Chapter IV

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
CHAPTER IV

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The advent of the Muslim powers—the Nevayets and subsequently the Wallajahs in the place of the Rayas and the Nayaks as the rulers of the land created an embarrassing situation for the feudal powers. The new masters owed their authority to the strength of arms and as such any moral support from the local powers was not of much relevance. While the Navayets occupied Madurai from the Nayaks, the Wallajahs took Arcot from the Nevayets. In 1749 on the death of Anwar-ud-din, founder of the Wallajah dynasty, in the battle against the Nevayets at Ambur, his son Mohammad Ali escaped to the rock fort at Tiruchirapalli. He won the alliance of the English, the Marathas of Thanjavur and Nanja Raja of Mysore and defeated the rival powers, the Nevayets and the French, during the Second Carnatic War (1749-1754). Because of the support extended by his allies Mohammed Ali could consolidate his authority. At the same time he added to the debt that he owed to the English East India Company. He claimed that he was to collect arrears of tribute from the poligars for the settlement of his debts. Accordingly, he entered into the venture, but the task appeared formidable. There followed repeated attempts made by the Nawab to collect tribute by force and the determined resistance made by the poligars. In the process the two sides weakened each other and the resultant situation invited British intervention.
The conflict of interests and the clash of arms came as a result of factors, bequeathed by internal contradictions. By tradition the chieftains extended their loyalty to the Nayak powers. Many of them shared with the Nayaks the cultural identity, for they were Hindu by religion, Telugu by language and Nayakkar by community. As the poligars owed their status to the Nayaks, a mutual obligation strengthened their ties. However, the rise of the Wallajahs as the ruling house created a new situation. On the one hand it released the chieftains from that obligation and allegiance that they owed by tradition to the Nayaks without developing anything of that kind as a parallel in relation to the Wallajahs.

Also the frequent political changes and the shifting fortunes of combatants, which marked the period from 1737 to 1754, saddled the chieftains in a peculiar dilemma. To render assistance to one party was an offence from the view point of the rival party and to remain neutral was offence from the view point of both parties. The period was full of risks. The poligars supported the Nayaks and then changed sides between the more prospective contestants like the Nevayets, the Mysore ans or the Wallajahs. By this process, many of the Poligars cultivated the animosity of the successful Wallajahs and invited trouble in the changed situation.

The collection of tribute otherwise called peischcush served as a potential source of embarrassment. The Nawab’s demands for tribute varied year after year. Exactions had at times been carried to the highest pitch and remissions were never obtained except through resistance. The Nawab’s managers made it a procative to
exact whatever they could from the chiefs by diverse means—hind ing internal
conflicts, bogus promises and mock assignments of land.¹ There by ultimately they
taught the Poligars to consider tribute not as a just payment to their sovereign but
as a price paid to purchase the forbearance to oppression. Bishop Caldwell ignored
the ordeals to which the Poligars were subjected to repeatedly, when he observed:
“It can hardly be said that the idea of governing the country by means of an order
of rude, rapacious, feudal nobles, such as Poligars generally were, turned out to be
a happy one, for down to the period of their final subjection and submission to
English authority 1801, Whenever they were not at war with the central authority,
they were at war with one another, and it was rarely possible to collect tribute from
them on revenue due to the central authority without display of military force
which added greatly both to the unpopularity and expense of the collection.² On
the other hand Caillaud, who had a better knowledge of the situation, in his letter
to Orme in 1775 gives an insight into the magnitude of oppression. He wrote:
“that the Nawab, if his has power in his hands, will squeece these people (the
Poligars) unmercifully, and we should (that is ought to ) see nothing but justice
done. My dear Mr. Orme, our rigid northern notion of justice

². Bishop Caldwell, History of Tinnevelly, p.58.
will make us at last the dupes and fools to the more pliant politics of these southern climates”. The letter further states: If we the Company support the Nawab let us it, and not prescribe to him in such cases as these. And after all, what have we more to do with their needs (of) government than their modes of faith. The Nawab acts justly as an eastern prince; let him not then as he please. We have the power still in our hands. You know the fable of the cat, the money and the roasted chestnuts”.

What is discamible is that while throwing light on the Nawab’s attitude towards the Poligars the letter indicates clearly the scope of intervention by the English East India Company for taking advantage of the state of conflict in the relation of the central authority with auxiliary powers. Further, as S.C. Hill has observed, the spirit of independence and turbulence which many of the Poligars cherished in common, led them into conflict with the Nawab. The absence of any definition of their privileges, their ignorance and the state set up by them frequently misled them to uphold themselves against the circar by force of arms. With forts a few old guns and a little equipment of stores, they cared little for the central authority, Those who could not manage their own affairs, usually put themselves under the influence of adventurers, whose only interest it was to entice themselves. The jargon of these self-seekers inflated the military spirit of

their masters in opposition to the Nawab's administration and guided the Poligars to a state of confrontation.

These stresses and the strains reflected upon the attitude of the Poligars towards the Nawab. Expecting no justice from the administration and holding aloft a spirit of freedom, they built up their armed strength in remote citadels and increased their resources, confident of their strength and having an easy road open to the hills for escape, whenever they were overpowered, they asserted that spirit of independence, which their situation so well qualified them to maintain. In consequence a series of military exploits arising from the hostile concentrations of the Poligars and the repeated efforts of the Nawab to assert his authority fill the pages of local chronicle. The Nawab destroyed as many of their strongholds as he could at different times, but the more he destroyed, the more the Poligars erected. In fact construction and destruction of forts formed one of the major occupations of the inhabitant masters.

The Poligar further waited for opportunities to withhold payment of their tributes to the Nawab. Whenever they found themselves unable to resist the demands of the Nawab, they paid as much as they could, failing which they procrastinated. The Poligars, when they appeared helpless before a formidable enemy, begged pardon for their fault and offered to pay tribute. This practice was in consonance with the maxim asserted to the Panchatantra, the book of apologues in India, probably the oldest of its kind in the world. This book suggests the sound
wisdom of procrastination, whether was with or without a reasonable hope in critical times. The reason given for this is that by gaining time one gains the chances of success, though it cannot be considered the case always. If they found it possible to resist, they refused payments. In that case the Nawab contended himself with their gratuitous offerings, however small they were and waited for a favourable occasion to bring forward all his past demands, which always consisted of a large accumulation of the arrears of peishcush, charges of the troops sent against them and the claims of compensation for the losses suffered by the ciricar on account of their depredations. The result was that a state of perpetual distrust took the place of mutual confidence which might have made the feudal powers good subjects in times of peace and useful auxiliaries in times of war.4

The political and military environment in which the Poligars lived had a powerful impact upon their character. Exposed to arbitrary and underfined demands, they frequently practised the same injustice by force of fraud upon each other. Corrupt amuldars taking advantage of their internal disputes generally interfered not as mediators, but as fomenters of these quarrels for gaining benefits to their own advantage. Disputes among the Poligars were occasioned by the unsettled boundaries and a variety of other claims.5 Their manner of general


behaviour was such that they maintained an animosity against each other. If one Poligar joined one side, the rival Poligar went over to the opposite side. The Nawab and his amuldares instead of enforcing order, exploited their mutual rivalry for the advancement of their own interest. At times, when they encountered serious threats to their common interests they forged unity. In that case they allowed their private animosities to subside and furnished their quota of peons for the defence of the besieged palayam without appearing themselves in the contest. Also, they did not hesitate to join any rebellion, for they believed that no change whatever could render them worse than what they under the Nawab’s administration. The Poligars, thus, acting under the stress of an interplay of common as well as individuAistic motives, followed no clear cut policy. They fought against the Nawab and at times against each other, thereby fell victims to the intrigues of external powers.

**Attempt at Nayak Restoration**

The Poligars felt themselves insecure so long as the Moghuls or their deputies exercised their sway over the land. Therefore they made repeated attempts peaceful as well as violent to reinstate the Nayaks in power. In 1750


8. Ibid., 1 July 1775, Vol.52, p.943.
when Nizam Nasir Jang marched to Pondicherry in support of Mohammad Ali in the war against Chanda Sahib, the Poligars sent a mission and sought his intervention on behalf of the Nayak. However nothing came out of their representation, for after sustaining a night assault by the French, he made a hasty retreat in the course of which he was assassinated. In 1752 Nanja Raja of Mysore sent an army to the south, Khub Sahib, who led the expedition, expelled the Nevayets from Madurai and gained possession of the territory for Mysore. However, the slaughter of cows and destruction of coconut trees by the Muslims Alienated the Sympathy of the Hindu inhabitants.\(^9\) Setupati Vijaya Raghunatha (1748-1760) of Ramnad and Rajah Uddaya Tevar (1750-1779) of Sivaganga, supported by other Poligars, organised a rebellion and drove off the Mysoreans. They crowded Vijayakumara, son of Bangaru Tirumalai of the nayak dynasty of Madurai as the ruler of Madurai. However this victory proved momentary, for immediately after the Poligars withdrew their forces, Miana, the Navayet general, gained control of Madurai. Vijayakumara fled to Sivaganga.\(^10\) Marking the failure of a combined venture.

Since then the Poligars made an appeal for British aid. On the 20th January 1754 they represented to Governor Thomas Saundars (1750-1755):


we have had no king from these twenty Years past to rule this country it was in a
distressed condition and as we the Poligars are 50 or 60 in number, We are in a
very bad circumstance having no ruler to command us. If his Honour settle the
country and appoint a Ruler over us it will be a means to require him (the
Governor) a good name reputation. We shall pay the tribute to the Nawab
according as it was customary to the Subah of Arcot and agreeable to him and will
enavour to deserve his honour's favour, this will settle the country.¹¹ This
representation was indicative of the recognition that the chieftains gave to the
growing influence of the English East India Company and their willingness to
accept the Wallajah sovereignty, subject to the elevation of a prince at Madurai for
maintaining order in the country. The Madras council took interest in the
suggestion but Mohammad Ali refused his concurrence. It appears that the Poligars
demanded the restoration of Vijayaakumara to power, for in 1757 too they sought
the elevation of this prince to authority.¹² But an error of judgment led
Mohammad Ali reject the appeal. Had he restored the Nayaks to power, nominally
no doubt, he could have gained an effective control of the country without any
serious difficulty and could have won the allegiance of the Hindu powers.

¹¹ Rama Nayak, 20 January 1754, letter to Governor saunders, Military country
Correspondence, Vol.1, pp.74-77.

¹² Madras Council, Military consultations, Madras, 4 February 1754, Vol.3,
pp.36-37.
The attitude of Mohammad Ali left the Poligars without any acceptable leadership and in a state of hostility with the Wallajahs. In the meantime the Nawab, hard pressed for money because of his prolonged wars against the rival powers—Chanda Sahip and the French—and the frequent demands made by the English East India company as his ally for money decided on military option. There followed a series of expeditions. Nawab Mohammad Ali claimed overlordship over the feudal chieflains but for long he found it impossible to assert his rights because of his prolonged wars against the Nevayets, the French and the Mysoreans. However, early in 1755 he found himself retrieved from threats to his survival and felt free to proceed against the rebel powers. Yet what added to the urgency was his financial predicament. When he was pressed for payment, the company was made to believe that he was to collect the arrears of tribute from the auxiliary powers but the Nawab had no adequate strength. Therefore the company extended its support to the Nawab in his wars against the feudal powers.

Expedition of 1755

In January 1755 the Nawab assembled an army at Tiruchirapalli in preparation of a campaign against the Poligars. It consisted of the Wallajah troops commanded by Maphuz Khan, the native troops of the Company by Khan Sahib and the European troops by Alexander Heron. Maphuz Khan was the elder brother of Nawab Mohammad Ali but lacked will power and martial talents, needed to make him an able general. Khan Sahib and Heron on the other hand were noted for
their ability in the conduct of military campaigns. Yet mutual suspicions hampered the developments of proper understanding about the leaders. Nevertheless, considering the importance of the expedition for the suppression of the feudal forces and consolidation of his authority, the Nawab accompanied it in the southward march.

Leaving Tiruchirapalli on 4th February 1755, the army reached Manaparai on the 10th and established contacts with the chieftains. However, the demands made by the Nawab were so exorbitant that the Poligars led by Lakshmi Nayak decided to resist. Thereupon the forces of Khan Sahib attacked the barriers and occupied two palayams. The chiefs now submitted to the authority of the Nawab and paid a part of the tribute. Mohammad Ali saw enough of bloodshed and returned to Tiruchirapalli. The army, resuming the march, made its way through Melur and Natham in Kallarnadu and occupied Madurai. The defiant chiefs entrenched themselves at Kovilkudi but were attacked and dispersed. In the course of the conflict the invading forces seized the brass images, which the Kallana worshipped. The massacre of the Vanquished and spoliation of the temples drove the kallans of frenzy. In the course of the struggle for idols they

13.Ibid., 13 February 1755, Vol.4, pp.24-44.
fell upon troops but their atrocities were countered by equally severe reprisals. Heron offered to restore the idols in return for a payment of 5,000 rupees but as the Kallans had no money he carried them off in a tumbril.\textsuperscript{15}

The combined forces of the Nawab and the company advanced to TirunelvAli by the end of March 1755. The Poligars were not only allied with the Nayaks but appeared remiss to pay the arrears of tribute. Maphuz Khan hesitated to resort to coercion for fear that the chieftains would seek the protection of the French or asylum in the jungles. Yet as no other alternative seemed open, he decided on offensive operations. To begin with, the forces stormed Nattakottai, a rebel stronghold near Tirunelveli, and wrought havoc with indiscriminate slaughter. The atrocities spread such a terror in the region that several Poligars submitted, cleared part of the arrears and gave security for the rest.\textsuperscript{16} Raja Marthanda Varma of Travancore withdrew his troops from the occupied territory of Kalakkad and Papnagudi. Still many of the principal Poligars, particularly Kattabomman of Panjalamkurichi and Puli Tevar of Nelcatansevval refused to yield and clear the arrears, as demanded.\textsuperscript{17}

On the 30th of April the detachments stormed Panjalamkurichi. Now

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 17 September 1755, vol.4, p.159.

\textsuperscript{16}H.C. Hill., \textit{op.cit}, pp.37-38

\textsuperscript{17}Military Country Correspondance, Fort St.George, 21 June 1757, Vol.5, pp.127-129.
Kattabomman, the Poligar, agreed to pay tribute and gave security. After this victory the troops infested Kovilpatti and forced the Poligar of Ettayapuram to accept terms. Maphuz Khan and Heron made settlements for a total amount of 4,50,000 rupees but the real collections came to 1,10,000 rupees only against as expenditure of 70,000. As the expectation of collecting huge amount proved a sheer reverie and as the threat of a French invasion of Tiruchirapalli seemed real, Governor Pigot became disenchanted with the operations. In compliance with his repeated orders the army in May began its return March from Tirunelveli. As the forces advanced a few miles, Maphuz Khan prevailed upon Heron for undertaking an expedition against Puli Tevar, the most formidable and talented of the chieftains of the western region of Tirunelveli. Accordingly, the troops marched to Vasudevanallur, one of the strongholds of the Poligar, and directed him, to make an immediate payment of Rs.20,000 under threat of coercion. An indomitable chief as he was, Puli Tevar contemptuously ignored the demand. Thereupon the assailants launched a vigorous attack upon the fort. However, for want of heavy cannon all attempts to make a practicable breach failed. By gallant sorties the troops of the rebel chief repulsed the attack. Humbled and humiliated, the forces abandoned the siege and made a retreat. To add to their predicament while they

were passing through the defiles of Natham, the Kallans fell upon the exhausted
troops and regained possession of their brass gods. In fact the expedition ended in
an anti-climax.20

Much was expected from expedition but it yielded no benefit, either to the
Nawab or to the company. Neither from the military nor political nor financial
point of view did the campaign prove fruitful. Not only did the army fail in the
suppression of the chieftains but also did suffer serious reverses at the hands of
Puli Tevar and the Kallans. Settlements were made with several Poligars but they
could not be enforced. In accordance with the prevailing tendency the generals of
the Nawab and the company gave more attention to the receipt of presents that to
the collection of tribute. The chieftains, subtle as they were, united against the
common enemy for taking advantage of the corrupt system. They administered
bribes to the avarice of their enemy and procrastination to its passion for command
but retained their military strength and political independence almost unassailed. In
consequence, the results were negative. Because of hostilities the inhabitants
abandoned cultivation and manufacture. The Poligars learned how to deal with the
troops of the Nawab and the company. The conflict between the two generals,
Maphuz Khan and Khan Sahib opportunities to the rebel powers to re-assert their
influence.

Appointed as Governor, Maphuz Khan assumed the administration of Madurai in April 1755. As Governor, he was required to pay fifteen lakhs of rupees as the annual rent for Madurai and Tirunelveli. Subject to this condition, he was left in absolute control of the administration. In a bid to restore order in the land, he made a strenuous effort to suppress the Poligars, but the problems which faced him appeared formidable. The local powers, among whom the most conscious were the Patan chiefs, the Kallans, the Maravas, Kattabomman, Puli Tevar, and the Rajah of Travancore, defied the Wallajah authority. The patan chiefs in co-operation with the Kallans re-established themselves in Madurai.21 The rulers of the Marava states of Ramnad and Sivaganga allied themselves with the Dutch. Kattabomman occupied the villages adjoining Panjalamkkurichi, while the Rajah of Travancore took possession of Kalakkad. The western Poligars of Tirunelveli in the mean time extended their sway over Nadumandulam.22 Varaguna, the Poligar of Wadagara, was the most powerful of the western Poligars, but Puli Tevar by his ability and subtility of his character gained an ascendency in the councils of the chiefs. Puli Tevar proposed a union of the western and the eastern Poligars against Maphuz Khan, but the chieftains of

21.Military country Correspondance, Fort St.George, 10 April 1756, vol.4, pp.43-44.

22.Ibid., 8 November 1755, vol.5, p.80.
Panjalamkurichi and Ettayapuram appeared reluctant, as they had given hostages to the Nawab during campaign in 1755. Yet most of the chieftains made a common cause against the wallajahs and decided to resist the Nawab’s claims.²³

Against this hostile combination Maphuz Khan found his resources to surmount it limited. He was the commander of the forces, but his army was neither well disciplined nor properly equipped.²⁴ Nor was he assisted by any able deputy. Danishmund khan, otherwise Known as Barkatoula, was in control of Madurai, but he was more interested in diversion with the dancing girls than in safeguarding the interests of the Wallajahs.²⁵ Still Maphuz Khan had two advantages; the control of the principal forts of Madurai and Palayamkottai and the absence of any binding unity among the rebel chiefs. Some of the Poligars even appeared inclined to change sides in consideration of rewards.

Maphuz Khan sought to take advantage of the differences among the Poligars. His attempt was to detach the eastern Poligars from their attachment with the western. This appeared not very difficult as there was not much of affinity

²³. Bishop Caldwell, op.cit, p.98. Ranga Pillai, the diarist, says that Maphuz Khan was incapable of making himself respected; was black and ugly, manners were unknown to him, he did not know how to treat visitors, and that the peons were orderly, decent and wore clean clothes, and turbans, but he was worse than them. (The Diary, Vol.1, p.308)

²⁴. Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 10 April 1756, vol.4, pp.43-44.

between the two groups, for the eastern was Telugu by descent while the western Tamil. He called a few villages and granted concessions in tributes to the Poligars of Panjalamkurichi and Ettayapuram in return for their alliance. Reinforced by the troops furnished by them, he expelled the forces of Travancore from Kalakkad. In March 1756 the rebels numbering about 20,000 assembled near Tirunelveli but on the 21st in a hard fought battle Maphuz Khan defeated them and killed their chief, Miana. Despite this victory the ravages by the Poligars continued so unabated that no collection could be made. Convinced of the necessity of taking more vigorous steps, the Nawab appealed to the Madras council for military support. Accordingly, at the instructions of lord Pigot (1755-1763) the governor of fort St. George, an expedition advanced to Tirunelveli. Khan Sahib, 26 who commanded the army, faced the situation firmly. He stormed the forts of the Poligars and mercilessly massacred the fleeing population. The fury with which he connected the operations threw the chieftains into panic. The rebels begged for quarters, paid tribute and evacuated the circar villages. Among the chieftains who surrendered were Puli Tevar and Varaguna of Sivagiri. The coercive means of Khan Sahib

26. Khan Sahib was born of Hindu parents in Ramansthapuram, but early in his life he ran away from his house and coverted to Islam. After serving the French and the Nawab he entered the service of the Company with the rank of subedar. His fidelity, intelligence and martial talents won for him the admiration of the English.
proved markedly successful but the settlement which he made in disregard to Maphuz Khan’s authority led him into a conflict with the latter.27

Maphuz Khan Vs. Khan Sahib

Maphuz Khan looked upon the proceedings of Khan Sahib especially the admission of the company’s troops into the fort of Madurai and the collection of tribute from the Poligars in disregard to civil authority as a direct challenge to his administration. Despite his inability to settle the country or to pay the rent, the jealousy with which he decided to retain his powers in opposition to the independent attitude of Khan sahib led the Two leaders into conflict. Maphuz Khan proceeded to Madurai, Expelled the company’s troops from the fort and entered into an understanding with the rebel chiefs to further his interests.

The defiant proceedings of Maphuz Khan began as a move against Khan Sahib but they assumed the proportions of a rebellion against the Nawab and his ally, the English, as the feudal powers were drawn into it. It would have been possible to nip the trouble in its bud had Nawab Mohammad Ali and Governor Pigot had taken timely action to ally the suspicions of Maphuz Khan but they did not, as their own political interests came into clash. The Nawab in accordance with his favourite policy of dispensing with an ally on the realization of his purpose, urged Lord Pigot to recall Khan from Tirunelveli. He complained that Khan Sahib

27. Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 23 August, 1756, vol.4, pp.69 and 129.
had interfered in his administration, collected taxes and admitted troops into the fort of Madurai without his authority. Also he asserted that the presence of Khan Sahib in Tirunelveli was no longer required and that his brother had no money to pay the expenses of the forces of the company. Despite the complaint, Lord Pigot anxious to preserve the influence of the company in Madurai, defended what Khan Sahib did. He point out that Khan sahib collected the revenue as per the agreement, which provided for the sharing of the rent between the Nawab and the Company and that he garrisoned the fort of Madurai for the security of the country, Not only did he refuse to recall the Company’s forces but also did inform the Nawab that Maphuz Khan to rejoice at what Khan Sahib did. In this apparent conflict between Maphuz Khan and Khan Sahib, there was involved in reality the rivalry between the Nawab and the Company for political influence. Therefore the issue raised by Maphuz Khan’s operation to Khan Sahib offered no immediate solution. It became evident that unless a governor acceptable to both the Nawab and the Company were appointed, it would be difficult to enforce a co-ordinated policy for the suppression of the feudal rebels and settlement of the country.

Accordingly, Lord Pigot and Mohammad Ali decided to appoint Tatarapa Mudali, a wealthy financier, as renter of Tirunelveli with effect from the 1st of July 1756. Barkatoula, appointed by Maphuz Khan, retained control of Madurai.

---

country while Khan Sahib the Madurai fort. Tatarapa Mudali Made settlements with the village heads and Poligars for the payment of taxes. But the rivalry between Tatarapa Mudali and Khan Sahib for supremacy again created complications. Khan Sahib expelled the Poligars from the cutchery of Tatarapa Mudali and executed five men sent by Puli Tevar for the payment of tribute. These high handed proceedings held the authority of the renter in ridicule, drove the Poligars again in hostility and helped Maphuz Khan to organize resistance with the support of the chieftains.  

In August 1756 Maphuz Khan went through a ceremony of receiving a firman or order of appointment to governorship from the Nawab. He went out of his camp with great pomp, saluted a person mounted on an elephant and received a rolled paper. After proclaiming himself as governor of Madurai, he issued orders appointing Baraktoula as his deputy for Nadumandalam and Mr. Jaffar and Tirunelveli.

Yet the rebellion could not be sustained without the support of the Poligars, against whom he fought on several occasions. Eager to gain their alliance, he granted concessions in territories, which were not his own, to the chieftains. Accordingly, he ceded Wallachinattam, Taravedi and Terembur situated

29.Ibid., 19 May 1756, vol.4, p.59.

near Madurai to the Patan Chiefs in return for their military and financial aid. He permitted Kattabomman to occupy the Nawab's villages adjoining Panjalamkurichi and the Rajah of Travancore to annex Kalakkad. The Poligars, angered at the imperious behaviour of Khan Sahib, on seeing the prospect of gaining more territories, joined the ranks of the rebels. In January 1757 after posting the Kallans for safeguarding the northern borders of Madurai, Maphuz Khan proceeded to Nelcatansevval, granted the districts of Alwarkurichi, Ambasamuram, Papankulam and Tengasamudram to Puli Tevar and won his alliance. The rebels made Nelcatansevval the principal base of operations in Tirunelveli. In a bid to win the support of the Hindu powers he promised the restoration of the country to the Nayaks and sent his deputies to the Marwa states and Mysore for seeking aid. However, the confederacy suffered from glaring anomalies. Some of the principal Poligars especially of Sivagiri and Ettayaypuram gave no support to Maphuz Khan. Many of the allies were half hearted, for they were guided more by their own interests than by any common objective. Obviously the rebellion assumed the proportions of an unorgainsed struggle aimed at the realisation of no common goal. While Maphuz Khan promised the restoration of the Nayaks to their former dignity, he did not define the satatus which he himself aimed at. The Poligars, on

the other hand, decided to annex as many villages as possible, without giving any regard to the jurisdiction of their leader or of the Nawab. In short, the pursuit of common policy was not there.

Yet rebellion broke out in January 1757 causing considerable alarm. Rebel forces consisting of 1000 horse and 10,000 armed men made incursions into circar territories in Tirunelveli. Spreading desolation everywhere, they moved to Panjalamkurichi, where the troops of Kattabomman numbering 4000 joined them. Tatarapa Mudali’s irregulars fled and his administration collapsed. Maphuz Khan Puli Tevar summoned the Poligar of Ettayapuram to join their ranks, but the latter refused. Thereupon they ravaged his palayam and sent the spoils of plunder to Nelcatansevval. Khan Sahib advanced from Srivilliputtur to intercept the convey of the rebels, but did not succeed. The Poligar of Wadagarai occupied Kadayanallur, Tangachi and Sankaranainarkovil, while the Rajah of Travancore took valliyur. With the spread of the rebellion, the major part of the province of Tirunelvelvi passed under the control of Maphuz Khan and his associates.

33. The observation of the historian Mr. Orme that Kattabomman, dreading the consequences of his refusal to co-operate with the rebel, joined Maphuz Khan and Puli Tevar (History of Indostan, Vol.II, pp.199-200) is untenable. The official records of Fort St. George state that Kattabomman was reluctant but subsequently entered into an alliance with Maphuz Khan sent his troops to the rebel camp. (Military Country correspondence, Vol.II, PP.180-181).

The troops of the Nawab and the Company retained control of a few strong posts, yet their render could collect no taxes from the villages except in competition with the rebel chiefs. Khan Sahib, aided by the Poligars of Sivagiri and Settur, repulsed rebel attacks on his post at Alwarurichi. In these battles Puli Tevar lost two of his generals. The Poligar of Wadagarai one of his legs. With no side gaining any significant victory, disorders descended upon the land on a large scale.

**Expedition of 1757**

In an attempt to regain control of territories, governor Lord Pigot sent an army in support of Khan Sahib. John Caillaud in command of the expedition marched to Ramnad as the Kallans closed the direct route through Natham and reached Tirunelveli early in March 1757. Still the forces found it difficult to launch offensive Operations. The shortage of provisions and the onset of the monsoon presented difficulties. Puli Tevar and Barkatoula appealed to Haider Ali of Mysore for aid. As the Third Carnatic War broke out, it appeared that the French would send an expedition to Tiruchirapalli in support of the rebels. Because of these considerations, Caillaud and Khan sahib began their return march on the 11th of April for fear of an assault on Madurai which was in rebel occupation.

---


the rebels led by barkatoula, trekked in pursuit, in skirting along the hills. For the
night they helped on the borders of Sivagiri. Taking them as intruders, the troops
of Sivagiri. Taking them as intruders, the troops of Sivagiri fell upon their camp
and dispersed them. In the early morning the rebels reassembled and resumed their
march to Madurai.  

Khan Sahib and Caillaud on their return march made on attempt on
Madurai. The fort of Madurai was large and had two surrounding walls with
square towers at intervals. The inner wall was twenty two feet in height but was
neither well maintained nor properly manned. Yet, what added greatly to its
strength was that the space between the two walls was so over grown with thick
bushes of thorny plants that it appeared insurmountable at most of the places..
However Caillaud discovered a small open space near a gate, not well guarded, on
the western part of the ramparts. He decided to escalate the walls through this
vulnerable spot. In the night of the 29th of April the troops approached the foot of
the walls undiscovered, fixed up the ladders and got over the first wall. The assault
progressed according to plan and the assailants moved steadily forward to the inner
wall. Now a cur dog, which silently followed one of the sepoys, frustrated the bold
venture. Overwhelmed by its helplessness to reach its master into the fausse-bray it
gently barred; instantaneously its counterpart in the fort answered it.

The rebels took up the alarm, hung out blue lights of sulphur and started a shower of arrows, stones, lances and fire arms on the intruders. In the resultant confusion, the troops of Caillaud retreated, but without suffering any serious loss.\textsuperscript{38} With the task unaccomplished, Caillaud led his forces back to Tiruchirapalli as he had to protect this fort against the French.

In the meantime the depredations by the Poligars of Tirunelveli and the military operations against the rebels of Madurai confined. Maphuz Khan Tevar recovered possession of the lost posts, but their attempts to storm the fort of Tirunelveli failed. However, when a body of troops left the fort on its way to Madurai, Maphuz Khan captured it. After this victory the rebels attacked Palayamkottai but Tatarapa Mudali won over the Poligars of Panjalamkurachi and Ettayapuram to his side, and rescued the besieged garrison. Still the rebels retained control of most of the Country in the far South.\textsuperscript{39}

At Madurai the siege continued. On the 9th of July the rebels sallied out in great strength, but were beaten. After the return of Caillaud from Tiruchirapalli the attempt was renewed and on the 10th of July a part of the wall was battered down. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the forces advanced to the breach. The rebel garrison taking the signal, flanked the towers and stubbornly resisted the assaults.

\textsuperscript{38} Madras Council, Military Consultations, 16 May 1757, vol.7, p.427.

\textsuperscript{39} Robert Orme, \textit{op.cit.}, vol.2, pp.235-239.
They set fire to bags filled with powder as they tossed them down over the besiegers. Ultimately, unable to storm the fort and suffering considerable loss, Caillaud withdraw from the walls.\textsuperscript{40} Now the assailments relied upon intrigues. Caillud and Khan sahib persuaded several chiefs, including the rajahs of the Marava states, Mudemiah and the Poligars of Panjalalkurichi, sivagiri, Ettayapuram and Settur to join their camp. Either their conviction that the struggle was futile or their desire to win the favour of the Nawab forced them to change sides. Kattabomman furnished 1000 troops for service with Khan Sahib, while Mudemiah brought with him the Kallans of Natham. These defections considerably weakened the rebels. Still Puli Tevar, BarkatoulaNabi Khan Kattack remained firmly in their alliance with Maphuz Khan.\textsuperscript{41}

As reinforcements either from Tirunelveli of from Mysore were expected Barkatoula continued the defence of Madurai against a concentration of the hostile columns. He appealed to Maphuz Khan for support but was of no purpose. Haider Ali too did not send any relieving expedition. Greatly disappointed, Barkatoula consented to surrender the fort if the Nawab paid twelve lakhs of rupees.\textsuperscript{42} After prolonged negotiations, Caillaud made a settlement with Bharkataula agreeing to

\textsuperscript{40} Madras Council, Military Consultations, 9 July 1757, Vol.8, p.641.

\textsuperscript{41} Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 15 August 1757, vol.5, pp.159-160.

\textsuperscript{42} Madras Council, Military Consultations, 11June 1757, Vol.7, p.583 and Vol.8, p.704.
pay an amount of Rs.170,000. On the 8th of September 1757 the rebels evacuated Madurai and Caillaud took possession of the fort. The acquisition of Madurai deprived the rebels of the control of a province and interrupted their communications with Kallarnadu. Maphuz Khan withdrew from the siege of Palayamkottai and retreated to the hills of Nelcatansevval.43

Occupation of Madurai fort was a major victory, Yet Caillaud could not follow it up on account of the outbreak of the war with the French- the Third Carnatic War. In October he returned to Madras after entrusting the command of the defences of Madurai with Khan Sahib.44 The withdrawal of the forces and the rebellion of the Poligars encouraged Haider Ali to advance to the far south. In October 1757 championing the cause of the Poligars, he marched to Madurai and occupied sholavadan. However, Khan Sahib attacked Haidar Ali at Natham and forced him to retreat to Dindugal.45

After his return from Natham, Khan Sahib sought to settle the war torn country. He strengthened the defences of Madurai and Sholavandan and posted the Kallans to guard against Mysorean incursions. Eager to promote the settlement of the country he impressed upon the Madras Council the necessity of persuading


44. Radhakrishna Aiyar, A General History of the Pudukkottai State, p.216.

Maphuz Khan to leave Madurai. He stated categorically that unless Maphuz Khan withdrew from his alliance with the Poligars, the disturbance would never cease and that the Nawab could never all the revenue. Accordingly, Lord Pigot advised the Nawab to persuade his brother to evacuate Madurai by promising to make a decent provision for his support. In compliance with this suggestion Mohammad Ali sent his deputies to Nelacatansevval. The deputies saw Maphuz Khan residing in a hut made of straw and living a life upon what Puli Tevar parted with. Still, he demanded the recall of Khan Sahib from Madurai and his grant of a district yielding two lakhs of rupees as the condition for his withdrawal from the alliance with the Poligars. But the Nawab rejected the terms. By the end of 1738 Khan Sahib himself marched to the north for the defence of Madras which was then besieged by the French led by the Count de Lally. As a result the rebel chieftains reasserted their influence. However in 1758 the Nawab established his say over Turaiyur, an important Palayam in Tiruchirapalli, taking advantage of a succession dispute. The ruling chief was Varadaraja Reddi but his claims were contested by his cousin Venkatachala Reddi. In September 1758 at the request of Venkatachala Reddi for military aid, the Company’s forces led by Khan Sahib and Joseph Smith


47. Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 8th March 1757, vol.6, p.31.
marched to Turaiyur. As the forces captured the barriers, the Poligar fled to the borders of Mysore. A large section of the population joined the chief in exile. Venkatachala Reddi now assumed management of the palayam and it seemed that the expedition was a success.48 However, in March 1759, soon after the withdrawal of the forces, the expelled chief descended upon the district. Now the rival Poligar fled and a body of troops which had been stationed by Khan Sahib surrendered. Yet Varadaraja Reddi, offered terms, which the Nawab accepted for fear of the Poligar joining the French. Mohammad Ali recognised the title of Varadaraja Reddi and received tribute.49 This settlement contributed to the extension of Nawab's influence in the Kaveri basin.

The Madras council with the approval of the Nawab appointed Khan Sahib Governor of Madurai in May 1759. On his arrival at Madurai he found all the territories extending from Natham near Madurai to the walls of Travancore again occupied by the Poligars, belonging to the camp of Maphuz Khan. In his bid to weaken the rebel ranks, he decided on a policy of divide and rule. Accordingly, he won over the rulers of Ramnad, Sivaganga and Pudukkottai and at the same time dealt with the defiant chiefs firmly. The kallans refused payment of tribute and treated the demands for payment with contempt. Whenever they were required to


They used to remark: 'the heavens give rain to the land, our cattle plough the fields and we cultivate, why should we pay tribute to an equal.' But Khan Sahib refused to compromise with his authority. He attacked the villages of Kallarnadu and continued his policy of desolation during the entire month of June. As resistance failed, the Kallans submitted and paid tribute. After effecting this settlement, the forces began a simultaneous offensive against the eastern and western Poligars of Tirunelveli. In the east he ravaged Ettayapuram and Kolarpatti and forced the chieftains to clear the arrears. In the west he stormed Kalkondan, held by the troops of Maphuz Khan and Puli Tevar. The Poligars entrenched themselves at Kanguntram but were routed and the Palayams of Sorandai and Uthumalai were occupied. In September 1759 Khan Sahib with the support of Travancore attacked Vadagarai. On the approach of the forces the Poligar fled to Nelcatensevval. Confronted by a difficult situation, Puli Tevar requested the ruler of Travancore to withdraw from the alliance but without success. In return for military aid Khan Sahib ceded Kalakkad to Travancore without the Nawab’s consent. In November the combined forces attacked Vasudevanallur. On the 27th


when the assault was in progress Puli Tevar with 3000 men gallantly fell upon the assailants. The Poligar lost 350 of his men against Khan Sahib’s 200. At the critical hour a heavy cannon of the Company burst. Puli Tevar wrested victory and the enemy was put to fight. This gave a serious blow to the authority of the Nawab.

However, in July 1759 when the military operations were still in progress, Maphuz Khan sent messages to Lord Pigot conveying for his support and the cession of Ambasumudaram and Rangasamudram to Puli Tevar. In response the Nawab wrote letters promising to make adequate provisions for his support, but indicating no concessions to the Poligars. In March 1760 the rebel chief left the camp of Puli Tevar and returned to the court of the Nawab.

52 Ibid., vol.8, p.114 for 1760. Copy of a letter from Maphuz Khan to the Nawab (no date).


Thus the rebellion of Maphuz Khan ended, but it did not settle the relation of the Nawab with the rebel Poligars.
Alliance system of Poligars

The significant victory of Puli Tevar over a combination of powers in December 1759 bolstered the hopes of the rebels and set in motion fresh wave of disturbance. The Dutch whose commercial interests were threatened in consequence of the growing influence of the English, drew closer to the Poligars. The prospect of getting aid from Haider Ali and the French appeared bright. These factors contributed to the rise of the eastern and the Western coalitions against the Nawab. Kattabomman and other Poligars of the eastern region of Tirunelveli organised themselves into a coalition. While Puli Tevar and other Poligars of the western region formed another coalition.

54. Ibid., 10 May 1760, Vol. 8, p. 165.

Maphuz Khan remanded at peace with the Nawab for the next few years. In 1765 he expressed a desire to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and requested his brother to give him a loan. Mohammad Ali paid Rs.1,03,000 after taking a bond and furnished him with an arcort, a few camels and tents. A few days later, Maphuz Khan represented that he spent away the money in liquidating his depts and requested the Nawab to advance Rs.5,000 more; upon which Mohammad Ali paid him Rs.10,000. Maphuz Khan took leave of his brother and started for Mecca, but after proceeding upto Chittur, a few miles north of Arcot, he returned. The Nawab, now remarked that Maphuz Khan was always guided by his women. (Military country Correspondence, Vol. 13, pp. 299-304 Nawab to Madras council, 17 September 1763).

The eastern poligars received the support of the Dutch. The western poligars, on the other hand, organised their resistance in close association with Haidar Ali and the French.\textsuperscript{56} The rebels received further encouragement when Haidar Ali and the French entered into an alliance against the Nawab and the English. By a settlement made in April 1760 the two Powers decided to conquer the Carnatic and to divide it between themselves; Haider Ali was to get the southern Carnatic and the western part of the central Carnatic while the French the rest of the Carnatic.\textsuperscript{57}

To begin with Kattobomman occupied Ottapidaram, while the Dutch invaded Alwar Tirunagari and Nanapad.\textsuperscript{58} But Khan Sahib encountered these aggressions with vigour. Gaining the support of the rulers of Ramnad and Sivaganga, he expelled the Dutch from the circar country and recaptured Ottapidaram.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{59} The principal Poligars of the eastern Coalition were those of Panjalamkurichi, Ettayapuram, Kulattur, Mailamandai, Maniachi, Kadalgudi, Nagalapuram, Ezhayiramppannai, settur and Kolarpatti. The important western Poligars were the chiefs of Vadakarai, sivagiri, Nelcatensevval, singampatti, utamalai and Surandi.

\textsuperscript{60} According to the terms lally agrees to cancel the bond for rs.25 lakhs which Naja rajah had given to the French during the struggle for Tiruchirapalli.(Military consultations, 9 June 1760, Vol.12, p.516).

\textsuperscript{61} Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 5 June 1760, vol.6, pp.194-195 and vol.8, pp.205-213).
On the 4th of June Haidar Ali’s forces consisting of 1500 horse and 2000 sepoys arrived at Tyagadurg on the southern borders of Mysore, expecting the arrival of a French army for operations in support of the Poligars. But Lally failed in sending his forces because of the desperate state of his finances. The English occupied Karur and forced Haidar Ali to withdraw his troops sent to Natham.59

In December 1760 Khan Sahib began his campaign against the Western coalition. On the 19th he entrenched himself within three miles of Nelcatansevval. The following day Puli Tevar charged the hostile columns but withdrew after he lost 100 of his men. The siege continued for about four months. In Split 1761 on the arrival of reinforcements, khan Sahib captured a hill, which commanded the view of the fort. Erecting batteries on the hill, he kept up an uninterrupted cannonade and cut off the rebel communications. Unable to withstand the ordeal or to obtain supplies, Puli Tevar surrendered on the 16th of May 1761.60 After this discomfiture the rebels evacuated their strongholds at Panagur and Vasudevanallur. Khan Sahib magnanimously permitted his enemy to escape to Ramnad. He followed up this victory with the suppression of other rebel chiefs and demolished twenty nine mud forts.


The success which attended these operations assisted the establishment of Nawab's authority 61

**Retreat of Travancore Forces**

In 1762 when Khan Sahib was engaged in the settlement of Madurai, the chiefs of Travancore, Sivagiri, Wadakarai and Panjalamkurichi united together into a confederacy. Dharma Rajah of Travancore (1758-1798) who had 16,000 troops, trained by de Lannoy, a Dutch general and numerous irregulars, headed the confederacy. This development represented a reaction against the growing influence of Khan Sahib. The Rajah in particular, after extending his Kingdom upto Cochin, displayed an ambition to gain territories on the east coast. 62 In November 1792 the troops of Travancore assembled at Tovala, on the south-eastern border of the kingdom. Reinforced by the troops of the Poligars of Panjalamkurichi and Pittapuram, the rebels occupied Panagudi, Ervadi and Tirukkurangudi. Another column assembled at Aryankavu on the Western Chats and made a junction with the troops of Wadakarai and Sivagiri.


62.Ibid., 6 February 1763, vol.11, pp.41-43.
The combined forces numbering about 30,000 captured Shenkkottai and raided the circar villages.  

On hearing this ominous development Khan Sahib at the command of 1000 horse and 6000 sepoys advanced by forced marches to the southern borders. He greatly increased his strength by obtaining the assistance of the Madras and allied Poligars. After sending one army to the far south, he himself took the field in the west. He attacked the invading columns at Wadakarai and dispersed them. The forces of Travancore and the Poligars evacuated Shenkottai and Puliyara and retired to the hills. After stationing two columns on the western border, he with the remaining detachments moved to Kalakkad. Before he could reach to the rescue of the columns, the Poligars won a victory over them. Yet on the 14th November he pressed upon the forces of Tranvancore, but the assault failed. Between the 14th of November and the 22nd of January 1763, he engaged the enemy in ten bloody actions but all of them proved indecisive. In February he received reinforcements from different quarters, in consequence of which he embarked upon another drive against the enemy. Inflicting heavy losses, he forced the rebel forces to evacuate all their posts and to retreat to the walls a forward step by carrying the war into Travancore.

63. Ibid., 1763-1763, vol.11, pp.135.

64. Ibid., 22 January 1763, vol.11, pp.46.
Accordingly, he captured Aramboly, advanced up to Neyyattinkarai, and even cut off the nooses of the prisoners of war. It appeared that Travancore would fall. The Rajah was so alarmed that he made entreaties to the Nawab for protection. Finding them of no avail, he submitted to the terms dictated by the triumphant invader. By the terms of the settlement signed on 21st February 1765 both the chiefs agreed to their territories. The rebel powers suffered a setback, but they found more of opportunities when Khan Sahib himself turned against the Nawab.

Expedition of 1766

In 1763 Khan Sahib organised a rebellion against the Nawab and sought to establish the independence of Madurai. The Poligars utilised the situation to regain their lost ground. Many of the chieftains extended their support to Khan Sahib in his rebellion, withheld payments and occupied circar villages. However in 1764 the Nawab defeated and executed Khan Sahib. Thereupon he decided to chastise the feudal powers for their defiant proceedings and enforce collection of tribute. Accordingly, he won the support of the company and waged more of compaigns in 1765 Colonel Rumley led two expeditions to Kallarnadu. He attacked the villages

---

and killed 5000 of these rebels. The Kallans submitted and paid part of their tribute. In the meantime Umdut ul Umara, son of Mohammad Ali, assisted by Donald Campbell, led the forces to Ariyallur and Wodayarpalayam. The two palayams with their well preserved tanks and rich fields appeared flourishing because of the benevolent administration of the chieftains. On the appearance of the forces the Poligar of Ariyalur fled to Wodayarpalayam. In a battle at Wodayarpalayam the Poligars were defeated and their territories were occupied. After this defeat the two chieftains escaped to the Danish settlement at Tarangambadi. This victory represented a major for the Nawab against the feudal powers in Tiruchirapalli.

In December 1766 Major William Flint led the forces to Tirunelveli, attempts to capture Kollankondan in Sivagiri and Ettayapuram failed it. However, in February 1767 the troops occupied Panjalamkurichi. In April 1767 the Wallajah and British forces launched a second campaign. Donald Compbell in command of the operations occupied Kollankondan and Settur. In May the forces marched to Sivagiri, a well fortified town with 20,000 inhabitants. The Varaguna, as the ruling chief was called, with his followers evacuated the town and took his position in

the inaccessible woods. The invaders occupied Sivagiri and stormed Vasudevanallur and Singampatti. Early in June they moved to the hills of Sivagiri but finding the task hazardous, withdrew. The Poligars now sought a peaceful settlement. On an examination of the accounts Campbell was convinced that the Nawab's policy of oppression and exaction drove them to rebellion. Whereas Khan Sahib during the seven years of his administration collected from Sivagiri total amount of 18,000 chakrams, the Nawab levied 33,000 for 1765 alone. Added to this, because of Haidar Ali's incursions to the Carnatic the forces were to be sent to the northern frontiers. Considerations of justice and expediency required a peaceful settlement. Campbell accordingly restored Sivagiri, Settur and Wadakarai to the Poligars and accepted what they paid.

CONQUEST OF MARAVA PALAYAMS

In 1763 when a civil war broke out in the Marava principalities, the Nawab decided to take advantage of the situation. The conflict began as the result of a struggle for power that followed the death of Setupati Sella Tevar (1748-1760). Muthuramalinga, an infant, was elevated to the throne while Muthu Viaja


Raghunathta assumed the office of the regent and Damodara Pillai continued as minister. The struggle for power drove the regent and the minister to hostile camps. Damodara Pillai with the support of Tandavaraya Pillai, the minister of Sivaganga, occupied most of Ramnad, but his attempt to capture the capital failed. In December 1763 the two ministers paid a visit to Colonel Preston, while he was engaged in the military operations for the suppression of the rebellion organised by Khan Sahib. The Nawab advised Preston to make use of the opportunity for securing support of the ministers against the rebel powers without placing much confidence in their alliance. Accordingly, the English general asked for their military support against Khan Sahib as a condition of his extending any support for the occupation of the fort of Ramnad. The ministers accepted the proposal and assisted the British troops for the reduction of Madurai, held by Khan Sahib, to submission.

But after the fall of Madurai, as per the design neither did Mohammad Ali nor did Preston show any inclination to help the ministers. Meanwhile, the regent for fear of the machinations of Damodara Pillai, sought the protection of Mohammad Ali. Thus the rival parties applied for the Nawab's intervention. The deceitful Mohammad Ali promised to support the regent too. On his part the regent agreed to admit two companies of the Carnatic troops, as was suggested by the Nawab, into the fort of Ramnad, apparently for its defence.
Had this settlement been implemented, the Nawab could have perhaps easily occupied the fort, but this was rendered impossible because of the sudden death of the regent by small pox.\textsuperscript{73}

On hearing the death of the regent, the ministers struck off to Ramnad, without taking leave of the Nawab or Preston and pretending as if they were apprehensive of the security of their persons but really because of the fear that the Nawab would demand the payment of tribute. Considering the services rendered by the ministers and fearing that the method of their departure would create an unfavourable impression upon the other allies of the Nawab, Donald Campbell who commanded the forces at Madurai, sent messages with assurances that they might return in safety after taking leave of Mohammad Ali, Yet they persisted in their pretended apprehension.\textsuperscript{74} Damodara Pillai gained the control of Ramnad town and restored order in the estate. The Nawab on his part did not pursue his attempt either for the collection of tribute or for annexation, but waited for a better opportunity.

In 1771 Mohammad Ali gained the support of the English for the annexation of the Marava states. He represented to the Madras Council that the Marava chiefs occupied circar villages, harboured the most, notorious robbers in their woods and

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 16 January 1764, vol.20, p.32.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 22 December 1764, vol.21, p.906.
they permitted the Dutch to establish factories without his consent. He also pointed out that despite their state of subjection, they paid no tribute, rendered no service for an expedition to Thanjavur\textsuperscript{75} and that the ruling Setupati Muthuramalinga Tevar obtained from him no permission for his ascension. The Madras council in consideration of the Company's alliance with the Nawab but without examining merit of the case, decided to extend military assistance for the expedition. In justification of this decision the English dubbed the Marava rulers as dangerous delinquents and declared that unless they were suppressed there was no safety to the government of the Carnatic.\textsuperscript{76} Thus excuses were formulated for military operations.

However, the contentions of the Nawab and the Madras Council were just allegations calculated to justify what they decided to do. The Nawab did not specify the villages if they were occupied by the Marava chiefs. The robbers infested those jungles, where they found shelter without anybody's asking. The Maravas granted commercial facilities to the Dutch only after the English rejected

\textsuperscript{75}In September 1771 the Nawab, assisted by the English invaded Thanjavur. Rajah Tujaji was defeated and forced to cede a part of his territory and agree to pay eight lakhs of rupees as annual tribute.

\textsuperscript{76}Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 3 November 1771, vol.19, p.247 and Madras Council Military Despatches to England, vol.7-9, pp.125-127
a similar offer, made to Colonel Heron. Further, there existed no state of real subjection as to oblige the rulers of Ramnad and Sivaganga to serve the Nawab or to pay tribute to him or to dissuade them from establishing relations with foreign powers like the Dutch.

In January 1772 the Nawab's forces entered Sivaganga and occupied Tondi, the important sea port. The Marva troops led by Semialinga Pillai sought to expel the invaders, but were dispersed. Yet, the Nawab suspended the operations because of the possibility of a Maratha invasion of the Carnatic. In May 1772 the campaign being resumed, the combined forces of the Nawab and the Company led by Joseph Smith advanced to Ramnad. The fort, equipped with a heavy cannon and fifty light guns and surrounded by an open space had forty four bastions and a ditch. On the 28th the army moved to the fort before the queen regent knew that there was a complaint against her. Another army led by Benjour advanced from Madurai to the eastern borders of Sivaganga and captured Tiruppuvanam, thereby preventing the troops of Sivaganga form marching to the aid of the Setupati. The military operations were thus effectively coordinated for the suppression of the two principalities.77

Undut ul Umara, son of Mohammad Ali, exercised general control of the operations. He opened negotiations with the queen regent for a peaceful

77. Military Country Correspondence, Fort St.George, 1772, vol.21, p.159.
occupation of the palayam, but it proved unfruitful. On the 1st of June Smith ordered a general siege and the next day made a breach on the walls. At 5 p.m. on the 2nd a party of grenadiers led by Major Braithwaite carried the fort by assault. A large part of the 3000 strong Marava garrison died fighting, while the rest fled. The invaders plundered the flourishing town and imprisoned the royal family including the queen-regent, her son Setupati and her two young daughters. On the fall of the fort, Smith wrote to the Madras Council: The fort of Ramnad is old, but the palace is one of the best buildings, I ever saw in the country and the inhabitants lived in truly Eastern Luxury which I am afraid they will never experience again. Young Maravar is about 12 years of age but the Rani has been invisible at least to Europeans. She has two daughters, both fit for matrimony. I have felt very much for the distress of these miserable people. Though there were 3000 armed men they did know what to do or how to act being attacked in sudden. The royal prisoners were sent to Tiruchirapalli.

A two pronged offensive decided the fate of the principality of Sivaganga. Joseph Smith from the east and Benjour from the west invaded the palayam in June 1772. The country was very busy of cocksure thorn, though there were villages and open spaces here and there. Raja Udaya Tevar in anticipation of the

invasion, erected barriers on the roads, dug trenches and established posts in the woods of Kalayarkoil. Undut ul Umara directed the rajah to pay one lakh of rupees but the latter evaded, abandoned his capital town of Sivaganga and established himself in the woods. On the 21st of June the detachment of Smith and Benjour effected a junction and occupied the town of Sivaganga. The next day, the forces marched to Kalayarkoil, and captured the posts of Keeranoor and Sholaveram. Now Tandavaraya Pillai, the minister of Sivaganga, sent messages to Undut ul Umara expressing his readiness for an accommodation. Therefore, smith wrote a letter in English directing Benjour to halt his advance until the result of negotiations was made known. But the troops of Sivaganga intercepted the letter and detained it without understanding the contents. Benjour, continuing the operations, came into conflict with the main body of the troops of Sivaganga on the 15th June. The Raja with many of his followers fell dead in the battle. His widow and daughter fled to Virupakshi in Dindugal. The invading forces plundered the town, collected jewels worth 50,000 pagodas and established the circar authority.79 Thus the Nawab suppressed two of the powerful poligars and greatly weakened the hold of feudalism.

In fact the epilogs under the rule of the Wallajahs encountered a complicated

———

situation, created by conflicting interests. They were required to deal with the administration of the Nawab the English East India Company as an ally of the Nawab and the rival powers. Assisted by the English, the Nawab sent expeditions against the chieftains and made a limited advance towards the consolidation of his authority. But this trend could not be sustained because of the opposition organised by the rival powers like the Nayaks and the Nevayets and the rebel powers, particularly Maphuz Khan and Khan Sahib. The consequent wars spread terror and turmoil yet the feudal fowres found it possible to take advantage of the disorders to expand the influence. For a time Nawab instead of pursuing his policy of coercion, resorted to a policy of conciliation with a view to gaining their alliance and granted them more of rights. The rival and rebel powers sought their aid and gave them concessions. More of the circar villages accepted their protection and paid taxes. However this situation did not last long. The auxiliary followed no uniform or common policy in relation with the new developments. Mohammad Ali on the otherhand was supported by his British ally. This led to the suppression of several of the poligars and the annexation of the palayams of Turiayur, Ariyalur, Wodayarpalayam, Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram. These gains were significant, but the Nawab found himself more and more indebted to the English.