

Pattom Lands in Travancore – A Study

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ABSTRACT:

Travancore lies at the southern end of the Indian Peninsula between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. Most of the people of Travancore were agriculturists or ryots. It seems to suppose that the *Jenmis* took for themselves all land nearest to their dwellings and that the distant mountainous and jungle tracts were ownerless till the states grew up and acquired proprietary rights over them. The ruling chiefs must have been claimed these tracts as their own along with others acquired by them and granted them to the ryots for cultivation. This article “PATTOM LANDS IN TRAVANCORE - A STUDY” highlights the main characteristic feature of the *pattom* tenure.

INTRODUCTION:

In Travancore there were two classes of lands held by cultivators. They were *jenmivaka* and *pattomvaka*. Here the *jenmivaka* lands belonged to private landlords while the Government was considered the sole proprietor of the *Pattamvaka* lands. The *Pattamvaka* lands were of different kinds such as *Sanchaya pattom*, *Durghasu pattom*, *Pandaravaga Payattu pattom*, *Vettazhivu pattom*, *Adiyara pattom*, *Karikkur pattom*, *Pandaravaga Viruthi pattom*, *Pandaravagai Putuval pattom*, *Nadupattom*, *Viruthi Nerpati pattom*, *Vilakka pattom*, *Miteduppu pattom*, *Toal pattom*, *Kudipullitanatu pattom*, *Nerotti- Nerpattom* and *Verum pattom*.¹ The main characteristic feature of the *pattom* tenure was the liability of the holding to pay the assessment. These lands were till 1040 M.E.(1865 A.D)the absolute property of the *sirkar*, and the holders had till then no proprietary rights or even transferable rights of occupancy. The holders were in such cases were mere tenants - at-will and had no permanent interest in the properties concerned.²

The *durghasu pattom* comprised of *nirthal*³ lands leased out at a lower *pattom* for a specified or unspecified period. They were liable to higher assessment at the discretion of the *sikar*. Also leases were generally for ten years or lesser periods after which they were renewed. Simultaneously, if the old lessee was unwilling to take it up once again the lands were auctioned and given on lease to the highest bidder.⁴ The *pandaravaga payattu pattom* included such lands as were *sirkar* waste and unassessed land with no taxable trees there on which the ryots wished to bring under cultivation. Then they were rendered liable to a *pattom* fixed by the *sirkar*. This tenure was so called from the assessment being fixed according to the capacity of the ground for sowing black gram or green gram in it. When the lands began to yield, the tenure was changed and brought under *Putuval* or *sirkar pattom* tenure bearing *vriksha pattom* or free tax till the next settlement.⁵

The *vettazhivu pattom* appears common to *sirkar* as well as to *jenmom*⁶ lands, and the *sirkar* in its demand made a deduction equal to the interest on the amount spent for bringing the waste under cultivation, while in the case of *jenmom* lands, the *jenmi* can redeem them on payment of the amount spent on improvements. The cultivation of Malancherikals on hilly tracts known as *cherikal*⁷ in the taluks of Changanachery, Tiruvalla, Minachil and Kottayam came under *adiyara pattom*. Accordingly once in twelve years the brush wood was removed and the ground cleared and sown with paddy or other grains.

This cultivation was called *ozhavu* the second and the third *kala* and *kumpappu*, the first two cultivations were generally paddy while the third had sugarcane, tapioca or some other minor produce. The tax levied for years of cultivation for *sirkar* land was 2/10 of the produce and the *paranel*⁸ and *kottai* for every *cherikal*. While in the *jenmitracts*, the *sirkar* was entitled to only 1/10. Also, assessments were levied based on the measurements of cultivated areas made by the subordinate revenue officials, 2 fanam⁹ for every *parai*¹⁰ of *sirkar* land. It was just half in the case of *jenmom* lands. But in the *Adiyara pattom* tenures, the *jenmi* having received on *Adukuvatu* or payment at the rate of 2 *chuckrams*¹¹ per *parai* of land and got only 3/20th of the produce as *varam*¹² in addition to *paranell* in *kottai*.¹³ However no *varam* was paid for *kumpappu* cultivation.

The waste land interrupted by channel beds and valleys over thrown with shrubs leased out for cultivation was added in *karikkur pottom*. In these cases 1/4 of the assessment was deducted for the cultivator's trouble and the remaining^{3/4} forms the Government demand. So in this case the tenant acquired full rights over the land. The *pandaravaga viruthi pattom* was the same as *sirkar pattom* and differed only in that it was once a *viruthi* for some service which was no longer required and hence discontinued as such and brought under the *pattom* tenure. The *pandaravagai putuval pattom* included the *nirthal* and cultivation. Tree-tax alone was levied for portions of ground containing taxable trees while *payattupattom* or ground rent alone was levied on the grounds containing no such trees.¹⁴

In *nadupattom* there included such temporary leases to third persons of escheated properties pending inquiries into the rights of claimants if any. The *viruthi nerpati pattom* was a tenure in which one-half the *pattom* was allowed for service and the rest paid to Government. Moreover *vilakku pattom* includes such lands as were assessed to *sirkar* as *pattom* lands, but were formerly given for lighting some temples which have now been assumed by the *sirkar*. The *toal pattom* was another tenure under which *sirkar* forests were leased out for the supply of *toal* or leaf manure for paddy fields. Also the *kudippullitanatu pattom* was another tenure peculiar to the Shertallai taluk and was so called from the settlement made on the assurance of the ryots themselves after the land was made over by the Cochin state in the absence of any accounts.¹⁵

Further by *nerotti-nerpattom* the *jenmi* received and amount from *kudiyar* that would secure to him an interest which would be equal to the *pattom* of the property transferred. It was redeemed, and seldom done as the money received has to be returned which was the full value of the property. The *verum pattom* was a lease without any debt or money consideration entering into the transaction. It may be oral or written, but the latter method was adopted when the term was for more than a year, in which such case it must be stamped and registered.¹⁶ Under on this tenure, the tenant took possession of the property and paid an annual rent to the landlord as agreed. He was bound to quit the land on the expiry of the term.

In the frontier taluk of Shenkottai a few tenures of this kind were known by various other name such as *japti*, *ayan zufti* and *ayan* included in the *leyan* (frontier). The first was so called because those lands were once attached by the British as theirs, later they were given back subsequently as the frontier disputes ended in favour of Travancore. The second class comprised of lands ceded by the British in due of Malayankulam *Desam* lands given up by Travancore, while the third comprised of accretions to Travancore from the outlying British District of Tirunelveli on a demarcation of the boundary line when disputed arose. As a consequence of such origin, these three classes of lands retained their British character and were treated as such in the state accounts.¹⁷ Similarly, there were some special tenures of this kind in current South Travancore. These were chiefly *Srikar Devaswam pattom*, *Ooranma Devaswam pattom*, *Narasingamattam pattom*, *Matam Nandavana pattom*, *Thirumukha pattom* and *Irayili pattom*. The *srikar* was considered the sole *jenmi*, *merassiholder* or the land-lord of this lands.¹⁸

CONCLUSION:

The peculiarity of these tenures was that in none of these was the full assessment demanded on behalf of the *srikar* except in the first in which case the full assessment was taken by the *srikar* as the *Devaswam* expenses were defrayed by the state since the assumption of the institution by the *sirkar*. Under the other tenures a portion of the assessment was allowed for the purpose noted by the name of tenure and the rest went to the *sirkar*¹⁹. The names merely indicate the original source of tenure which became converted in *pattom* in later times. Besides garden and *punja* lands, wet lands alone held under *pattom* tenure, came to about 2,00,000 acres. The ryots in possession of these lands hold them of the *srikar*, just as the tenants of an ordinary *jenmi* or *merassidar* hold lands of him.

REFERENCES

1. Samuel Mateer, *The Land of Charity*, London, 1871, p.13.
2. Travancore Land Revenue Manual, Vol.IV, PP.379-381.
3. Nirthal-Unoccupied land or lands abandoned by the tenants as unfit for cultivation are taken up by the Srikar.
4. Nagam Aiya, V., *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol.III, Trivandrum, 1999, p.329.
5. Huzur Central Vernacular Records, Huzur Sadhanam No. 7358 dated 31st Midhunam 1056 M.E.
6. Jenmam or Jenmom- The right of proprietorship which the owner has over his property. It literally means 'birth-right'.
7. Cherkals-Lands on the summit and slopes of hills that are cleared of trees and shrubs for purposes of ordinary cultivation.
8. Paranel -An extra cess levied on all Sirkar.
9. Fanam or Panam- A small silver coin of the value of 4 chuckrams now current in Travancore. This was first minted in 1035 M.E. (1860 AD)
10. Parai- Fees for measuring, a due from the tenant to the Jenmi.
11. Chuckrams- The earliest and the smallest silver coin that was current in Travancore, now substituted by copper coins of the same denomination.
12. Varam- The rights or dues of the Jenmi, according to which the cultivator pays him one-fourth of the produce without making any deduction for seeds or labour.
13. Kottai- A grain measure equivalent to 70 Madras measures.
14. Huzur Central Vernacular Records, Circular No. 3200, dated 9th Vrischigam 1036 M.E.
15. Sundararaja Aiyengar, *Land Tenures of Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1893.pp.82.
16. Sir Madava Rao, T., *Administration Report* for 1040 M.E. ,PP.8-18.
17. Nagam Aiya, A., *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol.III, Trivandrum, 1906.
18. Padmanabha Menon, K.P.,*History of Kerala*, VOL.II New Delhi, 1983. pp.116.