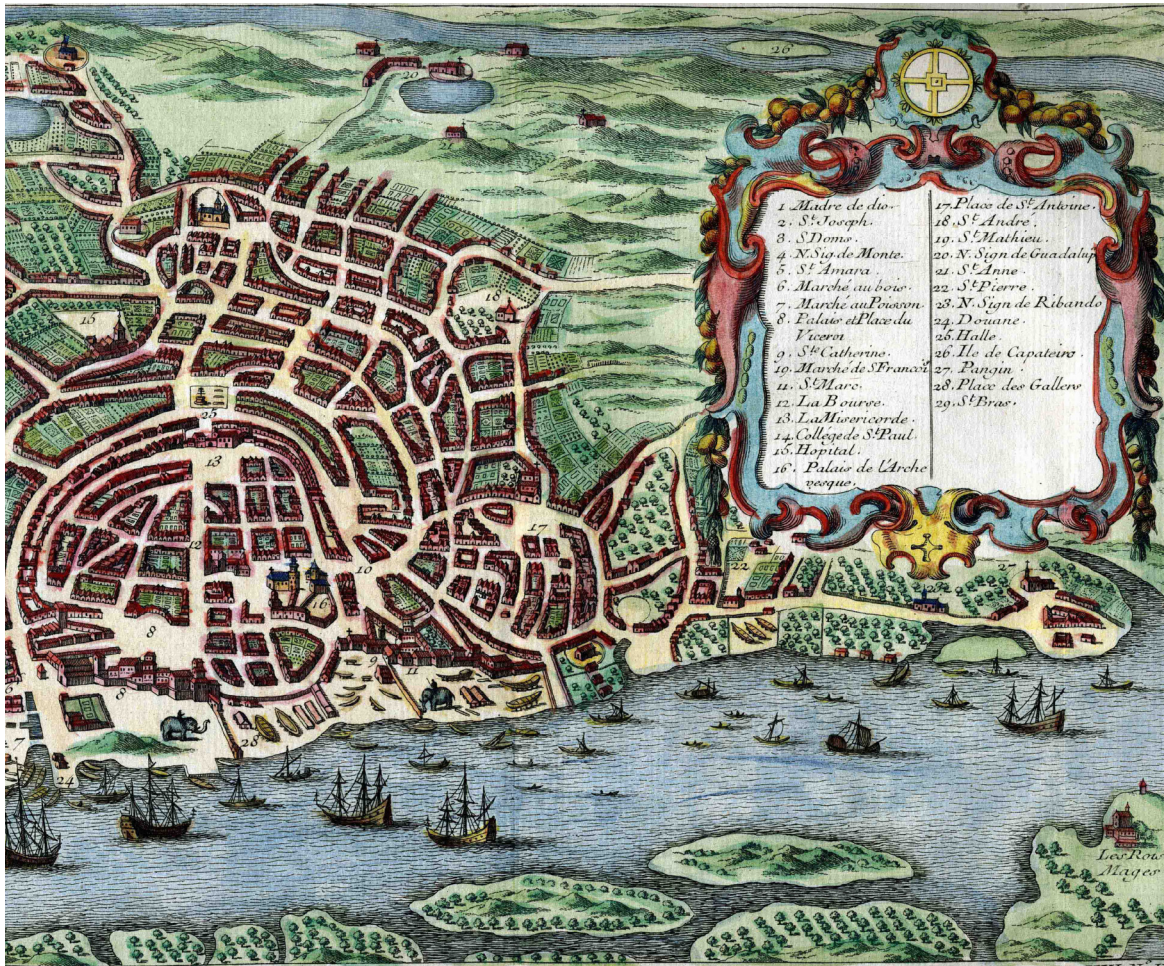


GOLDEN RESEARCH THOUGHTS

TUTICORIN UNDER THE PORTUGUESE RULE (1532 -1658 A.D): A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



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INTRODUCTION:-

Tuticorin, a port city of Tamilnadu is situated on the Eastern Coast of Thoothukudi district in South India. Geographically Tuticorin is on the North west shore of the Gulf of Mannar, near Pamben passage and between the mouth of Tamraparani and Veyppar rivers and it is a terminus of the Southern Railways. In this paper it is planned to give a small account about Tuticorin under the Portuguese rule in historical perspective.

Before the arrival of Portuguese:

Tuticorin might have been a Trading centre in the second century A.D., since Ptolemy mentions this as Sosikourai in 130 A.D. After the early Pandyas, Tuticorin might have been under the control of the later Cholas. Then it became one of the chief trading centres under the later Pandyas.¹

Paravas:

The Paravas were the original inhabitants of the seacoast of the Pandyan kingdom and their pre-occupation was pearl fishery. The Pandyan rulers were the overlords of the Paravas and obtained large revenue from pearl fisheries. The Paravas paid tribute to the successive Pandyan rulers since the latter gave protection to them.²

Arabs:

During the later Pandya period, Kadal became the Head Quarters of Arabs who were operating trade from the Malabar Coast. The Pandyan Monarchs extended great favours to the Arab merchants as done to others to facilitate the trade to be successfully conducted. The Arabs imported horses from Arabia for the Pandyan Kings and got pearls, precious stones in exchange.³ The Arabs were held in high esteem in the councils of Pandyans. This and other privileges they enjoyed in the Pandyan kingdom promoted them to think of setting down here on the fishery coast, but they even propagated their religion first through peaceful means. They also made matrimonial relations with the Paravas.⁴

The decline of the Pandya power and the humiliation the Pandyas suffered at the hands of Muslim invaders from north India gave encouragement to the Islamic chieftains to force the Paravas to embrace Islam. Moreover, the Moors, as they were called then, were very powerful on the sea and they became very stronger by the help rendered to them by the Zamorin of Calicut.⁵

Confrontation Between the Paravas and Moors:

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the Moors and their adherents took to the diving for pearls, an occupation which had hitherto been the monopoly of the Paravas of Tuticorin the native of the coast.⁶ The empire of Vijayanagar, which had by now, acquired almost the whole of South India except Travancore.⁷ Thus, Moors oppressed the Paravas and they waited for an opportunity to strike back the Moors.

The opportunity for it came not very late. At a pearl fishery held at Tuticorin, the Paravas had purposely picked up a quarrel with the Moors and killed hundreds of them. They even burnt their vessels and remained masters of the coast for some time. They were expected trouble from Moors at anytime. At this juncture, the Portuguese power in India had come to stay.

Portuguese in Tuticorin:

The Portuguese defeated the Zamorin of Calicut in 1502 A.D. and established themselves in Cochin.⁸ They were very eager to seize the South east coast and the pearl fishery therein. The time for their expansion of the South east coast was ripe.

The Paravas heard of the rising power of the Portuguese on the sea and success over the Zamorin of calicut and they decided to seek their help against the Moors.⁹

When the condition of the Tuticorin was like this, the Portuguese mission under Manuel –De- Fries sailing cape of Comarin (1523 – 25) in a bid to search for the remains of St. Thomas on the coromandal coast landed in Tuticorin.¹⁰

The Portuguese mission understood the problems faced by the Paravas against the Moors. The oppressed Paravas when approached the Portuguese mission for assistance, the mission advised the Paravas to seek the help of Portuguese Captain at Cochin. Accordingly some of the key persons among the Paravas (Called Patangattis (or) Jatitalaivaus) proceeded Cochin and appealed to the Portuguese Captain Dr.Pedro Vaz De Amaral for help. The king of Portugal John III, when informed, also ordered the Captain to provide necessary military help to the Paravas against the Moors.¹¹

On the advice of John III, the king of Portugal, the Portuguese Captain at Cochin arranged a fleet commanded by Captain Joao Froles accompanied by Micheal Vaz, the Vicar-General of the Bishop of Goa with other priests went to Tuticorin, defeated the Moors and restored pearl fishery to the Paravas. The Paravas were baptized by Micheal Vaz. The Paravas accepted as citizens of the king of Portugal in 1532. Thus the Portuguese power was established in Tuticorin.¹²

Administration of Portuguese in Tuticorin:

The political Government of Portuguese in India (Cochin) appointed a military Chief as captain to superintend the pearl fishery of Tuticorin. The Paravas of Tuticorin agreed to pay 1500 Cruzados as tax for their protection. The captain of Tuticorin obtained from each time of fisheries a profit of 6000 Rix dollars for the king of Portugal leaving the remainder of the income from the pearl fishery for the Paravas.¹³

The Paravas who continued to follow their own religion condemned the baptized Paravas. However the timely arrival of St. Francis Xavier saved the situation. St. Xavier established Tuticorin as his Head – Quarter. By his patient service among the people and miracles he believably performed, he converted the entire Paravas Community to the Christian religion in course of time. After this, the Paravas remained sincere Christians and had many monasteries in Tuticorin.¹⁴

The political Government of Portuguese kept themselves the command of Tuticorin, the pearl fishery and the sovereignty over the Paravas. The Nayaks of Madurai had become the ruler of Madurai by this time. In a short time

afterwards, the Nayaks Captured all the lower regions from Kanyakumari to Thanjavur, defeated all the Princes and local chiefs and obtained the sovereignty of all these Countries, they also wished to subject the Paravas of Tuticorin. The Portuguese opposed this. The Portuguese, often being not powerful enough effectively to resist, left lands with Priests and the Paravas and shifted their interest to the Gulf of Mannar and settled in Jaffnapatnam, from where they sent vessels to Tuticorin. This caused some disquiet as a result of which revenue of Nayaks was ruined, trade circumscribed and almost annihilated. The Nayaks of Madurai in the circumstance left Tuticorin open to the Portuguese.¹⁵

From 1563 To 1581 A.D., the Portuguese allowed the Paravas to engage in pearl fishery and trade in Tuticorin. The Moors left out of Tuticorin. The discontented

Moors who could not pursue the pearl fishery trade became sea Pirates.¹⁶

The growth of the power of Portuguese in Tuticorin caused anxiety to Nayaks of Madurai. Hence, Muthukrishnappa Nayak became a strong ally of the Maravar Country (Ramanad). It was Presumably to frighten the Paravas who acknowledged no master other than the king of Portugal. The Nayaks of Madurai sent, by about the middle of the sixteenth century, Vadugas the tax forming people of Nayaks to raid Tuticorin. These Vadugas were referred as Badugas by St. Xavier. This attempt was not successful.¹⁷

When, Thirumalai Nayak came to be power in 1623 A.D., he could not tolerate the Portuguese power in Tuticorin. So he entered into an agreement with Mudaliar Pillai Marakayar, the headman of the Moorish Community to reside near the Portuguese Government house at Tuticorin. The Portuguese did not object to this superintendency of the agent of the Nayaks of Madurai as long as it did not affect their revenue. When the Nayaks of Madurai turned their attention towards Tuticorin, there was already rivalry going on between the Portuguese and the Dutch in Tuticorin.¹⁸

The Dutch defeated the Portuguese in Tuticorin:

The peaceful and profitable trade the Portuguese had at Tuticorin evoked the jealousy of the Dutch. They made their first appearance in Ceylon in 1602 and made unsuccessful expedition to capture Tuticorin on 7th February 1649. Again in 1658 A.D. a superior fleet of Dutch entered Tuticorin harbour and succeeded in capturing it.¹⁹

Conclusion:

The Portuguese power was established in 1532 as a result of confrontation between the Paravas and the Moors. The Moors were defeated by the Portuguese. The whole Paravas were converted into Christianity. The Paravas of Tuticorin accepted the King of Portuguese as their sovereignty from 1532 to 1658 and paid taxes to Portugal from pearl fisheries.

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