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Professor Arasaratnams rejoinder - some comments

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PROFESSOR ARASARATNAM'S REJOINDER

SOME COMMENTS

Professor Arasaratnam falls into error on basic facts; judgements accordingly misdirected. Space spared for only some corrections.

1. p. 191 Repeats myth: text of Treaty held by Dutch differs from counterpart with Raja. Treaty itself refutes him: "Two covenants, reading word for word the same, here drawn up in Portuguese" (Heeres 1907:I, 316).
2. p. 193 "Emperor . . . titular greeting". Not when deployed to draw VOC into armed alliance, misled by façade of deception. Raja lacked powerbase in western lowlands. Demonstration marches skirting battle-zone were positive disservice as revealing to enemy non-intervention policy. Portuguese styled him simply: King of Kandy. "He arrogated to himself title of Emperor . . . His Imperial Majesty. The Hollanders gave him this presumption." (De Queyroz 1930:929, 930). His claim to newly won districts rested on right of conquest, by proxy through VOC military force. He fell victim to delusions of grandeur. As sovereign lord he forbade the Dutch to build any defence works in "his kingdom", though himself unable to maintain mastery of the disputed areas. VOC refused to expose troops, munitions, naked before lightning commando raids.

The King also breached rules of Diplomatic. In that age great importance was attached to formalism, especially exact designations in treaties. No such potentate as Ceylon Emperor existed. The contract therefore was null, the other party being a phantom.

3. pp. 193-194 "Dutch discovered cinnamon 1672 . . . Batticaloa district". Date requires correction to 1638. Coster learnt, from official spokesmen at Court, that cinnamon was harvested in abundance only along western coast; note phrase "in abundance". They could not deny it grew also on eastern side, though poorly organized, as any traveller could see. Coster reported: "Cinnamon local to Batticaloa coarse quality. However, in neighbouring

Sammanturai, Velassa, ample stocks in storage but kept hidden from us (*voor ons verborgen gehouden*)" (VOC 1129, f. 382). Raja deliberately withheld supplies; not disposed to ease pressure on Portuguese or Dutch by raiding his own resources. Preferred to unleash Dutch energies westwards. VOC had no choice, short of two-front war, but to accept King's edict: "No fighting: no cinnamon; from eastern parts only dribblets".

4. p. 197 Joint assault on Colombo "abandoned". But sub-head along margin Despatch 18.12.1639 reads: "Wait for Emperor till Doomsday" (*Wacht den Keyser voor Colombo te vergeefs*; VOC 1129, f. 7 recto).
5. p. 199 *Debts* (a) Cinnamon 1638 consignment, 144 bahars (fraction of promised "shiploads") "would have fetched . . . over f. 146,900". Not so; nearly half was below standard, unsaleable. Only 37,000 lbs. found takers at 32 stivers a pound, notional price, because subject to discount covering 18 months (32 *stuyt pondt op $\frac{18}{m}$ rabat*). Further heavy expenses: handling, freight, packing (leather covers) against salt water, deepsea hazards, again narrowed profit margins. Hypothetical f. 146,900 becomes meaningless against actual amount recorded for this very deal (VOC 316, f. 276 recto).
 (b) "Price Portuguese paid" (p. 198). Misnomer. They, as owners of production areas, were sellers, not buyers. They dictated prices. Their peelers were already rewarded with lands cultivated for their maintenance under service-tenure system for delivering annual quota; however, were further granted petty bonus to encourage harvesting in excess. Coster, diligent inquiry, testified that market rate at Colombo was thirty seraphins, "without King of Spain's tax" (VOC 1129, f. 387), meaning export duty. Price for shipments abroad thus became 110, even 120 seraphins. Raja assumed prerogatives of Portuguese crown, likewise imposed high levy. Galling to Dutch King-makers that cinnamon (grown on land held for generations by Portuguese, now at last seized by VOC troops and given courtesy title "King's territory" under legal fiction) was doled out to them at rates kept prohibitive. Raja playing with explosives.
 (c) "Portuguese bahar about 380 lbs" (p. 198). The standard weight for sales on the open market was the bahar of 480 lbs. Only in the Galle-Matara district, as a concession rooted in tradition among the peelers of Ruhuna (the southern province), the quota exacted was 384 lbs, to count in their case as a bahar. Dutch always adjusted public price levels to bring into the

general line this internal arrangement between the Captain-Controller of the Cinnamon department and a group of his peelers.

Professor Arasaratnam should cite authority for use of transferred epithet "Portuguese bahar, about 380 lbs".

(d) Wages and Rations at 25 guilders were ten in excess of true charge, "downright fraud" (p. 199). Rations alone cost f 12 per head: this fixed amount was credited to Raja in hundreds of cases where garrisons drew supplies from his purveyors (VOC 864, f. 645). From the alleged f. 15 only a princely three remained as wages. Mistake beyond excuse.

(e) Value of the serafin was not "2 Guilders" (p. 198) but f 1¼, i.e. 25 stivers (G.M. 1.722); climbed to 30 stivers in Batavia about November 1640 (Van Geer 1895:Bijlage vi 11) but in Ceylon not till April 1641 (VOC 865, f. 102).

6. p. 200 King silent; no letters, embassies from Court, 1659-87. The "exhaustive evidence" on which this claim is based could not be more at fault, as proved by extracts, Minutes of Dutch Governing Council, Colombo, C.N.A., viz:-

No. 10, f. 10 ver: 7.4.1663:- Letter from Court; King seeks news of Admiral's return. Expedient meet his wishes although the less we have to do with him the better for our peace of mind (*minste gemeenschap de meeste gerust^{ht}: sal baren*).

No. 12, f. 1, 27.4.1666:- Good relations with King follow our occupation Trincomalee at his request.

ff. 22-3, 23.7.1666:- Letters last received from Court, despatched in Raja's name, show satisfaction, goodwill our posting garrisons Trincomalee, Saffragam, Ruvanvella. Gifts to Raja with letter: Now that Your Maj. has commended to us occupation Trincomalee, Batticaloa . . .

f. 104, 23.3.1667:- Adigar Kumbalvella leads embassy from Court with letter by command of H.M. announcing death of King's only son, 3 March. Raja pins all his hopes on trusty Dutch. Replied suitable terms.

7. p. 202 Dutch seized large tracts. Error. Van Goens wrote 17.4.1665 to Raja, in response to his appeal: "Am sending troops Ruvanvella, Bibilegama bringing help to await H.M.'s orders; he should send trusty persons to confer with Dutch to serve H.M.'s cause" (Minutes, 27.5.1665; VOC 1251, f. 1044). Scores of similar executive decisions stand four-square against the views expressed in the Rejoinder.

Some other departures from fact are:-

Goa blockade: (p. 194) "three months, mid-January to mid-

April". Westerwolt:- Off Goa 27 October 1637, left 28 April 1638 (VOC 1126, f. 300 rect: ff.).

Caen: entered Portuguese sealanes 15.9.1638; cruised against shipping (VOC 1129, f. 119). Before Goa 4.11.1638. Broke off early, 19.2.1639, to assault Colombo.

Bouwers (also spelt Bouwens) ordered to close Goa port from 1.10.1639 till 3/4 May 1640 (Instructions: VOC 864 ff. 442-47). Lengthy blockades normal.

8. Arandara: (p. 196) *Roi fainéant*: Twelve thousand inactive before three thousand in exposed position. No attempt to engage, or delay withdrawal, harass rearguard or even inform Lukasz. In every duty required of an ally, Raja failed.
9. "Rarob" wrecked: (p. 199) VOC argued:- Article 18 covered outward voyages Java, homeward Ceylon (*int gaen offt keeren*), not local trips due to King's defaults. Raja's letters to Lukasz showed such cases to be fair basis for VOC claim, as GG reminded him (18.10.1641, VOC 865, f. 512).
10. Sweeps: (p. 194) "References checked thoroughly"; no evidence. Nevertheless:- G.M. p. 338, 1.12.1632: "The yacht Wesanen together with the yachts Diemen and Valck and some small craft shall cruise below Ceylon against the Portuguese...". G.M. p. 411, 15.12.1633: "The fleet, in combination with the squadron blockading Goa... shall then sail all together towards Calicut and down the Malabar coast... thereupon still cruising (i.e. on the look-out to bear down on the enemy) and scouring the seas along the shores of India, depart for Ceylon and, weather permitting, run down to Galle or Colombo in order to test whether any considerable service can be rendered to the King there together with some damage to the enemy". Moreover, p. 121, G.M. 1.2.1623, n. 5, refers to the Coen papers — details, naval actions; while, five pages lower down, another entry reads: "24.2.1623 — The Defence Fleet now on station before Goa comprises seven warships..."

The above mistakes, only part of the grand total, arouse misgivings as to soundness of the critic's grounding in old-world Dutch. Doubts quickly change to dismay when his version of Valentijn is compared with original; not a page free from renderings untrue to Text; some wildly astray, with meanings the opposite of the sense actually conveyed, viz:-

D = Dutch text; a and b = columns 1 & 2; E = English version. (D. 137b; E. 350.) *schoon 't verlies van die Pagar door ons op zyn Majesteit zelf geweten wierd*, is translated: "as the loss of this

frontier post was known by us from his Majesty" (for: although the loss of this stockade was blamed by us on his Majesty himself); here *weten*, to know, is confounded with the p. participle of *wijten*, to blame. Same page, at foot (D.) & E. 351:- *verontschuldigde zich verder om voor eerst Colombo te veroveren*, becomes: "taking the responsibility on himself further to conquer Colombo first", instead of the opposite: "excused himself from undertaking to conquer Colombo in the first instance". The next page (D.) & (E.): - *en stelde alle de zwarigheden, om Colombo te belegeren, voor*, is turned into: "build all obstacles in order to besiege Colombo", for: "pointed out all the difficulties that stood in the way of laying siege to Colombo". A few of the other phrases, violence to Dutch idiom:- *Zeeghaftig*, "Hastily", for Triumphantly (D. 79b; E. 240); *Een en andermaal*, "Once or twice", for Again and again (D. 80b; E. 242.); *Soldyen betalen*, "Pay the soldiers", for Pay wages (D. 119a; E. 322.); *Jammerlyk*, "Mercilessly", for Lamentably (D. 120a; E. 325.); *Nevens*, "Apart from", for Together with (D. 138b; E. 352).

ABBREVIATIONS

- C.N.A. Ceylon National Archives
 G.M. Generale Missiven, cf. Coolhaas 1960
 VOC The new VOC numbers replace the old K.A. series for references, State Archives, The Hague

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