

## **Invasions On South Travancore**

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### **Abstract**

The South Travancore state was situated at the Southwestern extremity of India. The ancient history of South Travancore proves to be traditional. This ancient kingdom of South Travancore forms the Southern-most portion of the west coast of India. The inscriptions available for this period in South Travancore speak of the Pandyas who ruled this part. The earliest ruler who invaded South Travancore was Sendan. The main basis for this inference is that he assumed the title "Vanavan" which was a distinctive appellation of the Chera ruler. Arikesari Maravarman, popularly known as Koon Pandya next attacked South Travancore. By defeating Raja Simha, the Pandya ruler, Parantaka Chola (907-935 A.D.) was able to extend his conquest as far South as Travancore. He fortified Kottaru and demarcated the boundary of the southern Kingdom. The inscriptions found out in Suchindram and its neighbouring areas indicate that locality was under Chola authority. Raja Raja, (985-1014 A.D.) the great, started his aggressive policy towards the south during his fourth regnal year.

In 999 A.D. he got a great victory over the Cheras and struck a blow to Chola prestige. He captured Kottar and renamed South Travancore into "Raja-Rajeswaram". After Rajendra, South Travancore was governed by the Chola-Pandya Viceroys for nearly half a century. Achutaraya, the Vijayanagar Emperor made an expedition to the South which resulted in the total defeat of Travancore ruler Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma in 1532 A.D. in the battle of Tamraparani. Tirumala Nayak (1625-'59) the greatest of all the Nayaks of Madurai attacked South Travancore in 1634 A.D. when Travancore was under the joint sovereignty of Unni Kerala Varma and Ravi Varma. Mukilan was a petty Mughal Sirdar and he invaded South Travancore in 1680 when Travancore was under the regency of Umayyamma Rani. As Marthanda Varma was a true lover of the welfare his subjects, he entered into the great task of fortifying all strategic centre. South Travancore gave opportunity to foreign powers namely the British and the Dutch and they established powers.

**Key words:** South Travancore – Ptolemy – Arikesarimaravarman – Kochchadaiyan – Maravarman Rajasimha - Jatila Parantaka Nedum Jadayan - Srimara Srivallabha, Parantaka vira narayana, Varaguna – II - Marudur Battle - Madurai-Kondan - Mummudi Cholanallur - Battle of Tamiraparani.

### **Introduction:**

South Travancore was one of the most picturesque portions of India. South Travancore was bounded by the Cochin state on the north, Tirunelveli district on the east, Indian Ocean on the south and Arabian Sea on the west. Its shape is triangular with the apex

towards the south a narrow strip of land belonging to the state of Cochin makes a deep indentation on the north-west angle and destroys the continuity and compactness of its shape. The four Tamil speaking taluks of Kanyakumari District viz., Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode, constitute what has been known for ages as South Travancore. The earliest rulers of South Travancore belonged to the Ay dynasty. It is seen from the Sangam works that they ruled the region around Pothigaimalai. The Greek Geographer Ptolemy says that one 'Ay' was ruling the land which comprised of Cape Comorin. The prominent Ay rulers who ruled over South Travancore are Ay Andiran, Titian, Athiyan, Titiyan-II, Nanchil Porunan, Karunanadadakkan and Vikramaditya Varaguna. After the disappearance of the Ays, the Pandyas held a paramount position in the South from 7<sup>th</sup> to the early part of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## **Political Background:**

The epigraphical sources available for this period in South Travancore speak of the Pandyas who ruled this part. They are Kadungon, Maravarman, Sendan, Arikesarimaravarman, Kochchadaiyan, Maravarman Rajasimha, Jatila Parantaka Nedum Jadayan, Srimara Srivallabha, Parantaka vira narayana, Varaguna – II and Maravarman Rajasimha – II. Immediately after the fall of the Pandyas, the Cholas became prominent in South Travancore. They conquered places like Kanyakumari, Kottar and Suchindram and established their sway in South Travancore. Inscriptions give proof that Parantaka –I, Raja Raja Chola and Rajendra Chola conquered a number of places in South Travancore. The Pandyas had close association with South Travancore from early times. It is proved through many evidences. Parantaka Pandya dedicated to the Goddess Kumari, "a whole Nadu as an endowment for the distribution of liberal gifts to all who attended Taipusam festival". The Divakaram describes the Pandya sovereign as "Kumari Serpan" and Purananuru speaks of the Pandyas as the "Lord of Pahruli" river which emptied itself in the Ocean at Cape Comorin.

## **Early Invasions:**

The earliest ruler who invaded South Travancore was Sendan. The main basis for this inference is that he assumed the title "Vanavan" which was a distinctive appellation of the Chera ruler. Arikesari Maravarman, popularly known as Koon Pandya next attacked South Travancore. He fought many battles in Thirukottaru, (modern Kottar) (650 A.D.). He erected a water-shed here which was a very popular form of beneficitation in olden days. In the Marudur battle an Ay Vel was defeated by the Pandyan ruler Kochadayan. The Velvikudi grant mentioned this victory. He was succeeded by Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadayan. He entered South Travancore through the Aramboly Pass, and captured large number of elephants and horses along with huge treasure of wealth. Viranarayana, the next Pandyan ruler patronised Suchindram temple. The Chinnamanur plates reveal this fact. Moreover, the villages called Viranarayanasserri and Viranarayana Mangalam near Suchindram owe their origin to him. Raja Simha, (900-920 A.D.) the successor of Viranarayana, ordered for the grant of certain lands to the temple of Suchindram. He was defeated by Parantaka Chola and assumed the epithet "Madurai-Kondan". Thus the opening of the tenth century earmarked the rise of imperial Cholas in South Travancore.

## **Invasion of the Cholas**

By defeating Raja Simha, the Pandya ruler, Parantaka Chola (907-935 A.D.) was able to extend his conquest as far South as Travancore. He fortified Kottaru and demarcated the boundary of the southern Kingdom. The inscriptions found out in Suchindram and its neighbouring areas indicate that locality was under Chola authority. Raja Raja, (985-1014 A.D.) the great, started his aggressive policy towards the south during his fourth regnal year. In 999 A.D. he got a great victory over the Cheras and struck a blow to Chola prestige. He captured Kottar and renamed South Travancore into "Raja-Rajeswaram". His Tirunandikara inscription records that he ordered to alter the name of Muttam into "Mummudi Cholanallur". The lamp in the temple of Tirunandikarai was known as "Raja Rajan Tiruvilakku". He also granted lands to this temple for celebrating a festival ending on the Satabhisha nakshatra, the

birthday of the king. The archaeological source explains the garrisoning of Chola army in Kottar. The inscription mentions that fifty sheeps for a lamp to the Mahadeva temple in Kottar were left in-charge of "Kottarunilappadaitasanimanikkam". The Chola garrison in South Travancore was called "Nilapadai". The Cholas inscriptions refer the storming and capture of the fortress sometimes earlier before the year 1008 A.D. Rajendra Chola (1012-1044 A.D.) the worthy son of Raja Raja followed the imprints of his father, in his policy towards South Travancore. He transformed Kottar into "Mummudi Cholanallur" the good town of the thrice crowned Chola. He gave a village as 'irayili devadana' to the Rajendra Choliswara temple here. Rajendra Chola continued the practice of maintaining a powerful garrison at Kottar to watch over this land. Another garrison was also stationed in Uthama Chola Valanadu which comprised of Purathayanadu as well as South Travancore on the side of ghats. He received tax on the land between Kottar and Vadaseri from Vira Kerala Varma (1021-1028 A.D.) his contemporary Venad ruler.

**Chola-Pandya Viceroys:**

After Rajendra, South Travancore was governed by the Chola-Pandya Viceroys for nearly half a century. This system started in 1019 A.D. and continued upto 1090 A.D. Records available for Jatavarman Sundara Chola Pandya granted money to the donor of the Assembly of Sundara Chola Chaturvedimangalam, the surname of Suchindram, (which was named after him). Kottar continued to be a strategic centre. One curious fact about his period was that an Eastern Chalukyan Prince, Chalukya Vijayaditya Vikiyanna held an important place in the army and lived in Kottar for some years. The Suchindram inscription of Jatavarman Chola Pandya Deva registers a gift of fifty sheeps for a lamp to the temple of Suchindram. Jatavarman alias Sundara Pandya's inscriptions found in Suchindram, proved that South Travancore was under his authority. Maravarman Udaiyan Sri Vikrama, a later Viceroy whose two inscriptions are found at Kanyakumari. The village Alur near Suchindram surnamed Vikrama Chola Pandyapuram owes its origin to him. In 1070 A.D.

Kulottunga I (1070-1120 A.D.) became the Chola - Chalukya ruler and he continued the practise of attacking South Travancore. His Suchindram inscriptions said that he garrisoned garrisons at Kottar. The Thirukalukundram inscription states how he burnt the town Kottar. He subdued numerous forces of Keralas and erected a pillar of victory there. Ravi Varma Kulasekhara (1090-1102 A.D.), the contemporary of Kulottunga I took firm resolve to beat back the Chola aggressors. He gathered all patriotic forces under his banner of war of liberation. He transformed his army into "suicide squads". However his forces were not withstanding with the Cholas. His capital Mahodayapuram was burnt by Cholas. He even transformed his capital to Quilon because of Chola aggression. T.K.Velu Pillai in his State Manual clearly depicted the real condition of South Travancore, because of the Chola invasion. He observed that no Chola monarch was able to make a permanent occupation of Nanchilnadu.

## **Invasions of Vijayanagar Forces:**

South Travancore, an apple of discord attracted the attention of Vijayanagar Emperors too. Achutaraya, the Vijayanagar Emperor made an expedition to the South which resulted in the total defeat of Travancore ruler Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma in 1532 A.D. in the battle of Tampraparani. Achutaraya's Kanchipuram inscription records this event. The sovereignty of Vijayanagar was established in South Travancore. The Second Vijayanagar attack upon South Travancore was in 1540 A.D. Unni Kerala Varma was the Travancore ruler. The reason for this invasion was the withholding of tribute. However, the hidden cause behind it was the proselytism of the Paravas into Christianity by the Portuguese which changed the loyalty to the latter. In this time the Vijayanagar forces was led by Ramaraya Vithala, the Vijayanagar Viceroy at Madurai. He was assisted by his brother Cinna Timma, the Mahammandaleswara, Krishnappa, the gallant son of Viswanatha Nayak of Madura and Sadasiva, the Chief of Keladi. The battle of Kottar in 1544 A.D., the pitiable condition of the Travancore forces was safeguarded by St.Xavier. He interceded in effecting a rapprochement.

Vithala built a fine gopura to the temple Suchindram. Vithala invaded again in 1558 A.D. Remissness in the payment of tribute was the cause of this invasion. In this time the victory smiled on the Travancore forces. They easily repulsed and butchered the panicky striken Vijayanagar forces. The people of South Travancore lived in peace for sometimes between 1558 to 1617 A.D. Once again in 1617 Anatoji Nayak from outside the ghats and raided South Travancore by stationing in Muppanthal near Aramboly. Ravi varma of Travancore (1617-1663) asked the people of South Travancore "to repulse the in road, as he was unable to do so".

### **Tirumala Nayak's Invasion - 1635 A.D.**

Tirumala Nayak (1625-'59) the greatest of all the Nayaks of Madurai attacked South Travancore in 1634 A.D. when Travancore was under the joint sovereignty of Unni Kerala Varma and Ravi Varma (1611-1663 A.D.) The real cause of this invasion according to K.K.Pillai is, "it was an act of wanton aggression, that the Nayak as the heirs of the Vijayanagar Empire, were authorised to collect tribute from Travancore was probably employed as a pre-text." This invasion reduced the Travancore ruler to the position of vassalage. The forces plundered the wealth wherever they went. The state was in an order of anarchy and confusion for about half a century. The records show that a large strip of land between Mangalam and Manakudy was governed by the Officers of Tirumala Nayak and his descendants. This invasion was followed by many Nayak incursions into South Travancore. Whenever, there was a delay in its payment, the Nayak army swooped on the southern territory through Aramboly Pass.

### **Mukilan's Invasion - 1680 A.D.**

Mukilan was a petty Mughal Sirdar and he led wandering life in the Southern Peninsula with a number of horsemen. He invaded South Travancore in 1680 when Travancore was under the regency of Umayyamma Rani (1677-84). During her regency internal confusion and misrule prevailed because of the terror of the Ettuvittil Pillamar. Taking advantage of the

chaotic situation Mukilan over-ran South Travancore. He plundered the unprotected territories and carried deprivations among the people. Mukilan's forces reached upto Trivandrum. The Yogakkars and Pillamars fled for their lives. He camped at Manakad and extended his sway from Thovalai to Edawa. The Queen took shelter in Nedumangad. She got the help of Kerala Varma, valiant Prince of the Kottayam Royal family in North Malabar. In the battle of Thiruvattar he was defeated and killed by Kerala Varma because the ranks of his army were thrown into confusion as a result of "the attack of a nest of wasps which were disturbed by the fighting in Thiruvattar". The Mutaliyar records of Alagiya Pandiapuram dated 915 M.E. (1730 A.D.) mentions that the southern portion of South Travancore were authorised to reduce certain taxes on account of the invasion of Mukilan. It shows the devastations committed by this intruder.

## **Queen Mangammal's Invasion (1697 A.D.)**

The Travancore King Ravi Varma (1684-1718 A.D.) entered into an alliance with the Nayaks in order to get rid-off the pressures of Ettuvittil Pillamars. He promised to give Kalkulam fort (modern Padmanabhapuram fort) if they would assist him in suppressing this rebellious group. But when his desire was achieved, he left the promise in the air and hacked the Nayak forces into pieces. Feeling disgrace over this Rani Mangammal sent her forces in 1697-98 under her able Commander Narasappaya. He conquered the Travancore forces and returned to the Nayak capital with considerable booty consisting of spices, jewels and guns. An extremely mis-spelt record of Queen Mangammal is found on a slab set up near a well at Kottar. This invasion wrought considerable havoc to the people. These Nayak raids and counter reprisals created a feeling of resentment against Travancore rulers. Normal agriculture was affected and the 'land of ploughs' was in excelsis.

## **Muthu Pillai's Attack on South Travancore (1723 A.D.)**

Muthu Pillai and his ally Chittamabalam Pandaram followed by his soldiers besieged Darasankoppu. Because of their enormities, the inhabitants left their homes and emigrated to

the outside of frontiers. Another minor but menacing attack came from the east in 1724 A.D. A lithic inscription found in Travancore gives a graphic account of the devastated state of the land from Mangalam to Manakudy. It also furnishes the calamities met by the people of South Travancore.

## **Alagappa Mutaliyar's Invasion (1725 A.D.)**

Alagappa Mutaliyar, a Commander of Mercenary troops sent by Madurai Nayak invaded South Travancore in order to help Padmanabhan Tampi and Raman Tampi in their claims to the Travancore throne on patrilineal system of inheritance. On his way to the capital Kakulam he plundered Kottar and Suchindram. It is believed that he took a huge vessel of bronze belonging to the Suchindram temple. The Royal forces were defeated in the battles of Tiruvitamkodu, Keralapuram and Thuckalay. They shut inside the Kalkulam fort with great losses. Marthanda Varma, the Prince of Neyyattinkara negotiated with Alagappa Mutaliyar for leaving the Kalkulam fort. Marthanda Varma, then reinforced his army and reoccupied the fort of Kalkulam. Through the negotiated agency of Periya Pandaram of Dharmapuram he won over the marauder.

## **Chanda Sahib's Invasion (1740 A.D.)**

The 1740 A.D. the Nawab of Arcot sent Chanda Sahib and Sardar Ali Khan to the South. They committed depredations in Nagercoil, Suchindram and Kottar, and burnt the great car of the temple of Suchindram. As Maharaja Marthanda Varma was pre-occupied with the fight against the Dutch, he was forced to surrender before the invaders, by giving a large sum of money and presents. After the invasions Maharaja Marthanda Varma decided to create new barriers in the eastern border. In order to protect his kingdom from these marauders, he planned "to construct stone bastions at intervals all along the mud-walls of the Thovalai fort". The garrisons at Aramboly were strengthened and fortifications were started according to the plan of Thaikattu Namputhiri. His technical skill was utilized in improving the fortification works of Kalkulam and Puliyurkurichi.

## **Conclusion:**

It is clear beyond doubt that, the atrocities committed by the invaders and the subsequent miseries of the people made Maharaja Marthanda Varma to think of new remedial measures. As he was a true lover of the welfare his subjects, he entered into the great task of fortifying all strategic centre. He enjoyed the fruits of his efforts even during his life-time and eastern border was strongly protected. South Travancore gave opportunity to foreign powers namely the British and the Dutch and they established powers. The pillar of victory erected here silently speaks of the naval victory of Travancore under Maharaja Marthanda Varma. The motive of Dutch to convert South Travancore into a settlement ended in fiasco. On the other hand the British succeeded in establishing their authority over Travancore.

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