CHAPTER II  

POLIGARS AND THEIR OVERLORDS

Under the Nayak powers the country was dotted with the feudal estates of the poligars. Most them were concentrated in Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramnad, Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, Dindugal and Coimbatore. The resources of the territories decided the political status of the respective poligars. The chieftains of western Tirunelveli and Ramnad were mostly of Marava community, those of Madurai, Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur were of Kallar tribes and those of eastern Tirunelveli, Dindugal and Coimbatore were nayaks of totiens. They spoke either Tamil or Telugu or both. The number of poligars varied from time to time yet it does not appear that their strength exceeded a hundred at any time. Early in the Nayak period it is believed that there were about seventy two poligars in Madurai country alone, while a few others came into existence under the Muslim administration. By 1752 their strength was indicated at about sixty.\(^1\) Towards the end of the eighteenth century the number of palayams in the Carnatic region was placed in treaty records at forty six.\(^2\) Creation of new palayams and sequestration of existing ones by the rulers caused frequent fluctuations in the strength of the poligars. The annexations as well as alienation’s, made by the poligars, too had

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contributed to this. Ramnad, Sivaganga, Sivagiri, Wadagara, Natham, Melur, Pudukkottai, Manapparai, Wodayarpalayam, Ariyalur, Turaiyur and Virupakshi represented the most important of the palayams. In the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai and Ramnad any territory belonged to the circar.3

**ORGANISATION OF THE POLIGARS**

In the country there were two classes of leaders: (1) the traditional chieftains, who descended from the royal houses of the post and as such they wielded considerable influence among the people and (2) the feudatories who owed their loyalty to the fallen sovereigns, yet lived in a state of independence. To the first order belonged the Pandya and Chola princes. In consequence of the absorption of Madurai within the political limits of the Delhi Sultanate, the Pandyas withdrew to Tenkasi and sphereheaded a struggle aimed at political liberation. To counter the Pandyan endeavour for gaining independence, the Afghan rulers planted Chola princes, called Mavali chiefs, at Manamadurai and other centers. Between the Pandyas and the Cholas, was shared much of the loyalty of the inhabitants.4 Next in order came the auxiliary powers. Many of the claimed authority from divine right or by royal concession, obtained as favour or in return for signal services. In Ramnad the Setupati claimed himself as the


guardian of the causeway to Rameswaram, the famous temple to which pilgrims flocked all over from India. He considered it his prerogative to afford protection to the pilgrims against the robbers, who infested the nearby jungles. According to tradition Sri Rama during exploits in South India entrusted this responsibility with the Setupati. However, the early line of the Setupatis became extinct by the sixteenth century. Yet some of the descendants, who commanded local influence, decided to reassert their authority, taking advantage of the collapse of the Second Pandya Empire. Marudappa Tevar of Uthumalai traced his decent from a warrior, who was stated to have sprung from the side of Goddess Minakshi with clubs in his hands to assist her in the wars against the rebels of Madurai. Because of his daring exploits during his service under Vadamalaiyappa Pillayan, The governor of Tirunelveli, under the Pandyas a rebellion in Tenkasi was suppressed. In return for this service he gained from the Pandyas the possession of Uthumalai. Another chieftains name Apadhurhura Tevar at the orders of the Pandyan ruler, Ugra Pandya Rajah, routed a Kannada army that advanced to the plains. He founded the authority of his family at Singampatti, given in reward.

5. Ibid., p.212.

6. Memoir showing the Origin of the Caste and Family of the Zamindari of the Estate of Uthumalai, para 2,5.

Kumara Ettappa Nayakkar undertook an expedition to Iramil at the direction of a Pandya king. He was hit by an arrow from an unknown foe, while he was returning after defeating the enemy. In 1584 he was granted Kalaugumalai as blood money. According to tradition Ketti Pommu or clever Pommu, who founded the Kattabomman line of chieftains at Panjalamkurichi, served under the Pandyas and gained from them the possession of that territory. In fact when the nayaks reached Tamil Country there had already existed a class of chieftains, who drew their influence from the possession of the territories, that they inherited or acquired.

V. Rangacharya in *Indian Antiquary* and R. Sathianathaier in his *History of the Nayaks of Madura* make references to the organisation of the poligari system by Visvanatha Nayaka. However, it is not very correct to assert that the rulers of Vijayanagar created the System. What they really did was to accept a situation that had already existed, partly because of their inability to change it and partly because of the advantages it offered and to put it into a definite form. The Nayak Chief, after assuming the administration of the Tamil territories, occupied Tiruchirapalli, strengthened its fortifications, cleared the jungles on either bank of the Kaveri and suppressed the robber gangs, who took asylum in the area. At his direction his general Ariyanatha Madali led an expedition to Tirunelveli.

However, the task of consolidation of Nayak authority faced insuperable odds. The chieftains who called themselves as ‘Pancha Pandyas’, believed to be the tributaries of the Pandyas, refused to accept any earthly superior. They assembled an army and entrenched themselves at a place referred to as Kayattattur, ready to fight out the issue. The local tradition of Panchalamkurichi indicates that the Pancha Pandyas took their stand at a Kurichi or a valley between two hills and hence the name of that place. Therefore it is likely that Kayattattur was Kayattar, situated near Panchalamkurichi. This development threatened to give the signal to the outbreak of a formidable rebellion through the country. As Sathianathier has rightly asserted, the Pandyas, legitimate and illegitimate, frequently questioning each other’s legitimacy, held their sway over different territories. It seemed certain that they would unite under a common banner to fight the common enemy. The troops of Travancore and the robbers who made jungle tracts of the west their habitat waited for opportunities for making irruptions into the plains. The attitude of the Portuguese, who exercised an overwhelming influence over the Paravas and independent authority over the coastal region, served as a source of constant concern. The Bahmini Sultanates, particularly Bijapur and Golkonda, concentrated their forces against the vulnerable frontiers in the north. The rulers of Kalinga too were hostile. So great was the magnitude of these perils that it appeared as nothing but impolite to provoke the chieftains of the Tamil country to raise the banner of resistance. In the meantime the generals who were serving the empire through
changing fortunes clamoured for territorial rewards. Guided by these considerations, Visvanatha Nayaka saw the wisdom of effecting a settlement that would pacify the chieftains and serve the needs of the times. The result was the acceptance of the poligari system on a feudal pattern as in case of the nayankara system. As this reform was of considerable political importance, it appears that he implemented it with the approval of Achyuta Raya, Emperor of Vijayanagar.

The nayaks associated the poligars with the administration and defined their rights and duties. The chronicles indicate that Visvanatha Nayaka gave recognition to seventy two palayams and entrusted the defence of each of the seventy two bastions of the Fort of Madurai with a particular poligar. Normally the chieftains gained possession of their districts either through inheritance from the ruling houses of the past or by their military might or in recognition of their distinguished service to the state. The nayaks permitted these chieftains to retain possession of the same territories or granted them the possession of other territories. The poligars were allowed to collect the taxes and required to pay one third of the collections as tribute to the sovereign, to maintain such number of troops as could be supported with one third of the revenue, and to retain the rest for their private expenses. They were directed to render military service to the sovereign, whenever it was demanded and to administer justice to their people. This arrangement, important as it was, accorded legal sanction to the poligari system rather than creating something new and left the chieftains as masters of their territories, with
fixed rights and duties. They received remissions in their payments and grant of more villages, in return for devoted service to the state. The settlement fulfilled two major objectives of the government; firstly, it provided for the administration of the remote and rugged territories and secondly, it created a second line of defence, indispensable during this period of anarchy and disorder.9

The period that followed witnessed the emergence of more of the poligars. The sultans of Golkonda and the nizams of Hyderabad found in the poligari system a convenient agency for tackling many of the problems that they encountered in the conquered territories in the far south. Not only did they accept the system but find it expedient to expand it. They created new palayams and granted them to their servants in recognition of meritorious service or in compensation for the protection of the properties of the circar, villagers, travellers and pilgrims. This accounted for the rise of several poligars in the Arcot region. The poligars held possession of their territories on a hereditary basis, with right to alienate any portion there of at any time. In subsequent times the Nawabs of Arcot created a class of chieftains with or without right to enjoy possession of estates on a hereditary basis or to alienate any part of them. However these chieftains were not treated as equal in status with the poligars.

In short what the nayaks proceeded to do was to accord recognition to a

9. R.Sathianathaier, op.cit., p.58.
historical phenomenon, created by the vicissitudes in the fortunes of the ruling houses of the Tamil Country. The eclipse of the old royal houses with the rise of new powers left in its wake numerous chieftains in possession of territories of reduced extent. In the mean time adventurers gathered armed gangs and asserted their power in different areas taking advantage of the disorders of the times. The followers and favourites of the new aggressors obtained from their lords concessions in land in reward of their service or sacrifice. Apart from these, the rulers found it necessary to assign lands to chieftains as compensation for the services, that they continued to render. Thus a four fold process, as an ultimate analysis would indicate, contributed to the rise of the poligars. They were (1) descent from royal houses (2) assertion of authority in command of armed followers - in these cases the chieftains obtained the recognition of the sovereign, (3) acknowledgment granted for a distinguished public service and (4) the need to protect public interests - in these cases they owed their existence to a deliberate act of the sovereign. However it is difficult to tell that a particular polilgar owed his existence to one particular cause or the other. While the early poligars gained more of rights through service to the rulers, the later chieftains took advantages of the turmoils of the times to attain the status of early poligars. In fact a combination of different factors contributed in one way or the other to the emergence of the

poligars into a powerful institution.

With the decline of the Vijayanagar Empire, the nayaks of Madurai and Thanjavur asserted independence but their endeavour to save the country from disorders proved futile. There came more of external aggressions and internal conflicts. The later rulers of Vijayanagar upon a course of warlike action with an ambition not only to regain the lost ground but also to reassert their waning authority over the provinces. They carried the war to the Tamil Country too. Mysore, Madurai and Thanjavur in the mean time entered into a three cornered rivalry for political supremacy. To add to the embarrassments, the Decani powers the Marathas and the Mysoreans made frequent inroads into the Tamil Country. As the prospect of political establisment vanished, the nayaks looked upon the local chieftains not only for support to carry on their own administration but also for assistance to check aggressions. The family records of the poligars and other chieftains furnish numerous instances of their exploits in supported of the nayaks to check foreign invasions and to suppress the defiant powers. These developments forced the nayaks to make additions to the existing palayams and to create new ones either to provide for new situations or to accommodate the new chieftains.

**The Marava Palayams:**

The number of new palayams that came into existence under the later Nayaks cannot be ascertained. However, the most significant of them were the Marava palayams. The territorial extent and economic resources of these palayams
were so considerable when compared with the ordinary estates, that they were often called as states and their rulers as rajahs. In fact the nayaks entrusted the administration of Rannnad with two commissioners, but found it impossible to afford effective protection to the pilgrims going to Rameswaram or to hold the Portuguese under check. Therefore Muthu Krishnappa Nayaka (1601-1609) of Madurai decided to appoint a chief acceptable to the inhabitants to carry into effect the reorganisation of the administration. The person whom he selected for the difficult task was Sadaikka Tevar, who belonged to the line of the ancient Setupatis. Appointed as deputy in 1604 Sadaikka Tevar established military posts along the road from Madurai to Rameswaram, provided escorts to the pilgrims and restored order. AS the Nayaks grow into prominence in the service of the Rayas of Vijayanagar, the Setupatis gained in their power in the service of the Nayaks of Madurai. Raghunatha Setupati, at the orders of Tirumala Nayaka, fought and repulsed a Muslim invasion and suppressed a rebellion organised by the poligars of Tirunelveli. As reward for his service he received the villages near Mannarkovil and a share in the reverse from the pearl fishery at Tutukudi. However, when Chokkanatha Nayaka came to power, Raghunatha Setupati disregarded the central authority and refused co-operation in resisting a Muslim aggression. In retaliation


the Nayak troops invaded Ramnad but could gain no decisive victory. In 1702 Rani Mangammal sent another expedition, but the Marava forces routed the Madurai army. In the same year the old Raghunatha Setupati, who was also called Kizhavan, declared the independence of the Marava territory. Yet the independence was not accepted and hence continued to be treated as a palayam. The new state of Ramnad extended from the sea in the east to within six miles of Madurai in the west and from River Vypar in the south to Thanjavur kingdom in the north.¹³

A territorial grant made by Kizhavan Setupati contributed to the formation of Pudukkotai. As a young man, he fell in love with Kathali, a girl of the Kallar tribe, and married her. He granted possession of a tract of territory to Raghunatha Raya Tondaiman, the brother of the girl. Raghunatha Raya (1686-1730) built the town of Pudukkotai, annexed the neighbouring palayams and asserted his independence by 1711. This marked the establishment of the Tondaiman dynasty of Pudukkottai. Adjoining this state were the tribal regions of Melur and Natham. Ruled by tribal council, they were in fact commonwealths of tribes. They had no hereditary chieftains and they paid no regular tribute to any sovereign. Inhabited by the warlike and independent Kallar tribes, the three districts, Pudukkotai, Melur and Natham, constituted what was called Kallarnadu.¹⁴

¹³. Ibid., p.212.
A second territorial concession made by Kizhavan Setupati to Periya Wodaya Tevar, a local chieftain, for maintaining 300 armed men for the service of the central authority served as the nucleus of the state of Sivaganga. Sasivarna Tevar, who succeeded Periya Wodaya Tevar, married on illegitimate daughter of Kizhavan Setupati and gained possession of more of the villages from Ramnad, adequate to maintain 3000 armed men. As the Setupatis grew in strength through service to the nayaks, so did the Sivaganga chiefs to the Setupatis. A young man of enterprise, Sasivarna Tevar ably assisted Setupati Kattaya Tevar (1723-1734) in repulsing an expedition, which the Marathas of Thanjavur sent to Ramnad. In acknowledgment of this important service, the Setupati divided his territory into five equal parts, retained three divisions in the south for himself and the rest in Sasivarna Tevar. This marked the rise of two estates within the bounds of Ramnad. Inhabited by the people belonging to the Marava community, the larger of the two called Greater Maravar and the smaller, lesser Maravar.

The Marava powers present a striking paradox, in the history of the poligars. To begin with Ramnad was a palayam, constituted by the nayaks. It paid tribute and rendered military service to Madurai. But when the influence of Ramnad was on the ascendency the authority of Madurai was on the decline. This enabled the

Setupatis to establish their independence. Having achieved this, they created new palayams within their territory. If the break away of the territory were a factor in the decline of Madurai, the loss of Pudukkotai and Sivaganga was equally a factor in the decline of Ramnad. Despite the assertion of independence, the Nawabs of Arcot when they extended their authority to the far south, considered the Marava and Kallar powers not as states but only as palayams.

Unlike the ordinary Poligars, the Rajah of Travancore had a dual status. He was the poligar under the Nayaks of Madurai and subsequently under the Nawabs of Arcot so far his possession of Kanaykumari and Kalakkad were concerned but was a sovereign by himself in regard to his authority over territories on the west coast. Mohammad Ali claimed the Rajah of Mysore and the king of Jaffna as his poligars, but he exercised no authority over them. He sought to enlist British support for the enforcement of his claims but with no purpose.

**CHANGING MASTERS:**

The Vijayanagar rayas and the Nayak powers, to whom the poligars extended their loyalty, traditionally, declined in their influence by the end of the sixteenth and seventeenth century respectively. The advent and exist of aggressive powers in quick succession together with internal dissensions among the Nayaks presented stresses and strains to the political system of the land. The poligari system too experienced the consequent vicissitudes in its fortune. Frequently assailed from different quarters, the chieftains strained their resources to defend
their traditional rights. Their effort to maintain the declining Nayaks in power headed towards an inevitable fiasco. Repeatedly the foreign invaders administered upon them devastating blows and subjected them to shattering experiences. These developments threw them into a quandary — whether to surrender to alien exaction and humiliation or to resist and assert their independence. As circumstances warranted, they relied upon one course or the other, but generally the second. Not only did they survive the long chain of threats but greatly did they consolidate their strength.

As Mysore occupied Coimbatore and Salem, the north western provinces of Madurai, the poligars in this region passed under the control of the rulers of Mysore. In 1674 Ekoji the Maratha adventurer and half brother of Sivaji, occupied Thanjavur from the Nayaks. Two years later Sivaji at the command of 30,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry undertook a campaign to the Carnatic. He occupied Jinji from Bijapur, advanced to Thanjavur and routed a combination of the poligars of Chittur and Vellore. Rustom Khan, a Muslim adventurer, sought to establish his authority at Tiruchirapalli and to expel the Nayaks. But his daring bid was thwarted by the timely intervention of the poligars. The Setupati of Ramnad and Chinna Katiri nayak of Kannivadi gained the support of the followers of the usurper, entered into a collusion with them, killed Rustom khan and re-established Chokkanatha Nayak in power. Between 1685 and 1688 Emperor Aurangazeb subdued Bijapur and Golconda, the premier Muslim powers of south India, and
annexed them. In 1694 the Emperor appointed Zulficar Khan as Nawab of the Carnatic with capital at Arcot. This development posed a direct threat to the Hindu kingdoms of the far south. The Mugal forces marched to Thanjavur and Madurai and levied contributions. Rani Mangammal (1689-1706) of Madurai and Rajah Shahji (1684-1712) of Thanjavur accepted the Mughal sovereignty. However, in 1707 when Emperor Aurangzeb died, there began a period of disorders during which the Empire collapsed and provinces declared their independence. Sadatullah Khan organised the Carnatic into an independent kingdom under the rule of his house, the Nevayets. This development placed a different power claiming authority over the chieftains.

Apart from these events of major consequence, that which a direct and adverse impact upon the poligars was the outbreak of a civil war, in the Nayak kingdom of Madurai. On the death of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha in 1732 without leaving a direct heir to the throne, his favourite queen, Minakshi, succeeded him at Tiruchirapalli, to which place capital was shifted from Madurai in 1665. Bangaru Tirumalai, cousin of the departed ruler, challenged her claim and organised a rival government at Madurai. The glamour associated with the possession of Madurai city and the proximity of the rival government persuaded most of the poligars to

transfer their loyalty from Minakshi to Bangaru and from Tiruchirapalli to Madurai.\textsuperscript{18}

In the civil war that broke out Chanda Sahib, who commanded the navayet army and encamped on the bank of the Kaveri, saw his opportunity. He entered into an alliance with Queen Meenakshi and routed the force of Bangaru Tirumalai, who were engaged in besieging Tiruchirapalli.\textsuperscript{19} After this victory, he advanced towards Madurai. The poligars and kallar tribes, who assembled in strength in the hilly region of Natham, intercepted his march and forced him to retreat, Rajah Tukkoji of Thanjavur in the meantime attacked Pudukkottai, but the Maravas rallied to its defence and drove out the Maratha troops. In 1736 Chanda Sahib deposed Queen Minakshi and usurped the throne of Madurai for kingdom. However, the consolidation of his authority required the liquidation of the influence of the poligars, who remained stubbornly loyal to the Nayaks. He assembled a large army and attacked the palayams of Pudukkotai, Ariyaur and Wodayarpalayam. The Tondaiman after a futile resistance fled to Manipallam, while the chieftains of other palayams to the coast. Another Nevayet army made its way through the woods of Nathem and descended upon Madurai. Bangari Tirumalai and his son Vijayakumara,

\textsuperscript{18} Besse, Father Beschi, p.125.

\textsuperscript{19} Indian Antiquary, Vol.46, pp.218-219.
finding resistance futile, escaped to the Marava country for asylum. But the poligars of Tirunelveli assembled their irregulars at Settur to resist the Nevayet invasion. Despite their daring struggle, Budda Sahib and Sadak Sahib, the brothers of Chanda Sahib, in command of the Muslim troops routed the poligars. The Nevayets forces took several of the chieftains as prisoners and shut them in the fort of Madurai. They suppressed the poligars occupied their fords and erected new outposts with a view to keeping the country under submission.\textsuperscript{20}

Inspite of this serious reverse, the poligars refused to accept the authority of the invading power. They appealed in the Marathas, the most prominent of the Hindu powers of the time, for intervention. The chiefs of Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga and Pudukkottai offered to furnish 5,000 horse and 40,000 foot for service with the Marathas to expel the Nevayets from the country.\textsuperscript{21} King Sahu, guided by different considerations, decided to embrace the opportunity. He entertained an anxiety to ensure the survival of the Maratha kingdom of Thanjavur, which was repeatedly threatened by the Nevayets, to check the Mohammadan advance to South India and to extend the Maratha influence right up to Kanayakumari.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20.] Madura Mission, Annual Letter, 14 July, 1736.
\item[21.] public Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 5 December 1740, p.63.
\item[22.] S.Radhakrishna Ayyar, \textit{op.cit.}, p.182.
\end{footnotes}
In 1740 the Maratha army consisting of about 50,000 strong cavalry under the command of Reghuji Bhonsle and Fateh Singh advanced to the Carnatic. In May 1740 they defeated and killed Nawab Dost Ali in the battle at Damalcherri near Chandragiri. Defences of the Carnatic collapsed and Arcot fell to the invading forces. After this major victory early in 1741 the Marathas marched to Tiruchirapalli. The records of the period do not indicate whether the poligars joined them. Yet it was possible that because of the promise of aid already made and the identity of interests, they would have sent their troops to join the Maratha ranks. In March 1741 the invading army occupied Tiruchirapalli, took Chanda Sahib, a prisoner and appointed Murari Rao as the governor of Tiruchirapalli. The Nevayets troops from Tirunelveli and Dindugal rallied to the aid of Chanda Sahib but they were intercepted at Manapparai and their generals, Budda Sahib and Sadak Sahib were killed in battle. Murari Rao sent an army under the command of Appaji Rao to the far south and established his authority at Madurai.

The Maratha intervention relieved the poligars from the treat of extinction and led to the re-establishment of Hindu power. The chiefs of Ariyalur and Wodayarpalayam returned to their districts. The Tondaiman regained possession


of Pudukkotai. The poligars, who had been thrown into captivity at Madurai, obtained their freedom. The Marathas respected the rights of the poligars as guaranteed to them by tradition and maintained cordial relations with them. The country returned to order.\textsuperscript{25}

However, this period of harmony with the central authority did not last for long. Determined to re-assert the mughal power in the Carnatic and when the Marathas were preoccupied with their internal conflicts, Asaf Jah, the Nizam of Hyderabad at the command of 80,000 horse and 2,00,000 foot marched unopposed to the Carnatic. After establishing his influence at Arcot, he marched to Tiruchirapalli. In March 1743 he attacked the defences of the fort. The siege continued for six months, after which the Nizam entered into a settlement with Murai rao, agreeing to give him Penukonda and gained possession of this stronghold.\textsuperscript{26} Asaf Jah now led his army to Madurai. Undeterred by the formidable strength of the enemy, the Kallans and the poligars harassed the enemy by frequent irruptions but failed in checking his progress.\textsuperscript{27} Asaf Jah took the city and appointed Khwaja Abdulla as Nawab at Madurai and as the guardian of the Nevayet prince, Saadat-Ullah Khan II. Because of the worsening situation in the

\textsuperscript{25} Indian Antiquary, Vol.46, p.243.

\textsuperscript{26} Ananda Ranga Pillai, Diary(trans), Vol.1. p.243.

\textsuperscript{26} Venkatarama Ayyar, Pudukkottai, Manual, Part 1, p.276.
Deccan during his absence, the Nizam made no attempt to suppress the poligars and hurried back to Hyderabad. This came as a relief to the local powers.

On the Death of Kwaja Abdulla in 1744 Asaf Jah appointed in his place his general Anwar-ud-din. In June 1744 Saddat-ullah Khan, the ten year old prince, was killed; it is believed with the collusion of Anwar-ud-din, his guardian. Yet, more interested in the preservation of his own influence than in the punishment of the perpetrators of this atrocious crime, the Nizam appointed Anwar-Ud-din himself as Nawab of the Carnatic. The new ruler founded the rule of the dynasty, the Wallajahs. The rise of another alien power in the country created again a situation of embarrassment in the poligars. Refusing to compromise with this new regime, they rallied to the Nayaks and sought to elevate their chief Vijayakumara, as the ruler at Madurai. Anwar-ud-din in 1744 sent his son Maphuz Khan on an expedition to the far south for the suppression of the poligars. The Kallans again attacked the invaders at Natham, they defeated Maphuz Khan and forced him to retreat. Mohammad Ali, the second son of Anwar-ud-din, commanded a second but more powerful expedition. He manoeuvred through the mountain passes of Natham, gained control of Madurai and advanced against the defiant chiefs. At Tirunelveli he routed a confederacy of poligars and dismantled seventy

two of their mud forts. He took several of them as prisoners, levied contributions and gained a partial control of Tirunelveli. The victorious army with considerable treasure in its possession began its return march to Tiruchirapalli. The Kallans in the meantime reassembled their irregular troops and waited on the hills of Natham. When the enemy entered their bounds, they ambushed them and looted their camp. Mohammad Ali made a narrow escape. So complete was this rout that it undid what the Nawab’s army achieved with great sacrifice.\(^29\) The poligars now made a concerted move. Let by the Marava cheiftains, they entered into a settlement with the Rajah of Mysore to expel the Wallajahs from the country and to re-establish the Nayak rule. Before this plan could be translated into practice there came unexpected developments which thwarted their venture. Nasir Jang and Muzaffar Jong son and grandson respectively of contested for authority in the Deccan. Sayaji and pratap singh the Marva princes came into conflict with each other in Thanjavur. The Wallajahs and the Nevayets entered into a bitter struggle for the possession of the Carnatic. The Mysoreeans in alliance with Murai Rao made a determined bid for the acquisition of Madurai. The English and the French embarked upon a prolonged war for supremacy in south India. All these powers, far and near, conspired together in converting the Tamil Country into their area of conflict, with the fort of Tiruchirapalli as the centre of

\(^{29}\) Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.Gergo, 12 June 1767, Vol.15, p.139.
concentrated attack. Overwhelmed by these unforeseen developments of major magnitude and left with different powers claiming control authority, the poligars found it to their advantage not to extend their authority to one power or other but to retire into isolation and concentrate upon matters of local interest. The period was marked by an expansion and consolidation of their influence.\(^{30}\)

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