

History of Onattukara

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Odanad was a small kingdom during the second Chera Empire between (800-1102). Mahodyapuram acted as the capital for the kingdom which lasted more than three centuries. The historical Odanad comprised parts of modern-day Kerala which includes Mavelikkara and Karthikapalli from the Alappuzha district and Karunagapalli from Kollam district. Later in history, it became known as Kayamkulam Kingdom. Onattukara is synonymous with Odanad. The geographical boundaries of Odanad were the south of Kannett, the northern parts of Trikunnappuzha, in the west, it was the Arabian sea and in the east, it was bordered by Ilayidath Swaroopam. In the 14th century text, Unnuneeli Sandesam Kannett is mentioned as the southern border of the kingdom. According to the records by The Dutch Commander of Cochin, Julius Valentyn Stein van Gollenesse in 1734 AD, the neighbourhood of Odanad were the areas of Pandalam, Thekkumkur, Ilayidath Swaroopam, Maadathukur, Purakkad and Thrikkunnappuzha. Madathumkur and Kannett which were the southern parts of the kingdom later separated from Odanad.

During the time of Perumakkan Kings of Mahodayapuram. The whole countryside was divided into small states which had its right of self-government like Venad, Odanad, Nandruzainad, Eranadu, Munjunad, Vembamalnad, Valluvanad, Eralnad, Puraikizhanadu etc. Several written proofs show that until the end of the 12th century Perumakan's Mahodhyapuram acted as the capital to the kingdom that stretched between Thiruvananthapuram and Kolathunadu. Popular historian Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai argues that even though the records aren't crystal clear, It has to be believed that this geographical division of kingdom existed at the beginning of the 12th century and places like Odanad and Venad attained freedom only during this time.

The proof of Venad and Odanad being a part of the Chera kingdom is found in Sukasandesha Kritika in the mid 14th century. Also, there are written proofs about it in Jewish records.

According to Orator MG Sashibhushan, Odanad was one of the five districts of administration established by Vikramaditya Varaguna, a vassal of the Pandaya rulers in the land between Kayamkulam and Thiruvalla. Kandiyyur was the capital in the initial period of their rule, as the empire expanded, Kandiyyur became a powerful local administration and the historical records indicate that the Pandayan King Sundara Pandayan defeated the Chola King in 1216 AD with the help Venad and Odanad. In the 13th century, Odanad became a strong regional power in itself.

A lot of information about the Odanad dynasty comes from the Kandiyyur Temple inscriptions and the Haripat Kshetra (Temple) inscriptions. The Kandiyyur inscriptions were originally written in Tamil. The inscription has information related to the Odanad dynasty during the time of Iruvi Kerala Verman in Malayalam year 393 (1218 AD). The script is about the renewal of Kandiyyur temple due to persuasion by a lady called Kurungudi Unnikkalathiram to the king of Odanad, Uthaichiraimangalath Shri Veeraperumattath Iraman Kothathiruvad. The inscription also mentions Kandiyyur as the capital of Odanad.

It's believed that in between 844 AD and 883 AD, Kerala was ruled by the Emperor Sthanu Ravi Kulasekaran. His Vassal was the king of Venad Ayyanadikal Thiruvadikal who was referred as Vellikula Sunadaran. Vellikulam was synonymous with the Ay dynasty and as Kandiyyur temple is believed to be constructed in the year 823 AD, this suggests that the Kandiyyur dynasty came into existence around the same time. The popular author K Shivashankaran Nair suggests that Velkula Sundaran may have been the ruler of Kandiyyur (Odanad) during those times. While MG Sashibhushan speculates that Melainad Kandiyyur Velikula Chundaran who ruled the place according to the scriptures found at Thirunama Nellore Rajaditeshwaram Temple and may have been a member of Odanad dynasty. The King mentioned in Jewish records of being from the Ay Dynasty maybe Melainad Kandiyyur Velikula Chundaran of Odanad himself.

The Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta travelled across Kerala from 1342 AD and during his more than four years stay in the state he recorded the political and social circumstances and culture of the land. According to him, 12 local dynasties ruled the state. One among it was Odanad. The southmost area of Melanad was the Ay Dynasty who had foreign trade relations with other countries of Asia and Europe since the 9th Century. There is a belief that *Desingnad* branches of the Venad Royal Family were related with

foreign rulers like Jaya Singh and the Yadavas ruled Odanad, Venpoli and Thiruvattuvaynad. This shows the relationship between Odanad and Ay Dynasty.

Many information about the Kings of Odanad can be found from the inscriptions of Haripad temple and Kandiyyur temple. In the Kandiyyur texts, it is recorded that the king Raman Kothavarama, the leader of yadukula, performed a ritual at the Kandiyyoor Mahadeva temple with hundreds of pots. It is also mentioned in Yadukula inscriptions further strengthening the beliefs of the existing relationship with the Ay Dynasty and Odanad.

In the inscriptions of Haripad Temple of an unknown time, there are references to Iravi Adicha Varma and Iravi Kerala Varama who were Odanad Kings. There are accounts of expenses by these two Odanad Kings for renovation and beautification of the Haripad Temple.

The 13th-century scripts of Veera Raghava Pattayam are the generally accepted version of the history of Odanad. The Patayam mentions the entire responsibility of the administration of the town of *Makotayar* to *Iraivi Korthana*, the trade union leader of those times. The treaty was also signed by the villagers of *Chokiram* and *Panniyoor* as well as the other rulers from Venad, Odanad, Eranadu and Valluvanad are the witnesses of this contract. Astrologers have recorded this to have taken place between 1225 or 1320. Although according to the Jewish texts Venad, Venpolinad, Nedumpayoornad, Valluvanad, Eranad and are the only kingdoms that existed. Venpolinad, Nedumpayoornad and Purayoornad later disappeared and Odanad newly came into existence. Although it was very common for a landlord to own multiple areas of administration. However, this can also be seen as the decline of the second Chola Empire and many of its administrative centres losing their power and becoming insignificant areas with a glorious past.

There are several proofs of political relevance of Odanad that could be traced to the beginning of the 13th century. By the end of the 12th Century the reign of the Chola regime started diminishing after which Pandya Kings started challenging the Chola Dynasty. In 1216 AD Raja *Maraverman Sundara Pandyan* defeated the reigning Chola King with Venad and Odanad helping him. *Chendan Raman* was the commander in chief of these joint forces of Pandya, Venad and Odanad. In return, As a gift for their assistance Odanad got Shambur Vadakara of Chenkotta taluk. This is an indication of the military advantages that Odanad held at the time for the Pandya kings in their war against the Cholas.

In the year 517 (1342AD) an unknown King of Odanad had donated one ruby stone to Irinjalakuda Temple of Cochin. On the occasion of this historical event, Odanad received the right to appoint the Tachudaya Kaimal at this Temple. There are several references about Odanad and its Kings *Manipravalam Kritis* written between the end of the 13th century and the dawn of the 14th century. The *Unniyadi Charithram*, *Shiva Vilasam*, *Unnuneeli Sandesham*, *Harya Kshamasamarotsvam*, *Kandiyur Mattam Padapattu*, *Padhya raknam* and *Chandrolsavam* in this Kritis mentions Odanad and its rich history in detail.

Provinces of Odanad

Ibn Battuta's travelogues indicate that Odanaddu was one of the 12 divisions of the state of Kerala in the early 14th century. But due to decentralisation of the powers may have resulted in many kings under Swaroopam disobeying the head and acting as independent rulers of their state. This is further evident by the number of rulers who tried to establish trade relations with the Portuguese merchants when they first arrived in Kerala in the 15th century. Some have suggested that the Odanad dynasty was further divided into four geographical sectors namely Pagodinho (Panayapally) Karthikappally (Karipazakkur and Kayamkulam). In 1743 AD the Dutch commander Van Golnese of Cochin recorded that the neighbouring state of Odanad was Pandalam, Thekkumkur, Ilayidathu Swaroopam, Madathumkur, Purakkad and Trikkunapuzha, Karunagappally. (Maruthoor Kulangara) and Mavelikara (Madathamkoor) in the southern border of Kannett was perhaps separated from Odanad Swaroopam later on. It is believed that *Perakam* and *Chiravay* merged with Venad for unknown reasons. It's assumed remaining areas like Pazhayadathu kovilakam became Mavelikara and Puthitadatha Kovilakam became Kayamkulam. After the departure of Perakam and Chiravay, the capital shifted to Eruvai and then to Krishnapuram and the name of Odanad itself became Kayamkulam.

Madathumkur was one of the provinces of Odanad. Mavelikkara was the headquarters of Madathumkur. According to Prof. K Vijayan, it was towards the east of the first capital of Odanad called *Mattam*. The name Madathumkur came from two words "Madampi" which means the local feudal lord and "koor" was a term generally given to a place inside the countryside. The area was home to huge wealthy families like *Arnootavar* and *Munnutavar* who held extensive positions of power. The centre of administration for

Arnootavar was from Arunoottimangalam, a place east of Mavelikkara. NP Chellapan Nair argues before Madathamkooor came into existence as a kingdom, this family had control over a few provinces including Mavelikara before Chirvay Swaroopam declared Madathamkooor as a kingdom and settled thereafter building a palace. The kings of the four provinces Madathamkooor, Odanad, Venad, Desingnad together have supervised the famous annual festival of Haryakshamasasamr Utsavam and Kandiyyur Padapattu. It is the first clear evidence of the province of Madathamkooor's existence. It was a landlocked state within Venad which was later merged with the rest of the country after Anizham Thirumal Marthanda Varma conquered Kayamkulam. There is no mention of any Madathamkooor King or People of Mavelikara in the records from 1218 that shows the contribution of people for construction of Kandiyyur temple, so it can be assumed Madathamkooor came to existence after this period.

According to K Shivashankaran Nair, Odanad was a highly developed kingdom with a long coastline extending between Ashtamudi and backwaters of Cochin. It was divided into many districts for the ease of business. Purakkad, however, continued to be a part of Thiruvattuvay province. Because of being facilitated with ports for trade. Karunagappally, Kayamkulam, Trikunnappuzha etc were important. Kayamkulam being the oldest of the four major provinces of Odanad. Karunagappally was ruled by Madathamkooor kings. According to him, the original centre of administration of Odanad Trikkandiyyur was shifted to Kandiyyoor because of the availability of ports. This continued until the first half of the 15th century.

By the end of the 14th-century Odanad was at the peak of its prosperity and the authorities of Madathamkooor became the Madampi's of the Odanad. The Odanaddu kings had two Palaces named Keerthipuram and Narayngamannur. According to *Unniyadi Charitham* which was written at the end of the 14th century shows that the kings lived in Narayngamannur palace at that time. It is said that the palace was near to the Kandiyyoor Mahadeva temple and the Keerthipuram Palace was on its east side.

In the 15th-century Odanad's capital shifted from Kandiyyur Mattom to Eruva. It was believed to be due to the separation of Chirvay and Parakam. About this time Krishnapuram palace was completed near Kayamkulam. Later the capital was shifted from Eruva to Kayamkulam and the Kingdom itself became known as Kayamkulam Kingdom.

It was during this period that the Venad Dynasty intensified with an imperial ambition to merge other Swaroopams with them. The history of continued war also indicates that Kayamkulam was a far superior kingdom both economically and in military strength. The adoption of the king of Designad by Kayankulam took place in the year 1731. This angered Marthandavarma who increased his resentment towards Kollam and Kayamkulam. Despite his invasion and conquest of Kollam, the rulers of the northern regions reinstated Designad's King under the leadership of kayamkulam. Kayamkulam was also a major strength to the joint army.

Kayankulam's King thus became a major enemy to Venad. They fought several battles with venad between 1731 and 1746. During this period the King of Marthandakoor King became a friend of Venad and willingly surrendered his kingdom to Venad and left.

When the king of Kollam died in 909 (1734 AD). The King of Kayamkulam claimed ownership over Kollam which further caused wars between both kingdoms. *Ramaiyyan* became the *dalava* during the same time. In the same year, a battle between them lasted 56 days and Marathur Kulangara became under the control of Venad. During 1741, Kayamkulam and Venad were in another fierce battle at *Lantha Fort*. 6000 soldiers of Kayamkulam led by *Eruva Achutha Varrier* defeated the Thiruvanthakur Sena and they retreated.

However with this retreat enmity grew more between the kingdoms. Venad troops blindsided the returning kayamkulam troops to Kollam. After initial resistance in 1742, the king of Kayamkulam reconciled with Venad and decided to become their vassal. The agreement was to pay rupees 1000 and an elephant as tax to them yearly. Kayamkulam broke this agreement and the king of Kayamkulam was assassinated in the final battle. Kayamkulam was permanently merged with the northern regions and became the part of the kingdom of Venad and became a powerful administration centre. The once powerful kingdom of Odanad later known as Kayankulam disappeared permanently.

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