

Supremacy of the Dutch in Travancore

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Abstract

The study explores the Dutch influence in South Travancore (1806–1947), a region known for its rich cultural and geographical diversity. Travancore, located at the southern edge of the Indian subcontinent, was historically significant due to its trade and cultural exchange. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) established dominance over the region's spice trade, displacing Portuguese control and forming treaties with local rulers. The kingdom's strategic position with both coastal and land boundaries facilitated extensive trade relations, including the export of pepper, textiles, and other goods through key centers like Quilon, Cochin, and Ceylon. The arrival of Christianity and the Dutch transformed local social hierarchies and traditions, marking significant cultural shifts. The research highlights the influence of global movements like the Reformation and Renaissance, which reshaped socio-political and economic structures worldwide, extending their impact to South Travancore. The introduction of coined money and shifts in governance fostered urbanization and economic development, integrating the region into broader global trade networks. Despite limited records, the study underscores the enduring legacy of Dutch commerce, administration, and cultural exchanges in shaping Travancore's history. By examining trade patterns and socio-political changes, this paper provides a nuanced understanding of the Dutch supremacy in South Travancore and its implications for regional history.

Key words:-Trade, Christianity, Venad, Coast, Relations.

Introduction

Travancore was in the southwestern extremity of the Indian peninsula. It was situated between 8°0'4"N and 10°22'0"N latitude, and 76°0'38"E longitude. The North boundary was Cochin State and Coimbatore District, Western Ghats safeguarded the Eastern side, the Indian Ocean on the South, and the Arabian Sea at the West. The temperature and climate are changed according to the height of the region from sea level. The hilly ranges are cold and the lowland areas are mostly filled with moisture. The major seasons were wet, hot, and cold. Kalkkulam had the largest number of palmyra palms. The strip of land was always subjected to invaders and traders; because of its richness flora and fauna and the tolerance of rulers. The United Dutch India Company was established in 1602 AD at Surat in Gujarat a large city beside Tapti river for the establishment of commercial relations with India, well known for silk weaving , commercial centre.¹

Christianity and Islamism were the two Foreign religions mostly strengthened in Travancore and especially in South Travancore. Travancore was geographically divided into three ie, North Travancore, Central Travancore, and South Travancore. North Travancore

comprised the present districts of Kottayam, parts of Idukki, Ernakulam, and Alappuzha in Kerala. Pathanamthitta, Kollam, parts of Idukki, Alappuzha, and the Shenkottai area of Thirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu are included in Central Travancore. Thiruvananthapuram District of Kerala and Kanyakumari District in Tamil Nadu are together known as South Travancore. The Dutch met most friendly affair with in the officials of Zamorian of Calicut and People.² They established friendly relations with the ruling prince of India and against maritime trade Monolpoly over the Portuguse in Eastern trade, driven out because of their influence for Malabar pepper trade, the Dutch got permission from Cannanore, Dharmapuram and Badagara. Because of Portuguse influence the ruler of Kayamkulam agreed to give more pepper from Quilon and Cochin but the Dutch obtained the right of preference from the ruler of Purakkad.³

The half parts of Kerala were the part of Travancore earlier. This thesis concentrated mainly on the History of South Travancore from 1806–1947. South Travancore had derived its culture from Tamil and Malayalam. Therefore, basically, it has different ethnicity and behavioural assimilation. Moreover, today, it is very significant; because Thiruvananthapuram is part of the State of Kerala and Kanyakumari is part of the State of Tamil Nadu. These two are the pilgrim centers since time immemorial. The Dutch obtained pepper from Cannanore, Kayamkulam, Calicut and Quilon. Thus, the Dutch established permanent settlement in Malabar Coast. The Travancore Monarch also promised that his land would remain open to the Dutch East India Company. He thought is an exepedient to request for the Dutch to conclude a treaty with him so that the Dutch might remain in his land during monsoon as they had settled at Kayamkulam Therefore, their social History is important even today.⁴ The entrance of other religions, especially, Christianity shook the existed social hierarchy and the mindset of the people. The micro study about South Travancore was limited because of the unwritten and perished records. South Travancore had both coastal and land boundaries. Quilon division in the North and Tinnelveli district in the Eastern side. Therefore, South Travancore certainly had land and coastal relations with the outer world.⁵

Kingdom of Travancore is located in the Southern part of India. It is the Southernmost edge of the Indian subcontinent. It stretched over the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The kingdom of Travancore, also known as the kingdom of Thiruvithamkoor. It was ruled by the Travancore Royal family from Padmanabhapuram and later Thiruvananthapuram. Travancore was one of the most beautiful lands by her cultural assimilation and geographical veracity. Many dynasties and Foreigners ruled Travancore at different times. She also witnessed many revolts. Travancore was known as Venad in the previous period. As mentioned earlier, Travancore was ruled by various kings from different dynasties.⁶

At last, Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma united these regions as Travancore. Travancore was divided into thirty-two Mandapathumvathukkal or Taluks South Travancore was the merging of two Administrative Divisions ie, Thiruvananthapuram Division and Padmanabhapuram Division. Thiruvananthapuram division included Chirayinkil, Nedumangadu, Thiruvananthapuram North, Thiruvananthapuram South, and Neyyattinkara.⁷ Padmanabhapuram division is the mixing of Vilavankodu, Eraniel, Kalkkulam, Thoivalai, and Agastheeswaram. Each of Mandapathumvathukkal (Taluks) had subdivision called Pravarthi

or Athikaram or Pidakai. Cape Camorin or Kanyakumari was a famous pilgrim center. The Headquarters of L. M. S. was situated at Nagercoil.⁸

For administrative purpose, Travancore was divided into four divisions. The four divisions are the Southern Division, Thiruvananthapuram Division, Quilon Division, and Northern Division. The administration was done by Dewan. The major population engaged in paddy cultivation.⁹ Christian religious practices transformed in Western Europe in the 16th century. This was not just a transition but the most significant event in the Church History. The emergence of Protestant Christianity was from the Western Catholic Church, heavily influenced in the socio-political sphere of Western society in the beginning and across the globe subsequently. The Reformation was an open dissatisfaction with the abuse of the Catholic Church, with the role of the priesthood, and with ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹⁰ The demarcation of moral behaviour in the Western European Church paved the way for Reformation. Priests had mistresses and illegitimate children, ate and drank too much, and were lazy and arrogant. They taught people to practice Christian principles in their lives, but they disobeyed in a broad light, raised confusion among people. Corruption and nepotism were everywhere among the rulers. The situations and teachings of reformers simultaneously acted to open the door of Reformation.¹¹ But, the impact of men like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli cannot be properly measured; their particular cast of mind, profound emotions, and established ideas all helped the Reformation as a movement to take the path it did, and to shatter the unity of Christendom.¹² A new political structure was evolving in Europe, which created a secular state of mind. The emergence of political absolutism is the product of these changes. National states which were powerful because of their ability to impose legal tax, maintain armies, and organize staffs of officials, came into existence.¹³

There were many unchristian practices in sincerely among common Christian people such as witchcraft and many forms of superstitions. All these were enlightened by reformers. The enhancement of scientific enquiry was more supported by Protestantism, but Catholicism was more difficult in rational thinking. Therefore, the new Christian faction was helpful for economic development and technological advancement. This resulted in the religion also. Robert Bellarmine, Roman Catholic Theologian and Controversialist, argued that one of the marks of a true Church was its continuity with the missionary passion of the Apostles. Westerners remembered the prophets and the Gospelization of Christ. Renaissance is the entrance gate of the transition of World History from the Post- classical period to Modern History.¹⁴

There is sequence of events that happened at this entry gate, which transformed the world order, and influenced South Travancore greatly. Simply, it was a cultural advancement of European society from 1300 to 1600. Even though, the epicentre was in Europe, its tremendous influenced around the globe. It's not merely a change alone in cultural aspects of life but also highly influential in the aspects of socio-economic too. Renaissance is a state of mind, not a mere political situation.¹⁵ It heralded a new style for the thinking of people and widened the horizon of knowledge. In cultural domains, the influence of intellectual revitalization causes acceleration in the transition of World History. Developments in literature become more widened in this era. It can be understood from various literature forms

that originated from the Middle Ages to the New Age. There was quickening and splendid development in the field of new art. Medieval music turned into magnificent new-age music in this time. In the domain of science and technology, there were plenty of discoveries and inventions were made. Radical changes in geographical knowledge contributed to global travel and trade.¹⁶

It subsequently led to further geographical discoveries across the planet. Most of the developments occurred in the field of Physical Science. The influence of economic changes enhanced the overall quality of developments in all areas. Coined money became a major medium of transactions among commerce, industries, and other areas of life. During the closing centuries of the Middle Ages or, as they may be called, the Renaissance 5 . The transition from the barter system to coined money had a great influence on international trade. The capitalist system was emerging from serfdom and manorial economy. In the domain of the socio-political sphere, the system of ruling and collection of taxes and levies became changed after the propagation of coined money.¹⁷

Kings or princes ruled and collected money and used it for personal wants. The emergence of coined money helped them to fill their treasuries with it. It was unimaginable before this evolution of money. However, they became more organized in ruling after this development, which eventually helped people in many areas. Fundamental life was centred on villages in Middle Ages, but it turned into urban and town life later. On the other side of the world, at the closing decade of the 18th century was characterized by an Evangelical and spiritual revival in England. It's stimulated to wake up many missionary societies to spring into existence. The Reformation Movement was complex and heterogeneous. Its agenda went far beyond the reform of the church by teaching and practices. It addressed fundamental social, political, and economic issues.

Reformation and Renaissance are the result of the rethinking of mankind. Rethinking means the revision or revisiting of an existing institution, idea, or view. It can revise anything in a Modern view. The Reformation like wise. In many respects modern day Corporations are all direct descendants of the VOC model. During 17th Century institutional innovations and business practices laid the foundations for the rise of giant global corporations in subsequent centuries as a highly significant and formidable socio-politico economic force of the modern day world. The victory of Dutch against the Portuguese in Indonesian waters were brought them in with the island of Ceylon. This island expelled the Portuguese with its capture of Dutch East India Company in 1658 AD within the period of their arrival in India The funeral remains from Vattacotta in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu. D'Lannoy, his wife Margaret D'Lannoy his son Johannes DeLannoy as an important Dutch settlement in Travancore, are examined in order to explore the patterns of trade. Over all very little variation , production, consumption and exchange of goods through an integration between India and Netherland. ¹⁸

The cites suggesting that the trade contacts and commercial relations between the nations in the production and exchange of goods and ideas were resilient in the of social, political economic and cultural changes that characterised during this period. The products were generally kept in Kottar, Vizhinjam, Anjengo, Quilon and Ceylon are the major centres

of trade during the Dutch commercial supremacy over Dutch period, exact custom for all goods carry of the sea will leave nothing an attempt to engrose spice trade. Throughout its, period the residents in Travancore, generally consumed more foreign goods than did their neighbours and other European countries in 1602 to 1825 important centres Cochin, Alleppey, Ayacotta, Chandramangalam, Pappinivattom, Ponnani, Pallipuram and Crangannore. Traded Commofditities were textiles, Pepper and yarn from India Cinnamon, Cardamom, germs from Srilanka some were traded only over short distance while others travelled greater distance.

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