CHAPTER FOUR

THE DECLINE AND THE FALL OF THE PORTUGUESE

The Portuguese encountered opposition and resistance from several quarters during their stay in the Fishery Coast. In all their adversities, the Paravas stood by them and supported them. However, once settled, the coloniser turned against the inhabitants (the Paravas) of the Fishery Coast. The so called saviours also turned out to be their exploiters. The fisherfolk, thus were the victims at the hands of every political power, be they native or alien.

Opposition from Native Powers

Zamorin and the Kunjalis Vs the Portuguese

No sooner did the Portuguese come to India, than they started calling themselves as the Lords of the Seas. Portuguese kings and their viceroys adopted titles like the Kings of India and Viceroyos and Governors of India respectively. However, it was not possible for Indian naval powers to accept their lordship at sea.

The most stiff and daring attempt to oust the Portuguese navy was made by the Muslim admirals of the Zamorin better known as the Kunjali Marakkayars. Their long and sustained war against the Portuguese at sea lasted for a hundred years. Though it ended in favour of the Portuguese, the credit for initiating the process of curtailing the Portuguese naval supremacy must go to the Kunjalis.¹

The Kunjalis hailed from Pantalayani Kollan in Kerala. Later, due to the harassment of the Portuguese, they shifted to Ponnani, the southern harbour in the jurisdiction of the Zamorin.2

When the first Portuguese Viceroy D. Francisco de Almeida attacked and destroyed their ships at Ponnani, they shifted to Agalpula and resolved to take revenge on the same. The Zamorin who admired their courage and loyalty had conferred on the family the title of Marakkayar with the right to wear silk turbans.3

The Kunjalis fought several wars with the Portuguese and sometimes the Kunjalis' fleets were totally destroyed. But the war was never given up and not a single man of their family ever surrendered to the Portuguese. The Kunjalis were hated by the Portuguese for two reasons: First they were Muslims and second they were the only native naval power which could confront them on the sea.4 Upto 1540 the Portuguese had been defeating them and looting their richly laden ships. Many of the Muslims were killed and enslaved. In return, the Kunjalis proved their efficiency of their guerilla tactics at sea and inflicted severe losses to Portuguese ships, goods and men.

The Kunjalis moved about with their lighter paraus (boats) with ease, and attacked and escaped speedily. It is a fact that their flags on these paraus kept flying from Colombo to Kutch and from Kozhikodu to the Red Sea in mere complete defiance of the Portuguese cartazes.5

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3 Ibid., p.30.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.

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The Zamorin of Kozhikodu on the western coast of India was not content to remain a silent spectator of the growing influence of the Portuguese on the east coast. He therefore came forward to help the Muslims who had not lost their business at Pazhayakayal.6

From 1525 onwards the Muslims of Kerala known as Mappilas made several attempts to control the pearl fisheries in the east. They were found in every nook and part of the sea of Sri Lanka. Thefts and battles were the order of the day. In 1526, twenty paraus of Kozhikodu attacked the Indian coast of the sea of Sri Lanka. George Gabral the captain followed them to chase, but could not avert loss of life. Five Portuguese were also captured by the Muslims. It was an utter defeat for the Portuguese.7

In 1526, Pate Marayakkayar, one of the powerful admirals of the Zamorin was travelling to Sri Lanka in order to fight with the King of Kotte. On the way Pate Marakkayar attacked the Portuguese ships which were coming from Malacca, near Kanyakumari.8 Further, Pate Marakkayar plundered all along the coast upto Pazhaverkadu. He was chased away by Manuel da Gama, the Portuguese captain.9 In the encounter, João Flores, the captain of the Fishery Coast died in 1528.10

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7 Jorge Manuel Flores, op. cit., p. 161.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., pp. 161-162.
On hearing this, Martim Affonso de Mello sailed from Cochin with a powerful fleet and subdued the Muslims at Pzhayakayal and punished them for their alliance with the Zamorin.  

In 1529 Pate Marakkayar proceeded to Sri Lanka with forty paraus and pirates to steal the Portuguese ships and to kill the factor. Affonso Mexia, the captain of Cochin sent Antónia Cardosa to protect the naos (ships) of Cochin. At the port of Vembar, both the parties had to fight and the Muslims caused immense damage to the Portuguese.  

At this juncture, the Mass Conversion took place at Thoothukudi and it was followed in other villages of the Fishery Coast. Seeing the entire coast coming into the fold of Christianity, the Muslims felt that their future was under threat. So the Marakkayars sought the help of the Zamorin who in turn arranged to send ships to attack Thoothukudi in 1537. The important admirals of the Zamorin - Kunjali Marakkayar, Pate Marakkayar and Ibrahim Ali Marakkayar were ordered to go to the Fishery Coast. 

At the end of 1537, the three chief captains of the Zamorin, sailed with fifty large and heavily armed battle paraus and two thousand men around Kanyakumari in the Fishery Coast, where they attacked the Christian villages and seized the boats of the fishers. They sacked and burnt Thoothukudi, the principal city of the Paravas, in the absence of Manual Rodrigues Coutinho, the captain of the

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11 Joao de Barros, *Decadas da Asia: Dos Feitos, que os Portugueses Fizeram no Descubrimento, Conquista dos Mares e Terras do Oriente, Decada IV, Livro I, Capitulo VII*, Lisboa, 1777, p.78.


Fishery Coast. The Marakkayars took the altar stone and vestments used in the church services, murdered many of the inhabitants and carried away several men, including some Portuguese, to make them as their galley slaves.\(^\text{14}\)

Pate Marakkayar said he would mobilise all the Muslims in India. He boasted that even the Rumes (Turks) who had then arrived in Diu would join him. All the Muslim princes also would join and challenged that the fall of the Portuguese' rule was imminent. The income from the pearl fisheries in that year (1538) would reach them only, he had said.\(^\text{15}\)

Martim Affonso de Souza was patrolling the Malabar coast. He heard that Pate Marakkayar had eluded him and had reached the Fishery Coast. Grimly he sailed southwards and a terrible fight took place with varying fortunes on both sides.\(^\text{16}\)

Most of the Portuguese were already bewildered, when one of their Malabar captains devised an ingenuous plan; he set the Muslim boats which were still on the beach on fire so as to make flight impossible. On seeing their ships burning, the Muslims lost every hope of escape and ran landwards in wild panic.\(^\text{17}\)

In the ensuing battle eight hundred Muslims lost their lives. Their rich booty consisting of 400 cannons, 2000 muskets and many other weapons and 22 war paraus were captured by the Portuguese. Pate Marakkayar's gorgeous tent with the

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p.248.


\(^{16}\) Gaspar Correa, op. cit., Tomo III, Part II, pp.823-824.

\(^{17}\) Georg Schurhammer, Orientalia, p. 249.
state parasol, a present of the Zamorin to Mayadunne were also taken away by the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{18}

The Paravas took the rest of the booty on their boats, delivered their prisoners and returned the captured ships to their owners. As a retaliation for all they had suffered they once more burnt down Kayalpattanam which the Muslims had just then built up again.\textsuperscript{19}

The power of the Muslims of Kozhikodu had been broken and at the end of 1539, the Zamorin asked for peace, which was concluded after his death with his successor in 1540. According to the terms of the peace treaty, the Zamorin was obliged to let his ships sail only with the permission of the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{20}

The victory at Vedalai was extolled in the whole of India and in Portugal. The Paravas were triumphant; the Singhalese emperor hailed De Souza as saviour; the power of the Muslims in Kozhikodu and in South India was broken.\textsuperscript{21} Of the three chiefs who took to flight, Ali Ibrahim succumbed to his wounds, whereas Pate Marakkar, who lost all his treasure, and Kunjali escaped to Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1553 A.D. Kunjali and his men landed in Punnaikayal and sacked the Portuguese' factory and fort.\textsuperscript{23} Kunjali's successor Mohammed Kunjali Marakkayar, adopted guerilla tactics and captured many Portuguese ships on the east coast.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{18} Gaspar Correa, \textit{op. cit., Tomo III, Part II}, pp.824-825.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 831.
\textsuperscript{20} Georg Schürhammer, \textit{Francis Xavier}, p. 266.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{23} Sridharan, K., \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 19-20.
\textsuperscript{24} Panikkar, K.M., \textit{Malabar and the Portuguese}, Bombay, 1929, p.159.
At one time Kunjali turned against his own master the Zamorin and he in turn supported the Portuguese to capture Kunjali. In 1600 he surrendered to the Zamorin on the condition that his life would be spared. But Andre Furtado, a hero of many naval encounters was responsible for the defeat of Kunjali took him to Goa. The victorious fleet of Furtado was welcomed in Goa with gaiety and celebrations. Kunjali was beheaded on a special French type of guillotine in front of the viceroy's palace in the presence of a vast crowd comprising of common men, fidalgos, (noblemen) noble ladies and merchants. His body was then quartered and limbs were exhibited on the beaches of Panaji and Bardez. Later his head was salted and conveyed to Cannanore with a view to strike terror.\textsuperscript{25}

By the turn of the century the Portuguese had to face a new menace in Dom Pedro Rodrigues in Mannar. Though the Kunjali was no longer around, it appeared as if his ghost was still haunting the Portuguese. A cousin of Kunjali, whose Christian name was Dom Pedro Rodrigues, harassed the Portuguese relentlessly, looted their ships frequently and was feared by them even in Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{26}

When he was a boy of thirteen he was captured by Furtado during one of the battles of Cardova and subsequently brought to Goa. In 1608 he was in the galley of Goa and was named Dom Pedro Rodrigues who introduced himself as a Spaniard and not as a Portuguese.\textsuperscript{27} The man seemed none other than the cousin of


\textsuperscript{27} Viagem de Pyard, II, p.24., cited in Teotonia de Souza, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 35.
Kunjali, who was baptised in Goa and later married to a Portuguese orphan. He must have known of the fate of his cousin. One day (or night) he fled from Goa and managed to reach his old place safely. Nothing is known about how and when he slipped away from the Portuguese custody. He gathered followers in Khozikodu and arranged five paraus. With these he crossed Kayakumari and passed through Sri Lanka to the Tanadiva Island. He entered the beach of San Joao (St. John) and there he harassed the Franciscans who had baptised him in Goa.

Constantino de Sa wrote from Sri Lanka in March 1618 saying that the renegade Dom Pedro had indulged in plunder and caused incalculable damage. He further stated that the same Dom Pedro had planned to do more harm at the request of Changali who wished to be reinstated as the Lord of Jaffna.

Constantino de Sa sent two galliots with several men apart from forty Portuguese vessels commanded by Victoria de Abreu. Dom Pedro won a total victory on this occasion and the Portuguese were discredited by the disorderly movement of the Portuguese forces, and contrary winds. Dom Pedro attacked the Cais dos, Elephantes (Elephants' Caves) and this forced the captain of Mannar to retaliate. Dom Pedro killed five hundred men including some Portuguese who were in tonis (boats).

Another letter of Constantino de Sa dated 7 May 1619 tells that Dom Pedro’s men had occupied the Ilha das Vacas (Cow Island) and seized its fort. From here he (Dom Pedro) was acting as a hindrance to the Portuguese navigation and their

28 Teotonia de Souza, op. cit., pp. 35-36.
31 Ibid.
trade. Felippe de Oliveira was immediately sent to Jaffna as the Portuguese feared that the next target of Dom Pedro would be Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{32}

However, Dom Pedro succeeded in defeating Vitorio de Abreu the commander and a Portuguese fleet without any appreciable resistance. The aggressiveness of Dom Pedro scared the Portuguese to such an extent that the captains of the convoy refused even to try recovering the lost ship.\textsuperscript{33} Dom Pedro then sailed back with impunity to Maldives with his grand booty that included men, women and money like a real pirate, quite different from his forefathers.\textsuperscript{34}

Though the Fishery Coast had been broken into several parts and ruled by different rulers (Viceroy, Nayaks and Poligars), the ultimate owner of the coast was the Vijayanagar emperor. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Vijayanagar ruler sent three expeditions to the south, which inflicted great havoc on the people of the Fishery Coast. The Portuguese, the Jesuit missionaries and the Paravas opposed the enemies as one formidable alliance but in all the battles, the Paravas were the most affected ones.

\textbf{Vijayanagar Vs Portuguese}

\textbf{The First Expedition (1544)}

Sadasiva was coronated in 1542\textsuperscript{A} but was only a nominal king. The whole power of the state was in the hands of Ramaraya the regent and his two

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{34} Teotonia de Souza, \textit{op. cit.}, p.37.
brothers. Ramaraya sent his cousin Vitthalaraya to subdue Unni Kerala Varma, the ruler of Travancore.

In 1544 Vitthalaraya undertook his first expedition, in which his brother Chinna Timma and the Madurai Viceroy Visvanatha Nayak played an active role. There were several causes attributed for the expedition of Vijayanagar on Travancore. The most accepted causes are,

1. the refusal of Unni Kerala Varma to pay tribute to the imperial power.

2. the disturbed political situation created by the ruler of Travancore in the south.

3. the conversion of the Paravas and the transfer of their political allegiance of the same from Vijayanagar to Portugal.

On his way to the south, Vitthalaraya defeated his rival rulers including Vettum Perumal, the ruler of Kayathar. Finally, he entered the Travancore territory after causing death and destruction on the way.

Xavier witnessed the atrocities committed on the Paravas by the Badagas (Vadugars). In his letter he says that the people fled to the rock out in the sea and were dying from hunger and thirst. He himself sailed to Kanyakumari with

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid, p.223.
40 The Forces of the Emperor of Vijayanagar were known as Vadugars (men from the north). The Portuguese called them Badagas.
twenty tonis to assist the affected people.\textsuperscript{41} He also asked the \textit{Patangattim} (\textit{pattangattis}) of Kombuturai, Punnaikayal and Thoothukudi to raise an amount from the champanotes\textsuperscript{42} in order to help the Paravas refugees.\textsuperscript{43}

On his way to Kanyakumari, Xavier persuaded the looting Vadagars to withdraw from their attack on the Parava villages.\textsuperscript{44} While narrating the most pitiful thing in the Fishery Coast, Xavier said, “Some had nothing to eat; others, because of their age, had not been able to come, others were dead. Others were husbands, and wives, who gave birth on the way; and there were other most pitiful sights which, if you had seen them as I did, would have moved you to still greater compassion”. Xavier ordered all the poor people to come and settle at Manappadu. He also wished the rich people of Manappadu to help the affected Paravas of Kanyakumari.\textsuperscript{45}

The ruler of Travancore collected an army from all his dominions and challenged his enemies. He expected help from Xavier thinking that the Portuguese would come to his rescue. But the holy missionary who was engaged only in spiritual affairs answered that he would offer prayers. No doubt, Xavier fulfilled his promise. The Vijayanagar army retreated from Kottar after ravaging the Fishery Coast for a couple months in the same year in 1544.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Letters of Xavier, June 16, 1544}, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{42} Champanotes were the owners of small boats known as champanas.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Letters of Xavier, June 30, 1544}, pp. 85-86.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid., August 1, 1544}, p.87.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, p.87.
\textsuperscript{46} Henry Heras, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 1, pp.143-144.
The Second Expedition (1549)

Vitthala undertook his second invasion to the northern part of the Fishery Coast in 1549. The cause seemed to be religious regarding the temple at Rameshwaram. Joao Fernandes Correa, the commander at Vedalai had dug a trench barring the path to the same temple. Thus the pilgrims had to pay a toll to the Portuguese and the alms received by the Brahmans of the temple dwindled. This was reported to Visvanatha and it resulted in the second invasion of Vitthala.47

Six thousand Telugu soldiers marched against Vedalai. They were helped by the Muslims who had been driven out of the Fishery Coast by the Portuguese.48

The Portuguese captain and his garrison sought refuge in the islands of the coast. Fr. Antonio Criminalli, an Italian Jesuit who had been appointed as the superior of the Fishery Coast arrived at Vedalai. He helped the Paravas to get into the boats to safer places. During these attempts a Muslim on a horseback pierced his left side with a lance and the Vadugars beheaded him, raised his head on the top of a spike and placed it over the door of the chapel of St. Vincent at Vedalai as a sign of their valour.49

Some Paravas were also killed on this occasion and many were reduced to captivity. The chapel as well as the Portuguese fort were razed to the ground.50 The

47 Ibid., p.156.
48 Krishnaswami, A., op. cit., p.239.
50 Ibid., pp.157-158.
captured women and children were taken away as sacrificial offering to thank their god for their success.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{The Third Expedition (1553)}

Vitthalaraya wanted to subjugate the Portuguese completely, since they were still the lords of the pearl fisheries. This time he formed an alliance with a Muslim pirate Irapali, a subject of the Zamorin, in order to attack the Fishery Coast by sea. Punnaikayal being the capital of the Portuguese settlements became the target of their attack.\textsuperscript{52}

Manoel Rodriguez Coutinho, the captain had a tough time and both Vitthala and Irapali took possession of the town together with the fort. Irapali then issued a proclamation to all the inhabitants of the coast announcing the end of the Portuguese rule. He invited all to become disciples of the Prophet unless they preferred to feel the edge of the Muslim sword.\textsuperscript{53}

Gil Fernandez de Carvalho, the captain of Cochin arrived on the Fishery Coast with a huge galliot – three lighters and one sloop. He slaughtered several Muslims with the help of the Marava chieftain.\textsuperscript{54} After this victory, Gil Fernandez straight away went to Punnaikayal to rescue Coutinho, his family, soldiers and Fr. Henrique Henriques. A hundred thousand fanams were demanded as ransom.

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\textsuperscript{52} Henry Heras, \textit{op. cit.}, \textit{Vol. I}, pp. 159-160.
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\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid.}
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\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.} p. 161.
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Gil Fernandez found himself unable to accede to this and sent a secret message to Ramaraya in Vijayanagar asking for his favour to liberate the captives.\textsuperscript{55}

An order finally came to Vitthala to hand over the captives to Gil Fernandez and this was done at Thoothukudi. Vitthala however demanded from the captain, the sum of a thousand \textit{pardaus} which was partly paid by the Christians of the Fishery Coast.\textsuperscript{56} It was probably after this expedition that the whole of the fishery Coast agreed to pay a small portion of the catch of a day's fishing to the Nayak of Madurai\textsuperscript{57} which accounted to ten thousand \textit{pardaus} every year.\textsuperscript{58}

Though Vitthala returned to his capital after completing his task as ordered by Ramaraya, the Nayaks of Madurai continued to oppress the inhabitants of the Fishery Coast. Krishnappa Nayak II (1595-1601 A.D) and Muthu Krishnappa Nayak (1601-1609 A.D) were against the Portuguese and the Paravas. Tirumalai Nayak (1625-1659 A.D.) was the most prominent of all the Nayaks of Madurai who allowed the Jesuits to carry out their missionary work freely but Robert de Nobili was harassed by the local officials.

**Oppression by the Nayaks**

Visvanatha invaded the Fishery Coast headed by a Deccan captain Melrao who reached Punnaikayal in 1560 demanding the catch of two days' fishing as tribute. Dom Duarte de Menezes, a Portuguese noble, proceeded with his forty soldiers
to take on Melrao. All the inhabitants of Punnaikayal took refuge in the mud fort there.\(^{59}\)

Though the Portuguese experienced initial success, yet neither Menezes nor Coutinho were able to withstand Visvanatha. Punnaikayal was sacked and destroyed. Coutinho was willing to pay a thousand fanams as everyone’s ransom. Except Fr. Joao de Mesquita, every one was freed. The Paravas consented to pay Visvanatha the catch of two days’ fishing.\(^{60}\)

At this juncture, the Portuguese viceroy Dom Constantina de Braganca, suggested the idea of fleeing from Punnaikayal. The Paravas also preferred to live in the island of Mannar which was just opposite to Punnaikayal. Only after the death of Visvanatha did many return to their homeland.\(^{61}\)

During the reign of Krishnappa, Christians were tyrannically treated by the neighbouring Poligars. One such Poligar is styled in the Jesuit sources as ‘King of Tuticorin’ (Thoothukudi) When the Paravas refused to pay a heavier sum, the Poligar marched towards Thoothukudi and entered it by surprise. He sacked the town, robbed the college of the Jesuits and destroyed the altars and the holy images of the church.\(^{62}\)

The Jesuit father who was in the college was captured and the Paravas had to pay a ransom of four thousand cruzados. The people expected some sort of amends from the Poligar for the injuries caused to them and the church. But he did not

heed to their words. The Paravas abandoned Thoothukudi and settled in a little island “of the Kings”.\textsuperscript{63}

Like his predecessor, Muthu Krishnappa also intended to oppress the Paravas. He imposed new taxes and did not control the Poligars who overruled their master in their palayams. One such person was the Poligar of Vigiabadi (Vijayapathi) Ariyaperumal who was tyrannising the inhabitants who lived in the tract between Kanyakumari and Manappadu. He besieged the village of Obari (Uvari) and took all its fisherfolk prisoners to his capital. The Paravas could not stand humiliations. In 1602 when this Poligar was asleep at his residence, he was slain by the Paravas. His head was cut off and brought to Manappadu as a glorious trophy of that campaign.\textsuperscript{64}

Muthu Krishnappa imposed an extraordinary heavy tribute of 200,000 cruzados on the Paravas in the same year. To obtain it he despatched a body of 5000 infantry with a number of cavalry and elephantry under a captain. This detachment went straight to Thoothukudi which had been abandoned some months before. The captain then sent for one of the Jesuits who were in the island called ‘of the Kings’. The Jesuit replied that the Paravas could not pay such a large sum of money.\textsuperscript{65}

When the Nayak attacked the neighbouring village the captain from the island of Mannar with two galliots proceeded to the seashore of Thoothukudi. He attacked a Hindu temple near the town. All the priests and devotees of the shrine ran to the Telugu captain begging for mercy. The ensuring battle fight between the two

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p.352.

\textsuperscript{64} Leon Besse, \textit{La Mission du Madure}, Tiruchy, 1914, pp. 404-407.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 353.
groups ended in favour of the Portuguese. The Nayak retreated to Madurai with his soldiers.66

The Vijayanagar empire opposed the Portuguese at all three levels. The emperor or his regent Vitthala, at imperial, the Nayak of Madurai Visvanatha and a couple of his successive Nayaks at Nayakdom and the Poligars at palayam levels. Their army men the Vadugars continued to inflict untold miseries on the Paravas even after their masters left the scene.

Vadugars' Atrocities

The Vadugars were let free to commit all kinds of atrocities on the new Christians. They roamed about the streets on horseback and plundered the Parava villages at nights. They seized not the weak and indigent but only those who could pay ransom.67

The Vadugars identified the local enemies of the new Christians and allied with them while harassing the former (the Christians). The Shanars68 were induced to enter into Parava villages where they plundered all money from the Paravas. Moreover the Shanars dipped cloth in the water meant for cattle and threw it on the face of the Paravas. The Paravas got suffocated and later they (the Paravas) were thrown into thalai (Pandarkinus) plants.69

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66 Ibid., p. 353.
67 Letters of Xavier, August 3, 1544, pp. 87-89.
68 Shanars lived in the interior villages of the Fishery Coast and they were converted by the Jesuits.
The Vadugars joined the Turks who had arrived on the west coast were moving along the east. Both the Vadugars and the Turks killed many Christians and were hindrance to the Paravas in collecting rice and other supplies. Sometimes the Vadugars themselves collected the items and demanded 100000 fanams from the Portuguese captain. He acceded to the demand, just to avoid torture from them.70

Sometimes, the Vadugars joined the Turks and Moors.71 The Muslims of Kayalpattanam provided shelter to these groups. Even Visvanatha attacked Punnaikayal from Kayalpattanam just eight leagues from here and enjoyed arresting all the Christians.72 In 1552 when Manoel Rodriguez Coutinho the captain of the Fishery Coast was at his resident at Punnaikayal, he was attacked by the Turks and the Moors.73

Once the Moors and Turks joined hands and disrupted the pearl fishing of the Paravas at Muguel near Kilakkarai. They were sheltered by the Muslims of Killakarai. When the captain of the Moors arrived, he wanted to ally with the Maravas of Periapattanam and appointed a person from the elders of the Marava caste as chief.74

But the Maravas turned against the Turks and the Moors since many of the Maravas at Periyapattanam were Christians. They even sent a message to Gil Fernandez asking him to challenge the enemies. After this incident the Maravas

70 Ibid.

71 In this context, the Moors are understood as sea pirates.

72 DI, Vol. XII, p. 941.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., p. 943.
became allies of the Portuguese and the Maravas were granted some privileges at every fishing season.\textsuperscript{75}

Taking advantage of the weakness of the Christians in their faith, Vadugars wooed them and persuaded them to visit the temples.\textsuperscript{76} So weak Christians were a source of numerous trivial problems.

They mocked at the gestures of the priests and brothers during their prayers when these religious and Jesuits had a tough time with these Christians.\textsuperscript{77} Constant wars, cruelty of the rulers and the irritation caused by the other local communities caused in the minds of the Christians an aversion for Christianity. They lived in fear.\textsuperscript{78}

The non-Christians whom the Portuguese called \textit{gentios} entered into the boats of the Fishery Coast. It happened without the knowledge of their local governor or the Portuguese captain. It was found that the \textit{gentios} were friendly with some of the Paravas who made them to do such indulgence. The \textit{gentios} used to plead the captain by giving fifteen patacus as a gratitude for the release of their own people at Thoothukudi and other places in the Fishery Coast.\textsuperscript{79} The same \textit{gentios} used to throw fire on the houses of the new Christians and the churches.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{DL}, \textit{Vol. IV}, p. 391.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 755.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{HAG, MDR, Livro 19D, fl. 1105, (1633-1635)}.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{DL}, \textit{Vol. IV}, p. 758.
So far we have seen the invasions and expeditions of the Vijayanagar rulers, their Nayaks and their forces the Vadugars. Thus the Fishery Coast was experiencing a battle between life and death. It is quite surprising to say that even the ruler of Travancore also made attempt to harass the Paravas. The ruler of Kayathar also did his share of squeezing the poor Christians in all the possible ways.

**Vettum Perumal’s Revenge**

After the Vadugars had withdrawn from the south, Vetturn Perumal, the Pandya ruler of Kayathar wanted to have his revenge on the Christians for their alliance with the ruler of Travancore. He attacked Thoothukudi with his bands of cavalry. The fisherfolk fled to the barren islands near the coast where they lacked both water and food.\(^{81}\)

It looks as though Vettum Perumal was at war with the ruler of Travancore. Because the Portuguese captain Cosme de Paiva profited by supplying horse to Vettum Perumal against the ruler of Travancore, Xavier asked Mansilhas to collect tonis from Kombuturai and Punnaikaval in order to bring the people from the islands to Combuture. Punnaikaval and Tiruchendur. The captain was more interested in Vettum Perumal and trade in horses. But the people in Thoothukudi were dying of hunger and thirst.\(^{82}\) In the war between the Great King and Vettum Perumal, Xavier wanted to protect the Paravas of Thoothukudi and Pazhokayal, and so he wanted them to be transferred into the territory of the Great King.\(^{83}\)

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\(^{81}\) *Letters of Xavier, September 5, 1544*, p. 93.


There were two groups of Paravas in Thoothukudi. One group opposed the settlement and it was supported by the captain, Cosme de Paiva, who had obtained a profitable income from the sale of horses to the Pandya king and refused to consider such a move. But another group of people wanted to leave Thoothukudi as per the order given by Xavier.

**Vadugars Vs Jesuits**

The Jesuit missionaries were also attacked by the Vadugars and the ruler of Travancore. At the end of 1551 the Telugu army captured a young Portuguese Jesuit Fr. Paolo de Valle. Though he was rescued by the Paravas from the Vadugars, he died soon as a result of the hardships during the captivity.

In 1552, one of the nobles of the kingdom of Travancore pillaged several villages near Kanyakumari. The inhabitants appealed to the Nayak of Madurai. On hearing this the ruler of Travancore turned furious and joined the forces of Vitthala and overpowered the helpless Christians. The combined army slaughtered the people in the silence of the night. One of the victims was a Portuguese missionary Luis Mendez, a lay brother of the Society of Jesus.

Brother Baltasar Nunes was twice seized by the Vadugars. Once, when he was studying the Tamil alphabet sitting under a projecting thatch of the church, some Teulgu soldiers entered a side door of the church to rob it. When he went into the church, he was surrounded by men armed with lances and bows. When the Parava

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women saw what had happened, they began to lament and tear their hair and called their husbands and saved thus Nunes.87

**Martanda Varma's Interference**

King Martanda Varma was under the influence of the Muslims and turned against the Portuguese and their missionaries. He even summoned Fr. Francisco Henriques and Br. Baltasar and ordered them not to make any conversion. He further said that the Christians should not celebrate their Sunday Mass. But Fr. Henriques replied to the king that the sea belonged the King of Portugal.88

The Portuguese officials also ill-treated the Paravas in many ways. Especially the captains became so greedy and extracted enormous sums of money from them. The captains were also at conflict with the Jesuits as they (the Jesuits) were a hindrance and prevented the Portuguese officials from collecting money from the Paravas in the name of the Crown. The following pages are devoted to these two aspects to demonstrate how the Paravas were victims of the designs of all higher officials:

The Paravas were not allowed to sell chank mussels to anybody at their will.89 As per the rule, Christians were allowed to move around in the Coromandel and Sri Lankan Coasts and the cartazes should be issued to them freely. The captains violated this and charged a fee on the coastal people for issuing cartazes. If the

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fisherfolk were unable to pay the stipulated amount then they were asked by the captains to sell clothes from place to place.  

In the absence of pearl fishing the subjects of the Fishery Coast were exempted from paying tax to the government. But officials demanded money from the fisherfolk. After witnessing the cruelties done by the captain to the Paravas, Miguel Vaz told the king that the Fishery Coast would be at peace without the captains.

The Portuguese officials created unrest in the Fishery Coast by not respecting the religious sentiments of the Hindus. First of all the Hindus were called *gentios*. The Christians were not allowed to mingle with them freely. Hindu temples and pagodas were destroyed and as a result the two communities looked upon each other with suspicion and distrust. There were many such incidents took place like the Vedalai episode of 1549:

Tiruchendur was a pilgrimage centre for the Hindus in the south. The Portuguese sacrilegged the temple by consuming liquor in the precincts of the temple. The enraged Brahmans murdered several Christians. They handed over the dead bodies naked to their mothers just as they were born as children. Many women and men were arrested and they were led to the pagodas to be sacrificed as a sign of victory. The Brahmans joyously chanted holy songs and gave thanks to their gods.

The captains exacted dues from the Paravas on the cowries they exported to Africa. The captains forced the Paravas to sell them same the commodities

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for less than a third part of the price which the foreign traders offered them. The captains did not permit the Christians to import rice into their villages by any other means. The people were forced to buy essential commodities at the rate fixed by the captains. They did not allow Christians to live in a particular place for a longer period. They (the Portuguese) kept on changing their (the Paravas) residences so that they would be moving from place to place. The captain collected a tribute for these movements as a source of revenue to the government.

Whenever neighbouring Sri Lanka was not at peace due to a conflict between its rulers and the Portuguese, the Paravas of Mannar were called to fight against the Sri Lankans. The Christians also carried rice in two or three champanas for the people in Sri Lanka during such times.

The Paravas who had already settled in Sri Lanka were also not treated properly by the king. Once he asked the Parava Christians to shave their beards off and smear themselves with ashes and become Hindus again. As the Paravas refused to oblige, they were fined with three hundred pardaus.

The Christians were evidently looked upon by the captain of the Fishery Coast as a race of slaves with no rights and no friends. His friends were only exploiters and oppressors. This was the case with captain Cosme de Paiva by whose greediness and severity, many Christians at Thoothukudi and elsewhere suffered persecutions and death about which Xavier writes to Mansilhas as follows:

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93 Ibid., pp. 161-168.
“Help Cosme de Paiva to free his conscience from the many thefts which he had committed on this coast and from the wrongs and murders that have been caused by his great greed in Tuticorin (Thoothukudi) . . . . advise him further to return the money which he received from those who killed the Portuguese for it is a despicable thing to sell Portuguese blood for gain”.

To advance their lucrative motives the Portuguese officials made even clandestine alliances with the Muslims and Hindus leaving the native Christians to the whims and vexations of the latter. Taking control of the pearl fishery: the Muslims had many a time chased the Christians of Thoothukudi and of the neighbouring villages out of their homes and instead settled their own votaries there with the full support of the Portuguese, in order to operate the pearl fishery under their direction.

The Portuguese controlled public offices were sold to the Muslims who paid a good price and the native Christians were excluded from them by reason of their poverty which prompted the Portuguese to go even to such an extent as to sell the Christian converts as slaves to rich Muslims and Hindus in return for a good sum from them.

The miseries brought upon the coastal Christians by the misconduct and in capacity of the Portuguese officials were so intensely agonising to Xavier that several times he wanted to give up his mission altogether on the Fishery Coast, which is evident from his following words:

97 Letters of Xavier, April 7, 1545, pp. 125-126.
99 Ibid., p.256.
"I have good reason for being unable to cease grieving for this within my soul. I have become so accustomed to seeing the offences committed against these Christian without once being able to help them that it is a sorrow which I continuously bear". The Portuguese struggling for their very survival continued to be in dire straits for the money requisite to carry on an exhausting contest increased their exactions from the same time were unable to give them adequate protection, especially at sea.

Maltreatment of the Coastal Christians

The general policy of the Portuguese Crown in its relation to the Fishery Coast was indeed to promote the Christian religion among the natives and to favour in a special way the Christians in all their political as well as social struggles. Unfortunately, this policy was not carried out by the Padroado officials, clerics and representatives of the Crown on account of their private interests and malicious intentions. They even went to such the extent of persecuting the coastal. Christians to satisfy their lust and lucrative motives.

The majority of the Portuguese soldiers and traders drafted from Portugal for the service of the Crown in India, and in particular on the Fishery Coast, were 'desperados' or condemned convicts or exiles. Hence their life in India was no better than it was in their homeland; they relapsed to the same sort of crime and avarice as they had been addicted to in their native land of origin.

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100 Letters of Xavier, March 27, 1544, p. 78.
One of the vices that was most rampant on the Fishery Coast among the Portuguese soldiers and trader was concubinage. As it was practically impossible to bring women from Portugal, they preferred to consort with their native slave-girls, most of whom were Christians, avoiding, however, the bonds of holy matrimony with them. The reason was that Alburquerque the Governor of Goa had discouraged the Portuguese from marrying the 'black women' of both Malabar and Fishery Coasts, that is to say the dark skinned women of the Dravidian origin, 'Nigresses' as they were called by the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{104}

Nicolao Lancillotto a missionary deplores this sexual licence of the Portuguese in the following terms:

The Portuguese had adopted the vices and customs of the land without reserve, including their evil customs of buying droves of slaves, male and female, just as if they were sheep, large and small. There are innumerable Portuguese who bought droves of girls and slept with all of them and subsequently sold them.\textsuperscript{105}

Another abominable crime committed by the Portuguese on the Fishery Coast was the seizure of the poor slave girls against their will and selling them for a good price to the Muslims and Hindu merchants after satisfying their lust. When some Portuguese committed this crime at Punniakayal, Xavier was filled with violent anger which he expressed in his letter to Mansilhas:

"I have become so accustomed to seeing the offences committed against these Christians without my being able to help them that it is a

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., pp.64-65.

sorrow which I continuously bear. I have already written to the Vicar of Quilon and that of Cochin about the female slaves who were seized by the Portuguese in Punicale (Punnaikayal) so that through major excommunications they may know who they were whom they carried off.\textsuperscript{106}

**The Portuguese Vs Jesuits**

It is true that whenever the Portuguese sailed to explore new areas, they carried their missionaries along with them. They were supposed to fulfill the spiritual needs of the Portuguese officials as well as to convert the natives.

But that was not true either in the Fishery Coast or in Goa in India, for instance. Of course there were genuine officials like Martim Affonso and Manoel Coutinho who rushed to the spot whenever the Christians were harassed by their enemies.

As time went on the officials looked at the missionaries, particularly the Jesuits, as their prime enemies. The reason was that the Jesuits, instead of performing their spiritual obligations, were involved in the civil and criminal jurisdictions of the Portuguese officials. Whenever things went wrong against the Christians such as the payment of taxes, the Jesuits stood for justice and the same was reported to the viceroy or the Crown.

The Crown in most of the cases was in favour of the Paravas and had punished the captains in the form of transfers or imprisonment.\textsuperscript{107} The Jesuits also

\textsuperscript{106} Letters of Xavier, March 27, 1544, p. 78.

often involved in trade activities contrary to their missionary zeal which was opposed by the Portuguese captains. A few cases in this regard are going to be cited here.

Xavier lamented that captain Joao Fernandes Correa inflicted several harsh treatment on the Paravas. Fr. Miguel Vaz complained to the king about the same captain.  

Since, the time of the arrival of Xavier, taking advantage of the scarcity of Portuguese officials, administrators and captains, the Jesuit clergy took upon spiritual and civil jurisdiction and were involved in conducting trade also. The Viceroy Conde de Linhares in his letter to the king in 1631 said that the reason for the conflict between the captain and the Jesuits was that the latter over exercised and mastered the royal jurisdiction.

From the time of Xavier, the Jesuit priests were forced to a situation in which they enjoyed not only spiritual but also civil jurisdiction on the Paravas due to lack of the officials of the Crown. But this was raised as an offence by Count Linhares who interpreted the right of the results as illtreatment of the jurisdiction and authority of the Crown.

In fact, the Jesuit clergies had acquired this right from the lords of the land and the viceroy. When such thing was highlighted to the captain general who was furious. The furious captain expelled the Jesuits from the region and called as the

108 Ibid., pp. 519-520.
population and branded them from the pulpit as the first enemy of the Portuguese Company.\endnote{110}

The episode of St. Peter's Church at Thoothukudi in 1632 would be the best example to show that the Portuguese captain and the rector of the Jesuits were rivals. This conflict was over is the jurisdiction over the same church between the Franciscans and the Jesuits. The people stood divided into two groups and one supported the captain and the other Fr. Fernao Lopez. Fr. Lopez took part very actively in the armed conflict and carried a flag with a Cross in one hand and with a lance he attacked the captain. The fisherfolk began running towards the sea and three children got drowned Fr. Lopez was also killed and the matter was finally brought to the Inquisition court.\endnote{111}

After experiencing the cruelties done to the Paravas by the captains, Miguel Vaz told the king that the Fishery Coast would be at peace without the captains. He further said that two padres (priests) and two catures (policemen) were enough to take care of the new Christians. He further added that if at all the king was particular in sending a captain, he (the captain) should not be tyrannical in nature. He stressed that the importance of consulting the opinion of the Jesuits in dealing with the Paravas.\endnote{112}

The Jesuits' varied interventions in the Pearl Fishery drove the Portuguese officials to such a fury as to send false accusations and calumnies against

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\textbf{111} \textit{HAG, MDR, Livro 17, fl.95, (1632 – 1633).}
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them to the Viceroy and the Crown. As a result, the Viceroy often deprived the Jesuits of their normal subsidies and income of maintenance as had been granted by the Crown, and left them to be supported by the native Christians themselves, which was indeed against the spirit of the Padroado obligation of the Crown.¹¹³

Being falsely informed that the Jesuits and the Christians were collaborating for the arrest of the Portuguese captain of the Fishery Coast by the Nayak of Madura, Viceroy Miguel de Noronha (1627 – 1636) retaliated upon them by sending a fleet of twelve armed ships with soldiers which attacked Thoothukudi and the neighbouring coastal villages and burnt down the houses of the Jesuits and the native Christians.¹¹⁴ This open enmity between the Portuguese officials and the Jesuits caused a big scandal among the non-Christians who, as a result, abhorred conversion to Christianity.¹¹⁵

The Fishery Coast was the backyard of the Portuguese only for about a century. The other European powers appeared on the east coast of Tamil Nadu in the very beginning of the seventeenth century. They were looking for alliances with the Asiatic powers.

The Dutch and the Danes appeared on the coast as the chief rivals of the Portuguese. King Christian IV of Denmark sent his forces to Thanjavur in 1620.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Leon Besse, op. cit., pp. 447-441.
¹¹⁵ Venantius Fernando, S., op. cit., p. 250.
¹¹⁶ Rajayyan, K., History of Tamil Nadu, p. 184.
In 1630, a Danish ship was burnt in the passage of Quilon by the Portuguese chief captain of Kanyakumari.117

The Dutch defeated the Portuguese fleet in the battle of Malacca in 1606 and reduced the rival settlements, including Nagapattanam and Thoothukudi. In 1632 the Dutch attempted to capture the fort of Thoothukudi which belonged to the Nayak of Madurai, who was the lord of Thoothukudi.118 They made the second attempt to capture the same fort in 1649. By aligning friendly with the ruler of Kandy, the Dutch burnt Thoothukudi in the same year.119

Dom Rodrigo de Monsanto was ordered by the Viceroy of India to proceed with a fleet from Kanyakumari to Thoothukudi. Likewise another fleet was sent from Sri Lanka to Thoothukudi,120 but it was continuously blockaded at Colombo by the Dutch. The Portuguese were unable to get the needed provisions from Thoothukudi.121 The Dutch also prevented the Portuguese from getting cinnamon from Sri Lanka.122

The Dutch had decided to take Thoothukudi first and it would be followed by Mannar and Jaffna. They used various strategies and formed alliances with the local people and moved forward to the targeted areas.123

117 HAG, MDR, Livro 16A, fl. 46, 1632.
118 Ibid.
120 Ibid., p.135.
121 Ibid., pp. 225 – 258, 263-264.
122 Ibid., pp.270-280.
123 Ibid., pp. 625-626.
On 11 February 1658, thirty Dutch ships arrived near Thoothukudi. The ships had carried the Dutch, the Bandanese (Indonesians), the Sinhalese, the Maravas and the Muslims numbering around three thousand men in two squadrons. The Portuguese defended the harbour for seven days, but in vain. Unfortunately one Pillai, the representative of Tirumalai Nayak, had already sold the Fishery Coast for the Dutch for 10,0000 patacus. This was learnt by the Portuguese from the Maravas.\textsuperscript{124} The Nayak sent the Pillai with presents to meet the Dutch and allowed the Dutch to conduct the fishing of \textit{ajofar} in the Fishery Coast.\textsuperscript{125}

It is very important to mention about Tirumalai Nayak who was supporting the Portuguese against the Dutch. It was rather strange but in fact opportunistic that Tirumalai Nayak who had allied himself with the Portuguese against the Dutch sold out the Fishery Coast to his erstwhile enemy later.

Tirumalai Nayak knowing that the defeat of the Portuguese at the hands of the Dutch was imminent, must have changed his attitude. Secondly the Pillai must have sold the coast to the Dutch without the knowledge of Tirumalai Nayak.

We cannot deny that Tirumalai Nayak would not have sold the Fishery Coast to the Dutch. If he had really supported the Portuguese, he should have allowed Christianity to be spread in his Nayakdom. But the Jesuit letters tell of the hardships experienced by De Nobili, caused by the officials and chieftains.\textsuperscript{126} Rangachari has condemned Tirunelveli Nayak as a traitor of blockset dye on ground that by his

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{HAG, MDR, 26A, fl. 190, (1658).}
\textsuperscript{126} Rajayyan, K., \textit{History of Tamil Nadu}, pp. 147-148

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alliances with the Muslim powers the Nayak betrayed his religion and his country.\textsuperscript{127} Tirumalai Nayak would act in accordance with what the situation warranted. True that opportunism rather than principle led him in the formation of alliance system.\textsuperscript{128} The selling of the Fishery Coast to the Dutch enabled them (the Dutch) to complete their final victory at Thoothukudi.

The Pillai knew that the Paravas would retaliate for the cowardice betrayal act of the Nayak. As a precaution, he sent a letter to the Pattangattis of Thoothukudi. In the letter he mentioned that the Paravas were earlier Hindus and took their new faith from the Portuguese when the Portuguese entered the Fishery Coast. And so, the same fisherfolk could accommodate the Dutch also as the former could not live without the sea.\textsuperscript{129}

The Dutch took possession of Thoothukudi and became its masters on 30 February, 1658. As per the agreement, the Pillai had advised the Dutch not to stay at Thoothukudi and that their captain should reside at Kalyapattanam. Secondly, the Christian population of the Fishery Coast would remain in their villages without any disturbances.\textsuperscript{130} But the Dutch did not stick to their stand and started bombarding near Thoothukudi. Their aim was to make the discontented people to flee from the coast and seek help from the Dutch.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} HAG, MDR, 26A, fl. 190, (1658).
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., fl. 184.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
Another problem that cropped up among the Paravas was that whether to stay in the coast or not. Dom Henrique, a highly respected Parava said that the Paravas could not stay on the shore without the Jesuit priests. Andre de Morais, another Parava who always caused unrest among the Paravas said that the Jesuits should not stay and that he would bring the native priests of the people of the land.  

**Fall of Mannar and Jaffna**

The Portuguese succeeded initially in defending Mannar. The Paravas continued to demonstrate their consistency and faithfulness. But the Marava leader received the embassy of the Dutch. The Portuguese waited for Fr. Manuel to persuade the Maravas to join them. But the enemy had already appeared in Mannar with four big ships and eight patacus (small ships) and they fought in the moon light. Caraiyars also joined the Dutch. The Captain Mor sent Fr. Antonio Pereira with a present of elephants for consulting and negotiating peace with the Dutch.  

On 24, the February 1658, Jaffna was pounded. The Paravas participated in the battle here also. When Jaffna was attacked a British ship had already arrived at Devipattanam on the north of the east coast as rival to the Dutch. Thus the Lusitanians commercial enterprise came to an end but "the private traders managed to survive atmost up to the middle of the eighteenth century." 

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123 *Ibid.*, fl. 89.  
126 The Portuguese were otherwise known as Lusitanians.
The undeclared (but the primary) driving force behind all these conflicts and bloodshed was the pearl. It is true that pearl fishing was seasonal. Yet it brought a staggering income to the Estado da India. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, though the pearl fisheries were in the hands of the Paravas, the Muslims were the actual beneficiaries of the pearl trade. But after the conversion of the Paravas, the Portuguese established themselves strongly on the Fishery Coast, conducted pearl fishing, and had the lion's share in the entire catch of the pearls. The Muslims were unable to navigate around the Indian Ocean as before. The income from the pearl fishing to the Vijayanagar Empire dwindled. These changed economic equations were the causes for the various wars that were fought under various banners.

It seemed that the Vijayanagar rulers did not like on religious grounds the Paravas being converted to Christianity. On the contrary, the same rulers entered into opportunistic alliances with the Muslim and the Turks. The Jesuits were also targeted while attacking the Christians the reason being the Jesuits by their presence on the fishery coast acted as agents to promote the commercial interests of the Portuguese. The Paravas considered the Portuguese Crown as their sovereign and willingly paid their allegiance to the former than to the Vijayanagar emperor. 137

The Portuguese officials later betrayed the Paravas and their missionary priests. The captains and private traders sought to promote their own interests and the Paravas and the priests opposed such moves and reported the same to the Crown. All those who had been adversely affected by the altered commercial trends rallied together against the Paravas.

137 Jeyaseela Stephan, S., Tamil Coast, p. 171.
As Bismark said “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, the enemies of the Portuguese joined together and opposed the Paravas. When the Portuguese officials considered the Paravas and the Jesuits as their enemies, they unscrupulously joined hands with the local Nayak, Hindus and the Muslims.

The Vijayanagar rulers, the Nayaks, the Poligars, the Zamorin and the Muslims were economically driven while attacking the new Christians. At least before the arrival of the Portuguese the Paravas were economically oppressed only by the Muslims of the Fishery Coast. But the moment the Paravas turned Christians, they had to experience miseries and sufferings from several new enemies, including the Portuguese. The Jesuits were the only supporters of the Paravas because the Jesuits and all their missionary activities were supported and financed by the Paravas only.