



PATTAZHI VILLAGE- A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Binu Raj B. K

MA (History), M.Phil, NET (July- 2018).

Abstract

Medieval Kerala life is largely influenced by the temples since it is the nucleus of administration. Even the very place names are associated with it. It was also a period of Brahmin influx to Kerala and resultant changes in the pattern of agriculture. Followed to this arose temples as centers of administration and divine element hardly get prominence. This study is an attempt to locate Pattazhi Durga Bhagavati Temple as the nucleus of the social orbit of Pattazhi so that the history of the village can be displayed. It tries to understand the specific features of Pattazhi village with the temple as its centre and the micro level analysis is situated in a macro level of the history of Kerala.

Introduction

History of Kerala has been studied at a macro level by K P Padmanabha Menon and then every historian had tried to reveal the history by using modern historiographic perceptions. Writing of local history in nowadays is a usual phenomena and the specification of the different regions in Kerala had contributed a lot to the shaping of its history.

The history of Kerala in the medieval period was largely influenced by the temples. The temples were the magnets of the period and it was maintained by the firm direction of the Brahmins, who were the owners of the land with their superior agricultural technique. Thus the present paper is an attempt to locate Pattazhi Durga Bhagavathi Temple as the nucleus of the social orbit of Pattazhi so that the history of the village can be displayed.

Methodology and Sources

The study is mainly on the basis of the historical analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources comprises of information collected from the field and social memory. The books concerned with the topic constitute the secondary sources.

Historical Background

The Brahmin settlement in Kerala is believed to have commenced in the post Sangam period and were consolidated by 8th century A D. There were 32 original settlements in Kerala. These original settlements again bifurcated and formed fresh settlements. These settlements in the form of an upgrama formed in almost in Kerala. In the case of Pattazhi the form of upagrama consisting of two families namely Allapparathu and Thazhaman settled in the two sides of the alluvial Kallada river. These two families were part of the original Chegannure settlement. It is inferred that the availability of fertile land and proximity of water were factors behind the formation of upagramas.

With their superior agricultural techniques and the knowledge of calendar the Brahmins claimed the superiority over the rest and completely re-oriented the society based upon the producers and non-producers and claimed the non producers status. Like everywhere in Kerala Brahmin settlements in Pattazhi were essentially a temple centered one. In earlier days Dravidian kavus represented as temples and Brahmins take care on the extraction of agricultural surplus and more interestingly divine element hardly appeared. Moreover, these shrines were difficult to visualize their structural forms. This is best evidenced in Pattazhi where a kavu named Kannampally stood as the temple of the Brahmin settlers.

The evolution of temple as the nucleus of Pattazhi gets clear shape at the time of Kambithan (influential Nair chieftain). His coming to the temple administration is not changed brahminical supremacy instead stabilize it. Along with this there seemed a cultural fusion between Hindus Muslims and Christians. The Muslims and Christians are coming from Tamil Nadu and Thiruvalla respectively. Interestingly, as mentioned Muslims comes from Tamil Nadu, in the sense that in the local usage they were named as pandikal, the very name associated with the people of Tamil regions.

Kambithan's role is not confined to Pattazhi alone. In the sense he maintained a Nair troop named as Kalari and it sent to Venad's help and thereby to help the war efforts of Marthanda Varma (1729-58) against Kayamkulam Raja. It was a victorious campaign. As a reward to the Kambithan's help Marthanda Varma decided to hand over Pattazhi (it belonged to Elayadathu Sworoopam and naturally to Venad) to 'Devi'. Thus the Pattazhi Devi' became the richest landlord of Pattazhi. This was best represented in a document named as Danapathram. Though Marthanda Varma could not redeem his vow his nephew Karthika Thirunal fulfilled it.



Soon after Kambithan became more powerful and even went to high taxation. This necessitated a social tension and caused agrarian discontent against Kambithan's rule. Though the discontent was a failure it paved the way for the end of Kambithan's rule more rapidly.

The very place name Pattazhi is well associated with a temple centered myth. As per the myth a man of great standing in a family named Kadiyam thurithil Keezeveedu had vast landed property including fertile banana groves. One day the Karanavar was strolling through the grove. He found a white clad female figure of unusual beauty and cogent. As he neared her she vanished. Instead of fear a special emotion of devotion filled his heart. All of a sudden his eyes fell on a well, till then no well had existed and on its top a smooth granite slab. A length of red Pattu (Silk) possessing special beauty was seen on top of this slab. As he peered into the magic well saw blue waters undulating like waves of a gentle azhi or ocean. Since it was the combined presence of Pattu and Azhi that showed the presence of divinity, the region came to be called Pattazhi.

Conclusion

The social formation of Pattazhi is inevitably linked with the Pattazhi Devi temple. Thus the study of the history of Pattazhi temple is the study of local history itself. As per the Marxian principle, the economic base, that is the controlling of agriculture by the Brahmins and politico-juridico and cultural superstructure, that represented by the temple had well netted in Pattazhi.

References

1. Gouri Lakshmi Bhai, A. T. (1993). Tulasi Garland, Mumbai: Bharathiya Vidhyaq Bhavan.
2. Gurukkal, R. (1992). The Kerala Temple and Early Medieval Agrarian System..
3. Kesavan, V. (1978). Brahmin Settlement in Kerala, Historical Studies, Calicut: Sandhya Publications.
4. Narayanan, M .G. S.(1976). Aspects of Aryanisation. Trivandrum.
5. Sreedhara Menon , A. (1967). A Survey of Kerala History, Madras: S V Publishers.