REWRITING HISTORY OF TAMIL SANGAM AGE: FROZEN WORD IN STONE - KEEZHADI TO KINNIMANGALAM

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Abstract

The history of India has hitherto been a history written from the North. The history of India was written with the Vedic period as its beginning. The history of India has begun to be written from the south through the ongoing excavations and epigraphical evidences in Tamil Nadu. The history of Tamil society dates back to the Sangam Age. The Sangam period is divided into the first Sangam, the Intermediate Sangam and the Third Sangam. Tolkappiyam, an important grammar work in Tamil and the five great epics belong to the Sangam age. Records of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas who ruled Tamil Nadu are found in Sangam literature. Some scholars say that the Sangam literary period is fiction. But some of the inscriptions discovered in Tamilnadu show that there is a close connection between Sangam literature and the present period. These literatures are the source material for the study of the life of the ancient Tamils and the history of Tamil Nadu. Archaeological excavations and inscriptions have strengthened the literature in recent years, even though the Sangam period studies have been published for more than 200 years. This provided an environment for archaeology in Sangam literature. In this way, we can try to trace the Sangam literary period through the inscriptions of Kinnimangalam and Keezhadi found in Madurai district. This article discusses the Keezhadi and Kinnimangalam inscriptions and the relationship between those words and Sangam literature.

Keywords: *tamil sangam literature, keezhadi, kinnimangalam, tamil ancient history*

Kinnimangalam Mutt

Kinnimangalam is located 18 km west of Madurai and southeast of Chekkanoorani. Many Tamil inscriptions have already been discovered in the hills surrounding this area[i]. The *Ekanathar Anandavalli* temple is situated in the heart of the town and is spread over an area of half an acre. The presiding deity of the temple is a Linga form. The vimana is built in a Nagara style with a brick wall and the sanctum sanctorum wall is a stone.

The temple has a sanctum sanctorum, a corridor, an ardhamandapa and a front mandapam that dates back to Vijayanagara. The Linga is the presiding deity of the temple and there are also tombs of the mutts who were the hereditary administrators of the mutt. The present temple was built later and the ground area adjacent to the present temple was earlier used as a mutt, said Thiru. Arulananda. The monastery is still functioning. The monastery has traditionally been a place of teaching and martial arts. In particular, it was a field of training in agriculture, nature conservation, water management, astrology, Tamil medicine, Tamil mathematics and martial arts

Kinnimangalam Inscription

Three inscriptions belonging to different periods have been found in the *Ekanathar Ananthavalli Amman* temple at Kinnimangalam. This ancient inscription is written in *Tamili* (Tamil Brahmi). This inscription found on an octagonal pillar contains the words ' *Ēkaṉ ataṉ kōṭṭam*[ii].

Kinnimangalam Ekanathar Mutt a fragmentary inscription belonging to the 7th -8th century was also found. The date of the publication of the inscription is not known as the foreground of the inscription is broken. This inscription is also written in four lines with a sharp chisel in the form of scratches on the stone. The inscription reads as follows;

1. *Iṟaiyiliyāka*
2. *Ēkanātaṉ*
3. *Paḷḷippaṭai*
4. *Maṉṟaḷi*
5. *Īntār*

To the left of this inscription are the outlines of twin fishes. These inscriptions may have been issued during the early Pandya's period. A lamp is also painted at the end of the inscription. The *Ekanathan* herostonel temple known as *Kottam* was known as *Pallipadai* in the 7th -8th century and an earthen *thali* was erected around this middle stone and the temple was given *iraiyili.*

On August 19, the state archaeology department conducted an excavation in the temple premises and found an inscription. During the reign of Vijayaranga Chokkanathan, Madurai was ruled by A.D. The inscription was cut in 1722. The inscription was very elaborate and contained 43 lines[iii].

The inscription lists the names of the Nayak kings who ruled Madurai and mentions the temple as Pallipadai Samadhi and claims that it belonged to a particular family. "So far, inscriptions in Tamil have been found only on Jain beds in herostone. For the first time, the letters have been found on a pillar. Besides, there is no dot system in Tamil letters. But the words 'its "Ekan kottam" found here have dots in all four places.

Therefore it may be a later Tamil. Among the Tamil inscriptions found so far, the Anaimalai inscription is the first to have a dot. Iravatham Mahadevan wrote it in A.D. It dates back to the 1st century. This inscription may also belong to that period[iv].

The word '*Kottam*' has never been mentioned in a Tamil inscription. The word kottam occurs for the first time in the *Pulankurichi* inscription. Therefore, this is also the first Tamil inscription in which the word "*Kottam*" occurs[v].

The word '*pallipadai*' in the inscription '*Iraiyili Ekanathan pallipadai mandaliyindar*' gives the impression that the place may have been a *pallipadai* temple, i.e., a temple erected over the tomb of the departed. The date of this inscription is B.C. According to paleontology, it dates back to the 2nd century.

The noun *Athan* is used in Arittapatti, Kongar, Puliyankulam, Vikkiramangalam, Mettupatti and Azhagarmalai[vi]. It should be read as *Atan*. Similarly in the pottery sherds of Kodumanal and Keezhadi the noun *Athan* is used as its name B.C. Until the 3rd century, they were written with alphabetic notation[vii].

Sangam Literature and Kinnimangalam Inscription

This inscription occupies a special place in the cultural history of the Tamils. The *Ēkaṉ ataṉ kōṭṭam* mentioned in this inscription indicates that the temple was built for the middle stone taken for the deceased. A fragmentary inscription of *Vatteluthu* belonging to the 7th -8th century found here proves this**.**

The word *Kottam* has many meanings in the Tamil language. *Kottam* is one of the administrative divisions of the state. *Thondaimandalam* was divided into 24 *Kottams.[viii]* In the early historical period, many mud forts were built in *Thondainadu* and the *Kottams* were given to the respective villages for their importance. Based on this, the divisions of the country were called *kottams*. The word *kottam* is first used in the *Pulankurichi* inscription[ix] (3rd century CE)

In Sangam literature, many objects are mentioned in the context of the place. Temples dedicated to the dead also have this meaning[x]. *Coṟkōṭṭam[xi]*, *pācaṟai[xii]* Words such as vocabulary and camp can be mentioned here.

According to the Tamil tradition, the *Kanthu* (stone pillar) is the forerunner of the Linga cult with four sides at the base and eight stripes at the top. The word *kottam* also means the palace of the king, the temple of the gods, and the monastery of the monastery[xiii].

In *Manimekalai*, it says, '*Cuṭu maṉṉōṅkiya neṭunilaik kōṭṭamum*'[xiv]. Of these, the word is mostly associated with the temple. The *Pattinappalai* mentions the *Nilakkottam[xv]* of Kaverippattinam. There is also information about *Puthuolir Kottam* and *Kamman Kottam[xvi]* in *Kalithokai*. 13. The *Silappathikaram* also refers to the place of worship in the burial ground area called *kottam[xvii]*. Manimekalai mentions *Chakravala Kottam[xviii]*.

The date of these was often temples or monuments taken in burial grounds for the dead, known as *kottams.*

Therefore, the meaning of the Tamil inscription is that the herostone must have been taken for *Ekan Athan* and a circular *kottam* was built around it. *Ekan's* father's name is his son *Athan*. The foundation stone was taken for his death and the division was formed.

The inscription is dated to the 6th century B.C. to the 2nd century B.C. For the first time in the history of archaeology, the word *'Kottam'* appears in this 2000-year-old inscription. The first archaeological evidence for the word *'Kottam'* which is widely used in *Silappathikaram* and Sangam literature has now been found.

Keezhadi

It is 13 km south-east of Madurai city. This place is located in the distance. It is 2 km north of this place. River Vaigai flows in the distance. The coconut grove at Keezhadi was the first to be excavated. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Bangalore carried out excavations in 2014-15 and 2015-16 and the Government of Tamil Nadu commenced excavations in 2017-18[xix].

The excavations so far in Tamil Nadu have revealed the existence of an urban civilization with buildings made of burnt bricks. From the 3rd century B.C. to A.D. The period up to the 2nd century is considered as the Sangam Age in Tamil[xx]. But the Brahmi script found here suggests that the Sangam period can be traced back by another three centuries[xxi].

The second urban civilization (Indus Valley Civilisation, First Urban Civilization) in the Gangetic plain dates back to around 1000 BC. Originated in the sixth century. But at a parallel period, evidence of urban civilization has been found at Keezhadi in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, it can be assumed that there was an urban civilization in Tamilnadu during the Second Urban Civilisation[xxii]. Six objects were sent to the Beta Analytical Testing Laboratory in Florida, USA for Accelerated mass spectometry study. According to the results, the objects were dated to B.C. Third century B.C[xxiii].

The object found in the depths of 353 cm B.C. 580 Year and The object found in the depths of 200 cm B.C 205 year[xxiv]. Since there are objects below and above these two levels, the period of Keezhadi can be dated to B.C. From the sixth century B.C. Archaeology has concluded that it dates back to the 1st century.

Kinnimangalam and Keezhadi

Based on the specimens of the script found at Kodumanal and Azhagankulam, the Tamil Brahmi script dates back to 1000 B.C. It was considered to be the third century. But according to the findings of the research found in Keezhadi, Tamil Brahmi is believed to be in B.C. It is believed to belong to the 6th century[xxv].

The Indus Valley script is the oldest script found in India. Archaeologists believe that between the disappearance of the Indus Valley Culture and the emergence of the Tamil Brahmi script, there was a script in the form of a scratch. Like the Indus Valley scripts, their meaning is not yet fully understood. These symbols are found in the Chalcolithic culture and later in the Megalithic culture[xxvi].

In Tamil Nadu, pottery sherds found at Adichanallur, Azhagankulam, Korkai, Kodumanal, Karur, Theriruveli and Perur have scratch scripts.

The Keezhadi excavation yielded 56 potsherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions. Names such as *Kuviraṉ* and *Atan* and incomplete letters have been found. The name *Athan* is referred to as it[xxvii]. These Tamil Brahmi scripts are considered to be very early in time, as early Tamil Brahmi did not have the custom of phonetic notation to denote *Nedil*. Two thousand years ago, Tamil structures have been continuously found in Keezhadi and the name *Athan* is continuously practiced in it.

Conclusion

Sundara Pandian Pallipadai in Tiruchuzhi in the Pandya country is mentioned in inscriptions as an ancient *pallipadai*.[xxviii] Currently in B.C. This shows that the Kinnimangalam *Pallipadai* temple of the 2nd century was the oldest *Pallipadai* in India. From the above data, it is clear that the *Pallipadai Samadhi* temple at Kinnimangalam continued to function from the 2nd century BC and the *Vatteluttu* inscription found here indicates the antiquity of this mutt and functioned well till the Madurai Nayak period. Keezhadi has revealed the possibility of an urban civilization in Tamil Nadu during the Second Town Civilization. R.Balakrishnan has been working on the Indus Valley. In his book *Journey of a Civilization: Indus to Vaigai*, Balakrishnan mentions that there is a connection between the Indus Valley and the Keezhadi. Archaeological evidence establishes that the life practices of the ancient Tamils described in the Sangam literature are not mere imaginary. Several archaeological evidences have been found at Keezhadi which testify to the urban

civilization recorded in Sangam literature. The Tamil (Tamil Brahmi) script written on a pot shell found at Keezhadi confirms that the period of Tamil literacy was 6th century CE. Away from the tendency to treat literature as fiction, literature can be considered as a historical document and for Sangam literature, Keezhadi excavation and Kinnimangalam inscriptions will help in reconstructing the history of Tamils.

Foot Notes

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