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Padikaval System in Tamilnadu -A Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to highlight the Padikaval system in Tamil Nadu. Any account of the system of judicial administration will not be complete without a description of the organization of the police. But information about the police system in the early periods is not easily available. It appears that generally police arrangements were made by the villagers themselves in their respective areas. Each village had a complement of watchmen for the protection of person and property. This system was known as padikaval and the watchmen as kavalkaran or Padikappar in the Tamil area. They were remunerated for their services by assignments of land and the proceeds of a special cess (padikaval kali) earmarked for the purpose. An inscription of 1221 registers that the padikappar were provided with four velis of land for house-sites by the big assembly since the allowances they had been receiving were not sufficient to maintain them. The land was to be inalienable under any circumstance except in case of treason.

KEYWORDS Padikaval system, padikappar,

Introduction:

Any account of the system of judicial administration will not be complete without a description of the organization of the police. But information about the police system in the early periods is not easily available. It appears that generally police arrangements were made by the villagers themselves in their respective areas. Each village had a complement of watchmen for the protection of person and property. This system was known as padikaval and the watchmen as kavalkaran or Padikappar in the Tamil area. They were remunerated for their services by assignments of land and the proceeds of a special cess (padikaval kali) earmarked for the purpose. An inscription of 1221 registers that the padikappar were provided with four velis of land for house-sites by the big assembly since the allowances they had been receiving were not sufficient to maintain them. The land was to be inalienable under any circumstance except in case of treason.[1]

Sometimes the townships granted shares in the produce which all the landholders had to pay on their lands for maintaining the village police.[2] An interesting inscription of the time of Parakramapandya gives the following rates of Padikaval; I kalam of paddy on every ma of wet land; 1/16 panam on every areca palm; 5 panams on every ma of land producing sugarcane, Kolundu, ginger, gingelly and plamtains; 2 panams a year for every house (vassal).[3] This system of village police continued even inlater times. When a few Kallavelaikkarar sought refuge in an assembly composed of certain specified groups of people in Jambukesvaram and Srirangam they were assigned the duty of guarding their lands and lives from injury in return for which they were permitted to collect from each family of the eighteen groups (Pandinen-bhumiSamayattar) one panam annually and one ring on each marriage occasion.[4]

Again four influential men of Tirukkalakkudi in the Ramanathapuram district granted to the watchmen of three villages the right of kaval which consisted of one bundle of hay and kuruni of paddy on each ma of their holdings to each group of these watchmen separately and of all other customary services (Karyakrama) due from their tenants.[5] During the days of Sadasiva Raya of Vijayanagar one LakkiNayudu was appointed to guard the suryaKomalla Pass in Cuddapah and granted a charter in which all the fourteen villages over which he had jurisdiction.[6]

The padikaval rights were so much coveted by the people that they received them as reward for some service that they rendered. According to an . inscription at Tirukkalakkudi, mentioned above, two persons, SaluvaNayaka and AppaPillai found a suburban village ruined, the tenants having dispersed and new tenants being unwilling to come and settle.

So they sent for one SakkadevarVettuvakkattan alias Sayapadaitangi and his brother Sirukuttuvan and also for the two agents of TammayyaNayaka and declared that as they had got tenants for the village and resettled it, the first two would be given the right of padikaval over the particular village surrounding the temple(tirumalai) receiving the customary donations and fees after allowing common rights and cultivating and paying the usual dues to the temple such as kattumukkai, misam, asupodu, makkalperu etc. They were also granted certain rights and obligations.[7] The padikaval rights were usually hereditary. At times a body of villagers enjoyed the right of policing and sold it to others. For instance, the residents of Annualvasal, sold the padikaval right in the village for 150 sakkarampanams.

In some places, a person enjoyed padikaval rights over a wider area like a nadu. He engaged a complement of watchmen called talaiyaris whom he paid ,in kind and in cash besides granting land free of rent and held himself responsible for the safety of property within his jurisdiction. Such persons holding padikavalkani over a large are were referred to as enjoying nadukaval, perumbadikaval,[9] merpadikaval[10] and arasukaval. The arasukavalgars of Turaiyur, Ariyalur and Udaiyarpalayam were the poligars of those places. Some of them, probably on account of their large income from the residents of the area under their jurisdiction, were able to make gifts of a share of their income to temples for worship.[11]

The Bellary District Gazetteer states that the kavalagars were remunerated in the following manner: "The Kavalgars were highly paid officials and granted payments as follows: (i) a village rent free or at low quit rent; (ii) a certain portion of rent-free land in every village under their jurisidiction; (iii) an allowance in grain upon each plough or upon the quantity of seed sown; (iv) an allowance in money paid by husbandmen

on ploughs and by tradesmen on houses, shops and looms; (v) a small duty on goods passing through the country; (vi) a similar duty levied on fairs and weekly markets, on shroffs paid in money and other dealers(Paid in kind.

The system obtained in the Deccan also. The Sindi inscription of the time of Someswara I gives interesting information about the police organization in the local areas, and says, "within the Township in cases where anything is lost, the aratalana has to make it good.[13] With the decline of the rural assemblies and organisations in the Vijayanagar period the Ayagar system came into prominence. The Ayagars were a body of village functionaries who were in charge of the administration of rural areas. One of them was the talaiyari who was the watchman of the village and of the crops.

An inscription at Tiruvamattur in the thirteenth year of the Chola Kulottunga III accords a nilaimaitittu by Kovan alias RajarajaNilagangaraiyan stating that, in return for the enjoyment of certain lands he would help only RajarajaSambuvarayar, JananathaMuvendaraiyar and UlagayyaKondaKadavarayar and none other. Again, RajarajadevanPopparappinar alias Kulottunga Sola Vanakovaraiyar and KiliyurMalaiyaman of Tirukkovalur made a compact among themselves according to which the territory lying to the south of the river Alvinaiyaru must go to the former and that to the north of it to the latter as also a defensive alliance in general coupled with the stipulation that they were to act together in the service of the king.[16] Such instances may be multiplied in the Chola period.

In the Vijayanagar period also, similar compacts are made among private people. In 1419-20 for instance, a compact signed between NarasingadvaUdaiyar of Perambur and his followers on the one hand and the residents of Kilaikkurici on the other. The terms of the agreement were as follows; "whereas there existed great enmity between us from the time of SemarNarasingadeva up top the time of Adaikkalam kata Narasingadeva, hundreds of men on both sides have been killed and imprisoned; in the time of the last mentioned chief we met together and settled that henceforward we ought not to act country to the interests of a each other on account of the longexisting enmity.".

The compact was arrived at before the residents of Tenmalai, Kiranur, Puduvayal and mudusorkkudi.[17] Such agreements were entered into elsewhere also. In S.1412 (wrong) Kilaka, one Devaradiya alias KundaHeggade and another Kinnikka-Heggade agreed in their presence of Good Mahalinga at Yelluru to live amicably forever without molesting each other's lands.[18] A few years later in S.1421 (expired) Siddhartti, one SankaradiHundaHeggade and another TirumalaArasaMaddaHeggade made a compact of mutual fidelity and agreed to render faithful service at all times against the enemies attacking YeluruandRapu. Such local compacts and arrangements served a good purpose in as much as they ensured peace in the local areas and gave relief to the central government in the matter.Besides the village police maintained by the people themselves in the rural areas, there were in the urban areas, and particularly at the capital, police units maintained by the government and held responsible for the preservation of peace and order and the detection of crimes within their jurisdiction.

This system was well organized in the Vijayanagar Empire. Referring to the functions of the government policemen of the capital, AbdurRazzak says; "The business of these men was to acquaint themselves with all the events and accidents that happen within the seven walls and to recover everything they are fined,"[19] Speaking about the punishment inflicted on them for the theft that took place within their ward he says; "Certain slaves which my companion had brought took to flight, and when the circumstances were brought to the prefect, he ordered the watchmen of that quarter, where the poorest people dwelt to produce them or pay the penalty; which last they did on ascertaining the amounts,"[20] Nuniz describes the system of police at the capital almost in the same way.

He ways that if anyone complained to the king that he was robbed in such and such a province and in such and such a road, the King sent immediately for the captain of that Province, even though he be at court and the Captain might be seized and his property taken if he did not catch the thief. He adds that in the same way the Chief Bailiff was obliged to give an account of the robberies in the capital and in consequence very few thefts took place.[21] The Bailiff and the Prefect were apparently different names of the same officer, 'who may be called the Police Commissioner Troops were at times stationed in some strategic places to provide for their safety and security from foreign aggression and internal rebellion. We hear, for instance, of sevagars who were apparently in charge of fortified areas.[24] Such cantonments were in a few places under the control of military bodies variously called kaikkolasenapatigalperumpadaiyar, Valangaimahasenai etc. They were apparently composed of some representatives ofregiments of the army. During periods of trouble, like cattle raids, some bold men fought against the raiders and even laid down their lives. Such valiant service for the local areas was commemorated by the people by the grant of kalnadu (herostones).

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