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What Did Arthur Cotton Do in Thanjavur?

“To put full stop to the blabbing on Kallaṇai”

Dr. S.A.V. Elanchezian
Associate Professor,
Department of Architecture,
Thiagarajar College of Engineering, Madurai, India.

Abstract: There are multiple Perspective casted on the Grand Anicut Kallaṇai by the local and western scholars. Particularly assigning dates to it is, oscillating still. That is because the early scholars struggled and also fixed their minds to assign the early history of Tamils to never go beyond 3rd century BCE. Hence, the biased statements were effectuated on all. There is great bedlam on Kallaṇai even, which could be the specific structural part that built by Karikālvaḷavan I, due to the dam is now in complex nature. Day by day the interpretations now becoming as blabbing. No one do this from in situ to know the rendered structures were periodically built on then needs. The title of this Research Paper is a readymade question and too a sub title that found in the Biography of Sir Arthur Cotton written by his daughter Lady Dope. It is a responsible to any scholars to clarify about when a chao for become questionably a fact.

Index Terms - Karikālvaḷavan, Young Cauvery, Karikālachoḷapērāru, Uḷḷār, Divider Dam, Arthur Cotton.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Cholas were the rulers long back and contemporaries to the Pharaohs of Egypt. However, who could be the originator of them is still being a myth. However, the medieval literature and copper plates mentions some mythical Chola Kings and one of them brought Cauvery to the plains, the river roared early between hills. Addition to this, Kākaṇṭhan was the name of the Chola King who downed the river to his country thus, his name named to Pūmpukhar early. Hence, Kākaṇṭhi was the then name of Pūmpukhar. Therefore, it is clear that the Pūmpukhar was an age-old port city even before to Karikālvaḷavan I. Why because, he was praised by a verse of Purananuru that belongs to Mid Tamil Sangam and it is sung by Veṅṅikuyathiyār a contemporary poetess of Karikāl. The particular stanza of the song follows:

Nalīyiru munnīr nāvāy oṭṭi
vaḷithoḷil āṇḍa uravōn maruka[1]

The Karikālvaḷavan here praised as whose predecessors were the genius, they found the exact monsoonal wind to sail easily to save times. Therefore, it is proven that the Pūmpukhar was an earliest port city from there the ships went and came for trade.

The continuous progress made by in his successors in all aspects now the turn has come to the Great Karikāl Choḷan I. The dam of Karikal was not built in 2nd century CE, which wrongly said and is followed somewhat. On this, my Research book will explain sharply.[2] He sought a permanent solution to tackle the excess flood of Cauvery. But the project of the same could be a huge task never before done. However, he planned with amazing plan to serve beyond the time estimated and expected. He, desired to make the agriculture systematically with disciplinal regulations under his government. Since, he decided to build a dam across the river and bifurcated the same by the dam itself. The Kallaṇai also known as ‘Grand Anaicut’ is situated near the village of Kilikūdu in Trichy district.

II. Divider Dam or Barrage Dam

Kollidam, the river takes itself much of water directly to the sea. But the diverted water at the head point of Thiruvarangam (Sri Rangam) directed towards a young river that being called also as Karikāla Chōḷḷappēraṟu. On this Young Cauvery a dam was constructed near the village of Kilikūdu by Karikālvaḷavan I, to divide the river further with one more. Hence, the secondary river called as Veṅṅāru. The name could be a corrupted word of Veṅṅi āru. Probably to commemorate his huge war victory over the enemies that held at Veṅṅiparṅathalai. The Veṅṅiparṅathalai was a war site of Chola country now known as Kōyilveṅṅi. Therefore, it is the exact dam built by the Great Chola Monarch Karikālvaḷavan I, to split the river in two formats hence purposively designed with angled position. In origin the Kallaṅai has no any shutters to regulate the water dislodging at its vents. However, the uḷḷār that is the connecting watery way between Cauvery and Kollidam been always open then that is without any dam with regulatory shutters as of now seen. Or perhaps, it has to be a low height barrage to prevent the high wastage as a speed breaker.

III. The dam of excess water dislodging

The Dam over Uḷḷār which wrongly called now as Kallaṅai of Karikālvaḷavan even by most senior scholars. For example, Prof. Dr. G. Deivanayagam who indicates the uḷḷār dam as 'Kallaṅai' both by words and drawing.[3] In fact, this is the dam also built in hard granite stones by Arthur Cotton thus the confusion continues. (See the picture below) In fact, its structure is so simple when comparing to ancient Kallaṅai. Built particularly to provide shutters to regulate the excess water. Because, he was the man who built lower anicut near Kumbakonam or renovated the early structure to irrigate the flanking fertile lands of Kollidam. Due to this reason, the excess water also restricted for agriculture for the same. Since, this dam serves as a reservoir for Cauvery, Kollidam and Veṅṅār and too a regulator for Kollidam itself. Kind of this embedded barrage has been called as bank rather than dam, hence, the whole early literature, medieval copper plates and inscriptions says that Karikālvaḷavan raised the bank of Cauvery.[4] Apart, the lengthy embankment of both sides, up to the estuary have been valued highly rather than construction of a dam particularly in one place. The man power used highly to raise the banks than dam built. It is said, more than 12000 captivated peoples of Sinhalese were used to this project.[5]



(The photo has been taken by the Author himself on 08-10-2023)

IV. The Curvy structure of Cotton's Dam

The dam of excess water dislodging is oriented in south east to North West axis. But, before the construction of this dam, in its middle area there was a temple been for Āñjanēyar. The cult being introduced or popularized during the reign of Marathas. From this we came to know, there was no any structure as dam existed before, over the uḷḷār indeed. Therefore, the small shrine been on the bank of Cauvery just. Here bank means a temporal heaped bund or naturally formed ridge.

Things as so, it is said and being believed that the bridged dam over the uḷḷār was built by Karikalvalavan I. Hence, the Cauvery and Veṅṅār regulators were added in British Period accordingly. Also, there are data repeatedly chants as the canal of Grand anicut too dug by Arthur Cotton. Arisilāru now Arasalāru is being a distributary to the Karikālachōḷapērāru that is young Cauvery right from Sangam age.[6] However, the Kudamuruṭṭy a distributary river is being now as first one. It was but, channelized later in Medieval period. Therefore, the Arisilāru had been channelized very early even from the period of Karikālvalavan I, why because, the estuary of the same situated at Kāraikāl. Here couple of questions will be chanced like, what if? and what could be the relation supposed? To answer these and according to my new research ‘Kallaṇai-Thañthiram- Karikālachōḷapērāru’ (to be published) the port town Kāraikāl is nothing but was a name on behalf of Karikāl. Kāraikāl is a corrupted name of Karikāl according to my research. For example, the Port City of ‘Alexandria’ of Egypt hold the name of its founder Alexander the Great. The Port city of ‘Caesarea’ of Palestine is too holding the name of its patron Emperor Caesar Augustus.[7] And the contemporary port of Dammam in Saudi Arabia is also known as King Abdul Aziz Port.[8]

Therefore, Cotton perfectly planned as what have to be done first, second and third even fourth. Therefore, the first work he executed was a dam between 1836 to 1838 with sluices across the Kollidam river near the western tip of the Thiruvarangam island now known as Mukkombu.[9] But he didn’t build on Cauvery at Mukkombu is noteworthy. It was built in 1845 by another engineer.[10]

Then, he came to work at Kallaṇai site where he revised the Kallaṇai which means, heightened its height considerably and equipped with shutters too. Further, he continued to build a shuttered dam across the inner connecting river that is uḷḷār with slight curves. Not only its purpose to let the excess water in to Kollidam but in the summer seasons it is serving as reservoir shutters closed as mentioned early. Again, he concentrated on Lower Anaicut to renovate it which situated at Anikkarai near Kumbakonam.[11]

V. The structural difference

It is very easy to find which is new and which is the old structures among the Kallaṇai complex. But almost all the scholars have been confused to find the exact dam of Karikālvalavan. According to my research; I have classified them in three categories with the aid of a table placed below.

Sl. No:	Name of the Dams	Year	Built by
1	Kallaṇai	Between 11 th to 6 th century BCE [12], [13]	Karikālvalavan I the Great
2	Sand / Silt - discharging Dam	11 th Century CE	Vīra Rajēndran alias Karikāl Choḷan [14]
3	Excess water dislodging dam over Uḷḷār	19 th Century	Sir. Arthur Cotton [15]

The reason for assigning the dates to the three dams are:

1. The dam converted as regulators for Cauvery and Veṅṅār was previously a dividing dam without shutters but with technical vent-bays. The vent bays have designed as the two low and inward stood pillar-wall that bracketed with two more heightened pillar-walls. Such these peculiar rendering with small and big pillars and too their edges are breadthless facets are rare in fact. (See the picture below) Kind of these features are especially for shutterless dams to break the speed of the upper stream and let them slowly in lower stream. To reduce the speed of aggressive current and to set a triangular delta for high cultivation thus the Veṅṅār had been bifurcated with double purpose. So, the dam across the young Cauvery and Veṅṅār was undoubtedly built by the great Karikāl I.



(This photo has been taken by the Author himself on 08-10-2023)

2. There was problem by the sedimented sands which made slow of water discharging. The sands were removed manually in very early days. However, to remove the sands there was introduced a small dam with five vents now seems between the two main dams and behind to the Karikāl Vaḷavan Mani mandapam or Memorial Hall. This is the second structure added in medieval period by Vīra Rājēndra Chōḷan (See the Picture below) equipped with shutters indeed.



(This photo has been taken by the Author himself on 08-10-2023)

3. The third annexed structure was the excess water dislodging cum reservoir with 30 shuttered vents purposively built for critical situations because of the continuous famine made threaten to survive. It has no any small and bigger pillar-wall settings because, its original design was shuttered dam, to pass excess water or to store for further use.

A single verse used to denote the two Kings and two of their works.

Thokka sakanīṟ ṛoḷāyirathu thoṇṇūṟṟin
 Mikka karikāl vayavēnthan – pakkam
 Alaikkum punarponni yāṟṟaṇaiyai yiṭṭān
 Malaikkum koḍaikkarathān vaṅthu [16]

Thokka kaliyin roḷāyirathu thonṇūṛṛin
 Mikka karikāl veṅthuthithu– thakkaṇṇi
 Yārukarai kaṇḍānpin āthonḍai vēṅthukachi
 Yūrusenṛān vēḷāḷa rothu [17]

this song had been penned by Auvai, a Sangam Poetess pointed out by Ulaganatha Pillai which has written on the book of Thondai mandala sathagam. [18]

Thokka kaliyin thoḷāyirathi thonṇūril
 Mikka karikāl veṅthuthithu– pakkam
 Alakkuḷi thiraipponni yārkarai kaṇḍān
 Malaikku nērānapuya man[19]

The year format that mentioned with Kali which is an age-old year system whilst the Sakha was a later one. Hence, the embankment of Cauvery by the Karikālvaḷavan I that mentioned in Kali year format was an old verse supposed by Auvaiyār I. But the same verse had been used as a template, in medieval period, according to our point of view, because, the both work on Cauvery were the same and apart, the name of the executors of the projects were also same. The only difference was the period between. Thus, the medieval period embankment and newly introduced sand disposing dam or even the dam over uḷḷār were mentioned in the template-verse by replacing the year format as Sakha.

Therefore, according to the year mentioned in the format of Kali year the work held on 11th Century BCE. As the same according to the year mentioned in Sakha format the year could be 1069CE which was a ruling year of Vīra Rājēndra Choḷan alias Karikāl Choḷan.[20]

VI. Conclusion

From this research we can assign the works done by the British Engineer Sir, Arthur Cotton did in Thanjavur were:

1. Built sluice dam across Kollidam at Mukkombu
2. Fixed shutters to the Cauvery – Vennar Dam and increased its height and paved a way as bridge over the dam to cross the river to go the northern bank side.
3. Perhaps, built excess water discharge cum reservoir dam over uḷḷār which the inner river connects the both Cauvery and Kollidam rivers.
4. Built lower anicut in Aṇaikkaṛai near Kumbakonam on Kollidam River. And made the medieval channels alive.
5. Renovated and partially re dug the Canal of Kallaṇai.

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