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CATTLE BRANDING SYSTEM IN MADURA DISTRICT OF COLONIAL TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

Cattle Branding System was introduced in several parts of the Colonial administration in the Indian sub-continent. The main intention for the implementation of the Cattle Branding System was to prevent cattle theft from the local communities under their administration. In this way as an experimental method this branding system was introduced in Madura district during the first decade of the twentieth century. The government initiated several stages of development to make the success of registering the cattle in this district. However this scheme has faced numerous hurdles to obtain its objectives to bring to an end on cattle theft. Due to the practical difficulties in branding the animals and also fails to gain the support of the public this cattle branding programme was declined by the government.

Keywords: *Cattle branding, Colonial system, Agriculture sector in Madurai.*

Introduction

Cattle Branding System was introduced in several parts of the Colonial administration in the Indian sub-continent. The main intention for the implementation of the Cattle Branding System was to prevent cattle theft from the local communities under their administration. In this way as an experimental method this branding system was introduced in Madura district during the first decade of the twentieth century. The government initiated several stages of development to make the success of registering the cattle in this district. However this scheme has faced numerous hurdles to obtain its objectives to bring to an end on cattle theft. Due to the practical difficulties in branding the animals and also fails to gain the support of the public this cattle branding programme was declined by the government.

Sources and Methodology

A judicious attempt has been made in scrutinizing the sources in relevant to this study. Primary sources were consulted to ascertain the information to fulfill the objectives of the study. The Records pertaining to Judicial Department, Government Orders, Office Proceedings of District Magistrate and Police Reports were consulted in the Madurai Central Record Office and also in the Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai. Both analytical and descriptive methodology has been adopted to construct the theme and to construct the content of this study.

Objectives of the study

The present study focuses on the reconstruction of colonial history pertaining to the Madura District of Tamil Nadu. The Colonial administration had followed several strategy to sustain their administration in this district during the first and second decade of

nineteenth century. In this concern, they adopted the Cattle Branding System as an experimental measure to reduce the cattle theft prevails mostly in this region. With these background, the present article has the following objectives, they are

- To analyse the back drop for the implementation of the Cattle Branding System.
- To identify the progress of this system and its hurdles in implementation.
- To assess the causes for the failure of this programme in this district.
- To reconstruct the social history of Madura district on the base of authentic sources.

Background of the Cattle Branding System

The British administration faced two prominent critical problems other than the routine crime of theft in Madura district: one was handling the crime of cattle lifting and the other was the native *kaval* system or the *Kudikaval* system prevails among the Kallars of *Kallarnadu*. The authorities thought to prevent this type of crime otherwise it seems to be an open challenge to the police authorities and their administration in Madura district.ⁱ So the Inspector General of Police invited among the Collectors as well as the superintendent of police of every district of Madras presidency to overcome the challenge and difficulties in connection with the cattle theft. Subsequently, G.S. Bandry, Superintendent of Police of Madura district had come out with a suggestion to follow the *Radhari system* as working in Malabar. He recommended Malabar *Radhari system* as a solution to prevent the cattle theft in Madurai District. As a supplement he also quoted that he heard about the Cattle Trespass Act and witnessed the fair working of this act successfully while at visit to Ceylon in 1886. In which cattle were taken to the camp and registered their cattle in a scientific manner just to prevent their cattle from theft. G.S. Bandry put forth the above said two modes of operation against the cattle theft which generally existed in Madura district. But due to the administrative inconvenient in taking decision, they failed to implement the scheme immediately during this period. However the government made attempts to restrict the cattle theft through the local police of Madura district. But unfortunately the local police had not been able to control the cattle theft in *Kallarnadu*.

Constitution of Special Police Party

In 1906, the government established a special police party as an experimental measure in Coimbatore district exclusively to deals the crime related to the cattle-theft. The special party consisted of an Inspector, Six Sub - Inspectors, one Head Constables and eighteen Constables. The whole squad was placed under the charge of Inspector Krishna Swami Aiyar in Coimbatore district. The Special Force had followed a strategy of watching the cattle lifting criminals and their principalities in connected with related crimes. On account of their effort and strict surveillance over the cattle theft made to fall of 219 cases of cattle-theft in 1907. Subsequently, in the same year, the special police party was extended to the Palani taluk of Madura district under the same Inspector Krishnaswami Aiyar for a period of six months. During this tenure, they narrowly watched the occurrences over the cattle-theft and made a hurdle to the cattle lifters which paved the way to reduce the crime in Palani Taluk. The special party restricted the cattle-theft within its stipulated period. On account of its strict vigilance several number of charge sheets were registered under the security section against 132 Kallars of Palani Taluk in the middle of April. Out of 132 Kallars, 84 were convicted and two were discharged. The remaining cases were pending that due to the absconding of Kallars. They were escaped and stay in their neighbouring regions such as Palani, Dindugul, Nilakottai, Periyakulam, Uttamapalayam, Usilampatti and Tirumangalam regions respectively. Considering the magnitude of this work, the Government appointed a Special First Magistrate on the request of D.W.G Gowre, Inspector General of police of Madura, in connection with cattle theft in Madura district in 1907.ⁱⁱThe Government placed a Special First Magistrate on special duty for a period of six months to try the large number of cases put up by the special police force to suppress the cattle theft and the *tuppu-cooli* (Clue-hire system).

On account of the success of the special police party in Palani and Coimbatore, due to their strict vigilance over the cattle-theft, the Inspector General of Police of Madras requested to M.Hamik, the Chief secretary of government for the extension of the special Police party to the whole district of Madura or even to the thrust divisions of Kallar inhabitation in this district. He quotes the

request of the district Superintendent of police and the District Magistrates stating that there was an probability of many of the cattle-lifters have left Palani Taluk and gone back to reside in Usilampatti and Tirumangalam divisions. These region would be their original home of these Kallars from ancient time. From there, they would commit able to their depredations in Dindigul, Nilakottai, Periyakulam and Uttamapalayam divisions. Hence, the special party would be extended to Madura for an extra period of three years to watch successfully and get bound over these cattle raiders. Further, he designed a working arrangement along with an additional force to sanction a party consists of an Inspector, one Head Constables and 20 constables. In which, the Inspector should have its Headquarters at Dindigul for effective supervision of the sub-ordinates. Three constables and a Head Constables as writer and one Sub-Inspector would be employed in prosecuting cases in the office. The other Sub-Inspector would be posted in the following areas such as Palani Taluk, Usilampatti Police Division, Tirumangalam Police Division, Dindigul Taluk and Periakulam Taluk respectively.

The purposes of the formation of this special party are as follows: The men composed in the special party were required to move freely about their areas and devote themselves to collecting information about Kallar who indulge in criminal activities. Along these, they have to collect evidences against the thieves and blackmailer in their jurisdiction. The constables would be placed at the local police and made them to report to the concern Inspector of their locality. The Inspector should consolidate the information and have to prepare a list of criminal Kallars to file security cases and to follow the prosecution of security cases. He would expect to maintain a close watch over the most dangerous and active criminals beside his men. If necessary, the Inspector made travel for inspecting the work of the sub-ordinates and making his own investigation.

On account of the knowledge acquired by the Krishna swami Aiyar in Coimbatore as well as in Palani Taluk in Putting down the cattle theft D.W.G Gowie, the Inspector General of police of Madras recommended to the M.Hammik, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras to be sustain in the special party . Further, the District magistrate

quotes, “the Kallars are responsible for a large percentage of grave crime and most of the cattle-theft in the Madura district: and it is worth the while of the police to keep them check. There can be no doubt that the systematic surveillance of this community by a special force, will have a marked effect in reducing crime similar what have been achieved in Palani. The special force employed to watch the Kallar must work through his country, otherwise the suspect will pass out of view into that portion of ‘*kallarnad*’ were the force is not working well. Recent experience has proved this fact, as the Kallars had moved under pressure from Coimbatore into Palani and now from Palani southward”.

On 3rd September 1908, the Government established a special police party for the suppression of cattle-theft in Madura district under the Inspector Krishnaswami Aiyar for a period of two year as a trial progress over it. The special squad consisted of an Inspector, six sub-inspectors, one Head Constable and eighteen Constables. They were directed with the following work to put down the cattle theft. They are as follows: The special police party was inculcated to collect and disseminate all available information about Kallars. The labor of the special force work had confined to the putting up a large number of security cases on those who association with the cattle-theft crime in their jurisdiction. It must be a means of letting the Kallars witness that they were being honestly. They were effectively watched and their associates known with an intention to frustrate their depredations and to break up the relationship with *tuppucooli* agents and others association with this crime.

The special party consisted of two mode of *operendi*: as a deductive and preventing agency to serve as a powerful auxiliary to the local police and to be means of intelligently collecting the information to collected from their divisions under their special watch. Moreover, the attitudes of this work not alone in the number of security cases putting, but in the result attained by preventing and putting down burglaries and cattle thefts. In endeavoring to make the Kallars feel that they are being effectively watched and cannot go far before they would be brought to the criminal book of police record. The other work was to find the cattle lifters and thereby put a dead lock to the cattle theft profession. The

constitution of special police party had scattered themselves and started to gather relevant information in connection with cattle theft in Madura district. In a short span of time, this special force collected evidences against the thieves and black mailers of Kallarnadu and charged them under the security sections of the Criminal procedure Code. Consequently, the period of the Special First Class Magistrate was extended from March of 1908, in order to dispose the cases charged by the Special Police Party.

Implementation of cattle Branding System

The government instituted the cattle branding system as an experiment measure in Madura Taluk at the last quarter of the year 1909. Subsequently, the branding system was implemented in Madura Taluk of Madura district on 21st September 1910. The basic principle of this system was to solve the issues related with cattle theft and to reduce the crime rate in this district. An intention behind this was to control the Kallars who have been a challenge to the police in dealing with cattle theft in their localities of *kallarnadu* thereby made a distress to their obnoxious activities of Kallars in this concern. The same system of branding of cattle was also extended divisions of Palani, Didigul, Thirumangalam and Periyakulam respectively in October 1910 for a period of three months. Due to the progress of improvement towards cattle branding in other region of Madura District, it also extended to Uthamapalayam division in January 1911.

Progress of Cattle Branding System

The cattle branding system was found to be successful in the initial stage of implementation in Madura Taluk. G.W.Lane, the District superintend of Police of Madura has submitted his report to the Inspector General of Madras reported about the progress of cattle branding in this district. In which, he affirmed that through this system seven hundred and

seventy cattle were branded in the Madura Division by the month of September 1910 itself. Nevertheless, he emphasized that this was occurred because the Kallars had not grasped what the branding system meant to them, Viz., the deprivation of their chief means of existence – *tuppucooly*. In such a way the authorities openly admitted the exact situation prevails during the occasion of introducing this system in the core area of Kallar inhabitation.

The cattle branding registration was done by collecting fees of four *annas* per animal in Madura District. But, initially a few cattle owners came forward for this registration along with their cattle in the special camps conducted by the Tahsildars of concern area during the year of 1910. But, the branding system does not attracts the cattle owners in the direction of registration even though they knew this scheme was to protect their cattle and for them identify their cattle easy if it is lost. One of the most important causes for non-willingness of the cattle owner was that the fixation of fees as 4 annas for registration. They felt it was higher and hesitated to spend this 4 anna for this matter. On the other side, a fear over the Kallars if the cattle were registered, it might be unnecessarily invite troubles from the local Kallarkavalgars. Analysing the current situation and real handicap in the registration process the government had reduce the fees to enhance the rate of cattle registration.

The government reduces the fees rate for registration of cattle for a rate of 2 annas in January 1911. In some cases, the public were suffered to pay the full fees of 2 annas as whole during the registration. In such instance, the government permitted them to register their cattle with what the sum of fees they possessed and the remaining as credit on condition to pay it later.ⁱⁱⁱSuch concession was provided mainly to encourage the owners to register their cattle and thereby adding an impetus to this programme towards vigorous of action. The tabular column shows this

Division	Amount collected Rs – Anna - Paise	Amount of expenditure Rs – Anna - Paise	Amount remitted to the HQ office Rs – Anna -Paise	Arrears of fees to be collected Rs – Anna - Paise
Madura Taluk	936-14-0	692-11-11	294-2-1	--
Dindigul Taluk	573-10-0	452-014-9	120-0-0	0-11-3
Palani Taluk	535-0-0	340-4-11	180-0-0	14-1-11
Tirumangalam Taluk	217-4-0	85-14-0	130-1-0	1-5-0

Periyakulam Taluk	351-4-0	255-14-3	125-5-9	--
Uthamapalayam Taluk	862-8-0	627-7-9	226-15-0	8-1-3
Total				24-12-7

Sources: *Madura District Police Administrative Report, 1911*

In Madurai district, the Uthamapalayam Division has always been happy hunting ground of the Thirumangalam cattle lifting Kallars. Hence, the new cattle branding system received welcome among the villagers in this division and also they appreciate the means adopted for preventing their cattle being stolen. The cattle branding system was strictly adhered in this division with an assistance of police during the year of 1911. But on contrary, the branding system had come to the deadlock in Thirumangalam Division and the people in this division openly denied branding their cattle. Since, majority the population were Kallars and at all the same time they don't want to incur the displeasure of the Kallars. An account of the fear, both the Kallars and Non-Kallars disfavoured this new system stating that it would cause damages in the body of their cattle. At the same time, then and there, the cattle branding have been identified its triumph especially in Palani Taluk of Madura district. For instance, In Kallimanthaiyam station limit a branded bullock worth of rupees sixty six was made away with but that cattle lifters shortly returned the same on finding that the animal was branded. In another instance, two branded bullocks were stolen and were set free in the morning as soon as the thieves discovered they were branded animal. In another case three pairs of branded and one pair of unbranded bullocks were kept in a cattle shed, but in this case thieves entered the shed and stole the unbranded pair only. The above fact evidently pictured that the branding system has made an

impact among the Kallar cattle lifter in Madura District but at the same time it had been unsuccessful in other areas rather than Palani Taluk of this district. However, the operation of branding of cattle was in progress with encouragement of village *Munisif*. The Sub-Magistrates and Tahsildars explained about the advantages of the system to the ryots by conducting special awareness camps in various quarters of Madura District. On account of these the notion over the registration of cattle in the camp partly achieved by the colonial administration in this district. The following statement explicates the number of cattle registered in every division as after the effort of the authorities in concern divisions since

Divisions	1909	1910	1911
Madura Taluk	205	1985	5135
Dindigul Taluk	-	1948	3600
Palani Taluk	-	2461	2610
Tirumangalam Taluk	-	823	915
Periyakulam Taluk	-	261	4028
Uthamapalayam Taluk	-	-	7476
Grand Total	205	7478	23774

Source: *Judicial Department, 1911*

On one side, the registration of cattle branding has been successfully applied in different taluks of Madura District with adequate alteration on its implementation by the government. On the other side, the cattle lifting cases had also been registered in the records of the police administration. For instance, the table would clearly depict the number of cases registered in every divisional stations for the year 1909, 1910 and 1911.

Circle or Divisions	1909		1910		1911
	Upto 30th June	Upto 31st Dec	Upto 30th June	Upto 31st Dec	
C or Madurai Taluk	15	27	13	20	20
H1 or Tirumangalam Taluk	5	4	2	6	8
D or Dindigul Taluk	13	15	9	22	13
F1 or Palani Taluk	47	54	29	45	47
G1 or Periyakulam Taluk	23	19	20	21	8
G2 or Uthamapalayam Taluk	10	17	26	22	15
Total number of cattle theft cases	113	136	99	136	111

Source: *Judicial Department, 1911*.

From the above table, it evidently illustrates that the cattle-lifting incidents in Tirumangalam Division and Periyakulam Division have certainly decreased due to the strict adherence in the application of the branding system by the administrators. The branding of cattle was started in Uttamapalayam taluk in January 1911 onwards only and therefore there was a decrease in cattle theft case in this division. As an important aspect to be noted in the above illustration that the Madura Division too suffered in controlling the cattle lifting. According to the registration census, 5,135 cattle have been registered in Madura Taluk but it evident there was no practical decrease in cattle theft.^{iv}The observation is that the Madura Division faced its own hindrances from Kallars, since they predominantly inhabited in this division. However, the cattle branding system was useful to cattle owner and it shows a positive sign in controlling the crime over cattle theft. Moreover, in fact, the Kallars were afraid of steeling the branded cattle and therefore such decrease would otherwise obviously there could be an increase in the cattle theft.

The main intention of the government for introducing the branding system was to manage the obnoxious activities and to diminish Kallars taking part in cattle theft. But the basic intention to kept surveillance over Kallars in Kallarnadu seem that much of success. Perhaps, in certain divisions of Madura District, the system provides an impression that it was quite working successfully in general, but on other side, this branding system fails to certain extend. So, the government had identified the flaws in the system through a review among the authorities involved in this programme. They arrived three valid causes for the above said problem. One of the cause was rate of fees was higher for branding the animals (4 *annas*). The branding of large size symbol would cause damages to the cattle which made to hesitate the cattle owner and the fear of public against the Kallars. Considering these difficulties the government reduces the fees for branding to an *anna* per head of cattle and also advised to brand the symbol on the side of the face. The design also reduced to a minimum in size and it would minimized the damage to the hide. Besides, they cattle owners were assured that don't afraid of Kallars, the government would

curtailed their criminal activities through police and its other mechanism. With these changes, the cattle branding system was further extended for two more years in Madurai District from 20th December 1911 onwards with certain alteration in registration. But the new system had faced certain difficulties in the applications. It was quite impracticable to apply the brand to the animal's chick. If suppose any misplace or wrong application of the branding heated iron at the cheek due to the animal's struggle and great difficulty in keeping it head down cannot be rectified as the available space for branding on the side of the face was so limited.

Branding Design to Cattle Registration

The government had come out with a scientific method of branding the cattle in this scheme. In which, the programme scheduled to use both alphabet and numerical designs in branding the cattle. The branded cattle had the details such as.

- a. The initial letter of the District
- b. The initial letter of the Taluk.
- c. The alphabetical letter to denote thousands.

The above design denotes that the bull was branded and registered as number 5356 in Tirumangalam Taluk and Madurai district. The actual size of individual branding letters and figured varies from 3 to 4 inches in length and from one and half and two and half inches in the breath. The actual length of a complete brand was eight and half inches and its breath eight inches. A certain space was left between each letters of figures, otherwise the skin all peels off and the mark left was blurred and indistinct. Therefore branding irons could not be well be reduced in mean time, as an alternate to the orthodox system of using hot iron was replace by a chemical branding of cattle system. The system was successfully implemented by Dr. Sturges in Ceylon. This System was recognized and applied in 1913. As per the system, practically, the cattle suffered no pain, whatever, and the time required for heeling was very short span. The marks left after the operation seems indelible. But the efforts of the government were seems to be questionable in the application among the Kallars of a Madurai District. Nevertheless, the government had taken several steps to dismantle the involvement of the selective Kallars in cattle-lifting crime but all the attempts seems to be vein. The basic cause for the ineffectiveness of the system was failing in getting reorganization

among the public in branding the cattle. The villagers were also aware of the consequences of the branding cattle, in some cases, they witnessed that if any of the cattle were lost and it was immediately slaughtered and even consumption of it was to some extent prevalent among the Kallars. It resulted among the owners who supposed to lose his cattle totally instead of being sold for half of the value in the name *tuppu-coolyto* their fellow Kallars. The District Magistrate of Madura had not satisfied with the registration of cattle in this district. According to the cattle census of 1918 nearly 289954 cattle were existing in Madura district but unto this nearly 23774 cattle were registered in all the divisions of this district. Hence, the branding system had lose its practical creditability among the peoples of this district. Therefore, the cattle branding system was abolished in 1920.

Conclusion

The Cattle Branding System was put into operation as a trial method to restrict and to reduce the cattle theft in Madura district. The government branded the cattle by registering symbols on the body of animals with an intention to identify that animal if it is lost or to rescue from the theft. The programme of registration of cattle had failed to invite the attraction of cattle owners due their fear over their animal would get injury and they unwanted to get the trouble from the Kallar *kavalgars* of this region. As a result of these, the rate of cattle registration was decreased when compare with the existing cattle. Hence the government put an end to the cattle branding system in Madura District

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