



SUPREMACY OF DUTCH IN TRAVANCORE (1700-1753)



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ABSTRACT

Travancore, a premier princely state of south India politically, occupied an important place in Travancore history. On the eve of the eighteenth century the erstwhile state Travancore was almost like a political Kaleidoscope which was greatly disturbed by internal and external dissensions. The internal feuds coupled with machinations of the European powers. Struggled for political supremacy

in Travancore especially the Dutch from 1700 to 1753 A.D. was noted worthy in the history of the state. In this context, this paper high lights the part of the Dutch to attain the political supremacy in Travancore.

KEYWORDS

Travancore, Kulachal, Dutch Army, Ettuveetil Pillamar, Marthanda Varma, Elayadathu Swarupam

RESEARCH PAPER

Travancore the princely state became an attractive for the colonists of the west from seventeenth century onwards. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the English developed commercial relations with the state of Travancore¹. Among the Europeans the Portuguese

were the first to develop commercial contacts with the princes, and establish and fortress in the regions². Their possessions were taken over by the later adventurers, the Dutch³.

The aim of the Dutch in the beginning of the seventeenth century was to take over the whole of the Portuguese trading empire in Asia. Their policies were therefore less forceful and less impetuous than those of the Portuguese in Travancore. Though they made their first contacts with the princes of Kerala early in the seventeenth century and continued friendly relations with them for half a century, it was until 1658 A.D., when they expelled the Portuguese from Ceylon, that they finally began a serious campaign on the Malabar Coast. The Dutch established commercial settlements at Quilon, Kayamkulam, Purakkad and Kodungalur, and they occasionally interfered in the affairs of the local Rajas⁴ and they involved in wars with principalities of Travancore.

The Dutch realized that their policy of non-interference was proved unsuccessful in Malabar polities. Hence stein Van Gollennesse, the Dutch Governor decided to change his policy towards the Malabar princes. Desinganadu, which had united Quilon and Kayamkulam, could act as barrier against the increased power of Travancore¹¹. The Dutch possessed a number of factories like salt fanning, dying and printing along the Malabar Coast, Cochin and Anjengo⁶. Encouraged by their successful establishment of factories and the internal squabbles in Travancore, the Dutch East India company entered into political intrigues with the kingdoms inimical to the Maharaja, with the object of maintaining the balance of power and there by perpetuating their political and commercial supremacy⁷. It created serious consequences upon Travancore. Hoping all success, Desinganadu started an open rebelling against Travancore. The king of Cochin and the prince of Thekkumkur concluded an alliance against Travancore in April 1738 A.D. The Dutch were waiting for an opportunity to attain the supremacy openly supported this anti Travancore alliances. They were greedy to fill their political supremacy through helping the enemies of Travancore⁸ In this critical situation Ettuveettil Pillamar also joined hands with the enemies of Travancore like Kayamkulam, Desinganadu and Cochin. The Travancore's occupation of Nedumangadu and Karunagappalli also added fuel to the enemies of Marthanda Varma. Eventually the enemies of Travancore succeeded in their attempts to persuade the Dutch to take a stand against Travancore. Consequently the Dutch were interfere in the internal politics of Travancore⁹.

Availing the advantage of the situation, the Dutch allied themselves with the enemies of Marthanda Varma and they allied with the Raja's of Desinganadu, Nedumangadu, Kayamkulamand. At this Cochin juncture Raja of Travancore Marthanda Varma attacked these local powers¹⁰. While being engaged in his efforts to suppress his political enemies in

Travancore, Marthanda Varma had to countenance the cunning designs of the Dutch East India Company who were trying to interfere in the internal affairs of Travancore with similar motive¹¹. To strengthen his supremacy the Raju Marthanda Varma signed a contract with the French, August 1740 A.D. In the meantime, Van, Inhaff the Dutch commander and supported to Elayadathu Swarupam against the will of Marthanda Varma¹². Hence the army at Travancore drove away the Dutch and Kayamkulam forces and recaptured Elayadathu Swarupam¹³ they tried to capture the Dutch out-posts in Travancore. The Dutch wanted teach a lesson to the ruler of Travancore.

The Dutch were attached and their store houses and factories were located. The Dutch were humiliated. The Dutch retired to Cochin¹⁴. The victory of Marthanda Varma made the survival of the Dutch in Malabar was under great threat. Under these processing circumstances, the Dutch entered into another war with Travancore¹⁵. In the mean time, large Dutch force from Cochin landed at Kulachal. This sudden move of the Dutch compelled Marthanda Varma to seek French assistance from Mahe¹⁶. As the French were involved in a contest for supremacy with the English East India Company they readily responded to the request of the Maharaja¹⁷. Travancore made an agreement with the French. Later French was not able to help Travancore, because they had to fight with a Valunnavar of Vadakara, a powerful nobleman of Kolathiri and Suzera of Mahe.

When Marthandavarma engage with northern rebellious rulers, the Dutch started a war against Travancore at Kulachal. On 27th May 1741 A.D. Marthanda Varma, advanced upon the Dutch forces at Kulachal. The war continued for two months. It was one of the most severe battles recorded in the history of the state. The Travancore country boats surrounded the Dutch with flame and attacked the Dutch mercilessly¹⁸. The Dutch at Kanyakumari under Hackert continued their efforts to break through the Travancore line. The Travancore soldiers were terrified by this unexpected action. On the Dutch side, Hackert and his officers also saw no point in keeping the Travancore lines. Therefore the council of war decided to retreat on Kanyakumari. In the Meantime, Travancore agreed to the English not to disturb the English factories of Anjengo, Vizhinjam and Edawa in Travancore and also promised to help the Raja in the event of his being attacked by any European powers²⁰. One of the clauses of the treaty provided the neutrality of the Dutch in the wars which Travancore might choose to wage against native powers. The provisions of this agreement were formally embodied with the treaty of Mavelikkara in 1753 A.D. It marked the complete humiliation of the Dutch and their eclipse as a political power in Kerala²¹.

At last the Dutch were driven out from Travancore in different stages. But the establishment of British relation with the Travancore was a milestone in the history of European powers in Travancore. In the beginning, the British, the French and the Danes made no political demands and were always willing to sell arms and ammunition to Travancore in spite of the protest of the Dutch. When the Dutch power in central Kerala was considered as difficult for them to trade, the relations between the English and the French and the local powers were customarily excellent. As the days passed the Dutch paved the way for the English East India Company took attempts to infiltrate into the politics of the native states.

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