



RETHINKING DUTCH TRADE SETTLEMENTS IN TRAVANCORE

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ABSTRACT:

In the millennium after 300 BC, the western Indian Ocean emerged as a main hub of Old World exchange. Study of this commerce long depended on separate regional archaeologies and a handful of literary sources with Western/Roman bias. A recent surge in scholarly interest has led to a vast increase in data that has fostered a more balanced understanding of the commercial, human, and material aspects of ancient Indian Ocean trade. This review summarizes recent research on the topic and assesses its significance to wider scholarly debates on scale, organization, connectivity, agency, and social cohesion in ancient trade and exchange. Keywords Western Indian Ocean · Trade · Exchange · Connectivity · Identity · Early Historic period · Pre-Islamic period · Classical period · Late antiquity Introduction On rare occasions, even modern archaeology takes on the characteristics of exploration and sensational discovery. The sanctuary contained a large number of graffiti in South Arabian, Indian Brahmi, Ethiopic Ge'ez, and Greek script, as well as an inscribed tablet in Palmyrene Aramaic, giving a date corresponding to AD 257–258 and in the centuries around the turn of the first millennium AD.

KEYWORDS:

Dutch, Travancore, Ceylon, Quilon, Dutch Ship, Fanams, Anjengo Fort, Vizhinjam, Kottarmerchants, Pepper.

INTRODUCTION

After AD 23 so many merchant travelers, missionaries, apostles and many commanders visited Quilon, Pliny, St. Thomas, Mar Sabor and Mar Proth, Marcopolo, Ibn Battuta and Zheng He are few of them. Pliny mentioned about the port city of Quilon and evolved political and trade centre during Kulashekhara dynasty under Venad.

On March 20, 1602 A.D, the amalgamation of as many fifteen companies with headquarters in the Netherlands, engaged maritime trade with East. The United Company of Netherlands was very powerful organisation. It was made up of six chambers which traded each with its own capital but pooled their profits and

losses. The Amsterdam chamber which was one of the most important, appointed six of the seventeen Directors who held office for life. But the Assembly of the Noble Lords of the seventeen which met three times a year was concerned only with the general lines of policy. The Dutch reached Malabar about the end of April 1603 A.D.

Travancore was a premier princely state situated at the Southern most part of the Indian Sub-Continent. The princely kingdom traces its history from the early period. During the ancient period it formed an integral part of the early Tamilakam. Being a part and parcel of the erstwhile Sangam Age its society, polity, economy, culture, etc were very much associated with the ancient Dravidians. Thereafter it underwent far reaching changes. The advent of the Aryans led to the beginning of the caste system, slavery and regular battles.

The situation remained the same till the advent of the Europeans. Renaissance movement in Europe kindled a new wave among of the Europeans. Italy became the classical home of Renaissance. The Renaissance spirit found its manifestation among the other Europeans in the form of Geographical explorations. Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, Denmark, France etc tried their luck in the field of geographical discoveries.

Travancore remained a source of attraction to all European powers. There was competition among the European powers to cultivate friendship with the rulers of Travancore. In the course of their contest the United Dutch East India Company succeeded to establish friendship with the king of Travancore. The unfortunate Dutchmen were taken by the Portuguese to Goa where they were hanged. Utterly unable to crush their rivals by force, the Spanish, Portuguese had no effort about resorting to under hand means. Thus the first attempt made by the Dutch to trade in Malabar ended in disaster. The Dutch set about driving the Portuguese out of East Indies. The success against their Portuguese in the Indonesian waters brought them in contact with the Island of Ceylon. The Island got rid of the Portuguese with its capture by the Dutch East India Company in 1658 A.D within 60 years of their arrival; the Dutch power was ascendant in the East.

Malabar Command of the Dutch East India Company entered the field championing the cause of Elayadathu Swarupam, one of the states conquered by Travancore. They moved against Travancore without waiting for reinforcements from Batavia. The Malabar command held the field in the last stage of war. The success in the first stage encouraged the Dutch to extend their range of operation in spite of the lack of sufficient forces at their command. A small force of the Dutch East India Company was sent to the South. It landed at Kulachel and made extensive conquests. Marthanda Varma rushed to the place with a large force to prevent their advance. Finding it difficult to engage the large Travancore forces the small Dutch force withdrew to the fort at Kulachel. The Travancore forces laid the siege. The Malabar command could not send troops to succour the besieged garrison due to the inclemencies of the weather. The Dutch did not have enough forces to wedge through the blockade. The siege was effective. There was an impasse for some time. The agony of the besieged Dutch forces increased with the break out of a fire. The first consumed all the food provisions in the fort. Yet, the Dutch forces remained in the fort for two days. Finally they surrendered to the forces of Travancore on August 7, 1741 A.D due to starvation.

The Dutch continued war in the hope of regaining their lost prestige. They were wrapped up in the dreams about receiving reinforcements from Batavia. In the meanwhile the expansion of Travancore went unchecked. The Dutch found their political fortunes slipping out of their grip. To prevent further disaster they signed a treaty of peace with Travancore on May 22, 1743 A.D. The Malabar Command considered the treaty only as a truce. The

Supreme Command at Batavia was dissatisfied with the terms of the treaty. There was confusion all over the coast. The king of Travancore made capital out of the inaction of the Malabar Command and continued the wars of conquests. The Dutch scheme of regaining the lost territories never materialised without the supply of sufficient reinforcements. Meanwhile the trade of the Dutch East India Company declined sharply. The Malabar command finally found itself in a difficult situation. It had to decide either to follow the market or to force the rulers to comply with the contracts of trade. On assessing the new situation, the Dutch found that these two lines of action were unsuitable to their interests. Therefore they decided that a treaty of friendship with Travancore would save from the predicament. The peace treaty which was concluded between the Dutch East India Company and Travancore on August 15, 1753 A.D. was known as the Treaty of Mavelikkara and it became a landmark in the history of the Dutch East India Company. The king Marthanda Varma, who remained the greatest danger and threat to the imperial and colonial machinations of the Dutch East India Company passed away in 1758 A.D. Thereafter the heroic and epic resistance continued their struggles against the Dutch East India Company under the leadership of D'Lannoy and Dalawa Ramayyan led by Karthika Thirunal Bala Varma who ascended the throne of Travancore immediately after the sad demise of king Marthanda Varma.

The United Dutch East India Company formed in 1602 A.D. tried for the establishment of commercial relations with India. In the course of their attempts to find out the most suitable centre of trade they were attracted by the land of Travancore. Travancore occupied a prominent place among the princely states of India with its larger area, larger revenue, larger military force, political disunity, continuous history and cultural traditions. It lies in the extreme south of the Peninsular bounded by Cochin and Coimbatore, Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli on the east, Indian Ocean on the south and Arabian Sea on the west. It forms an irregular triangle with its apex at Cape Comorin in between $8^{\circ} 4'$ and $10^{\circ} 21'$ north latitude and 76° and 77° east longitude. On October 29, 1604 A.D. a Dutch ship under the command of Stevan Vander Hanghan, first Dutch Admiral for Eastern trade between India and Netherlands was invited by the Cochin king. The Dutch captured places such as Cannanore, Dharmapuram, Vadamkara, Kayamkulam, Calicut, Cochin, Purakkad and Quilon for obtaining pepper. It brought out severe conflict between the Portuguese and Dutch which affected their permanent settlement on the Malabar coast. The king of Quilon promised to the Dutch and the King of Travancore to conclude a treaty with the Dutch against the king of Cochin. In 1650 A.D. at Quilon where a warehouse was built with the assistance of the Dutch but the relation with the Portuguese continued to be tense and made a surprise attack on their lodge and set it on fire and captured the Dutch company's vessel loaded with goods on its way to Malabar. The Batavia Government had decided to build a strong and defensive stone building at Kayamkulam which helped to damp the interest of the Dutch authorities in the continuance of the Malabar pepper trade and emerged Dutch as a commercial power to be reckoned with Malabar politics and followed a policy of aggression against the Portuguese. But the Malabar trade was left to judgement of the Governor of Ceylon but the Batavia Government were in a position to equip a strong fort for the capture of Colombo from the Portuguese. The danger to their strong-hold on the Malabar coast from the Dutch became imminent. The capture of Quilon on September 16, 1657 A.D. by Van Goens was the first achievement of his military expedition. Both Quilon and Travancore assured to the Dutch the control of the pepper trade in that region. On February 10, 1661 A.D. Vander Maiden, the Dutch Governor after consultations with the Zamorin of Calicut started the attack upon Pallipattin. The capture of Cochin in 1663 A.D. was the most important achievement of the Dutch as a commercial power. Portuguese surrendered to the Dutch and forced the ruler of Kolathiri to conclude a peace treaty granting freedom of trade. The continuous

quarrels among princely and their interference with the European powers had troubled the position of the Dutch and got some allies such as Cochin, Tekkumkur, Vadakkumkur, Chembakasseri, Mangattu and Pappinivattam.

Marten Huysman, the Dutch Governor and the king of Cochin made a new treaty on November 21, 1678 A.D whereby the Cochin was virtually handed over to the Dutch and compelled to interfere openly to take the management of the affairs of the Cochin kingdom where the Dutch laid the foundation of their power in Malabar had overthrown the Portuguese power and succeeded in their maritime and commercial supremacy in Eastern waters. After establishing their power over Malabar the Dutch turned their attention towards the southern part from Attingal. Despite the treaty guaranteeing the exclusion of other European nations from her territory the Rani of Attingal permitted the English to build a fort at Anjengo.

As a result disagreements broke out between the Rani of Attingal and the Dutch Company but the appearance of different European competitors added the troubles of the Dutch of these nations such as English, French, Danes and Portuguese. The Zamorin of Calicut invaded northern part of Cochin and adopted two princes of Tekkumkur. The Dutch soon established their commercial supremacy over Quilon and turned their attention towards Travancore.

The Cochin commander, however, saw nothing in Dutch involvement in Travancore politics and advised the ruler of Desinganadu not to accept the crown because of nobles could be relied on. The Ettuveetil Pillamar, Nair Madambimar, Yogakkars and the Madurai Nayaks had some upperhands in the affairs of Travancore. They preferred to stay neutral and refused to comply with Desinganadu's requests for help to obtain Travancore throne. In 1721 A.D Attingal Rebellion broke out between the local people and the British. It was a calculated attempt on the part of the Attingal people against the British. In September 1722 A.D the Rani of Attingal concluded a contact with the English in which she had promised that perpetrators of the Attingal massacre were to be punished. The supply of pepper was also guaranteed on April 25, 1723 A.D Rama Varma the ruler of Travancore offered English factory at Kulachel and concluded a treaty with the English East India Company, offering the English an opportunity to take revenge for Attingal massacre. During this period in Travancore some feudalistic elements had upper hands in the affairs of the kingdom so with the advice of his nephew Marthanda Varma he hired Maravar cavalry from the Coromandal Coast. The Maravar forces enabled Rama Varma to become independent from the Nair militia of the Ettuvittil Pillamars. The English were prepared to give loans to Rama Varma because they hoped to obtain trade privileges. The Ettuvittil Pillamars who realised the fact that Rama Varma had only survived with the English help. Rama Varma offered the English as a compensation for their loans, of his newly built fortress of Karipatanam, south of Kulachel caused conflict with Ettuvittil Pillamar. Ramavarma had no choice but to make all possible effort and sent a large force to Attingal with the support of the Dutch and French the main rivals of the English who had supported the pillamars. On February 9, 1729 A.D Rama Varma died of small pox and succeeded by young prince called Marthanda Varma the ruler of Travancore.

DUTCH TRADE SETTLEMENTS

Among other European nations the Dutch had established trade and commercial relations with Travvanore from earliest times remained a source of attraction to all the European powers. There was competition among the European powers to cultivate friendship with the rulers of Travancore¹. In the course of their contest the United Dutch East India Company succeeded to establish friendship with the King of Travancore. The Dutch were full of zeal and energy after their freedom from the yoke of Spain the sixteenth century. They forged rapidly ahead leaving behind other European powers. They sent ships to different parts of the world seeking trade. Some of the ships sailed to east in search of land and wealth. These visits convinced the Dutch that such expeditions were profitable.²

Kottar was an ancient trade centre in Venad Kingdom during period of Cheras and Pandyas at various times, Palayaared (Pahrili river) flows across the Kumari Kadam has an acute bend near boat harbor and people called it Askottam Aaru (bent river). The trade centre was established on the banks of the Pahrili river. The Roman naturalist Pliny (23-79AD) mentions Kottar as commercial metropolis having trade links with Roman merchants.³ An inscription with the information of Kottar was first found in Kommandiyamman temple located at Vadasery. Inscription was carved during 18th ruling year of Rajarajachozhan in AD 1003, 15 of 19 inscriptions found at Zozhapuram, Sozharaja temple call this name as Thiru Kotaaru and Kottar⁴. These inscriptions were the period of Rajendrachozhan, Kulothungachozhan, Venattumannan, Veera Kerala Varman, Parakirama Pandyan. Inscription from Puravaseri Perumal temple of 12th century and from Pudukkiramam Azhagiya Manavala Perumal as Kottar⁵. The 12th century inscription found from Talapathy Samuthiram Naganadha temple located in the Highways of Tirunelveli- Trivandrum highway remarks Kottaru Peruvazhi 4 of the 7 inscriptions found Vadi Veswaram Azhagamman temple also call as city as Kottar⁶. From the inscription carved during 15th – 16th century built Vadiveeswaram in 14th century inscriptions found at Pudukkiram manavala Perumal temple tells about Kottar. St. Francis Xavier the great Roman Catholic Missionary came to Kottar in AD 1544 started missionary work in the region keeping Kottar as its base⁷.

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The Dutch factory was started at Edava. Another factory store house at Kollachy. Supplied two lakhs of weight of pepper. The synod of Diamper in 1599 was the last great event in the history of the nation in Malabar. The conquest of Ceylon completed 1658 and 1660 powerful fleet under the commander Admiral Vaneons started in Malabar replacing Raja Veera Kerala Varma of Cochin on his throne. The Dutch exact custom for all the goods carry of the sea the Dutch will leave nothing an attempted to engross the spice trade. But the most important case of the decline of the Dutch supremacy in Malabar was the recuvuiys war that company carried against Maharaja Marthandavarma of Travancore in the 17th century⁹.

The English East India company also followed the Dutch method of Triangular Trade in early 1600's. In 1601 A.D then Travancore king Ravivarma Kulasekhara Perumal started the construction of Padmanabhapuram Palace. He ruled Venad between 1592-1609 AD capital of Venad kingdom was Kollam formation of Venad kingdom was 8th to 9th century AD. Religion was Hinduism. Malayalam, Tamil, Sanskrit were the languages of Venad. The rulers of Venad kingdom was trace its ancestry related to the chieftains to any lineage of the early

historic South India from 1st to 4th century AD¹⁰. The Dutch had established trade relations with Quilon, Cochin, Alleppey, Ayalotta, Chandramangalam, Pappinivattom, Ponnani, Pallipuram, Changanore etc. Traded commodities were textiles, Pepper and yarn from India, cinnamon, cardamom and gems from Sri Lanka some were traded only over short distance while others travelled greater distance. They had also trade relations with Indonesia, China and Japan. The Dutch landed on Malabar coast for spice trade. Trading normal competitive forms. Historically the Dutch have been experts in sea and trading centres were owned by Travancore monarchs. Observed before that Travancore King was the party to the treaty of 1664 with the Dutch East India company. Soon after the relations between to powers became considerably strained. The English had first occupied Vizhijam and Kovalam but after the factory of Anjengo, was built in 1695 that became the centre of English trade in Venad¹¹. Dutch had an important factory at Thengapattanam and Tuticorian. The Dutch shown consideration in the Maharajas court some English marchant seized Brahmin Pandit and campled him to shave the beards of their slaves, in return which the native blockaded the port of Anjengo, which inflicted heavy loss upon the company.¹²

Rijcklof van Goens was the Governor of Ceylon an Governor General of Dutch East India Company. He was the Governor of Ceylon on 12th May 1660 to 1661, During the Dutch period of Ceylon he was also served as Council Member of India in 1675¹¹. The Dutch had established trade relations with Quilon. Quilon became the Dutch Colony (1661-1663) Travancore anams and chakram was a type of money singular unit of currency during medieval Travancore. During the time of Ramavarma the ruler of Travancore 1663-1672. 1667 the Kochi fort was major landmark of the Dutch. Sooner the warehouses, of Kollam, Kayamkulam, Kodungalloor, Kannur and Chettuvai. As per official records the trade centres existed in 20 places in Malabar.¹³

During 1673-77 Van Rhee de became the Dutch the Governor General of Kochi. Adithya Varma ruled Venad from 1672-1677. Few records at the Kerala state Archives on Travancore dealings with tobacco demonstrates changes from late-eighteenth century to mid-to-late Nineteenth century as first an agricultural import and later as a staple commodity in the slote. A regional trade network was serviced by smaller ships that called along coastal trading routes various ports through out the region¹⁴. The goods were then collected in warehouses in protected strong holds much larger return ships of 500 to 1000 tons were used for the long haul which included a stop over cap town. Transport through land and water after the arrival of the Dutch in 1663. Kochi controlled maritime trade.¹⁵ The ware houses were built for their trade and few of these structures still stand along the coast of Vembanad lake the place were river periyar flows into the Arabian sea. Goods would be brought in on boats and transferred to foreign ships that plied this trade route usually spices like pepper and cinnamon were brought in from other parts and shipped across the world.

In 1662 Cranganore and Caochin were taken from the Portuguese made the Dutch got trade settlements in Quilon, Kayamkulam, Cranganore and Cannanore and placed under the Dutch commander at Cochin. In 1667 the Dutch had monopoly of trade towards the North of Quilon. The Dutch exact custom for all the goods they carry off to sea, though they leave nothing unattempted to engross the spice trade; for none has escaped but this of pepper and cinnamon. The Dutch had concluded alliances with all the princes of Travancore and had secured them the monopoly of the entire trade. By increasing competition of other European rivals who adopted a mode of obtaining as much pepper as they wanted in the market place. The Dutch company continually insisted upon the performance of contracts that no peper should be furnished others. The Rajah of Karunagapally demanded captian Nieuhoff got quantity of peper to the Dutch company might secure. The selling of pepper to other nations was stigmatised as contraband trade ought to be put a stop to by compulsion if other means were not sufficient. But

princes themselves, even if they had will, had not power to retain their subjects from carrying on trade with other foreign nations.¹⁶

The Dutch had trade settlements in Kayamkulam, Purakkad, Chettuvai, Crangannore, Cannanore and Quilon and first of these methods and Dutch decided to retain their possessions to preserve the monopoly of pepper trade. In 1739 the Dutch Governor, Van Imhoff suggested two expedients for the retention of the trade monopoly in Trancore. Either to follow the market price in the purchase of pepper or to imprison all the refractory princes and thus and enforce their contracts.¹⁷

Thus the craze for monopoly only increased as pecuniary loss became more and more felt, and in 1740 a new treaty was concluded with the Raja of Edappally according to which he was obliged to deliver up all his pepper to the Dutch company. The only three articles of commerce Dutch got large quantities were coir, fish and salt, by dipping it several times in the sea and cut into pieces of the thickness of the length of a man's finger and sent in ships to Acheen, and cowries collected by women and put into parcels each containing about 12,000 of them. They sold chiefly alu, camphor, sugar, lead, copper and quicksilver. But the most important cause of the decline of the Dutch supremacy on the Travancore coast was the ruinous war that the Dutch company carried on against Maharajah Mathanda Varma of Travancore in the eighteenth century.¹⁸

DISCUSSION

Even in the midst of conflicts and confrontation both the people of Travancore and Netherlands were greatly benefited by their contacts. The discovery of the new sea route to the East opened commercial activities of Europeans and it led to the encounter between the Portuguese and the Dutch. After the conquest of East Indies and Ceylon the Dutch turned their attention towards Calicut, Cochin, Carangannore and Ponnani. The Dutch encouraged the cultivating of rice, coconut, indigo, revived many industries, popularised dying, encouraged trade and commerce, exported coir, cotton goods, jaggery and tamarind. The Dutch maintained Leper Asylums at Pallipuram and Vaipin. The Dutch contacts of Malayalam with foreign languages enriched vocabulary. Portuguese, Dutch, Greek, Latin and Syriac words have been borrowed due to their contact.

CONCLUSION

After the fall of the states into the hands of Marthanda Varma the Dutch trade came to stand still. The Commander of Cochin informed the King of Travancore that if he supplied pepper to other European nations it would be a violation of contracts and privileges granted to the Dutch East India Company. In 1737 A.D the high and responsible post of Dalawa was conferred upon Ramayyan, a successful servant of King Marthanda Varma. It was a combination of both those of Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief. It was the good fortune of Marthanda Varma to be served by able and faithful ministers like Krishnan Annavi, Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai and Mallan Shankaran of Palliyadi. It was at this movement that one of the princes of Elayedathu Swarupam imprisoned in Travancore escaped and demanded the restoration of her kingdom and when he refused to concede the demand of the Dutch Governor Van Imhoff personally visited the court of Marthanda Varma to press the claims of the princess. But during the interview Van Imhoff threatened to invade the kingdom of Travancore. The situation on the coast forced the Dutch to enter the war even without obtaining permission from the Supreme Government at Batavia. In the battle of Kulachel the Dutch were completely defeated and most of them were taken as prisoners. The two men whom Marthanda Varma took special notice were Eustatious D'Lannoy and Donaldi

both of them Flemish origin and D'Lannoy was appointed as the Valiakappithan(Great Captain) of Marthanda Varma's army.The Dutch and Travancore consulted on the best means of involving the English in the coming struggle and the result was the sale by the illustrious and mighty Netherland's East India Company flanked the Travancore Lines on the west.At the climax of the financial crisis of the king of Travancore was forced to seek a loan from Bombay Government,borrowed huge amounts from the bankers and merchants of other countries at high rate of interest.Thus the Dutch surrendered to Cochin ruler which Tipu had conquered.During this time of the Dutch Commander Vanspall the Dutch possessions passed into the hands to England after the outbreak of Napoleonic war in 1795 A.D and it marked the end of the Dutch power on the soil of India.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With deep sense of gratitude,I acknowledge the sincere help and able guidance of Dr.K.Rajayyan former Professor and Head, Department of History, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai who has shown great patience in helping me during the course of my research work,His encouragement has helped me to select the present topic for the research.I also provide my sincere thanks to Dr.B.Sobhanan former Professor and Head, Department of History, University of Kerala, Kariavattom, Thiruvananthapuram provide best of knowledge about the study of the topic.I sincerely record my thanks to Dr.R.Rajalingam, Associate Professor of History, S.T.Hindu College, Nagercoil who guided me to complete this study.I also record my indebtedness to Dr.A.Rajathangam, Associate Professor of History, P.G and Research Department, N.M.Christian College, Marthandam for his co-guidance and suggestions.

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