Puli Thevar (Pulithevar) of Nerkattumseval – Western Palayakkarar Confederacy, Heron 1755, Kalakadu, Yusuf Khan 1761 & First Resistance to British Rule | TNPSC Notes

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Puli Thevar (also written Pulithevar or Pooli Thevar; Tamil: பூலித்தேவர்) was the **Palayakkarar (Poligar) of Nerkattumseval** (also spelt Nelkattanseval or Nerkattanseval), a small Maravar palayam in what is now **Tenkasi district**. From **1755 to 1767** he led the **western Palayakkarars** against the **Nawab of Arcot** and the **East India Company** – defeating **Colonel Heron**'s expedition (1755) and routing **Mahfuz Khan** at **Kalakadu** – and is therefore remembered as the **first voice against British rule in Tamil Nadu**, more than a hundred years before the Revolt of 1857.

தமிழில் படிக்க

These notes are written for TNPSC Group 1, 2/2A and 4 aspirants and are meant to be complete on their own. Puli Thevar is a core topic in the syllabus unit **History, Culture, Heritage and Socio-Political Movements in Tamil Nadu** (early revolts against British rule in Tamil Nadu) and also appears in the **Indian National Movement** portion (early uprisings against British rule) and in **History and Culture of India** (the Carnatic and the rise of the East India Company in the South). This page covers the background, every exam-relevant person, place and date, the difference between documented history and oral tradition, and the wider Palayakkarar context. Read each section, then use the tables, the quick revision table and the key points at the end.

Puli Thevar at a Glance

Item	Fact
Name	Puli Thevar / Pulithevar / Pooli Thevar (Tamil: பூலித்தேவர், also பூலித்தேவன்)
Born	1 September 1715 (date followed by most accounts and by the annual birth anniversary)
Parents	Chitraputra Thevan and Sivagnanam Nachiyar
Palayam	Nerkattumseval (Nelkattanseval) – now in Sankarankovil taluk, Tenkasi district (formerly Tirunelveli district)
Bloc	Leader of the western (Maravar) palayams
Opponents	Nawab Muhammad Ali of Arcot and the East India Company – Colonel Heron, Mahfuz Khan, Yusuf Khan (Khan Sahib / Marudhanayagam), Campbell
Allies	Western Palayakkarars (except Sivagiri), the Raja of Travancore; sought help from Hyder Ali and the French
Commanders	Ondiveeran, Venni Kaladi (Periya Kaladi)
Main years	1755 Heron fails; Kalakadu victory; 1760 heavy guns reach Yusuf Khan; 16 May 1761 forts fall; 1764 Nerkattumseval recaptured; 1767 final defeat
End	Escaped after the 1767 defeat and died in exile

Background 1: The Palayakkarar System

To understand Puli Thevar, first understand the system he belonged to. A **palayam** was a military camp or a small territory held for military service, and its holder was the **Palayakkarar** (anglicised as **Poligar**).

- **Origin:** the system grew out of Vijayanagara military practice and was established in Tamil Nadu by **Viswanatha Nayaka**, Nayak ruler of Madurai, with his minister (dalavay) **Ariyanatha Mudaliar**, around **1529**.
- **Number:** traditionally there were **72 palayams** under the Madurai Nayaks.
- **Duties:** the Palayakkarar collected revenue, kept part of it for his troops and administration and paid the rest to the ruler; he maintained an army for the ruler, kept law and order and settled disputes in his palayam.
- **Police rights:** the policing duty of the Palayakkarar was called **Padikaval** (also Arasu Kaval).
- **Two blocs:** the **eastern palayams** (for example Sattur and Nagalapuram) were held mainly by Telugu-speaking Nayak chiefs, while the **western palayams** (for example Uthumalai, Singampatti and Nerkattumseval) were held mainly by Maravar chiefs. Puli Thevar was the leading figure of the western bloc.
- **End:** the system lasted about two centuries; after the Palayakkarar wars it was abolished when the Company took direct control of the Carnatic under the **Carnatic Treaty of 1801**.

Background 2: The Nawab of Arcot, the Company and the Tribute Question

After the decline of the Madurai Nayaks, the far south came under the claim of the **Nawab of the Carnatic (Arcot)**. Two rivals fought for the Nawabship during the Carnatic Wars: **Chanda Sahib**, backed by the French, and **Muhammad Ali**, backed by the English East India Company. With Company help, Muhammad Ali became Nawab, but he had little money and depended on the Company's army.

- To pay his debts to the Company, the Nawab needed the **tribute** (land revenue, often called **kist**) of the Palayakkarars of Madurai and Tirunelveli.
- The Palayakkarars had long run their palayams almost independently and saw no reason to pay a distant Nawab who had no hereditary claim on them.
- Three Pathan officers who had served **Chanda Sahib** – **Mianah, Mudimiah and Nabikhan Kattak** – commanded the Madurai and Tirunelveli region and supported the Tamil Palayakkarars against Nawab Muhammad Ali. Puli Thevar had close ties with them.
- So the conflict began as a revenue dispute but became a fight over who would rule the south – the local chiefs, or the Nawab backed by Company guns.

Early Life and Nerkattumseval

- **Birth:** Puli Thevar is generally said to have been born on **1 September 1715**; his birth anniversary is observed every year on 1 September.
- **Parents: Chitraputra Thevan** and **Sivagnanam Nachiyar**.
- **Community and palayam:** he belonged to the Maravar community and ruled **Nerkattumseval**, one of the traditional 72 palayams, in the former Tirunelveli region of the Madurai Nayak kingdom.
- **Location today:** Nerkattumseval is a village in **Sankarankovil taluk** of **Tenkasi district**; it was in Tirunelveli district before Tenkasi district was carved out.
- **Forts:** besides Nerkattumseval, his important forts were **Vasudevanallur** and **Panayur**.
- **Name forms:** exam papers and books use Puli Thevar, Pulithevar, Pooli Thevar, Puli Thevan; and Nerkattumseval, Nelkattumseval, Nelkattanseval, Nerkattanseval. All refer to the same person and place.

Puli Thevar's palayam was small, but he had great influence over the western Palayakkarars. That influence, more than the size of his territory, is why both the Nawab and the Company saw him as the main obstacle in the south.

1755: Colonel Heron and Mahfuz Khan Fail

In **March 1755** the Nawab sent his brother **Mahfuz Khan** to Tirunelveli together with a Company army under **Colonel Alexander Heron**, to collect the arrears of tribute from the Palayakkarars.

- **Madurai** fell to them easily.
- Heron was then urged to deal with **Puli Thevar**, who continued to defy the Company.
- Heron had **no cannon** heavy enough to breach the fort, **no supplies** and **no money to pay his soldiers**. He abandoned the attack and **withdrew to Madurai**.
- The Company **recalled and dismissed** Heron.

This was the first open defiance of the Company by a Tamil chieftain, and it is the basis for calling Puli Thevar the first to resist British expansion in the Tamil country. Some writers go further and describe it as the first defeat of Company troops by an Indian chieftain.

The Confederacy of Western Palayakkarars

Puli Thevar knew that one palayam could not stand alone. He formed a **confederacy (alliance) of Palayakkarars** to fight the Nawab and the Company.

Group	Who	Role
Joined	All the Maravar (western) palayams **except Sivagiri**	Formed the core of the confederacy under Puli Thevar
Stayed out	**Sivagiri**, **Ettayapuram** and **Panchalamkurichi**	Did not join the confederacy
Supported the English	Rajas of **Ramanathapuram** and **Pudukkottai**	Backed the Company against the confederacy
Helped Puli Thevar	Raja of **Travancore**	Sent troops (2,000 at Kalakadu); from 1756 to 1763 aided the Tirunelveli Palayakkarars
Help sought but not received	**Hyder Ali** of Mysore	Could not help – he was busy fighting the **Marathas**
Help sought	The **French**	Hope of French support ended when the English took Pondicherry (1761)

Exam tip: **Panchalamkurichi** (later famous for Veerapandiya Kattabomman) and **Ettayapuram** did **not** join Puli Thevar. Options that put Kattabomman beside Puli Thevar are wrong – Kattabomman belongs to the 1790s.

The Battle of Kalakadu

- After Heron's failure, **Mahfuz Khan** stayed on in the south. He received additional sepoys from the Company and the Nawab, along with cavalry and foot soldiers, and prepared to station his army near **Kalakadu** (in present Tirunelveli district).
- Before he could do so, **2,000 soldiers from Travancore** joined Puli Thevar's forces.
- In the battle at **Kalakadu**, Mahfuz Khan's troops were **routed**.
- The victory raised the confidence of the confederacy.

From **1756 to 1763**, aided by the Raja of Travancore, the Palayakkarars of Tirunelveli led by Puli Thevar were in a **constant state of rebellion** against the Nawab's authority.

Yusuf Khan Takes Command

The Company now sent its ablest commander in the south, **Muhammad Yusuf Khan** – called **Khan Sahib**, and known as **Marudhanayagam** before he embraced Islam.

- Yusuf Khan refused to attack Puli Thevar until **heavy guns and ammunition** came from **Tiruchirappalli**.
- Because the English were fighting the **French** (the Third Carnatic War) as well as facing Hyder Ali and the Marathas, the artillery reached him only in **September 1760**.
- Through these years Puli Thevar's army, led by commanders such as **Ondiveeran** and **Venni Kaladi**, kept up the fight against the Company forces.

The Fall of the Forts – 16 May 1761

- Once the guns arrived, Yusuf Khan **bombarded the Nerkattumseval fort for about two months**.
- On **16 May 1761**, Puli Thevar's three major forts – **Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur and Panayur** – came under Yusuf Khan's control.
- Puli Thevar escaped and continued the struggle from hiding.

The lesson of 1755 and 1761 is the same from opposite sides: in 1755 the Company lost because it had no artillery; in 1761 it won because it did. Mud forts of the Palayakkarars could not stand a long siege by heavy guns.

The Confederacy Breaks Up

- The English captured **Pondicherry** from the French on **15 January 1761**, ending French power in South India. The French help that the Palayakkarars hoped for never came.
- The unity of the confederacy broke. **Travancore, Seithur, Uthumalai and Surandai** changed sides and joined the Nawab and the Company.
- With his allies gone and his forts lost, Puli Thevar could no longer hold the field.

The End of Yusuf Khan (1764)

After his success, Yusuf Khan began to act on his own. He **negotiated with the Palayakkarars without informing the Company**. The Company and the Nawab charged him with **treachery**, and he was **hanged in 1764**. The man who had defeated Puli Thevar was thus destroyed by the same Company he had served.

Return and Final Defeat (1764–1767)

- **1764:** after Khan Sahib's death, Puli Thevar **returned from exile** and **recaptured Nerkattumseval**.
- **1767:** a Company force under **Campbell** (called **Captain Campbell** in the Tamil Nadu textbook) defeated him.
- **End:** Puli Thevar **escaped and died in exile**. Sources differ on the date and place of his death.
- **Tradition:** a popular story says that while held by soldiers he asked to pray in a temple, and that he vanished from inside it, leaving his broken chains behind. This is a legend, not recorded history – write it as "according to tradition".

Puli Thevar's Commanders

Commander	What to remember
Ondiveeran (Ondiveeran Pagadai, "Maveeran")	Led one of the units of Puli Thevar's army. According to oral tradition (noted in the Class 10 textbook), he lost a hand in battle and treated it as a reward for having entered the enemy fort. He is said to have died on 20 August 1771. India Post issued a commemorative stamp on him on 20 August 2022, released by Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi at Tirunelveli; a memorial (mani mandapam) stands in Tirunelveli.
Venni Kaladi (also Periya Kaladi)	A general of Puli Thevar's army who, with Ondiveeran, led his troops against the Company forces.

Why Puli Thevar Could Not Succeed

- **Disunity:** Sivagiri, Ettayapuram and Panchalamkurichi stayed out; Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai backed the English.
- **Loss of allies:** Hyder Ali could not help; the French were finished after the fall of Pondicherry (1761); Travancore, Seithur, Uthumalai and Surandai changed sides.
- **Artillery:** once Yusuf Khan got heavy guns from Tiruchirappalli (1760), the forts could not hold.
- **Resources:** a small palayam could not match the combined money and men of the Nawab and the Company.

- **Divide and rule:** the Company won over neighbouring chiefs one by one – a method it used again against Kattabomman and the Maruthu brothers.

Significance and Legacy

- **First organised resistance:** Puli Thevar led the first organised resistance of the Palayakkarars against the Nawab and the Company – in 1755, a hundred years before 1857.
- **Alliance-building:** he tried to unite local chiefs and seek outside powers (Travancore, Hyder Ali, the French) – a pattern later followed by Velu Nachiyar and the Maruthu brothers.
- **Beginning of the Palayakkarar wars:** his struggle opened the period of Palayakkarar revolts (1755–1801) that ended with the Carnatic Treaty of 1801.
- **Memorial:** the Government of Tamil Nadu has built a **memorial for Puli Thevar at Nerkattumseval**, where remains of his palace stand.
- **Birth anniversary:** observed every year on **1 September**; on 1 September 2022 Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to him as a leader of resistance to foreign rule.
- **Ondiveeran stamp (2022):** a commemorative stamp on his commander Ondiveeran keeps the story of the 1755–1767 struggle in public memory.

Puli Thevar and the Later Revolts in Tamil Nadu

Leader	Region	Period	Link with Puli Thevar
Puli Thevar	Nerkattumseval (Tirunelveli region)	1755–1767	The first; led the western Palayakkarars
Velu Nachiyar	Sivagangai	Lost Sivagangai 1772; recovered it 1780	Also sought help from Hyder Ali – and received it
Veerapandiya Kattabomman	Panchalamkurichi	Hanged at Kayathar, 1799	Panchalamkurichi had stayed out of Puli Thevar's confederacy
Maruthu brothers	Sivagangai	Tiruchirappalli Proclamation and South Indian rebellion, 1800–1801	Built a wider confederacy, like Puli Thevar
Dheeran Chinnamalai	Kongu region	Executed 1805	Continued armed resistance after the Palayakkarar wars

Who's Who in the Puli Thevar Story

Person	Side	Role
Muhammad Ali	Nawab of Arcot	Claimed tribute from the Palayakkarars; backed by the Company
Mahfuz Khan	Nawab	Brother of the Nawab; led the 1755 expedition with Heron; routed at Kalakadu
Colonel Alexander Heron	Company	Failed against Puli Thevar in 1755; recalled and dismissed
Yusuf Khan (Khan Sahib, Marudhanayagam)	Company	Besieged Nerkattumseval; took three forts on 16 May 1761; hanged for treachery in 1764
Campbell (Captain Campbell)	Company	Defeated Puli Thevar in 1767
Mianah, Mudimiah, Nabikhan Kattak	Chanda Sahib's agents	Pathan officers in Madurai–Tirunelveli who supported the Palayakkarars
Raja of Travancore	Ally (until he changed sides)	Sent 2,000 soldiers for Kalakadu
Hyder Ali	Mysore	Asked for help; could not help because of war with the Marathas
Ondiveeran, Venni Kaladi	Puli Thevar	His commanders

Places to Remember

Place	Why it matters
Nerkattumseval	Puli Thevar's palayam and main fort; now in Sankarankovil taluk, Tenkasi district; Tamil Nadu Government memorial
Vasudevanallur, Panayur	His other two major forts; fell with Nerkattumseval on 16 May 1761
Madurai	Fell easily to Heron and Mahfuz Khan in 1755; Heron withdrew there
Kalakadu	Mahfuz Khan routed with Travancore help
Tiruchirappalli	Source of Yusuf Khan's heavy guns (arrived September 1760)
Pondicherry	Captured by the English on 15 January 1761 – end of French hopes
Sivagiri	Maravar palayam that did not join Puli Thevar
Seithur, Uthumalai, Surandai	Palayams that later deserted the confederacy

Key Terms

Term	Meaning
Palayam	A military camp or small territory held in return for military service
Palayakkarar (Poligar)	Holder of a palayam
Padikaval / Arasu Kaval	Policing rights and duty of the Palayakkarar
Kist (tribute)	Revenue the Palayakkarars were required to pay to the Nawab
Confederacy	An alliance of rulers for a common purpose – here, of western Palayakkarars under Puli Thevar
Nawab of Arcot (Carnatic)	Ruler of the Carnatic; in this period Muhammad Ali, dependent on the Company

Writing Mains Answers on Puli Thevar (Group 1 / Group 2)

Descriptive papers ask about early resistance in Tamil Nadu. Build your answer around these points and support each with a fact from the notes above.

Puli Thevar's resistance to the Nawab and the Company (about 150–250 words)

- **Introduction:** Palayakkarar of Nerkattumseval (Tirunelveli region); leader of the western palayams; first to resist Company expansion, 1755.
- **Cause:** the Nawab's demand for tribute to pay the Company; Palayakkarars' long tradition of autonomy.
- **1755:** Heron and Mahfuz Khan take Madurai, but Heron fails against Puli Thevar for want of cannon, supplies and pay; he is dismissed.
- **Alliance:** confederacy of western palayams (except Sivagiri); help from Travancore; Hyder Ali and the French approached.
- **Kalakadu:** 2,000 Travancore soldiers join; Mahfuz Khan routed.
- **Yusuf Khan:** guns from Tiruchirappalli (September 1760); two-month bombardment; Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur, Panayur fall on 16 May 1761.
- **End:** recaptured Nerkattumseval in 1764; defeated by Campbell in 1767; died in exile.
- **Conclusion:** a forerunner of the Palayakkarar wars and of the national movement; showed both the courage of local resistance and the cost of disunity.

Causes of the failure of Puli Thevar's confederacy (about 150 words)

- Not all palayams joined – Sivagiri, Ettayapuram and Panchalamkurichi stayed out; Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai backed the English.
- Outside help failed – Hyder Ali was fighting the Marathas; the French lost Pondicherry in 1761.
- Allies deserted – Travancore, Seithur, Uthumalai and Surandai changed sides.
- Artillery – heavy guns made Yusuf Khan's siege successful.
- Company's divide-and-rule policy and greater resources.

The Palayakkarar system and its role in early resistance (about 100–150 words)

- Introduced by Viswanatha Nayaka with Ariyanatha Mudaliar around 1529; 72 palayams.
- Palayakkarars collected revenue, kept troops and policed their areas (Padikaval).
- Eastern (Nayak) and western (Maravar) blocs; Puli Thevar led the western bloc.
- Their military strength and local loyalty made them the first to resist the Nawab and the Company (1755–1801).
- The system ended with the Carnatic Treaty of 1801.

Practice: Match the Following

Item	Match
Nerkattumseval	Palayam of Puli Thevar
Colonel Heron	Failed for want of cannon, supplies and pay (1755)
Kalakadu	Mahfuz Khan routed with Travancore help
Tiruchirappalli	Heavy guns for Yusuf Khan, September 1760
16 May 1761	Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur and Panayur fall
Captain Campbell	Defeated Puli Thevar, 1767
Hyder Ali	Could not help – fighting the Marathas
Sivagiri	Maravar palayam that did not join the confederacy
Ondiveeran	Commander; stamp issued in 2022
Viswanatha Nayaka and Ariyanatha Mudaliar	Palayakkarar system in Tamil Nadu (c. 1529)

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Heron vs Campbell:** Heron failed in **1755**; Campbell defeated Puli Thevar in **1767**.
- **Yusuf Khan's side:** in the Puli Thevar story Yusuf Khan (Marudhanayagam) fought **for** the Company and the Nawab; he was hanged in 1764 for acting against them later.
- **1761 is not Puli Thevar's death:** in 1761 his forts fell; he came back in 1764 and was finally defeated in 1767.
- **Panchalamkurichi and Ettayapuram** did not join Puli Thevar – and Kattabomman belongs to the 1790s, not the 1750s.
- **Sivagiri** was the one Maravar palayam that stayed out.
- **Hyder Ali did not help** Puli Thevar (busy with the Marathas); he did help Velu Nachiyar later.
- **"First":** Puli Thevar is the first Palayakkarar to resist the Company; Velu Nachiyar is the first woman ruler (queen) to resist it – do not mix the two.
- **District:** Nerkattumseval is now in **Tenkasi** district (Sankarankovil taluk), not Ramanathapuram or Sivagangai.
- **Mahfuz Khan** was the Nawab's brother, not a Company officer.

Quick Revision Table

Year / date	Event
c. 1529	Palayakkarar system introduced in Tamil Nadu by Viswanatha Nayaka with Ariyanatha Mudaliar
1715 (1 Sep)	Birth of Puli Thevar (date followed by most accounts)
1755 (Mar)	Mahfuz Khan and Colonel Heron march to Tirunelveli; Madurai falls
1755	Heron fails against Puli Thevar and withdraws; later dismissed
After 1755	Confederacy of western Palayakkarars; Mahfuz Khan routed at Kalakadu with Travancore help
1756–1763	Tirunelveli Palayakkarars under Puli Thevar in constant rebellion, aided by Travancore
1760 (Sep)	Heavy guns reach Yusuf Khan from Tiruchirappalli; the bombardment of Nerkattumseval (about two months) follows
1761 (15 Jan)	English capture Pondicherry – French help ends
1761 (16 May)	Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur and Panayur fall to Yusuf Khan
1764	Yusuf Khan hanged for treachery; Puli Thevar recaptures Nerkattumseval
1767	Defeated by Campbell; escapes and dies in exile
1771 (20 Aug)	Death of Ondiveeran (traditional date)
1801	Carnatic Treaty – Palayakkarar system ends
2022 (20 Aug)	Commemorative stamp on Ondiveeran
2022 (1 Sep)	Prime Minister pays homage on Puli Thevar's birth anniversary

TNPSC Key Points (PYQ-style facts)

- Puli Thevar – Palayakkarar of Nerkattumseval; leader of the western (Maravar) palayams.
- First Palayakkarar to resist the territorial expansion of the East India Company (1755).
- Born 1 September 1715 (as generally given); parents Chitraputra Thevan and Sivagnanam Nachiyar.
- Opponents: Nawab Muhammad Ali of Arcot and the Company.
- 1755: Mahfuz Khan (Nawab's brother) and Colonel Heron; Madurai fell; Heron failed – no cannon, supplies or pay – and was dismissed.
- Close ties with Chanda Sahib's three Pathan agents: Mianah, Mudimiah, Nabikhan Kattak.
- Confederacy: all Maravar palayams except Sivagiri; Ettayapuram and Panchalamkurichi did not join; Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai backed the English.
- Sought help from Hyder Ali (busy with the Marathas) and the French.
- Kalakadu: 2,000 Travancore soldiers joined; Mahfuz Khan routed.
- 1756–1763: constant rebellion, aided by Travancore.
- Yusuf Khan = Khan Sahib = Marudhanayagam; guns from Tiruchirappalli in September 1760; two-month bombardment.

- 16 May 1761: Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur, Panayur fell.
- Deserters: Travancore, Seithur, Uthumalai, Surandai.
- Yusuf Khan hanged for treachery in 1764; Puli Thevar recaptured Nerkattumseval in 1764.
- 1767: defeated by Captain Campbell; escaped and died in exile.
- Commanders: Ondiveeran (lost a hand – oral tradition), Venni Kaladi.
- Memorial at Nerkattumseval built by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Puli Thevar called the first voice against British rule in Tamil Nadu?

In 1755, more than a century before the Revolt of 1857, Puli Thevar of Nerkattumseval refused to submit to the joint force of the Nawab of Arcot and the East India Company led by Colonel Heron and Mahfuz Khan. The Class 10 Tamil Nadu textbook describes him as the first among the local chiefs in Tamil Nadu to resist the territorial expansion of the Company, and he went on to organise a confederacy of western Palayakkarars that fought the Nawab and the Company until 1767.

Why did Colonel Heron fail against Puli Thevar in 1755?

Heron had taken Madurai easily, but when he turned on Puli Thevar he had no cannon to breach the fort, no supplies and no money to pay his soldiers. He gave up the attack and withdrew to Madurai. The Company later recalled and dismissed him.

What happened at the Battle of Kalakadu?

Mahfuz Khan, brother of Nawab Muhammad Ali, received more troops from the Company and the Nawab and moved towards Kalakadu. Before he could take position, 2,000 soldiers from Travancore joined Puli Thevar, and Mahfuz Khan's troops were routed. Kalakadu showed the strength of the alliance between Puli Thevar and Travancore.

Who captured Puli Thevar's forts in 1761?

Yusuf Khan, also called Khan Sahib and known as Marudhanayagam before he embraced Islam, commanded the Company's forces. After heavy guns arrived from Tiruchirappalli in September 1760, he bombarded Nerkattumseval for about two months, and on 16 May 1761 Puli Thevar's three main forts – Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur and Panayur – fell.

How did Puli Thevar's struggle end?

Yusuf Khan was accused of treachery and hanged in 1764. Puli Thevar then came back from hiding and recaptured Nerkattumseval in 1764, but in 1767 the Company force under Campbell (Captain Campbell in the textbook) defeated him. He escaped and, according to the textbook, died in exile; sources differ on the date and place of his death.

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Practice questions

1. Puli Thevar was the Palayakkarar of which palayam?

A. Panchalamkurichi
B. Nerkattumseval
C. Sivagiri
D. Ettayapuram

2. In which district is Nerkattumseval today?

A. Ramanathapuram
B. Sivagangai
C. Tenkasi
D. Thoothukudi

3. Who was the first Palayakkarar to resist the territorial expansion of the East India Company?

A. Veerapandiya Kattabomman
B. Puli Thevar
C. Marudhu Pandiyar
D. Oomaithurai

4. Who led the Company army that came to Tirunelveli with Mahfuz Khan in 1755?

A. Colonel Heron
B. Captain Campbell
C. Major Bannerman
D. Robert Clive

5. Who was Mahfuz Khan?

A. A Mysore general
B. Brother of the Nawab of Arcot
C. A Travancore minister
D. A French officer

6. Which of the following was NOT a reason for Colonel Heron's failure against Puli Thevar?

A. Lack of cannon
B. Lack of supplies
C. No money to pay soldiers
D. An attack by Hyder Ali

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7. What happened to Colonel Heron after his failure against Puli Thevar?

A. He was promoted
B. He was recalled and dismissed
C. He was killed in battle
D. He became governor of Madurai

8. Which Maravar palayam did NOT join Puli Thevar's confederacy?

A. Uthumalai
B. Seithur
C. Sivagiri
D. Surandai

9. Which rajas supported the English against Puli Thevar?

A. Travancore and Cochin
B. Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai
C. Thanjavur and Mysore
D. Sivagangai and Madurai

10. Why could Hyder Ali not help Puli Thevar?

A. He was at war with the French
B. He was at war with the Marathas
C. He had a treaty with the English
D. He was not yet born

11. How many Travancore soldiers joined Puli Thevar before the battle of Kalakadu?

A. 500
B. 1,000
C. 2,000
D. 5,000

12. Whose troops were routed at Kalakadu?

A. Yusuf Khan
B. Colonel Heron
C. Mahfuz Khan
D. Captain Campbell

13. Yusuf Khan was also known as

A. Marudhanayagam
B. Mudimiah
C. Nabikhan Kattak
D. Thandavarayan

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14. From where and when did heavy guns reach Yusuf Khan?

A. Madurai, 1755

B. Tiruchirappalli, September 1760

C. Madras, May 1761

D. Pondicherry, January 1761

15. Which forts of Puli Thevar fell to Yusuf Khan on 16 May 1761?

A. Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur, Panayur

B. Panchalamkurichi, Kayathar, Ettayapuram

C. Sivagangai, Kalaiyarkoil, Virupakshi

D. Kalakadu, Madurai, Dindigul

16. For about how long did Yusuf Khan bombard the Nerkattumseval fort?

A. Two weeks

B. Two months

C. Six months

D. Two years

17. Which of these did NOT desert Puli Thevar's confederacy after 1761 (because it had never been part of it)?

A. Travancore

B. Seithur

C. Uthumalai

D. Pudukkottai

18. In which year was Yusuf Khan hanged for treachery?

A. 1761

B. 1764

C. 1767

D. 1771

19. Who defeated Puli Thevar in 1767?

A. Colonel Heron

B. Yusuf Khan

C. Captain Campbell

D. Mahfuz Khan

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20. Which statement(s) is/are correct? I. Puli Thevar recaptured Nerkattumseval in 1764. II. Panchalamkurichi joined his confederacy.

A. I only
B. II only
C. Both I and II
D. Neither

21. Which commander led a unit of Puli Thevar's army and, according to tradition, lost a hand in battle?

A. Kuyili
B. Ondiveeran
C. Chinna Marudhu
D. Sundaralingam

22. Who among the following was NOT one of Chanda Sahib's three Pathan agents linked with Puli Thevar?

A. Mianah
B. Mudimiah
C. Nabikhan Kattak
D. Mahfuz Khan

23. Who introduced the Palayakkarar system in Tamil Nadu?

A. Tirumalai Nayak
B. Viswanatha Nayaka
C. Rani Mangammal
D. Krishnadevaraya

24. Match: (a) Heron (b) Yusuf Khan (c) Campbell (d) Mahfuz Khan — (1) 1767 (2) Kalakadu (3) 1755 (4) 16 May 1761

A. a-3, b-4, c-1, d-2
B. a-1, b-4, c-3, d-2
C. a-3, b-2, c-1, d-4
D. a-4, b-3, c-2, d-1

25. Which event ended the Palayakkarars' hope of French help?

A. Battle of Plassey (1757)
B. English capture of Pondicherry (1761)
C. Battle of Buxar (1764)
D. Treaty of Madras (1769)

Answers with explanations

1. **B) Nerkattumseval** – Puli Thevar ruled the palayam of Nerkattumseval.

2. **C) Tenkasi** – Nerkattumseval is in Sankarankovil taluk of Tenkasi district (formerly Tirunelveli district).

3. **B) Puli Thevar** – The textbook names Puli Thevar, who defied the Company in 1755, as the first.

4. **A) Colonel Heron** – Colonel Alexander Heron came with Mahfuz Khan in March 1755.

5. **B) Brother of the Nawab of Arcot** – Mahfuz Khan was the brother of Nawab Muhammad Ali of Arcot.

6. **D) An attack by Hyder Ali** – Heron withdrew for want of cannon, supplies and pay; Hyder Ali played no part.

7. **B) He was recalled and dismissed** – After withdrawing to Madurai, Heron was recalled and dismissed.

8. **C) Sivagiri** – All Maravar palayams except Sivagiri joined.

9. **B) Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai** – The rajas of Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai backed the English.

10. **B) He was at war with the Marathas** – Hyder Ali was engaged in a serious conflict with the Marathas.

11. **C) 2,000** – 2,000 Travancore soldiers joined, and Mahfuz Khan was routed.

12. **C) Mahfuz Khan** – Mahfuz Khan's troops were routed at Kalakadu.

13. **A) Marudhanayagam** – Yusuf Khan was called Khan Sahib, and Marudhanayagam before he embraced Islam.

14. **B) Tiruchirappalli, September 1760** – The artillery from Tiruchirappalli arrived only in September 1760.

15. **A) Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur, Panayur** – Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur and Panayur fell on 16 May 1761.

16. **B) Two months** – The bombardment lasted about two months.

17. **D) Pudukkottai** – Travancore, Seithur, Uthumalai and Surandai changed sides; Pudukkottai backed the English from the start.

18. **B) 1764** – He negotiated with the Palayakkarars without informing the Company and was hanged in 1764.

19. **C) Captain Campbell** – Captain Campbell defeated him in 1767; he escaped and died in exile.

20. **A) I only** – He recaptured Nerkattumseval in 1764; Panchalamkurichi stayed out of the confederacy.

21. **B) Ondiveeran** – Ondiveeran commanded a unit of Puli Thevar's army; a stamp on him was issued in 2022.

22. **D) Mahfuz Khan** – The three were Mianah, Mudimiah and Nabikhan Kattak; Mahfuz Khan was the Nawab's brother.

23. **B) Viswanatha Nayaka** – Viswanatha Nayaka, with his minister Ariyanatha Mudaliar, established it around 1529.

24. **A) a-3, b-4, c-1, d-2** – Heron 1755; Yusuf Khan 16 May 1761; Campbell 1767; Mahfuz Khan Kalakadu.

25. **B) English capture of Pondicherry (1761)** – The English took Pondicherry on 15 January 1761, so French help never came.

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