

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF DENOTIFIED COMMUNITIES IN TAMIL NADU - A STUDY OF PRANMALAI KALLARS: A RE-LOOK

Article Particulars

Received: 18.9.2017

Accepted: 12.10.2017

Published: 30.10.2017



Dr.A.ALAGUMALAI

Associate Professor & Head,
Department of Political Science, PTMTM College, Kamuthi,
Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu, India

C.VAIRAMANI

Ph.D Research Scholar,
Department of Political Science, PTMTM College, Kamuthi,
Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu, India



Abstract

In the core region of Pandya country, particularly in the present Madurai District, the area of Usilampatti is the centre of attraction for the dominant group with the identity of Piramalai Kallars, an important clan in the present society. The "Home land" of this people is still unrevealed. So far, the generally accepted view is that the Piramalai Kallars were the people migrated from the Chola country during the reign of the Chola Emperor Rajaraja I. An attempt is made in this article to focus a relook on the origin or the home land and the name Piramalai Kallars with the help of the medieval source materials.

Keywords: *Pandya country, Piramalai Kallars, Chola country, home land, Rajaraja, Meenakshi Amman temple*

Through the ages, the elderly people of Piramalai Kallars say that "the dwelling boundary of Piramalai Kallars is surrounded by the west tower of Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple in the east; Thottappanaickanur i.e., the Andipatti ranges in the west, Nagamalai ranges in the north and Kalligudi in the south". It is indeed; now-a-days this particular group is dwelling predominantly in this area only. But, none of the scholars, came forward so far to put forth how and when the name Kallar(fs;sh;) was christened to this community.

It is noteworthy to point out here that the name Kallar(fs;sh;) is not mentioned even in a single record of the medieval period i.e., from 9th and 10th to 15th and 16th centuries. The medieval records frequently mention the names of Brahmins (upper class people), Kaikolars (mudali=weavers), Idayars (shepherd), Thattar (blacksmith and goldsmith), Chetty (traders), Kudi (peasant) and other groups but, there is no such inference regarding the Kallars though they are the dominant group here. At the same time, a lithic record belongs to Rajaraja III dated 1228 A.D. (ARE:1920/No.57) noticed from

Vaidhyanatha temple at Thirumalapadi (now Thirumalapadi is in Ariyalur District), near Thanjavur, the core region of the Chola country, clearly indicates 'kaniyudaiya kallar' (kaniyudaiya kallar = kallar with land holdings). But the contemporary inscriptions in Pandya country did not say anything about Piramalai kallars. This confirms that the kallars of Pandya country does not belong to the Chola region. Moreover, the inscriptions of Chola Kings Rajaraja I and his son Rajendra I collected from the Pandya region does not mention the name Kallar, even though the inscriptions of Chola mandalam clearly mention the name Kallar.

From the above, the general opinion prevailing among the scholars that some families of Kallars from Chola country brought to Pandya region for the stability of the Chola rule in Pandya Country were the people of the present Piramalai kallars is nullified. The lifestyle, the social customs particularly their religious activities and the matrimonial relationship are entirely different from one with the other. Another important feature of the Kallars of Chola country is still having more than 500 family titles such as Vandayar, Munayathiriyar, Pallavarayar, Thevar, Mallikondar, Sendapiriyar, Sethurayar, Kandiyar and so on (Venkatasamy Nattar, 1984 : pp.97-100). This is an unique difference between the kallars of Chola country and the Kallars of Pandya region in and around Thenkallaga nadu. The documentations of the famous English scholars like Edgar Thurston (1909) and Louis Dumont (1986) in their works about the men and women folk of the Piramalai kallars, who entirely differ from other communities by their unique features like boldness, face to face approach, innocence and etc. These are the reflectors to know their characters in depth through the society. According to Na.Mu.Venkatasamy Nattar (1984:pp.94-96) though the customs of Thanjavur kallars is entirely different from the Madurai kallars, the later is fond of wars and courageousness, fearlessness, magnanimous and protecting the people one who seeks asylum are the best habits of this people. Here an important question arises as to where the migrants from Thanjavur region settled in the Pandya country. Taking this into account during the field study, it is come across about the thickly populated people known as 'Easanattuk kallars' and also known as Mukkulathor of Dindigul area. There is close relationship between the Easanattuk kallars and the Thanjavur kallars in their social customs. For example, the above said Easanattuk kallars of Dindigul region still having the tradition of worshipping the ancestral God (Nattukottai) in the region centering Thirukkattuppalli, the place situated in the west of Thanjavur, near Kallanai and the creation of many structural temples in this area for the saivite God and the Goddess Sundaeswarar and Meenakshi during the last stage of early Medieval period and the another important similarity with these two groups (i.e) Easanattuk kallars of Pandya region and Thanjavur kallars is having more than 500 family titles like Kalingarayar, Sethurayar, Vandayar, Thevar, Pallavarayar and etc., for the identity of their individual groups. It clearly indicates that the present Easanattuk kallars might have been migrated from the Chola country during the reign of Rajaraja I and

established their first habitation at Melur and Natham area and later they have settled in Dindigul region and the other interior areas of Pandya region.

In this juncture, it is important here to describe the origin and the derivation of the name Piramalai kallar. In the British records, the name "anaiyur kallars" is seen at the very first occurrence (Baliga,1960,p.434). During the 17th and 18th centuries (i.e.) in the Nayak period particularly in the records of Thirumalai Nayak, the names Thevar and kallar are seen as the suffix (Sethuraman,1995,pp104-105). It is clear that on the basis of the copper plate issued by Thirumalai Nayak, Anaiyur (Usilampatti taluk) was served as the Taluk Head-quarters of the kallar region (Jayakumar,2008,pp.29-30). This was later followed by the Britishers also. The political and government related activities of these people are seen since the Nayak period. For example, to safeguard the capital city Madurai from the attack of Sultans of Bijapur and Golkonda,Thirumalai Nayak sought the help of Piramalai kallars and Kanagaya Nayak of Ammayanayakkanur Zamin gave the 'Padikaval' rights to Kumarathevan son of Karuthaveerathevan of Ariyapatti, Madurai kottai and Chinniveerathevar son of Rasathevar (Jayakumar,2016,p.12). From this one can infer the Kallar's vital role continuously in the government under the Nayak period.

Before 16th and 17th century A.D. the name Kallar(fs;sh;) was not in the usage in any of the records of this area. Hence, the question how the name Kallar was used as a clan name of this people has to be analysed. Thenkallaganadu(njd;fy;yf ehL) was one of the names of the revenue divisions under the Pandya administration. As far as the present day is concerned, the then Thenkallaganadu consists of Vadipatti, Nilakkottai, Usilampatti and Tirumangalam region. While analysing the medieval records noticed in this region, particularly the record of Cholanthalaikonda Veerapandian belonged to 956A.D. copied from the Iravathesvarar temple at Anaiyur of Usilampatti taluk, is the earliest record about the revenue division Thenkallaganadu (ARE1961-62/no.336). This 'Nadu' (ehL) division was equivalent to the present revenue district. Not only the records of Veerapandiya, the records of his successors and the Chola kings who ruled Pandya country are also noticed in Thenkarai Moolanathaswamy temple of Cholavandan , Madurodhaya Eswarar temple at Kovilpatti of Vikkiramangalam and other places of this region the name Thenkallaganadu is seen continuously.The term Kallagam (fy;+mfk;=Kallagam) means a habitational area or a land surrounded by mostly hills and hillocks. Hence, the term Kallagam doesnot mean Kallar(thief). Even today, the geographical features of this region, gives the meaning for the term Kallagam and which is densely populated by the Piramalai Kallars. The records having the name Thenkallaganadu are available in this region only. Obviously, the name Kallaganadu was called as Kallar nadu in the later period. It leads to know this people in the name of Kallar in due course. This Thenkallaganadu was generally identified as Piranmalainadu and Puramalainadu among the scholars. Because, in the records of Vijayanagar and Nayaks, this region was also called as 'Puramalai Kallaganadu' and

'Piramalaipatru'. But, in those days, actually the area of Puramalainadu consisted of the area of Thiruppathur and Thirumayam taluks particularly the area of present Ponnamaravathi.

After the control of Madurai Sultans, when the Pandya country came under the control of Vijayanagar, the name Thenkallaganadu was continuously mentioned in the official records but with a little bit changes. The records of Vanadhiriyar, one of the chieftains of Madurai region, under the direct control of Vijayanagar, are also noticed in Thenkallaganadu region. Among the records of Vanadhiriyars in this region, a record dated 1488A.D. copied from the outer wall of the sanctum in the temple called Mahalingasamy temple on the top of the Siddha Mahalingam hill near Anaipatti of Nilakkottai taluk, was issued by Thimmachi Nayakar Thirumalaiyan, is noteworthy to mention here (Jayakumar, 2016, p.126). In this record, the name Thenkallaganadu is mentioned as 'Puramalai Kallaganadu' with slight changes. Here, the prefix 'Then' (njd;) of the earlier name Thenkallaganadu is removed and added the new prefix 'Puramalai', which also means the region surrounded by the hills and hillocks. Similarly, the record of the ruler of Madurai Kittinappanayakar belonging to 1570 A.D. is found in a stone slab near Angaleswari and Valagurunathaswamy temple of Thangalachery of Tirumangalam taluk, Madurai District (Vijayavenugopal and Venkatraman, 1996, pp.68-70). This record clearly shows that the place Thangalachery was situated in Tittian (present Tidian) Sirmai (Sirmai (rPh;ik) was a revenue unit like the modern district) of Piramalaipatru in Udhayavalanadu. Madurodhayavalanadu of Pandya records is nothing but Maduraimandalathu Udhayavalanadu of Thangalacheri inscription of Nayak period. The Nayaks record of Siddha Mahalingeswarar temple cited already which was engraved 82 years earlier than the Thangalachery Nayak's inscription mentions Puramalai Kallaganadu, is nothing but Piramalaipatru of Thangalacheri record. It is noteworthy to mention here, the name Kallar (thief) has not seen even in a single record since 9th and 10th century's upto 17th Century A.D. Hence, the term Kallar(fs;sh;) might have been derived from the term kallagam(fy;yfk;) i.e., the landscape which is surrounded by hills and hillocks. In fact, Kallar (fy;yh; / people inhabited in the area surrounded by hills and hillocks) might be corrupted as kallar(thief) in the later period. Moreover, the Puramalaikallaganadu of the later records as cited above, obviously gives the present name Piramalai Kallar. The DNA analysis of Mr.Virumandi belongs to Kallar community of the village Jothimanickam located inbetween Anaiyur (an ancient Taluk Headquarter) and Vikkiramangalam (a medieval trade centre) in the area of Thenkallaga Nadu, done by R.M.Pitchappan (2002,pp.157-161) of Madurai Kamaraj University proves that the DNA 130 gene found in Mr.Virumandi is also found in the majority types of aboriginals in Africa and there is similarity in a few groups in Philippines and Malaysia. This point leads to infer the people of Kallars was the successors of the people who have migrated from the African coast and settled in India particularly in Tamilnadu around 70,000 years ago. From this, one

can say that the people of Kallars who have migrated and settled in the region surrounded by hills and hillocks known as Thenkallaganadu of Pandya country by thousands of years ago. They lived in the region of Thenkallaganadu as aboriginals and they know only the Tamil language and the Tamil land and doesnot know any other languages. So, it is clear that the homeland of kallars is the Thenkallaganadu of Pandya country at present the area covered by Vadipatti, Nilakkottai,Tirumangalam and Usilampatti taluks of Madurai District dominantly inhabited by this people. For a certain period , they lived as an aboriginal like Sombon, Jarava, Sentinel and etc., of Andaman and Nicobar Islands without knowing the outside world particularly without knowing they themselves are Indians and then in the later period especially during the late medieval period the Kallars involved themselves in the political arena.

References

1. ARE= Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy
2. Baliga,B.S. (1960) Gazetteer of Madurai District, Government of Madras.
3. Venkatasamy Nattar,Na. Mu. (1984) Kallar Carittiram,Thanjavur.
4. Edgar Thurston (1909) Castes and Tribes of South India, Chennai.
5. Louis Dumont (1986) A South Indian Sub-caste: Social Organization and Religion of the Piramalai Kallar, Oxford University Press.
6. Sethuraman,K. (1995) 'Copper Plate of Kanagayanayak of Ammayanayakkanur Zamin, 'Avanam,No.6, The Journal of Tamilnadu Archaeological Society.
7. Jayakumar,P. (2008) Pandinattin Anaiyur, Anbu Veliyeettakam, Thanjavur.
8. Jayakumar,P. (2016) Thenkallaganadu, Tamil University, Thanjavur.
9. Vijayavenugopal,K. And Venkataraman,R (1996) Thangalachery Inscription of Kittinappanayakkar,Avanam,No.7. The Journal of Tamilnadu Archaeological Society.
10. Pitchappan,R.M.(2002) "Castes, Migration, Immuns genetics, Indigenous Diseases of South India: A Review, Community Genetics 5.