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Sangam Age Thiruvattar in Kanyakumari District

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ABSTRACT

In the districts of Kanyakumari, Thiruvattar is situated on the banks of the river Paraliyar, its old name was Vaattaru. The present name Thiruvattar is only a corrupt form of Thiruvaattaru. The poets praise several ancient sovereigns of Tamil land in the classic anthology verses. Thiruvattar has been geographically described by the one of Ettuthogai poet Mangudikilar in verse 396 of Purananuru as Valanir Vaattaru. Vaattaru has accrued its name on account of its location on the banks of a river. That designation has its nirvalam or abundance of water supply in the form a swift-moving river of perennial waters. There were many Ay families in Sangam Age. The Sangam literatures mention the name Ezhini was used by many Sangam chieftains. So, one of the families of Ezhini governed the place-Thiruvattar. They also maintained good relations with crowned monarchs of the Chera country.

Sangam Age Thiruvattar in Kanyakumari District

The age of the Sangam has been fixed between third century B.C to third century A.D by historians like K.A.Nilakanta Sastri¹ and N.Subramanian². The Sangam age consists of Muthar Sangam (First Sangam), Idai Sangam (Middle Sangam) and Kadai Sangam (Last sangam). The first sangam has no historical evidences. The Idai sangam has only one literary work i.e Tholkappiam. It has any reference about Thiruvattar. But Kadai Sangam has literary reference about the place Thiruvattar. Following that period, the literatures of medieval Pandyas and imperial Cholas have some evidences about the place Thiruvattar.

During the Sangam period, the Tamil country was ruled by the three crowned monarchs and many Chieftains. The Chieftains were the subordinates to the monarchs. They were known as kurunila mannargal³. These chieftains were powerful in their territories. They rendered assistance to the crowned monarchs at the time of wars. Sometimes they opposed monarchs individually or collectively or by joining hand with other crowned monarchs⁴. Vincent A. Smith mentioned one hundred and twenty Tamil chieftains. Among them Velir and Ays were important⁵. The mountains and rivers of the Tamil land was the main reason for prevailing the number of chieftains.

Ayvel Chieftains

The earliest known rulers of this region belonged to the Ay dynasty, whose remote ancestors are referred to as the Hida Raja in the Asokan Rock Edicts-II and XIV. The term Hida is the variation of Ida or Idaya is a synonym of Ayar which takes its singular form as Ay⁶. The Ay kingdom extended from the present Tiruvalla in North to Nagercoil in the South including the Western Ghate its most portions. The Purananuru locates the Ay capital on the Podhigai Malai (mountain) i.e., old place Aykudi. It is significant that Ptolmy calls the region from Baris (Pamba) to Cape Comorin Aioi (Ay) where the chieftains of the Ay clan ruled. The erstwhile south Travancore known as Najanadu was included in the early kingdom. The place Thiruvattar was within the territory of Ays of Aykudi. Many Velir branches ruled in the same regions under

the same names and feudatory families. The Adhiyans of ancient Tagadur are identified with the Adhigaimans of Dharmapuri District⁷. Among the Ay kings of the sangam age Ay Antiran, Titiyan, Atiyan and Ezhini were the most outstanding⁸

Kosar in Sangam Age

The kingdom of South India, together with Ceylon, was mentioned in the II and XII Rock Edicts of the Asoka. The II Edict mentioned the name of Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras and Keralaputras⁹. Satyaputras were members of the fraternity of truth. The early Tamil literature is held to be the Kosar-noted for their fidelity and heroism in war¹⁰. Thus, they occupied a considerable place in the literature of Sangam age. It seemed highly probable that they should have a place in the earliest political divisions of the Tamil country next to the three main kingdoms of the south. Therefore, the scholars accepted the identity of the Satyaputras with the Kosar and their country with Kongu¹¹.

Kosars and Battle of Vaataru

Bindhusara (298-273B.C), the son of Chandra Gupta Maurya ruled for 27 years as an emperor of India. He annexed Deccan regions except the Tamil land¹². The army of Vadugar and also Kosars defeated chieftains Nannan, who ruled Thuluva country. They captured Thuluva country and stayed there. The famous fort city of Thuluva country called Pazhi or Cheruppazhi was strengthened by Kosars. From this place they attacked Cheras, Cholas and Pandya territories¹³.

The Battle of Vaataru took place between army of Kosar and Ezhini, one of the Ayvel chieftains, who belonged to Atiyan race in third century B.C. The next severe battle took place at Chellur city. In that battle, Ezhini was killed when an arrow struck on his chest¹⁴. The Cholas had a prominent place in the political history of the South. In that time, Chola King Ilam Set Senni realized the weakness of his chieftains. He took decision to defeat the Mauryans without the help of Tamil chieftains. The Chola king Ilam Set Senni defeated them in the famous battle of Cheruppazhi¹⁵.

This incident reflected the unity of three crowned monarchs and Velir chieftains against the northern invaders. Because of their unity, they never allowed Mauryans to extend their control towards southern kingdoms. During the reign of Bindhusara, Ilam Set Senni, the Sangam Cholas began to dominate the southern areas. It is proved that Cholas were dominant in Sangam age and Thiruvattar was under the control of Ezhini, an Ayvel chieftain. After the death of Ilam Set Senni, his son Karikala became the ruler. One of his early achievements was the victory in the battle of Venni¹⁶. In this battle eleven Velir chieftains fought against Karikala and they were defeated and accepted the overlordship of Karikala¹⁷. Since that time the Cholas dominated the southern parts.

Ezhini Adan

During last part of Sangam age, Thiruvattar was under the control of the Vaattaru Ezhini Adan. According to Ragava Iyengar since Ezhini adorned the title Adan, he belonged to the branch of the Chera family¹⁸. Ullur S.Paramesvara Iyer's opinion was that Adam of Thiruvattar was an Ayvel Chieftain¹⁹. But in the words of Sadasivam, the Ezhini Adan was a connector of Chera and Adhigan family²⁰. Purananuru mentions the names of Ayvels, Adhigans and Cheras of Sangam age. Chera kingdom friendly relations with chieftains they also made matrimonial alliances with chieftains and so the above said views are acceptable one.

Ezhini Adan ruled with his Thiruvattar as his headquarters at Thiruvattar. He was a man of letters²¹. Mangudi Maruthan was the court poet of Pandyan Nedunchzhiyan, who praised Ezhini Adan in his poem²². So it proved that both of them were contemporary rulers. He also praised him as philanthropist. The Kosar were employed in the army of Ezhini Adan²³. The Cheran Mantramcheral and Chola Perunarkilli supported by five other minor chieftains opposed Pandyan Nedunchzhiyan at Thalyalanganam²⁴. The five Velir chieftains were Titiyan, Ezhini, Erumaiyuran, Ilango Venman and Porunan²⁵. The contemporary Ezhini was Ezhini Adan of Thiruvattar, who was defeated in the battle of Thalyalanganam²⁶.

There after the Ay chieftains waiting for the chance to recover their territories from Pandyas. Thus Thiruvattar has its historical importance from Sangam Age onwards.

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