

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JAFFNA KINGDOM – A HISTORICAL VIEW**Dr.K Arunthavarajah***Senior Lecturer Gr.1, Department of History, University of Jaffna.Sri Lanka.***Abstract**

According to the historical and archaeological evidences, the Jaffna Kingdom had come into existence about the 13th century A.D and lasted till the beginning of 17th century A.D when it lost its independence due to the colonial rule of Europeans. During that period the king of Ariyasakkaravarti dynasty had created the good administrative machinery with the support of all sections of the subjects. In this all administrative activities were specially arranged. This Kingdom had got the monopoly in most of economic activities and it had created a well-designed administrative structure and earned good income. Here one can point out that the Europeans who came later had not made any radical change in the administration of Ariyasakkaravatties after they observed them and had arranged the administration on the same line. This research is mostly done on the basis of the historical approach. The main aim of this research is to focus the qualities of the administrative activities in Jaffna, its growth, and the benefits the Jaffna Kingdom earned through this. In this research the primary and the secondary sources are used. Here it is difficult to get reliable contemporary primary evidences for the Jaffna Kingdom. The letters, memoirs documents etc. written during the period of European rule, the literary works written by the indigenous authors etc are used to rectify the defects and do better research. The books written by the later researchers, research article also are taken as the secondary sources.

Key words: *Early settlements, Ariyasakkaravatties, Mudaliyars, Traditional Administration, Public Administration.*

Early Settlements

The early settlements of Jaffna Tamils took place several centuries ago. In 1970 an exploration made in Kantharodai, a place situated in Jaffna had shown that the early history of civilization of Jaffna had began at the time of the Megalithic period in South India (Begley, V.1973, pp.191-196). On archaeological research made in 1980 in place; like Aanaikodai, Karainagar, and Velanai had shown that the the concentrated Dravidic settlements belonging to Megalithic period were found in these places (Ragupathy, P, 1987, p.179). Nowadays the efforts of knowing the traditional history of Jaffna people are taking place in many parts of Jaffna, by the University of Jaffna.

One of the *Pali* chronicles *Mahavamsa*, describes about the history of Sri Lanka. It indicates that Northern part of of Anuradhapura was called *Naagadepa* (Geiger, W.ed.1953, pp, 44-70). The Tamil literacy work *Manimekalai* has referred to *Naganaadu* (Saminathayar, U.V, ed.1956, p.43-63) and the golden plate that was found out in Vallipuram (One of the places in Jaffna Peninsula), in the period of 2nd century A.D has referrene of *Nagadivam* (Epigraphia zeylanic, Vol.no.29, p.234). On this basis one can say they *Nagadivam* mentioned in *Mahavamsa*. might have denoted Jaffna and the adjoining Vanni areas of the present day.

Origin of Jaffna Kingdom

Generally a unique historical tradition cannot be obtained for all regions. But Sri Lanka had preserved the long historical tradition among the Asian countries. But Jaffna, which is situated in Northern region did not preserve historical tradition to a great extent. The inscriptions and literary works had shown that

the word *Yalppanam* (Jaffna) has been used for over 500 years. An inscription of the *Vijayanagara* Empire belonging the 15th century refers to Jaffna as *Yalpaanayanpaddinam* (Town), Sandesha literature indicates Jaffna as *Yapapatuna*. Both Portuguese and Dutch documents indicate Jaffna as *JavannaPaddinam*, (Pathmanathan.S.2011). But there was no reliable evidence available before too15th century A.D regarding the use of the word Jaffna.

In considering the period of the origin of Jaffna Kingdom, the historical researchers had identified this from 13th century onwards. Under the leadership of *Ariyasakkaravatties*, the *Paandiya* invasion took place in Sri Lanka, resulting in the spread their influence in Sri Lanka.It paved the way for the origin of Jaffna Kingdom (Pathmanathan, S.2011, p.108). Continuously their administration had lasted for about 350 years in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. The Tamil literatures which relate to some aspects of the Jaffna Kingdom like *Kailaayamaalai*, *Yaalpaanavaipavamaalai* do not contain any reliable documental proof about the history of Jaffna before 13th century A.D. So on the basis it is very difficult to say about the history of Jaffna before this century. So one could conclude that the Jaffna Kingdom rose from 13th century A.D on wards with Nallur,in the Northern part of Sri Lanka as the capital.

The researches that are done recently about the origin of Jaffna Kingdom do not agree with the former idea. (A.D 13th century). Some recent researches prove that the origin of this Kingdom dated back to A.D 8th century onwards. There were so many legends regarding the origin of Jaffna Kingdom, the environment and the back ground. One can say this Kingdom did not originate immediately but it came through the continuation of the ancient Kingdom of *NaagadepaManipallava*(Kirishnarajah.S.2000, p.54). Further it has achieved its highest political, cultural structure in the 14th centuryA.D. The *Ariyasakkaravatties*, who were in authorities on that period collected tributes from the Southern Sri Lankan Sinhala rulersThe Morocco raveller Inb Batuta also has referred to an Aryacakravarthi who was his contemporary.

Location

The Kingdom of Jaffna had included a vast region. Queirozregarding its boundary has said that Jaffna Kingdom was not confined to the Jaffna Peninsula. It had included the following areas namely Valikamam, Vadamarachi, Thenmarachi, Islands and the parts of Vanni from Mannar to Trincomalee(Perera,S.G.trans, 1930, p.51).

The *Ariyasakkaravatties*, had made their administration by having Nallur as the capital city of Jaffna Kingdom during their Period. During the period of Singayaarian I (Jeyasingayaarin,Vijeyakoolankai Sakkaravatti) Nallur was declared as the capital of Jaffna. The boundaries of Jaffna had included the following parts, that is the North part included the Northern part of Kopay eastern part included Saavankodai, Naavatkuli the Southern part included the Pannai lagoon and the west part included the Kokuvil , Kondavil (Pathmanathan,S.1992,p.132). The King's administrators', and officers, residence the temples of the kings, the premises of Brahmins, the soldiers' division were seen in the parts included this region. Further the King's palace, flower gardens, Yamunaari courts complex were created in Nallur. And the temples were constructed in four parts of Nallur(Kunarasa, K.2001, p.20).

Jaffna Kings

The inscriptions during the period of Maaravarman Kulasekaran had given some the details about the *Ariyasakkaravatties*. They had hailed from Ramanathapura Sevirukkai areas Sakaravarthi Nallur as their residence. Some of them had served as administrators and soldiers in the palace of the Paandiyas'

(Pathmanathan, S.1978, p.109). Further the Kings belonging to *Ariyasakkaravatties's* generation were called as Singaiyaarians' in Tamil literary works.

The Kings who reined the Kingdom of Jaffna belonged to the Singayaarin's caste (Pathmanathan, S.2001, p.35). Singayaarin means the caste name of Jaffna Kings. The books and inscriptions written during their period and later denoted them as Singayaarian. Here Singai denotes the city Singai and the Ariyan means the brief the emperor of Ariyan descent. (Pathmanathan, S.2011, p.105). The *Ariyasakkaravatties* had conquered Jaffna Kingdom under the supremacy of the Paandiya in the Northern part of Sri Lanka by about the 13th century A.D. This invasion of Ceylon took place under the leadership of *Ariyasakkaravatti* was the result of the influence of Aariyan emperors in Jaffna. Here the *Ariyasakkaravatti* had got the authority in Jaffna and later he was proclaimed as an independent king. He could do so the Pandya Empire had become weak by this time in Tamil Nadu. Due to the invasion of *Ariyasakkaravatti* on Sri Lanka, the Southern Sri Lanka was lost its stability (Kirishnaraja, S.2000, pp-55-57).

The *Yaalpaanavaipavamaalai* shows the details regarding the Kings, who ruled Jaffna before the invasion of Senpahapperumal on Jaffna by A.D 1450, as follows,

- 1.Vijeyakoolankai Sakkaravatti
- 2.Kulasekara Singayaarian
- 3.VickramaSingayaarian
- 4.Varothaya Singayaarian
- 5.Maarthaanda Singayaarian
- 6.Kunapooshana Singayaarian
- 7.Jeyaveera Singayaarian
- 8.Kunaveerasingayaarian
- 9.Kanaga Sooriya Sigayaarian (Sabanathan, Kula.ed.1995, pp.34-44).

Administration of Jaffna

The administration of Jaffna Kingdom was created by the *Ariyasakkaravatties*. The details regarding administration of Singayaarian are found in *Kailayamaalai* (Jambulingampillai, S,V.ed 1939, pp.4-21). It had included the details of the administrative officers appointed by him in Jaffna Peninsula, Islands and Vanni. One could identify the administrative divisions to some extent. In this administrative method the social structure and social behaviour especially were seen among the Tamils who lived in Northern parts of Ceylon which were highly stressed. Further there were some notes seen regarding the divisions of West *Pattu* South *Pattu*, East *pattu* and North *pattu*. The Poet Mayilvakanam had noted that there were some high rank officers involved in the administration called *Maathaakkar* (Sabanathan, Kula.ed 1953, pp.34-44) The aristocrats related to the Paandiyas were had their influence in the parts of Vanni from Maathoodam to Verukkal during the period of Paandiya in vasion and the reign of Aariya emperors. These details were seen in *vaiyaapaadal* (pathmanathan,.1978, p.150). A Sinhala book called *Nammpoththa* says about the Kingdom that was under the control of *Ariyasakkaravatties* as Themilapattinam (Ibid). Through its information one can know that this Kingdom extended from Jaffna peninsula to Trincomalee. Naagarkovil, Kantharodai, Thellipalai, Trincomalee, Velham veharai and Elanthakoda (Ibid)

Jaffna Kingdom had got so many benefits by maintaining the relationships especially the trade and cultural relationships with other countries due to its location. Especially it had earned more income through the trade. During that period there were so many harbours situated in Northern part of Sri Lanka

under the control of the kings of Jaffna. Most of them had lost their importance today. Kayts, Trincomalee, Kankesanthurai, Colombuthurai, and Poinpedro were some of them. The paths leading to Southern Sri Lanka from Vanni had joined via lagoons with Colombo. In those days Jaffna had maintained the trade relationships with south India, Trincomalee and Batticaloa through these harbours in the Jaffna peninsula. The elephant trade, pearl and conch shell trade were especially done through these harbours. One can say that the Jaffna kings had earned a lot through these and they had maintained the administration with the aid of them. Generally Jaffna kings had the special titles like Sethukavalan, Singaiyaarian Gangaikondaan and the Kings also had titles like Pararasasekaran, Sekarasasekaran. The rights of reign were transferred from the father to the son especially eldest.

Forces

Forces were considered as the main part in the administrative activities. The forces were seen in a special stage in the case of the Jaffna Kingdom. In this way the *Ariyasakkaravatties* had maintained the special force (Pathmanathan, S.1993, p.354). The Sinhala books say that the *Ariyasakkaravatties* had sent lakhs of warriors against the Southern Sri Lankan aristocrats called Nishanga Alagakonar. Fr. Queiroz says in the 1st Sangili had sustained more than 1200 warriors against the Portuguese when they invaded Jaffna. It was usual in those days the Jaffna Kings had obtained the forces from some parts of South India.

Rajavalia says Karunadar, Keralar, Tamils, Thuruvar and vanniars were seen in the forces of Ariyan emperors when the lieutenant of Parakiramabahu VI, the Senbahaperumal had invaded Jaffna during the period of A.D 15th century. (Gunasingam, M.2008, pp.54-84) Due to the Rajakaariya method the government had called the warriors from South India and engaged them in army. The money was given to them as wages for their services. The Following high officers were noted in the administration of Jaffna Kingdom.

Athikari

In the periods of Tamil Kings, the *Athikari* (authorized officer) was the highest post in comparison to the other administrative posts except the post of *Vanniyandar*. The kings ruled the country with the aid of them. The high officers were appointed as leaders in the provinces. The king did not pay salary to them. The people provided the necessary items to the king. After that the people had to pay the levies to them for the sake of their salary (Pathmanathan, S.2011, p.127). There were two divisions seen in the high officers. One of them had taken the leadership post and responsibilities in the regional administration. The officers were considered as the leader to the social groups like carpenter, blacksmith, weavers, fishermen, *Karaiyar etc.* The officers were the responsible for the levies and the information regarding the above said people.

Mudalaliyar

In considering Sri Lanka the word *Mudalaliyar* was used by both Tamil and Sinhalese for long period (Irschick, E.F, 1994, p.08). Even though this word was used to indicate the old Dravidic kings in South India this word was used as a Tamil caste name. Further from the 13th century A.D, this word was used to denote the rural level officers in Sri Lanka. In Portuguese administration, the officers who had these names had influence (Abeyasinghe, Tikiri.1996, pp.8-18).

In considering Jaffna kingdom the *Mudalaliyar* had the important place in the administration. They had the good experiences in the kingdom's administrative matters. They were considered as the faithful hands to the king and the king had got their advice whenever he needed. Thus king had got the advice

from them regarding the internal and external affairs. In the administration of Sinhala kings and their contribution was an indicative one. (Tennent, J.E.1959, p.156)

The appointment system of *Mudalaliyar* was introduced in Sri Lanka due to the result of South Indian influence as the appointment system of officers. They were seen as the leaders in the divisions of soldiers and the judges who could analyze the court cases during the period of which the Chola, Paandiya Emperors had got the influence in Tamil Nadu. And also recovery of the levies for state also was their responsibilities (Tennent, JE1959, p.157).

In Jaffna the *Mudalaliyar* had the influence in the three fields like army service public administration and administration of army. Most relations of kings were made with the aid of them. Due to the background of their influence the Europeans had tried to use *Mudalaliyar* to carry out their activities (Patrick Peebles, 1995, pp.27-41).

Kangaani

This word also came to Sri Lanka due to the influence of South India. The word *Kangaani* had become popular by the immigration of workers from India during the period of British. It was also used in Jaffna during the periods of Tamil kings. (Nadesan, S.1993, pp.86-97). Some of the documents maintained by Portuguese had the notes related to it. Through this one can realize that these officers were of high rank. There were no notes regarding them (*Kangaani*) in the Dutch documents. Some of the Chola inscriptions had some information about them. Through the information based on them, one can realize that the *Kangaani* (Estate Supervisor) had a prominent place in the state administration of Jaffna.

Udayar

The Occupational name *Udayar* was used in Jaffna for a long time. Likewise there were some evidences to show that this word was used in South India in the administration for a long time. In Sri Lanka this was the famous designation during the period of Jaffna kings. It is indicated by such names such as *Udayavan*, *Kilaan* and *Thalaimahan*. Persons who worked as village headman to people were called *Udayar* in *Thamilaham*. In to Sri Lanka, *Udayar* means the village headman, a higher position than *Thalaiyaari*.

The main responsibility of *Udayar* was the village security. Their main duty was to control illegal activities such as stealing and robbery and restore the peace and harmony. Moreover, they gave their support to the high rank officers in justice and administration. (Irschick, E.F.1994, p.08)

Thalaiyaari

The headman of the village is called *Thalaiyaari*. *Pattamkaddi* and *Adappanar* are the village head man's ranks with the social groups like fisherman, *Paravar*, and *Karaiyar*. Normally the government officers will contact with people with the help of village level headmen. They do not get money for this profession (Perera, S.G.trans, 1930, p.51). Instead of money they get paddy lands. These designations were seen as rights of generation.

Vanniyanaar

Vanniyanaar (aristocrats) had the position of leaders in the land of *Vannipattukkal*. The areas such as *Panankaamum*, *Karikkadu Moolai*, *karunaaval paththu*, *Melpaththu*, *Mulliyavallai*, *Thenaimaravadi* and *Chettikulam* were included in the kingdom of Jaffna (Pathmanathan, S.2011, p.127). These were seen as monopoly structures. This division of people had got the authorities and influences as the king. They got services for the kings were paid then. These people's administrative methods were similar to

Jaffna kings' administration. Administrative divisions and names of designations seen there were similar.

They functioned without any restrictions in the following fields like public administration ethnic tax and judiciary. They went to Jaffna Kingdom once a year for paying their tribute as this part was situated far away from Jaffna. They paid their allegiance to the kingdom of Jaffna through this method. Moreover they maintained friendship. They had authorities to appoint officers for the purpose of conducting official matters.

Varrisai

The headmen who had the administrative designations throughout the kingdom got together twice a year. All village headmen should be present at the state meetings. Likewise the meetings were conducted two times in a year were called "*Varrisai*". This method was adopted later by the Portuguese and the Dutch.

System of Revenue

Land Tax

Land tax is a specified tax to the state of Jaffna. Because the king had earned a lot of income through this tax. Majority of cultivated lands belonged to the private sectors in Jaffna. Both land tax and *Vaaram* were recovered on the basis of the land. The land owners should pay a certain amount as the tax to the king according to the nature of the land. A part of products that belonged to the Kings was called *Vaaram*. 1/10 of products should be given to the king (Pathmanathan, S.1992, p.53).

Taxes which were recovered on the basis of land included house tax, land tax, and tree tax. Taxes which were recovered on houses were called house tax. Taxes which were recovered from gardens that were surrounded by the home was called garden tax and taxes recovered from the trees were called tree tax. *Ariyasakkaravatties* had used same measurements to survey the lands like the kings of Tamil Nadu.

Personal Tax

This tax levy was recovered from all the matured gents and ladies. Each and every one should pay certain amount to government as levies per year. During the period of Tamil kings 120000 cash was recovered as personal tax per year (Abeyasinghe, Tikiri.1986).

Officer Tax

This tax was recovered for the purpose of officers' cost of living and to do their duty well as they were responsible to provinces.

Office Gelden

Persons who performed different jobs paid tax to the king were called office gelden. Persons such as carpenter, blacksmith, weaver and goldsmith paid this tax. These taxes were not recovered individually and it recovered totally for each community for which they had to pay.

Wages

People had to pay taxes to government and they also had to work for wages. They had to work twelve days per year on the basis of one day per month (Sitrapalam, S.K.1993, p.231). People were engaged

in building construction pounding stones, constructing barns, constructing roads and constructing pools and canals.

Conclusion

One can know with the help of evidence that the kingdom of Jaffna had functioned as independent state under the guidance of *Ariyasakkaravatties* for more than 350 years. It was not a simple matter to administrate a Country for long time. The main reason was its' well planned administrative system. *Ariyasakkaravatties* created a sound administration with the help of government officers and with the co-operation of people. Local products' income was received by local and foreign trade, tax collection and best troop structure contributed to build a sound administration. The Portuguese and other Europeans realized the Jaffna kings efficient administration. They did not make any change on a grand scale and they adapted it.

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