

Some of the Place Names in Coorg: A Linguistic Analysis

Dr. Lalitha K. P.

Assistant Professor, Department of Kannada, BMS College for Women, Bengaluru, India

ABSTRACT

This document gives a thorough Linguistic Analysis of Place Names in Coorg (Kodagu), a district in Karnataka state, India. In this paper an attempt has been made to trace the changes that have occurred in the place names of this district due to various factors which include geographical location of the district, influence of the languages of the other states and districts sharing borders with it, perceptions of the Non-Kodava speakers like Kannadigas, British etc. The Analysis of the place names of Coorg has been described and a discussion about the changes with relevant examples has been presented.

Keywords: Coorg, Kodagu, Kodava Language, Dravidian Languages.

INTRODUCTION

Need is the source of every innovation. Language is the medium discovered by virtue of basic human need which separated us from the other species. A medium discovered to express our feelings naturally is a reflection of our cultural and social life and the geographical environment in which we live. The rise of villages is also a major phase of human social progress. The names of villages of places are the footprints of the human steps towards civilisation. These place names contain social, cultural, historical and geographical information about the human life. We can conclude that the language that was discovered as a basic tool for communication and the place names given based on the experiences are inter-related and therefore the linguistic analysis of place names is vital. The 'village' is to society, like what family is to an individual.

DESCRIPTION

The Analysis of Place Names in the District of Coorg is described as Follows

The place names of Coorg district have their own unique character in the background of language. Geographical boundaries of the Coorg district also play a vital role. The place names were influenced by Malayalam language from border of state of Kerala, Kannada from Hassan district and Hunsur taluk of Mysuru district and Tulu from Dakshina Kannada district. 'Kodava' language, being a member of the Dravidian language family has influences from other Dravidian languages as well. Also, major languages of the lineages of the rulers who ruled Coorg over time, English of the British and the languages of the tribes such as Yerava, Kuruba etc. have made their own influence on the place names in this district.

Generic List of Place Names of Coorg

The linguists have studied the place names by dividing them in to two groups, viz. 'specific' and 'generic'. Here both 'specific' and 'generic' are separate syllables. When these syllables join, the tones vary at some places.

The generic structures seen in the ending of the place names and their brief description are as follows:

Some Generics

- Ooru
- Keri
- Okkalu

**Address for correspondence*

lalithakrashi@gmail.com

- Pura
- Mangala
- Gaala
- Godu
- Koppa
- Kote
- Yeri
- Pete
- Kunda
- Guppe
- Maadu
- Nadu
- Kattu
- Badaga

Ooru

This is the original Dravidian term which indicates places of living. Naadu, Grama, Sanna, Pattana, Tode, Nedu.^[1]

According to Mr. M. Chidanandamurthy, there is proof^[2] from inscriptions that some names which end with ‘ooru’ were formerly the names ending with ‘Pura’.

Ooru: Place of living, an inhabited Place – a Village, a Town, a City.^[3]

Since this is a Dravidian term, this is used in Kodava language with a slight difference. For example:

Nalluru (Kannada) Naloor (Kodava)

Kirugooru (Kannada) - Kirugoor (Kodava)

Kanooru (Kannada) - Kanoor (Kodava)

Ooru is used in the ‘Kodava’ language with a change of u > y sound. We will see the merging of vowel sounds when ‘specific’ and ‘generic’ merge. For example, Hosa + ooru > Hosuru.

Keri

It is a word that indicates the places of living. Beedi, Angadibeedi.^[1]

The meanings for beedi given in the Tamil dictionary are – group of houses, village etc.^[4]

For example:

Nadikeri

Shettigeri

Parakatageri

Konanjageri

Aiyyangeri

Biligeri

Monnangeri

However, in Kodava language, ‘Keri’ means a geographical unit smaller than village. Villages were formed due to merging of several Keris. Example, Nalkeri.

The change from ‘ga’ sound to ‘ka’ sound results in ‘keri’ to ‘geri’.

This is also the place of living for the people who perform their secondary occupations. Example: Shettarakeri – Shettigeri

Nayinda (barber) keri – Nadikeri

Okkalu

Actually, ‘okka’, is a term in Kodava language that has become ‘okkalu’ in Kannada. In Kodava language ‘okka’ means family. For example, a place where forty okkas or families live. Each okka (okkalu) or families have their distinctive names. These are called ‘manepeda’ or ‘okka peda’ (In Kodava language, peda means ‘name’). Example: Kolera, Kallichanda etc. These are called Kolera okka, Kallichanda okka etc.

Pura

It is a word that indicates the place of living (Sanskrit word) – Town, house, city.^[3]

It is used widely in all parts of India In all Indian Languages or of all generic of Sanskrit. It is used to mean simply a village or Settlement. For example, a place or town where a community called ‘siddhas’ lived: SIDDAPURA.

Mangala

Though Mangala is similar in meaning to Sanskrit term called “Brahmanara Agrahara” in Kannada, the forms such as mangala, mangila, mangli are used in other places too, where Agraharas or Brahmins are not present.

The scholars associate these names to Chola connection. However, in the context of Tulu place names, this association doesn’t hold relevant. According to R. K. Manipal, the meaning of the term is non-Sanskrit in origin and similar to Prakrit, where the term denotes a place abundant in watersheds and a place fertile for sowing.^[5]

Mangala means “An agricultural track or a fertile country. Mangala is used as a Geographical nomenclature.”^[6]

“The term Mangala as it occurs in the place name Mangaluru is interpreted by some scholars to mean a fort or a protected place. In the case of place names where the term Magala is attached to a Dravidan suffix of prefix, the term may be taken to imply an agricultural tract or a fertile country.”^[7]

The above logic and comments of the scholars also apply to the place names in Kodagu district. The local languages belong to Dravidian language family. The influence of ‘Tulu’ language and culture were also prevalent on this taluk. Here also, chances of seeing the Brahmin Agraharas may be less. Similarly, the generic ‘mangala’ indicates presence of abundant watersheds and the appropriate place for sowing.

Gaala

This is also the short form of ‘mangala’.^[8]

According to the inscriptions, ‘mangalas’ are the places or villages donated to the Brahmins. This started from the reign of Cholas. It is possible that the village names that end with mangala may be the villages that were donated to Brahmins. There is a proof that Cholas ruled at some places of this taluk. For example, Kannamangala (Kandangala).

Godu

It is a word which indicates the geographical features. It means mountain, tower, hill etc.^[1]

Meaning: Hill, top of the hill.^[3]

It is used as ‘godu’ due to shift from ‘ka’ sound to ‘ga’ sound.

Kodu: It means a horn, a tusk, a bunch, a branch in Telugu. It is used in the sense of rivulet also. But in Kannada it signifies a point, a peak or top of a hill.^[9] For example, Karadigodu – The hilly area with dense woods where bears take refuge.

Koppa (Koppalu)

Koppalu - Small Village, a Hamlet.^[3]

Koppa(lu): Chikkahalli, kloor, community of huts.^[3]

Koppalu means small village or place. For example, Gonikoppalu is originally Govinakoppalu, a place for cows (Govu), market for cows. A small area reserved for the trade only, the features seen in the common villages were not seen in this area.

Kote

Nirmanavachi – compound built for the defense of the military, strong compound walls. ^[1]

Kote: Fort wall or the wall protecting the city or village (a fort, a wall round a town; a rampart).
Example: Chennaihana kote, the area ruled by the Palegar Channaih.

Yeri

It is term with origin in Malayalam. ‘Yeri’ means dense forest area. Example, ‘Puliyeri’ means the highlands where tigers take shelter or a dense forest appropriate for the living of the tiger.

Pete

It indicates the places of gathering of the folks, commercial centre or place of business. It is a place of selling the crops grown on the surrounding agrarian areas and purchasing the materials from the distant places.

Kunda: Parvata Soochi

‘Kittel’ has given the term ‘a pillar of bricks’, pillar made of bricks for the word ‘kunda’. The term ‘kunda’ in Kannada denotes hill, mound etc. In Kodava language, the term ‘Kunda’ clearly denotes ‘hill’. Kodava language has the influence of Malayalam and ‘Kund’ means hill. In Malayalam also, ‘kunda’ means hill. This point has been clarified by field data also. Example, Belagunda (Bilugunda).

Guppe

Kuppa, Kuppe, Guppe, Koppas have the meaning of Guttu, gumpu, guddu etc. ^[8] Example, ‘Rudraguppe’ means the place of the group of Rudra and his other devaganas (angels).

Maadu

High lands, rooftop. ^[10] It is a name of the place which is geographically taller than the outer areas. ‘Maadu’ also means roof top or sky. For any place, sky is the roof.

Nadu

These nadus were seen during the rule of local chieftains (Palegaras) and during the Hoysala rule. Example: Bottiyat nadu, Shreemangal nadu etc. These were the places under the ruler ship of some palegaras. Even ‘Manusmriti’ refers nadavas. It means nadus were present even during the time when this edict was written. In Tamil, ‘nat’ means village. The places where people lived were called nadus. In the Taluk here, the ‘nadus’ were formed with merging several ooru and keris.

Kattu: Kettu (Kodava)

Which means round, obstruct, restrict etc. ^[11] Example, ‘Pathkettu’ a place where pattukoota ghosts have been restricted and quarantined.

Baadaga

Though this term means small village, R. C. Hiremath takes the reference of Kittel dictionary and says that it could be padu>padi>badi>vadi (da). ^[11]

In support of the following view, there are terms in Tamil dictionary such as padi, padai which mean village, base of the military. – (V. Gopala Krishna Linguist for many languages)

In his work, the poet Pampa said, ‘Aidubadamam Avargeevudu’ (five villages should be given to them); according to the reference made by Sham. Bha. Joshi, the patch of these nadus is nothing but bada. Though, for Pampa, a warrior himself, it is possible that he may have referred to giving military bases as well.

In the context of the names of places in Coorg district, ‘Badaga’ means ‘military base’, since there are many villages with ‘badaga’ in this district. All of these were seen in the places which were in direct control of the kings, Paleyagars.

DISCUSSION

Linguistic Differences Occurred in Few Place Names in Coorg

Due to various reasons including the ease of use, frugality, pride of the natives about their culture, or the influence of Kannada which remained the language of trade, inappropriate pronunciation by the

British, we may witness with the current status of the place names of the district undergoing phonetic changes, assimilation, word elongation, apostrophe errors, unnecessary consonants and use mahapraana etc. This resulted in the changes such as constriction of meanings, extension of meanings, disintegration of meanings, improvement of meanings, changes in meanings and wrong meanings over the time; the current status of usage is the result of this metamorphosis.

The Names of the Places Which Have Undergone Phonetic Changes

The changes in phonic sounds are called phonetic changes. These phonetic changes occur due to human nature of frugality.

Changes in ‘ha’ > ‘a’ Phones

Hatturu>atturu

Therahalu>Teralu

Consonant ‘va’ > ‘ba’ Change

Veeranani>birunani

Veeranga>beeranga>beeruga

‘pa’ > ‘ha’ Change

We can see so many changes of consonant ‘pa’ to ‘ha’ during the time of Keshiraja, author of ‘Shabdamani Darpanam’. According to his own words –

“sanda ‘pa’ karakke ‘ha’ karam

dorekolgum vikalpadim samyogam

sandhisidode dushkaramadu

sundara ma deshiyinda membar vibhudar

vrutti - karnataka shabdada ‘pa’ karakke vikalpadim

ha karamakkum

dvitvadol piridum pa karakke ‘ha’ karamilla, idu deshiyol chelvu”. [12]

Palanda > halugunda

Pudukkeri > hudikeri

Peggala > heggala

Pathakett > halligattu

Pachchat > hachchinadu

Poldur > hodduru

‘ga’ > ‘ka’ Consonant Change

Gottigeri > kottageri

‘ta’ > ‘da’ Change

Kavati > Kavadi

Some Names where Mahapraanas (Aspirated) Changed in to Alpapraanas (Unaspirated)

Therahalu > Teralu

Hakattooru > Akatturu

Few Place Names Which Have Undergone Assimilation

When our voice organs are stressed, a tone can be corrupted in to another form or a tone can be shifted to closer tones which are similar in pronunciation. This is called assimilation.

Aranji > Arji

Kalatmad > kaltmad

Arakeri > Arkeri

Karamad > Karmad

Chennangi guddadooru > Chennangi gudluru

Kukkaruru > Kukluru

Nala-keri > Nalkeri

Mareyooru > Marur

Biliyooru > Bilooru

Bengeyooru > Benguru

Moorudhare > Maldare

Moorukallu > Moorkallu

Mekeriyooru > Mekooru

Mahakoota > Makutta

Yedeyooru > Yadooru

Bolumad > Bol-mad

Hadiyooru > Hadooru > Hatooru

Few Place Names Which Have Undergone Changes in Meaning

If a name of the place has been changed in the usage and records in to a different form to give meaning which is entirely different from its origin, it means the place name has undergone meaning change.

The terms, which have had their origins in the Malayalam and Kodava languages, have lost their meaning when they have been translated in to Kannada and retained with different meaning in both the records and usage. Also, the influence of the British English and wrong pronunciation has also resulted in the changes in the meanings of the place names. The meanings of the names of a few places have been constricted due to loss of original meaning, meaning has been lowered, extended, bettered at some places as observed during the place name studies.

Examples –

- **Nayinda kerri > Nadikeri**

The origin of the name was in the barbers called Nayindas. However, over the time, has changed to ‘Nadikeri’, which means ‘Central Hamlet’.

- **Kadanoorandur > Kadanur**

The place name was in use, in association with the close aide of the devaganas called ‘Kadanoora’. However, today’s form of ‘Kadanoor’ means ‘Place of Battle’.

- **Bollooru > Bellooru**

In Malayalam language, ‘Bolla’ means ‘Water’. However, today, ‘Belloor’ is used as ‘White Village’.

- **Kakotu Achayyana parambu > Katotu Parambu**

The place is named after a person called Kakotu Achahyya. The present form, Kakotu Parambu has lost the name of the person.

- **Chennangi guddadooru > Chennangi gudluru**

The earlier name Chennangi Guddadooru was indicative of the village which is closer to the hill. Today it is called as ‘Gudlu’, which simply means ‘hut’.

- **Nellooru > Nallooru**

In the Kodava language, ‘Nel’ means ‘paddy’. However, ‘Nalla’ gives different meaning, which means ‘good’.

- **Karadi gudde > Karadi godu**

In Kodava language, 'gudde' means a 'collection of something in huge volume'. However, it is used as 'Godu', which means 'Highland'.

- **Mailadi > Maithadi**

In Kodava language, 'Mile' means 'Peacock'. The term was derived from Malayalam to Kodava language. However, the place name 'Maithadi' is meaningless.

- **Pathkett > Haligattu**

Originally, the place name 'Pat-koota' was a symbolic 'Place for Ghosts'. The Kannada form of 'Haligattu' means 'A Group of Villages' is a severe distortion of the original meaning.

- **Konda kere keru > Kondangeri**

A name of a village which has a hamlet or village containing Konda kere ('pool where someone was murdered') is now turned to 'Kondangeri' – 'a Hamlet of fire' (Konda means fire).

- **Kollepete > Palibetta**

The original name from 'Kolle' refers to 'Hunting'. However the place name was changed to 'Palibetta' by the British.

- **Govinakoppalu > Gonikoppalu**

The place name referred to 'cows' (Govu means cow). But today it's changed to 'Goni', which means 'Sack Bag'.

- **Ponnappanapete > Ponnampete**

The name referred to a person called Ponnappa. Now it is changed to 'Pon' which means 'Gold'.

- **Poldur > hodduru**

In the Kodava language, 'Pold' means 'Festival'. 'Hodduru' is a corrupted Kannada form which resulted in losing the original meaning of 'a Village of Festivals'.

- **Bolmad > Bollimad**

In Kodava language, 'Bol' means 'Empty'. However, the corrupted form, bolli means 'Silver'.

CONCLUSION

The above illustrations show you how the place names were changed in phonetics and meanings in both usage and records to corrupted forms due to eased use in pronunciation and perceptual errors of the native Kannada and English speakers.

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AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY



Dr. Lalitha K. P. was born in Kodagu district of Karnataka, India. She is a Gold Medallist in Kannada Literature, Master of Arts – Post Graduation Course from University of Mysuru. She has also been awarded Doctorate (PhD) in Folklore from the same University. Presently, she is serving as an Assistant Professor in BMS College for Women, Bengaluru.