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**Administration of Jaffna during the Period of Dutch rule-
A historical Perspective**

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Sri Lanka was divided into three major kingdoms, namely Kotte, Kandy and Jaffna. When the Portuguese, the first European invasion took place, these three kingdoms waged internecine wars among themselves but were generally independent. At this juncture the Portuguese first established relations with the kingdom of Kotte and capitalized the political condition in their favour. Finally they conquered this kingdom and thereafter began to turn their attention to Jaffna.

The Kingdom of Jaffna in North of Sri Lanka had its capital at Nallur. It was ruled by Tamil Saiva king. According to Fr. Fernando de Queros¹ this kingdom included the Jaffna peninsula, the adjacent islands and the area from Mannar in the West and Trincomalee in the East. As stated earlier, the Jaffna kingdom was independent and the kings had established their own administration and generally did not submit to any other powers.

But after the complete annexation of Jaffna kingdom by the Portuguese in 1619, Jaffna lost its independence. The Portuguese established their administration to suit their interest. Thereafter the Dutch conquered Jaffna and ruled over it from 1658-1796. As far as possible, the Dutch as agents of the Dutch East Company (VOC) followed a frugal economic policy, aimed at exploiting the resources of the former kingdom. During the period of their rule, they followed a liberal policy to some extent towards other religions. Their administration was more geared to economic benefits². At the same time, like the Portuguese, the Dutch also followed some aspects of administration of the Jaffna kings of earlier times and the Portuguese, to suit their interests. The Dutch administration in Jaffna lasted till the British conquered it in 1796. The trade which was in the hands of Tamil and Muslims passed on to the Dutch army in Jaffna.

This article deals with the salient features of the administrative system set by the Dutch in Jaffna, the problems they faced when this was introduced here, how they met this challenge and how much successful they were, when they introduced their administration and to research about the problems that the people had to face at that time. This will also include a comparative study of the administration of the Dutch in Jaffna with those set up earlier by the kings of Jaffna and Portuguese and to document them. The research methodology is based on history. Primary and secondary sources of information were used to meet the needs of research. The main sources included the notes, letters and books written by the priests who had come here to propagate Christianity in Jaffna. Books and articles written by these had gone to the Netherlands which were sourced to collect information regarding Jaffna. The moments and archaeological remains of the Dutch period also form important sources. Further research articles and books written later on the basis of primary sources, data collected from the internet and the information of various types obtained from the scholar and researchers interested in this field were also included in this article.

The Dutch who conquered Jaffna from Portuguese did not introduce the administrative system of their mother land here. The people of Jaffna had already been familiar with an administrative system. They followed this system wherever conducive to their economic benefits, hence they followed this system in some respects. The Jaffna *commandary* was

decided into several sub divisions as the other two Commandaries. The administration was carried on with the help of local officers. The higher posts were reserved for the Dutch only. This Dutch administrative system in Jaffna had the aim of exploitation of human economic resources. They had achieved success in their endeavors.

Keywords: Monopoly, Economic policy, Traditional Administration, propagation of religion, Local officers

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