CHAPTER-II

EUROPEAN TRADING FIRMS IN THOOTHUKUDI
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Modern European Trade: The Beginnings:

A new era of Indo-European trade by sea, through the Cape of Good Hope, commenced towards the end of the 15th century with the advent of the Portuguese. The Dutch followed by the English and the French, had formed a trading company. The Portuguese and the Dutch were among the earliest to be ousted in trade with India in succession. The English and the French survived in south India and were often locked in a bitter struggle, either as a result of their conflict for supremacy in Europe as well as in Indian politics of the times, each trying to gain territorial possessions at the expense of the other. But their professed aim was to secure the monopoly of the trade. In this struggle the English came out successful and the trade of India became theirs, and India became her dominion.¹

The Articles of Trade:

In the west coast of India the coveted trade was on pepper and spices. In the east coast it was cotton both in raw and manufactured forms. The cotton handloom textiles were the most important and biggest item. They were produced in many varieties in the Coromandel Coast. The English parliament had to decree a penalty up to £ 100 on Indian textiles found in English market in order to protect

its home industry. The trend was reversed in the aftermath of Industrial Revolution in England. When the Manchester industries were established, British manufacturers were damped into Indian market. In 1788, The British East India Company in its bid to procure raw cotton from the Indian countryside distributed seeds to the farmers to grow more and more cotton.  

Dawn of New Era and Change in the Character and Functioning of the British East India Company:

In the latter half of the 18th century, the control and authority of the British was established over a greater part of the Indian peninsula. In the southern India, the British had firmly established themselves over all the districts.

The Company’s territorial acquisitions had two consequences. Firstly, the Company’s officials were involved more in politics and had even succeeded in it. The first few decades of the nineteenth century were the years of revenue organization and the administration of acquired territories. The second consequence of the change in the character of the East India Company was an offshoot of the first. It set the pace for the future trends.

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2 A. Sarada Raju, Economic Condition in the Madras Presidency, 1800-1850 (Madras: University of Madras, 1924), pp. 87-90.


Free Trade:

The act of 1793, the British East India Company was directed to provide 3,000 tons of shipping for private trade. The amount of goods shipped gradually increased exceeding the targeted 3,000 tons. The Act of 1813, confirmed the territorial authority of the Company. The commercial and territorial accounts were to be kept separate and the Board of Control was to superintend the affairs. By the Act of 1813, the monopoly of trade of the British East India Company was confined thereafter only to China, but the right of trade in India was thrown open to all British subjects.

Again, by the Act of 1833, even that exclusive right of trade of the Company with China was also terminated. The provisions of India Charter Act of 1833 state further that the British East India Company closed down their commercial business and sold their merchandise stores and commercial assets. The British East India Company ceased altogether to be a mercantile corporation. The free-trade policy was fully operational in 1833.

The Act of 1833 was a landmark in the history of Indian commerce. Any British with enterprise and capital, with wits and guts, could henceforth fell

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free to sell their products and buy primary commodities. The beginnings were many-sided. New cotton was introduced; new crops like tea and coffee were planted on the hills. Semi-processing, like ginning and oil-crushing and refining sugar from palmyra jaggery was adopted. Patterns and fashions suited to foreign markets were brought in and a conscious attempt at production to cater to foreign markets had commenced. Overseas and inland trade and commerce had attracted wider sections of the Indian population, cutting across traditional castes and professional groups.

**European Trading Firms in Thoothukudi:**

The Nineteenth century was an age of commercial expansion. Thoothukudi like the rest of India was involved in trade in primary commodities by the Mid-19th century. Its handloom exports had diminished. The cotton sugar manufacture- “on the European system” was prominent among the industries. Cotton-pressing and weaving were the largest in numbers. The palmyra sugar was largely produced. These led to the establishment of European private companies in Thoothukudi and its hinterlands.

**Dymes & Co:**

In 1831, Groves of Liverpool with his brother came to Thoothukudi to see the possibilities of cotton business. At that time, cotton was sent to Madras for export without screwing by Hughes, a British merchant who had all the cotton

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business at Tirunelveli. Groves bought 200 bales of cotton and sent to London through Thoothukudi port. This was the first shipment of cotton directly sent to London. In 1832, Groves established a cotton screw in Thoothukudi with his business in Colombo. After that, screws were erected by Madras merchants and others. Baggott was succeeded by his father who acted as Groves and Co. After, Baggott, this was managed by Messrs Dymes & Co. in 1880’s that emerged as one of the leading firm of cotton exports in Thoothukudi. Dymes & Co. established their branches at Kadambur and Kovilpatti for the procurement of cotton\textsuperscript{11}.

**The New Berar Company Ltd:**

The another oldest cotton procurement and exporting company Messrs Gaddum & Co. was established in 1840 by Arbuhnot & Co. Later it was passed into the management of the New Berar Company Ltd., a leading exporter of cotton from Thoothukudi port\textsuperscript{12}.

**A & F Harvey & Co:**

A&F Harvey Brothers from Westminster, London came to Tirunelveli and was engaged in full-time cotton business. They were called the cotton magnates of south India. A&F Harvey’s operation of cotton trade was the biggest in Thoothukudi and dominated the cotton market. In 1885, A&F Harvey formed Tinnevelly Mills Company Ltd. The first mill was started at Papanasam in the

\textsuperscript{11} *A Brief Sketch of European Firms in Tuticorin* (Tuticorin: The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce) (Unpublished Records), 1906.

\textsuperscript{12} *Ibid.*
village of Vikarasingapuram. Later the Coral Mills at Thoothukudi in 1888 and Madura Mills & Co Ltd. around the time were established. A&F Harvey & Co. established their branch offices for the procurement of cotton at Ambasamudram, Kadambur, Nallatinputthur, Sattur, Virudhunagar, Madurai, Dindugal and Tirupur. A&F Harvey & Co. was the agent for British East India Steam Navigation Company and Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company.\(^{13}\)

**Ralli Brothers & Co:**

Ralli Brothers & Co, a Greek company, established in 1881, conducted very large export and import in Thoothukudi port. Ralli Brothers & Co. was exporters of cotton, oil seeds and oil cakes, hides, skins and leathers. They imported yarn, piece goods, sugar, chemicals and other commodities. Their main export commodity was cotton. For the procurement of cotton, they established branch offices at Kovilpatti, Virudhunagar and Nallatinputthur. Ralli Brothers & Co. established steam-ginning factories at Thoothukudi, Sattur, Virudhunager and Tirumangalam. The Ralli Brothers’ ginning factory at Tuticorin Thoothukudi was the largest. They appointed brokers and agents for the supply of cotton for their export. Their main head office was at Finsbury, Circus, London.\(^{14}\)

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Volkart Brothers & Co:

Volkart Brothers & Co, a Swiss company established in 1881, conducted very large export trade in cotton and senna. They owned a ginning factory at Thoothukudi. They appointed local merchants as their brokers and agents for the procurement of cotton and senna. Volkart Brothers & Co. was the agent for the Asiatic Steam Navigation Company\(^{15}\).

Mr. Zellwegar & Co:

Mr. Zellwegar & Co was a general merchant in Thoothukudi, exported cotton and other articles. He appointed brokers and agents for the procurement of cotton and other articles of trade\(^{16}\).

Burma Oil Company & Co:

Burma Oil Company was established by the Europeans in Thoothukudi. They were engaged in imports of oils and export trade\(^{17}\).

Shah Wallace & Co:

As Insurance Company in Thoothukudi they served as agents for Queen Land Insurance & Co, London. They were the bankers and traders in Insurance\(^{18}\).

\(^{15}\) M. Frankline Kline, *Op. cit.*, 


The Asiatic Petroleum Company:

It was a petroleum company established in Thoothukudi for the import of petroleum products by the Europeans\(^{19}\).

The Bombay & Co:

An European company dealing in cotton and palmyra-fibre. Also importer of cotton-piece-goods, yarns, metals and timber\(^{20}\).

The Bank of Madras:

The Bank of Madras had a branch at Thoothukudi to transact the business of European firms\(^{21}\).

National Bank of India Ltd:

The National Bank of India established in 1863 had been incorporated in to the United Kingdom. They were Bankers to the Government of British Empire. They had a branch a Thoothukudi, with Head Office at 26, Bishopgate, London, to transact business with European firms\(^{22}\).

The South Indian Railway & Co:

The good number of mills and factories of cotton, ginning, spinning and weaving, cement, sugar, various kinds of oils, rice, magnesite, tiles, timber,

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tea and coffee were serviced to Thoothukudi port by the South Indian Railway & Co.23

Local Merchants:

In Thoothukudi, the European firms were involved in large scale exports and imports, while the locals of Thoothukudi and in its surrounding places assisted to procure various commodities for exports and imports and acted as agent or brokers to European firms. In Thoothukudi there were innumerable merchants and bankers engaged in the trade and commerce, belonging to the communities of Paravas, Vellalas, Nadars, Kammalas and Mohammadans.24 The prominent among them are discussed in the following pages.

Cruz Fernandez:

i) Cruz Fernandez of Thoothukudi, son of John Cruz Fernandez, started his business activities in 1899 at the age of twenty as a businessman. In 1897, he was appointed as a broker of Messrs. Ralli Brothers at Thoothukudi. He was a Municipal Councilor in 1897 and was the Chairman of Thoothukudi Municipality during 1909-1914.25

B. Gopalasamy Naidu:

ii) Gopal Vilas was a banking concern in Thoothukudi. Later they were brokers for Dymes & Co. and Ralli Brothers & Co. in Thoothukudi. The proprietor of the Bank B. Gopalasamy Naidu was a prominent Banker providing credit facilities to local merchants. His son B. Venkataramanujulu Naidu also followed his father’s profession and acted as an agent for Dymes & Co. and Rallies & Co. in later years.26


26 Ibid., p.789.
J.M.B. Roche Victoria:

iii) As a prominent trader in Thoothukudi, he has the owner of a sailing vessel. He acted as agent for the European firms for the shipment of commodities to the steamers and sailors. He became the first Chairman of Thoothukudi Municipality in 1885. He held the office of the Chairman of Thoothukudi Municipality from 1885 to 1901.²⁷

T.S. Pitchen Chettiar:

iv) T.S. Pitchen Chettiar, son of P. Sankaralingam Pillai, was also a prominent merchant in Thoothukudi. His grandfather was instrumental in getting the construction of many temples of Siva and Vishnu in Thoothukudi. The Traveller's Bungalow managed by the Thoothukudi Municipality was gifted by his family. He joined as an assistant in the firm of Ralli Brothers & Co. and worked with the firm for four years. In 1895, he joined as a broker in the Dymes & Co. and later became the agent of Bombay & Co. He was a councillor first and then became Chairman of the Thoothukudi Municipality.²⁸

P.M. Subramany:

v) P.M. Subramany was a prominent merchant in Thoothukudi. He was son of Muthinallappa, a native of Palayamcottai settled in Thoothukudi. In 1892, he joined in the firm of Messrs, Volkart Brothers & Co. In 1897, he joined in the firm of Zellweger & Co. as a broker. He was also a councillor in Thoothukudi Municipality. He procured cotton, senna and fibre for the Volkart & Co. and Zellweger & Co.²⁹

A. Balasubrayaloo:

vi) A. Balasubrayaloo, broker for Messrs. Volkart Brothers & Co, was son of A. Vedanarayanaswami Chettiar, whose ancestors originally belonged to Madras. But later they migrated to Thoothukudi. Padmanaba Chetty, the grandfather of A. Balasubrayaloo, came down to Thoothukudi as an assistant to Coke, one of the prominent cotton merchants of the day. A. Balasubrayaloo’s father and grandfather served as brokers of Messrs. Parry & Co. for 25 years. His


father had acted as a broker for Messrs. Volkart Brothers & Co. for another 25 years. A. Balasubrayaloo succeeded his father as a broker for Messrs. Volkart & Co.  

S.K. Mohideen Kadirsha Marakayar:

vii) S.K. Mohideen Kadirsha Marakayar, son of Chinnattami Marakayar, one of the earliest inhabitants of Thoothukudi was born in 1857. He turned out to be the biggest banker and exporter in Thoothukudi. More than fifteen years he acted as honorary Magistrate of Tuticorin Thoothukudi. S.K.M Sagul Hamid Marakayar, the eldest son of the Kadirsha Marakayar, followed in the footsteps of his father.  

S.V. Nalla Perumal Pillai:

viii) S.V. Nalla Perumal Pillai was an exporter and a salt merchant. He was also a land-lord and Banker in the Great Cotton Road, Thoothukudi. He was not only a prominent merchant in Thoothukudi, but also a Councillor and Municipal Chairman of Thoothukudi.  

ix) S.S.V. Krishna Pillai was a land-lord and Banker. He was also a merchant and exporter of salt in Thoothukudi.  

x) S.T.A. Arumugham Pillai, was another important merchant in Thoothukudi.  

xi) A.M.M. Arunachalam Pillai, was yet another prominent merchant in Thoothukudi.  

xii) M.V. Shunmugavel Nadar, a native of Aruppukottai, was a Banker. He started his banking business at Thoothukudi and opened branches at North India and Ceylon. He was the first Chairman and one of the founder, Member of Nadar Bank at Thoothukudi.  

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31 Ibid., p.788.  
32 Unpublished Documents in the office of Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce, Tuticorin, 1913.  
33 Ibid.  
34 Ibid.  
35 Ibid.  
A.R.A. Shenbaga Nadar:

xiii) He was born in 1885 at Sivakasi. He was a large scale timber merchant in Thoothukudi. He was the Director of Nadar Bank from its inception.

xiv) G.A.S. Shunmuga Nadar, born in 1888 at Sivakasi, was a prominent timber and tiles merchant at Thoothukudi.


xvi) V.V. Shunmuga Nadar, was a prominent food grains merchant.

xvii) M.V. Palanichamy Nadar born at Aruppukottai in 1885 entered into cotton business and started Raja Mills of Madurai and became one of the founder members of the Nadar Bank in Thoothukudi.

xviii) Rao Sahib P.S. Chidambapa Nadar born in 1886 at Virudhunagar, set up brass sheet and vessels business.

xix) P.S.P. Kandasamy Nadar, a prominent exporter of senna, timber and tiles in Thoothukudi. He also tried his fortune in the business of grains, cardamoms and other spices.

xx) N.K.R. Periana Nadar was a general merchant dealing in grains and salt in Thoothukudi.

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38 Ibid., p.20.

39 Ibid., p.21.

40 Ibid., p.21.

41 Ibid., p.22.

42 Ibid., p.23.

43 Ibid., p.25.

xxi) M.V.E.VE. Dorairaj Nadar was Mittadar of Melleesurapuram. He entered into the business of food grains in Thoothukudi 45.

xxii) T.M.M. Sankaralinga Nadar was a prominent merchant and engaged in coffee, cardamom and ginger trade in Thoothukudi 46.

xxiii) V. Asirvatha Nadar served as broker for the G. Zellweger & Co. at Virudhunagar and Thoothukudi 47.

xxiv) N.P. Issac Nadar was a Banker in Thoothukudi 48.

xxv) Paul Nadar, B.A, BL., was Lawyer to A & F Harvey & Co in Thoothukudi 49.

xxvi) The other prominent merchants in Thoothukudi were: A.S.V. Velayudam Pillai, V.A.A. Athinarayan Chettiar, V.A.V.S. Venkatachallam Chettiar, A.S.V. Thiruchittambalam Chettiar, A.A.A. Arumugam Chettiar, N.S. Devanarayanam Pillai, M.V. Maya Nadar and Ismail Hajee Abdool Rahiman Sait 50.

The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce – Its Formation and Contributions:

The Charter act of 1833 ended the trade monopoly right of British East India Company with Europe and inaugurated the era of free trade. The merchants had started their trade with certain restrictions. Their individual interests varied. But, they felt the need for a collective body to project and put

45 The Nadar Bank, Ltd., Silver Jubilee Souvenier, Tuticorin, 1947, p.27.

46 Ibid., p.28.

47 Ibid., p.28.

48 Ibid., p.29.

49 Ibid., p.30.

forward their common interests to the administration\textsuperscript{51}. There were already examples of such organizations, the Chamber of Commerce in England (1783), for instance. In India, the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce was the earliest to be formed in 1834. The Bombay and Madras Chambers of Commerce were formed in 1836. The other similar organizations, Cochin Chamber of Commerce in 1857, Coconada Chamber of Commerce in 1868, United Planters Association of Southern India in 1893 were formed. Likewise the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1906\textsuperscript{52}.

**Formation of Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce:**

The European commercial firms at Thoothukudi realized that to benefit thoroughly from the changed situations, an association which could speak the united voice of the merchants on any matter affecting the trade and commerce of the Thoothukudi, was indispensable.

Accordingly on Saturday, 24 November 1906 a meeting held at European Merchants Club, Beach Road, Thoothukudi, unanimously resolved that – “an Association be formed in Thoothukudi under the designation of the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce”. J.Milligan (Messrs. Milligan & Co.) R.H. Hunter & A. Harvey Jr (Messrs. A & F Harvey & Co.) A. Egli (Messrs. Volkart Brothers & Co.) E. Chapman (Madura & Co.) M.S. Jachiri (Messrs. Ralli


Brothers & Co.) J. H. Walthew (Messrs. Dymes & Co.) W. H. Guard (Messrs. Bank of Madras & Co.) W. G. Mewart (Messrs. National Bank of India & Co.) and G. Zellweger (General Merchant) were present at the meeting\textsuperscript{53}.

A provisional committee was formed, headed by E. Chapman. The provisional committee requested the members to obtain the rules and regulations of other similar Chambers for the purpose of drafting the by laws of this Chamber. The provisional committee in this meeting unanimously resolved that the following members were its defacto members: 1. The National Bank of India Ltd. 2. The Bank of Madras Ltd. 3. The Madura Company Ltd. 4. Messrs. Ralli Brothers Agency. 5. Messrs. Volkart Brothers Agency. 6. Mr. Zellweger. 7. Messrs. Dymes & Co. 8. Messrs. Milligan & Co. 9. Messrs. Gaddum & Co. 10. Messrs. A & F. Harvey. 11. Messrs. Chisholm, Ewart & Co. and 12. Messrs. Camorin & Co\textsuperscript{54}. The provisional committee was authorized to convene the next meeting\textsuperscript{55}.

The second meeting of the Chamber was held on Monday, December 10, 1906 at 4.pm in the presence of all the members, ballot being taken and


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p.3.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.2.
election conducted. J. Milligan was elected the first chairman of the Chamber and G. Zellweger was elected the Hon. Secretary\textsuperscript{56}.

The provisional committee submitted the drafted rules and regulations of the chamber. In the same meeting, the chairman of the chamber addressed to the Government of Madras about the formation of the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce for permission to correspondent directly with the different Heads of the Departments to obtain information with regard to trade and commerce. The Government of Madras directed that the information required by the Chamber should be supplied through the medium of Government as like that of Madras Chamber of Commerce\textsuperscript{57}.

In the first general body meeting, resolutions were passed requesting the Government to allow the Secretary of the Chamber to be associated with the committee appointed by the Government to investigate and report on the necessities and requirements of the Thoothukudi Harbour and requested the District Collector to give representation to the Chamber in the Thoothukudi Port Landing and Shipping Dues Committee and in the Thoothukudi Municipal Council. The Government of Madras accepted the request and gave representation in the port dues committee and Thoothukudi Municipal Council\textsuperscript{58}.

\textsuperscript{56} The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce, Minute Book 1906 (unpublished),p.4.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., pp.6-7.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.9.
Another resolution was passed to affiliate with the Madras Chamber of Commerce. The Madras Chamber of Commerce accepted the request and incorporated Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce into its fold\textsuperscript{59}. The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce also proposed to elicit the co-operation of the Ceylon, Bombay and Calcutta Chambers of Commerce. The proposals of the Chamber were accepted by all concerned\textsuperscript{60}.

**Rules and Regulations of Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce:**

1. The General objectives of the Chamber shall be to promote, foster and protect the commerce of Thoothukudi, by collecting and classifying all information bearing on its wants and interests and exerting itself to obtain the redress of acknowledged grievances and the removal of pernicious restrictions; to decide differences on matters of local customs and usages and to form a court of reconciliation and of arbitration parties willing to abide by its decisions; to communicate with the public authorities, with similar Associations in other places and with individuals on matter of trade; and finally, by recording its proceedings and decisions to form a code practice by which the transactions of business may be simplified and facilitated.

2. All Europeans engaged in mercantile pursuits at Thoothukudi or willing to aid in carrying to affect the objects of the Chamber shall be admissible as members. Members can appoint only a European representative of their firm to attend meetings and vote on their behalf.


\textsuperscript{60} *Annul Report of the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce*, 1906-07, p.7.
3. Firms or persons desirous of joining the Chamber shall be proposed by one member, seconded by another and balloted for the whole Chamber.

4. The Chamber reserves itself the right to expel any member in case of need, to be decided at a General Body meeting on seven day’s previous notice by a majority of three-fourths of the members.

5. The entrance fee of each member shall be Rs.25 and his half-yearly subscriptions Rs.50, payable in advance.

**Committee:**

The affairs and funds of the Chamber shall be managed by a committee of three of its members, one of whom shall hold the office of Chairman and they shall be elected in each of their offices by ballot at the Annual General Body meeting of the Chamber. The new committee is to take office on the first day succeeding this meeting and to continue to act until the holding of the next Annual General Body meeting.

**Meeting:**

The secretary, depending upon the request of the members of the Chamber or upon the written requisition of four or more members of the Chamber shall call a General Body meeting, and such a meeting shall be held within seven days after receipt of such requisition. No General Body meeting shall be held unless a quorum consisting of one-fourth of the member’s resident in Thoothukudi be present. A General Body meeting of the members of the Chamber shall be held
during the month of January in each year. The Chamber shall also hold an ordinary meeting regularly on the second Thursday of every month\textsuperscript{61}.

**Contributions of the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce:**

1. **Information:**

   Information is the life-breath of trade and commerce. The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce had taken the initiative to assess their needs and to suggest ideas and remedies, particularly, on taxation, import and export duties, currency and exchange, banking issues, trade and commercial development and its related legislation, collection of commercial statistics, sea-customs and port administration. The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce helped the mercantile community of Tuticorin, whatever the events happened in England and in her colonies, with regard to commerce and to react and interact quickly as early as possible\textsuperscript{62}.

**Code of Practice:**

The Chamber evolved a code of practice whereby business could be transacted in a simplified manner. It had discharged specific functions for the benefit of the European mercantile community of Thoothukudi on a voluntary basis.

**These included:**

(i) Undertook survey with reference to matters of cotton, cotton-piece goods,

\textsuperscript{61} *Annul Report of the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce*, 1906-07, pp.3-6.

yarn etc. and arbitrated and settled disputes.

(ii) Published, fortnightly, the current price and market condition and tonnage schedules.

(iii) Registration, on payment of fee, of trademark, which differentiated against the non-members. The registration had evidential value if dispute arose.

(iv) Notified the dates on which the port could not function due to bad weather or some other reason.\footnote{Annul Report of the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce, 1906-07, pp.3-6.}

**Postal and Communication Facilities:**

The postal and telegraph service is the primary need of commerce. The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce took maximum efforts for the benefit of mercantile community in Thoothukudi by providing these facilities.

From 1882 onwards, the British East India Steam Navigation Company had been carrying the mail between Calcutta and Coramandel Ports and also to Ceylon and Rangoon by making weekly calls at Thoothukudi and Colombo. The Chamber took effort and modified it into a direct daily service between Thoothukudi and Colombo.

The electrical telegraph system was speedily established throughout India. The express telegraph between Madras-Bombay-Calcutta was completed in 1855. A telegraph line of Madras to Ceylon was completed in 1858. In 1859, line was laid to connect the “Great Cotton Town” namely Thoothukudi. The Chamber took efforts to secure tariff reduction. The Chamber got success in this effort.\footnote{Ibid. pp.3-6.}
Tuticorin Harbour Development Works:

The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce became a member in the Thoothukudi Port Landing and Shipping Dues Committee and gave its views to improve the harbour. The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce drew the attention of the Government to the need to construct new pier and other improvement on the foreshore. It included dredging and marine survey. The Chamber attempted to reduce the rates for storing coal in the port limits. It took appropriate action to put weighing machines on the foreshores. In view of the inconvenience and delay experienced in having documents stamped either in Tirunelveli or Madras, the Chamber requested the Collector of Tirunelveli to place an embossing machine and stamps with Inspector of Customs at Tuticorin. The Chamber succeeded in this effort too.\(^\text{65}\)

Thoothukudi Town Development Works:

The Chamber became the member of Thoothukudi Municipal Council. In the municipal council, the Chamber’s representative pressed for action to build Beach Road Drainage System with a view to preventing the outbreak of epidemics of cholera and plague in Thoothukudi town. The Chamber requested the Government to bring out a scheme of drinking water supply to Thoothukudi. The Government conceded and introduced the Thoothukudi water supply scheme. It

\(^{65}\) Public Works Department (Marine) G. O. No: 108, Dated 23rd March 1911.
also took initiative to motivate the Government to lay Metal Road in and around Thoothukudi for the progress of trade and commerce in Thoothukudi 66.

Quality Control of Cotton:

The Chamber frequently debated on ensuring good quality of cotton to buy for export. The European firms agreed not to buy low quality of cotton. It also referred the matter to Agricultural Department of Government of Madras for appropriate action 67.

The British Imperial Council of Commerce:

In 1909, the British Imperial Council of Commerce was formed in London with a view to assimilating the various British Chambers of Commerce throughout the world. The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce requested Mr. A. Harvey, London to represent this Chamber on the council 68.

Other Works Dealt with by the Chamber:

- Drafted rules for the regulation of coastal trade between the sub-ports of sea-customs.
- An Advisory Board for Income-Tax assessment was formed by the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce.
- Drafted bills for the Regulation of life assurance companies and provident Insurance societies 69.

67 Ibid., p. 13.
Formation of Merchants Association in Thoothukudi:

The Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce allowed only European firms as its members. The local native traders were not allowed. Hence, the native merchants formed “Merchants Association” in June 1913 to pursue trade and commerce in Thoothukudi. The founder members of this association were:

1. S. K. M. A. Muhamed Malica Pillai, General Merchant and Commission Agent, Emperor Street, Thoothukudi.
2. V. T. V. Tharma Perumal Pillai, Banker and Commission Agent, Victoria Road, Thoothukudi.
3. J. L. P. Roach Victoria, Forwarding Agent, Exports and Imports, Perera Street, Thoothukudi.
4. M. V. E. Ratnasamy Nadar, Banker and Merchant, South Raja Street, Thoothukudi.
5. S. V. Nallaperumal Pillai, Exporter and Salt Merchant, Great Cotton Road, Thoothukudi.
6. S. S. V. Krishana Pillai, Exporter and Importer, Salt and General Merchant, Beach Road, Thoothukudi.
7. T. Shunmuga Mupanar, General Merchant and Salt Merchant, South Raja Street, Thoothukudi.
9. P. S. T. Sankaralinga Nadar, Commission Agent and Steamer Agent, South Raja Street, Thoothukudi.

Later the Merchants Association of Thoothukudi was registered as “Indian Chamber of Commerce” in May 1922 under the Companies Act of 1913. This formation of Merchants Association in Thoothukudi was the outcome of the worsening relation between the European firms and local traders in Thoothukudi.

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70 Records of Indian Chamber of Commerce (Unpublished), Tuticorin.