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ORIGIN OF THE PALAIYAKOTTAI ZAMINDARI

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Palaiyakottai is a pretty big village in the kankeyam taluka, near Tarapuram in the Koyamputtur district. It is the fief of the local zamindar, called Nallacennai Carckarai Mantratiyar. A copper plate in possession of the zamindar traces the origin of the zamindari to the time of virupaksa Utaiyar II (AD 1465-85) of the sangama dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire. His predecessors, Devaraya and Mallikarjuna, are noted in the record. The present paper examines the importance of the grant and the origin of the palaiyakkottai zamindari. Palaiyakottai (Palaiya “old”, Kottai “fort”) means the “Old Fort” as opposed to Putukkottai (palaiya “new”, kottai “fort” [1]. The copper plate under investigation was issued during the time of Virupaksa in appreciation of the meritorious deed rendered by the forerunner of the palaiyakottai family. The record was originally copied by col. Mackenzie and included in the Manuscripts prepared by him.

The most interesting part of the prasasti “grant” [2] is its historical prefix, meykirtti, which presents a magniloquent account of the birudas “titles” of the Emperor. Such historical prefixes were common since the time of the colas who record their rodomontade - deeds in the meykirtti [3]. The record begins with the conventional invocation “Svasti Sri” and gives the following titles of the Emperor:

- Mahamandalesvara “Ruler of the Great Landmass”
- Kantanatukontu “Possessed all lands that he saw”
- Kontanatu kututtan “gave all lands that he conquered” [4]
- Dustaigraha “Destroyer of enemies”
- Sistaparipalana “Protector of friends”
- Emmandalamum yilamum ilankapurium kontaruliya “He took all lands [5], Ilam and Ilankai and was the protector”
- Racatiracapamecuvanan “King and king of kings, the Eternal Lord”
- Recamarttanda “Sun among the Kings”
- Recavallabha “Skilfull among Kings”
- Recapungava “a falcon among the kings”
- Recasekhara “Garland among the kings”
- Recanavanidhi “Nine treasure among the kings”
- Narayana “Nine treasure among the kings”
- Narayana “Narayana Himself”....
- Paracuraman “parasurama Himself”
- Acuvapati “Master of horses”

Kancapati “Master of elephants”

Narapati “Master of man” and so on.

It is recorded that Virupaksa II overcame the following ruling powers: Anga vanga, Kalinga, Kerala, Maratha, Marava, Tulukkar, Kavutar (Gauda), Telugar, Tuluvar, again Tulukkar, Saurashtra, again, Kosala, Arya..., Cera, Cola, Pandya and so on. He is saptasamudratipati “Lord of the seven Seas” [6]

It is important to note that the record to the Muslims as Tulukkan (Turk) and notes their rendition and the removal of the taxes (in Tamil mokaran - tavirttan) imposed by them.

There is an interesting account of the origin of the palaiyakottai zamindari. Anterior to its origin the region around Redhapuram in Konkumandalam was in Charge of Nanjana Utaiyar who was appointed by Virupaksa as mahamandalesvara of konkumandalam. One konkarayan of Tennilai captured Mandapuram, falling within the jurisdiction of Nanjana Utaiyar, and captured the cattle by killing persons who came to protect the animals. The matter was reported to the overseer. He made a public declaration to the effect that one who brings the head of konkarayan is to be presented with 24 nadas. It was a known fact that Alkanuttamakkanmintan of karaiyur was the fit person to do the job. Therefore, nanjanautaiyar granted the 24 with kaniyatce (power to rule the fief) with the title of pattakkarar (holder of the copper plate grant) to alakanuttamakkanmintan even before he could to bring the head of konkarayan. On receipt of the grant, he vested vijayanagarar (may be courtesy call to call on the emperor) and brought with him 200 soldiers to assist him in the operation against konkarayan. They undertook an assault on tennilai and made holes in the fort to make an entry. The wall collapsed while the holes were dug by killing the persons engaged in the operation. Unhindered the soldiers completed the holes, entered the fort and killed konkarayan. They collected the head of konkarayan and three marakkals of tail (mangalyasutra) [7] of the wives of konkarayan. Three among the wives wanted to commit sati, which the victors permitted. The victors also brought an image of ganapati as booty. The cart that carried the image would not move on reaching the west bank of mattaru (river of pearls). The image was consecrated at that site. The victors proceeded to the palace of nanjanautaiyar and presented the head of konkarayan and the boot obtained from his place. Uttamakkanmintan was honored and sent back with a state procession. Since then the family came to possess the fief of palayakkottai.

However, the record does not give details of origin of the name palaiyakottai and nallacenai Carkkaraimanratiyar. The original name of the place was karaiyur. The set of two names were perhaps later in origin. The family continued to hold the fief down to the British times. Presently, they are very influential in the region.

The present article is a brief account of the doctoral thesis of the candidate who is working on the pattayakkarar of palaiyakottai.

Notes and References

1. V. Latha, Cave Temples of the Pandya Country: Art and Ritual (with references to the Putukkottai Region, Delhi 2005, Chap. 1.
2. South Indian Temple Inscriptions, Vol. III, Pt. I, No. 1223 (D .2949.7).
3. Raju Kalidos, History and Culture of the Tamils, Dindigul 1976, p. 129. Rajaraja's meykkiritti begins with tirumakal pola. Rajendra's meykkirtti beginning with tiruumanni valara and records his conquests in South Asia as far as Kadaram.
4. It is possibly a reference to the regional governors.
5. Ilam and Ilankai are the same. It is not clear why the record notes both the names. Perhaps the northern part of the island, now called Ilam by the Freedom fighting Tigers, was known as Ilam.
6. It is not clear why Maratha is noted twice. The two references to Tulukkar may inferentially be identified with two of five Deccan Sultans (viz., Adil Shah, Nizam Shah, Qutb Shah, Imam Shah and Barid Shad).
7. Emblem of married women, it is a golden badge in various shapes-for various castes, tied to a yellow thread and fitted to the neck of women.