Kin Groups, Agrarian Slavery and Land Ownership in Eighteenth Century Central Kerala: Deciphering New Kōleluttu Palm Leaf Documents

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Abstract

Besides deciphering nine new Kōleluttu records on palm leaves, this paper identifies kin groups in the ownership pattern of agrarian land in pre-modern Kerala. The agrarian production process of the early 18th century involved agrarian slavery, as seen in the documents, and is viewed as a continuation from the early medieval period onwards. It is argued that ownership of land by kin groups and the agrarian production by them continued side by side with agrarian slavery till the pre-modern period. **Keywords:** kinship; agrarian slavery; pre-modern agrarian production.

Introduction

The subjoined nine *kōleluttu* palm leaves belong to the early 18th century and originally come from the Alathur Taluk of Palakkad district. Two documents within this collection are written on stamped palm leaves supplied by the erstwhile Princely State of Cochin and bear the seal of the Cochin State on it. At present, nothing more is known about the origin and sequential owners or possession of these palm leaves. The collection has more than a hundred single palm leaves belonging to the last half of nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century, all of which register land transactions in Malayalam script, from which I have selected the subjoined nine kōleluttu records, considering its script and historical importance.

These documents prove that the assumption, generally held by historians and epigraphists, that $k\bar{o}le\underline{l}uttu$ was employed and kept alive by the Christians and Muslims for a long time, while the Malayalam script called $\bar{a}rya$ $e\underline{l}uttu$ (a derivative of Grantha) was adopted by upper caste Hindus,(Narayanan, 2013:380) is false, and can no longer be held valid. Both the scripts were used in Kerala until the beginning of second half of the nineteenth century; $k\bar{o}le\underline{l}uttu$ as the script reserved for documents, while $\bar{a}rya$ $e\underline{l}uttu$ was for Sanskrit and Malayalam literary endeavours. Besides

these scripts, Muslims and Syrian Christians employed *Arabi-Malayalam* (Arabic script to write Malayalam language) and the *Garshoni-Malayalam* (Syriac script to write Malayalam language) respectively in their records till the modern period. It was during the colonial period that *ārya eluttu* was chosen as the standard script to print Malayalam and consequently it became the sole official script to write and print Malayalam language. ³

Early-Modern Land Rights: Towards Capitalist Investment in Land

All the nine leaves, the first one starting from Kollam Era 881 (CE 1706), enunciate attippēru ⁴ (sale deed) kind of land transaction. The proliferation of documents concerning land transaction during the early modern period in Kerala has been noted by scholars, and many such documents regarding the same have been published. ⁵ In the context of the early modern land records, lease documents (kāṇam, pāṭṭam, kulikkāṇam etc.) are common, ⁶ but aṭṭippērǔ (absolute ownership) is sporadic and far in between. The abundance of money transactions through these documents during the early modern period is regarded as an impact of the mercantile capitalist engagements along the Malabar Coast, which affected the economy of Malabar since the advent of the Europeans .⁷ By the nineteenth century, as noted above, the profusion of land transactions and the revenue that could be extracted from the same were utilized by the colonial government, and it was insisted upon that stamped palm leaf should be used to record the transactions. ⁸

Owners, Vendors and Neighbours: Kin Groups as Land Holders

Each transaction recorded in the subjoined palm leaves is done by a single person, most probably the senior most of the kin group (kāranavar), along with his kinsmen (tampimārum), which points to the collective nature of the ownership of land by a kin group (taravāt) than to personal ownership. Similarly, as seen in the case of the several kinds of lease deeds in other collections, which are already published, the transactions were being done between two kin groups rather than between two persons. ⁹All the records point to the fact that the ownership and other rights of land were assigned in the collective ownership of kin groups until the pre-modern period, personal right over the landed property being a much later development, which became the general practice only in the early twentieth century as far as Kerala is concerned. Scholars have noted the commencement of private property as emerging out of the influence of mercantile capitalism on the Kerala economy in the form of church property as early as the 16th century. ¹⁰ Christians have been practicing the division of ancestral property, as demonstrated by the canons of the Synod

of Udayamperur in 1599; but as far as the various 'Hindus' were concerned, it was mostly in the early twentieth century that the entire kin group's property came to be divided, first among its branches (*tāvali*), and then eventually among their individual members by executing partition deeds. ¹¹ It is to be noted that not only the transacting kin groups, but also the neighbours, the witnesses and the persons who write the document also are denoted as belonging to a kin group. For e.g. Ampātṭ Rāman Māñci, whereof the first name is of the kin group and the second, of the person concerned. Suffice it to say that the development of private property in Kerala is a less studied subject and needs careful research.

Except the last leaf of the present collection, which is undated, all the leaves are arranged in chronological order. The last leaf carries a scribal mistake. In line number 9, instead of the numeral 'five' it is written 'fifty' twice, and instead of 'three,' it is written 'thirty.'

ഓല 1

ഇത മറുപാടടമ

പുറം 1

- 1 കൊലല2 800,8,,10,1 2ത കരകകിടക വിയാഴ2 ചിങ്ങ ഞായററില കിഴപാലെ യൂര നാടട ചിററൂര 2ന
- 2 നതതിരുനനെഴുതിയ അടടിപപെററൊലകകരണമാവത അമപാടട രാമനമാ ഞചി കൈയയാല പെറുമഅരതത

പുറം 2

- 3 2 വാങങി കകൊണടാന കൊടകരെകകു2രന കണടന കൊണടാന കൊണട പരിചാവത ഇപ പെറു2രതതതതിന
- 4 കാരിയ2 തനറെ തൊ22 ഒടപപെറെനില മാട2പിളളിപപടടി കണടതതിന മെല പപെടട തെകകെപ
- 5 പെരുവഴികക കിഴപപടട കെഴകക വാരികകൊടടവ ഉഴുനന നെലതതിനു പ ടിഞഞാടട പടിഞഞാ
- 6 റെ കുനനിന കെഴകകൊടട ഇതിനകതത ഉളള നെല2 എണപതു പറെകകു2 അതിലെ മെലപപലവു2 കിഴപ
- 7 പലവു2 തനനടിയാന വലലിചചാതതനമാരില വെളളണണനെയു2 അവനറെ മകകള ഇരുവരെയു2 കുടടിക
- 8 കണണനെയു2 അവനറെ 2കകള നാലരെയു2 ന2പിയെയു2 അവനറെ 2ക കള ഇരുവരെയു2 ആകകകൂടി അ
- 9 ഞചു2 ചെറിയ കിടാങങള ആറു2 ആകപപതിനൊനന എണണ2 വലലിയാളി നെയു2 നെല2 എണപതു പറെ
- 10 കകുമങകൂടി അടടിപപെറായി നീരാടടികകൊടുതതാന കൊടകരെകകുമരന കണടന ഇമമാരകകമെ

പുറം 1

11 ഇപപെറുമരതതവുമ കൊടുതത ഇചചൊനന നെലമ ഒടപെറ നിലമാടമപ

- ി≈ിപപടടികകണടതതിന മെലപപടട
- 12 തെകകെപപെരുവഴികക വടകകൊടട കെഴകക വാരികകൊടടവരുഴുനന നെലസ്ഥിനന പടിഞ്ഞാടട പടിഞ്ഞാറകകുനനിനു
- 13 കെഴ്ടകൊടട ഇരുകരെകകാടുങ്ങകരെയു2 തനനടിയാന വലലിചചാതതന2മാ രില വെളളയനെയു2. അവനറെ മകകളെയു2
- 14 കുടടികകണണനെയു2 അവനറെ 2കകളെയു2 ന2പിയെയു2 അവനറെ 2ക കളെയു2 ആകകകൂടി അഞചു2 കിടാങള ആ
- 15 റു2 ആകപപതിനൊനനെണണ2 വലലിചചാതതനമാരെയു2 നെല2 80 പറ വിതതിനു നെലവു2 കൂടി അടടിപപെറാ
- 16 യി നീരടടിചചുകൊണടന അമപാടട രാമന മാഞചിയുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇപപ രിചിതറിയുമ താക്ഷി ഇളമാള
- 17 ചചെനന രാമനുമഞ്ചെനനായികകോടട ചാതതരാമനുമ അറിയ കൈയെ ഴുതിനെന ഇപപടികക മെലെടുതത മെനൊന കയയെഴുതത

2

ഓല 2

പുറം 1

- 1 കൊലല2 800,80,2 2ത ചിങ്ങ വിയാഴം തനു ഞായററില കിഴപാലെയുര ന ാടട ചിററൂര മനനത്തിരുനനെഴു
- 2 തിയ അടടിപപെററൊലകകരണമാവത എഴുവതത ചാതതന മലെയന കൈ കയാല പെറുമ അരതതതമ വാങികകൊണടാന മാടമ

പുറം 2

- 3 പിളളികകൊരു ചെനനു2 ത2പി2ാരു2 ഇപപെറു2 അരതതതതിനു കാ രിയയതിന കൊടകരെനായരൊട നെടിയ ഉപ
- 4 യ2 ഒടപെറ അയിഞഞ്ഞൂററു നാഴി വിതതിനു നെലതതിന അതിരായത അമപാടടെ നെലതതിന കിഴചപടട,,,,,,,,,
- 5 യതതരുടെ നെലതതിനനു മെലപപടട കെഴകകെടുതതകണടതതിനു പടിഞാ ടട പടിഞ്ഞാറെ പെരുവഴികക കെഴകകൊടട
- 6 ഇതിനകതത അനപതു പറ വിതതിനനു നെലവു2യതിന നെടിയ വലലിചാ തതന നമപിടെ മകന വെളളണനെയു2 അതിനമെ
- 7 ലമൊതല കരണവുമ ഇചചൊലലിയ അതിരിനകസ്ഥുള്ള കാടുമങകരയുമ മെലപപലവുമ കിഴ്യ Пലവുമ
- 8 2 കൂടി അടടിപപെറായി നീര മുതലായി നീരാടടികകൊടുതതാന മാടമപിളളി കകൊരുചെനനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇമമാറ
- 9 കകമെ ഇപപെറു2 അരതതവു2 കൊടുതത ഇചചൊനന നെല2 ഒടപെറ അനപതു പറ വിതതിനു നെലവു2 വെളളണനെനന
- 10 വലലിചചാതതനെയു2 അതിനറെ മൊതലകകരണവു2 ഇചചൊലലിയ അതി രിനകതതുളള മെല പപലവുങകിഴപപലവു
- 11 ങ കൂടി അടടിപപെറായി നീര മുതലായിനനീരാടടിചചുകൊണടാന എഴ ുവതത ചാതതന മലയ നുനതമപിമാരുമ ഇമമാ

പ2റം 1

- 12 റകകമെ ഇതറിയുനതാക്ഷി എളമാളചചെനനരാമനുമ ചെനനായികൊടട ചാതതരാമനമ ് പൊടിവ്
- 13 തെയയന കൈയെഴുതത.

ഓല 3

- (കൊണ്ണി സയ്യത്ഥായ്യ മുദ്ര ഓല) നണ്ച്ര് 1349 തഹസി≥ നാരയണ≥ ക \neq ര (ഒ Π) പു \cap 0 1
- 1 കൊലല2 900 10 72ത കറകകിട വിയാഴ്വമോടവ ഞയററില കിഴപാലയൂര ന ാടട ചിററുമനനത്തിരുനനെഴു
- 2 തിയ അടടി പപെററൊലകരണമാവത അമപാടട രമനമാഞചി കൈയാല പെ റുമറതത കൊണടാന വരികകൊ

3

പുറം 2

- 3 ss രാമനുമ തമപിമാരുമ കൊണടറ കൊണടയിപപെറുമറതതിനുമ കാരിയമ തനറെ തൊ Ω മഒടെ പെറെ അമപ
- 4 ടടെ കണടസ്ഥിനന മെലെത അയയമപാടടിലെ ക≠സ്ഥിനന താഴത്തെ കണ ടമ പസ്ഥു പറെകകുമ അതിലടുതത കരെയു മെലപപലവുമ
- 5 ങകിഴപപലവു2 കൂടി നീറ മുതലായി നീറടടിപപെറായി നീറാടടികകൊടുത താന വരികകൊടട രാമനുന തമപിമാരു2 യി
- 6. 22ാറകകമെ യിപെപറു2 അറതതവു2 കൊടുതത യിലലിയനില2 വൊടെപെ റെ അ2പാടടെ ക≠ തതിനന മെലെത അയയമാടടിലെ
- 7 കണടസ്ഥിനന താഴതതെകണട2 10 പറകകു2 അതിനടുതത കരയു2 2െലപ പലവുങ കിഴപപലവു2 2ങകൂടി നീര 2ുതലായി നീരട
- 8 ടി പെറായി നീരാടടിചചെഴുതിചചയെഴുതിയ കൊണടാനു അമമാടട മാഞചി യുന തമപിമാരുമ യിമമാറ

പുറം 1

- 9 കകമെ യിപപരിചിതറിയുന താക്ഷി വെളമുളയതത രാമാനു ചെനനായിക കൊടട ചെ
- 10 നന രാമനുമറിയ കൈയെഴുതിനെന കൊററികകൊടട വീടടി കൊരപപ കൈയെഴുതത

ഓല 4

- 1 കൊലലമ ് 572ത ് പൊടിവ് ് ഋമ കുമപഞായ‰ില പാലയൂര നാടട തതതമ ങങലതത മനനതത ഇരുനന
- 2 എഴുതിയ അടടിപപെററൊല കരുണമാവിത അമപാടട രാമന ഇടടുണണി രാമന കയയാല പെറുമ അറതതമ

പുറം 2

- 3 വാങ്ങി കകൊണടാര ്രപാടിവ്് റുത്തിഅകരത്തലിരികകു2 പരതെചിക ളില തൊപപറു പൊടിവ്
- 4 22യാരു2 ത2പി2ാരു2 കൊണടാര കൊണട ഇപെറു2 അറതതതനിനു2 കാ രിയ2 തനറെ തൊ22 ഒടചെറെ
- 5 ച2പതതില നിലതതിനന കിഴ്യപപടട തങ്ങടെ പാറെകകലെ കണടതതിന മെലപപടട കണട2 രണടു2 കൂടി നൂററി
- 6 രുപതുനാഴി വിതതിന കണടവു2 ഇരുകരെ പറ2പു2 മെല പലവു2 കിഴപല വു2 കൂടി നീര മുതലാ
- 7 യി നീരടടിപപെറായി നിരാടടികകൊടുതതാര ചിപപി അമമയാരുമ തമപിമാ രുമ ഇമമാറകക

- 8 മെ പെറുമ അറതതവുമ കൊടുതത ഇചൊനന നിലമ ഒടചെറെയില ചമപത തിലെ നിലതതിന കിഴ്ച പടട
- 9 പാറെകകലെ കണടതതിനന മെലപടട കണട2 രണടു2 കൂടി 12 പറ വിത തിനന കണടവു2 ഇരുകരെ പറ2
- 10 പുമ മെലപലവുമ ,, പൊടിവ് ,, തലായി നീരടടി പപെറായി നീരടടിചചുകൊ 4

പുറം 1

- 11 ണടാര അമപാടട രാമന ഇടടുണണി രാമനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇപരിച ഇതറിയ , പൊടിവ് ,
- 12 അരങകന ചാതതനു2 മാണികകതത കണടന തെയയനു2 അറിയ എഴു പ്ര ാടിവ് പപ കൈ എഴുതത

ഓല 5

പുറം 1

- 1 കൊലലമ 900 ്ട 10 ്9 മത കുമപ വിയാഴമ എടവഞായററില കിഴപാലയൂര ന ാടട ചീററു
- 2 ര മനനതതിരുനനെഴുതിയ അടടിപപെററൊലെ കകരണമാവത അമപാടട രാമെന ഇടടി ഉണണി രാ

പുറം 2

- 3 മെന കൈയാല പെറു2 അറതത2 വാങങി കൊണടന പൊറെയതത രാമന ുമനതമപിമാരു2 കൊണടര
- 4 കൊണടനന പെറു2 അറതതതതിനു2ങകാരിയ2 ത≥റെ തൊ22 ഒടചെറ അണണാകൊണതത വടകക തങങ
- 5 ടെ നിലതതിന തെകകൊടട തെകക തങ്ങടെ നിലതതിനന വടകകൊടട കെഴ്ചകെ തിരിതതിയിലലതതെ നില
- 6 തതിനന പടിഞഞാടട പടിഞഞാറെ പറമപ വെ≈ചചരിവിന കെഴ്കൊടട ഇതിനകതത 12 പറ വി
- 7 തതിന കണടവുമ വാരവുമ കാരാഴ്യണമയുമ മെലപലവുമ കീഴ്യപലവുമ ഇന ാലതിരിനകതതുള്ള
- 8 തെപപെരപപെടടതുമ നീര മുതലായി നീരടടിപപെറായി നീരാടടി കകൊടുത താന പൊറയതത രാമനുമനത
- 9 മപിമാരുമ ഇമമാറകകമെ ഇപപെറുമ അറതതവുമ കൊടുതതിചചൊനന ന ിലമ വൊടചെറഅണണാകകൊണ

പുറം 3

- 10 തത തങ്ങടെ നിലതതിനന മെലപപടട തങ്ങടെ നിലതതിന കിഴപപെടട ഇലലതതെ നിലതതി നന പ
- 11 ടിഞ്ഞാടട പടിഞ്ഞാറെ പറ2പ വെളളചചരിവിന കെഴ്രകകൊടട ഇതിനനക തത പനതറണടുപറ വിതതിനനു കണടവു
- 12 2 വാരവു2 കാരാഴ്യണമയു2 മെലപപലവു2 കിഴ്യപപലവു2 ഇനാലതിരിനകത തുളളതെപപെരപപ ടടതു2 നീ
- 13 ര മുതലായി നീരടടിപപെറായി നീരടടിചചു കൊണടാന അമപാടട രാമെന ഇടടിണണി രാമനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇപപ
- 14 രിചിതറിയു2 താക്ഷി ഇളമാളെ ചാതതെന രാമനു2 ചെനനായകകൊടട തെയയന രാമനു2 അറിയ തചചൊടട കണടു കൈയെഴുതത

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ഓല 6

പുറം 1

- 1 കൊലല2 900,6,10,7 2ത കനനി വിയാഴ2 മീനഞായററില പാലയൂരനാടട തത തമങങലതത
- 2 മനനതതിരുനന എഴുതിയ അടടിപപെററൊലകകരുണമാവത മാരാതത ചാതതു കൈയാല പൊ

പുറം 2

- 3 നനു2 പെറു2 അറതതവു2 വാങങി കകൊ≠ടാര പുതതിലലതത കൊനന ചചന കെലനു2 ത2
- 4 പിമാരുമ കൊണടാര കൊണടയികകൊണട പൊനനുമ പെറുമ അറതതതതി നുങകാരിയമ തനറെ
- 5 തൊ222ണി കെടടികകൊളു2പ കൊപാലചാമിപപടടരുടെ നിലതതിനന മെല പപൊടട
- 6 40 പറ വിതതിന കണടവു2 അതു2മെല മൂനനു കര നീറ ചായിവുകണടുളള പറമപുകളു2
- 7 മെലപപലവു2 കിഴപപലവു2ങകൂടി നീരായി നീര മുതലായി നീര അടടിപപെ റായി
- 8 നീരടടികകൊടുതതാര പുതതിലലതത കൊനനചചന കെലനു തമപിമാരുമ യിമമാ
- 9 റകകമെ യിചചൊനന പൊനനുമ പെറുമറതതവുങകൊടുതത യിചചൊനന നിലമ മണികെ
- 10 ടടികകൊളുമപ കൊപാലചാമിപപടടരുടെ നിലതതിനന മെലപപൊടട നാല പപത

പുറം 1

- 11 പറ വിതതിനന കണടവുമ മൂനനു കര നീര ചായിവവ കണടുളള പറമപുക ളുമ മെലപപലവുങകീ
- 12 ഴപപലവുങകൂടി നീരായി നീരമുതലായി നീരഅടടിപപെറായി നീര അടടി ചചു കൊണടാന മാരാതത
- 13 ചാതതുവുന തമപിമാരുമ യിപപരിചിത അറിയുനതാക്ഷി കീഴ്യാനി അരങകന ചാ
- 14 തതനു2 മാണികകതത കണടന തെയയനു2 അറെയ മരുതുര ചാമി കൈയ യെഴുതത

ഓല 7

കൊണ്ണി മുദ്ര നം.1350 തഹസി≥ നാരായണ≥ ക≠ര (ഒ∏്)

പുറം 1

- 1 കൊലല2 900,7,10,9 മാണട തുലാവിയാഴ2 മകര ഞായററില പാലയൂര നാടട തതതമങങലത്ത മനനതി
- 2 രുനന എഴുതിയ അടടിപപെററൊലകകരുണമാവിത അമപാടട മാഞചി ഇടടി പപങ്ങന കൈയാല പൊ

പുറം 2

3 നനുമ പെറുമ അറതതവുമ വാങങികകൊണടാന മാരാതത ചങകരനുമ

തമപിമാരുമ കൊണടാറ കൊ

4 ണട ഇകകൊണടാ പെറു2 അറതതതതിനു2 കാരിയ2 തനറെ തൊ22. 2ണി കെടടികൊളു2പ കൊ പാലചാ

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- 5 മിപപടടരുടെ നിലതതിനന മെലപപൊടട 40 പറ വിതതിനു കണടവുമ അതു മമെല മൂറുകര നീറ
- 6 ചചായവവ കണടുളള പറപുകളുമ മെലപപലവുമ കീഴ്യപപലവുമ കൂടി നീരായ നീര മുതലായ
- 7 നീരടടിപപെറായ നീരടടടികകൊടുതതാന മാരാതത ചങകരനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇമമാറകക
- 8 മെ യിചചൊനന പൊനനു2 പെറു2 അറതതവു2 കൊടുതത ഇചചൊനനാ നില2 2ണികെടടിക
- 9 കൊളുമപ കൊപാല ചാമിപപടടരുടെ നിലതതിനന മെലപൊടട നാലപപതു പറ വിതതിനു

പുറം 1

- 10 കണടവു2 മൂനനു കര നീറചചചായവു കണടുളള പറമപുകളു2 മെലപപ ലവു2 കിഴപപലവു2 കൂടി
- 11 നീരായ നീര മുതലായ നീറ അടടിപപെറായ നീരടടിചച കൊണടാന അമപ ാടട ഇടടിപപപങ്ങ നുമ തമപി
- 12 മാരുമ ഇപപരിചിതറിയുമ താക്ഷി കീഴ്യാനി അരങകന ചാതതനുമ മാണികക തത കണടന തെയനുമ അറിയ കൊണടാന കയെഴുതത

ഓല 8

പുറം 1

- 1 കൊലല2 900,90,8 ആമത എടവവ്യാഴ2 മിതുന ഞായററില കിഴപാലെയൂര ന ാടട ചിററൂര മനനതതിരുനന എഴുതി
- 2 യ അടടിപപെററൊലെ കകരണമാവത അമപാടട മാഞചി രാമന കൈയാല പെറുമരതതമ വാങ്ങികകൊണടാര എഴുവതത രാ

പുറം 2

- 3 മന ചാതതനുമ തമപിമാരുമ കൊണടാര കൊണട പരിചാവത യിപപെറുമര തതതതിനുമ കാരിയമ തനറെ തൊമമമ_. വെന്ത് ്
- 4 ,വെന്ത് , ഒടടുറപെനന നിലം പൊറയതതെ നിലതതിന മെപപൊടട ആലകക ലെ ചെറെകക കിഴ പപട ഇതിനകതത അറു
- 5 പതുപറ വിതതിനു കണടവു2 ഇതിന2മെലുളള ഇരു കരപപറ2പു2 മെലപല വു2 കിഴ്യപലവു2√ുരിയു2 നുരിയിടപപഴുതു2
- 6 കൂടി നീര മുതലായി നീരടടിപപെറായി നീരാടടികകൊടുതതാന എഴുവതത രാമന ചാതതനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇമമാരകക
- 7 മെ ഇപപെറുമരതതവുമ കൊടുതത ഇചചൊനന നിലമ ്വെന്ത് ഒടടു റപെനന നിലമ പൊറയതതെ നിലതതിന
- 8 മെപപൊടട ആലകകലെ ചിറെകക കിഴ്യപപടട ഇതിനകതത 6,10 പറ വിത തിനന കണടവുമ ഇതി നമമെലൊള്ള ഇരുകരപ

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9 പറമപുമ മെലപപലവുമ കിഴപപലവുമ നുരിയുമ നുരിയിടപപഴുതുമ കൂടി ന

- ീര മുതലായി നീരടടിപപെറാ
- 10 യി നീരാടടിചചു കൊണടാര അമപാടട മാഞചി രാമനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇമമാ രകകമെ പെറുമരതതവു വാങങി

പുറം 1

- 11 എഴുതികകൊടുതതാര രാമന ചാതതനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇപപടികക പെറു മരതതവുമ കൊടുതത എഴുതിചച
- 12 കൊണടാര മാഞചി രാമനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇമമാരകകമെ ഇപപരിചിതറിയുമ താക്ഷി എളമുളചെനന രാ
- 13 മനു2 ചെനനായികകൊടട ചാതതരാമനു2 അറിയ കൈയെഴുതിനെന ഇപ പടികക അചചൊതതകണടു കയയെഴുതത

ഓല 9

പുറം 1

- ചെനമമകകരുണമ കെടുവനന പൊയതിനറെ പെറപപ
- 1 മെടവിയാഴ്വ മെടഞായററില പാലയൂരനാടട മടുപപു മനനതനിരുനന എഴു തിയ അടടിപപെററൊലകക
- 2 രുണമാവിത രാമലതത മലയന കണടന കൈയാല പെറുമരതതവുമ വാങങി കകൊ≠ടന പെറുവീ

പുറം 2

- 3 ലിയതത കുമരന രാമനുമ തമപിമാരുമ കൊണടാറ കൊണട പരിചാവിത ഇകകൊണടാ പെറുമറ
- 4 തതതതിനു2 കാരിയ2 തനറെ തൊ22കുളചചരിവ അഞഞൂററു നാഴികകു2 കരുപപുകൊട അ
- 5 ഞഞൂററു നാഴികകുമ പാലഞചെരികൊളുമപ മുനനൂററു നാഴികകുമ ആക കൂടി 13 പറ
- 6 വിതതിന കണടവു2 ഇനനിലങങളില നീചചരിവു≈ പറമപുകളു2 മെലപപല വു2 കീ
- 8 വിലിയത്ത കുമരന രാമനുമ തമപിമാരുമ ഇΩാറകകമെ ഇപപെറുമറതതവുമ കൊടുതത
- 9 ഇചചൊനനാ നിലമ കുളചചരിവ 50 പറകകുമ കരുപപുകൊട 50 പറകകുമ പാലഞചെരി കൊളു

പുറം 1

- 10 2പ 30 പറകകു2 ആക കൂടി 13 പറ വിതതിനനു കണടവു2 ഇനനിലങങളില നീറചചരിവുളള പ
- 11 റമപുകളുമ മെലപപലവുമ കീഴ്യപപലവുമ ഉമി കടതല മാണികകതതൊടുളപപ ടട തെപപെറ
- 12 പപടടതു2 കൂടി നീരായ നീര മുതലായ നീരടടി പപെറായ നീരടടിചചു കൊണടാന രാമലതത മ
- 13 ലയനകണടനു2 തമപിമാരുമ ഇപപരിചിതറിയുമ താക്ഷി അരങകതത അര ങകന ചാതതനുമ മഞഞപപു
- 14 ളളി കണടനകുമരനുമ അറിയ കൊണടാന കയയെഴുതത.

ഓല 1A *(Ola 1A)*



ഓല 1B (Ola 1 B)



ഓല 2A (Ola 2A)



ഓല 5A (Ola 5A)



ഓല 5B *(Ola 5 B)*



ഓല 6A (Ola 6A)



ഓല 7A (Ola 7A)



ഓല 7B (Ola 7B)



ഓല 8A (Ola 8A)



Analysis

The date of the document is denoted in Kollam Era, along with the position of Jupiter. As Jupiter was considered an auspicious planet and stays one year in one of the twelve houses of the zodiac, it was a pan-Indian practice to denote the position of Jupiter in documents. Sun $(\tilde{n}\bar{a}yar)$ stays 30-31days in one house and the particular period is denoted in the name of that house, hence $m\bar{n}na\tilde{n}\bar{a}yar$ means the month of $M\bar{n}nam$.

Multiple Owners of a Single Land: Intricacies in Pre-modern Land Holdings

Of the nine documents, five are executed by concerned kin groups while sitting in *Kīlpālayūrnāṭṭu Cirrūrmannam*, ¹² three while sitting in *Tat*tamankalattu Mannam and one at Mattuppu Mannam. Dr. Hermann Gundert describes a mannam as a place of judgment or discussion (as in Tamil manram)(Gundert, 2013:720). The mannams described in the palm leaves probably may be the local chieftains, who got a share while such transactions were made. An attippērū document is described by Major Walker as 'the last deed executed, and without which the sale of a property can be valid' (Walker 1862:1). The statement of Walker needs some clarification here, as the first clause of the sentence is based on a false assumption that before the execution of an attippērū deed, several other transactions like pāṭṭam, kāṇam, oṛṛi, etc. took place, and aṭṭippēṛŭ was the last of the above mentioned transactions. In fact, no such transactions were necessary for an attippērŭ transaction. The janmam holder of the land may engage in any of the above said transactions according to his economic compulsions, or he may execute an attippērŭ deed directly before making a lease right, or after making one to a third party, if he desired so. The value of the property is indicated in the attippērū deed as annu perumarttam. 13 But in the case of kānam deeds, the money transacted usually got mention as the further dealings of money as payment of interest or repaying of the debt were ensued.

Valliccāttanmār: Bonded Agrarian Laborers

Another aspect of property deal denoted in the present collection of documents is the transaction of bonded labourers along with the land. Similar instances have been noted by earlier historians in several parts of Kerala before. *Tarisāppalli* Copper Plate (CE 849) is the first instance for the same. An inscription from Trikkakkara during Indu Kota's period (CE 959) also has a reference to the transaction of pulayās along with land. Bonded labourers were mortgaged along with land when the land was pawned. Not all the land had bonded labourers, and therefore, only some *aṭṭippēṛŭ* documents denote the same. The extant lease deeds (*pāṭṭaśīṭṭu*) and other tenure documents—*kāṇam*, *kulikkāṇam*, *oṛṛi* etc.—also seldom speak about the permanent labourers. It is probable that the land which had bonded labour was tilled by the owning kin group on their own governing, while the other lands owned by them were leased for various tenures to other non-landed kin groups, which were tilled by their collective effort. This practice also seems to be of early medieval origin. ¹⁴

Naming a land was an old practice in Kerala for which early medi-

eval records have several instances. It was only in the 20th century that the modern survey system started, and numbers were given to every survey in a village, for taxation purpose by the government. ¹⁵ The present documents have several instances for the naming of the lands. For e.g., palm leaf no.1 refers to about *tommāoṭapēṛŭ*, *māṭampiḷḷippaṭtikkaṇṭam* etc.

All the lands transacted are wet land, and the dry land is indicated as *itinōṭu cērnna kāṭum karayum* (i.e., the scrublands and land attached to this land), which indicates the importance of the paddy cultivated land compared to dry land in pre-modern Kerala. The wetland had a kaleidoscopic pattern of ownership distribution among the holders, who were kin groups, as indicated by the description of borders.

While the land is sold it is pointed that *mēlppalam* and *kīlppalam* is included. Dr. Hermann Gundert defines *mēlppalam* as the future produce and *kīlppalam* as the present produce(Gundert, 2013:782). Another right given along with land is *nuri* and *nuriyiṭappalut*. According to Dr. Hermann Gundert, *nuri* and *nuriyiṭappalutŭ* is a bunch of rice seedlings or paddy seeds (what three fingers can hold) and the space required planting them respectively(Gundert 2013:543). These colloquial words points to two different types of paddy planting techniques that prevailed in pre-modern agriculture in Kerala, the first one being the planting of prepared seedlings in the well-tilled paddy field, and the second one being seeding in the furrows at the time of tilling. The first technique was practiced just after the beginning of rainy season when there was enough water in the fields, while the second was done during the spring, when rainy season was expectant. The mention of *nuri* and *nuriyiṭappalut*, means that even the minute space to plant seedling is transferred in the deed, was not retained by the vendor.

Water Resource Management: Some Pre-Modern Experiments

The reference to *ālakkale cirakku kīlppōṭṭu* (i.e., downwards from *Ālakkal* ¹⁶ *Cira*) in palm leaf no. 8, needs special discussion. The reference to *cira* ¹⁷ (controlled water tank) and *kulam* (water tank) in relation to paddy cultivation is very important. The practice of controlled tank irrigation goes back to the Sangam period (BCE 3rd c. to CE 4th c.). ¹⁸ The practice was in vogue not only during the Sangam period, but even during the early medieval period, ¹⁹ evidences for which can be found in the inscriptions of the period. Every settlement in the pre-modern period had one or multiple controlled tank in and around them. In fact, many of them are named after the controlled tanks as for e.g., *Cempūccira* (tank of red flowers), *Kurriccira* (small tank), *Kuriayaccira* (smaller tank), *Vallaccira* (large tank), *Putuccira*, *Puttencira* (new tank) etc., all sites belonging to Thrisuur district.

In this practice, a permanent large bund was constructed around a seasonal stream, twenty or so meters close to its origin, so as to collect large quantity of water during rainy season. The excess water was cleared through one or two constructed permanent mud canals starting from either side of the tank, sometimes one or more kilometers long, converging in a lager rivulet or river. The wetlands beyond the tank and beside the canals up to the converging rivulet were safeguarded from the excess water by the tank and canals during rainy season. Just after the rainy season, the harvested water in the tank was channeled through the canals for use in paddy cultivation.

Inflow of Money and New Ownership Pattern: Agrarian Scenario in Transition

At least two of our present palm leaves speak about Tamil Brahmans as *janmi* (absolute owner) of the land. Tamil Brahmins, most of them cloth merchants and moneylenders, might have invested their profit in the land as a safe form of asset. Emergence of new *janmis* like the Church, the Christians, the Muslims, and the Tamil Brahmans, all of them traders, as noted above, is recognized as the influence of merchant capital on the economy of late medieval and early modern Kerala, which generated new landed groups, and invigorated the agrarian economy with their money deposits, both as *kāṇam* money and as value of the land.

Conclusion

These documents prove the continued existence of kinship and collective ownership of land by the kin groups in pre-modern Kerala. Though small in number, these documents present an agrarian economic system of early modern central Kerala in transition—the feudal land ownership changing to new ownership patterns generated by the mercantile capital. Besides, these point to the prevalent slavery, related to agriculture, in central Kerala. Farming procedures and irrigation system are some other aspects dealt with in the documents. Interestingly, these palm leaves also present the picture of a variegated distribution of agrarian land in modern Kerala, and point out the urgent need to delve deep into the nuances of the pre-colonial and early colonial forms, patterns and institutions in agriculture for a better understanding of the modern history of Kerala.

Notes

- These leaves belong to the collection of Sri Mohemmad Riyas P.V., New House, Beypore, Kozhikkode Dt (a former student of Farooq College, Kozhikkode), who generously allowed me to decipher and publish the text.
- 2. Stamps were introduced in the Princely States, as part of the British inter-

vention in the administration, as a method to increase the states' income, in the beginning of the 19thcentury. In Travancore, the Regent of Travancore, Rani Gowri Parvati Bai issued an order in Kollam Era 994 (CE1819) that stamped palm leaves issued by state must be used by people while executing documents. Please see Doc. no.4 in Thaliyola: Kerala Archives Journal, January- March, 2010, Vol. 1, Part 1

One of the two stamped leaves of the present collection bears the text of a previous date, viz., KE 917, corresponding to CE 1742, which is evidently a text copied after the introduction of stamp system.

- 3. Though *Kōleluttu* subsisted till the 19th century, it never went into printing, while *Grantha* and its derivation *Ārya eluttu* were adapted to print Sanskrit and Malayalam respectively. However, *Grantha* was eventually replaced by *Dēvanāgari*. See the various volumes of the Travancore Archaeological Series (TAS) for the specimens for printed Grantha.
- 4. *Attipperŭ* means a sale deed. In this kind of land transaction, the absolute right over land is transacted by the owner, to another, by receiving the extant rate/value (*annu perumarttam*) of the land.
- For example, see M. G. S. Narayanan ed., *Vanjeri Grandhavari*, Department of History, Calicut University, 1987; and K. K. N. Kurup ed., *Kootali Grandhavari*, Department of History, Calicut University, 1995.
- See M. G. S., Vanjeri Grandhavari, Documents no.12 A, 14 A etc. and K. K. N. Kurup, Koodali Grandhavari, Section B 4, 5, 8, 16, section C. Doc. no. 35etc.
- 7. For a discussion on the subject, see Santhosh E., 'Ceppeţukalile Śabarimala' in *Ezhuthu* (mal), Book 4, February 2019, pp. 55-59. The essay discusses how the mercantile capital of early modern period reach atop Sabarimala, a hill top temple, in the second half of the 17th century CE, and make investment there, changing the feudal economy into semi mercantile and semi capitalist.
- 8. Major Walker, as early as 1801, noted that it was the local land lords who received dues when a land transaction was made, and suggested that the government could accrue or claim this share instead of the local chieftains. For details, see Major Walker, *Land Tenures of Malabar*, Malabar Government Press, Calicut, 1862.
- 9. See M. G. S., *Vanjeri Granthavari*, Documents no.12 A, 14 A etc. and K. K. N. Kurup, *Koodali Grandhavari*, Section B 4, 5,8, 16, section C. Doc. no. 35etc.
- 10. For instance, see 'Palaiyur Plate of Kollam 852'in A.S.Ramanatha Ayyar

- ed., *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. VI., pp. 85-88., The document is an *aṭṭṭppēṛŭ* deed of Kollam Era 852 (C E 1677).
- 11. From the beginning of 20th century onwards, laws were being passed concerning the partition of land of kin groups, and a large number of such partition deeds came to be executed and registered to effect the dissolving of kin groups in the regions now constituting Kerala. The kin groups, who had *janmam* right of lands divided their *janmam* right, while the kin groups who had various lease rights, shared the rights among themselves. In the wake of the land reforms, by the beginning of the 1970's, the leaseholders of land were declared as the owners of land, the *janmam* holders losing their ownership right. The branches of the kin groups included some terms in the documents like arrālatakkam and āśaucabandham, among them as the two conditions in the *tāvali* partition deeds. *Arrālatakkam* is an agreement that in the case of extinction of one branch, its property will go to the other branches; and āśaucabandham means the observing of pula and vālāyma, the two customary rituals among the kin groups, the first one being ten or sixteen days of self-imposed pollution on the death of one member of the kin group, and the second one, the observance of grief for one year. For eg. see Doc. no1101 of Kollam Era 1101, a document registered in Sub Registrar office Nellayi, Thrissur Dt., which happens to be the partition deed of *Cankarannōta* family, the feudal lords of erstwhile *Perumpatappu swarūpam*. Both these customary words were eventually abandoned.
- 12. Probably a meeting place controlled by the chieftain of the area, whose authority and presence legitimized the transaction. Major Walker, at the beginning of the 19th c., had noted that the local chieftains received their share when a land transaction, was made. Only the *attippērū* deeds mention the presence of such an authority, probably the absolute right transaction only fetched a share to the chief. For details see, Major Walker, 1862, *Land Tenures of Malabar*, Calicut, Malabar Government Press.
- 13. Means 'the present market rate'
- 14. An inscription from Chembra Subramanya temple speaks about Vāyila Kumaran Iyakkan, his mother and mother's younger sister, together holding and cultivating the temple's land on lease. The same inscription speaks about Cirattalai Tariyanan, Cālakkarai Iyakkanār and others holding and cultivating temple land as lease. The first name evidently, is the name of the kin group to which they belonged to, and most probably, of which they were the senior most. See M. R. Raghava Varier, *Keraleeyata: Caritramanagal* (mal) for the text and details.

- 15. Taxation of the land in Cochin was started during the reign of Rama Varma alias Sakthan Tampuran (1790-1805). The land records, *kanṭeluttu* documents, were prepared according to the name assigned to it by its owners. Later, by the beginning of the 20th century, records were reformed and numbers were assigned to each surveyed land in every village.
- 16. *Ālakkal* may be the name of a kin group.
- 17. *ālakkale cirakku kīlppaṭṭu* in ōla no 8, line 4.
- 18. Many of the megaliths are found near these controlled tanks. Cempūccira in Thrissur district is a classic example for this. In that village, there were more than ten cist burials and urn burials around two controlled tanks there. The association of controlled tank and megaliths in Tamil Nadu were noted by several historians before.
- 19. kaṭalaṅkulattālum ilañcaikkulattālaum nīrperuvana in Pārthivapuram Copper Plate 1.33-34. See T. A. Gopinatha Rao ed., *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. 1, p. 23.

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