CHAPTER I

EUROPEAN’S EARLY MILITARY TRANSACTIONS WITH TRAVANCORE

Nayar’s military service which commenced ever since the recorded history of Travancore gained significance during Marthandavarma’s reign (1728 - 1758) who constituted a standing army dominated by the Nayars. Since then, the Travancore army had been trained by European military officials where the majority of them were British. During the 19th and 20th century, Travancore was virtually under the control of British administration by means of commercial, political and military treaties. By the introduction of the Western System of Training, Nayar Battalions fell into the hands of British administrators, who gave less importance to the development of native military force. This was due to their previous bitter experiences with the native forces in 1721, 1804, 1809 and 1812 and the neighbouring states of Madras in the form of Vellore Mutiny 1806. European commercial rivalries among themselves and the native state of Travancore had a great impact on the Nayars, as the Nayars were the prime military force which fought against the European elements. Later the Nayar Brigade was trained by the Europeans. Their military transactions compelled the native rulers especially Rajah of Travancore to introduce western pattern of military
system. Portuguese took advantage of the mutual rivalry among various Rajahs and chiefs of different principalities above Venad and acquired forts and had their establishments at Cochin, Quilon, Cranganore and Cannanore.\(^1\) By the later half of 17th century they had to face commercial rivalry from another European nation namely Holland. The new rival uprooted Portuguese power from Ceylon by 1658 and by 1663 their possessions were taken over by the Dutch East India Company.\(^2\)

Holland was the next European country which had political, military and commercial relations with the princely state of Travancore. Like the Portuguese, the Dutch commercial traders also interfered in the internal battles of the various principalities. From south to the town of Cochin for nearly fifty years the Dutch power was established prior to the accession of Marthandavarma. Marthandavarma's annexation of Northern parts of Travancore in which the Dutch had their commercial centres affected their profits. Moreover, the Dutch had no power in Zamorin territories. Hence, the Dutch traders

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\(^1\) A. Sreedhara Menon, Kerala District Gazetteer, Quilon (Trivandrum, 1964), p.103.

\(^2\) Edward Thorton, Gazetteer of the Territories under the Government of East India Company and the Native States on the Continent of India (London, 1854), Vol. I, P.400.)
had to shift their commercial interest from North to Southern part of Travancore.³

By the fourth decade of the 18th century, the Dutch and Rajah Marthandavarma broke into open conflict. In July 1741, War of Colachel was fought between Travancore troops consisting of Nayars under Rama Iyer and the Dutch forces under their Commander D'Lannoy. The Dutch troops tried to seize Colachel a strategic port but were defeated and sued for peace. Even though the war lasted for a brief period, it had far reaching effects on the military history of Travancore. The battle was fought by the Travancore forces without any foreign assistance and hence the battle displayed the military supremacy of Travancore against European power. The battle was considered as a landmark in the annals of the Nayar Force.⁴

The notable changes in the Travancore army during the period of Marthandavarma can be attributed to one man namely D'Lannoy. Travancore was fortunate in getting the services of D'Lannoy and few other Dutch men who were captured as war prisoners. D'Lannoy laid the foundation for the introduction of Western pattern into the military system of Travancore. Marthandavarma understood D'Lannoy's potentials and the pressing need to discipline the forces on the European model. D'Lannoy joined the force as a captain and within a span of

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³ M.O. Kosy, *Dutch Power In Kerala* (New Delhi, 1989), P.5.
two decades, rose to the rank of Commander in Chief of the forces succeeding Iyyappan Marthandapillai, the native commander in chief in 1761.

D’Lannoy became one of the most trusted Commanders of the Rajah and was entitled ‘Valiyakapithan’ by Marthandavarma. Even during the days of the subsequent Rajahs, D’Lannoy became very popular and continued to render remarkable military services. It was due to the military operation of the Travancore forces under D’Lannoy against Zamorin forces in 1762 that Travancore forces won the battle and compelled the enemies to withdraw from Cochin territory. The Treaty filled the treasury with war indemnity and Travancore Rajah acquired the right to settle disputes between Cochin and Zamorin. Thus D’Lannoy operations indirectly paved the way for the decline of Nayar feudatory chiefs in Cochin as their counterparts in Travancore. He was also entrusted with the duty of fortification of the frontier areas along with Iyappa Marthandapillai Dalawa and to supervise the garrison stationed at the remote places. He also took the command of the Travancore forces stationed in Cochin to avert any further threat from Zamorin’s forces. D’Lannoy not only displayed his military efficiency during various battles fought for the security of the State, but he also instilled a sense of fear and respect among the people. He conducted regular military parades for the soldiers and thus kept the people informed

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that 'any sort of aggression would be put down with an iron hand'. He also took steps to strengthen the Travancore military force by recruiting men of his own race in different coups known as pully pattalam, supplemented by the artillery force. From 1751, until his death in 1777 at the age of 63 he devoted his entire life for the cause of the State. His death was deeply mourned not only by the soldiers but also by the general public.\(^6\)

The Colachel war helped Marthandavarma to proceed further for his northern expedition. The defeated Dutch wanted to regain their lost position by joining with the rival ruler of Travancore, namely Kayamkulam Rajah and started their expedition against Marthanda Varma to capture Killimanoor fort. Marthandavarma with the assistance of Rama Iyer and D'Lannoy defeated the combined forces. The war ended in the Treaty of Manner signed in 1742 between Travancore and defeated Kayamkulam Rajah.\(^7\) The Dutch political supremacy also began to decline when their establishment at Quilon, Purakkad and Kayamkulam were engulfed by Travancore. The agreement between Dutch and Travancore in 1748 were included in the commercial and military Treaty of 1753 signed at Mavelikkara.\(^8\)

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Thus the reign of Marthandavarma gave a new impetus to the military system of Travancore. Being an efficient and enlightened Rajah he was the first monarch to have realized the need for an efficient standing army. Rajah had to face threats from the Eastern region, from his neighbouring chieftains and also from the Dutch forces. He took measures to fortify his frontier area and constructed new forts. Some of those forts on the southern region of Travancore like Tovala before renovation was utilised by the Nayak forces to make a way through the fertile land of Nanchinad. The invaders also gave troubles to the defenseless inhabitants and caused devastation in the villages. After having completed his fortification, he stationed his forces at those strategic places in order to check internal troubles and also avoid major threat from any external forces. Stationing of an army at the forts had become highly essential, for he could be free from depending upon any mercenary forces. Those forces when called for service had to paid a huge some of money which brought additional financial burden to the state.9 The Dutch company had to face commercial rivalry from other European nations like the French and the English East India Company. Dutch had also to sell two of their most vulnerable forts namely, Cranganore and Ayakotta to Travancore.10 By the close of the 18th century the Dutch had only Dutch Cochin and Tenkasser near Quilon under their control. In the European rivalry the involvement of Holland to the side of Napoleon had its repercussions in the relationship


between the Dutch and the English in Travancore. All the Dutch East India Company's possessions were taken by the English, and the Dutch flag ceased to fly over Malabar from 19th October 1795.\(^{11}\)

Denmark was the third European country which had political and trade relations with Travancore. On account of rivalry from the English East India Company, the Danes had to shift their interest from Etava to Colachel. Danes had arms deal with Travancore and their rival Carnatic Nawab. In 1772 Danish Company's monopoly in trade with India was cancelled. By the Treaty of 1795 between East India Company and Travancore, Rajah Ramavarma was deprived from stationing any foreign national in his territory without the knowledge of the English. That resulted in the decline of the Danish power in Travancore.\(^{12}\)

Like other European settlers in India, the French Company too had political, commercial and military relations with Travancore, which had its repercussions in the form of wars with other European settlers as well as the native states.

\(^{11}\) P.C. Alexander, *The Dutch In Malabar* (Annamalai Nagar, 1946), p.120 .

French Council were determined to have their settlement at Colachel and made efforts to convince the Travancore Rajah for the settlement.\textsuperscript{13} The growing popularity of the French faction at the Royal Court greatly worried the English East India Company. The Company's representatives brought to the knowledge of the Travancore Rajah, Adityavarma the former Treaty commitments and English interest at Colachel. The Nayar revolt of 1721 resulted in the Treaty terms of 1723 by which the Travancore Rajah Constructed forts for the English East India Company at Colachel. The Provision of arms were to be supplied by the Company, and the English were given a monopoly in pepper trade.\textsuperscript{14}

The rivalries between French and the English did not much concern Travancore Rajahs. They did not want to create any ill feelings between Travancore and those nations with which they had fair deal in pepper and arms contract. In the first Anglo-French war of 1746-48, Rajah of Travancore sent forces to assist the British forces against the French troops. The forces consisted of several Battalions of Nayars. At the end of the war when Madras fell to the French troops the families


of the British Officers and soldiers were taken to Chirakkal palace, in North Malabar for safety.\textsuperscript{15} The outbreak of second round of trouble in 1756 witnessed the fall of Pondicherry and Mahe on 16th and 31st of January, 1761. However, by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Mahe was restored to the French in 1765.\textsuperscript{16}

Among the European Companies in India, the British became the supreme power by dint of its military activities and political diplomacy. That paved the way for the subjugation of other European companies like the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes, the French as well as the native kingdoms. In order to establish their power in the Indian territory the British waged a series of wars and annexed several states with their political weapon of divide and rule. This resulted in a number of treaties and agreements with the native states as well as the other European traders in India. The English military operations and diplomacy paved the way for the change of political and military systems and customs of the native ruling family who lost their power and prestige within their country and their neighbouring states.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Compiled by The Regional Records Survey Committee (Trivandrum, 1970), p.9.
In the initial days the English East India Company was a peace seeking commercial trader, confined to their activities in their factory at Anjengo or Tellicherry and dealt in arms deal and pepper trade. They had no political, territorial or military interest, but by the later half of the 18th century, there were marked changes in the political and military interests of the English Company. That resulted in a series of political and military Treaties signed by the Company with the Rajah of Travancore. Rajah Ramavarma requested the Madras Government to send their Officers to give instructions to his Battalions in drill and discipline. The Madras Government refused the request on the ground that they had no provisions to send their Officers to impart instruction to soldiers of the native Rajah who did not come under their authority. Hence Rajah Ramavarma made further request for atleast two to three Battalions to be stationed at his frontier region to avert any sort of threat from the Mysorean forces. It was under these circumstances that the Rajah signed the Agreement in 1788 with the Company's officials. Two Battalions of Company's troops were stationed on the frontier of Travancore. These Battalions were commanded only by European Officers, and Captain Knox took the command. A civil Officer acted as a mediator to

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conduct transactions between the Madras Government and the Rajah of Travancore.'

These Battalions were paid by the Travancore State in cash or in pepper. According to the agreement, the Company soldiers were stationed for the Rajah's security. The agreement consumed a lot of financial burden upon the state. But the Rajah agreed to it for he realized that the threat from Tippu's forces could even deprive him of his political, military, and territorial supremacy as that of his counterpart, Zamorin of Calicut.

For each Battalion of Company's Sepoys, in times of peace, the Rajah had to spend 1,750 star pagodas, 40 fanams and 40 cash. When the Battalions were called for service by the Rajah, the state had to pay a batta allowance at the rate of 998 star pagodas, 6 fanams and 12 cash. For additional number of European soldiers the amount was borne by the Company's Government. The Rajah provided the materials required for the construction of the building for the soldiers and the amount was paid by the company. Despite many restrictions these soldiers were answerable only to Madras Government from whom they took orders. The agreement of 1788

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was significant for it marked the beginning of sending the English East India Company's Battalions in Travancore which paved the way for the stationing of subsidiary forces in the later days. The civil officer's post was later changed to that of a British Political Resident who assumed office from the beginning of the 19th Century.

After the Treaty of Srirangapatnam in 1792 Travancore Rajah wanted the Madras Government to pull out their Battalions stationed in Travancore. The Company wanted their presence on the plea that those forces were meant to assist the Rajah to check both internal and external aggression. Madras Government also insisted that Travancore Government should contribute towards the war expenses since the Company's forces were utilized on behalf of the Travancore State. This was followed by a series of mutual correspondence between Dewan Kesava Pillai with the Madras Government. Before both the sides came to a proper conclusion, commercial agreement was signed on 28th January 1793 between Dewan Kesavapillai as the representative of Travancore Government and Major General Robert Abercromby, Governor of Bombay Presidency on behalf of the Company. The agreement was

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followed by a correspondence between Dewan Kesavapillai and the new Governor General Lord Morington and others which resulted in the military Treaty on mutual alliance and friendship on 17th November 1795.\textsuperscript{22} By this Treaty, Travancore forces were bounded to aid the Company’s forces and in fact a part of the state forces were employed in the Cornwallis operation against Tippu Sultan. The state also had to pay an annual subsidy of six lakhs of rupees for the maintenance of the three Battalions (Out of these three Battalions, two were already stationed as per the agreement of 1788 and the third was stationed under the new Treaty) with European artillery and two companies of lascars.\textsuperscript{23}

By the Treaty of 1795 independent state of Travancore became a tributary state and came to be dependant upon the East India Company’s forces. A permanent subsidiary force (infantry and artillery) under the European Commanding Officer was stationed in Travancore. The state surrendered their arbitrary rights in settling disputes between the native states and foreign power. As per the Treaty the state had no alliance with any other foreign service men other than the Company’s officials. Thus Travancore was encircled by an ‘Iron

\textsuperscript{22} Secret Sundries, Vol.I, June-December 1808, p.3.

Ring Policy' which prevented her either from stationing or having any sort of contact with any other European power. The Travancore Government depended upon an alien power for their safety and the native soldiers took instructions from an European Officer. Above all the Rajah and his soldiers came under constant checks and their movements were closely studied by those Company's Battalions through the civil mediator.\textsuperscript{24}

The Year 1798, was very significant with regard to the Company's paramountcy in India. It marked the coming of Lord Wellesley as the new Governor-General of India, who with his political weapon of subsidiary Treaties annexed several native states. In Travancore in the same year an inefficient Rajah Balaramavarma ascended the throne. The people were dissatisfied with the Rajah and his court factions.\textsuperscript{25} In 1799 Tippu was defeated and killed in the fourth Anglo-Mysore War, which ended the 25 years of Mysorean attempts to establish their supremacy in Kerala. The Anglo-Mysore Wars demonstrated the military supremacy of the Company's forces. Lord Wellesley appointed Colonel Macaulay as the Political Resident of

\textsuperscript{24} Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Hon'ble House of Commons in a Committee of the whole House (London, 1813), p.246 and p.477.

\textsuperscript{25} Rose Vincent, (ed.), French In India (Bombay, 1990), pp.115-116.
Travancore and Cochin in 1800. Before 1800, the Commanding Officer at Palayamcottah served as an intermediary for the Madras-Travancore Government. It was through Resident Macaulay that Wellesley decided to complete the British policy of Subsidiary Treaties and revised the previous Subsidiary rate. The Resident proposed certain military reforms in the Travancore forces. The proposal reduced the military expenditure of the state. The Nayar soldiers, the hereditary fighters of the land felt that they had been superseded in their homeland by foreigners. The Europeans held high posts at the cost of the natives who were given only subordinate position. The Nayars also revolted against the British officials who tried to take over both civil and military administration of Travancore. The ring leaders had only one common cause that was to end the British Imperialism in Travancore and to terminate those state officials and European Officers who sided the British officials. By 16th of November 1804, Nayar soldiers broke into an open revolt. In this revolt the soldiers were not supported by the Dewan, the Rajah or the close associates of the Carnatic Brigade. The entire Nayar soldiers stationed at different outstations like Alleppey, Paravoor, Mavelikkara, Travancore and Northern lines took part in the revolt against the united Company's force. After much resistance the rebels surrendered on 18th of December, and their ring leaders were apprehended and seriously dealt with.

After the revolt the Carnatic Brigade became the only remaining militia of the state. The supremacy of the Nayar soldiers gradually declined. All those soldiers who sided with the rebels were removed from service. Some of the soldiers of the Nayar force afterwards joined the carnatic Brigade.27 After the Nayar forces were reduced, the Resident wanted to utilize the amount for the increased subsidy. The Nayar soldiers revolted against this measure, as they had already lost their military supremacy and estates under well established standing army. Company's authorities wanted to reduce the native soldiers strength in the force and also their pay. Though the Brigade was termed as the carnatic Brigade, the people enlisted in it were mostly the Rajah's faithful subjects. The Rajah considered the carnatic Brigade as an essential part of his dignity. The proposal to disband it was considered as an attempt to seize his authority. The British Resident and the Madras Government came to know of the growing dissatisfaction among the soldiers. The high rate of subsidy fell in arrears. The Rajah and the Dewan made several correspondences with the Madras Council through the Resident but all their measures yielded only partial success. In 1805, Lord Wellesley wanted to fulfil his policy of establishing British paramountcy over Travancore State by putting pressure upon Rajah Balaramavarma to sign in the Treaty of 1805. In the same year, Wellesley was called back and Lord Minto had become

the new Governor-General, but things remained the same for Travancore. The Rajah was asked to disband his forces, the only existing force after the suppression of the Nayar Battalion. Under pressure, the Rajah accepted the Treaty terms on 12th January 1805.\textsuperscript{28,29}

As per the new Treaty, though the Rajah was relieved from sending his force to the assistance of the Company's troops, he had to maintain an additional Regimental infantry at the cost of Rs. 4,01,155/-. In addition to the sum payable by the Treaty of 1795, the annual subsidy was raised to 8 lakhs of rupees. If the payment was delayed the company officials could interfere in the internal administration like the collection of revenue, judicial matters etc. By accepting these terms, Travancore state became dependent upon the company. The company's military Treaty with Travancore resulted in the loss of political and military identity of Travancore.\textsuperscript{29} It was only with the lapse of Paramountcy on the 15th August 1947, Travancore state ceased to pay the annual contribution to the Honourable company for the defence of Travancore from foreign aggression.\textsuperscript{30} As per the Treaty terms, Travancore Government could not engage any other foreign national nor to enter into any settlement with them. By doing this, Travancore was bound

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\item \textsuperscript{28} A. Sreedhara Menon, Kerala District Gazetteer, Trivandrum (Trivandrum, 1962), p.212.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Political Consultation, Vol. 265, 22 August, 1837, p. 387.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Report on the Administration of Travancore - Cochin 1949 (Trivandrum, 1950), p.3.
\end{itemize}
to take only Company's assistance in times of war or peace. The Company did not want any other nation to compete with them in Travancore either in pepper or in the sale of arms and ammunitions the Government was not able to join with any other foreign national to instigate against the Company. Even though the Commanding Officer of the Company's force was paid by the Travancore Government he was responsible only to the Presidency from where he had been sent and took orders from them. In this way the Commander of the Company's subsidiary force acted as the military agent in Travancore. 31

The Rajah's refusal to disband the carnatic Brigade and the default in the subsidy strained the relations between Travancore and the English beyond an amicable settlement. The revolt of 1809 opened a new chapter in the annals of the Nayar military service. It was the last of the agitation started by the Nayar soldiers of Travancore. Unlike the revolt of 1804 which was confined to the Nayar battalions in the service of the Rajah, the revolt of 1809 received support from the Dewan, Yeluthambi. He was elevated to the office of the dewan in 1801; throughout the major portion of his career he only acted as a mere mouthpiece of the company. It was through him that the company imposed the subsidiary systems upon Travancore. This brought about financial and political liability on Travancore. He supported the Resident in the suppression of the Nayar revolt. The friendship and cordiality which

existed between the Resident and the Dewan started to decline. In the later days of his career he refused to tolerate the company's interference in the internal administration of Travancore. He recruited several Nayars and Nadars of Southern regions and trained them in the use of bows and arrows, lances etc., By the end of 1808 he organised a force of 40,000 men and instilled in them a sense of Patriotism, liberty and loyalty to the throne. Under his supervision a portion of every district of Travancore was trained in the use of arms. He also held negotiations with Paliatachan, the Dewan of Cochin. He requested the Zomorin and rulers of Malabar to unite in the joint venture to overthrow the British rule form the country. The rebel force was no match to the combined forces stationed at Malabar, Tinnevelly and Canara. The Dewan and his associates tried to attack Resident Macaulay, who escaped to Cochin. They broke open jails and released prisoners. The native Nayar officers in the carnatic Brigade sided the insurgents, but Colonel Daly refused to assist the rebels. After the revolt the Madras Council decided to reduce and disband the carnatic Brigade. Finding further resistance futile Dewan ended his life on 28th March 1809 just three months after his resignation.

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32 Secret Consultation regarding Travancore. pp. 103-104.
34 C.M. Agur, Church History of Travancore (Madras, 1903), pp. 537-543.
For the Travancore rebels, the revolt of 1809 was an attempt made to overthrow British imperialism, but the British considered the revolt as a conspiracy on the part of the Dewan's subjects. After the suppression of the revolt the soldiers were deprived of their weapons which were distributed to the company's troop and the real value for these weapons fell upon Rajah of Travancore.

The carnatic Brigade formed a portion of the force sent by the Nawab of carnatic to assist the Rajah's of Travancore in their struggle against feudal chiefs and nobles. In due course this force became a portion of the old Travancore militia. The recruits consisted of chetyans, vellialans and other caste of hindus. Later the Travancore rulers began to enrol his subjects other than the Nayars under the same title of the carnatic Brigade. After the fall of the carnatic Nawabs and the annexation of the Kingdom in 1801 the carnatic force came under the control of the British. The force was commanded by the European officers viz., Colonel Daly and others. One battalion from the carnatic Brigade was sent with the Bombay Army against Tippu Sultan of Mysore.\textsuperscript{35} The strength consisted of 5 Battalion of Infantry and 1 Battalion of cavalry with Alleppey as its Head Quarter. Travancore Government paid

Rs.12,500/- per month as salary to the soldiers. The Brigade played a crucial role in the suppression of the Nayar revolt. The carnatic Brigade was maintained and strengthened by the Travancore Government. The Effective role played by the Brigade came to an end in 1809 following the revolt against the British.

Following the dismemberment of the Travancore Force, the martial strength of Nayars were reduced into an organised Internal peace force. At the request of the Royal family a new force was organised on the model of the British Native infantry Regiment. This force came to be known as the Nayar Brigade. The Brigade consisted of men recruited purely from the Nayar caste, and from the vicinity of Travancore. The force was raised only to assist the Rajah in the internal administration of his Kingdom. As per one of the clause of 1805 treaty, no part of Rajahs troops could be furnished for service in British India. The Brigade was maintained by the Travancore Government. The recruit, discipline, arms, drill and accoutrements were based on the model of British Native infantry Regiment. The officers holding high posts in the Brigade were Europeans.  

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37 The Nayar Brigade of Travancore, [Selection from the Records of the Madras] (Madras, 1898), p.34.
After the disturbance the native ministers were no longer trusted by the British Government, and there had been remarkable transformation in the general administration of the princely state of Travancore and the state force. Despite the three months of devastating revolt the natives stood only for native rulers and remained hostile to the British interest in their internal affairs. Under these circumstances the Madras Government with the consent of the Rani Gowri Lakshmi Bai appointed Colonel Munro in 1811 as the first political Resident cum Dewan of Travancore. He brought about radical changes in the political, military, police, revenue departments of the state. Politically the claims of the male heirs were replaced by female rulers. Umminithambi, the Dewan was released from his office for having indulged in a conspiracy against the Officers of the subsidiary forces. Resident Munro took up the dual responsibility upto 1814, but until 1818, when he laid down his office he kept in touch with


the general administration of Travancore. Out of these reforms military and police duties were bifurcated into two separate units. Like wise the revenue and treasury was also brought under different departments. Rani Lakshmi Bai had full confidence in the Company's rule and believed that it was only through their political representative a general supervision in the administrative machinery could be brought about.⁴¹

Thus the entry of European traders in Travancore by means of commercial, political and military agreements witnessed significant changes in political atmosphere and military activities of Travancore. It virtually brought Travancore under the political and military supremacy of the British. The Colachel war created an awareness upon Travancore sovereign to westernise his traditional Nayar Battalions by appointing European military Officers like D'Lannoy and Daly who made remarkable changes in the Brigade. Among the European traders the British superseded all others by its commercial, military and political Treaties which changed Travancore as a dependent state. The Britishers missed no opportunity to dominate the day to day administration of Travancore. The outcome was that Nayar Brigade began to decline because the British never liked to strengthen the native forces.