Ideology In The Personal Names Of Medieval Kerala

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Abstract: This paper makes use of the multidisciplinary techniques to glean evidences from the remote past to cull out the ideology and symbolism in the names. Anthroponomastics, Epigraphy, History and Linguistics helped us in this task. The social history of Kerala requires further studies to be established as an area of prominence in the history of Kerala. This paper is an attempt in this direction using the inscriptions of medieval Kerala as the source material. Studies of inscriptions are abundant in the context of South Indian history, but less in the case of Kerala. One of the reasons for this in the case of Kerala is the limited availability of epigraphical sources which may not go beyond two or three hundred. Here we attempt to study the social history of Kerala from the personal names in medieval inscriptions. Anthroponomastical study of medieval Kerala is not attempted by the scholars earlier to glean social history. The names found in the inscriptions are representational and we interpret the ideology and beliefs of the people based on this. Though the inscriptions available to us are mostly chance discoveries, we are not considering it as capable of providing the entire picture of the medieval society of Kerala. But definitely, it helps to formulate valid assumptions on the life world of the people of medieval Kerala. This paper is a preliminary attempt to analyse the naming pattern of medieval Kerala and its structure. How the nature of social stratification existed in medieval Kerala reflected in the naming pattern and how it can be identified from the inscriptional evidence, the formation of castes and its growing rigidity how affected the naming, the spread of agrarian practices and how it affected the personal names, etc. however needs to be further investigated.

Keywords: Anthroponomastics, Beliefs, Inscriptions, Medieval Kerala, Personal names, Toponomy.

I. INTRODUCTION

History of medieval Kerala is mostly dependent on the writings of scholars like William Logan, K.P. Padmanabha Menon, K.V. Krishna Ayyar, Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, M.G.S. Narayanan, Kesavan Veluthat, M.R. Raghava Varier and K.N. Ganesh. A few emerging scholars also work in this area and contribute to enhancing our understanding. But the social history of medieval Kerala is an area crave for further explorations by the scholars. Though there are some studies including a few monographs in this field, the majority of them focused on social stratification, the law of inheritance and devadasi system.

II. OBJECTIVES

In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse the collective and individual ideology reflected in the personal names used in medieval Kerala. It is one of the least probed areas of study in the case of medieval Kerala. The personal names used by the entire population of medieval Kerala is not known to us. The names are most repeated in the case of many families for generations as is known to us. For instance, the name of grandfather is attributed to the eldest male child in the case of Nampūthiri family in Kerala. The subsequent children have also attributed the name of grandparents or the names generally used by the family members. The prefix *cheriya* (junior, literally small) and *valiya* (senior, literally big) is used along with names to differentiate persons having the same personal name in a family. There are restrictions about the use of names among various castes. The names exclusive to the

Nampūthiris and elites are not supposed to be used by lower castes. Thus, the names we come across in the documents of medieval Kerala are mainly confined to the elite section of the society.

III. METHODOLOGY

We have only limited information of a few names which are survived in the records such as inscriptions, chronicles, oral sources and literature. In the present paper, we use only the information available in the inscriptions, as the entire data is unwieldy for a research paper. Statistical and analytical methods are used to find out the symbolism and ideology of the names presuming the significance in the frequency of its use. Anthroponomastics, the study of personal names, gives an interesting glimpse of the culture, the political and social organisations, religion, castes, and mutual relationship among them. It also shows the ideology and customs of the inhabitants. The present paper is based on the names found in the inscriptions of Kerala to analyse the naming pattern, society and culture.

IV. SOURCES AND EARLIER STUDIES

The societies, in general, assign personal names to its members but there are cultural differences in practice. Most of the societies give names soon after birth or to infants, but among many societies, naming is delayed. Despite their universality, there is a great deal of difference from one culture to another in the way of naming. The major objective of naming is to provide a symbolic system of identification. The relationship between the name and the bearer is complex. The emergence of individual names and name categories is always based on cultural and social context. In other words, names are not only part of the language, but also part of society and culture. M.G.S. Narayanan observes, about the ancient and medieval naming pattern of Kerala, "the custom of adding a family or lineage name seems to have been prevalent from earliest times. In some cases, on the additional name, signifying, perhaps that of the father or the uncle (*Kāraṇavar*) also seen. The Sanskritised names probably were those of Brahmins, who also had added the lineage names".

The personal names are studied in different parts of India. However, no serious study has been done on the personal names of medieval Kerala. The inscriptions, most of which are from temples contains names of a large number of individuals figuring as witnesses to transactions, donees and also members of managing committees of temples. The names generally consist of three segments. The name of the family, name of the father and the ego's name, for instance, Vanṟalaiccēri Kōtai Iravi. In a few cases, there would be one more segment before such three-segmented names, for instance, Mūḻikkaḷattu Kūṟṟampaḷḷi Chuvākaran Tāmōtiran, where the first segment signifies the village from which the individual originally hailed. There are however cases where one or more of these segments are omitted.

V. BRAHMAN AND NON-BRAHMAN NAMES

The names which we get from inscriptions are mostly that of the Brahmans or those related to them. The reason is that the inscriptions of Kerala are mainly resolutions of the temple committees or land grants as *Brahmasvam* or *Dēvasvam*. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai does not distinguish the members of the temple committees from the donors and witnesses to the transactions. There are certain names of non-Brahmanas but they figure mostly as donors. In other cases, it can be demonstrated that the names are of Brahmanas. However, the absence of the Brahmanical suffix 'Śarman' the total absence of references to names of gotras and the transformation of personal names into unrecognizable Dravidian forms (like Cāttan for Śāstraśarman, Kaṇṭan for Nīlakaṇṭha, Ruppan for Subrahmaṇya, Uruttiran for Rudra, etc.) led Elamkulam to assume the names as of non-Brahmanas. Apart from the absence of gotra names or the *Śarman* suffix, what stood in the way of his appreciating the Brahmanical character was the inadequate consideration of the context in which the records appear.

Kesavan Veluthat says that Elamkulam's lack of familiarity with conditions in central and northern Kerala from where most of these records come may be a reason for this. Many of these records are from temples which are reputed as *grāmakṣētras* (village temples) of Brahmanas, a tradition which he ignored. Nor did Elamkulam know that many of the houses mentioned in them survive to this day and that they are brahmana houses. This knowledge is essential to realize that the names of those who figure in the records in the capacity of witnesses and members of the *sabha* are Brahmanas. But then Elamkulam mixed up all names figuring in records and argued somewhat theatrically, that a large number of them were non-Brahmanas. The reality, however, is that the list included many brahmana names which he failed to identify as such. Such non-Brahmanas as are present are in the capacity of donors or tenants and not as those who controlled the land of temples. Thus it is necessary to have a fresh look at these names.

VI. TOPONOMY OF PERSONAL NAMES

The personal names in certain cases also incorporate the place names. Place names are hidden treasures. They often hide fragments of history and geography. The geographical features of a country are best preserved in its place names. The importance of place-name studies is brought out by F.T. Wain Wright in the following quotation. "Place name supply in full measure linguistic information of a kind that is absent in archaeology and usually blurred in the historical record. They also supply fairly precise conclusion on the intensity of settlement, linguistic boundaries origins, and relationships with occasional comments on social and economic conditions". The first part of the personal name consists of the place name of that person is already mentioned. The place-name like *Paḷḷi*, *Ambalam*, and *Kōṭṭam* derives from the influence of Jain and Buddhist religions. Similarly, place names can be seen as having a large part of them based on different aspects of the landscape of nature. Place names were also influenced by *Aintinais* mentioned in the early Tamil

literature. The place names like Neythal Mangalam, Mullakkal, etc. shows the influence of *Aintinais.* There are place names with *Paḷḷi* seen in inscriptional records along with personal names such as *Kaṇayapaḷḷi, Kamakanapaḷḷi, Kuṟumpaḷḷi, Koyipaḷḷi, Pullipaḷḷi, Veḷḷiyampaḷḷi, Malayipaḷḷi, Mūthāmpaḷḷi, Makkandapaḷḷi, Ñāyarpaḷḷi, Kāññirapaḷḷi, Varikkampaḷḷi, Śivaripaḷḷi, Tēvarpaḷḷi, Paḷḷivirutti, Mullapaḷḷi* etc. The term *Paḷḷi* indicates in most cases Jain or Buddhist connection.

Land terms with prefix *kāṭu* also indicate the existence of productive spaces near the forest or the formation of such spaces out of forested areas because of slash and burn and forest clearance. The term that is found in the inscriptions either suffix or prefix terms such as *kāṭu, kara, turutti indicate* the forest clearing, reclamation of estuarine lands and water-laden areas. The conjoining together of *kāṭu* to the terms denoting lands in these areas and terms signifying the agriculture practice in the flood plains, waterlogged areas and estuarine regions indicates the process of agrarian practices. There are several *kari* lands in the inscriptions of the area, namely, Kīrankaṭampanār kari, Chēnnan Chēnnanār kari, Ūrāḷachēnnan kari, Gōvindanār kari, Paravanār kari, Indranīlan kari and Pāṭṭiār kari. Tiruvalla copper plates mention many *kari* lands. The *kari* stands for the land spaces reclaimed from the estuarine and waterlogging areas. *Paṟambu* as mixed crop cultivation space began to be developed in the laterite areas in the midland because of the proliferation of settlements and cleaning of forest in this region. *Thōṭṭams* are monocrop gardens. Kīrankaṭampanār kari and Ayyankāṭṭumaṟṟam mentioned in Vāḷapaḷḷi copper plate indicate the process of reclamation and lands so created for cultivation. The peoples like Kīrankaṭampanār and Ayyan or their ancestors might have engaged in the creation of these lands for production operation. It was because of this that their names were attached to the lands and these land names continued to appear even in the land deeds.

VII. IDEOLOGY OF PERSONAL NAMES IN MEDIEVAL KERALA

The personal names are indicative of their beliefs and sects. Though the person bearing the name is not responsible for his name as his parents generally give him the name. Thus, a particular name is given by parents to their children showing their beliefs and the social norms. Thus, an analysis of the personal names will help us for a better understanding of society. We have utilised one hundred and fifty inscriptions of medieval Kerala available to us for the present study. When we look into the linguistic origin of personal names, we can find the influence of languages like Prakrit, Pali, Tamil, Sanskrit, etc. Table-1 is given at the end of this paper, which shows the names derived from Prakrit.

Aranganrayan	Iyakkan Inthirayudhan	Kantan Kannan
Athichan	Irayiirayan	Kantan Tevan
Ayyan	Iyakkan Parameswaran	Kavathi Kannan
Ayyanadikal	Irayingan	Kiruttan
Ayyappan	Irayaran Chathan	Kumarachuvami
Chathan	Kanapathi	Kumaran Iyakkan
Irayachinkan	Kantan Athaki	Kuntan
Iyakkan Kovinnan	Kangathiran	Nakkan
Iyakkan Kotai	Kannanchuvaran	Pakkaran
Iyakkan Keralan	Kannakumaran	Vathutevan
Iyakkan	Kannan Vikkiraman	Yakkan Chathan
Iyakkan Chirikantan	Kannan Iyakkanar	Yakkan Pozhan
Iyakkan Kuntapozhan	Kantan	

Table 1: Names in inscriptions derived from Prakrit

VIII. RELIGION AND PERSONAL NAMES

Sramanas interaction with Śaiva-Vaiṣṇavas resulted in cultural syncretism and transcendence. The following names found in the inscriptions are an example of this.

Jain + Vaiṣṇavism: Iyakkan Govindan, Iyakkan Intirāyudhan, Kaṇṇan Iyakkan, and Iyakkan Chirikaṇṭan.

Jain + Buddhist: Yakkan Chāttan.

Jain + Regional: Yakkan Kēraḷan, Yakkan Kunṟappōḻan and Iyakkan Kōtai.

Jain + Śaivism: Irāyiran Chāttan.

Vaiṣṇavism: Kaṇṇan Vikkiraman, Kaṇṭan Kaṇṇan, Kaṇṭa Nārāyaṇan, Kaṇṭan Kiruṭṭan, Kaṇṇan Kumaran, Kaṇṇan Chuvaran and Kaṇṭan Tēvan.

IX. YAKṢA-YAKṢI CONCEPT IN PERSONAL NAMES

The Yakṣa-Yakṣi concept was adopted by the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain religions in many ways. It is believed that Ilankovan, who lived in the Jain monastery of Tirukuṇavai, wrote the great work *Cilappatikāram*. It is in this work first reference to Iyakki or Yakṣi of Tamiḷakam is found. This work contains a reference to Ponni Iyakki or Golden Yakṣi. The terms Yakka and Yakki are closely related with the Yakkan and Yakki in Buddhist language Pali, and Jakkan and Jakki in Prakrit, the Jain language. Many temple inscriptions in Kerala mention people with names like Yakkan and Yakki. They generally speak about the gifts given to the temple. From the ninth century onwards more than twenty Yakkans are mentioned in more than ten temple records. Important among them was Tiruvalla copper plates related to Tiruvalla temple, it includes 41 copper plates, a few of these leaves have been lost. If we exclude the Tiruvalla copper plates the term Yakkan first appears in Kaṇṭiyūr temple inscription of 947 AD. The Cēra inscriptions like Kollam Rameswaram

inscription of 1102 AD and Perumchellūr copper plate of 1145 also mentions about Yakkan. Trikkākara, Neḍumpuṟam, Trikkaḍittānam, Tiruvaṇṇūr, and Thāḷakkāvu inscriptions and Tirunelli copper plate mention Yakkan. Almost all inscriptions which mention about Yakkan and Yakki are donations given to the temple. These inscriptions indicate that the Yakkans were the landlord and prominent men of high rank.

One of the authors of this paper has put forward the hypothesis that Yakkans were Jains. They might be Jains and later became Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava believers. The purpose of these land grants may be to show their loyalty to their new faith. Persons like Yakkan Govindan an administrator under the Kīḻmala chief made donations to Tiruvalla temple. Amayamaṅṅalattu Yakkan Chāttan of Tiruvalla copper plate was a witness of donations. When we analyse the structure of the names the word Yakkan usually appear in the middle part. The only exception for this is Kumaran Iyakkan and Chuvaran Iyakkan. For at least two generations ago the name Yakkan may have been used by the Jains. As per the available inscriptions so far, only one Yakki appears in the inscriptions. It is Yakkiamma, the wife of Pallath Kuntan Iravi mentioned in Tiruvalla copper plate. The Tiruvaṇṇūr temple inscription indicates Yakkan as the name of a Jain believer or the trace of Jain relationship. Kaṇayapaḷḷi Yakkan Chellan in this inscription shows that his name was Chellan and his father's name was Yakkan. The term 'kaṇaya' also refers to the Jain connection. M.R. Raghava Varier points out that the Kaṇam or Gaṇam was a Jain group in south India. From the tenth to twelfth centuries Yakkans are found in inscriptions. They are generally obscure in later writings and texts. The following table shows the names that contain Yakkan and Yakki in the inscriptions of medieval Kerala.

Kandiyoor Inscription	AD 947	Punnacherri Iyakkan Parameswaran, Iyakkan Keralan
Thrikkakara	AD 950	Pantithuruthi Yakkan Kuntapozhan
Thrikkakkara	AD 950	Pantithuruthi Yakkan Kuntapozhan
Nedumpuram Taḷi	AD 950	Manalmantathu Iyakkan Inthirayudhan
"	"	Nedumpurayur Iyakkan Ayyan
"	"	Iyakkan Chathan
"	"	Manalmattathu Iyakkan
Tirunelli Copperplate	AD 1005	Amayamangalathu Yakkan Chathan
Trikkadithanam	AD 1010	Mulakkad Iyakkan Govindan
Tiruvannur	AD 1044	Kanayapaḷḷi Yakkan Chellan
Thrikkadithanam	AD 1050	Manalmattathu Iyakkan Chirikantan/Iyakkan Srikantan
Tazhakkavu	AD 1051	Iyakkan
Tiruvalla Copper Plate	AD 900-1100	Yakkan
"	"	Peruvayalur Yakkan Kotha
"	"	Kidangupara; Ponni Yakkanayan
"	"	Kumaran Iyakkan
"	"	Yakkan Govindan
"	"	Mayi Yakki
"	"	Yakki Amma
"	"	Pakaiviruthi Kumaran Iyakkan
Perumchellur Copper Plate	AD 1145	Cherpalaikattu Chuvaran Iyakkan

Table 2: Names of Yakkan and Yakki found in inscriptions

The personal names in medieval Kerala will also help us to understand the nature, designation, titles of administrative offices of the medieval period. The masculine gender, feminine gender, geographical features, flora, fauna, caste, religion are implied in personal names. The study of personal names embodies a lot of things underlying them. They give us insights into the culture, political and social organisations etc. By studying personal names in medieval Kerala, we can understand that certain names are frequently used by people. Table-3 given below illustrates this. The repetition is mostly due to the naming convention followed.

NAME	REPETITION	NAMES	REPETITION
Narayanan	88	Vikiraman	15
Kumaran	47	Tamotiran	13
Kantan	41	Pozhan	12
Tevan	30	Tuppan	9
Kovinnan	32	Ayyan	9
Kothai	30	Chikantan	9
Kannan	29	Iyakkan	13
Chathan	28	Tayan	8
Chankaran	22	Purayan	7
Chennan/ Chennanar	22	Keyavan/Kesavan	19

Table 3: Frequency of Names in Inscriptions

X. NAMES OF WOMEN IN INSCRIPTIONS

Feminine names appear in inscriptions are given in Table-4 given below. It is clear from the table that only a few feminine names appear in inscriptions. Most of them were wives, mothers or daughters of rulers. They mainly depend on the elite males and did not have mostly any existence of their own. When we look into the structure of their names the first name is the name of the father and the second is a personal name. The successor of Karunandaḍakkan is Vikramāditya Varaguṇan, known from Hajurkacheri copper plate of Varaguṇan's wife Murukan Chenti, who is regarded as 'Āykulamātēvi'. This copper plate also states that Murukan Chenti was the daughter of Thenkanāṭṭu Kiḷavan. Responsibilities to keep things assigned as aṭṭippēṟu to Murukan Chenti was given to Pārthivaśēkharapuram Perumākkaḷ. Chāttan Murukan mentioned in Pāliyam inscription is Thenkanāṭṭu Kiḷavan. So, the first name was Murukan who was Chenti's father and Chenti was her name.

Tillaisthanam inscription	Kadamba queen, wife of Vikkiannan
Chokur inscription	Chuzhiyilil Chittarayil Naṅṅayar
Thrikkakara inscription	Kizhanadikal
Tirunandikkara copper plate	Murukan Chenthi
Kollur madam copper plate	Deviyar, mother of Vallabhan Kotha
Kilimanoor Copper Plate	Umayamma (mother of Manikantan Tiruvadi)

Mampaḷḷi Copper Plate	Thrikalayapurath Athichan Umayamma
Kilimanur Copper Plate	Kizhperur Manikandan Mathavi alias pillayar tiruvadi
	Melppadi Manikandan Umayamma alias Pillayar Tiruvadi
Chitharal Thirucharanam Jain Document	Naranakuttiyar
”	Kunanthakikurathikal
”	Pathmini padar
Kadinamkulam Inscriptions	Umayamma (Mother of Sri Veeraraman)
Keralapuram Inscription	Neelammakutty (daughter of Mathamma)
	Mathamma (daughter of Eechakutty)
Tiruvalla Copper Plate	Illamkunnunadu Naṅṅayar
	Ekkiamma (Ponpallath Kunnan Iravi's wife)
Panthalayani Kollam Inscription	Easwaran Nili (daughter of Chiyamanapollamma Nayithi)

Table 4: Names of women in Inscriptions

A male-dominated society existed in medieval Kerala as like those of other parts of India. According to the records the dancers were called as Naṅṅayai, Naṅṅaiyār, Naṅṅacci, etc. There are also references to *Tēviṭicci* and *Kūttacci* referring dancers. The earliest reference to *naṅṅa* in a Kerala inscription is found in the Chōkkūr inscription. There are also reference to Naṅṅamār in Nedumpuram Taḷi document. Inscriptions only mention about rice as a reward for Naṅṅamār. Chōkkūr inscription mentions about the land donated to temple by Chirṟaṟayil Naṅṅayār. Neḍumpuṟam Taḷi inscription mentions about the paddy to be given by the Tribhuvanamahādēvi to the temple and also mentions about their land. These are pieces of evidence that points to the land owned by Naṅṅamār. Place names like Naṅṅapaṟambu and Naṅṅaccikunnu are still seen in the vicinity of the Chōkkūr temple. Neḍumpuṟam Taḷi document mentions about Tribhuvanamahādēvi Chiritaranaṅṅacci, which shows that Tribhuvanamahādēvi was the title adopted by her. Again, it is assumed that the Mahādēvi in the title shows her connections with the royal family.

The royal family were also seen as devadasis during this period, Kaṇṭiyūr inscription and many other inscriptions are examples for this. There is no clear evidence to know the positions and divisions among the Naṅṅamār. The Naṅṅamār or Naṅṅyārs followed the matrilineal system of inheritance. In inscriptions, we can see that along with their names the name of mothers was also included. Kēraḷapuram inscription mentions about Nīlamma Kuṭṭi daughter of Mātamma and Mātamma the daughter of Eacha Kuṭṭi. Panthalāyani Kollam inscription mentions about Easwaran Nīli daughter of Chiyamanapollamma Nāyitti. These names show that they used the name of the mother along with their names. The main reason behind this may be that they followed the matrilineal system of inheritance in which mothers had more importance than their father. This is just an assumption there is no evidence to prove that their naming pattern was like this. The main limitation while studying the medieval period is the lack of proper evidence. But in the case of Murukan Chenti and Āticcan Umayamma name of father was given as the first name. Their name appears as the second name.

XI. CONCLUSION

The inscriptions are windows to the past. Anthroponomastics help us to understand the naming pattern of that period which indicates the social ideology. This paper is a preliminary attempt to analyse the naming pattern of medieval Kerala and its structure. How the nature of social stratification existed in medieval Kerala reflected in the naming pattern and how it can be identified from the inscriptional evidence, the formation of castes and its growing rigidity how affected the naming, the spread of agrarian practices and how it affected the personal names, etc. however needs to be further investigated.

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