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HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS OF THE PLACE NAMES OF KOYILANDY

Dr. Liji K

Assistant Professor of History, Nehru Arts and Science College Kanhangad, Kerala

The study of local history is significant due to several reasons. A historian has to travel in different routes to reconstruct the past and uncover the untold stories of mankind. Thus place names of are carriers of long time history. Sometimes it reveals geographical features of a particular place or cultural history or it may be reflections of social formation. Koyilandy is marked in the world map as a renowned trading centre of medieval Kerala. Most of the societies are interested in spinning legends in connection with their places and local history and Koyilandy is not an exemption to this trend.

Place name study is generally known as toponomastics. The term toponymy is derived from the Greek word 'Topos' which means place and 'Onuma' which means name. Toponomastics is a branch of Onomastics, the science that deals with the study of names. Onomastics has been considered as a branch of linguistic study. The main two divisions of Onomastics are Anthroponomastics and Toponomastics. While Anthroponomastics deals with study of personal names, toponomastics handles the study of place names.

Toponymical evidence has a special significance in historical studies. We can subdivided toponomastics into several branches such as microtoponymy which is the study of names of uninhabited places, hodonymy which deals with the study of names of streets, roads etc. Ethnic differences and variations in time can make changes in the linguistic content of place names. The changes and processes in the combination of words are the main causes for the draining of meaning.¹

It is a fact that a considerable number of words in a language may disappear completely and partially in course of time or by external influences. In the situation it is significant to not that they may be preserved in place names rise from and influenced by living languages.²

Among the place names of Kerala, Koyilandy has much historical importance because of its tradition of maritime trade relations with the different parts of the world. It is because of the coastal facilities of Panthalayani Kollam in Koyilandy it became a centre of medieval maritime trade. These types of maritime trade relations enabled Koyilandy to form a Peculiar cultural system and to develop an urban character. The place names of Koyilandy still preserve the old memories of the region.

Koyilandy is the coastal Taluk of Calicut district. It is situating 24 k.m north from Calicut. The boundaries of Koyilandy Taluk are Calicut in the south, Wayanad in the east and Arabian sea in the west. The history of Koyilandy reveals that in the early period it was a part of Pantalayani 'amsom', Kovalkandy desom and Kurumbranad taluk. According to revenue records there are 36 villages in Koyilandy taluk such as Chemanchery, Pantalayani, Viyyur, Mudadi Thikkoti and Payyoli.³

Several scholars are of the opinion that Koyilandy is derived from the words 'Kovil' (temple) and 'Andi' (God Subrahmanya). Gradually Kovil became Koyil. Another view is that the place(kandi) where the Kovil is situated is known as Kovalkandy. There are house names such as Koyilkandy, Koyil, Meethale Koyil, Thazhe Koyil etc.⁴

¹. K. Ayyappa Panikkar, et. al., (ed.), *Gaveshanaprathibha* (mal.), D. C. Books, Kottayam, 1994, p. 70.

². N. M. Nampoothiri, *A Study of Place Names in the Calicut District* (Ph. D Thesis), Calicut, 1988, p.1.

³ *Revenue Handbook*, Kerala Government, Trivandrum, 2003, p. 49.

⁴. Kondamvalli Sivaraman (ed.), *Koyilandy Innalekalil* (mal.), Koyilandi, 2005, p. 23.



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Sangam works and some travel accounts of foreigners speak about a coastal village named 'Tyndis'. In Sangam works it is indicated as 'Tondi' and the author of *Periplus of the Erythrian Sea* called it has 'Tundis'. It has been identified by Scholars with Panthalayani. It figures as a place of importance in medieval Arab, Chinese and European accounts of the Malabar Coast. A number of medieval archaeological evidences in the form of Chinese porcelain and other pottery brought to light corroborate the literary evidence of foreign contacts of Pantalayani Kollam in the middle ages.⁵

Place names and field names in this village indicate the evidences of Arab and Chinese settlements, old market places, shops, warehouses etc. The evidences of diverse types suggest that Pantalayani Kollam was a centre of considerable commercial importance through out the medieval period. Idrisi recorded about the 'town of Fandarina'. According to him Fandarina was a town built at the mouth of a river which came from 'Manibar' (Malabar) where vessels from India and Sind coast anchor.⁶ He says that the inhabitants were rich, the market well supplied and trade flourishing. Dimishqi includes Fandarina among many cities of Manibar, the country of pepper.

Ibn Batuta reports Fandarayana is a large and beautiful city with gardens and bazaars. He records that it has trade relations with China. Chinese texts of the same period refer to 'Fan-ta-la-yi-na' and 'Pan-ta-li', evidently Fandarayana of the Arab geographers. From the 13th through the beginning of the 16th century, European travelers like Odoric of Porenno, John de Marignoli, Friar Jordanus, Barbosa etc. mention this town in their accounts of the Malabar Coast. Pliny mentioned this place in his work as 'Cathale', for Portuguese it is 'Pandarani' for Odoric it is Flandarina. Sheik Zainuddin record it as 'Fundria'.

References speak that the name Pantalayani is derived from the word Bandar. It is the short form of Bandargah which means harbour. 'Pandar' may be the transformed form of Bandar and later it became as 'Pandal'.⁷ there are references about Vandana Kollam in the 'Aithiyamala' of Kottarathil Sankunni. Recording to this work a group of Vaisyas came from Southern Kollam to Kurumbaranadu region. They took rest under a tree that is 'ayini'. It was a tree with many branches and gave them shade like a tent and it is called as Pandalayani.⁸ The Vaisya group who came from Southern Kollam gave the name of their native place to the region which they settled and thus it became Pantalayani Kollam.

The character of Pantalayani township is reflects in some place names and field names around the Koyilandy taluk. The township of the medieval period has transformed into a new structure. But a tradition of this bazar is preserved in some field names and names of certain areas of Koyilandy. Thus an area on the mud- road from the high way to the seashore is known as Thazhathangadi, which means 'Lower Bazar'. This area is also called Kannatichantha, literally meaning 'mirror market'. It is significant to note that mirror was a major item of medieval markets. There are other place names which indicate the existence of shops such as Peetikakkandi and Peetikasthalam, both mean the location of shops.

We can see the trade relations of China with Kerala in certain place names around Calicut and the regions of Calicut and Pantalayani Kollam. There is a place with the name Cinakkotta, near the silk street of Calicut. Chinese travellers like Mahuan mentioned about the silk trade of Calicut. Chinnachery in Kappad, Calicut, is also relates with Chinese settlement, besides there is another Chinese centre which is known as Chinthavalappu.⁹ The famous mosque of Kollam Cheenappalli also leads to the Chinese settlements of this area.

When we analyse the place names of Koyilandy we can see that there are a number of place names that bear the geographical features of the region. Does the place name Muchukunnu indicates the exact geographical features of the particular region. Muchukunnu is the transformed form of muthukunnu which means big hill.

⁵. Kesavan Veluthatt and P. P. Sudhakaran (ed.) *Advances in History*, Prof. M. P. Sreedharan Memorial Trust, Calicut, 2005, p. 155.

⁶ Ibid., p. 162.

⁷ K. M. George (ed.), *Saravijyanakosam*, Vol. I., Reprint, The State Institute of Encyclopedic Publications, Trivandrum, 1992., p. 732.

⁸. Kottarathil Sankunni, *Aithiyamala* (mal.), Reprint, D. C. Books, Kottayam, 1998. p. 522.

⁹ M. G. S. Narayanan, *Kozhikodinte Katha (mal.)*, Chettur Sankaran Nair Foundation, Ottappalam, 2001, p. 41.



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Keezhariyur is an important place in Koyilandy. The place has an important role in the Indian national movement especially in Quit India Movement. Keezhariyur recorded its name in the history of National Movement by 'Keezhariyur Bombcase'¹⁰ against the colonial power. We can see the colonial influence in the agrarian sector of Keezhariyur which has plantations of cashew. The place name indicates its geographical features and water body. It is actual 'ur' which has a stream (aruvi) on its bottom (keezhe) part. Keezhe Aruviyulla Ur gradually got its name Keezhariyur.

Flora and fauna of particular region will cast their Impressions on place names. For example Vengalam is a place of Koyilandy, certain scholars are of the opinion that this name may be derived from a type of tree which is known locally as 'venkana'. The region is very familiar with this tree and it is abundantly available for the people.

Like this we can see that there are lots of place names which show the influence of flora such as Ayinikkadu (which is also known as anjili)¹¹, Kanhiramukku, Mavintechottil etc.

Another factor is that place names are highly influenced by fauna also. Since ancient time man they can't do domesticate animals. This is also evidenced from the place names such as Anayara, Anakkayam and Naripparambu. The Western place names like Larkland, Wolf's land and Scheppeland (sheep land) etc. are similar to these names.¹²

Many scholars studied seriously about the place names in the different parts of the world. In the context of Kerala, scholars like M. R. Raghava Varrier, Dr. K.M. George, N.M. Nampoothiri, Ramachandran Puthusseri etc. gave considerable contributions to this branch of knowledge.

The regional history has an important role in creating a new historical consciousness by removing narrow historical consciousness. Like nationalism, regionalism is also a historical or cultural phenomenon. Place names are one among the major sources that help us to reconstruct the regional history.

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¹⁰ K. B. Menon organised locals against the British power and they engaged in making bombs to attack the British power as a part of Quit India movement. This conspiracy case is known as 'Keezhariyur Bomb case'.

¹¹ Anjili used for making boats. When trade developed in the areas of Koyilandy and Panthalayani Kollam boat building is also developed.

¹² S. Guptan Nair (ed.), *Godavarmayude Prabandhangal* (mal.), Trivandrum, 1990, p.3.