

FEAR AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT

J.F. DUPLEIX AND EURO-INDIAN RELATIONS IN BENGAL
(1730-1740)

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Abstract

In the first half of the 18th century in India, the trading companies of Holland, England and France were the protagonists of a political and economic expansion. In this paper, the Author aims to highlight the colonial experience of the French governor Joseph-François Dupleix's in Bengal in the 1730s. In particular, the Author wants to refer to the shift in the balance of power relations between Europeans and Indians, and He wants to highlight a slow and progressive shift of the balance towards European players. In fact after the 1730s, progressively, the use of force becomes, thanks to the fear it generates, a normal *modus operandi* on the part of the European Companies in India.

Keywords: India, Bengal, European Expansion, Euro-Indian Relations, Joseph-François Dupleix

The 18th century can be considered as the closing phase of the Modern age, the last century in which the world system was characterised by the fact that Europe was not the economically most developed area. And it was precisely from the middle of the 18th century, slowly and thanks to its strategic and technological supremacy in the

military field, that the West began to take control over, and to economically exploit, the rest of the world¹.

In the first half of the 18th century in India, the trading companies of Holland, England and France were the protagonists of this political and economic expansion². But the Europeans were not the only actors on the Indian scene. After the death of Aurangzeb (1707), the last great Mughal emperor, many local potentates had risen in India, making themselves *de facto* independent from Delhi, though formally still recognising the Great Mughal's authority. So the empire, from a centralised monarchy, turned into a system of essentially autonomous provinces. Moreover, it had to deal with the growing power of the Marathas, who managed to take away

¹ On the variation in the balance of power relations between Europeans and Indians during the «colonial age», see: M.H. Fisher, *Diplomacy in India, 1526-1858*, in H.V. Bowen-E. Mancke-J.G. Reid (edited by), *Britain's Oceanic Empire. Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 249-281.

² About the Dutch Company (the V.O.C., *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) see, *passim*: C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire: 1600-1800*, London, Hutchinson & Co, 1965; O. Prakash, *Precious Metals and Commerce: The Dutch East India company in the Indian Ocean Trade*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1994; F. Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company. Expansion and Decline*, Zutphen, Walburg Pers, 2003; P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, 1602-1795: 's werelds eerste multinational tussen commercie en cultuur*, Amersfoort, Bekking & Blitz, 2012; E.M. Jacobs, *Merchant in Asia: The Trade of the Dutch East India Company During the Eighteenth Century*, Leiden, CNWS Publications, 2006 (original ed., Zutphen, 2000). On the policies of the British East India Company (E.I.C.) in the first half of the 18th century in particular, see: P. Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, London-New York, Longman, 1993, *passim*; A. Wild, *The East India Company: Trade and Conquest from 1600*, London, Harper Collins, 1999, pp. 64-85; P.J. Stern, *Company, State, and Empire: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Asia*, in H.V. Bowen-E. Mancke-J.G. Reid (edited by), *Britain's Oceanic Empire. Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850*, op. cit., pp. 130-150; H.V. Bowen-J. McAleer-R.J. Blyth, *Monsoon Traders: The Maritime World of the East India Company*, London, National Maritime Museum, 2011, *passim*. About the French *Compagnie des Indes* see, *passim*: P. Haudrère, *La compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 voll., Paris, Les Indes savantes, 2005 (second ed.); D.C. Wellington, *French East India Companies: A Historical Account and Record of Trade*, Lanham, Hamilton Books, 2006; C. Manning, *Fortunes à faire. The French in Asian Trade: 1719-48*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1996; I. Ray, *The French East India Company and the Trade of the Indian Ocean: A Collection of Essays*, with an introd. by L. Subramanian, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1999.

from Delhi's control many rich districts in the Gangetic plain (even though the Marathas themselves were fragmenting into many conflicting family groups)³.

The interest of the European seafaring powers in the Indian subcontinent grew manifold in the first decades of the 18th century, although such political instability greatly affected the relations between the Officials of the trading companies and the Indians⁴. In point of fact, to the Indian princes, all Western merchants were equally of little importance, since the Europeans did not have any political or military clout⁵.

At this time the political use of force with the objective of generating a sense of fear in the rivals (especially in the trading rivals) was common among all the players, Indian and European, although the dominance of Asian principalities was evident. In this paper, I intend to highlight the colonial experience of Joseph-François Dupleix's in Bengal in the 1730s. In particular, I will refer to the shift in the balance of power relations between Europeans and Indians, and I will highlight a slow and progressive shift of the balance towards European players. After the

³ See, J.F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 253-281; M.D. Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 275-308; S. Gordon, *The Marathas (1600-1818)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, *passim*.

⁴ On the European rivalries in India see, in general: H. Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1976; and P. Emmer-F. Gastra (edited by), *The Organization of Interoceanic Trade in European Expansion, 1450-1800*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1996. In particular, about the Anglo-French rivalry, see: F. Crouzet, *La guerre économique franco-anglaise au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2008, pp. 331-339.

⁵ A Jesuit well acquainted with the subcontinent wrote most effectively, at the beginning of the 18th century: «The Indians regard the Europeans as disgraceful and contemptible people»; Father Martin's letter to Father Le Gobien, Madurai, 1 June 1700, quoted by M. Vaghi, *L'Idea dell'India nell'Europa moderna (secoli XVII-XX)*, Milano-Udine, Mimesis, 2012, p. 23.

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1730s the use of fear against the Indian rivals, therefore, becomes an important political instrument even for the European trading companies.

Dupleix is the most famous governor of French Indies⁶, the earliest of the so-called European Nawabs, and the man from whom the more famous Robert Clive learned that to conquer the subcontinent was a feasible enterprise, adopting him as his model. The term *nabobism* was created for Dupleix, to describe the complex game of interference in, and collusion with, the political power of Indian princes initiated by the French Governor since the 1740s⁷.

By now it is generally accepted that the idea of a territorial expansion at the expense of the Indian princedoms, with the concurring political

⁶ About Joseph-François Dupleix (1697-1763), Director of French Bengal factory of Chandernagore (1731-1741), and then Governor of Pondicherry (1741-1754), the French chief town in India, see: M. Vaghi, *Joseph-François Dupleix e la prima espansione europea in India: 'Le trône du Grand Mogol tremble au seul bruit de votre nom'*, Milano, Unicopli, 2008, pp. 55-138. Dupleix's published biographies are many, but often rather outdated. I'll cite therefore only those I regard as more significant: A. Martineau, *Dupleix et l'Inde française: 1749-1754*, 4 voll., Paris, Société d'éditions géographiques, maritimes et coloniales, 1920-1928; P. Cultru, *Dupleix ses plans politiques, sa disgrâce*, Paris, Hachette, 1901; and the only modern, albeit secondary, work, M. Vigie, *Dupleix*, Paris, Fayard, 1993. The work of the former curator of the Madras record office on the «founding fathers» of the British *raj* over India is quite interesting: H.H. Dodwell, *Dupleix and Clive. The Beginning of Empire*, London, Methuen, 1920.

⁷ S.A. Wolpert, *A New History of India*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 175. The term *nabobism* describes, among other things, the behaviour of some European colonisers who would imitate the customs and the usages of Indian princes with aiming at a more effective control over the populations they were administering, accustomed to being ruled in a more «ceremonial» way than the one generally prevailing in European States. For sure, Dupleix did not overlook the need of adapting himself to the traditional usages of Deccan, but his *nabobism* is certainly of a political nature and not out of fashion, so to speak: «The 'game' Dupleix embarked upon has come to be called 'nabobism', the English corruption of the Mughal title *nawab*». But the meaning of the mangling of the title of *nawab* more widespread in European literature and customs from the middle of the 19th century – which defines by the term nabobs the colonial administrators who became immensely rich thanks to their Indian service («to be as rich as a nabob») – has nothing to do with Dupleix. On the relations between Dupleix and Clive, and on the policy of the so-called *nabobism*, see: Vaghi, *Joseph-François Dupleix e la prima espansione europea in India*, op.cit., pp. 48-54.

interference in their internal affairs, was worked out by the «men on the spot» (administrators and military officials), not by the European Courts. Under this respect French Governor J.F. Dupleix is a paramount figure; he was the first to envisage and to put into practice a European territorial expansion in India, on behalf of France, albeit in a limited and ephemeral way. He was stopped at first by his recall to the motherland in 1754, and then by the decisive French defeat in the Seven Years war, which eventually opened the way to English penetration in the Indian subcontinent⁸.

It is undeniable that Dupleix, whose reflections on the European policy in the East Indies started as early as the 1730s, was a forerunner.

In the first half of the 18th century, as a matter of fact, the importance of obtaining large territories overseas was generally not understood in France, if the opinion expressed – among other commentators – by Montesquieu on colonial adventures is to be given credence⁹. In the eyes of the famous *philosophe*, then, only the Indian and Chinese settlements (providing the exotic goods that fashion had made indispensable) and, above all, the plantation colonies of the Antilles (which had made the

⁸ On Dupleix's move from «traditional» merchant colonialism to a policy of interference in Indian politics and of territorial conquests, see: Vaghi, *Joseph-François Dupleix e la prima espansione europea in India*, op.cit., pp. 150-174. About the crisis of French power in India after 1763, see: G. Mansingh, *French Military Influence in India*, New Delhi, Knowledge World, 2006, pp. 9-25; S.P. Sen, *The French in India (1763-1815)*, New Delhi, M. Manoharlal, 1971 (second ed.), pp. 218-415; S. Das, *Myths and Realities of French Imperialism in India*, New York, Peter Lang, 1992, pp. 129-242; P. Le Tréguilly, *Les aventuriers*, in P. Le Tréguilly-M. Morazé (sous la direction de), *L'Inde et la France, deux siècles d'histoire commune (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)*, Paris, CNRS éd., 1995, pp. 51-63.

⁹ «L'effet ordinaire des colonies est d'affaiblir les pays d'où on les tire sans peupler ceux où on les envoie [...]. Les princes ne doivent donc point songer à peupler de grands pays par des colonies [...]. Mais, quand ces colonies réussiraient, au lieu d'augmenter la puissance [du prince], elles ne feraient que la partager; au moins qu'elles n'eussent très peu d'étendue, comme sont celles que l'on envoie pour occuper quelque place pour le commerce»; Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, critical edition by J. Starobinski, Paris, Gallimard, 1973, lettre CXXI, p. 271.

fortune of the French Atlantic ports in the context of the triangular trade) were useful to France. A colonisation of the Mughal empire could not, on the contrary, even be taken into consideration, in Montesquieu's opinion, both because of the vastness of its territories and the great numbers of its subjects (to whom he attributes a *civilisation* as worthy as the European one), and because of its climate, totally unfit for European habits and unhealthy, according to a classic 18th century stereotype.

Showing how deep-rooted among a great part of the French ruling class and public opinion was the Jean-Baptiste Colbert-inspired utilitarian conception of colonisation (so much so that even a refined *esprit*, such as Montesquieu was, was influenced by it), the *Encyclopédie*, still in 1765, maintained that colonies were founded by the mother country only to the exclusive economic benefit of the mother country: the *grandeur* of France did definitely take a less relevant place than economic interest¹⁰.

Also the common people were on the whole uninterested in overseas adventures, often seen as a last refuge for those left with no other means of subsistence (as later Albert Duchêne underlined in his important work on French colonial policy)¹¹. To the middle of the 18th century France, colonies were of secondary importance; while to their rivals on the other side of the Channel their importance was paramount¹².

¹⁰ About the conception of colonisation in India by Colbert, see: A. Ray, *The Merchant and the State: The French in India, 1666-1739*, 2 vols., New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 2004, vol. I, pp. 13-17; H. Deschamps, *Les méthodes et les doctrines coloniales de la France*, Paris, Colin, 1953, pp. 34-44; P. Haudrère, *La Compagnie des Indes*, in P. Le Tréguilly-M. Morazé (sous la direction de), *L'Inde et la France, deux siècles d'histoire commune*, op. cit., pp. 11-21.

¹¹ «Pour la masse, les colonies demeurèrent des pays embrumés de légendes, vers lesquels l'esprit d'aventure seul pouvait entraîner de braves gens, s'ils n'étaient très pauvres ou très naïfs»; A. Duchêne, *La politique coloniale de la France: le Ministère des colonies depuis Richelieu*, Paris, Payot, 1928, p. 90.

¹² «Jamais, au XVIII^e siècle [...], les colonies n'ont été d'importance vitale pour la France au même titre qu'elles l'étaient, à la même époque déjà, pour la Grande-Bretagne [...]. De 1688 à 1815, les guerres successives où l'Angleterre fut entraînée n'auraient

The military victories achieved by Dupleix in the first Carnatic War (1745-1748) did cause, it is true, a sort of colonial euphoria¹³ in France, fed by the hope of seeing the trade profits increase exponentially. But the dream of colonial *grandeur* on the part of the *Compagnie des Indes* and the trust that public opinion – both Parisian and of the Atlantic ports involved in the trade with the subcontinent – had in Dupleix ended up crumbling quite fast. The absence of the expected revenues coming from the control of the *aldée*¹⁴ allotted to the Governor of Pondicherry by the

jamais pour elle qu'un but jamais oublié: créer ou consolider un empire colonial»; Duchêne, *La politique coloniale de la France*, op. cit., p. 93. In particular, about the importance of the colonies in the 18th century France, see also: J. Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 147-152. On this subject, instead, T.R. Metcalf highlights England's precocious «imperial» designs: «The British idea of themselves as an imperial people charged with the governance of others, had its origin in the discoveries and conquest of the Tudor state in the sixteenth century» (T.R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 2). Some authors maintain – rightly, in my opinion – that the first British empire arose in opposition to the «insufferable monopoly» held by Spain on Atlantic traffic, rather than against France. Only later on, with the wars of the 18th century, the rivalry for world hegemony gradually, not suddenly, growingly involved the other rising power, France. On this see, among many other works, the efficacious summary by: A. Hugon, *Rivalités européennes et hégémonie mondiale, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Colin, 2002, pp. 173-175. On English colonial policy between 1660 and 1776, see: K.E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories: 1570-1850*, London, Frank Cass & C., 1963, pp. 68-105. On the British perception of the importance of the colonies in the Walpolean era, see: D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 170-198.

¹³ Among these military victories the French conquest of Madras (September 21st, 1747) and the victorious defence of Pondicherry, vainly besieged for almost three months by the English admiral Boscawen (August-October 1748), stand out. These two significant victories by Dupleix had a decisive effect on the opinion of the Parisian ruling class, which for a time became favourable to the «territorial policy» in India (also thanks to the presence of the new *Contrôleur Général des Finances*, Machault d'Arnouville, who substituted in 1747 Orry, who had instead always opposed colonial conquests). On this subject, see M. Vaghi, *La 'Relation du siège de Pondichéry en forme de journal' (1748). Un episodio chiave della rivalità anglo-francese in India*, Milano, CUEM, 2010, pp. 7-35.; and A. Martineau, *Dupleix, sa vie, son œuvre*, Paris, Société d'éditions géographiques, maritimes et coloniales, 1931, pp. 102-117.

¹⁴ The French term of *aldée* is linked in Mughal India to the concept of *jagir*. *Jagir* is the right to collect and to keep the taxes from a certain territory, bestowed by the Mughal authority. *Aldée* literally means «native village community» (from the Portuguese *aldeia*,

Indian princes¹⁵ and the direct intervention of the British government in support of its Company, soon frustrated Dupleix's efforts and jeopardised the French presence in India¹⁶.

Even though the French ruling classes and cultural *élites* were generally against military or territorial expansion in India, from the 1730s Dupleix realised that the situation in Bengal required a different policy. He was worried both because of the dynamism shown by the Dutch *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (V.O.C.) and by the East India Company, and because of the political insecurity of that rich province of the Mughal Empire, an insecurity that was undermining the profits of the European Companies.

Indeed, despite the growing profits – «for most of the East India companies were extremely successful and dividends high»¹⁷ –, the fundamental difference between 1690, when Aurangzeb graciously

village), the districts allotted to the Compagnie des Indes by imperial authority or by local Nawabs.

¹⁵ French revenues for the most part used to cover the costs of the war, or, in other instances, were obtainable only once the princes loyal to France were safely established on their thrones.

¹⁶ As the Madras victory in 1746 and the Pondicherry one in 1748 had contributed to strengthen in a decisive way the position of Dupleix at the court of Versailles and to have his Indian policy approved, the scalding defeat suffered by the troops of the *Compagnie des Indes* at Srirangam (June 12th, 1752) at the hands of Lawrence and Clive determined the public condemnation and removal of the French governor of India (August 1754). By then Dupleix was seen as a warmonger blinded by his hatred against the English, and besides no longer militarily undefeated. Even those – such as Machault d'Arnouville – who on principle did not oppose a territorial expansion by the French company, were driven to seek for peace, or at least for an agreement, with the English: «Il n'était pas question de faire des nouvelles conquêtes qui auraient été plus onéreuses qu'utiles...»; Aix-en-Provence, ANOM (Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer), FC (Fonds des Colonies), C2-79, *Relation de l'expédition de Mabé*, s.l., s.d., f. 249. On this subject, see again Vaghi, *Joseph-François Dupleix e la prima espansione europea in India*, op.cit., pp. 139-145; and Martineau, *Dupleix, sa vie, son œuvre*, op. cit., p. 179-188 and pp. 275-287.

¹⁷ C. Koninckx, *Ownership in East India Company Shipping: Prussia, Scandinavia and the Austrian Netherlands in the 18th Century*, in *Bijdrage tot de internationale maritieme geschiedenis*, edited by C. Koninckx *et alii*, Bruxelles, Collectanea maritima, 1988, vol. 4, pp. 33-42 (quotation from p. 41).

granted to the recently defeated English a new decree which authorised them to trade in his domains¹⁸, and the 1720s and 1730s, when trade was regulated by the many different local Nawabs and not from Delhi any longer, had the effect of bringing uncertainty and tensions among the Europeans operating in Bengal.

While once upon a time the empire used to acknowledge the economic importance of European merchants and granted them – in exchange for a share of their profits – an adequate protection both against marauders and against any possible abuses committed by local officials, by now the disempowered emperors had to be paid for a protection they were not any longer able to ensure and for permits that held no real say in the empire's peripheral areas, where the «greed» of Mughal bureaucrats had – in the eyes of Europeans – reached such levels as to jeopardise the very profits of commercial ventures.

Actually, as mentioned above, the demise of the great Aurangzeb had allowed the rise of many local potentates that became in actual fact independent from Delhi, even though they formally continued to acknowledge the authority of the Great Mughal, and the empire had *de facto* ceased to be a united State. One can therefore understand why from the 1720s local Nawabs stopped applying the extant agreements between the Great Mughal and the European companies, gradually placing in their stead their own tax legislation – which was not necessarily more burdensome towards Westerners, but very often perceived as unfair by the Westerners themselves.

In the correspondence of the famous official of the *Compagnie des Indes* Joseph-François Dupleix, both before and after his nomination as director of the Chandernagore settlement, there are quite frequent examples of an explicit critique of the greed of Mughal officials in Bengal

¹⁸ I refer to «Child's War», a war between the East India Company and the Mughal Empire which lasted from 1686 to 1690. See: J. Keay, *India, A History*, London, HarperCollins, 2000, pp. 372-375.

– a greed that favoured, directly or indirectly, an unequal treatment of the different European companies there, causing tension among them. Dupleix expressed for the first time such fears already in 1727¹⁹, on his first arrival in India. He suspected that the Dutch were trying to bring on their side the most important Nawabs, and that they were plotting against France in cahoots with the English of the East India Company (and the fear of an Anglo-Dutch alliance against France was to stay with Dupleix, as we will see, also during his direction at Chandernagore): «The Dutch haven't declared their intentions so openly, but on many occasions they didn't miss the opportunity to show that they bore with our near presence only with impatience, as they clearly showed by stopping one of our ships coming from Yanaon»²⁰.

Once attained the highest post at Chandernagore, Dupleix feared that the insistence to try to stop the European smugglers and pirates on the part of the companies of Holland and England could turn into a kind of monopoly on their part, aimed at driving out of India all other European nations:

In fact, it is the ships of these four Nations [France, England, Holland and Denmark] coming to India without the permission of one of the Companies which are to be regarded as interlopers, and which under these terms can be taken and arrested [...]; but as for those that could come under the Polish and the Swedish flag [...], they cannot be regarded as such, since they carry a Commission by the Sovereigns who allow

¹⁹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (BN), Département des manuscrits, manuscrits occidentaux, NAF (*Nouvelles acquisitions françaises*), 9357, *Mémoire sur les établissements de la Compagnie et sur le commerce dans les Indes Orientales*, Pondicherry, 8 October 1727, f. 48r-74r.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, ff. 57v-58r.

them to come to India, and we cannot have these ships attacked or captured²¹.

But the most important reflexions by Dupleix concerned the political relations between the players on the Bengali stage – Europeans and *Maures* (Indian Muslim officers) – and his awareness of the weakness of the trading companies.

On the one hand Dupleix informed his superiors in France that he had obtained the renewal of the imperial authorisation to trade in the *suba* (imperial province) – «as the conclusion of our embassy to the Nawab [Shuja Khan], from whom we have got the *paravana*, from now on we are at ease and our merchandise is sold without impediment»²²; on the other hand he highlighted the vexations that also the Dutch and the English had to suffer, since the Nawab «has demanded from them the payment of 130,000 rupees»²³.

Certainly, Dupleix was well aware of the Europeans' political and military weakness in India, and had an idea of its causes: «This affair will be settled like all the others by giving in to the Nawab's demands. These two nations [Holland and England] well deserve to be treated this way: they have themselves shown the Maures how to do it [...]. The Maures, the Rajahs, have absolutely no other aim than to pillage the Europeans»²⁴.

In that same 1732, Dupleix renewed his call for the central government in Delhi to intervene against the administrations in the

²¹ BN, FR (*Manuscrits français*), 8979, Dupleix's letter to the *Contrôleur Général* (Orry), Chandernagore, 30 November 1732, ff. 68v-71r.

²² BN, FR, 8979, Dupleix's letter to the Directors of the *Compagnie des Indes*, Chandernagore, 14 January 1732, ff. 21r-23r. From 1725 to 1739 the Mughal Governor of the Bengal province was Shuja Khan, Nawab of Murshidabad. Generally, in Mughal India, the term *paravana* – from the Persian *farmām* – denotes a royal or governmental decree promulgated in the name of the ruler or another person (e.g., prince, princess, governor) holding partial elements of sovereignty.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

periphery, which were interested in exacting the customs duty to their exclusive benefit, damaging both the French and the Mughal.

Director Dupleix proposed to pay a lump sum of 40,000 rupees directly to the *padishah* (the Great Mughal), in order to obtain free trade for the French in the Bengali *suba*, conferring to them the exemption from the duties to local officials (as the Dutch already were doing): «We [the French and the English] are the only two nations that have not got this concession, which does not cause any loss whatsoever to the King [that is, the Great Mughal], since it makes no difference to him whether it is us or a *Gentil* [a Mughal non-Muslim official] paying him his right of coinage»²⁵.

From this November 1732 letter, sent by Dupleix to the *marchand* Forestieri (a sort of ambassador of the French Company to the court of Delhi), one can see that it must have been preceded by at least another one, in which the director was expounding to his colleague a project for a common Anglo-French embassy to the Nawab in order to obtain the «*droit*» that the Dutch already enjoyed – that's what the *we are the only nations* in the quoted sentence means.

But Dupleix knew that the «concession» enjoyed by the V.O.C. was in reality almost useless, since the Dutch were not strong enough to have it enforced. He was indeed reporting the abuses («*thyranies*») the Europeans were subjected to, and he underscored the fact that the lack of any reaction to abuse on the part of the Europeans made the *Maures* regard the Companies as weak subjects that could be freely «squeezed» at will, without having to fear any retaliation on their part:

²⁵ BN, FR, 8979, Dupleix's letter to the *marchand* Forestieri (in Delhi), Chandernagore, 11 November 1732, f. 6r/v.

Whatever the care I employ to treat with the Maures [...], I cannot succeed, since all their attention is only set on finding new ways to get money from the Europeans [...] and they seem to be quite persuaded that the Companies of Europe do not care at all about the abuses [...] they commit every year. Anybody in their place would think the same, since they have seen that the vexations they perpetrated against the ships *Malescot* and *Pigeon* had no consequences, the same as those they perpetrated and kept committing daily against the English and the Dutch; this inaction on our part encourages them, and I do have reason to believe that eventually they will go dangerously too far [...]. There is no more consideration on their part: the name of European they once used with respect has become something laughable to them, and they regard us as inexhaustible resources that they can squeeze at will²⁶.

In the past, continued Dupleix, the emperor's directions were enforced by the sovereign's local representative. Now, on the contrary, «the Nawab, who indulges in the worst debaucheries, leaves the care of his affairs to a gang of crooks, who on their part only mind to fill their own pockets [...]. The Nawab himself has pushed the thing up to the point of telling me that, if I was not satisfied, we could well leave the country, since he did not need us any more than he needed the other Europeans»²⁷.

Thus the *Compagnie des Indes*, around the year 1730, was facing (as all the Europeans did) the serious problem of defending itself from the *Maures*. But the director of the French factory of Chandernagore had also worries about the Dutch, the most prominent European power in Bengal.

²⁶ BN, FR, 8979, Dupleix's letter to the Directors of the *Compagnie des Indes*, Chandernagore, 30 November 1732, ff. 72v-77 r.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

Dupleix wanted to avoid for his Company the sad ending suffered by the Habsburg trade society (the Ostend Company)²⁸, that had led a miserable life in India, mostly caused by the boycott promoted against it by the Dutch and by their English allies.

The hostility of the two seafaring powers against the trading society supported by Charles the VI in the context of the Habsburg maritime plans²⁹ was more than justified, anyway, since the Ostend Company offered legal cover to the traffic of many English and Dutch merchants, who were in such a way infringing the monopoly granted to their respective national Companies³⁰. Moreover the immediate and strong English and Dutch reaction against the activity of the Ostend Company is indeed well known: it was exerted both by diplomatic pressures in Europe and by an open boycott in India, which Dupleix witnessed, as we shall see.

The vicissitudes of the trading society founded by the Habsburg Emperor came in fact to an end by 1727, when Charles the VI, desiring to guarantee his daughter Maria Theresa's succession to his throne, bargained the recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction by Holland and

²⁸ It is important to note that in the 18th century India the smallest European trading Company was, without doubt, the Ostend Company, created in 1723 by Emperor Charles the VI of Habsburg. It was also the most successful and, as such, the most opposed by the rival trading companies. In general see: Koninckx, *Ownership in East India Company Shipping: Prussia, Scandinavia and the Austrian Netherlands in the 18th Century*, op. cit., *passim*. On the birth and development of the Ostend Company see: M. Huisman, *La Belgique commerciale sous l'empereur Charles VI. La Compagnie d'Ostende: étude historique de politique commerciale et coloniale*, Bruxelles-Paris, Lamertin-Picard, 1902, pp. 155-214; and M. Wanner, *The Ostend Company as Phenomenon of International Politics in 1722-1731*, in «Prague Papers on the History of International Relations», 2006, pp. 29-63.

²⁹ See: M. Wanner, *The Establishment of the General Company in Ostend in the Context of the Habsburg Maritime Plans, 1714-1723*, in «Prague Papers on the History of International Relations», 2007, pp. 33-81.

³⁰ O. Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, *passim*.

England against his pledge to suspend the traffics of the Ostend Company for seven years. The Company – which in 1731 lost its imperial charter for good – saw its traffic with India shrink to about nil, notwithstanding its attempts to circumvent the obstacle by having its merchant ships fly a foreign flag or by leasing the ships of the many Polish merchants operating in the Indian subcontinent; and it survived as a mere financial company up to the time of its final demise in 1785³¹.

While in the first half of the 18th century in India the relations between the agents of the V.O.C., of the *Compagnie des Indes* and of the East India Company saw periods of close cooperation, at times giving way to intense commercial rivalry, the treatment meted out to the Ostend Company merchants by the other seafaring powers marked for sure the top in terms of boycott.

In the correspondence of the French director of Chandernagore the fear that the rivals could join their forces against the French presence in Bengal – once the Ostend merchants, who in 1732-33 were operating only through intermediaries, had been thrown out for good – surfaces quite clearly:

I have put in the letter [...] the reflections one has to do on the present state of the European nations; they deserve to get the attention of the Company, as well as the conduct of the English and the Dutch towards us do. The jealousy of these two nations has no limit, and both will do all they can to destroy us, each in its turn; last year it was the English, this year it is the Dutch; so that we are obliged to respond in turn to them [...] with the weak garrison the Company maintains here³².

³¹ For details of the reasons of the suspension and of the subsequent and final suppression of the Ostend Company, see: Huisman, *La Belgique commerciale*, op. cit., pp. 404-454.

³² BN, FR, 8979, Dupleix's letter to the Directors of the *Compagnie des Indes*, Chandernagore, 14 January 1732, ff. 21r-23r.

In Dupleix's opinion the hostility towards the traffic of the Ostend Company and of its intermediaries – «the Poles», as he calls them – does neither originate in, nor limit itself to, the leaderships of the Dutch and English Companies, but must be a policy pursued by their respective governments. To drive the Habsburgs out of India must have been the decision of European chancelleries, a fruit of fleeting alliances:

I send you, my Lords, a copy of this letter, where I underlined to him [Dupleix is referring to Philibert Orry, the French *Contrôleur Général de Finances*, that is the minister of finances] my worries about the conduct that I have to follow on these occasions, and that for my own safety I need to get orders from the Court on a matter that concerns the King and the treaties of alliance [...]. When the English and the Dutch attacked the Poles, they did it only because of orders issued by their Sovereigns³³.

From what has been said it appears that in the middle 1730s Dupleix still perceived the rich and powerful merchants of the V.O.C. as the main rivals of the French Company. They were regarded – for some aspects, quite rightly – as the main actors in the crisis of Portuguese trade, in the boycott of the Ostend Company, and ever ready to wreak on France a similar miserable destiny: «The Dutch, whose design of destroying all the other Companies will never falter»³⁴.

The Anglo-Dutch naval blockade had catastrophic effects on the Ostend Company. Dupleix – who personally never made public the fact that he was disturbed by the traffics of the «*Ostendais*», and who did not take part in their expulsion from Bengal – gives a sad report about them

³³ BN, FR, 8979, Dupleix's letter to the Directors of the *Compagnie des Indes*, Chandernagore, 30 November 1732, ff. 72v-77r.

³⁴ BN, NAF, 9357, Copy of a letter by Dupleix to the *Contrôleur Général* (Orry), Chandernagore, 31 December 1734, ff. 99r-100r.

in a letter to an infrequent correspondent of his: «The factory of the Imperials still exists, but in a wretched state, as they have got neither money, nor ships, nor even the hope of getting them someday»³⁵.

The main threat to the interests of the *Compagnie des Indes* in Bengal were the Dutch, then: the V.O.C. was so reckless as to even claim a right of inspection on the French ships, on the pretext of verifying whether their cargo had, either as the origin or as the destination, the markets controlled by the intermediaries to the Austrians.

At the end of 1733 Dupleix wrote a long letter to Philibert Orry to denounce such illegitimate ship inspections – illegitimate since they were carried out on ships that had lawfully been authorised to trade, both by their own government and by the Mughal authority – and to ask for instructions on the conduct he had to follow:

In the month of July, the Dutch have demanded that we showed the licences of our ships. Neither the Council, nor I, have judged appropriate to consent; and in order to show them that we will resist by force, I gave order to the Captain of the *Prince de Conty* to be prepared to defend the original orders he had got. These actions would not have been carried out if the Dutch had not been following instructions from their government [...]. After this confrontation the Dutch have withdrawn the two warships they kept at Coupy, and the passage is at present free³⁶.

On the 23 November 1733, therefore, in his letter to «*M. le Contrôleur Général*», Dupleix was explaining his decision to respond by force to the Dutch demands, denouncing the bullying by the V.O.C. and informing the French minister that he had ordered the captain of the *Prince de Conty* to break the Dutch blockade open by force.

³⁵ BN, NAF, 9357, Dupleix's letter to Mr. Loyson, Chandernagore, 19 December 1735, f. 107r\v.

³⁶ ANOM, FC, C2-75, Copy of the letter written to *M. le Contrôleur Général* by M. Dupleix from Chandernagore, 23 November 1733', ff. 87r-88v.

Yet this information is contained only in the letter addressed to the French government; to his Company – which had an exclusively commercial interest, and was strongly against any confrontation with other Europeans in the Indian subcontinent – Dupleix only gave the information that «the Council of Chinsura [...] has demanded that the ships entering the Ganges under the French flag show their permits or licences»³⁷.

However, the French Company got to know about Dupleix's orders against the Dutch blockade; in a letter received almost one year later in Chandernagore the Company expressed its appreciation of the good revenue of the Bengali trade, and approved of Dupleix's policy, both as for his attitude towards the Europeans («*polonais*» and «*suedois*», as we have seen) unjustly considered «pirates» by the Dutch, and as for his decision to respond by force to the unjust Dutch demands: «The Company approves [Dupleix's] attitude to the matter of the interloper ships [...] signals its satisfaction for the cargoes of the Company's ships [...] approves of the response given by the Council of Chandernagore to the envoys of the Council of Chinsura and to their demands to show the permits»³⁸.

In the end, as can be gathered by a «*Réponse du Conseil de Chandernagor aux demandes des Messieurs les Députés du Conseil de Chinchura*»³⁹, Dupleix and his Council had managed to have the upper hand in the matter, obtaining from the Chinsura Dutch the freedom of navigation for French shipping – warships included – and for all the merchants going to Chandernagore. The whole question was summarised by Dupleix himself in a letter dated

³⁷ ANOM, FC, C2-75, Chandernagore Council's letter to the Auditors and Directors of the *Compagnie des Indes*, Chandernagore, 23 November 1733, ff. 89r-96v.

³⁸ ANOM, FC, C2-75, Summary (coeval, sl, sd) of a letter by the French Company received in Chandernagore, 31 December 1734, ff. 133r-134r.

³⁹ ANOM, FC, C2-75, *Réponse du Conseil de Chandernagor aux demandes des Messieurs les Députés du Conseil de Chinchura*, Chandernagore, 26 July 1734, f. 139r\v.

31 December 1734 to the *Contrôleur Général* Orry, where the French director openly criticises the Dutch for their thirst for power again, accusing them of wanting to destroy *all the other Companies*, and highlighting his success in the complex matter: according to Dupleix, the role of the *Compagnie des Indes* as the victim of its European rivals was finally over⁴⁰.

Many times up to 1740 (when he was elevated to the prestigious office of Governor of Pondicherry) Dupleix recalls his laborious work to start in Chandernagore an ambitious plan to «strengthen» the *Compagnie des Indes*, that would have been, if accomplished, a source of envy and worry for the other European nations in India: «What worries, what sleepless nights, what risks I have undertaken and run to make Chandernagore worthy of the jealousy of the English and the Dutch, who had for her only the most complete contempt before»⁴¹.

Actually, the Dutch harassment did not last for long: as a matter of fact, the policy of firmness Dupleix recommended to his government, together with the good relations between the French director and the new Dutch governor – Jean Albert de Sichtermann, «*conseiller des Indes et directeur général pour la noble Compagnie de Hollande à Chinchura*», who in 1741 was best man at Dupleix's wedding⁴² – soon fostered a peaceful cooperation between the two Companies.

A proof of the friendship between the two European officials and of their willingness to peacefully solve the inevitable conflicts between those who were, at the end of the day, trade rivals, can be found in a letter written by Dupleix in the spring 1735, concerning a French-Dutch quarrel about the ownership of a piece of land bordering both their

⁴⁰ ANOM, FC, C2-75, Dupleix's letter to the *Contrôleur Général* Orry, Chandernagore, 31 December 1734, ff. 141r-144r.

⁴¹ BN, FR, 8981, Dupleix's letter to the Auditors and the Directors of the *Compagnie des Indes*, Chandernagore, 25 November 1738, ff. 11r-20v.

⁴² BN, NAF, 9355, Copy of the marriage certificate of the wedding between J.F. Dupleix and Jeanne Albert, Chandernagore, 17 April 1741, f. 488r.

comptoirs, Chinsura and Chandernagore. In this document, on the one hand Dupleix displays a firm attitude in reclaiming the ownership of that land for the *Compagnie des Indes*, on the other hand he advocates a peaceful solution of the dispute in accordance with the law, even considering the assignment of the contended land. Unfortunately, other papers which could throw more light on the matter are not available, but this letter gives a good idea of the question:

Mr de la Croix [an official of the French Company] yesterday reported to me the claims you say you have on the piece of land in front of your park, where you have started to dig up. I believe, Sir, that those who told you that that land belonged to your Company were either mistaken, or had the design to rouse between our two nations some subjects of discussion that I on my part tried to avoid as far as possible [...]. I cannot forsake the rights of our Company [...]: in order to maintain our friendship I offer to give you the land that you need [...] by the means of the deeds and of the other documents used in these circumstances. All will be settled according to the rules and every dispute will cease⁴³.

In the 18th century, European merchants in India were generally allowed to practice the country trade, the trade «from India to India, which spreads not only throughout the Indies, but also to China, to Persia, to Tartaria, and throughout the whole Mughal Empire»⁴⁴.

Private trade cooperation between European merchants in Bengal was also widespread, despite its official prohibition by all the Companies. As C. Koninckx reminded us: «This ‘country trade’ was carried on by the employees of the various companies, sometime even in collaboration

⁴³ Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal (Ars.), ms 4743, Dupleix’s letter to Sichtermann, Chandernagore, 13 May 1735, f. 10v-11r.

⁴⁴ [M. De Gennes], *Mémoire pour le sieur Dupleix contre la Compagnie des Indes, avec pièces justificatives*, Paris, Le Prieur, 1759, p. 14.

with those of rival companies. And yet [it] was, in fact, still not allowed, though it was certainly connived at, as the supercargoes themselves were often involved too»⁴⁵.

The opportunity for the merchants to effect private trade exchanges brought Dupleix to found a company to this aim already in 1731, as soon as he was nominated director of the Chandernagore settlement. Among its shareholders were some high-ranking officials of the French Company, and some among the highest representatives of the rival trading companies of the French, despite the fact that this was officially forbidden by his Company: the English governor of Calcutta, Stackhouse, the Dutch Sichtermann, and the representative of the Habsburgs' Company at Bankibazar, Schonamille.

Dupleix's commitment to these trade activities was quite evident already in this period: for instance, in less than four months (September to December 1731) he equipped no less than six merchant ships, which sailed from Chandernagore towards Pegu, the Maldives and the Western coast of India (where in Malabar rich pepper plantations and flourishing markets were to be found): «I put the cake in the oven, I don't know if I will be successful»⁴⁶.

Dupleix's cautious optimism turned out to be well-founded: the year 1731 came to a close with great profits for him and for all his business partners, thanks to the fact that not a single cargo had been lost.

In order to send their revenues to France, Dupleix and the other officials of the French Company would use the merchant ships returning to their ports in the motherland. These operations were carried out

⁴⁵ Koninckx, *Ownership in East India Company Shipping*, op. cit., p. 39.

⁴⁶ BN, FR, 8979, Dupleix's letter to Lenoir (Governor of Pondicherry in 1731 and immediate superior to Dupleix), Chandernagore, 25 September 1731, f. 1r. One can infer from this letter that it had been preceded by at least another one, of which unfortunately no trace is left. As shown by what Dupleix wrote: «*J'ai eu l'honneur de vous écrire par deux brigantines que je compte bien arrivés*» («I have the honour to write to you through two brigantines which I trust have already arrived well»).

sometimes legally, and other times illegally. For small sums they would strictly abide to the legal ways: one would personally deliver the bills of exchange or the cash (usually gold *pagodas*) to the ship's captain, and once in France he would declare the shiplot to the customs officer. This latter would withhold the dues, and would deliver the rest to the official of the Company in charge.

For greater amounts of money, instead, more refined, and illegal, operations would be conducted, with the help, again, of the captains of Europe-bound ships. The common usage was to have the goods arrive to Europe on foreign ships. Dupleix had of course connections that allowed him to perform this work of total tax evasion: indeed, «his friendship with Governor Sichtermann allows him on the contrary to act in full illegality, having gold ingots and different Eastern currencies brought to France *through Holland*»⁴⁷.

Thanks to the complicity of the director of Chinsura, Dupleix would manage to send to France even the precious Bengali fabrics, which, despite the ban on their trade and sale as a form of protection of the fledging French textile industry, were nonetheless in high demand even amongst people connected to the government and to the Court.

Dupleix's good relations with Sichtermann, the Dutch, by the end of 1736 resulted in a European alliance against the «vexations» by the Mughals princes.

Dupleix started to organise a secret agreement with the Dutch and with the English aimed to boycott the saltpetre trade, which was in the hands of the Bengal Nawab; and he was successful, despite the trade rivalry among the three Companies being as fiery as ever, since the English had managed to obtain an exemption from the custom duties on the rice trade, which increased as a consequence the financial load on the

⁴⁷ Vigé, *Dupleix*, op. cit., p. 135.

other two Companies: «Ever since the Nation has had a foothold in Bengal, we get our rice from Doulia; we are not going to change this custom at all: it has been granted to us by the decrees of the Kings and *paravanas* of the Nawabs. The other Nations have the same privilege, but with this difference: that the English do not pay any duties, while we and the Dutch have to regularly pay the Ganges duties»⁴⁸.

So it seems that from 1736-37 Dupleix managed to organise, together with the Dutch and the English, a «syndicate» against the *Maures*, always accused of being too greedy in extorting money from the European Companies.

In the summer 1736 Dupleix wrote to the Calcutta Governor to present his project to prevent the *Maures* from selling their saltpetre in European-controlled ports, or to anybody who was not a subject of the Great Mughal. Knowing that Governor Stackhouse would be reluctant to accept a proposal which meant a total blockade of the Nawab's trade – since the English were at that moment entertaining good relations with him – Dupleix underlined that neither Sicthermann's «intention, nor mine own, has ever been to block trade in any part of Bengal [...], but our plan is only that these three Nations [France, England and Holland] should stop buying any saltpetre owned by the Maures in all of these provinces»⁴⁹.

Once his plan of alliance proved successful, Dupleix wrote the news to his aides, without concealing his satisfaction for the practical results of the move: «Ali Agi Khan had to stop being happy, and I was able to make him sure that this ship [Dupleix was referring to a Danish trading

⁴⁸ Ars., ms 4743, Dupleix's letter to M. Burat (a French merchant), Chandernagore, 21 April 1735, f. 9 r\v.

⁴⁹ Ars., ms 4744, Dupleix's letter to Stackhouse, Chandernagore, 27 July 1736, f. 1v-2 r.

ship that had attempted to buy the Nawab's saltpetre] will not be able to buy his saltpetre»⁵⁰.

The Bengali Nawab's ships were in the end unable to find any port to unload their saltpetre, nor were they able to sell it to any independent European merchants, since they were under the pressure of the coalition promoted by the Chandernagore French Director.

The Nawab, though having come to know in advance of the intentions of the three European companies, was not able to evade the combined blockade of the three European navies, which substantially damaged his economic interests in the region. He had tried in vain, as an extreme recourse, to use some men of straw for his traffics, who were to freight the ships belonging to the Danish Company or to private ship-owners in order to evade, according to his plans, the checkpoints placed by France, England and Holland along the course of the Ganges.

The boycott conceived by the three Companies, therefore, targeted the Danish – accomplices, in this case, of the Nawab – as well, and in this regard Dupleix recommended the utmost firmness to his agent in Patna: «I am persuaded that you will do all that is in your power in order to support the good idea; that will get you many kudos»⁵¹.

The blockade of Bengali saltpetre was actually successful, and indeed Dupleix wrote that «the Danish ship did not get the permission for any trade, and it is completely false that it managed to buy the saltpetre from the Maures, and that saltpetre suffered as well from the damages of being left in storage for a long time»⁵². And again, some weeks later, Director Dupleix confirmed that the *Maures* had not been able to unload

⁵⁰ Ars., ms 4744, Dupleix's letter to M. Groiselle (a French merchant), Chandernagore, 5 November 1736, ff. 17v-18 r. Ali Agi Kan was *fassedar*, a high Customs Officer of Nawab Shuja Khan, the Mughal Governor of Bengal.

⁵¹ Ars., ms 4744, Dupleix's letter to Burat, Chandernagore, 6 November 1736, f. 18 r\v.

⁵² Ars., ms 4744, Dupleix's letter to Groiselle, Chandernagore, 11 January 1737, f. 72 r\v.

their saltpetre either at the French factories, «or as well at the English or Dutch ones»⁵³: the Western alliance had indeed given its fruits.

In conclusion, in Duplex's opinion, the *Compagnie des Indes* would have been able to put in practice an efficient colonial system in the Indian subcontinent only if the French government had resolved to lend its full support to a scheme of territorial and political expansion at the expense of the Indian principalities⁵⁴. That is to say, a colonial system in which the French, in the long run, would have been freed from the constraint of having to put up with the «tantrums» of local rulers; a political situation, therefore, diametrically opposite to what the Europeans had found in Bengal in the 1730s, as we have seen.

Therefore this episode of anti-Indian «alliance» of the three main European Companies in Bengal during the first decades of the 18th century can be considered as one of the first documented examples of the shift in the power relations between Europeans and Indians in favour of the Europeans, and it acquires a symbolic importance. Since then, progressively, the use of force becomes, thanks to the fear it generates, a normal *modus operandi* on the part of the European Companies.

From the end of the fourth decade of the 18th century even in the Indian sources there is a new awareness of this situation. In the *History of*

⁵³ Ars., ms 4744, Duplex's letter to Groiselle, Chandernagore, 2 February 1737, ff. 80v-81r.

⁵⁴ Duplex indeed in his *Mémoire du 16 octobre 1753* (and then in the more extensive version of this same memorial, that he got published in 1759 in Paris, *Mémoire pour le sieur Duplex contre la Compagnie des Indes*, op. cit.) highlights that a great trade Company needs to obtain steady and secure revenues from the possession of agricultural districts, avoiding (according to mercantilist theory) the export of gold and silver for the keeping of the *comptoirs* and for the purchase of Indian goods. See: BN, NAF, 9355, *Mémoire du 16 octobre 1753*, MS by Duplex, Pondicherry, 16 October 1753, ff. 343r-370r; and M. Vaghi, *Alfred Martineau et la 'genèse' du protectorat. Le cas indien (1745-1761)*, in «French Colonial History», 2013, Vol. 14, pp. 71-87.

the Battle of Bobbili (by 19th century storyteller Peddada Mallesam⁵⁵), for example, there are frequent references to the actions of the French commander in the region, Charles de Bussy⁵⁶ (who started his career in India under the orders of Dupleix). Bussy safeguarded with force – and with the fear it generates – the French interests in Bengal⁵⁷, and received continuous requests for help from the local princes (such as the king of Vijayanagaram who wanted to take possession of Bobbili in alliance with him⁵⁸).

By this example of Bussy's policy in Bengal – of which the *History of the Battle of Bobbili* leaves a clear proof⁵⁹ –, we understand that Europeans

⁵⁵ P. Mallesam, *Bobbili Yuddha Katha*, edited by Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma, Madras, Oriental Library, 1956. The battle of Bobbili (1757) is one of the significant episodes in the history of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh (at the time part of the *suba* of Bengal) and in the history of Anglo-French-Indian wars (1756-1763). The Vijayanagaram king (Pusapati Peda Vijaya Rama Raju, 1670-1756) had won the war against the king of Bobbili with the help of French General Bussy. The Yanam region was given to Bussy as a token of gratitude for the help rendered by him in the fight against the Bobbili's forces. See the English edition of *Bobbili Yuddha Katha* in: V.N. Rao-D. Shulman-S. Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time. Writing History in South India (1600-1800)*, New York, Other Press, 2003, pp. 24-79.

⁵⁶ Charles-Joseph Patissier de Bussy (?1718?-1785) had served with distinction under Joseph-François Dupleix in the East Indies (receiving the Order of Saint Louis). He had contributed to the recovery of Pondicherry from the British in 1748. In 1782 he was named to lead all French military forces beyond the Cape of Good Hope; he coordinated his operations with Pierre-André de Suffren and fought honourably against the British during the Indian campaigns of the American War of Independence. See, *passim*, A. Martineau, *Bussy et l'Inde française (1720-1785)*, Abbeville-Paris, impr. F. Paillart-E. Leroux, 1935.

⁵⁷ Bussy «who has received a *farmām* from the Delhi Padshah and had it confirmed by the Golconda Nawwab: the Kalinga country, as far as Katakam [Cuttack], was given to Bussy as tax-farm (*amūl*). This includes Srikakulam and Sindhu Katakam. Intent on realising the revenue from this vast area, Bussy sets off from Golconda with 174,000 troops»; Rao-Shulman-Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

⁵⁹ «Bussy demands that the lord of the area – the Kondapalli sarkar – come and pay his respects. The two aides [of Bussy] send an urgent letter: 'If you are sitting, come just as you are, still sitting, for an interview (*beṭhi*). If you are standing, come as you stand. If you fail to come, your fortress will be pulverised'. Receiving this letter, the zamindar,

Massimiliano Vaghi

had become, by the middle of the 18th century, the main players on the political scene of the subcontinent.

Surinidi Potteya, rushes to meet Bussy with many gifts – meat, eggs, butter, and foreign liquor – to say nothing of 400 retainers, dancing-girls, and musicians»; *ibidem*, p. 26.