
On *Mushika* Lineage and *Kola Swarupam*: Revisiting the Epigraphs of Kannur District, Kerala

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Abstract: Epigraphs are the important source material for the study of Kerala from 9th to 13th century CE. This paper attempts to revisit 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: Mushikavamsa Kavya, Kolathunadu, Swarupam, Sanketam, Perinchellur, Eramam Chalappuram, Tiruvattur

Introduction

Historians trace the historical antecedence of 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 medieval *Mushika* and *Kola Swarupam* to the colonial Chirakkal and Kavvay Taluks. Though the region has a long historical 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 11th 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.

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

Mushika Lineage and Muppumura

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, Narayanan1977: 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 Nrparama (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 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.
- *Iramanjamani* 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 Valabhappattanam (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.

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 Kannapuram inscription (12th century CE), in which *Udayavarmanayina Ramaghatamuvar* 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 Ramavarma 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 Karipathu *Kovilakam*. According to the *Keralolpathi Kolathunattu Vzhakkam* Udayavarman was from the Karippath *Kovilakam*. Accordingly, Udayavarman and Ravivarman, as the followers of the Cheraman 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, Perichellur 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*, Karipathu Udayavarmman has desired to conduct a *Yaga* at Perinchellur *grama* and became the patron of the *Yagasala*. Udayavarmman 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 Perintriikkovilappan (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 Talipparamba *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 epigraphs from the present Kannur district help to validate the historicity of MVK and trace the evolution from the early medieval Mushika lineage to the medieval matrilineal *Swarupam* kind of polity in Kolathunadu. 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 into the *Kshatriya* status (*Varman*).

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