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PROBLEMS OF DIPLOMATIC CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: INTER-STATE RELATIONS OF TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN

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Abstract

Towards the beginning of modern age, the geographical landscape and political terrain of Kerala had evolved into three independent kingdoms of Travancore, Cochin and Calicut. These States were well defined with clear cut boundaries. Their territories were unique in terms of geography, climate, social structure, economic resources and above all bounded by common language, Malayalam. Among them Travancore and Cochin with the feature of inseparable territorial regularities had their role in maintaining the extent of diplomatic relations between the two. Here the up keeping of Mandala concept and diplomacy of Kautilya is significant. The intermixture of jurisdiction amounts to a prodigious disadvantage to the extent cordial in their political relations. It led to Major disputes over several stuffs which related to basic necessities of life like, land, water etc. To settle the disputes even the British Government had to interfere in the form of an arbitrator. As these States were underneath British Colonialism, along with the exertions of these States, British Government keenly initiated elucidations in settling these disputes. Land disputes covered those of Munambam, Malayattur Hills and Valiyapanikan Thuruthu and Water dispute was mainly related to Periyar River. Besides these there were Minor disputes related to border, roads, places etc. It includes those of Andhakaranazhi and Kalady Road dispute. It is being

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attested to the fact that these areas were not explored in an effective manner to know more about the extent of diplomatic relations maintained by these States.

Keywords: Inter-state relations, Diplomacy, Mandala Concept, Boundary disputes, Encroachments

Introduction

Kingdoms were natural allies and Diplomatic relations were inevitable to gain strength and resource appropriation. Inter State relations were mainly promoted by the longing of the rulers for the acknowledgment of their political supremacy by other States. They acted on the basis of political, economic and military self-interest. Inter-State relations always turn hostile due to many factors. Questions related to boundary, income from trade and commerce, religious endeavours etc., leads to unfriendly state of affairs between States. Diplomatic relations between the States often determine the nature of settling the disputes. Some of the tactful policies in settling these disputes by the rulers of both the States had genuine resemblances of inter-State relations maintained by the ancient times as embodied in the Mandala theory of Chanakya,¹ who evolved the Mandala theory in Arthashastra.² Geographical base, economic and military powers were the determining factors. The State always has the continuous thirst for wealth and makes attempt to thrive for it. Political and diplomatic failure leads to unnecessary wars and external interference.

The inter-State relations of Travancore and Cochin were not far from the above statement. Among the innumerable princely states of pre-independent India, these erstwhile kingdoms formed an integral part of South India. The disputes between Travancore-Cochin States were also related to encroachments and the right of establishing their power. The important disputes in this regard were related to Andhakaranazhi, Keezhcheri Desom, Thiruvankulam Muri and Canal, Kaniannoor Desom Kalady road and Kuriyappally River. These disputes existed only for a decade. The minor disputes were emerged after the settlement of J.C. Hannington Commission. Both Travancore and Cochin had taken special interest in settling these minor disputes cordially without changing them into major issues by affirming that diplomacy is really the lifeblood of the State. The fruitful aspect of Mandala theory can be best understood in settling the minor disputes.

Objectives of the Study

The Inter-State relations between Travancore and Cochin were practically an unexplored area. No serious study had been made to explore the origin of disputes between the States regarding various matters of interest. The present study focuses the minor disputes emerged between the States in the last quarter of the 19th century. It aims:

1. To know the inseparable territorial regularities and their role in boosting conflicts and disputes.
2. To point out the minor regional encroachments and peaceful settlements by native States.

Methodology

The article is made up entirely on the basis of archival data related to the origin, development and settlement of disputes. The methodology relied in this perusal is descriptive, analytical and argumentative.

There were Major disputes related to land, water and temple management. Land disputes covered those of Munambam, Malayattur Hills and Valiyapanikan Thuruthu. Water disputes were mainly related to Periyar River. Devaswom disputes comprised of Irinjalakkuda Koodalamanikkam temple, Annamanada temple at Adoor, Perumanam and Elamkunnapuzha Temple. In this context an external interference occurred in the form of British intervention to settle the disputes. Being an ally of Travancore and Cochin by the treaties of 1805 and 1806, respectively the Madras Government appointed a Civil Servant, J. C. Hannington as Arbitrator in 1880. These disputes had for several decades been the subject of acrimonious correspondence between the two States and a source of vexation to both the parties.³ According to his verdicts almost all the disputes were settled amicably either in favour of Cochin or Travancore. Along with the settling of major disputes some minor disagreements emerged between the states.

Minor disputes between Travancore-Cochin States were also related to encroachments and the right of establishing their power, most of which were related with the boundaries of both Travancore and Cochin. These disputes were mainly concerned with border, encroachments of rivers, canals, cultivated land, changing of border stones, and alteration of survey maps and illegal collection of taxes from boundary places. Though certain problems were amicably solved to some extent through discussion, consultation, agreements and arbitrations, some problems had been continued for a long period. The boundary line of Cochin goes along the border of the *Proverthies* of Aykaranad, Trikkakara, Manjapra and Perumbavoor in the Kunnathunad Taluk. In order to prevent disputes it became inevitable to conduct survey operations in the Kunnathunad Taluk with the survey of the adjoining Taluks of Cochin. The Cochin Survey Agency began their operations in the areas of future contention. At the same time Travancore commenced survey operations in villages adjacent to the above said portions of the Cochin State. An arrangement had been already sanctioned for the deputation of a Cochin official to represent Cochin during the progress of Travancore survey operations on the boundary line. It was desirable to lay

down certain definite instructions of the guidance of the Survey Departments of both the States to enable them to act in concert, in the demarcation and survey of the lands on the border. The Survey Superintendent suggested a *modus operandi* that might be adopted. The State boundary between Travancore and Cochin to the boundary stones planted at that time, were found to be incorrect during the Revenue Survey. The important disputes in this regard were related to Andhakaranazhi and Kalady road Dispute. Emerged after the settlement of J.C. Hannington Commission, these disputes had existed only for a decade. Both Travancore and Cochin had taken special interest in settling these minor disputes cordially without changing them into major issues.

Dispute over Andhakaranazhi

Andhakaranazhi was a coastal village located in Alleppey District of the modern State of Kerala. Now it is a littoral village in Pattanakkad *Grama Panchayat*, in Cherthala Taluk. *Andhakaranazhi belonged to Thuravur Proverthy* in the Cherthala Taluk⁴ of Travancore State.⁵ Earlier Chellanam Village separated Travancore territory from Cochin by a small opening into the sea called Andhakaranazhi.⁶ It was once the State boundary between Travancore and Cochin.⁷ There existed a *Chal* (small stream) belonging to the northern side of Cochin.⁸ It developed due to continuous sand sedimentation formed by the continuous action of seawater. Possession and control of this minor region was of great importance to both the States. It was just 27 km parallel to Cochin port. Besides this it was a busy fishing hub.

A tracing of the dispute go back to 1870's. When Hannington arrived as Arbitrator to settle the disputes between the States the matter got his attention. He carefully studied the locality and laid boundary stones between the States in this disputed area. But Cochin's attitude towards its acceptance was often negative. Further actions on Cochin's side indicate the same. As years went by, Cochin showed more irritation in its dealings with this locality. On 25 October 1900, the Superintendent of Police reported to the *Dewan* of Travancore that a Revenue Survey was going to be done by Cochin Government at Andhakaranazhi. It would disturb the existing boundary as those of 1880's between the two States near Andhakaranazhi.⁹ Travancore that made no encroachment alleged that Cochin encroached the Travancore side near Andhakaranazhi.¹⁰ A number of encroachments were cited from Andhakaranazhi to Munambam Bar. The *Diwan* Krishna Swami responded to that in a serious manner. He demanded a detailed report regarding the encroachments from the Acting Superintendent. *Diwan* Krishna Swami informed the Assistant in Charge of Survey Superintendent, of duties and about the encroachment. He ordered to make arrangement for a local inspection and verification.

Order of the Diwan was passed to S Padmanabha Iyer, the *Diwan Peishkar* Kottayam. He inspected Andhakaranazhi region with Kunjan Pillai, Revenue officer. In their inspection it was clearly found that the Cochin surveyor had placed a new stone on Travancore portion of the region. Due to this Travancore lost nearly 16 cents.¹¹ They prepared a detailed report stating encroachment on Travancore side. *Diwan Peishkar* Kottayam forwarded a copy of the report to *Diwan* of Travancore. In the report it was stated that Cochin Survey party had encroached the *purampoke* and No. 357 of Travancore territory and planted demarcating stone and pegs therein.¹²

The *Dewan* Peshkar of Cochin stated that the encroachment near Andhakaranazhi had been removed. After his declaration a local inspection was made by the Superintendent of Survey, Travancore State. He reported erasing of encroachments by Travancore and Cochin ryots. Within prohibited limits of midline true boundary of the two States upon the river between Edappally, Kunnathunadu Taluk, Travancore and Ernakulam *Proverthy*, Kanayanur District were subsequently noticed and steps were taken to remove it. It was reported by the Cochin *Diwan* that the encroachments on their respective sides were removed.¹³ This was confirmed by the letter No. 7724/R. dated 22nd January 1906 from the *Diwan* Peishkar, Kottayam to Diwan of Travancore. The Acting Resident's letter Dis.No 439 dated the 8th August 1906 regarding the removal of encroachments on both in the boundary canal between Edappally and Ernakulum were released. The Acting Resident reported that the encroachments on the portion of the Cochin-Travancore boundary were cleared and that there were no encroachments on Travancore side. He also added that there was some discrepancy in the two village maps of Cherthala Taluk. It would be rectified during the joining revision survey of the stated boundary which was in progress.¹⁴

Kalady Road Dispute

With the era of tarred and metalled roads Travancore wanted to connect northward and southward portions of the kingdom with fine roads. From Trissur to Travancore territory a road was essential for communication and transportation. Speedy movement of cargoes was its prime motive. Already Travancore got Karappuram, Cherthala and Alangad from Cochin.¹⁵ The newly recommended road was to connect southern Cochin with Northern Travancore. The road southward from Cochin side and the new road in north Travancore would progress through the isolated territory of Cochin territory on the bank of the Periyar River.¹⁶

The arguments put forward by Travancore in this road construction were as follows:

1. The Cochin territory should make the benefits of the Travancore road construction. Cochin can connect isolated tracts of their kingdom.

2. The road construction is being done under the supervision of the Travancore engineers. Full responsibility was vested with Travancore Sirkar.
3. The construction helped forthcoming developments of both the States.

As a contrary to the above statements and assurances, Cochin Sirkar explained their stand.

Arguments made by Cochin Government

1. Kalady Desom in the Vellarapilly Proverthy belonged to the Cochin Government till 1816. Travancore Government forcibly took steps for the fixation of 755 *paras* and 3/16 *Edangalies* of paddy land and 138 piece of garden land belonged to Kalady *Desom* later and annexed them to the Manjapara Proverthy of Travancore State.
2. In 1824 a conference was conducted and in it the above mentioned things were discussed.
3. The Cochin Government never gave up claiming the remaining portions of the Kalady Desom and such portions have always been under its Government.
4. The disputed portions consisted of *Janmam lands*.¹⁷
5. In a small portion of Chengal Desom and the portion of Kalady Desom Travancore Government had no claim.
6. Cochin's earlier attempt to construct a road through Edappally *Janmam* land was not accepted by the Travancore Government.

Without considering the arguments of Cochin Government, Travancore decided to proceed with the new mission. The Superintendent of Travancore accepted the benefits of Engineers' recommendation. Tahsildar of Alangad informed that the line of road out of Kalady said to be the Cochin territory was not so and as a result, arrangements were made and work started at that place.¹⁸ But one of the Cochin officials, with weapons, drew away coolies from the work, and threatened the men of work.¹⁹ As a result the progress of the work came to a standstill. So he requested to avoid such illegal and unauthorized activities.²⁰ The supervisor in charge of the northern road reported the matter immediately to Travancore Sirkar. He requested that immediate steps were being taken in the matter to enable work to be proceeded with and further molestation of the working parties prevented.²¹

The Chief Engineer of Travancore demanded the immediate attention of the *Diwan* of Travancore on the issue. At any cost, the obstruction created by the Cochin officials to Travancore work on the portion of the northern road and the damage they effected to the

road in carrying out their objection was to be eliminated.²² He also noticed that the problem was to be referred to Alangad Tahsildar.²³ The construction of Kalady road demanded serious attention from the part of Resident. He wanted to settle the dispute in an amicable and liberal manner²⁴

The Resident raised the question to the *Diwan* of Cochin as to whether Kalady was located in the Cochin territory or Travancore territory and settle the problem harmoniously. The Resident demanded Cochin Government to place the claim on record, leaving the disputed boundary to be adjusted.²⁵ The construction of road was no longer a point of opposition from the part of Cochin. So he urged Cochin government to take a fair decision on constructing roads.

Even though such arguments were there on the matter, both the parties agreed to settle the matter amicably. It was another instance of settling the age old diplomatic relations even in minor disputed cases. There would be no mutual jealousies, no mutual strife.²⁶

Conclusion

The Minor disputes between the countries mostly culminated in conflicts and wars. But as far as Travancore and Cochin were concerned, the major minor disputes that were related to Andhakaranazhi and Kalady road Dispute had been settled with mutual discussions and agreements and even by the interference of British Residents. This may be some times be due to the fact that both these territories were under the sway of a powerful colonial authority. The encroachments of the individual or *Desoms* were not tolerated by both the States of Travancore and Cochin. These encroachments, sometimes, served as bottlenecks to the smooth transportation and trade in the region. At that time, there arose a need to evict those encroachments by the authorities of both the States. These endeavours on the part of erstwhile Travancore and Cochin helped them to keep up their separate State entity. There were no superior and inferior calculations in a serious form between the two. Both the parties had to suffer the bitterness of temporary disputes. That is why they could uphold their prestige to an amazing extent. To a certain extent by settling the minor disputes, these native states maintained successful diplomatic relations. It prevented them from going for destructive wars.

Notes & Reference :

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In course of time, it conquers the adjacent kingdom with which diplomatic ties evolved.

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17. Lands of private Individuals

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19. *Ibid.*, p.6.
20. *Ibid.*
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22. Cover file.234, Letter No. 2477, Chief Engineer Travancore to the Dewan of Travancore, dated 6th july 1877, State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram.
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