evidences of Assam in depth and in proper light. Dr. R. D. Bandupadhayay had not examined any of the epigraphical evidences of the table above. Out of the 9 evidences of the table, A. H. Dani read only one i.e. Nidhanpur CP and his study also failed to reflect the true picture of it. By the time, T. P. Verma, gave his conclusion all the important epigraphical evidences of Assam were published but surprisingly he failed to study all these evidences from various aspects. He studied Nagaon CP of Balavarmana-III, Sualkuchi CP of Ratnapala, Guwahati CP of Indrapala, Nidhanpur CP of Bhāskarvarmān, Khanamukh CP of Dharmapala, Barganga RI of Bhutiverman, Dubi CP of Bhāskarvarmān, Umachal RI of Surendravarman along with 9 more others, but in his conclusion, the actual picture of Indian script never came out as he failed to take note of the developed letters in the above inscriptions. The above study unveils that Dr. R. D. Bandupadhayay analyses only 0.86% of the epigraphical evidences of Assam while others such as A. H. Dani did 1.29%, T. P. Verma did 7.33% and A.K. Singh did 5.17% of the evidences. This has been tabulated as

Epigraphical Evidences of Assam

below:-

Percentage of study of Epigraphical Evidences of Assam			
Rākhāldās Bandopādhyāy	Ahmad Hasan Dani	T. P. Verma	A. K. Singha
2/232 or 0.86%	3/232 or 1.29%	17/232 or 7.33%	12/232 or 5.17%
Kumauli Grant and Assam plate.	Kumauli Grant, Assam plate and Nidhanpur CP.	Umachal RI, Barganga RI, Dubi CP, Nidhanpur CP, Hayantahal CP, Parvatiya CP, Nagaon CP, Bargaon CP, Sualkuchi CP, Guwahati CP, Guakuchi CP, Khanamukh CP, Subhankarpatak CP, Puspabhadra CP, Silimpur CP, Kumauli Grant and Assam plate.	Dubi CP, Nidhanpur CP, Hayantahal CP, Tezpur RI, Parvatiya CP, Howraghat CP, Nagaon CP, Guwahati CP, Guakuchi CP, Gachtal CP, Khanamukh CP, Silimpur CP.

CP= Copper plate; RI= Rock Inscription

Fig-4

From the above findings, the question that arises is what is the actual inscribed picture in the epigraphical evidences of Assam? The actual picture can be found in the epigraphical evidences only. In Nagājari Khanikargāon RI we find the shape of ‘ga’ which is seen in most of the MIS in almost same form but in much later dates. This picture has been appended below:-

Assamese ‘ga’ and its various adopted form in Indian Script					
		ga		1 st century	
Its form in Modern Indian Scripts					
Nāgarī		Orissan		Sāradā	
ga	5 th century	ga	7 th century	ga	9 th century
Tibati -Umed		Gujrātī		Bengālī	
ga	9 th century	ga	10 th century	ga	11 th century
Māithilī		Tākārī		Grantha	
ga	14 th century	ga	14 th century	ga	16 th century
Keithī		Mourī		Gurmukhī	
ga	16 th century	ga	17 th century	ga	Modern

Fig-5

What has been given in the chart above is not the only finding of epigraphical evidences of Assam as far as ‘ga’ is concerned. There are more other epigraphical evidences of Assam which are found in Nidhanpur CP of Bhāskarvarmān which is known to all. These have been examined in case of various letters. The findings are shown below:-

Shape of Letters in Assam till 650 AD									
Modern Assamese Letters					Modern Devanagari Letters				
ka	tha	da	dha	na	a	u	ga	cha	ta
ba	ma	la	ṣ	s	da	na	pa	pha	ma
					ya	ra	la	ṣ	s

As per Nidhanpur CP of Bhāskarbarmana

Fig-6

It is to be noted that Nidhanpur CP of Bhāskarvarmān was discovered on 29th December’1912. It was published in *Epigraphia Indica* in 1913-14 in Vol-12, (page-65-79). Nidhanpur CP contains ten Assamese letters and fifteen Devanagari letters. These modern Indian letters itself reflect its importance. Surprisingly enough, Dr. R. D. Ban-

dupadhayay avoided this in his study in 1919. A. H. Dani read it but he overlooked these modern Indian letters in his study in 1963. Dr. T. P. Verma not only overlooked this picture but also made a completely contradictory conclusion in 1976. Surprisingly A. K. Singh feels these letters as a sign of expansion of Kutila Script to Assam only in 1991.

Thus, the findings of Assamese epigraphical evidences in this study prove the conclusions of Indian epigraphists are outright wrong. The letters of Nidhanpur CP of Bhāskarvarmān is most significant for Modern Indian Script. Most of the letters lost their shapes of *Dhammlipi* in this stage. These shapes of letters are also found in Japan. The evidence is a manuscript; collected from *Hōryūji* monastery of Japan and preserved in Japan National Museum. The *Hōryūji* manuscript interestingly points out two important perspectives- (a) the script is called Siddham script of India, (b) its time has been put at 5th century AD. From the manuscript an alphabet has been constructed. While this alphabet is compared with the various evolution charts of modern Indian scripts like Assamese, Bengali, Devanagari, Gurmukhī, Keithī, Oriya, Sarada, Tamil, Telegu, etc; its matching proves with 6th-7th century's Assamese script only. Thus, it proves two things- (a) this is Siddham Script, and (b) it was used in Assam during that period. The comparative chart has been appended below for ready reference:

Comparison of Alphabet of Hōryūji manuscript & Nidhanpur CP															
Letters of Hōryūji manuscript (5 th century AD)						Letters of Nidhanpur CP (593-640 AD)									
ā	ā	i	ī	u	e	ā	ā	ī	ī	u	e				
ka	kha	ga	gha	cha	chha	ka	kha	ga	gha	cha	chha				
ja	ta	tha	na	ta	tha	ja	ta	tha	na	ta	tha				
da	dha	na	pa	pha	ba	da	dha	na	pa	pha	ba				
bha	ma	ya	ra	la	va	bha	ma	ya	ra	la	va				
sa	sa	sa	ha			sa	sa	sa	ha						

Fig-7

Now the comparison has become very easy. The comparison of the letters of Hōryūji manuscript with those of Nidhanpur CP actually indicates that they belong to the same period and same place. The letters i, ī, e, dha, na, of *Hōryūji* manuscript are much older than that of Nidhanpur CP, but at the same time, ka, ga, da, ma, ya and ra show the novelty of *Hōryūji* manuscript letters as compared to Nidhanpur CP. It is also possible to surmise that the difference of writing surface and writing toll may also be responsible for this difference. If the time of *Hōryūji* manuscript is correct the time of Nidhanpur CP may also be

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5th century AD i.e., older than the present date. None can deny this, because no date was inscribed in Nidhanpur CP; its time was imaginary and assigned. At the same time, the assigned date 5th century may also be incorrect.

The above analysis proves that epigraphical evidences of Assam have not been studied to the extent it should have been to draw conclusion regarding the Assamese script and language. In total there are 232 numbers of discovered, deciphered, and published epigraphical evidences; out of this 0.86% to 7.33% epigraphical evidences have been studied in various books of scriptology till this date by the scriptologists. Thus, the conclusions drawn by the scholars about Assamese script, language, sculpture, history in their study have not at all achieved the level of acceptability.

How old is the Epigraphical Evidences of Assam

Now the obvious question is what do the epigraphical evidences of Assam reveal? The answer to this question lies in the systematic and methodical examination of epigraphical evidences of Assam. The examination unveils one un-deciphered rock inscription. It is found at Dhupguri of Kamrupa Metro District. Based on its letters, it may be surmised that it is the most ancient rock inscription of Assam discovered till this date. Most of the letters of this rock inscription have over the years lost their shape. Those which could be read are identified as follows-

Similar letters of Dhupguri RI and Dhammlipi					
ka		Dhupguri Rock inscription			ra
		Piprawa vase inscription			Dhupguri Rock inscription
		Girnar Edict			Girnar Edict
e		Dhupguri Rock inscription			va
		Piprawa vase inscription			Dhupguri Rock inscription
		Girnar Edict			Piprawa vase inscription
ba		Dhupguri Rock inscription			ya
		Piprawa vase inscription			Dhupguri Rock inscription
		Girnar Edict			Girnar Edict
ma		Dhupguri Rock inscription			i
		Piprawa vase inscription			Dhupguri Rock inscription
		Girnar Edict			Girnar Edict
u		Dhupguri Rock inscription			ja
		Piprawa vase inscription			Dhupguri Rock inscription
		Girnar Edict			Girnar Edict

Piprawa vase inscription-5th century BC; Girnar Edict-3rd Century BC

Fig-8

The above table depicts many angles. The Dhammlipi was a fully developed script and so it is possible to conclude its existence prior to 3rd century BC. The letters of Piprawa vase inscription and its similarity with the letters of Asokan edicts help us in making such conclusion. The inscription found from Mahasthangarh (Bangladesh) is assumed to be prior to the Asokan edicts. (Mule 2018:26) Till this date the scriptologists who study India Script fail to come to a convincing conclusion

regarding evolution of Dhammlipi. Most of the scriptologists support the concept of foreign origin; which is not true. It is believed that “after the decline of the Indus Valley culture, the graphic record of India is virtually a total blank for well over a thousand years until the time of the Asokan inscription” (Salomon 1998:10). While we add findings of Dhupguri RI to the already existing epigraphical evidences of Assam, we find a new stage of evolution of Dhammlipi which occurred in about 7 to 8 century BC, in between Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) and Asokan edicts. Rajbali Pandey is the person who claims that Indian scripts are indigenous; but he has not provided any data in support of his conclusion. Thereafter we find Dr. Rajendra Prasad Singh who observes that there are at least 10 letters of Dhammlipi which developed from the symbols of IVC. While we examine the letters of Dhammlipi among the symbols of IVC, we find 11 similarities which are tabulated as follows:-

Similar letters of Indus symbol and Dhammlipi						
Letter	ī	ka	ga	ta	da	śa
Dhammlipi						
Indus symbol						

Letter	ba	tha	ya	la	ta	ṭa
Dhammlipi						
Indus symbol						

Fig-9

It is confirmed that the Indian script is indigenous. The evolutionary track of script from IVC to Dhammlipi has now been discovered; the matching of ī, ka, ga, ta, da, śa, ba, ma, ya, la and ṭa has proved the fact. The matching of 4 letters (ka, ra, ba, ṭa) of Dhupguri RI with the symbols of IVC as well as resemblance and transformation of 6 letters (e, ma, va, ja, da, u) of Dhupguri RI with IVC symbols establish the fact that Dhupguri RI is a significant stage of evolution of Dhammlipi from IVC symbols. The same has been tabulated as below-

Similar letters of Indus symbol & Dhoppuri RI			
Indus symbol	Dhoppuri	Indus symbol	Dhoppuri
	ka		ra
	ba		ta

Fig-10

Evolution of letter of Dhoppuri RI from Indus symbols			
Indus symbol	Dhoppuri	Indus symbol	Dhoppuri
	e		ma
	va		ja
	da		u

Fig-11

The above analysis of epigraphical evidences of Assam asserts the fact that these are very much important for the study of Indian script, language and history. “Moreover, as also noted by Sircar, a great

many of the estimated 90,000 inscriptions already found in India have not yet been published” (Salomon 1998:5). The unstudied epigraphical evidences of Assam and unpublished 90,000 inscriptions of India debunk the genuineness of the conclusions arrived at Modern Indian Script, language and history. The history proves to be suppressed, altered and manipulated. The epigraphical evidences of Assam, which has already been published, are yet to be concluded properly from the perspective of Indian history, Indian script, and Indian language. Only 7.33% of epigraphical evidences of Assam have been studied; the studied evidences are also not evaluated properly; 90 thousand inscriptions of India are yet to be published; under such circumstances, without any hesitation one can aver that the conclusions made on Indian script, language, sculpture, and history are not acceptable.

Epigraphical Evidences of Assam and Indian History

While we analyze the information of epigraphical evidences of Assam, we find some different pictures of Indian History. This point may be examined in the light of Prayag Pillar Inscription (PPI). In the 21st line of Prayag Pillar Inscription we find “*His regal splendor only added colours by the ruthless extermination of Rudra Deva, Matila, Naga Dutta, Chandra Vermana, Ganapati Naga, Naga Sena, Achyuta, Nandan, Bala Verman and many other kings of Aryavarta- and overthrew the kings of the forests into servitude*” (Bhatia 1962:28). In the same book we also find, Balabarmana was “*Most probably somewhere in Assam* (Bhatia 1962:72).”

The above findings may be examined in the light of other studies and epigraphical evidences also. At the same time, what calls for our attention is the observation- “*According to the genealogical lists, the founder of the dynasty was a person named Gupta. He is given the simple title of Maharaja, which shows that he was only a minor chief ruling a small territory in Magadha*(Tripathi 1972:237-238).” Yet another is- “*(line-1)... maharājā (line-2) dhirājasri prāgyotishendra Pushyavarmana tat puttro mahārājādhīrā (Line-3) ja Sri Samudravarmma tasya tanayo Dattadevyam Mahārājādhīrāja (lane-4) sri Va (Ba)lavarmma tena jato...*” (Sircar 1956:228).

The above statements confirm the fact that Balavarmana was a Mahārājādhīrāja of ancient Assam i.e. Kamarupa and Samudragupta occupied Aryavarta by defeating him. Rudradeva, Matila, Nagadutta, Chandravarmana, Ganapatinaga, Nagasena, Achyuta, Nandan might have been the mahārājās under Mahārājādhīrāja Balavarmana. The

data of PPI also confirms that Magadha was under Balavarmana, because from Assam one reached Magadha first and then Aryavarta. Before Samudragupta, the king of Magadha was Maharaja where Balavarmana was Maharajadhiraj. This is just a small example that we find from the combined study of epigraphical evidences of Assam and PPI. After Balavarmana, ancient Assam became a bordering country for Magadha; therefore we find Kāmarupa referred to as “pratyanta” in PPI. This is a very important angle that remained unaccounted so far in Indian history because of keeping the epigraphical evidences of Assam unstudied. Other than the story of Mahabharata, the inclusion of ancient Assam was not found recorded with Indian history on the basis of epigraphical evidences.

Evidences of epigraphy of Assam and Indian Languages

The PPI can be analyzing from the perspective of language also. “The Peoples Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI)” concludes, “*The North East has the highest per capita language in the whole world* (Debi 2013)”. In the report of PLSI it is also found, “*NE contains more than 210 languages*” (Debi 2013)^{1/4} While we use the term North East India, it covers ancient Assam within it. From the present data of highest per-capita language in the whole world, it had definitely highest per-capita language in ancient times also. The varieties of languages created the need of linguafranka in ancient days. In ancient Assam, the need of communication among the people of various languages accounted for the careful nourishment of the lingua franca. Because of the need based careful nourishment, naturally this linguafranka turned into an accepted language among the people of the region. It grew and evolved naturally, so its nomenclature became ‘*Prākṛt language*’- the word Prākṛt comes from the word “*Prakṛti*” meaning nature. Everybody used and cared it; thus it got another name ‘*Pali Language*’. The word-“pali” comes from the word “pālan” that means “to rear”. Whatever its name ‘*Prākṛt or Pali*’; it was a link language of ancient Assam as it was the place of highest per-capita language in the world.

This fact could be examined from the Mahāsthān fragment RI of Bogra Dist of present Bangladesh. Bangladesh was a part of ancient Assam. The epigraphers like Rajbali Pandey and scriptologist like Gunakar Mule ascertain its time as 4th century BC i.e. prior to the Asokan edicts. “Certain palaeographic characteristics of the early inscriptions, such as the absence of distinction in some records (e.g., Mahāsthān) of vowel length- mostly for vowel other than a and ā- have been taken as an indication of their pre-Asokan antiquity” (Salomon 1998:12). While

we examine from the lingual perspective, in pre-Asokan Mahāsthān RI, we find 93.33% words of Assamese language. In Assamese, in some words the ending sound of 'a' never pronounced like the Sanskr̥t language, viz. 'dana' in Sanskr̥t and 'dan' in Assamese; 'sara' in Sanskr̥t and 'sar' in Assamese; 'rasa' in Sanskr̥t and 'ras' in Assamese etc. The Assamese language of Mahāsthān RI can be read as-

- (1) na na sava giyanam tel dan sar umad nasā
- (2) māte rasu lakhi te pudan gal te rat
- (3) bahi payi sati ras avagiyanam
- (4) dhyan iyam ran iva hi sati rad gati yāyi ke pi
- (5) pik sir sa atiyayi kasi pi rāg and
- (6) pik ehi esam kothagale kosam.

Here we find that out of the 45 words in Mahāsthān RI 42 are Assamese as per present day Assamese Dictionary, 'New Edition Hemakoṣa' by Hemchandra Baruah. May be, as per the rule of evolution of language three words i.e. *pudana*, *iyam* and *iva* disappeared from Assamese language. The text of Mahāsthān RI reads as-

- (1) on donating knowledge, by creating new after new, instead of sinking everybody moves to the top like oil.
- (2) the voice calls the owner who fully bath in the test of three wealth
- (3) external liquid test of ignorant ends
- (4) because of deny, habit of drinking ends in the fight of meditation,
- (5) on harvesting the habit of cuckoo, its embryo remains till end,
- (6) store rooms of this comfort like cuckoo..

While the text of Mahāsthān RI translated in to modern Assamese language, six message of morality are found. The Mahāsthān RI has clearly depicts the picture of the prevalence of Assamese language during pre-Asokan age. Since the established scholars had not carefully studied the epigraphical evidences of Assam, this picture of Assamese language had not come to light. From the time of Mahāsthān RI i.e. during these 2422 years, Assamese language has lost 6.67% of its words or vocabulary (45 words) that means only three words lost its original form.

Mahāsthān RI is situated not far away from present Assam and the fact that only three words of the Assamese vocabulary had been lost shows that the RI is definitely one written in Assamese language. The most surprising matter in this regard is that even the PPI also contains Assamese language. PPI contains 90.71% Assamese words. The Assamese words of PPI are as follows:-

- (5) asya prajñā ānuṣaṁ ōchit sukh manaś śāstr tattvārtha bharttū stabdh ōch
- (6) śata kāvya śrī virōdh budh guṇīta guṇ ajñā hatā ēva kṛitvā vidva lōkē sphuṭ bahu kavitā kīrtti rājya
- (7) Āryya upa guhya bhāv utkarṇa nitai rōm sabhya ēsha ūchchha vasitēshu tulya kulaja –mlān ānan dvikṣit
- (8) snēh bāspa guru tattve chakṣu eshā abhihit nirikṣya nikhil iti
- (9) Dṛiṣṭa karmma anēk ānya manuj sadṛiś adbhut ōdbhinna harsha ābhā āsvād kēchit
- (10) Vityya ottapta āsa cha kēchi cha chharaṇam upagarā sya vrittē praame paya
- (11) Samgrāmēshu sva bhuja vijitā nitya uchcha āpa kāra aśva śva mān
- (12) Tōṣa ōttuṅga sphuṭa bahu ras sneh phulla ramman paśchāttāp
- (13) Udvel ōdita bāhu viryyara abhasād eke yena kṣanāda unmūla Āchhut Nāgasen
- (14) daṇḍa grāha yata Kōta kulaj Pushpa āhvāya kīata āsūrya yēn tat
- (15) Dharmma prāchīr bandha saśikar śuchay kīrttaya sa pratān vaidushya tattva bhedi praśam uka arttha
- (16) Addhyeya sūkta mārgg kavi mati vibhava otsāraṇa cha api kāvya anusyād ōsya gunamati vidudh dhyāna pātra ēka
- (17) vividh samar śata avataraṇ dakṣa sva bhuja bala parākkram aika bandhō parākkram ankasya paraśu śar śanku śakti prās āsi tōmar
- (18) bhindipāl nā rācha vaiṭ astik ādy anek prahar virūdh ākul śat- āṅka śobhā samudāy ōpachit kānta tar- varṣa maṇ
- (19) Kausal āka Mahēndra Mahākān tārak Vyāgra- rāj Kaurālak Maṅṭarāj Paishmapurak Mahēndragiri Kaummūrak Svāmidatta Airaṇḍapallak Daman Kāñcheyak Vishnugōp Āvamukta
- (20) Nilarāj Vaingēyak Hastivarma Pālakkak Ōgrasēn Daivarāshtrak Kubēr Kausthalapurak Dhanañjay prabhriti sarvva dakshiāpath rāj grahan mōkṣa ānugrah janīta pratāp ōnmiśra mahābhāgya asya
- (21) Rudradēv Matil Nāgadatta Chandravarmma Gaapatināg Nāgasēn Āchhut Nandi Balavarman ādy anēk Āryyāvartta rāj prasabh ōddhar ōdvitta prabhāv mahat parichārakikrita sarvva āṭavik rājasya
- (22) Samatat Davāk Kāmṛūp Nēpal Karttipur ādi pratyanta nripati Mmālav Ārjunāyan Yaudheya Mādrak Ābhīr Prārjun Sanakānik Kāk Kharaparik ādi cha sarvva karadān ājñākaraṇ prāṇamā gaman
- (23) pāritōshit prachaṇḍa śāsan anēk bhraṣṭa rājya otsanna rājavaiś pratishthāpan ōdbhūta nikhil bhuvan vicharaṇ śānta yāśa Daivaputra sāhi Shāhānusāhi Sak Muruaih Saimhalak ādi cha
- (24) sarvva dvīp vāsi ātmanivedan kan ōpāy nādān garut madak sva vishay-abhukti śāsan yāchan ādy upāy sevā kṛita bāhu vīryya prasara dharāṇi bandha prithivya pratiratha asya
- (25) sucharit śata alakṛit anēk guṇ gaṇ atisikta charaṇ tal pramriṣṭa anya-

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narapati kīrtte sādhdva asādha ūday pralay hētu puruṣasya achintya
asya bhakty avanati mātra grāhya mṛiduhidaya asya anukampā avato
anēk gō śata sahasra pradāyi

- (26) kṛipaṇ dīna anāth ātur jan ōddharaṇ samantradikṣ ādy upagat manas
samriddha asya vigrah avalōk anugrah asya Dhanad Varun Ēndra ant-
aka samasya sva bhuja bala vijit ānēk narapati bhava pratyarppana an-
itya vyāpta ayukta puruṣa asya
- (27) niśita vidagdha mati gāndharvva lalita vidita- tridaśapati guru Tamburu
Nārad vvidvaj jan opajivya anēk kāvya kkriyā pratiṣṭhita kavirāj śabda
suchira stōta ānēk adbhut odār charitṛa
- (28) lōka samaya kkriya anuvidhān mātra mānuṣa lōka dhāma dēva asya
mahārāj śri Gupta prapautra mahārāj śri Ghaokacha pautra mahārājad-
hirāja śri Chandragupta-pautra
- (29) Lichchavi dauhitra mahādēvyā Kumāradevyā samutpanna mahārājad-
hirāja śri-Samudragupta sarvva pṛithvi vijaya janita odaya vyāpta nikhil
avanit ālam kīrtti ita tridaśapati
- (30) bhavan gaman avāpta lalita sukh vicharaṇ achakṣā iva bhuva bāhura
uchcharit stambha asya pradhān bhujavikkram praśam śāstravākya
oday uparyupari sañchay ochchhrita anēk mārgg yaśa
- (31) Purna ati bhuvan traya Paśupati jata antara guhā nirōdh parimōkṣa
śighra aiva pāṇḍu Gānga pay Ēta cha kāvya ēsha eve bhattārak pādān
dasasya samip parisa arppān ānugrah ouṇmilīta mate
- (32) Khādyat pākika mahādaṇḍanāyak Dhruvabhūti putra sāndhivigrahik
kumārāmātya mahādaṇḍanāyak Harishēn sarvva bhūta hit sukhāya
- (33) Anuṣṭhita cha paramabhattārak pād tēna mahādaṇḍanāyak Tilabhattak

What we find after study of epigraphical evidences of Assam is revealing indeed, the language of PPI was Assamese of that time. Most of the scholars have concluded that language of the inscriptions of Gupta period was Sanskr̥t which is now proved wrong. That this new finding contradictory to that of those scholars affirms the fact that one must examine a language from its Linguistic point of view. The science of language says that each language in every 1000 years, loses 19% words (Singh 2020:60). Sanskrit is now a dead language. If Sanskrit was used in PPI, only 31% of its words should have been lost by now- not the whole language. Had Sanskrit followed the litmus test then it should have lived up to 5660 AD. As per the theory, Assamese language having lost only 9.29% words, proved that the inscribed language of PPI was Assamese in 360 AD. The epigraphical study undoubtedly proves that the language used in both Mahāsthān RI and PPI was Assamese because in the last 2422 years this language has lost

6.67% in Mahāsthān RI and in 1662 years it has lost 9.29% words in PPI.

Now we should examine the traditional conclusions regarding language of PPI-

- (1) Captain A. Troyer said that without hesitation it can be read as Sanskrit.
- (2) J. F. Fleet concluded the language of PPI was Sanskrit.
- (3) O. P. Singh Bhatia concluded the language of PPI as polished Sanskrit.














As only 7.33% epigraphical evidences of Assam were studied, these three conclusions are obviously not correct. To go by the rule of linguistics, out of the total 528 words of Assamese in the PPI, 479 still remains in spite of the spent time which are still found in the present form of Assamese language. In comparison with that, of its 528 words Sanskrit 361 should have been there but the language itself is already dead, let alone 361 words. It only proves that Assamese was the language used in the PPI. From their incomplete study, the scholars have wrongly concluded that the inscribed words of PPI were Sanskrit. It may sound strange that Sanskrit cannot be called mother of all languages of India as there is neither any comparative lingual study nor any information required to prove this fact.

The language of Mahāsthān RI has confirmed epigraphically the evolution of Assamese language from 4th century BC. Therefore, it has sufficient ground to call the language of Junagadh RI of Rudradaman, dated 150 AD, as Assamese instead of Sanskrit. The ancient Assamese was a language of common man and everybody could read and write it. Therefore, it was inscribed in rock inscriptions (RI) and copperplates (CP). On the other hand, Sanskrit is a refined language (Singh 2020:23), not a language of common man and therefore could not be used in edicts, RI and CP. Sanskrit, it may be concluded, developed either as a very refined form of Assamese language or it was a stage in the path of evolution of the Assamese language. Therefore, it had its small span in the past and now a dead language.

The PPI holds a surprising fact, PPI was inscribed after victory of Samudragupta and the existing 90.71% words of PPI confirm that it was written in Assamese language in 360 AD. Thus, it can be said that Samudragupta was either an Assamese or Magadha was under ancient Assam for such a long period in which Assamese language may have turned into the language of Magadha. In any of the cases the script, language, sculpture of ancient Assam possibly influenced entire South Asia. The language of Junagadh RI is the epigraphical evidence of ex-

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pansion of Assamese language up to Gujrat at 150 AD. With some fluctuation this trend continued up to 1142 AD; Kumauli grant of Vaidyadeva is its epigraphical evidence. The impact of this expansion has been reflected in epigraphic evidences of entire Indian sub-continent, as shown by the evolution charts of its scripts. This has been extracted for reference as follows-

Evolution of 'ka' in epigraphical evidence of Assam and its adopted form in south Asian script												
Dhamlipi		Asamiya	Siddham	Tibbati	Nagari	Saradi	Bengali	Matthili	Oriya	Devanagari	Tamil	Gomukhi
Dhupguri RI of Assam 7 th -8 th century BC	Asokan Edicts 3 rd century BC	Nidhanpur CP 593-650 AD	UVDS, in 679-988 AD	8 th century AD	Pratihara i.e. 8 th -11 th century AD	1 st half of 10 th century AD	Bangad Lipi, i.e. 980-1036 AD	10 th Century AD	11 th Century AD	Yadava 1187-1317 AD	15 th century AD	16 th Century AD
												

Conclusion

The conclusions about Indian script, language, and history proves incomplete without the study of epigraphical evidences of Assam. The epigraphical evidences of Assam have been left from study, consequently, after IVC symbols, in the path of evolution of *Dhammlipi*, there is a silence of almost one thousand years in the study of Indian scripts. The matching, the resemblance as well as the sign transformation of letters of Dhupguri RI from the symbols of IVC seals unveils, in between IVC symbols and *Dhammlipi* the script of India got the stage of Dhupguri RI at about 7th-9th century BC in Assam. Thus, the conclusions what had drown by the scholars till this date, without study of the epigraphical evidences of Assam, about script, language, sculpture, and history of India as well as Assam, failed the litmus test of acceptability. The conclusions of the epigraphists based on 0.86% to 7.33% study of epigraphical evidences Assamese is outright unacceptable. The inscribed language and the recorded information of Balavarmana of 21st line of PPI ascertains, for a sufficiently long time Aryavarta including North India was ruled by the king of ancient Assam. These facts have thus been coloured straightway and the impact of Assamese script, language, culture, structure, sculpture was also neutralized. The present narrative of ancient Indian history is not true as we read and believe. Along with the history based on Archaeological as well as epigraphical evidences, there is another two parallel histories in India, one is based on belief i.e. Aryan narrative and another is in teaching in academic field. The history is getting rich by compiling the facts of each related archaeological as well as epigraphical evidences every time. It is the time to make the Indian history rich with the study of complete epigraphical evidences of India. The epigraphical evidences of Assam can add many facts in the history of script, language, culture, struc-

ture, sculpture and history of India. The ancient artifacts are the key of history but the inscriptions are the king of all evidences of history. The unstudied 90 thousand inscriptions; the unevaluated inscriptions of Assam and the ill-evaluated inscriptions need proper study to enlighten the real past of India. The findings of this study have built this perception to crystallize this importance and articulated here from the perspective of epigraphical evidences Assamese.

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Political Geography of Kolathunadu, Kerala, India: Reading the Epigraphs of Early Medieval Period

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Abstract

Kolathunadu was the northern most political division of pre-modern Kerala. Though the number of epigraphs from the region of Kolathunadu is very less, they furnish a pattern of political transformation between 10th to 12 century CE. This paper attempts to make some notions on the political geography of Kolathunadu by revisiting five epigraphs from Kannur district like Narayan Kannur, Eramam Chalappuram, Tiruvattur, Kuruvakkavu and Perinchellur that signified to the political situations of two important ruling lineages of Kolathunadu during 11th century CE and 12th century CE. They exemplify the evolution of political lineage of Mushikas in the early medieval period (9th to 12th century CE) to the Swarupam polity of Kolathiris in the medieval times (12th to 15th century CE). The role of Perinchellur Brahmin settlement in the making of political power of the Kolathunadu is also evident in these epigraphs.

Keywords: Kolathunadu, Mushikavamsa Kavya, Kola Swarupam, Perinchellur Sanketam, Muppumura, Kuruvazhcha

Introduction

In historical studies, Kolathunadu is described as the political division of Second Chera kingdom in the early medieval period (9th to 12th century CE) and as the powerful *Naduvali* in the medieval period (13th to 16th century CE) (Pillai 1970: 250-251, Narayanan 1996: 90-105). Historians traces the historical antecedence of Kolathunadu, the geographical area comprises of the present day Kannur district of Kerala state of India, from the imaginary geographical extension of various forms of political authorities that existed in this part of the land from the early historic *Velir* chieftains of Ezhimala through early medieval Mushika and the medieval *Kola Swaroopam* to the colonial Chirakkal and Kavvay Taluks. Though the region has a long histor-

ical past and heritage, the number of available historical evidences are too scanty. The present article focusses on the epigraphs in Vattezhuttu script with old Malayalam language of 10th and 12th century CE like *Narayan Kannur* (929 CE), *Eramam Chalappuram* (1020 CE), (Narayanan 1971: 98-99, 103, 2013: 455,475) *Tiruvattur* (1020 CE) (Nair 1972:72-74, Narayanan 2013: 480-81), *Kuruvakkavu* (1122 CE) (Nair 1972:68-71), and *Perinchellur* (1145 CE) (*Veluthat* 2013:165-180), all now from part of the Kannur district. The *Pullur Kodavalam* inscription (1020 CE) (Narayanan 2013:454) from Kasaragod district, the part of erstwhile Kolathunadu, but now situated in the neighbouring Kasaragod district, has also been included in the study. These epigraphs authenticate some important historical developments of the early medieval and medieval Kerala in general and our study area in particular. Accordingly, the present paper focuses on the succession pattern of the Mushika rulers, the expansion of Second Chera rule (800-1122 CE) towards Kolathunadu during the last lap of Bhaskara Ravi (1021 CE) and the formation of *Kola Swarupam* in the post Chera period. The role of the Perincellur Brahmin settlements, which developed from the early historic *Sangam* (*Akananuru* 220) period onwards, in the making of the polity of the Mushika lineage and *Kola Swarupam* are also evident in the inscriptions.

Mushikas

Mushikavamsa Kavya (hereafter MVK), a 11th century CE semi-mythical and semi historical court chronicle of Mushika dynasty of Ezhimala composed by Atula, the court poet of the last mentioned Mushika ruler Srikantan, has 15 cantos contained the genealogy of about 115 Mushika rulers from the legendary founder Ramaghata Mushika to the last rulers Srikantan (Rao:1920:87-113, Pilla 1977, Narayanan 1977: 58-66). The above mentioned epigraphs authenticate the historicity of the Mushika lineage of about 19 rulers, mentioned in the last three cantos, from Kunchivarman (97th ruler) to Srikantan (115th ruler) (Narayanan 1977: 58-66, Unni 1980) (Table 1.).

- MVK refers to the Kerala king Jayaraga, identified with the second Chera king Kota Ravi Vijayaraga (883-913 AD), as the son-in-law of Kunchivarman and brother-in-law of Isana Varman (98th ruler).
- Isana Varman is said to have been succeeded by his sons Nruparama (99th ruler) and Palaka (100th ruler).
- The Narayan Kannur inscription of 928 C.E. refers to *Validhara Vikkira Rama*, as the crown prince (*Ilamkoyil*), identified with two rulers of the

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Mushika lineage i.e. Validhara (102nd ruler) and Vikrama Rama (104th ruler). According to MVK, Validhara was succeeded by his nephew Ripurama (103rd ruler) and then by his brother Vikramarama, i.e. the second nephew of Validhara. The first part of Vikramarama's name 'Validhara' is evidently derived from the name of his uncle, Validhara.

- *Iramanjemani* and *Vijayam Srikantan* have appeared in the Tiruvattur temple inscription as the over lords of the Tiruvattur temple. MVK depicts a Jayamani (113th ruler) as the younger brother of Gambhira (112nd ruler) and the uncle of Srikanta. According to MVK Jayamani was succeeded by his nephew Valabha II (114th ruler), who is depicted as the founder of the towns like Valabhapattanam (Valapattanam) and Marahi (Madayi). Accordingly, after Vallabha II, his brother Srikantan, the same *Vijayam Srikantan* and *Kandan Karivarman* alias *Iramaghata Muvar* of the Tiruvattur and Eramam Chalapuram inscription respectively, became the ruler. The first part of his name *Vijayam* must have been derived from the name of his uncle Jayamani.

Table.1. Historicity of the 19 Mushika rulers

Name	Canto	Relations	Peculiarities
Kuncivarman	XI - 100	Son	.....
Isnavarman	XII - 5	Son	He had matrimonial relation with Cedi and Chola
Nrparama	XII - 62	Son	.....
Candravarman	XII - 77	Son	.....
Palaka	XII - 89	Son of Isnavarman	.....
Validhara	XII - 90	Nephew of Palaka	Mentioned in Narayan Kannur Inscription at Ramantali
Ripurama	XII - 93	Nephew	.....
Vikramarama	XII - 95	Brother	Mentioned in Narayan Kannur Inscription at Ramantali
Janamani	XII - 101	.....	.....
Samkavarma	XII - 102	.....	.....
Jayamani	XII - 103	.....	.....
Valabha	XIII - 1	.....	.....
Kundavarman	XIII - 14	Brother of Valabha	Established Narayanapura Temple
Palaka	XIII - 17	Nephew	.....
Ripurama	XIII - 18	.....	.....
Gambhira	XIII - 24	.....	.....
Jayamani	XIII - 39	Brother of Gambhira	Mentioned in Tiruvattur Inscription

Valabha II	XIII - 43	Nephew	Established the city - Valabha pattanam and Madayi. Visited Srimulavasam and Sambara. Assisted Chera in their war against Chola.
Srikanta	XV - 1 XV- 48	Brother	Patron of the poet. Mentioned in Thiruvattur inscription, Renovate the temples like Vatukesvara, Ahiranesvara and Kharakanana

Both *MVK* and the inscriptions refer to a change occurred in the succession line from patrilineal to matrilineal line after Palaka (101st ruler), when his nephew Validhara (102nd ruler) and then his nephew Ripuraman came to the throne. After Ripurama, his brother Vikramarama became the chief. This pattern can be seen in the following rulers in the *MVK* up to Srikantan which validated by the contemporary epigraphs. It shows that the succession was based on the seniority rank of the male members in the matrilineal household and the senior need not be the nephew of the ruling chief but it can be his brother. This system was known as *Muppumura*, by which the *Muppu* (senior) became the chief through a ceremonial function conducted by the Brahmin. The existence of this system is evident in the early medieval Kurumbranadu, the neighboring nadu of the Mushikas. The Kanapuram inscription (12th century CE), in which *Udayavarmanayina Ramaghatamuvvar* appeared as the chief of the region, refers to that “*moothavar chelutha katavar*”, means the senior most member of the household had to occupy the right over the land. In short, the succession pattern of the Mushikas in their last phase was based on *Muppumura*, which was common to the medieval matrilineal household polity of Kerala called *Swarupam* (Rajesh 2011:149-214, 2014: 52-68).

Mushikas and the Second Cheras

The northern part of Kerala was remained as independent political entities from the early historic period to 11th century CE. According to the Sangam literatures, in the early historic period the region was ruled by a *Velir* chief named Nannan of Ezhimalai, who was defeated by Narmudi Cheralathan, one of the early Chera ruler (*Ventan*) mentioned in the *Patittuppattu*. But we don't have evidences to prove the rule of the early Chera kings over the region of Nannan. However, Atula incorporated Nannan as Nandana in to the Mushika genealogy

and placed him as the second ruler in the lineage account.

The political association between the Mushikas and the Second Chera appears in the last part of the *MVK*. Accordingly, Mushika rulers were assisted the Chera kings, during the reign of Kota Ravi Vijayaraga (883-913 AD), in their fight against the Cholas. The Pullur Kodavalam and Eramam Chalappuram inscriptions composed during the 58th regnal years of Second Chera king Bhaskara Ravi (1020 CE), hinted at the suzerainty of the Second Chera power over the Mushikas. Eramam Chalappuram inscription refers to Kantan Kāri Varman alias Irāmaghata Muvar, identified with the Srikantan of *MVK*, along with the *Chalappuraththu Tali* and the merchant corporations like *Valanchiyar* and *Nanadesikal* and *Panimakkal* made an agreement probably in connection with some gift from Rajendra Chola Samayasenapati of Katappappalli. The presence of *Valanchiyar* and *Nanadesikal* provide a link with the Chola (Narayanan 2013:455). Similarly, Manigramam merchant guild, who mainly mentioned in Kerala in the Second Chera inscriptions like Tarisappalli copper plate of Sthanu Ravi (849 CE), Jewish Copper plate and *Iringalakkuda* inscriptions of Bhaskara Ravi, *Thazhakkad* inscription of Ravi Kotha Raja Simhan, has appeared as the guardian of the Narayan Kannur temple of the Mushikas and as most beloved to the junior crown. The presence of Manigramam, who were involved in the inland and overseas exchange at Kollam and Kodungallur areas under the patronage of Chera rulers, seems to have shown the Chera influence in the Mushika kingdom. The appearance of the Valbhan II as the founder of the two prominent trading centers at Madayi and Valapattanam have revealed the involvement of the last Mushika rulers in the lucrative trade networks of the west coast. Such examples can be seen in the case of Venatu from 9th century under Ayyanatikal Tiruvatikal as well.

In short, Mushikas had political linkage with the Second Chera kingdom from the last decade of 9th or the beginning of 10th century CE and accepted their sovereignty during the reign of Bhaska Ravi and till that time the Mushikas were remained as independent political entity.

Kola Swarupam

The post Chera period witnessed the emergence of Kolathunadu as a dominant *Swarupam* which had resource control over the agrarian settlements and the coastal trading centers like Valapattanam and Madayi (Rajesh 2011). The *Perinchellur* inscription (1145 CE) refers to the name Kolathunadu to denote a political division during the 12th

century CE. This name was absent in the inscriptions of the Mushikas and also in the *MVK*. The *Kavya* refers to the name *Kolam* as the capital of the Mushikas and, at the same time, call their kingdom as Mushikarajya. The Tiruvattur inscription refers to the king Srikantan as “Mushikendran”. The Perinchellur inscription refers to Karumpattu Iraman Iravi Varman alias Kolathu Tiruvati Koyiladhikarikal and two Sabhas of Perincellur as the donors of 707 *Anayachu* to a landlord named Pukazhamalaicheri Chuvaran Thevan on interest basis. Here Kolathiri and Perincellur appeared as the supreme political and ritual authority respectively over medieval Kolathunadu. The inscription validated the evolution of the Perinchellur settlement in to the status of the *Sanketham*.

Kolathiris claimed their ancestry from both the Mushikas and Perumal (Second Chera) in the *Keralolpatti Kolattunattu Vazhakkam* (Varier 1984). They used many titles like Iramghata Muvar, Ezhi Perumal, Kolathiri etc. to substantiate such claims and traditionally received three royal names like Udayavarman, Ravivarman and Ramavarman for the ruling chief. Karumpattu or Karippattu was the earliest matrilineal faction of Kolathunadu. Kuruvakkavu inscription of 1122 CE refers to Udayavarmman alias Iramaghatamuvar. the earliest known ruler of Kolattunadu. Karipathu Iramaravi Varmman (Ravivarman), who appears in the Perinchellur inscription, was the second ruler from the Karippathu *Kovilakam*. According to the *Keralolpathi Kolathunattu Vzhakkam* Udayavarman was from the Karippath *Kovilakam*. Accordingly, Udayavarman and Ravivarman, as the followers of the Cherman Perumal, were known as *Kolathiri Vadakkan Perumal*. *Kola Swarupam* (Kolathiris) had *Muppumura* and remained as one of the dominant matrilineal power in the pre-modern period of Kerala.

Perinchellur Sanketam and early medieval and medieval polities

Both the *Mushikas* of early medieval and *Kolathiris* of the medieval period were loyal to the archaic Brahmin settlement of Perincellur. The Perinchellur settlement is identified with the present Taliparambha of Kannur district (Veluthat 2013: 35-42) As mentioned earlier, Perinchellur was developed from the early historic period. *MVK* stated that the settlement was established by the legendary king Sutasoma (10th ruler) and many other rulers were paid their obeisance to the settlement. But the relation between the ruling power and the Brahmin was not always smoothly operated. According to the *Keralolpathi Granthavari*, Karippathu Udayavarmman has desired to conduct a *Yaga* at Perinchellur *grama* and became the patron of the *Yagasala*. Udayav-

armman sent his representatives to seek consent from the Brahmins of Kurumattur, who belonged to the Perinchellur settlement. In response, the Talipparamba yogam and sabha of Perinchellur grama assembled at Talipparamba and took a joint decision that; as such a practice has not performed earlier; they did not conduct the ritual on behalf of Kolathiri and also informed that they were only loyal to the Perintrikkovilappan (the chief deity of the *Sanketam* or Rajarajeswaram temple) and never admit political intrusion of Kolathiri over the Sanketam. As Udayavarmman breach the Sanketa Maryada, the Taliparamba *Yogam* and *Sabha* also jointly decided to demolish the Karippathu Kovilakam, the residence of Udayavarmman.

In such a situation the ruling powers brought a bunch of brahmins from, probably, Karnataka to perform rituals of royal consecration for them. This had resulted in the origin of 237 Brahmin households, distributed in the five areas like Cheruthazham, Kulappuram, Arathil, Kunneru Vararuchimangalam in the Perumba river belt and came to known as *Anjudesam* that mentioned in the *Jambu Dweepolpatti* part of *Keralolpathi* (Varier 1984: 54-78) and *Sagara Grandhavari* (Unithiri 2008: 37-57), under the patronage of the Kolathiri in the medieval period. However, as these settlements need the consent from the existing dominant settlement of Perinchellur for performing the rituals for *Kola Swarupam*, Kolathiri was finally forced to pay his obeisance to the Perinchellur *Sanketam* to get the consent. This incident shows the traditional eminence of the Perincellur Sanketam over the political powers of the region, probably from the early historic period.

Conclusion

The above discussion traces the political geography of Kolathunadu from the early medieval Mushika lineage to the medieval matrilineal *Swarupam* kind of polity. The Mushikas were remained as independent political entity until the beginning of 11th century CE and then accepted the suzerainty of the Second Chera kingdom especially during the time of Bhaskara Ravi. This political linkage must have enabled the Mushikas to make settlement with the leading merchant corporations of south India like Manigramam, Valanchiyar and Nanadesikal and involve in the most profitable overseas exchanges. This would be one reason behind the political dominance of the Kolathiris in the post Chera period in the northern part of Kerala. The Perincellur Brahmin settlement had a significant role in the making of these polities and had the exclusive right to conduct ritual functions through which the rulers were elevated in to the *Kshatriya* status (*Varman*).

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Vijayanagara Imperial Ideology as Gleaned from the Inscriptions

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to analyze various aspects of Vijayanagara imperial ideology as gleaned from the inscriptions. Here, the complex strands that constituted the imperial ideology of Vijayanagara have been explored through the inscriptions. It highlights the plural and cosmopolitan nature of the Vijayanagara political authority.

Keywords: Vijayanagara Empire, Turushka, Krishnadevaraya, Hampi, Royal Donations, Pampakshetra

Introduction

History of Vijayanagara has been a fascinating subject to the historians since 1900.¹ Historians have analyzed Vijayanagara history using various approaches. The recent approach towards the study of Vijayanagara is the one using an interdisciplinary method of correlating the archaeological remains or data with the reconstruction of the material culture of the period. The ruins of the city of Hampi afford a wealth of data to the historians who look at Vijayanagara from an interdisciplinary perspective comprising of the multifaceted aspects of the empire such as art, history, religion, society, economy, archaeology, anthropology and so on in understanding the questions concerning the empire. Scholars like George Mitchell, John Fritz, Vasundhara Filliozat, Carla Sinopoli, Kathleen Morrison and Anila Verghese have raised questions which are not discussed in the written sources such as the construction of ritual and cultural space and the kinds of activities that took place in these spatial zones such as the legitimization of power, the elaboration of an imperial ideology, the articulation of belief practices, rituals and expression of art, architecture, craft production and courtly styles.

All empires need a justification for exercising power. In the case of Vijayanagara, it made certain claims to justify its imperial status. One is that they have freed South India from the invasion of Turks whom

they call as Turushka. Secondly they have restored the *purvamarayadai* or the ancient order of things i.e. a language of restoration not of revolution. Thirdly on the political front they claim that they are *sthanacharyas* who restored many of the ancient cultures and reestablished ancient kingdoms like Chera, Chola and Pandya. Thus they make a bundle of claims that justify their imperial power. If we look at the inscriptions of Vijayanagara, the idea of restoration of an ancient culture is what manifested itself in their public acts. Another important realm in which the Vijayanagara imperial ideology reflected is its architecture. Incorporative attitude of the rulers was yet another means of legitimization of power by the Vijayanagara rulers which is also reflected in its architecture. Vijayanagara existed in a complex network of competing empires and states that vied for territorial and political power across peninsular India. These included the Islamic Bahmani Sultanates in the Deccan and the Gajapati rulers of Orissa in the East. Though there were conflicts between Vijayanagara and these polities, it did not preclude other forms of interactions with both ideological and economic consequences. Recent studies on Vijayanagara Empire have reassessed the role of ideology in the establishment of the last medieval polity in Peninsular India. Robert Sewell argued that Vijayanagara stood as a bulwark against the expansion of Islam. The geo political rivalry between the two Deccan based states/polities were transformed into an ideological and cultural struggle, a sort of late medieval clash of civilization in the writings of several Vijayanagara historians. Burton Stein has pointed out that Vijayanagara was engaged in far greater struggles with the Gajapati kingdom of Orissa than with the Bahmani Sultanates and the fact is revealed through the inscriptions.²

If the term 'ideology' is defined in pragmatic statements relating to worship and the claims for legitimacy, Vijayanagara experience of statecraft depicts a large variety of ideological statements and pre-suppositions. The term *Purvamarayadai* or restoration of ancient order of things has figured in the early Vijayanagara inscriptions especially with reference to the Turkish invasions. In the case of the famous Srirangam temple the inscription of Kumara Kampana describes the restoration of worship and the appointment of priests and ritual specialists. The bonds established in the fourteenth century were further strengthened in the sixteenth when the Srivaishnava Tatacharya became influential in the empire particularly during the reign of Krishnadevaraya (TTD Report, 259).

The references to Turushka or Turks in the inscriptions of Vijay-

anagara has made some historians think of the process of state formation essentially in terms of religious identity. Cynthia Talbot has suggested that the category of Turushka represented the civilizational 'other', the 'mlecha' of Sanskrit sources (Talbot, 1995: 692-722). This interpretation overlooks the specific historical events and particularly inscriptional evidence which speaks of forty years of anarchy in the context of Vijayanagara intervention of temple affairs such as the instance of the Srirangam temple. The reconstruction of Vijayanagara imperial ideology in post-colonial intellectual strategy of mere rhetorical creation as suggested by Cynthia Tolbot ignores the concrete and specific historical situation which was encountered by the Vijayanagara state. As suggested by Professor Venkata Raghatham, the interpretation did not take in to consideration the specific trope of civilizational disorder engendered by the politico-military conflicts with the Sultanates (Raghatham, 2002: 136). The Proleya Nayaka's Grant of 1336 A.D is one of the earliest inscriptions which refer to the civilizational disjunction caused by the raids of the Khalji Sultanate (EI, Vol XXXII: 239- 268). As the inscription says "when the sun viz. Prataparudra set, the world was enveloped in the Turushka darkness. The evil Adharma which he had up to that time kept under check, flourished under them as the conditions were very favorable for its growth" (Ibid, 241). The historical Mahakavya, Prataparudra Charitamu, based on the life of the Kakatiya king Prataparudradeva too places the historical situation relating to the end of the Kakatiya dynasty in the same format.

The reference in the inscriptions to Turushka or Turks suggests that the identity was based on ethnicity rather than religion. The term Turushka and claim of the defeat of the Turushka as an imperial claim is found in several Vijayanagara inscriptions. A Vijayanagara copper plate record states:-

"Having conquered Chera, Chola and Pandya together with the lord of Madhura, whose honor was his ornament, the fierce Turushka, King Gajapati and others – he imposed his commands on the heads of all the famous kings from the banks of the Ganges to Lanka and from the rising East to the setting West (Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol X, No.240: 717).

Phillip Wagoner has argued that the title Hinduraya Suratrana or the Sultan among Hindu Kings (EI, Vol XVII: 111) which make appearance in several Vijayanagara royal inscriptions is yet another metaphor in which the royal imperial ideology is embedded (Wagoner, 1996: 851- 880). The word appears in a long Sanskrit inscription found

at Hampi dated 1344 A.D (Epigraphia Carnatica, 1905: 113-114). An inscription of Aravidu dynasty belonging to Tirumala I dated 1570 A.D mentions *Urigola Suratrana* meaning Suratrana of Warrangal which Wagoner translated as Sultan of Warrangal (Ibid). Rather than viewing the politics of Vijayanagara in exclusively religious terms, the title Hinduraya Suratrana suggests a harmonious blending of Islamic and Hindu ideas.

Temple Construction and renovation

The construction and renovation of temples marked the symbol of imperial power of the Vijayanagara. The temple architecture at Hampi especially the royal shrines constructed under the patronage of the rayas reflected the imperial vision and ideology of the state in several ways. Purva Paschima Samudradhipathi (ARE, No.500 & 503), lord of the Eastern and Western Seas, *Chera Chola Pandya Sthapanacharya* itself suggest that Vijayanagara imperial self image was predicated upon the implied continuity with the earlier historical dynasties of the region. These titles were adopted by the rulers to project the legitimacy of imperial state (Raghotham, Op.cit.). Secondly at the level of monumental architecture the rayas deliberately adopted the Chola and Pandya paradigm of architecture. I quote Sister Anila Verghese here. “The Vijayanagara polity by adopting the Chola Pandya paradigm as the imperial idiom of temple architecture revived the gopura structure after a hundred year gap in its construction and made it a pan-South Indian feature of temple architecture spreading across the whole of Tamilnadu and much of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka” (Varghese & Dallapicola, 2010: 168).

The construction of gopura in major temple cities replicating the pattern inherited from the Chola tradition became an aspect of the imperial ideology of Vijayanagara particularly during the early Tuluva period. Three storey gopuras were frequently experimented with at Hampi. These structures include the Ramachandra temple, the Virupaksha temple and the celebrated Vithala temple. Further multi storeyed gopuras were constructed at Srirangam, Kalahasti, Chidambaram, Ahobilam, Kanchipuram, Melukote and Tirupati. The construction of gopuras along with the elaborate hundred pillared mandapas was architectural expression of royal power.

Royal Donations

Another way in which regal wealth was displayed was making donations to a temple deity. Dr Alexandra Mack has argued that dur-

ing the Tuluva period there was a substantial increase in the flow of endowments to important shrines such as Tirupati temple (Mack, 153-163). Gifts of money, land or income from land were invested by the temple to provide a continuous source of income. Probably the most enduring evidence of such gift giving is seen in the construction of temple throughout the empire, these monuments often recorded their donors in stone inscriptions. Particularly impressive were the towered gateways and associated high enclosure walls erected by the Vijayanagara kings throughout the empire. The temples like Kanchipuram, Tirupati, Srirangam are examples. By constructing such features kings in essence reconstituted entire temple complexes as their gifts. Equally important were the royal donations to temples to support various rituals and festivals which involved thousands of Brahmins who have to be fed and sheltered. For example, donations were made to Vithala temple at Hampi by Krishnadevaraya and epigraphs record that various religious rituals and festival in the temple were sponsored by him. The temple contains twenty four inscriptions out of which two belong to the reign of Krishnadevaraya (SII, Vol IV, No. 273 & 278). The importance attached to these donations made by the king is attested to by the fact that multiple versions of these inscriptions were engraved. The text of all the inscriptions is identical. While there are some discrepancies with regard to the date, there is virtually no confusion with regard to the fact that they record transactions that took place in the reign of Krishnadevaraya in 1513 A.D. The inscription records the grant of three villages- Hariharapura, Virupapura and Gopisettyahalli- along with specified lands together with the income accruing from various taxes for offerings to the deity of Vithaladeva (Ibid). In another inscription dated 1516-17 the king is said to have a hundred pillared Mantapa constructed. The mantapa is referred to as nurrukkal mantapa (SII, Vol IX, Pt II, No. 502). The Vithala temple bears on its South wall an important epigraph which offers testimony to the presence of Vyasa-tirtha an important sectarian leader of the Madhvas in Hampi. The inscription records the gift of six hamlets, a village with its canals and the taxes paid by the ferrymen who carried their trade across Tungabhadra to the god Vithala. The taxes which were payable in cash kind and paddy were made over to the temple. Out of the food offerings made to the temple, three shares were assigned to Vyasa-tirtha who is referred to as 'our Guru' – in the inscription. This is the earliest inscription which refers to Vyasa-tirtha and the one in which the king establishes personal rapport with him (ARE, No.480, 1889). According to the tra-

dition, Vyasa reached Hampi during the reign of Saluva Narasimha. However all inscriptions which refer to him came from the period of Krishnadevaraya. These inscriptions show the primacy accorded to the worship of Vithala and the close linkages between the Vijayanagara royalty and the cult of Vithala (Filliozat, 1988: 52). This is only one example from Hampi, there are inscriptions from the temples at Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Srirangam, Kalahasti and many other temples.

Temple Urbanization

All the major temples in those days were focus of a new process of religious and economic significance i.e. temple urbanization. This urbanization process with temple as its base was a result of the economic policies followed by the warrior elites. To attain self-sufficiency in the artisan products they took an important step by attracting artisans from other places. P Shanmugham in his study based on Vijayanagara epigraphs has shown clearly that artisans like weavers, potters, blacksmiths and carpenters were settled in villages so that the manufactured output could be taxed (Shanmugham, 2010: 111). Further merchants particularly Balija, Setti and Komati merchants were encouraged to settle in Nayaka territories. In the seventeenth century, participation in international trade gave such groups opportunities to carry on their activities in concert with the European companies (Subramaniam, 1988: 34). The Komati merchants of Andhra region who rose to the status of powerful regional merchants followed to all parts of South India. These merchants appear in the inscriptions of Vijayanagara especially from the Vithala shrine at Govindaraja temple at Tirupati constructed during the reign of Krishnadevaraya (TTD, Vol III). The temple inscriptions of Vijayanagara trace the emergence of new influential social groups such as the warrior nayakas, merchant class and agriculturalists of the region serviced by the temple and its functionaries.

The Concept of Pampakshetra

The imperial ideology centered around the city of Vijayanagara utilized a variety of local myths and legends. A number of important local cults and practices crystallized to create an imperial ideological carapace for the Vijayanagara empire. The most ancient religious tradition within the city is that of Pampa Devi- with whom is associated the concept of Pampakshetra. Identified with the city of Hampi- the concept of Pampakshetra created during the Sangama period helped to fashion a mystique for the royal city. There is an early Vijayanagara

inscription dated 1385 A.D belonging to the reign of Harihara II which states that a grant was made in the presence of ‘Tunga, Pampa and Virupaksha’ (EC, Vol V, No.148). One of the gates of the fortification of the city was named after Pampa Devi- another indication of the importance of the myth in the royal city. Pampakshetra as the domain of god Virupaksha is mentioned in another inscription belonging to the reign of Devaraya I dated 1406 A.D (EC (rev), Vol VIII, No.133: 240). There is a copper plate record which bears the date A.D 1386 which states that Harihara, the ruling maharaya of Vijayanagara established an agrahara and named it Vidyaranyapura, evidently after the sage Vidyaranya. The gift is said to have been made in the presence of Virupaksha at Pampakshetra (EC (rev), Vol. XI, No.32: 265). These inscriptions demonstrate the existence of Pampakshetra myth, which was invoked to bolster the legitimacy of the early Sangama dynasty. Anila Verghese has argued that the Pampa myth probably represented a local cult patronized by the pastoral communities which was sanskritized through the creation of a matrimonial alliance between Virupaksha, a form of Siva worshipped at Hampi and the river goddess Pampa. The fact that only one shrine is found in Hampi dedicated to Pampa reveals that the cult was completely subsumed under Vijayanagara imperial ideology. The rulers of Vijayanagara deployed these local myths and legends skillfully to underpin the legitimacy of the imperial state.

In this paper I have discussed various aspects of Vijayanagara imperial ideology as gleaned from the inscriptions. It has been argued that all political formations, particularly those whose self-image was that of an empire, fashioned ideologies that provided a framework of legitimacy for their claims of rule, hegemony and dominance. Complex strands that constituted the imperial ideology of Vijayanagara have been explored through the inscriptions that throw light on the plural and cosmopolitan nature of the Vijayanagara political authority.

Notes

1. In 1900 Robert Sewell wrote the book ‘A Forgotten Empire- Vijayanagar: A Contribution to the history of India’ which was arguably the first serious attempt to narrate the history of Vijayanagara Empire in a systematic manner.
2. Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam Inscriptions (hereafter TTD), Vol III, No.176 & 178 mentions Krishnadevaraya’s victory over the Gajapati king of Orissa and on his way back he visited Tirupati temple and presented to lord Venkateswara the Navaratna Prabhavali.

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Understanding the Early Travel Accounts of Kerala: The South Indian Pilgrimage of a Malayali in 1842

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Abstract

There are several texts available on travel and pilgrimage in south India. Present study is on the Manuscript titled as the “Yatrakurippu” by an unknown Malayali author. The manuscript script is written in Malayalam language. The manuscript seems interesting as there were only few texts available in this genre in Malayalam language till modern period. So, this paper is an attempt to explore the travel note of an unknown Malayali author and it discusses the insights put forwarded by the traveller though the Manuscript does not reveal much about his experiences. Rather, the author focuses on the place names, the places he visited and stayed, the rivers crossed etc. The paper also attempts to map the places the traveller visited and based on the manuscript.

Key words: Epigraphy, Travelogue, Pilgrimage

Introduction

Human beings started to travel from one place to the other since prehistoric times. It was through these travel experiences, that people could understand the world around them. The Gilgamesh written in the 8th BCE is one the oldest and known travelogues. According to P.J Thomas, *Vanthamana Pusthakem / Romayathra* is the first attempt in this genre in Malayalam literature. *Rameswara Yatra* is a travel account in verse form composed by Dharmaraja in 1784. Moreover in 1786, *Kariyattimethrante Pattu* also appeared and it is a travel account of the journey to Rome. In 1854, a travelogue in the form of a poem called *Kashiyatra Varnanam* was published in Malayalam. It seems that the travelogue explained in this paper might have written between the periods of *Kashi Yathravarnanam* and *Kariyettimetherande Pattu*.

The travel account titled *Yatrakurippu* found in one of the palm leaves collections preserved in the *Tunjan Manuscript Repository* of

the University of Calicut. It seems that the manuscript was composed in 1842 and it is description of a journey of a person from a place called Pallimanna in the present-day Trissur District of Kerala to far-away pilgrimage centres in south India. It is a rare text which would be helpful to know the early nineteenth-century Kerala. This manuscript in the form of palm leaves was collected from a Siva Temple in Pallimanna of the Thrissur District and the text is written in Malayalam script. The *grantha* has ten folios and the size of the *grantha* is 24×4. Each folio is having nine rows of words and each row contains fifteen letters. The number of the *grandha* is 34 of the Tunjan Manuscript Repository, University of Calicut.

The year of the composition of this manuscript is mentioned in the text itself which is calculated as 1842 CE. The date and route of the travel are also recorded at the beginning of the manuscript itself. Like the *sandesakavya* texts of the medieval period, important places and temples seen during the journey are listed by the author. It is very sad to see that the name of the text and the author of the manuscript are unidentifiable by the given details of the document. The references of the places visited and the route travelled help us to redraw the route through which the travel took place. These kinds of travels might have brought new experiences not only to the traveller but also to the people around him in the village in which the traveller lived. This is a 180-year-old palm leaf text.

The traveller intended to visit some pilgrim centres in South India and it set out from Pallimanna. The traveller visited Chittilappalli, Panniyoor, Beypur, Thirunavaya, Kuttippuram, Thaliyil, Thalassery, Kannur, Kunjimangalam, Payyannur, Neeleswaram and touched Karnataka. After this, he continued his journey from Mangalapuram and passed Uduppi, Kunthapuram, Bylloor, Mukali, Honnapuram, Gokarnam and Bahabaleswaram. It is said that the traveller stayed in the home of Sandhibhatter for eleven days and travelled through Bybdoor, Kollur, Kodassadri, Karkkolam, Karandhoor, Dharmastharam, Madikkeri, Thalakkaveri, Mysure, Jenna Pattanam, Krishnarajapuram, Kolar, Gundakkal, Erppadi, Kalahasthi, Madirasi, Mylappur, Sreep-erampathur, Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai, Thanjavur, Chidambaram, Kaveripattanam, Mayooram, Mannarkovil, Pazhani, Pollachi, Kollamcode, Thrippalur, Pazhayanur, Vengazhoor and reached Pallimanna. He records the temples he visited such as Mookambika Sharanam, Venkidachalapathi Sharanam, VelayudhaSwami Sharanam etc. The places recorded in palm leaf folios are as follows.

2. Analysis and Discussion



Leaf 1 Folio 1-Eye copy of the Manuscript

പ	പള്ളിമണ്ണ	തിരുനാവായ	തിരവനൂർ
ഊ	തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ	തൃക്കണ്ടിയൂർ	പന്നിയങ്കര
ച	ചിറ്റിലപ്പിള്ളി	തിരുപ്പാണ്ടി	കല്ലയെ
ങ്ങ	ചെങ്ങാഴിക്കോട്	കെളാശരം	തളയിൽ
പു	പെരിങ്കുന്നൂർ	ചെറമംഗലം	പുത്തൂർ
ത്ര	തൃത്താല	എരമംഗലം	കാരനൂർ
പ	പന്നിയൂർ	കടലുണ്ടി	പുളുക്കുക്കടവ
വ	കാങ്കപ്പുഴ	ചാലൂർ	കോരപ്പുഴ
ന	കരിങ്ങമണ്ണ	പെപ്പൂർ	കൊല്ലം

Transliteration-1

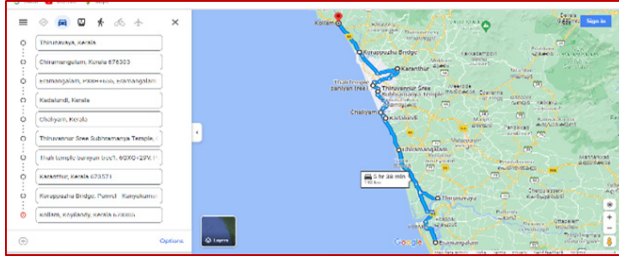
പ	പള്ളിമണ്ണ	തിരുനാവായ	തിരവനൂർ
ഊ	തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ	തൃക്കണ്ടിയൂർ	പന്നിയങ്കര
ച	ചിറ്റിലപ്പിള്ളി	തിരുപ്പാണ്ടി	കല്ലയെ
ങ്ങ	ചെങ്ങാഴിക്കോട്	കെളാശരം	തളയിൽ
പു	പെരിങ്കുന്നൂർ	ചെറമംഗലം	പുത്തൂർ
ത്ര	തൃത്താല	എരമംഗലം	കാരനൂർ
പ	പന്നിയൂർ	കടലുണ്ടി	പുളുക്കുക്കടവ
വ	കാങ്കപ്പുഴ	ചാലൂർ	കോരപ്പുഴ
ന	കരിങ്ങമണ്ണ	പെപ്പൂർ	കൊല്ലം

Transliteration-2

പ	Pallimanna	Thirunavaya	Thiravannoru
ഊ	Trishivaperooru	Trikkandiyuru	Panniyankara
ച	Chittilappilli	Thiruppandi	Kallaye
Gam	Chengazhikkoda	Kelaswaram	Thaliyil
പു	Peringanooru	Cheramangalam	Puthooru
Thrapu	Trithale	Eramangalam	Karannuru
Ra ppe	Panniyuru	Kadalundi	Pulukkukkadava
Tta vazhi	Kamkappuzha	Chalyam	Korappuzha
Nadannayude	Karingemanna	Peppuru	Kollam
Vivaram			

Pallimannais located in KumbalangadVillage of Vadakkancheri in the Thrissur District today. The PallimannaSiva Temple is a very old pilgrimage centre and the temple has become a protected national monument in 1983.

2.1.1.1.1.Route Covered by the According to the Google Map



According to the first folio of the Manuscript contain the travel from Pallimanna to Kollam. The traveller covered the district malappuram and kozhikode.

2.2. Leaf 1 Folio 2-Eye copy of the Manuscript

തൊറശ്ശേരി കതരൂര തളിപ്പറമ്പം കുട്ടോത്ത്
 വടകര എരുമുട്ടി ക്കാഞ്ഞിരങ്ങോട് കിണാവൂർ
 ലോകനാർകാവ് കുതിരൊട്ടം ചെറുകുന്ന് നീലിശ്വരം
 കുറ്റിപ്പുറം എടക്കാട് ചെറുതാഴം വെള്ളിക്കൊത്ത
 പെരുങ്കുളം കണ്ണൂർ കുഞ്ഞിമംഗലം ചന്ദ്രഗിരി
 ഇരിവെനാട് ചിറയ്ക്കൽ പയ്യന്നൂർ കാവു
 മമനപ്പുറം മൊറായെ തെക്കുംപാടം കുംബൊഴ
 കൊടിയേരി ത്രിച്ചംബരം ഉതന്നൂർ ശീരൽ
 തലശ്ശേരി
 ചിങ്ങേരൻ
 അംപു

Transliteration-1

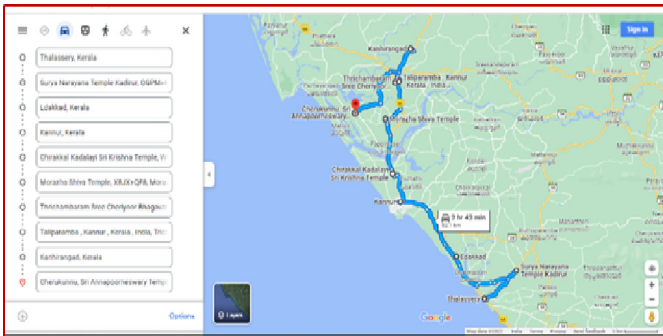
തൊറശ്ശേരി	കതരൂർ	തളിപ്പറമ്പം	കുട്ടോത്ത്
വടകര	എരുമുട്ടി	കാഞ്ഞിരങ്ങോട്	കിണാവൂർ
ലോകനാർകാവ്	കുതിരൊട്ടം	ചെറുകുന്ന്	നീലിശ്വരം
കുറ്റിപ്പുറം	എടക്കാട്	ചെറുതാഴം	വെള്ളിക്കൊത്ത
പെരുങ്കുളം	കണ്ണൂർ	കുഞ്ഞിമംഗലം	ചന്ദ്രഗിരി
ഇരിവെനാട്	ചിറയ്ക്കൽ	പയ്യന്നൂർ	കാവു
മമനപ്പുറം	മൊറായെ	തെക്കുംപാടം	കുംബൊഴ
കൊടിയേരി	ത്രിച്ചംബരം	ഉതന്നൂർ	ശീരൽ
തലശ്ശേരി			
ചിങ്ങേരൻ			
അംപു			

The South Indian Pilgrimage of a Malayali in 1842

Transliteration -2

Thorasheri	Kathiruru		Thalipparambu	Kuttothu
vadakara	Erumuttil		Kanjiramkaadu	Kinavooru
Lokanarkkavu	Kuthorottam		Cherukunnu	Neeslwaram
Kuttippuram	Edakkadu		Cheruthazham	Vellikkotha
Perumkulam	Kannur		Kunjimangalam	Chandragiri
Irivenadu	Chiraykkal		Payyannur	Kaavu
Menepuram	Moraya		Thekkumpaadam	kumbozhe
Kodiyeri	Trichambaram		Uthanooru	sheerel
Thalasseri				
Chingyaran				
Ambu				

2.2.1.1 Route Covered by the author According to the Google Map



According to the first leaf, second folio of the Manuscript contain the travel from Thorasseri to Sheerel. The traveller covered the district Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragode.

2.3. Leaf 2 Folio 1-Eye copy of the Manuscript

മഞ്ചീശ്വര	മുഹിക്	നാഗരമം	ശീരമഞ്ചീശ്വരം
കണ്ണിശീർത്ഥ	പാവുവര	സാളഗ്രാമ	നായ്ക്കിനീക്കുണ്ട
സൊമേശ്വര	എറുംമാള	കൊ	ബെരു
ഉള്ളൂള്ള	കു	പു	പുരണശീർത്ഥ
മംഗലപുര	ഉദ്യാപുര	കുംഭകാ	ശീ
പണ്ണപു	ഉഡു	കൊടിശ്വര	മുരൂപ്പിശ്വര
സുരനരിക്ക	കല്ലുണപുര	കുന്താപുര	ബെലു
പാവഞ്ച	ബ്രഹ്മപുര	മാരാസ്സാ	മി
	ബാർക്കു		മുക്തി

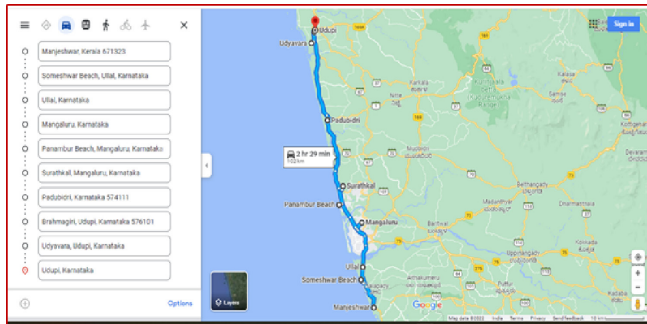
Transliteration 1

മഞ്ചീശ്വരം	മുലികെ	നാഗരമഠം	തിരുമഞ്ചീശ്വരം
കണിതീർത്ഥം	പഡുവദ്രെ	സാളഗ്രാമം	നായ്ക്കിനിക്കളൈ
സൊമേശ്വരം	എറുംമാള	കൊട്ട	ബൈരൂർ
ഉള്ളാളം	കാപ്പു	വരുണതീർത്ഥം	ട്ടകാള
മംഗലാപുരം	ഉദ്യാപുരം	കുങ്കാശി	ശ്ശീരാഗം
പണംപൂർ	ഉഡുപ്പ	കൊടിശ്വരം	മുരശീശ്വരം
സുരത്തിക്കല്ല	കല്ലാണപുരം	കുന്താപുരം	ബൈലൂർ
പാവഞ്ചം	ബ്രഹ്മാപുരം	മാരാസ്സാമി	മങ്കി
	ബാർക്കൂര		മുകളി

Transliteration 2

Mancheswaram	Mulike	Naagamadam	Thirumancheeswaram
kanitheertham	Paduvadre	Saalagramam	Naykinikkattai
Someswaram	Erummaala	Kotta	Bairooru
Ullalam	Kaappu	Varunatheertham	Ttakaala
Mangalapuram	Udyapuram	Kumbakaashi	shiragam
Panampoor	Uduppa	Kodeeswaram	Muradeswaram
Soorathikkallu	Kalyanapuram	Kunthaapuram	Bairooru
Panancham	Brehmaapuram	Maarasaami	Manki
	Barkkoora		Mukali

2.3.1.1 Route Covered by the author According to the Google Map



As per the description from the leaf two , folio one of the Manuscript contain the travel from Mancheswaram to Mukali. The traveller moved from Kerala to Karnataka.

2.4. Leaf 2 Folio 2-Eye copy of the Manuscript

കാസൽകോട്	s	ദിവസം	എലൂർ
ഹൊന്നാപുരം	0	തീരിയെപ്പൊന്നവഴി	ഹാൽകല്ല
ദാരിശ്വരം	0	ബാഡെ	കൊല്ലൂർ
കുംമട്ടെ	ഒട്ട	ബൈദൂർ	മൂകാംബികേശ്വരനം
അഷനാശിനി	നി	തക്രസെ	കല്ലബി
ഗൊകർണ്ണം	0	എളിങ്ങിത്ത	കൊടശാദ്രി
മഹാബലേശ്വര	ര	ഹെരഗുഡെ	ശുംകഗുട്ടെ
നെപൂജിച്ചശാന്തഭട്ടരുടെമനയിൽ	പൂജിച്ച	ഗുളിഹൊളെ	കൈവള്ളി
		അരശ്ശീരൂർ	

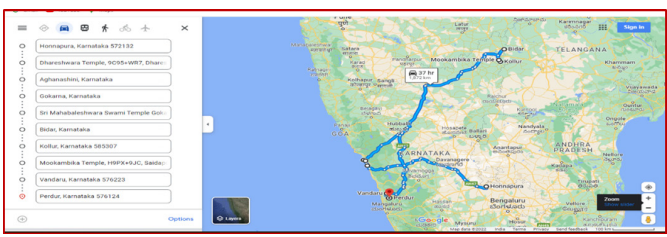
Transliteration -1 Malayalam

കാസൽകോട്	ദിവസംതാമസിച്ചു	എലൂർ
ഹൊന്നാപുരം	തീരിയെപ്പൊന്നവഴി	ഹാൽകല്ല
ദാരിശ്വരം	ബാഡെ	കൊല്ലൂർ
കുംമട്ടെ	ബൈദൂർ	മൂകാംബികേശ്വരനം
അഷനാശിനി	തക്രസെ	കല്ലബി
ഗൊകർണ്ണം	എളിങ്ങിത്ത	കൊടശാദ്രി
മഹാബലേശ്വര	ഹെരഗുഡെ	ശുംകഗുട്ടെ
നെപൂജിച്ചശാന്തഭട്ടരുടെമനയിൽ	ഗുളിഹൊളെ	കൈവള്ളി
	അരശ്ശീരൂർ	

Transliteration-2

Kaasalkodu	"DivasamThamasichu"	Ealooru
Honnapuram	"Thiriyeponnavaazi"	Halkalla
Dareeswaram	Baade	Kollooru
Kummatte	Baidooru	Mookambikesharanam
Aghanaashini	Thakrase	Kallabi
Ghokarnam	Elijitha	Kodashaadri
Mahabaleswaram	Heragude	Shumgagattai
"nepoojichashanthabhatarudemanayil"	Goolihole	Kethavalli
	Arashirooru	

2.4.1.1.Route Covered by the author can be pictured by Google Map as follows



Second folio of the Manuscript contains the travel from Kasalkoda to Kethavalli. The traveller visited most of the pilgrim centers in Karnataka.

Leaf 3 Folio 1-Eye copy of the Manuscript

ഹെരമണ്ണ	ഹിരിഡുക	എമ്മൈത്തൊട്ടം	ഇജ്ജനമ്പാടി
മൂഡുവകെ	കാർക്കൊളം	അളത്തംഗാടി	മറുതാഴ
കുപ്പാരെ	വണ്ടുപാളം	കാറന്തൂർ	സുബ്രഹ്മണ്യം
ശങ്കരനാരായണ	ശൃംഗേരി	ഗുരുനിക്കര	പള്ളത്തടക്കൈ
ദേവസ്ഥാനം			
വണ്ടാരു	നാൽക്കൂര	ബെളുത്തങ്ങാടി	കണമക്കല്ല
കൊക്കണ്ണി	അണ്ടാരി	ധർമ്മസ്ഥലം	ഒറൊമ്മല
പെരഡൂർ	മാളെ	മഞ്ജനാമസ്വാമി	മടിക്കേരി
		ശരണം	
എരുത്തൂർ	നാനാവി	കൊക്കടൈ	ഭാഗമണ്ടലം
മൂഡുമഭദ്ര			

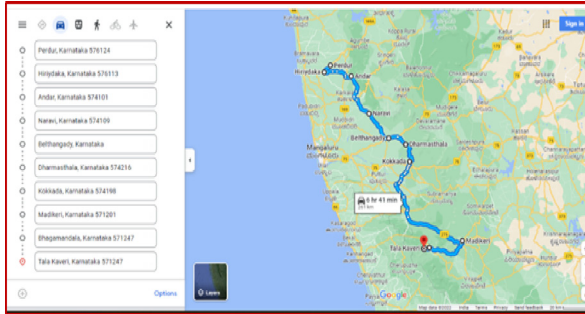
Transliteration Malayalam 1

ന	ഹിരിഡുക	എമ്മൈത്തൊട്ടം	ഇജ്ജനമ്പാടി
ഹെരമണ്ണ			
മൂഡുവകെ	കാർക്കൊളം	അളത്തംഗാടി	മറുതാഴ
കുപ്പാരെ	വണ്ടുപാളം	കാറന്തൂർ	സുബ്രഹ്മണ്യം
ശങ്കരനാരായണ	ശൃംഗേരി	ഗുരുനിക്കര	പള്ളത്തടക്കൈ
ദേവസ്ഥാനം			
വണ്ടാരു	നാൽക്കൂര	ബെളുത്തങ്ങാടി	കണമക്കല്ല
കൊക്കണ്ണി	അണ്ടാരി	ധർമ്മസ്ഥലം	ഒറൊമ്മല
പെരഡൂർ	മാളെ	മഞ്ജനാമസ്വാമി	മടിക്കേരി
		ശരണം	
എരുത്തൂർ	നാനാവി	കൊക്കടൈ	ഭാഗമണ്ടലം
മൂഡുമഭദ്ര			

Transliteration -2

ന	Hiriduka	Emmathottam	Ijjanambadi
Heramanna			
Mooduvake	Karkkolam	Alathamgadi	Maruthazha
Kuppore	Vandupaalam	Kaaranthooru	Subrahmanyam
Shankaranaarayanadevasthaanam	Sringeri	Gurunnikkare	Palathadakkai
Vandaru	Nalkoora	Belathangadi	Kanamakkallu
Kokranni	Andari	Dharmmathalam	Orommale
Peradooru	Maale	Manjanadha swamisharanam	Madikkeri
Eruthooru	Naaravi	kokkade	Bhagamandaalam
Mudumabhadre			

2.5.1.1.1.Route Covered by author According to the Google Map



According to the leaf three, first folio of the Manuscript contain the travel from Heramanna to Bhagamandulam. The traveller visited most of the places in Karnataka.

2.6. Leaf 3 Folio 2-Eye copy of the Manuscript

തലക്കാവേരി	ചുഞ്ചനിക്കണ്ടെ	മധുരു	നരസാപുരം
പെവനാട	എടത്തൊരെ	ജെന്നപട്ടണം	കോലാരം
മൊനാട	ലക്ഷമണക്കണ്ടെ	വസുപ്പെണ്ടെ	മുളുവാതില
കുശാലനഗരം	വലംപിരി	വിടിതി	കലപലമടക
രാമപുരം	മൈസൂർ	കെക്കരി	ഗുണ്ടക്കല്ല
കൊണ്ണൂർ	ശീരങ്കപട്ടണം	പെങ്കളൂർ	ഫലമഞ്ജരി
രാമനാഥപുരം	ലിംഗരാജൻസത്രം	കൃഷ്ണരാജപുരം	പെങ്കടഗിരി
ഹനസൂയെ	മണ്ടെ	ഹസുകൊണ്ടെ	ശീത്തൂർ
			പൂതലപ്പട്ടു

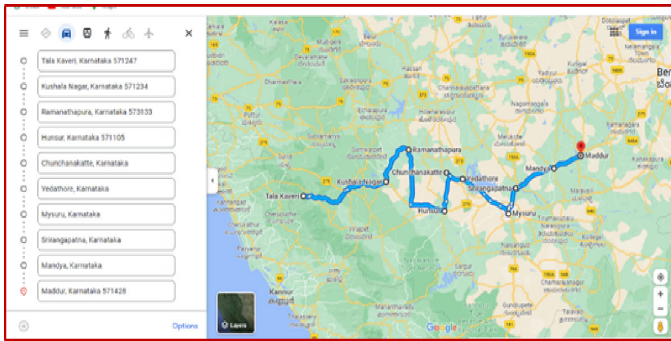
Transliteration Malayalam 1

തലക്കാവേരി	ചുഞ്ചനിക്കണ്ടെ	മധുരു	നരസാപുരം
പെവനാട	എടത്തൊരെ	ജെന്നപട്ടണം	കോലാരം
മൊനാട	ലക്ഷമണക്കണ്ടെ	വസുപ്പെണ്ടെ	മുളുവാതില
കുശാലനഗരം	വലംപിരി	വിടിതി	കലപലമടക
രാമപുരം	മൈസൂർ	കെക്കരി	ഗുണ്ടക്കല്ല
കൊണ്ണൂർ	ശീരങ്കപട്ടണം	പെങ്കളൂർ	ഫലമഞ്ജരി
രാമനാഥപുരം	ലിംഗരാജൻസത്രം	കൃഷ്ണരാജപുരം	പെങ്കടഗിരി
ഹനസൂയെ	മണ്ടെ	ഹസുകൊണ്ടെ	ശീത്തൂർ
			പൂതലപ്പട്ടു

Transliteration 2

Thalakkaveri	Chunchanikkattai	Madhooru	Narasaapuram
Pevanaada	Edathorai	Jennapattanam	Kolaaram
Monaada	Lakshmanakkattai	Vasupetta	Muluvaathila
Kushaalanagaram	Valampiri	Vidithi	Kalpalamadak
Raamapuram	mysur	Kenkeri	Gundakkalla
Konnura	Sheerangattanam	Bengalooru	Falamanjari
Raamanadhapuram	Lingarajansatram	Krishnaraajapuram	Pengadagiri
Hanasuye	Mantai	Hasukkottai	Shithoora
			Poothalappattu

Route Covered by author According to the Google Map



According the leaf three ,second folio of the Manuscript contains the travel from Thalakkaveri to Puthlappattu . The traveller covered most of pilgrim centres in Karnataka.

Leaf 4 Folio1-Eye copy of the Manuscript

കൊത്തക്കൊളൈ	നാരായണ പുരം	മാമുനെ ശൈ	തിരുവത്തൂര
പനപ്പാ കരം	കർക്കപാ ടി	കാരപ്പാ കരം	ജെന്നൽപട്ടണം
ഐതൈപ്പി ഇളി	എർപ്പാ ടി	തനായ്ക്കനിശ ശൈ	മദിരാ ശി
ചന്ദ്രഗിരി	ഇശയ്യൂ ണു	തടൈസ്സത്രം	മൈലാപ്പട്ടൂര
ഗോവിന്ദ	കാളപാ സ്തി	ആറമ്പാക്ക	നോകംപാക്ക
രാജപട്ടണം		സ്സത്രം	
കിഴുതിരുപ്പ തി	കൊത്തംപാളാ യ	ജാനകീരാമ	പെരൈ സ്വത്രം
മെലൈതിരുപ്പ തി	നിരിപ്പാക്കൊ ശൈ	ചെട്ടിസ്സത്രം	പെട്ടൈ സ്വത്രം
പെങ്കടാചലംപതി ശരണം	സന്തനെ ലൂർ	നന്ദമ്പാക്ക	സ്സത്രം
അലമലമകാപു രം		പാളുപായൽ സ്വത്രം	അമരിനി ട
		മാധവാരസ്സത്രം	ശ്രീപരംപുത്തൂ ര

The South Indian Pilgrimage of a Malayali in 1842

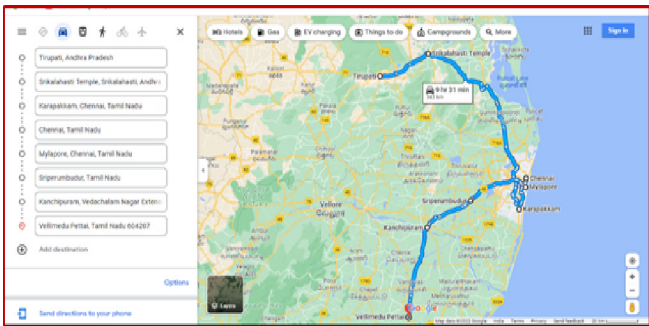
Transliteration Malayalam 1

൧	നാരായണപുരം	മാമ്പട്ടൈ	തിരുവത്തൂർ
കൊത്തകൊട്ടൈ			
പനപ്പാക്കം	കർക്കംപാടി	കാരപ്പാക്കം	ജെന്നൽപ്പട്ടണം
ഐതൈപ്പിള്ളി	എർപ്പാടി	തനായ്ക്കനി ഗട്ടൈ	മദിരാശി
ചന്ദ്രഗിരി	ഇശ്ശുണ്ടു	തടൈസ്സത്രം	മൈലാപ്പൂർ
ഗോവിന്ദ രാജപ്പട്ടണം	കാളഹസ്തി	ആറനാക്കസ്സത്രം	നോകംപാക്കം
കിഴുതിരുപ്പതി	കൊത്തംപാളായം	ജാനകീരാമചെട്ടിസ്സത്രം	പെരസത്രം
മേലേതിരുപ്പതി	നീരിപ്പാക്കൊട്ടൈ	നണ്ടനാക്കസ്സത്രം	പെട്ടസത്രം
വെങ്കടാചലം പതിശരണം	സന്തനെല്ലൂർ	പാല്പായൽസത്രം	അമരിനീട
അലമൈമകാപുരം		മാധവാരസ്സത്രം	ശ്രീപരംപുത്തൂർ

Transliteration 2

൧	Naarayanapuram	Mampettai	Thiruvathooru
Panappakkam	Karkkampaadi	Karappakkam	Jennalpattanam
Itheppilli	Erppadi	Thanaykanigattai	Madirassi
Chandragiri	Ishagundu	Thadaisatram	Mailapooru
Govindharajapattanam	Kalahasthi	Aarampakasatram	Nonkampaakkam
Kizhuthirupathi	Kothampalaayam	Janakeeramachettisatram	Peresatram
Melethirupathi	Neerippakkottai	Nandrambhakkasatram	Pettesatram
Venkadachalathisharanam	Santhanellooru	Palwayalsatram	Amarineeda
Alamelamangapuram		Madhavarasatram	Sreeparampoothooru

2.7.1.1.1.Route Covered by author According to the Google Map



According to the leaf four, the first folio of the Manuscript contains the travel from kothakottai to Sreeparampoothoora. The traveller visited most of the places in Andhrapradesh and Tamilnadu.

2.8. Leaf 4 Folio 2-Eye copy of the Manuscript

രാമകൊസൃതം കാഞ്ചിപുരം	പഞ്ചമഹാദൈവി ശീതീരശ്ശാവടി	പുത്തൂർസ്സൃതം ശ്ശിപ്പാഴി	കാരൈക്കാല തിരുമലരാജ പട്ടണം
മാവണ്ടൂർ	പണ്ഡ്യരുട്ടി	വൈതീശ്വരൻ കോവിൽ	ണാഹൂര
വെന്നകരം വന്തവാശി	കാനശ്ശാടി വെങ്കടരാജൻ പെരട്ടെ	തുരുവങ്ങാട് ച്ചായാവനം	നാഗപട്ടണം മായൂർ
വെള്ളിമുഴു വിക്കരവാണ്ടി	കൃഷ്ണാപുരം ഭൂവനഗിരി	കാവേരിപട്ടണം സംഗമം	കൃത്താലം മദ്ധ്യർജ്ജുനം
കൊലിനെല്ലൂർ തീരുണമലൈ	ചിരംബരം കൊള്ളടം	തീരുക്കടയൂർ തലങ്ങംപാടി	കുംഭഘോണം നാച്യാർകോവിൽ

Transliteration in Malayalam

രാമകൊസൃതം	പഞ്ചമഹാദൈവി	പുത്തൂർസ്സൃതം	കാരൈക്കാല
കാഞ്ചിപുരം	ശീതീരശ്ശാവടി	ശ്ശിപ്പാഴി	തിരുമലരാജ പട്ടണം
മാവണ്ടൂർ	പണ്ഡ്യരുട്ടി	വൈതീശ്വരൻ കോവിൽ	ണാഹൂര
വെന്നകരം	കാനശ്ശാടി	തുരുവങ്ങാട്	നാഗപട്ടണം
പന്തവാശി	വെങ്കടരാജൻ പെരട്ടെ	ച്ചായാവനം	മായൂർ
വെള്ളിമുഴു	കൃഷ്ണാപുരം	കാവേരിപട്ടണം	കൃത്താലം
വിക്കരവാണ്ടി	ഭൂവനഗിരി	സംഗമം	മദ്ധ്യർജ്ജുനം
കൊലിനെല്ലൂർ	ചിരംബരം	തീരുക്കടയൂർ	കുംഭഘോണം
തീരുണമലൈ	കൊള്ളടം	തലങ്ങംപാടി	നാച്യാർകോവിൽ

Transliteration 2

Ramakasatram	Panchamahaadevi	Puthoorsatram	Karaikkala
Kancheepuram	Shithirashaavadi	shippazhi	Thirumalarajapattam
Maavandooru	Panyurutti	Vaitheeshwarankovil	Naahoor
Vennakaram	Kaanashadi	Thiruvangadu	Naagapattanam
Panthakaashi	Venkadarajanpettai	Chayavanam	Maayooru
Vellimoodu	Krishnapuram	Kaveripattanam	Kuthalam
Vikkaravandi	Bhuvanagiri	Sangamam	Madyarjunam
Kolinellooru	Chidhambaram	Thirukkadayooru	Kumbakoam
Thirunaamalai	Kolladam	Thalangampaadi	Nachyarkovil

Route Covered by the author According to the Google Map



The South Indian Pilgrimage of a Malayali in 1842

According the leaf four , second folio of the Manuscript contain the travel from Ramakkasatram to Nachyarakovil. The traveller visited most places in Tamilnadu.

Leaf 5 Folio 1-Eye copy of the Manuscript

ശ്രീവാഞ്ച്യം	ചൂരക്കോട്ടെ	അണക്കരെ	തൊട്ടാ മുട്ട്
തൊട്ടുകുടി	തഞ്ചാവൂർ	ജംബുകേശ്വരം	മെലൂർ
ഹസ്തിരാമഗയെ	കരിന്തെട്ടാംകുടി	ശ്രീരംഗം	ശ്ലീട്ടമട്ടി
തിരുവാല്ലൂർ	വെണ്ണാറ്റുങ്കര	തൃച്ചിനാപ്പിള്ളി	മധുരെ
ലക്ഷ്മണാകുടി	കണ്ടിയൂർ	മണികണ്ടം	ശമെന്തൂർ
മന്നാരകോവിൽ	തൂരുവയാറ്	വീരാലിമലൈ	വാടിപ്പെട്ടി
വടൂർ	ചാത്തന്തൂർ	കോവിലപ്പട്ടി	അമിനായ്ക്കൈ
രൂറത്തനാട്	കോവിലടി	തൊരംകുറുശ്ശി	കാമപ്പിള്ളി
			സത്രം

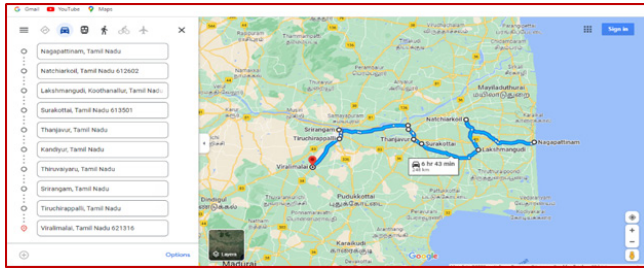
Transliteration -Malayalam

ശ്രീവാഞ്ച്യം	ചൂരക്കോട്ടെ	അണക്കരെ	തൊട്ടാമുട്ടി
തൊട്ടുകുടി	തഞ്ചാവൂർ	ജംബുകേശ്വരം	മെലൂർ
ഹസ്തിരാമഗയെ	കരിന്തെട്ടാംകുടി	ശ്രീരംഗം	ശ്ലീട്ടമട്ടി
തിരുവാല്ലൂർ	വെണ്ണാറ്റുങ്കര	തൃച്ചിനാപ്പിള്ളി	മധുരെ
ലക്ഷ്മണാകുടി	കണ്ടിയൂർ	മണികണ്ടം	ശമെന്തൂർ
മന്നാരകോവിൽ	തൂരുവയാറ്	വീരാലിമലൈ	വാടിപ്പെട്ടി
വടൂർ	ചാത്തന്തൂർ	കോവിലപ്പട്ടി	അമിനായ്ക്കൈ
രൂറത്തനാട്	കോവിലടി	തൊരംകുറുശ്ശി	കാമപ്പിള്ളിസത്രം

Transliteration -2

ശ്രീവാഞ്ച്യം	Choorakottai	Anakkare	Thottamutti
Sreevaanjyam			
Thottakudi	Thanjavoor	Jambukeswaram	Myloor
Hasthiraamagaye	Krinthetamkudi	Sreerangam	Shittamatti
Thiruvalloru	Vennattumkare	Thrichinaapilli	Madurai
Lakshmanakudi	Kandiyoor	Manikandam	shamennoora
Mannarakovil	Thiruvaiyaara	Viralimalai	Vaadipetti
Vadoora	Chathannoora	Kovilappatti	Aminaykkampaalayam
Rurathanaada	Kovidadi	Thoramkurissi	Kamappillasatram

Route Covered by the author According to the Google Map



According the leaf five, first folio of the Manuscript contains the travel from Sreevanchyam to Kamappillasatram. The traveller visited most places in Tamilnadu.

Leaf 5 Folio 2-Eye copy of the Manuscript

കന്നിപാ ടി	ഉഡുമലക്കടെ	കൊല്ലം കോട
പുതുസ്സത്രം	പുത്തൂ ര	പല്ലശ്ശനി
സത്രംപട്ടി	പൊള്ളാച്ചി	പല്ലായൂ ര
കണക്കപട്ടി	മാജനായക്കപൊളായം	ത്യപ്പാളൂ ര
പഴ നി	നൂലാകട വ	പഴയനൂ ര
വെലായുധസാമി	കുപ്പാണ്ടി	വെങ്ങാലൂ ര
ശരണം		
കലയംപുത്തൂ ര	പട്ടരപ്പള്ളം	പള്ളിമണ്ണ
കണ്ണാടിപ്പുത്തൂ ര	നടുപ്പതി	

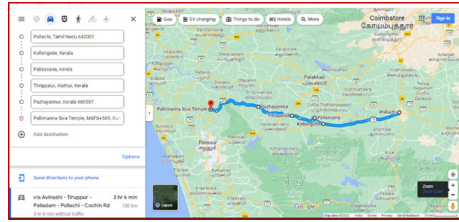
Transliteration Malayalam

കന്നിപാടി	ഉഡുമലക്കടെ	കൊല്ലംകോട്
പുതുസ്സത്രം	പുത്തൂര്	പല്ലശ്ശനി
സത്രംപട്ടി	പൊള്ളാച്ചി	പല്ലായൂര്
കണക്കപട്ടി	മാജനായക്കപൊളായം	ത്യപ്പാളൂര്
പഴനി	നൂലാകടവ്	പഴയനൂര്
വെലായുധസാമി	കുപ്പാണ്ടി	വെങ്ങാലൂര്
ശരണം		
കലയംപുത്തൂര്	പട്ടരപ്പള്ളം	പള്ളിമണ്ണ
കണ്ണാടിപ്പുത്തൂര്	നടുപ്പതി	

Transliteration -2

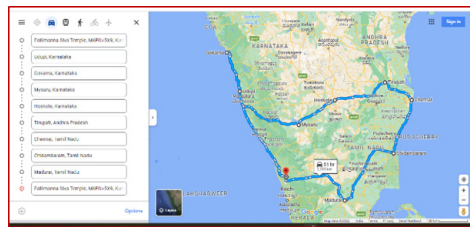
Kannippadi	Udumalakkattai	Kollamkodu
Puthusatram	Puthooru	Pallashani
Satrapatti	Pollachi	Pallyooru
Kanakkampatti	Majabhanaaykampaalayam	Thrippalooru
Pazhani	Noolamkadavu	Pazhayanooru
Velayudhaswamisharanam	Kuppandi	Vengalooru
Kalayamputhooru	Pattarappallam	Pallimanna
kannadipputhooru	Naduppathi	

Route Covered by the author According to the Google Map



According the leaf five, Second folio of the Manuscript contain the travel from kannippadi to pallimanna. The traveller reached Kerala.

Route Covered by the author According to the Google Map



Conclusion

The text is a valuable manuscript enabling the research scholars to understand the history of travels by the Malayali people during the early days of colonial rule. The text is not sharing ample evidence about the details of the locations the traveller visited. This has become a problem in examining the experiences of the traveller. There were customary practices in Kerala society preventing people from travelling beyond their native villages. The text gives us evidences of Malayali journeys taking place in the early modern period. Though these travels are intended to mere pilgrimages, they might have brought many new experiences into the Malayali world. It also proves that the world of the Indian people was not limited to the villages alone.

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Grantha

ThaliyolaGrantha2494 AD, Completed Work, Malayalam,leaf 5, length
24,width 4, lines 9, letters 15.

Ranni Jacobite Church Inscription

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to decipher an inscription found at St. Thomas Jacobite Valiyapalli of Ranni which is under the Jacobite congregation. The four lined Kolezhuthu inscription of Ranni St. Thomas Church stands as the epitome symbolizing the struggles and reforms undergone by this Christian congregation during the colonial period.

Keywords: Synod of Diamper, Syrian Christians, Latinisation, Kolezhuth

Introduction

There are number of studies on the history, culture, and various other practices of the Christians in Kerala. It is believed that the St. Thomas, the first missionary of Christianity, who came to Kerala in the early decades of the C E.(John, 1999:1-13) As result of the early attempt of the Christian missionaries- even before the 16th century- a sizable population of Christians had been in Kerala. However, they had been practicing Christianity on their own way. But, the arrival of the Portuguese and their religious policies in Kerala brought about series of issues among the indigenous Christianity of Kerala during the 16th century. The Synod of Diamper held in 1599 under Alexe de Menesis was an attempt to bring down the indigenous Christians of Kerala under the authority of the Pope. (John, 1999:1-13) But the forceful persuasion of the Portuguese authorities to bring them under the direct control of the Roman Catholic Church resulted to an open protest from the indigenous Christians of Kerala. The Koonan Cross oath of CE 1653 and a delegation under Kariyattil Ausep the Metropolitan and Paramakkal Thoma Kathanar to meet the Pope and to convey the grievances etc could be seen as the direct impact of the Synod of Diamper.

There are many sects and sub sects among the Christians in

Kerala. The Jacobite denomination is one among them. (Zachariah, K. C,2006:20-23) They are popular in the southern part of Kerala having number of Christian churches and seminaries. The Jacobite Christian churches in the southern Kerala is special with Cross installed with *Kolezhuthu* inscriptions. There is a *Kolezhuthu* inscription date back to the 18th century CE at Ranni Jacobite Church in the Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. It is a four lined inscription written in the *kolezhuthu* script. *Kolezhuthu* is a modified version of *Vattezhuthu* which had a got acceptance among various sections of Kerala society during the 16th century and was widely used in various purposes like administrative, for inscribing on epitaphs, documenting the records of financial transactions and also keeping the records of the agricultural activities etc.



Photograph of the Inscription found at the bottom of the Cross installed in the Church at Ranni

Transliteration

വരി

1. കൊലലമ 900 50 6 മാണ്ടു
kolalama 900 50 6 ma na tu
 2. മകരമാതമ 5 ന് കൈപാ
makeramathama 5 nu kaipa
 3. വെനി കൊച്ച ചാകൊ അതൈപപ
veni kochacha chako athaipapa
 4. തരകെൻ വൈപപിച്ച കുരിച്
tharaken vaipapichacha kurich
- Translation (Malayalam)

Ranni Jacobite Church Inscription

1. കൊല്ലം 956മാണ്ടു
2. മകര മാതം 5ന് കൈപാ
3. വെനികൊച്ച ചാകോ അതൈപ്പ്
4. തരകൻ വൈപ്പിച്ച കുരിച്.

kollam 956mantu makera matham 5nu kaipani kochu chako athaippu tharekan vaippicha kurichu

Ranni St. Thomas Church Inscription- An Analysis

It is believed that St Thomas arrived in Kerala in A.D. 52 and he brought many people under the fold of Christianity. (Visvanathan, S. 1993:53-54)) So, as mentioned earlier the Christianity had practiced in Kerala long before the arrival of Portuguese in 1498. There are enough evidences about the Christian community as an influential group in Kerala who possessed power, prestige, and recognition even to interfere in the affairs of trade and administration as early as 9th century onwards. However, they led a very syncretic life having been completely assimilated with the local traditions till the advent of the Portuguese colonialism in Kerala. Moreover, interpreting the copper plate inscriptions belonging to the period of King Vira Raghava and Kulasekhara, the historians are of the opinion that before the arrival of the Europeans, the Christians led a life very closely knit with the lives of people belonging to various other religious and caste groups in Kerala. (Sreedhara Menon, A.1970:68-89) The conservative and narrow-minded Portuguese looked down on the indigenous Christians with triviality. Subsequently, in CE 1599, Bishop Alexis D Menesis held a Synod at *Udayamperoor* and called for latinising the rites and rituals of Christian in Kerala. It can be seen as an attempt to organize and unite the Christian population of Kerala under the common Umbrella of Pope. Added to that, the scriptures which contained the rites and rituals of the traditional customs were destroyed. In the year 1599, A group of Christians who were dissatisfied with the radical changes brought in the realm of rituals and customs of Indigenous Christianity, took an oath in front of the Coonan cross. But many of the Christians involved in it were upset with this and they finally submitted themselves to the authority of the Pope. The people who followed the traditional rites were called the *pazhaya koottukar* and the ones who initiated the reforms came to be called *puthiya koottukar*. Eventually the former became Jacobite and became the Jacobite congregation in 1665.

The inscription under study is found at St. Thomas Jacobite *Valiyapalli* of Ranni which is under the Jacobite congregation. Here, a holy cross made of stone was erected during the Kollam Era of 956 on the 5th of the month of *makaram* by a person named Koch Chacko Athaip(Ousep) Tharakaran. This cross was presented to the church on the 16th of January in 1781(as per the Gregorian Calander). Koch Chacko Athaip/Ousep who contributed men and money for the construction might have belonged to a wealthy merchant family. The merchant groups and their families had played significant role in the growth and development of the Jacobite congregation in Kerala. The four lined *Kolezhuthu* inscription of Ranni St. Thomas Valiyapalli stands as the epitome symbolizing the struggles and reforms undergone by this Christian congregation during the colonial period.

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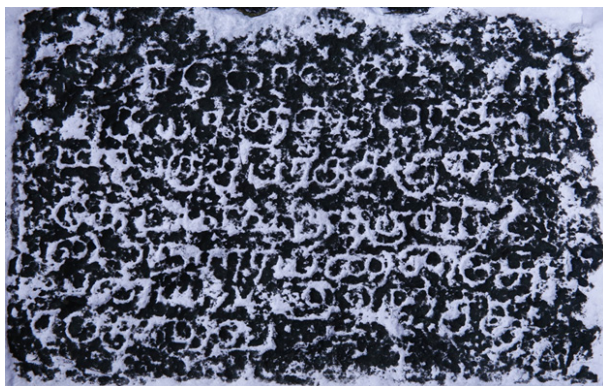
Sreepadam Pond Inscription of M.E. 799 (1624 C.E.)

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This inscription, in Tamil language and script, is engraved on a granite slab found inside the Sreepadam Pond of the Sreepadam Palace which is located adjacent to the north entrance of the Sree Padmanabha Swami temple in Thiruvananthapuram. The Sreepadam Palace is one of the oldest palaces in Kerala. The epigraph was discovered at the north east corner of the pond, while cleaning it, in connection with the restoration works of the centuries old Sreepadam Palace.

The epigraph has 7 lines. It starts with an invocation '*Hari*' instead of common '*Swasti Sri*'. The letters are engraved beneath the relief carvings of two *padma pada-s* (feet with floral motives). The stone slab is 105 cm in length and 40 cm in breadth. The approximate thickness of the slab is 30 cm. The measurement of the inscribed area is 40cm in height and 20 cm in width. The inscription is now lying submerged in water.



Estampage of the inscription

Text:

1. ha ri ko l la m 7
2. 9 9 * tai mā ta
3. m 2 5 ci pā ta k ku ḷa m
4. ke ṭ ṭi p pi t ta ku ḷa t ta
5. rai nā rā ya ṇa n tē
6. va n pa t ma nā va n ca t
7. ā cē vai.

* symbol denoting YEAR

Transliteration

1. ഹരികൊല്ലാമ 7
2. 99 * തൈമാത
3. മ് 25 ചിപാതകകുളമ്
4. കെട്ട് കിപ്പിത്തകുളത്ത
5. നൈനാരായണന്തൈ
6. വന്പത്മനാവന്ചത
7. ഘേവൈ

2023-03-21
From vivo Notes

Translation:

In the year 799 (which corresponds to C.E, 1624), 25th day of the month Tai, Kulatharai Narayanan Tevan who built the *Sreepadam* pond is always in service of Sree Padmanabha.

The inscription registers the construction of the pond by Kulatharai Narayanan Tevan. Narayanan Tevan was the ‘*Adhikarapadaartham*’ of the Rajas of Venad. *Adhikarapadaartham* was an administrative functionary of the temple. The King of Venad at that time was Vira Ravi Varma (1611-1663).

Kulatharai Narayan Tevan whose name is mentioned in this inscription could also be found in a palm leaf document of the M.E. 811. It is referred to by Sri. T.K. Veluppillai in the appendix of the Travancore State Manual vol. 2.

Kunhi Marakkar Shaheed Maqam Inscription Arabic Text Deciphered

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Many Maqams (shrines) are erected on the coastal belt of North Malabar in the name of Kunhi Marakkar Shaheed, a martyr who valiantly fought against the Portuguese colonialism. It is believed that the Portuguese soldiers had killed him and threw his body in the Arabian sea by mutilating it in to several pieces. The shrines were erected in the places where his body parts found later. One of such Maqams (Shrine) is in the Halwa Bazar, Kuttichira in Calicut. There is a tomb stone in the Maqam on which Quranic verses are inscribed. The estampaged copy of the inscription is given below.



Arabic Text

1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
2. الحمد لله رب العالمين. الرحمن الرحيم
3. مالك يوم الدين. اياك نعبد و اياك
4. نستعين. اهدن الصراط المستقين
5. صراط تلذين انعمت عليهم
6. غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا... ان الله عنده اجر عظيم

.بيشرهم ربهم برحمة منه ورضوان و جنات

Transliteration

1. bismillahi al rahman al rahim
 2. al hamd lillah rabbi al al ameen. Al rahman al rahim
 3. maliki yawm al diyn .Iyyaka naebudu wa iyyaka
 - 4..nastaein. Ihdina al sirat al musthaqeem
 5. sirat al ladheena aneamata alayhim
 6. ghayr al maghdubi alayhim wala al daallein
- Innaallah indahu ajirun azeemKhalideena fiha abadhan
yubashiruhum rabbuhum birahmatin minhu wa ridwan wa jan-
nat.

Translation

Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds. the Most Compassionate,
Most Merciful
Owner of the Day of Judgment. It is You we worship and You
We seek help
Guide us along the Straight Path The path of those whom You
have blessed
not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray.

.....will abide therein fore ever Indeed God has a great reward
(with Him)

Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him (and
approval) and of gardens for them (wherin is enduring pleasure).

Book Review

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Menon, Sudha. Charithram Adrusyamakkiya Murivukal, Kottayam: DC Books. Paperback Normal Binding pp1+ 232, Rs.280.

**Writing Life: Women and Ethnic Conflicts in South Asia
Charithram Adrusyamakkiya Murivukal (Wounds Rendered Invisible by History)**

Every time when women like Jeevalatha, Saira, Hajira, Parveen, Noor, Rasiya, Sreshta, Thamang and Children tell their stories, readers are listening to the stories of a specific locality they lived their life. On an earth without sky, people hold their ground like trees against storm with determination and resilience to hang on to life. This review reads Sudha Menon's book 'Charithram Adrusyamakkiya Murivukal' (Wounds Rendered Invisible by History) published by DC Books in 2023.

The book marks and traces life of women on the pages of human history. It is a life story of subjugation, exploitation and exercise of hegemonic structures upon the every single aspects of the life. No matter it is livelihood, marriage and sexuality. The life-story of the women that unearth their bare existence in a way tell a story as well as a history. In fact it doesn't have place and country. The story is almost same which a poignant hard reality of life. History is not out there. It evolve when people give expression to it. The book bring forth a history through the life stories of the women, children and their encounter with repressive military and ethnic articulation of honor and power. Sudha Menon has attempted to juxtapose the female bodies that she came across with her own emotional experiences through a text that inextricably contains

the elements of biography as well as experiences of suffering women's lives. Stories written by people who walked unknown lands become available to us in the form of travelogues and memoirs. Such texts mainly contain accounts of either the people whom the author encounters or the stories that mark the uniqueness of the geo-linguistic differences found. Here, the writer woman tries to read the incarceration and strife of women lives as a uniform experience beyond the space-time constraints. The book describes the gawky moments of life apart from the helplessness, silence and the gaping against life. Women who make Dhaka Muslin, a coveted dress at global level, thousands who were uprooted when the earth decided to stand straight, their outcries, death scented villages of Warangal in Andra Pradesh, lives that aren't discussed in traditional histories or stories: The book notes down all of these with a deep and thick description empathetically engaging with labourers, and survivors of systemic failures.

People's life are affected by structures of power and when it turn against their existence, they react against it. One of such instance are activated in an image that comes to public's mind is that of the people of Sri Lanka who stormed the President's residence. Srilanka in this book gives us the backstage stories of the disappointment and deprivation of the common man--those who are from the villages, those who depend the sea for livelihood. The conflict between Sinhalese and the Tamil ethnic groups did not provide peace to either. Jeevalatha's mother, who unintentionally got involved in the Anti-Ezha procession, faces cruel attack. The Sinhalese youth, who were caught in the fury of death and violence, treated her only as a 'black' body. Jeevalatha's life was disturbed and was caught in between the Sinhalese Army's frequent raids for Tamil Tigers on side and the Tigers who sneak at night seeking food on the other. Parents who refuse to send their children to school as they feared their children will be abducted and inducted into the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) force. LTTE was not just any army but a group of people who have devoted their life to the army: Brains that bleed of blind racism and hatred. They live only to become incendiaries and suicide killers. When the Tamilians strive for their freedom, lives of Tamil women face horrendous atrocities. Jeeva recalls thus: "I'm sure that he won't be alive today. My son must have died long ago at the hands of either the Indian army or the Sinhalese"

As far as racial conflicts are concerned, female body is just a racial body and thus men deem attacking a female body as a conquest of

the opposing races. These bodies are subjected to repression no matter which ideology men carries. Eventually, all armies destroy human lives. Even armies that call themselves as peace keeping forces soon end up destroying a lot of peaceful lives. The story of Sri Lankan women is also the story of those who regard female body as the embodiment of pride and dignity of their race and yet the ones who subject all women to cruel harassment. Jeevalatha's life-sketch is to be understood as the one that tells the life of female sufferings beyond spatio-temporal and country specific boundaries. Virginia Woolf statement 'as a women, I have no country' is to be a fitting expression of the life of women in Sri Lanka in the context of racial war.

What belong to women in a nation? Women carry burdens of the spirit of nationalism and identity pride. Every moral code is rested upon the women of the country. They are always attached to a locality where they live. The nation is defined and designed for male. The story of Sudha from Pakistan tells the plight of certain parts of the world that are rich in natural beauty, yet the women continue to live like slaves. Though the land of Sindh carries the legacy of a great civilisation, the wounds created by partition remain unhealed. Around twenty lakh people lost their lives in communal conflict during the partition of India. The Muslims and Hindus from the border villages fled to Sindh and India respectively. Extreme nationalism and racial hatred takes its maximum toll on the weakest sections of a society. The portrayal of Sindh stands as a testimony to fact that throughout the history of the world, it has always been the women and the children. Saira's life makes it apparent that the politics of Purdah not only veils the female body but is capable of destroying and erasing their lives.

While men are engaged in the discussions on ammunitions of Pakistan army, women continue to worry about their work. In other words, Saira could not relate to any territorial borderlines or line of control except thinking the whole world as her home. Saira is the most talented among those girls who do embroidery works. The one who does wonders with colours on clothes. Fishing is a regular vocation there since it is a place where the sea and the estuary meets. Saira does go for fishing. Usually it is the job of the women to do the sorting of the fish once men go about their way after bringing the fish onshore. Walking on bare foot, women with sore feet are common. A work day begins as early as four 'o' clock in the morning and continues late till twelve at midnight. Saira's predecessors were from the Eastern U.P.

For them, India is their birth place. So the question of actual homeland of those who went to Pakistan as refugees is still puzzling. Most of them handles Sindhi, Urdu and Hindi quite well.

Though there are practices that hold the women responsible for crimes with an imposed morality on female sexuality, in many parts of the world, rituals like stoning them to death are quite hard to digest. Where do such barbaric traditions originate where a woman not only faces social ostracisation but is sentenced to death if she is accused of an affair or relationship other than marriage? Therefore, a rape victim chooses to remain silent on the atrocities done to her, lest she faces social excommunication and inhumane stone pelting. This may be exactly why Saira's mother remained silent even after getting raped. In the land of Sindh, the destiny of women's lives are at the mercy of men's will. Though it is Saira's life that is discussed at length in the book, the psychology of feudal patriarchy and violence against women are exposed largely through the experiences of Hajira.

There was a sea of Purdah in Afghanistan. Purdahs of blue, green and black but drained the vibrance of women's lives. One day, Hajira was kidnapped beside Sindhu canal and raped in a car by a feudal lord on her way to collect grass for the cattle. Two days later, she was abandoned at the same spot. A shepherd who came that way identifies Hajira and took her to her home. When a non-government organisation (NGO) workers of Badeen insisted, Hajira approached the police for justice. New laws help little in changing the lives of the destitute as the proceedings in the village goes with the orthodoxy. So by the time things appeared before the village court, the rape case was changed to that of prostitution. The feudal lord testified himself as a witness to the cooked-up extra marital affair of Hajira and the shepherd and said that he had to whip them both to save the pride of the community. The lord was supported by two false witnesses too. The wealth and power of feudal lord made things easier for him. The priests and police of the village supported this argument. As a result Hajira and her family was sentenced to social ostracisation and stoning. Thus, they killed Hajira by the barbaric method of 'Karokkari'. Stories like these are common in the folklores. Killings of Saira and Hajira are evidence that society has not changed its mind set against madnnesses like honour killings based on caste or ideologies enshrined in Manusmriti. We still have lands and skies that crave for freedom around us.

The author was involved in the rehabilitation of women victims of war. She was weaving together these stories as these are directly told to her. She was listening to the life of these war victims. As usual it was women who bore the brunt of war mostly. On a land where agriculture and industry was totally destroyed, women are forced to engage in prostitution for a living. It is estimated that Kabul alone had fifteen lakh widows at the time. The team including author reached Kabul with a mission to provide some sort of job and the necessary training for it to the women who lost everything. The number of women seeking jobs saw a rise day after day at the community centre in Kabul. Hoping that they would get a job to live a bare minimum subsistence, many had flocked into the mission's office. They are ready to do any sort of job at any price. This shows a picture of poverty, deprivation and extreme level of vulnerability of the women.

Parveen's story is the story of every woman in Afghanistan. Victims of a particular system anywhere in the world will have the same story and the same language. The Russian war filled the lives of women and children with fear. They spent their lives thinking of their daughters being kidnapped and enslaved by the soldiers. They decided to conscript all men into the Mujahidin fearing that the Russians would destroy the nation. But the Mujahidin who threatened the Russians with bombs and guns pretended themselves to be the saviours of village girls. The village often trembled at the gunshots heard from the hilltops. Russian battle tanks and war planes became an everyday sight. Parveen could even identify the guns carried by soldiers to be 'Kalashnikov'. The number of Mujahid groups who embrace death as 'shaheeds' (martyrs) for the country has increased tremendously. Such Mujahid groups unleashed violence against villagers who could not provide money and food to them. They started abducting and raping girls who did not wear hijab. Gradually the difference between Russians and Mujahids faded and Parveen was now afraid of Mujahids too. All those who waged war have started looking same and the difference was now only about how big or small the groups were.

Parveen who liked to go to school had to agree for marriage. She was compelled to marry Abu who came with a gun in his hand. These are people who do not have any say in their lives. Primitive laws had already banned falling in love as it was also seen as an act of personal decision. This is evident from the life of the girl called Noor. Noor used to sit beside a nearby brook while taking the cattle for grazing and one

day she meets a young boy named Hasara and falls in love with him. Afthab, Noor's brother locks her up in a room and beats her when he happens to know about her relationship with Hasara. For Afthab's racial mindset, his sister's love at the time of holy war was an insult and heresy.

Though cooperative enterprises begins to throw some light into the lives of women who were oppressed socially and communally, the repercussions of war destroys their lives. Many women trying to build a sisterhood with the help of literacy classes and small scale jobs amidst these desperate times is itself a dream. Industrial growth will lead to an increase in the wealth, yet the life of the working class often become complicated in an exploitative system. The book tells us that the life in Dhaka is one like that. Consumers who purchase may forget the fact that all the colourful goods items exhibited in the market bear the smell of many a workers' sweat and tears. Mostly, the value of time, hard work and labour that goes into the making of the product is not perceived. We tend to forget that the foundation of all big companies are such workers and their effort. The story of Bangladesh is that of the story of the experiences of women who work in the small scale textile factories that manufacture shirts, jeans and skirts for international companies. About 82 percent of the total income from exports for this country is contributed by the garment factories. Women often work for sums as meagre as 5 Taka per hour in these den like rooms without proper light or ventilation. Welfare of the workers who are victims of fire accidents or occupational hazards is nobody's concern. Media pays attention only when there is a large-scale mishap or disaster. Politicians would dash into pour consolations or meagre compensations for the next one or two days and leave. Despite all these adverse conditions, workers continue to work as there is little choice left for survival and the misery surrounding the job remains ignored.

Certain workers of Eastern Bengal produce threads using the teeth of a particular variety of fish found in the lakes there. This job demands high concentration and focus as the weaving of these threads requires humid atmosphere. So the smart among the weaver girls does the job sitting in small boats in the lake. A Kilo of cotton yields only around 8 grams of muslin threads. The stories of Safiya and Rasiya is that of the story of extreme suffering under capitalist cruelty. Safiya loses both her legs at workplace in an accident. Rasiya, Safiya's daughter is unable to go to school or continue her studies. When the author asks Rasiya what her ambition is, she says "I want to eat Pizza from one those malls in

the city at least once". The difference between urban and rural lives and the way market robs the desires of human beings can be seen in this reply. A childhood without ambitions in life is in the making. The loss of childhood amidst hunger and vulnerability actually kills their dream and happiness in life.

The story of Nepal tells the tale of earthquakes too. Around 10 lakh people lost their livelihood and shelter in an earthquake that took the lives of 8000 people on the 25th of April 2005. Sudha Menon shares her observation as to how she noticed a decrease in the number of children after the first week at the rehabilitation camp. Further investigations conducted by the study group revealed the human trafficking done amidst the disaster. It was an eleven year old boy who opened his mouth to disclose this reality. Two-three strangers who lingered outside the camp try to convince a girl in the camp to go with them so that she will be adopted by childless foreign couples. They tell her that she can lead a secure life if she agrees to what they say. This incident in fact triggered the investigation on the missing girls and boys from the camp. Later it was found out that children trafficked from these camps were brought to India via the borders of Bihar and were used for sex trade or prostitution. They will be destined to spend the rest of their life as sex-slaves in places like Sonagaachi and Kamathipura. This part of the book in fact describes the helpless situation of the parents who failed to take care of their children amidst their struggle for survival. Shresta's story is an example of such a situation. A girl from the beautiful village of Nepal who dreamt of a colourful life ends up in the Red Street in India. It is quite hard to distinguish whether this is an actual real life incident or tale from folklores.

Cotton fields that bear the odour of death is presented to the reader from Andhra Pradesh. Farmers who perish under debt traps. Places like Warangal and Telangana offer spectacles of glorious cities and dying villages. Cotton farmers resort to suicide with the burden of agricultural loans, as the cotton prices unexpectedly go down in the market. Revamma, Sita, Himabindhu, Swati, Latha-all lost their lives in the cotton field. While they work hard to overcome the difficulties, death come in the form of debt trap and loss of price to the goods they produce. We cannot separate any social and political distinctions in their life. If people's hope loses, there is no reality that can be classified as social and economic. Everything work together against these vulnerable sections of the society. The book is a life-story that exposes the stark social reality. These wounds of life will remain unhealed in the

collective consciousness of the society. Death cannot undo people like Jeevalatha, Saira, Hajira, Parveen, Noor, Rasiya or Shresta for their successors live even today all around the world and their sufferings continue. Therefore, the history of these humans will remain visible as there occur cruelty, ultra-nationalism, ethnic false consciousness of pride and culture of domination and hegemony of one group over the other. Sudha Menon's book reminds us of another great work 'Ini Njaan Urangatte' (Let me Sleep now) by PK Balakrishnan. Draupathi who lies down to sleep after the Kurukshethra war is haunted by the memories of humiliation and cruelty. The pain and suffering she had to experience being with masculine power of individuals and systems. 'Charithram Adrusyamakkiya Murivukal' (Wounds Rendered Invisible by History) brings many a women lives to memories and weaves a history of human kind that subjugate and oppress women to claim false notions of pride and fundamental cruelty racial conflicts. Life-writing as the book is relying on stories of innumerable vulnerabilities delineate hidden transcripts of fear and hatred and the experience of women. It is an articulated fragments of history. Its wounds won't be healed even after we depart from this world.