GROWTH OF PALAYAM SYSTEM IN SOUTHERN TAMILNADU

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ABSTRCT

The Tamil Country Palayams did not enter politics suddenly or without cause, as is common in other regions of southern India. They evolved through time as a consequence of political forces interacting with past events. Until a new order was put in place, they continued and even flourished under the old conditions, but then they faded and vanished. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a proliferation of Palayams across the country. Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramnad, Tanjore, Tiruchirappalli, Dindigul, and Coimbatore were the locations where the majority of them were found. There were both large and little ones, such as Pudukottai, Sivagangai, and Ramnad. Among the lesser ones were Kolvarpatti and Mannarkottai. Regional resources dictated the political status of the many Palayakkarars. In the western regions of Tirunelveli and Ramnad, most of the chieftains were Maravan. In the eastern regions of Madurai, Dindigul, Coimbatore, and Pudukottai, though, chieftains were either Tottiyans or Kalian, who spoke Tamil. They were fluent in either Telugu or Tamil, or both. Roughly seventy-two Palayakkarars (including those from Tirunelveli) were said to have served in the Madurai region during the early Nayak dynasty. During the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the Palayakkarars—who were the owners of Palayams—were pivotal figures in Tamil Country's history. Although the Palayam system began during the Nayak era, it wasn't until the decline of Nayak power in the 17th and 18th centuries that the regions inside it became autonomous from the rest of the local political environment.

Keywords: Palayams, Politics, Nayak Power
DOI Number: 10.48047/nq.2022.20.9.nq44856 **NeuroQuantology 2022;20(9):7356-7359**

1. INTRODUCTION

After the thirteenth century, the development and governance of Tamil Country were severely impeded by the instability caused by the region's history of invasions by Northern and European kings, recurrent rebellions, and famines. They broke the peace inside the region. The government of the country did nothing to restore law and order in the region. Because of this, several national leaders were able to ascend to prominence. The Vijayanagar dynasty

solidified its grip on Tamil Country around the turn of the sixteenth century. The southern Tamil provinces were administered by Viswanatha Nayak, who was appointed governor during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya, a prominent ruler of the Vijayanagar Empire. Madurai was made capital during his tenure. Viswanatha Nayak created a number of smaller divisions, or Palayams, for administrative ease.

1.1 Etymological meaning of Palayam and Palayakkarar

In this context, "Palayam" is a camp headed by Palayakkarar. Caldwell suggests that "poligar" means "holder of a camp," which is followed by "holder of a barony on military tenure." The English, however, have borrowed the word "Poligar" from one of the Indian languages known as "Palegadu" or "Palegara," which means the same thing in Tamil as "Palayakkarar." Kara sounds similar to gara in Canarese (Tamil) and gadu in Telugu. The English name "Pollarn," meaning a Palayakkarar's holding, seems to have originated from the Telugu Palem-u, not the Tamil Palayam.

The term "palayam" can refer to a variety of things within the Tamil culture. Soldiers, a camp, a force, an establishment of a chieftain, an army camp, etc. are all signified by the word plalayam. In Tamil, a group of places chosen for a Palaiyakkaran is called Palayappattu. A king's army whose men served as kavalkarans, also known as Palaiyakkarans, were warriors. Each of the Palayam, which are modern-day taluks, was headed by a monarch. A fixed number of villages were allotted to a Palayakkarar, who held the Palayam. As part of his responsibilities, he had to fight alongside his lord and pay tribute to him every year. In southern India, particularly in the states of Karnataka and Tamil, who inhabit primarily hilly and forested areas, a small chieftain is described as a "palayakkarar" by Wilson. They were obligated to render service and homage to the supreme state.

2. ORIGIN OF PALAYAM SYSTEM

To appease these disparate groups, Viswanatha Nayak and his minister Ariyanatha devised the Palayam system, as recounted by Nelson. The most powerful members of each class would be rewarded materially and politically, and their children would be pledged to their service. According to popular belief, Viswanatha built the Palayam system as a pragmatic solution to his issues. The southern region was able to retain its claim to specific portions of land after he appeased his opponents. Even before Viswanatha became king, there were Palayakkarars in the southern kingdom; therefore the system wasn't completely novel. The Palayam, a political order comparable to the Nayak system but with lower prestige, rose to power during the Nayak period.

Many attribute the establishment of the Palayam system to Viswanatha Nayak, king of Madurai from 1529 until 1564. Nonetheless, the method existed before Viswanatha Nayak, as is evident from earlier publications. After its introduction by Kulothunga Chola I, the kaval system took shape during the next century. Kulothunga Chola I fortified Kottaru into an army camp after the invasion of the Southern Tamil Country. The Kottaru was making his way from Chola Mandalam to Pandya Mandalam. "Koitai Kaval" means "guarding the fort" in its original form. One may say this is the first step toward establishing the Palayam system.

The revered Jatavarman The kingdom of Pandya Nadu, ruled by Vikiramapandya from 1401 until 1422, included the areas of Ramnad and Tirunelveli and was capitalised on Korkai. Arikesari Parakirama Pandya, his son, was king from 1422 till 1463. He won back Madurai from the Vijayanagar Empire in a fierce struggle. In order to safeguard the realm, he bolstered his army following his triumph. He divided Pandiya Nadu into five sections, or bastions or kothalams, and built thirty-two forts. There were a lot of camps and troops built. The soldiers were given specific training. The term "Palayams" was later used to describe these compositions. According to Sathiyanatha Iyer, when Viswanatha Nayak took over as governor of Madurai, he was worried about a possible civil war with the Pandya. Hence, he constructed 72 bastions and divided the Pandiya Mandalam into 72 Palayams, assigning a

Palaiyakkaran to oversee each of them. Nelson speculated that Viswanatha may have really bestowed complete authority on the preexisting Palayams. The institution was founded during Kulothunga Chola I's reign, continued by Pandya, and prospered and extended during Viswanatha's. The former was supported and encouraged by Ariyanatha Mudali.

3. ORGANIZATION OF THE PALAYAMS

Once the country was under peaceful rule, Viswanatha and Ariyanatha organized it all for effective administration. It was necessary to take into account local chieftains who had been Pandya vassals in the past, as well as northern emigrants who had escaped the Muhamadan danger or were seeking "pastures new." Incorporating all of these factions into a governing structure that would foster national wealth and peace was essential. There was widespread chaos, and the country was mostly forested, which posed serious threats to the people's well-being. A sad situation prevailed in agriculture. Under these circumstances, the federal government would be severely limited in its ability to achieve its goals unless it granted considerable discretion and autonomy to the various regional and municipal governments. The newcomers' inflated feeling of self-importance might be used for more constructive endeavors if only they were acknowledged. Furthermore, the nation needs a solid defense to allow for coordinated action in risky situations. The so-called Palayam system was presumably instituted by Viswanatha and Ariyanatha to achieve these political, economic, and military goals.There were 72 bastions in the Madurai fort, and each one was now formally commanded by a different chief who was bound to keep his post for his own and his descendants' benefit no matter what. He was also obligated to pay a specified annual tribute and supply and maintain a specific number of soldiers for the Governor's armies. He was the one who kept the peace for the governor over a certain parcel of territory. He was granted an area with a particular number of villages, according to his status and the favor of Viswanatha and Ariyanatha, as well as the title of Palayakkarar, in exchange for his pledge that he would give these and other services. Along with this, the Governor's Act was made even more solemn and important by presenting each grantee with rich gifts and conferring upon them titles and privileges amidst much pomp and ceremony.

4. ASSESSMENT ON THE PALAYAM SYSTEM

Finding the precise date of the system's implementation and the total number of Palayams created is somewhat challenging. Only an assumption can be drawn from the provided evidence. According to Nelson, the system was in place during Krishna Devaraya's reign. According to Caldwell, the Palayakkarars can be traced back to Viswanatha, who sought to ensure the stability of the dynasty he aspired to found by aligning its interests with those of the country's top men and making his rule popular among all social classes while the southern districts were being settled. The challenge, however, seemed insurmountable. He had brought to Madura large numbers of his own caste's dependents and devotees, all of whom had demonstrated great loyalty and obedience and had performed an outstanding job for him.According to the Mrityunjeya Chronicles, Palayakkarar was the owner of one of many Palayams that made up the kingdom. Having some kind of command and control over the specified area was crucial. The members of Viswanatha's caste and his dependents who had shown they to be trustworthy, submissive, and hardworking accompanied him on his journey to Madurai. Not only that, but he also had to think about the senior chieftains who had been vassals of the Pandyas and the Telugu and Kannada people who had emigrated from their homelands because of the Mohammedan mindset or because they were seeking better opportunities elsewhere. But how many Palayams Viswanatha had originally founded and whether or not his successors had added to that number remained a mystery.

5. CONCLUSION

The Nayaks, building on the preexisting kaval system, formed the military houses known as Palayams in the sixteenth

century. The Palayakkarars were the ones who held the Palayams. Among their responsibilities was the upkeep of law and order within their realm and the provision of military aid to the king. They were granted the authority to form a government, construct a fort, and maintain an army. Half of the money was taken in by the people, and a third went to the Nayak monarchs. Palayakkarar used the remaining money for his own spending and to keep their army running. Instead of dealing with the central authority, they dealt directly with the individuals they lived with in the community. As a result, the Palayakkarars were better able to operate autonomously after the decline of the Nayak in the early 18th century. Consequently, the Palayakkarars were unwilling to submit to the Nawab's authority and instead proclaimed their independence. Despite Nawab's hopes that the Company would assist in subduing the Palayakkarar rebels, the Company demonstrated its superiority. A military foundation supported the organization of the Palayams. For three centuries, the Palayakkarar and Palayam systems were in use. When the Palayakkarars defied central authority and garnered backing from those who were opposed to the Nawab and the Company's administration, they were defeated and the Palayam system was abolished. Pulithevan, Palayakkarar of Nerkattanseval, and Kattabomman, Palayakkarar of Panjalankurichi are two examples that need special note.

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