THREE TAMIL PROCLAMATIONS ISSUED UNDER THE DUTCH RULE IN CEYLON

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During the Dutch rule of Ceylon (1658–1796), the central and local governments issued proclamations which had to be obeyed and observed by the general public. Dutch publications of this type were called “plakkaats”. They were issued in Dutch, Sinhalese and Tamil. The Sinhalese and Tamil plakkaats were but translations of their originals in Dutch. They were not only read and proclaimed at public places but also displayed at important places for the information of the public and were liable to be torn off or destroyed. This is the reason why few plakkaats have survived today. Some of the plakkaats issued by the Dutch government in Tamil are preserved in the Department of National Archives, Nugegoda, Ceylon. The earliest of the Tamil printed plakkaats preserved there is dated 6th August, 1732.¹ In this article we shall treat three such plakkaats, one dated 16 May 1733, one 14 April 1745 and one 13th May, 1792. The first plakkaat was issued by the Dutch governor, Diederick Van Domburgh. The document ranks forty-second among a collection bearing the registration number 2440. It was issued on the sixteenth of May, 1733 from the Colombo Fort. It is of thick hand-made paper and contains twenty-nine hand-written lines. The writing is in black ink and is well preserved. The following is the Roman transliteration of the unemended Tamil text of the plakkaat and my English translation of it.

¹ Jurriaanse, M. W., *Catalogue of the Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon, 1640–1796*, Ceylon Government Press, Colombo, 1943, p. 127.

1. intha ilangkaith thiivukkum ithatkuc centha thalangalhuk-
kuk kovetinatorun thirextorumaakiya cii mesththiri thiiithe-
rukku van thompetuk avarkalhum avarkalhuTaiya
2. aalocanaith thalaivamaarum ithaik kaaNkita allathu vaacik-
kitathaik keTkita cakalarukkum aarokkiyamaaka atiyappa-
NNukitathaavathu
3. ivaTaththile yirukkita manitharum kaNTiyil raacaavin the-
caththileyirunthu varukita manitharum veTimarunthu kolhl-
hath theNTikkita ceythi athikamathikamaaka naangkalh
4. atiyumpaTi campavikkuthu antha veTimarunthu araikkita
thalaththile velaikkaararaaleaanaalum pitaththippaTukita-
thumaaya allathu yuththama kompanjnjiya
5. vit paNiviTaiyin pazhakkaththukkum paathukaappukkum
veNTi coluthaathukalhukkum marinjnerumaarukkum
koTukkitatukalhaale antha coluthaathukalhaaleenkilum
6. marinjnerumaaraalenkilum kiTaikkitatukalhumaayirukka
veNum athu kaaraNaththinaale paTaipporukku veNTiya
thaana uththama kompanjnjiyavil pitathanamaana vas-
thuvai oru
7. ethu vazhiyaana upaayangkalhile izhanthupokac campavik-
kuthu appaTic campavikkittatu yinthath thecaththile kovet-
inathoraakayiruntha ciimaaraale athu kaariyaththukku
8. ethiriyaaka mutaikkumutai esththaapiththup pitaciththa-
maakkina palakkaaththukkalhileyum vishecamaaka 1703
aaNTu kaarthikai mii 6 thikathi esththaapiththup pitacith
9. thamaakkina palakkaaththileyum makaa kaTuuramaana
aaykkinaikalh kutuththirukkaileyum anthap palakkaath-
thai 1708 aaNTu puraTTaathi mii thikathi maTupaTi
10. puthuppiththathumuNTu athu entha vithamaanaalum athin
pitaku athukalhai matanthuponathaippole kaaNappaTu-
kuthu appaTiyaanaalum athaith thaTaipaNNukitathukku
11. naangkalh icciththu anthap palakkaaththit ceythiyaiyum
puthuppiththu engkalh olaanthaakkaata coluthaathuma-
raaleyum intha uurile pitantha coluthaathumaar
12. ulhpaTa voskkiiththaamaar avarkalhuTaiya periya citiya
muthalalaahimaaraakiya collappaTTa cakalaraaleenkilum
mattum eppaTikkoththavarkalhaaleenkilum engkalh
13. thecaththile kuTiyirukkita engkalh caathiyil manitharukka-

- naalum inthath thecaththaarukkaanaalum pitampaale varu-
kitavarkalhukkaanaalum eppaTikkoththa
14. varkalhukkaanaalum yaathoru vettimai yillaamal enthak
kaariyaththaic collienkilum veTimarunthenkitathile atpa-
maanaalum oru kuTuvai marunthaanaalum oru veTilukkuth
 15. thakkathaanaalum vitkavum koTukkavun thiyaakampaN-
Navum maattavum elaathapaTikkum innam engkalh kaik-
kiilh kuTiyaana perkalhaaleyenkilum pitampeyirunthu
engkalh
 16. aracaaTciyin kiilhe varukita parathecikalhaaleenkilum ep-
paTippaTTavarkalhaaleenkilum antha veTimarunthukalhai
paNaththukkenkilum nankoTaikkenkilum maattikkolh
 17. lhukitathukkenkilum vaangkaathapaTikku melaale collap-
paTTa cakalamaana perkalhaiyum makaa kaTuuramaam-
paTiye kaTTalhaipaNNi vilakkitathu nallathentu
 18. thottinapaTiyaal appaTiye yithaikkoNTu thaTaipaNNukitom
aakaiyinaale veTimarunthaith thoTTu melaale connapaTik-
ku oru kuTuvai marunthaanaalum allathu oru
 19. veTilukkuth takka marunthaanaalum engkalh caathiyil
manitharukkenkilum ivaTaththil manitharukkenkilum pi-
tampeyirunthu engkalh aracaaTciyin kiizhe varukitavar-
kalkukk
 20. enkilum kaacukkaanaalum cummaavaanaalum nankoTai-
yaakavaanaalum maatukitathukkaanaalum koTuththa cey-
thi oppanaikku vanthaal avarkalhukkum anthappaTi kaa-
cukkaanaalum
 21. nankoTaikkaanaalum maatukitathukkaanaalum vaangkina-
varkalhukkum yaathoru irakkam illaamal maraNaththinaale
aaykkinai paNNukitathuNTu ithallaamal cakalamum
 22. nantaakap paraaparikkumpaTikku intha ilangkaiyile eng-
kalh aracaaTcik kiizhaay irukkita cakala thalankalhileyum
nitkita ithatkumel innam varappota kotupputaal
 23. caricenthu alupperuci luyiththunaanthumaaraakiya paTaith-
thalaivamaarukkung konjsthaappaamaarukkum velhiya-
rangkamaaka ithaikkoNTu kaTTalhaipaNNukitom ethinaa
 24. leentaal oru veTilukkuth thakka veTimarunthaanaalum
cilavalhikkithu enthath thalaththilentum enthap pitakaara-
maakaventum nantaakap puthukka oru kaNakku

25. ezhuthivaikkumpaTikkunthaan anthappaTi ceyyaamal cila
per acaTTaipaNNukitathenkilum allathu antha veTimarun-
thukalh engkeyoc centu tangkalh kiizhe nitkita coluthathu
26. kalhiTaththileenkilum voskkiiththaamaarkalhiTaththilenki
lum aaraaale vitutaavile cilavalhikkappaTTathu vittatho
maattinatho allathu cummaa koTuththathovenkita
27. ceythikkup pelaththa kaariyangkalh oppivikka iyalaaathen-
kilum campaviththaal avarkalhai yaathoru potuththal illaa-
mal thangkalh thalaimaiyinaalum tholilinaalum
28. maattippoTappaTum innam intha veTimarunthu vitkuthalile
maatuthalile koTukkuthalile kuttavaalhi entu oppanaippaT-
Taal cattum irakkam illaamal maraNa aaykkinai
29. paNNappaTum ithu kaariyam engkalhthanathu paathukaap-
pukkum engkalhin nalla kiizhppaTikitavarkalhuTaiyavung
kuTiyaanavarkalhuTaiyavum
30. reTcippukkum veNTi yippaTi nallathentu kaNTom
31. inthap palakkaaththuk koTupaTTathu 1736 aaNTu vaikaaci
mii 16 thikathi kozhumpit koTTaiyile

D. V. Domburgh

English Translation

Be it known for the welfare of all persons who either see or hear the reading of this proclamation from His Excellency, Diederick Van Domburgh, Governor and Director of this island of Ceylon and its Dependencies and His Chief Councillors.

We come to know more often of the news that persons residing in this place as well as those coming from the Kandyan kingdom are attempting to obtain gunpowder. They must be obtainable from the workmen or slaves who grind the gunpowder at the mill here or from the soldiers and sailors who are supplied with it for the discharge of their duties and protection of the Honourable Company. On account of this, the Honourable Company loses by whatever deceitful means an essential commodity of warfare. In order to prevent such acts, Their Excellencies, the Governors of this island have now and then enacted and issued proclamations of which the one issued specially on the sixth day of the month of November, 1703 prescribing severe penalties, was reenacted on the third day of the month of September, 1708. Whatever it may be, those (proclamations) seem to have been forgotten after-

wards. Even so, with a desire to prevent it, we reenact the measures of that proclamation since we consider it good to order most strongly against the selling or giving or exchanging of even a slight quantity of gunpowder or a pot of powder or quantity enough for an explosion by our Dutch soldiers or soldiers of local descent or the great and small officials, gunners and others whoever they may be, to the persons who are of our nationality and reside in our territory or to those of this country or those coming from elsewhere or to whatever persons, without any distinction and without saying anything and further the obtaining of the gunpowder to part for money or as gift by the inhabitants directly under our control or by the strangers who come under government from elsewhere or by whatever persons, we hereby order all the above said persons accordingly. Therefore if information is got with proof that persons give, as mentioned above with regard to gunpowder, a pot of powder, or powder enough for an explosion for money or free or as gift or exchange to persons belonging to our nationality or to persons born here or to persons coming under our government from elsewhere, they together with the persons who accordingly buy for money or as gift or for exchange, will be, without any mercy, punished with death. Moreover, we hereby order publicly all the high officers of the army such as Corporals, Sergeants, Sub-lieutenants, Lieutenants and Constables and those to come hereafter to look after everything well. This is done to maintain well a fresh account of the station at which the gunpowder has been used and the purpose for which the gunpowder even for a single explosion has been utilised. If some persons do not do so and disregard or are unable to make a strong case for the gunpowder passing further into the hands of the soldiers under them or to gunners or wasted away or sold or exchanged or given free by anyone, they will be without any tolerance relieved of their chief responsibilities and jobs. Further, if found guilty of selling or exchanging or giving this gunpowder, they will be without any mercy punished with death. This measure is considered good for our own safety and for the protection of those good subjects who are obedient to us.

This plakkaat was issued on the sixteenth day of the month of May, 1736 from the Colombo Fort.

D. V. Domburgh

The Historical Significance of the Plakkaat

The Portuguese were the first to introduce gunpowder into Ceylon and from their times it has been looked upon by the natives as an essential commodity of warfare. The manufacture of gunpowder at this time was a highly skilled craft and the native king and people neither had the technical personnel among them nor the chemicals which were mostly brought from foreign countries. Kings of Kandy like Rajasinha II desired that their people should learn to use the modern weapons of warfare introduced by the Portuguese and Dutch and strived hard to know everything in this direction from the Europeans. But the foreign powers made a point of parting their knowledge only to the people who come under their yoke and were loyal to them. As a result, attempts were made from time to time by native kings and people to obtain gunpowder, firearms and other commodities of warfare by deceitful means from the officials of the Dutch East India Company in Ceylon.

This plakkaat confirms the fact that persons under the Dutch government as well as those under the Kandyan king were attempting to obtain unlawful supplies of gunpowder.² The Dutch government suspected the workmen or slaves who grind the gunpowder and the soldiers and sailors of parting with quantities of gunpowder.³ Though plakkaats relating to the prevention of loss of gunpowder have been issued by Dutch governors in 1703 and 1708, the Dutch government felt the need for reenacting them in the year 1736 as the people seem to be violating their earlier orders. By the plakkaat issued in 1736 it was reiterated that none should sell or give or exchange even a slight quantity of gunpowder or a pot of powder or quantity enough for a single explosion to those residing in the Dutch territory or coming from elsewhere.⁴ Both the unlawful buyer and seller of gunpowder if detected would be without any mercy punished with death.⁵ As regards the preventive measures adopted by the Dutch government, it instructed the

² See lines 3-4 of the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

³ See lines 4-7 of the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

⁴ See lines 7-15 of the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

⁵ See lines 18-21 of the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

commissioned officers of the army to maintain a fresh account of stations at which gunpowder is used and to account for even the smallest quantity of gunpowder utilised.⁶ Those officials who do not carry out these orders will be relieved of their responsibilities and jobs.⁷ Further, if they are found guilty of selling or exchanging gunpowder, they too without any mercy, will be punished with death.⁸ The loss of gunpowder as evidenced from this plakkaat shows the corrupt tendency of the commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the Dutch government in Ceylon.

Glossary

The Arabic numerals enclosed within brackets indicate the line in which the term discussed occurs in the plakkaat.

alupperuci (23). This term is derived from Portuguese “alferes” and it means ‘a Sub-lieutenant or a commissioned officer of the lowest grade in infantry’.

aaykkinai (9, 10 & 21). This is from Sanskrit “aa-jñaa” meaning “punishment”.

olaanthaakkaarar (11). This word is from Dutch “Holland” plus the Sanskrit termination “kaar” denoting the feature [+animate] plus the Tamil epicene plural suffix. It refers to the Dutch.

konjsthaappaamaar (23). This is derived from Dutch “konstabel” plus the Tamil epicene plural suffix “maar” and it means ‘constables’.

kompanjnjiya (4 & 6). This is from Portuguese “companhia” meaning ‘company’ and here it refers to the Dutch East India Company as ruling the island of Ceylon.

kotupputaal (22). This term is from Dutch “korporaal” and it denotes a ‘corporal’.

koovetinathoor (1 & 7). The etymology of this word is traced to Portuguese “governador” meaning ‘governor’.

caricenthu (23). This again is from Portuguese “sergente” meaning ‘sergent’.

⁶ See lines 21–25 of the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

⁷ See lines 25–28 of the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

⁸ See lines 28–29 of the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

coluthaathu (5, 11 & 25). This word means 'soldier' and is from Portuguese "soldado".

tireathoor (1). The meaning of this term which is derived from Portuguese "director" is 'director'.

thiitherukku van thomperuk (1). This is a Tamilisation of the Dutch name Diederick Van Domburgh. Diederick Van Domburgh was the Dutch governor who ruled Ceylon from 1734–1736.

paratheeci (16). This word is from Sanskrit "para-deesin" and it means 'stranger'.

palakkaaththu (8 & 11). This term means 'proclamation' and is derived from Dutch "plakkaat".

marinjjeeru (5 & 6). This term denotes a 'sailor' and is derived from Portuguese "marinheiro".

meesththiri (1). This too is from Portuguese "mestre" meaning 'chief'.

lugiththunaanthu (23). This is from Dutch "luitenant" meaning 'lieutenant'.

vooskiiththaa (12 & 26). This is from Dutch "beschieten" meaning 'to fire'. It refers to a 'gunner'.

The second plakkaat was issued by the Dutch governor, Julius Valentyn Stein van Gollenesse. This printed document ranks seventeenth among a collection bearing the registration number 2442. It was issued from Colombo on the 14th of April, 1745.

The following is the Roman transliteration of the unemended text of the plakkaat and my English translation of it.

Tamil Text

1. ithaikkoNTatiyappaNNukitathaavathu
2. ceTTi conakarulhpaTa mattunh velaikaataraith thaangkalh ceythuvarku
3. ta niyamamaana uuzhiya velaiylethaane nhilaiyaaka nhituththivikkita
4. thukku yociththuppaNNina aTaimaanangkalh avarkalhil ane
5. kam perkalk ceTTaipaNNaamal aneka upaaya thanhthiramaana maatkang

6. kalhai yuNTupaNNiyaakilum pitathaanamaayivaTaththilirunhthu mattunh thalangalhuk
7. kum mattunh thalangalhilirunhthu ivaTaththukkum poyvanhthu collappaTTa tha
8. langkalhile cilavaana naalhaaka yaathoru velai paNiviTai ceyyaamalirunhthum
9. anhta uuzhiya velaiyaal miiTcippaTa atinhthirukkita ceythi naalhukkunaalh athi
10. kamathikamaay engkalhukkuth theriyavarukitapaTiyinaale inhthak kaariyam neeraaku
11. mpaTikku munnaale mutaikkumutai koTuththirukkita ellaak kaTTalhaikalhu
12. m pelaththuTane yirukka nhilainhituththi ithu mukaanhthiramaaka matupaTiyung
13. kaTTalhai paNNaththakkathaakap pitakiTTa pangkuni maatham irupaththanjaanh thikathi
14. ilangkaiyil aalocanaiyile mukiththa pitakaaramaay inimelththuvakkam uuzhiya ve
15. lai ceyyavantha ceTTi paravar conakar thamilharaakiya thaangalh pona thala
16. ngkalhile tharipaTTirukkita nhaalhvaraikkunh thangkalhi-Tamaakayirunhthu uuzhiyanj
17. ceyyaththakkathaakath thangalh muthalaalhikalhuTaiya cammathikkum matumolhi uth
18. tharippukkum pothumaana piNaiyaalhikalhaik koTaamalth thangalhil yaa
19. thoruthar enhthap pitakaara vaarththaikalh colliyaanaalunh kalhuththurai kaali
20. yulhpaTa vete yaathoru thalangalhukkaakilum anhtat thalangalhilirunhthu iva
21. Taththukkaakilum pokaatha varaathapaTikku ithaikkoNTu kaTTalaipaNNuki
22. tom anthhappaTi piNai koTuththup potavarkalhukkaaka anhtap piNaiyaalhi
23. cammathithathu eththanai naalh anhta uuzhiyanjceyyavunj ceyvikkavum enta
24. ceythi appaTip potavarkalhukkuk koTukkita pasppoTuththuvaakiya kaTa

25. thaacip paththirangkalhile vilhakkamaay ezhuthappaTTi-
rukkavum anhta niyamiththa
26. nhaalh centuponathin pitaku anhtanthath thalangkalhile
tharipaTTirukkita per
27. kalhai avarkalhukku aana aaykkinaipaNukitathukku
anhtath thalangkalhit thuraimaa
28. raale piTikkappaNNip paravecamaaka ivaTaththukku
anuppivikka veNTiyathunh thavira
29. angkangke thirikitavarkalhuTaiya ceythi avarkalhuTaiya
muthalaalhmaar e
30. ppaTikkoththa njaamukaththinaaleyaakilum pokkaay
viTTuviTaamal athi ciiki
31. rame colli atiyappaNNavum veNum anhta muthalaalhi-
maaril appaTi yaatho
32. ruvar atiyakkoTaamalirukkita ceythi theriyavanhtathe
yuNTaanaat thanmap pe
33. TTiyin purocanaththukku irupaththanjitaiyaat theNTam
vaangkitathum uNTu
34. ithatku ethukaiyaayirukkita avaravare inhthac ceythi
atiyavum
35. inhthak kaTTalhaipaththiram koTupaTTathu 1745 aaNTu
ciththirai mi 14 kolhumpile

Julius Valentyn Stein van Gollenesse

English Translation

Be it known by this proclamation.

We hear more and more day by day of the news that Chetties, Moors and other servants do not pay heed to the measures adopted to enforce compulsory labour on them and that they through many cunning devices free themselves from performing obligatory services in the mentioned places especially by moving out from this place to other places and vice versa. In order that this state of affairs may be remedied and all the orders issued earlier from time to time be firmly enforced, we as a result of decision in Council in Ceylon on the 25th of last March, order by this proclamation that hereafter, Chetties, Moors and Tamils who have to render obligatory service should obtain sufficient and suitable

guarantors to the approval and accountability of their employers before visiting Kalutture, Galle and other places so that they will render obligatory service during the course of their stay in these places. They should not visit other places or come to this place whatever excuses they may give. Even those who obtain guarantors must have entered in their passports details like the number of days the guarantor is prepared to stand surety and the nature of obligatory service to be rendered. Those who are found in these places at the expiry of the days (allocated for their stay) must be caught by the officials of the places and sent here quickly so that they can receive their due punishment. Besides this, the employers should inform the authorities immediately of the whereabouts of those who are thus found here and there and not ignore this under whatever pretext. Should it be known that any employer is withholding information (regarding the illegal stay of those who went there to render obligatory service) he (the employer) will be fined 25 reals which amount will go to the (deacon) charity box.

All those to whom these laws apply must be aware of this. This proclamation was issued from Colombo on the 14th of April, 1745.

Julius Valentyn Stein van Gollenesse

The Historical Significance of the Document

The Dutch East India Company from the commencement of its trading activities in the east was aware of the importance of carrying on trade in the small ports of the eastern territories for the purpose of enriching its major annual trade. The profits which accrued from the Asian trade were utilized for the establishment and running of the administrative system and for the maintenance of a military force in Ceylon.⁹

Arecanuts, chanks and pearls had a lucrative market in India. The Indo-Ceylon trade was in the hands of petty traders distributed along the coast of South India and Ceylon. The bulk of the Indo-Ceylon trade was carried on by Chetties, Moors and Paravars. The Dutch felt the need of participating in this trade from very early times. It was their cherished ambition to gain a foothold

⁹ Arasaratnam, S. *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, Djambatan, Amsterdam. 1958, pp. 145-53.

on the South Indian Coast.¹⁰ From very early times, the merchant communities such as Chetties, Moors and Paravars brought rice and other commodities in sampans from India and after disposing of them in Ceylon, took with them arecanuts, chanks and other commodities on their return journey.¹¹ So the Dutch government in Ceylon looked upon these merchant communities as their rivals in the Indo-Ceylon trade and imposed severe restrictions on their movements in Ceylon. Chetties, Moors and Paravars were ordered to render certain obligatory services to the Dutch government in Ceylon. These obligatory services¹² included counting of copper coins in the bazaar, hauling of boats at specified ports, clearing of forest areas, etc. As the Dutch government found that the Chetties, Moors and Paravars were devising ways and means of evading the performance of obligatory services, it ordered every member of these merchant communities to secure for himself a passport, the exact nature of the obligatory service expected of him, the duration of the service and the official under whose supervision the obligatory service was to be performed, were to be entered. These orders are embodied in a biljet issued during the governorship of Julius Stein Van Gollennesse and it is dated 3rd March, 1744.¹³

Despite their stringent measures, the Dutch government in Ceylon found these merchant communities continuing to be engaged in private trade and flagrantly violating the laws enforced on them. Through many cunning devices, the merchant communities got exempted from the performance of obligatory services to the Company. The Dutch government viewed with grave concern the private profit making trade activities of these merchant communities especially in Kalutture, Galle and other places close to seaports.¹⁴ In the plakkaat under our consideration, further

¹⁰ Arasaratnam, S. *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, Djambatan, Amsterdam. 1958, pp. 145-53.

¹¹ *Memoir left by Jacob Christiaan Pielat to his successor, Diederik Van Domburgh, 1734*, translated by Sophia Pieters. G. J. A. Skeen, Government Printer, Colombo. 1905. pp. 24-25.

^{12/13} See, Thananjayarajasingham, S. 'A Tamil Biljet relating to the obligatory services of certain subjects of the Dutch government in Ceylon'. *Proceedings of the Second International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies*, Madras: I.A.T.R. Vol. II. 1972. pp. 306-11.

¹⁴ See lines 15-21 of the Tamil text.

measures are taken by the Dutch government to curb the loitering here and there of Chetties, Moors and other merchant communities. These merchant communities are ordered to secure for themselves suitable guarantors who are acceptable to their respective employers,¹⁵ when leaving their place of residence. The employers under whose supervision these communities should perform obligatory service, should see that no person of such communities stays beyond the date specified in his passport.¹⁶ If a person stays beyond the date entered in his passport, he should be immediately sent to Colombo so that he could be punished.¹⁷ Failure to report the stay of a person beyond the required date will make the official liable to pay a fine of twenty-five reals which sum will be deposited in the (deacon) charity box for the benefit of distribution among the poor.¹⁸

It is interesting to note that the present plakkaat was issued only in Dutch and Tamil and not in Sinhalese. The reason is not far to seek. The Chetties, Moors and Paravars to whom the orders embodied in this plakkaat are applicable, are native speakers of Tamil.

Glossary

The Arabic numerals enclosed within brackets indicate the relevant line in which the term discussed occurs in the Tamil text of the plakkaat.

aaykkinai (27). This term is derived from Sanskrit "aa-njaa" and it means 'punishment'.

itaiyaal (33). This is a loanword from Portuguese "real". The Portuguese introduced a coin called "real" which was of the value of one shilling and six pence (7½ new pence). This coin was in circulation even in the time of the Dutch as is evidenced by this plakkaat. Even today, real is used for rating a shoal of fish in Paasaiyuur and Karaiyuur in North Ceylon.

uuzhiyam (3, 9, 14, 16 & 23). This is a Tamil word meaning 'forced labour'. The Portuguese demanded uuzhiyam from

¹⁵ See lines 15-18 of the Tamil text.

^{16/17} See lines 25-28 of the Tamil text.

¹⁸ See lines 31-33 of the Tamil text.

various castes and communities and those who rendered *uuzhiyam* were not paid any remuneration. The “*uuzhiyath-thoompu*” (Forced Labour Register) of Portuguese times are still preserved in the Department of National Archives, Ceylon. The Dutch extended this system of forced labour to some new communities such as Chetties, Moors and Paravars who were private traders by profession.

kaTathaaci (24–25). This is from Portuguese “*cartaz*” and it means ‘paper’. In Portuguese it means ‘placard’.

kalhuththurai (19). *Kalhuththurai* is the name of a place which is twenty-six miles to the south of Colombo. At one time, it was a seaport.

kaali (19). *Kaali* is the name of a place which is seventy-two miles to the south of Colombo. At one time, Hambantota which is in the Galle (*Kaali*) District was a seaport.

ceTTi (2 & 15). This term is from Prakrit “*seeTTi*” and it denotes ‘mercantile caste’.

coonakar (2 & 15). This is from Sanskrit “*yavana*” and it refers to ‘Moors’ in this plakkaat.

paravar (15). The Tamil word “*paravar*” refers to a fisherman caste living in villages along the coast in the south of the Tamil country. The Paravar along the Syrian coast were proselytized by the Portuguese.

pasppoTuththu (24). This term is derived from Portuguese “*passa-porte*” and it means ‘passport’.

Tamil Text

The third plakkaat was issued by the Dutch governor, Willem van de Graaff, is preserved in the Department of National Archives, Nugegoda, Ceylon. This printed document ranks twenty-eight among the collection bearing the registration number 2446. It is dated 13th May 1792 and has been signed by B. L. van Zitter who was secretary to the Political Council. The following is the Roman transliteration of the unemended Tamil text of the plakkaat and my English translation of it.

1. meelaana cangkaiponhta aaNTavamaaraal uNTupaNNap-paTTa pattiram
2. kaTTalhaikkatikamaakak kuuTTappaTTa engkalh curuk-kamaana elhuttukkalhin peraaR kaikkoNTa kaRpinaikki-Nakkamaaka
3. inhta aracaaTcikkaTangkiya cakala iTangkalhilum uNTa-ana nhankoTaikalhukkum irupiRatturimaikalhukkum ma-raNi
4. tupponavanaale tan muTukina uRavinamuRaiyaarukku vai-kkappaTukiRa urimaikalhukkum nhankoTaikalhukkum itaR
5. kaTuttiraata ivarkalh pitirkalh talhlhi nhuuttukku anjcaa-kavum piRattiyaarukku vaikkappaTukiRa nhankoTaikal-hukkum
6. urimaikalhukkum nhuuttukku pattumaaka aRavupaNNum-paTikkup piRakiTTa pangkuni mii 30 tiyile engkalhaar
7. termaanikkappaTTatu
8. kolhumpuc ciimaikkaTuttirukkiRa anhtanhta iTangkalhin ulhlhuur mutalaalhikalhunj cavam aTakkampaNNukiRavar
9. kalhum maRRum paTTaNattukcup piRampaakat tangkal-hukkulhlheyum piRampeyum irukkappaTTa cakala viiti-kalhukkum
10. uNTaayirukkiRa veykmesttaR enRa teru atikaarikalhukkum itaikkoNTu kaRpikkappaTukiRataavatu paTTa
11. Navaacakangkalhile avaravarukkaTutta elkaimaanangkal-hile maraNattin perile campavikkiRa kaariyangkalhai yusttiis
12. cakkiRattaar avarkalhukkum paTTaNattukkum piRampaa-kac campavikkiRa kaariyangkalhai lanhtiRa at cakkiRattaar avarkalhukkum
13. yaatoru taamatam illaamal uTanetaane aRivikkaveNum
14. aanaal maRRum itaRkaTutta cakala iTangkalhilum ulhlha canangkalhukku evaraale allatu evarukku itu kaariyang
15. kalh nhaTappikkappaTumenkiRataip piRacittamaana veRe aRikkaippattirangkalhinaale aRivikkappaTum
16. ovvorutar inhtak kaTTalhaippaTi nhaTanhtu atai nhiRaive-RRukiRataRkum kolhumpile yusttiis cakkiRat

17. taar lanhtiRaat cakkiRattaaraakiya ivarkalh tangkalh elkai-
maanangkalhile ovvorutar maraNikkiRa anhtanhtac camai
18. yangkalhile avarkalhuTaiya urimaikkaaRarai allatu anhta
aastikalhin perile tattuvattaikkoNTirukkiRa anhtanhta
19. varkalhai alhaippittu itu kaariyangkalhin perile tevaiyaayi-
rukkiRa cakalattaiyum aRivikkumpaTi keTkavum kaTuura
20. maakak kaRpikkappaTukutu inhtap piRakaaramaakac
collappaTTa kaariyangkalhai nhaTattukiRataRku nhyami-
kkappaTukiRavarkalhaa
21. le anhtanhtat talangkalhileyum nhiRaiveRRappaTum
22. ippaTikku kolhumpil 1792 aaNTu vaikaaci mii 13 tiyile
melaana cangkaiponhta uttama kattanum ilangkaa
23. purikkum ataRkuc cenhta talangkalhukkum tecaatikkamu
maakiya velum yakkop panhte kiRaap
24. makaraacaa aaNTavarkalh mutalaaka maRRum aalocanait
talaivamaaruTaiyavum kaTTalhaippaTikku yelhutappaT-
Tatu

B. L. van Zitter,
Secret.

English Translation

This proclamation was enacted by the most supreme lords.

In accordance with our brief communication issued in addition to our orders, it was decided by us on the 30th of last March (1792) that donations and maternal and paternal claims to donations and wealth under this government be subjected to a tax as follows: of the wealth and donations bequeathed by a deceased to his close relatives, one-fifth of the value of such bequest excluding expenses incurred on account of funeral rites be collected. In the case of outsiders inheriting a bequest of wealth and donations, one-tenth of the value of such inheritance shall be levied as tax.

All authorities of (those) stations adjoining the city of Colombo as well as those who undertake funeral-service, and Weesmeesters who are officials in charge of all roads in and outside the city are instructed to report without any delay all matters concerning deaths occurring within their respective areas in the city to the judicial secretary; deaths occurring outside the city should be reported to the landraad secretary. Persons residing in other areas

shall be notified through further proclamations as to who should implement these orders and to whom the orders are applicable. It is hereby strongly urged that everyone should abide by these orders, and, in order to execute them, the judicial secretary and the landraad secretary should, in all instances of death of persons, notify all matters pertaining to them either to the relative claimants of each deceased person or to the persons vested with authority to administer the bequest of the deceased. All officials assigned to carry out in the prescribed manner the above said matters should do so in their respective stations.

Thus was this proclamation drafted in Colombo on the 13th of May 1792 by His Excellency Willem Jacob van de Graaff, governor of Ceylon and its dependencies and His Chief Councillors.

The Historical Significance of the Plakkaat

Owing to the slowness of communication between Patria and the Colonies in those days, the need for security of private possessions of the colonists was soon felt by the Dutch government. The possessions of the Dutch East India Company's officials in the East, who died without leaving wife or children, were looked after by the "curator ad lites", who watched the interests of the deceased's relatives in Patria. In case, however, a Dutch man or a Dutch woman left any children, the "weeskamer", which was an institution established by the V.O.C. to look after the possessions of minors, would intervene, and demand or cause to be compiled an accurate list of the goods left by the deceased. The "weesmeesters" would take charge of the children and the estate of the deceased. Although the physical care of the orphans would almost invariably devolve on relations or friends, the "weesmeesters" were officially in charge and were responsible to the central government for their action and their accounts, which were submitted twice a year to the Governor in Council. This type of board was established in Colombo, Jaffna and Galle.

Apart from the Dutch weeskamer, the government had established native weeskamers which were entrusted with the care of the goods of the children of the islanders. These boards were

established in Colombo, Jaffna, Galle, Matara, Negombo and Trincomalee.¹⁹

The Dutch government felt the necessity of imposing a tax on all types of inheritance in order to obtain additional revenue and to maintain the weeskamer institutions. This plakkaat issued during the time of Willem Jacob van de Graaff lays down that, of the wealth and donations bequeathed by a deceased to his close relatives, one-fifth of the value of such bequest excluding expenses incurred on account of funeral rites be collected and in the case of outsiders inheriting a bequest of wealth and donations, one-tenth of the value of such inheritance shall be levied as tax.

Glossary

cakkiRattaar (12 & 17). This is a Tamilisation of the Dutch word "secretaris" meaning 'secretary'.

lanhtiRaad (12 & 17). This term is derived from Dutch "landraad". The landraad was a court which dealt principally with the affairs of the native inhabitants, and foremost of these came disputes relating to land.

velum yaakkop panhte kiRaap (23). This is a Tamilisation of the Dutch name Willem Jacob van de Graaff. Willem Jacob van de Graff was governor of Ceylon from 7th February 1785 to 1st August 1794.

veykmesttaR (10). This term is derived from Dutch "weesmeester" and it refers to a body of officials who looked after the children and wealth of deceased persons.

yusttiis (11 & 16). The etymology of this word is traced to Dutch "justitie" meaning 'justice'. In the plakkaat it refers to the court of justice or raad van justitie which operated in Colombo. The raad van justitie had many functions. In its criminal jurisdiction, the country ruled by the Dutch was divided under the three raden van justitie of Colombo, Jaffna and Galle. The raad van justitie had, in addition, an original civil jurisdiction within the towns in matters involving sums over certain prescribed limits.

¹⁹ Jurriaanse M. W. (1943). *Catalogue of the Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon 1640-1796*. Ceylon Government Press, Colombo. pp. 268-69.

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