

**Arakkal swaroopam:
Matriliny, Trade and Politics
(1723-1907)**

*Thesis
Submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of*

Doctor of Philosophy in History

By
MUHAMMAD SIRAJUDIN K

Under the supervision of
Dr. T. Muhammedali
Associate Professor and Head
P.G. & Research Department of History



Farook College (Autonomous) Kozhikode



**Affiliated to the University of Calicut
December 2020**

Dr. T.Muhammedali
Associate Professor & Head
Department of History
Farook College (Autonomous), Kozhikode

Certificate

This is to certify that this thesis entitled '**Arakkal swaroopam: Matriliney, Trade and Politics (1723-1907)**' submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, University of Calicut is a record of bonafideresearch carried out by **Muhammad Sirajudin K**, under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any degree or title before.

Farook College,
23/12/2020

Dr. T.Muhammedali
(Supervising Teacher)

Declaration

I, Muhammad Sirajudin K, hereby declare that the thesis entitled '**Arakkal swaroopam: Matriliny, Trade and Politics (1723-1907)**', submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History is done by me and that has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degree or title before.

Farook College
23/12/2020

Muhammad Sirajudin K

Acknowledgement

I took eight long years to complete this research. Although, I have registered as a Part-time PhD scholar at the Department of History, Farook College, Kozhikode in November 2012, the commencement of the work was delayed considerably owing to a host of reasons. Finally, in May 2016, I have started collecting primary data and reading secondary materials. Luckily, in September 2017, I have been awarded a two year Fellowship under the Faculty Development Programme (FDP) of the University Grants Commission which enabled the pursuing of my research on full-time basis. For the next two years, i.e. from 26th September 2017 to 25th September 2019, I have been busy engaged in collecting primary materials from various archival repositories in and outside Kerala. During this period, I have also found time to interview a few individuals including a senior member of the royal house of Arakkal. So, I am greatly indebted to UGC for sanctioning me the fellowship without which this work could not have been completed as intended.

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Abbreviations

AMTS	: Authentic Memoirs of Tippoo Sultaun
APL-1	: Arakkal Papers List 1
APL-2	: Arakkal Papers List 2
Ar.	: Arabic
BSHS	: Bombay Secretariat Home Series
BSMS	: Bombay Secretariat Mahratta Series
EFI	: The English Factories in India by Charles Fawcett
EIC	: English East India Company
JCRM	: Joint Commissioners Report on Malabar 1792-93
KSAT	: Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram
LFT	: Letters sent from Tellicherry
LTT	: Letters sent to Tellicherry
Mal.	: Malayalam
MCCF	: Malabar Collectorate Correspondence File
MCR	: Malabar District (Collectorate) Records
NAI	: National Archives of India, New Delhi
OUP	: Oxford University Press
PDD	: Public Department Diaries

RAK	: Regional Archives Kozhikode
SLDOSP	: Selections from the Letters, Despatches and Other State Papers Preserved in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, Volume-II.
SPDD	: Secret and Political Department Diaries
SR	: Selected Records
TC	: Tellicherry Consultations
Ur.	: Urdu
WRRL	: William Robinson's Report on Laccadives, 1848

Chapter 1

Introduction

Arakkal swaroopam holds a conspicuous place in the history of Kerala as the only Muslim royal house of the region. This ruling dynasty with its headquarters at the historic harbour town of Cannanore once dominated the seaborne trade of Malabar spices and other articles with Surat, Bengal, Malacca and Arabian ports. They were also seen engaged briskly in the trade of certain peculiar and precious products of Laccadives and Maldives islands. The House seems to have acquired prominence as a political power by the middle of the 16th century. The rulers of this house, generally known as the Ali Raja of Cannanore, eventually established their political power in and around Cannanore city, enjoying virtual monopoly of trade in that area. By garnering economic prosperity and establishing political influence, the house gradually claimed independence from the *kolathiris* who were the sovereigns of *Kolathunad*. The fancifully mythical stories regarding the origin of the dynasty, the affluence gathered through the maritime relations with the outer world, the practicing of a unique version of matrilineal system of inheritance, the colonies established in Laccadive islands and lastly, by the dawn of the modern era, their pendulous relations with the European colonialists -all added substantially to their vehemence and historical significance. This study attempts to contextualize the preeminence the House of Arakkal had attained in the 18th century Malabar and their subsequent downfall, by the end of the succeeding century. The three core issues dealt in this study are the political assertiveness of the House of Arakkal in the 18th century Malabar, modus operandi of the matrilineal norms of succession in their maritime environment, and their engagements with European colonial powers, both as merchants and as monarchs.

The Setting

The territorial limits of the kingdom of Ali Rajas in the mainland which falls within a radius of about six or seven kilometers from the bazaar of Cannanore, were relatively small. But, to this tiny terrain, we have to add the Laccadive and Minicoy group of islands, their possessions in the Arabian Sea. Then, the area where the House has exerted their sway would almost equal the magnitude of Calicut and Cochin, two major *swaroopams* of pre-modern Kerala. In addition to this, they always enjoyed solidarity and support from the part of their coreligionists residing at neighbouring pockets like Valapattanam and Matayi in the north and Mammakkunnu, Edakkad and Dharmapatam in the south, although these places were theoretically, under the domain of *Kolattiri*. This naturally qualified them to claim some sort of fussy sovereignty in these areas. Among these, the Mappila settlements of Valapattanam and Dharmapatam, where their sphere of influence was more dominant, were virtually integrated to Arakkal's domain at various points in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Above all, the entire region of North Malabar also came under the sway of the House of Arakkal in mid-eighteenth century, however for a brief term, by virtue of Haider Ali's attack and subjugation of Kolattunadu in 1766. At the time of Cannanore's capitulation before the British Army under Robert Abercrombie in 1790, the kingdom had actually comprised of nine *deshams* (villages) laying in between Valapattanam river in the north and the Kuttikkakam Munamp (the cape at Kuttikkakam) near Edakkad in the South. These *deshams* were Thottada, Kadalayi, Avera, Kanhira, Kuruva, Kottakkupuram, Kannukkara, Kannothumbal and Kanathur. Later, there arose disputes between the houses of Arakkal and Chirakkal over the question of ownership of lands included in Kanathur and Kannothumbal villages. At present, first five of the nine *deshams* mentioned above constitute the village Kararinakam in the district of Kannur in the state of Kerala that owes its name to the *karar* (agreement)

reached in between the EIC and the Beeby of Arakkal consequent on the victory of the former in the third Anglo-Mysore war.

The geographical setting of this tiny kingdom with Cannanore as the epicenter of spice trade that succeeded the port of Madayi near Mount Eli (*Ezhi Mala*) was undoubtedly the principal factor behind its unparalleled success as a maritime power. The major advantage of Cannanore was its fine bay that facilitated easy anchoring very near the coast. Adds to this was the presence of two navigable rivers- Valapattanam and Dharmatam situated respectively in the northern and southern faces of the harbour of Cannanore. On the banks of these rivers stood Valapattanam and Dharmapattanam, two satellite ports that fed the chief port at Cannanore. Although, Cannanore is generally preferred to be identified with the *Naura* of Periplus by many including W.H. Schoff¹, there is nothing to substantiate this argument except ‘a vague similarity in name’².

It is true that, Ibn Batuta, who had travelled extensively through Malabar during the first half of the 14th century, did not mention a place by name Cannanore. But, some scholars have identified his *Jarfattan*, as Cannanore³. However, others have equated it with Sreekandapuram, a hinterland settlement of Cannanore. To substantiate this, they would point towards the existence in this village, of an ancient mosque regarded as one of the earliest in the coast of Malabar of which a reference is found in *Tuhfat-ul*

¹ W.H Schoff, *the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century*, Longmans, London, 1912, p. 204.

² Lionel Casson, *the Periplus Maris Erythraei- Text with Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, p.298.

³ Henry Yule (Ed.), *Cathay and the Way Thither; Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, Vol-II, The Hakluyt Society, London, 1866,p.453; Sebastian R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam- Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast*, Cambridge University Press, UK,2018, (Hereafter, *Monsoon Islam*)p. XV.

*Mujahidin*⁴. S.M.H Nainar has endorsed this view by relying on al-Idrisi (1099-1165 CE, Spain) and al-Dimishqi (1256-1327 CE, Syria), the medieval Arab geographers⁵. However, as Nainar himself has observed, the description of the place rendered by al- Idrisi differs drastically from the account given by al-Dimishqi. To Idrisi, Jurbattan is a populous town on a small gulf which produces rice and grains in large quantities and the surplus was exported to *Sarandib* (Sri Lanka). Dimishqi states that Jurbattan is on the coast and its inhabitants are infidels⁶. Since, both of them had put it unanimously that Jurbattan was a coastal town, the grounds for equating it with Srikandapuram of the hinterland appears too flimsy. A careful reading of Ibn Battuta's description of Jurfatan would also reveal that the town, of which he is talking, is not one at the hinterlands, but a port where runs brisk seaborne trade under the patronage of its king, *kuwayl*, one among the four powerful Sultans of Malabar⁷. Obviously, the term *kuwayl* must be a derivative of *kolattiri*, the title used by Raja of Cannanore.

Although, Kannur (Cannanore) and Srikandapuram are now offering a picture of two distant lands, it was not the case even half a century ago. Till 1970's, there flowed a tributary of Valapattanam river by name Kakkad *puzha* or Kakkad river which owed its name to a small but significant Mappila settlement situated in the vicinity of Cannanore Town. This river had started losing its course since 1958 owing to the introduction of an irrigation project at Kattampally adjacent to Kakkad. Finally, by mid 1970's, environmental destructions and encroachments had caused the total drying up of this once

⁴ Sheikh Zainuddin Al-Makhdoom-II, *Tuhfat ul Mujahideen (Tribute to Warriors)*, National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi, 2014, p.26.

⁵ S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India*, University of Madras, Madras, 1942, p.35.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.41.

⁷ *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta (India, Maldives Islands and Ceylon)*, translated by Mahdi Husain, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1976,(Hereafter, Ibn Battuta) p.186.

opulent river⁸. When alive, it had facilitated speedy and effective communication between the port town of Cannanore and its hinterlands like Irikkur and Srikandapuram. During the period in question, when people relied almost exclusively on river routes as the best or perhaps the only, available means for communication, the presence of this now defunct river and the briskness of trade therein might have caused the perception that both the places are different segments of a single area. Along with Jurfatan, Battutta was seen describing vociferously the commercial opulence of other predominantly Muslim settlements like Buduftan and Dahfatan being identified respectively as Valapattanam and Dharmatam situated within a short radius of 13 kilometers from the port town of Cannanore⁹. He also details the maritime significance of Hili (Marahi/ Matayi) or Mount Eli lying further north of Valapattanam and goes on to provide a glowing account of the splendid mosque and the great jurist of African origin who headed the seminary therein¹⁰. Elizabeth A. Lambourn has also identified Jurbattan, the port town situated in the northern part of Malibarat that finds frequent mentioning in some of the 12th century Geniza documents, as Cannanore¹¹.

Rather than stressing unnecessarily on the differences in identifying the spot, more congenial is to view all these towns as different nodes of a single commercial hub of North Malabar. Perhaps, such a treatment would also justify the use in Geniza records, of the plural, *Malībārāt*, (literally ‘the Malabars’) instead of the term *Malībār* or *Mulaybār* widely used in medieval

⁸ Interview dated 22/05/2019 with Muhammad M., aged 79 years, a native of Kannur.

⁹ *Ibn Battuta*, p.186.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.185-86.

¹¹ Elizabeth A. Lambourn, *India in the 'India Book: 12th Century Northern Malabar through Geniza Documents*, pp.71-84, in Claire Hardy-Guilbert, Hélène Renel, Axelle Rougeulle & Eric Vallet (Ed.) ‘*Sur les chemins d’Onagre Histoire et archéologie orientales Hommage à Monik Kervran*’, Archaeopress Publishing Limited, Oxford, 2018, pp.71-72.

Arab world to refer the south western coast of India¹². Here, one should also consider the shifting port order, often due to environmental changes which was so common a phenomenon throughout the Coast of Malabar. The most noteworthy example of this trend in the history of Kerala is the ascendancy of Kochi over Cranganore attained as the result of a massive flood occurred in 1341¹³. This flood had also affected North Malabar where the rapid sedimentation of the shore had rendered the port of Eli/Marahi unusable paving the way for the emergence of Cannanore as its successor¹⁴. Unlike the ports of Coromandel which afforded little protection from cyclonic weather and violent recurrence of monsoon, the ports of Malabar Coast, especially Cannanore and Cochin, were known for their sailor friendly character allowing anchoring of ships in the ports proper¹⁵. This peculiarity when coupled with the proximity of navigable rivers like Valapattanam and Anjarakkandy that had ensured a ready access to spice producing hinterlands such as Anjarakkandy, Sreekandapuram and Irikkur has caused the rise of Cannanore as the most prosperous commercial hub of Malabar. In the accounts of Abdurrazak and Pero da Covilhan, the 15th century travelers who set out to India from Persia and Portugal respectively, some direct references to Cannanore could be found. The *Bendinaneh* referred by Abdurrazak, as a port town lying in between Calicut and Mangalore has been identified as Cannanore¹⁶. Similarly, Covilhan, who had been deputed to undertake a

¹² S. D. Goitein and M.A Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza ('India Book')* Brill, Leiden, 2008, p.55.

¹³ *Monsoon Islam*, p.46.

¹⁴ Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World-Vol- III, Indo-Islamic Society 14th-15th Centuries*, Brill, Leiden, 2004, p.71.

¹⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500-1650*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp.13-4.

¹⁶ R.H Major (Ed.), *India in the Fifteenth Century. Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1857, p.20.

voyage to the east in search of the kingdom of Prester John¹⁷; is said to have reached the coast of Malabar from Aden in a ship belonging to the ‘Moors of Cannanore’, to become the first Portuguese to reach Indian soil¹⁸. It was Covilhan who first informed King John of Portugal the trading prospects existing in the coastal towns of Malabar such as Kozhikode and Kannur which soon proved instrumental in heralding, however, disproportionately applauded ‘Portuguese Epoch’ in Asian Trade.

The People

In the first half of 16th century Castaneda has described Cannanore as a great city with many Moor merchants who trade in all kinds of merchandise¹⁹. Gaspar Correa, while describing the organized attempt of the ‘Moorish merchants’ of Cannanore, however ineffective, to detract *kolattiri* from entering into a trade alliance with the Portuguese was actually hinting their prominence as a privileged group of merchants²⁰. Both Varthema²¹ and Barbosa²² who had been in Malabar during the opening years of sixteenth century, are also vociferous in describing the affluence of the Moors settled in the towns of North Malabar such as Dharmatam, Cannanore and Baliapatam.

¹⁷ Prester John was a legendary Christian King of the East, made popular through the chronicles of Medieval Europe as one who successfully prevented the dominance of Islam.

¹⁸ Hernan Lopes de Castaneda, *The First Book of the Histories of the Discoveries and Conquests of the East Indies Enterprised by the Portingales in their Dangerous Navigations in the Time of King Don John, the Second*, (Translated into English by Nicholas Lichefield), Thomas East, London, 1582, p.3.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.94.

²⁰ *Lendas Da India of Gaspar Correa: The Three Voyages of Vasco Da Gama and His Viceroyalty - Accompanied by Original Documents*, Translated and Edited by Henry E.J Stanley, the Hakluyt Society, London, 1869, p.224. Hereafter, the work will be cited as ‘*Lendas da India*’.

²¹ Ludovico di Varthema also known as Barthema of Bologna is an Italian traveller who visited Malabar in the beginning of sixteenth century (1502-08)

²² Duarte Barbosa was an official of the Portuguese *Estado* in India who worked as a scribe and interpreter in their factory at Cannanore. His work, the *Book of Duarte Barbosa* (c.1516) was one of the earliest examples of Portuguese travelogues on the east.

Their description of the riches of the Moors of Dharmapatam is of particular significance here as the Arakkal *swaroopam* considers this coastal village situated in between Cannanore and Thalassery as their ancestral home²³. According to Varthema, Cananore is the port with many Moorish merchants who live after the manner of those moors in Calicut. Pointing to the affluence of the place, he adds that here grows a few spices, such as pepper, ginger, cardamom, and cassia, though, it was from horse trade the country derives major share of its revenue. For each horse shipped from Persia country receives twenty five ducats as customs duty. There is much traffic in this place, to which two hundred ships come every year from different countries. Varthema recounts Tormapatani [Dharmapatanam] as a town of Moorish merchants who owns many ships made out of the timber plentifully available there. But, he adds, these Moors are subject to a pagan lord²⁴.

The following description given by Barbossa also points towards the unparalleled affluence of these Moorish merchants that made them capable of challenging their *kolattiri* overlord, frequently and effectively.

Tarmapatan is a “large town of Moors, natives of the country²⁵, and very rich, great merchants who likewise possess much shipping ...has many and very large mosques, it is the last town of the kingdom Cannanore on the side of Calicut. These Moors

²³ Dharmatam, known variedly as Dharmapatanam, Tarmapatan and Terendapatam is a small town near Thalasseri southward of Kannur. Battuta describes *Darafthan* as a highly prosperous settlement of the Muslims with a good number of gardens, a huge pond and a juma masjid. As per legend, it was from here that *cheraman perumal* embarked to Mecca. The official version of the myth regarding the origin of the *swaroopam* describes Dharmatam as their ancestral home.

²⁴ *The Travels of Ludovico Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India and Ethiopia, A.D.1503-1508* (Translated from the original Italian edition of 1510 by John Winter Jones) Hakluyt Society, London, 1863, p.132.

²⁵ The reference, ‘natives of the country’ indicates the indigenoussness of these Mappila merchants as distinct from the *pardesi moors* or Arab merchants settled in the Malabar Coast.

when they receive any injury from the king of Cannanore, immediately rise up, and withdraw their obedience until the king goes in person to remove the injury and to cajole them”²⁶.

As per Barbosa’s description, Ceicate (Edakkad) and Cotaogato (Kottayam) both lies southward of cannanore were also Moorish towns where considerable trade takes place²⁷. The following description of Cannanore given by Barbosa is even more elaborate and accurate.

On the sea coast near the kingdom of Calicat towards the south is a city called Cananor, in which there are many Moors and Gentiles of many kinds, who are all merchants, and possess many large and small ships. They trade in all sorts of goods, principally with the kingdom of Cambay and Ormuz, Golan, Dabul, Banda, Goa, Ceylon, and the Maldiu Islands²⁸.

The passage extracted above testifies growing affluence of the Moorish merchants of Cannanore and neighbouring towns in the dawn of 16th century. They were too powerful to challenge their ‘suzerain’ frequently over one reason or the other. It also shows the haplessness of the once powerful *kolattiri* who was now reduced to such low ebb as to appear before his ‘subjects’ in person to remove the injuries caused by his decisions and to pacify them. Barbosa adds further, as if to pinpoint the real reason behind their apparent disobedience, that “these Moors, Mapulers, they carry on nearly all the trade of the seaports; and in the interior of the country they are very well provided with estates and farms. So that if the King of Portugal had not discovered India this country would have had a Moorish king: because

²⁶ Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*, (Tr. and edited by Henry E.J Stanley), Hakluyt Society, London, 1866, p.150.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.150-51.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.150.

many of the gentiles turned Moors”²⁹. Another passage from the Book of Barbosa is of greater significance as it embodies the political ambitions of the Cannanore Moors. Referring to certain incidents of Maldives Barbosa says:

Their king is elected by some Moorish merchants, inhabitants of Cananore, and they change him when they please. These persons receive tribute of him every year in cordage and other produce of the country. They go there to load their ships without money, because the people of the country, with or against their will, have to give these said Moors whatever they wish³⁰.

It is absolutely unrealistic to imagine that this formidable group of wealthy aristocratic entrepreneurs, who had successfully played the role of kingmakers in such remote an archipelago as the Maldives, would have remained idle spectators of the political events at home. There is greater scope to assume that these merchant magnets would have exerted their say in the realm of native politics especially under the given scenario of their ever growing riches and influence in just opposition to the declining influence of *kolattiri*, regarded generally as their overlord.

At this point, it seems relevant to examine the question whether the Arakkal swaroopam was an offshoot of Kolattunaduor not? A careful reading of the European accounts of the early sixteenth century including those of Varthema and Barbosa, would prove that the dependence of Arakkal *swaroopam* on *kolattiri*, if anything of that sort have really existed ever, gradually started waning off by the end of fifteenth century. On the other hand, one could easily locate the reversal of this dependence, at least by the turn of sixteenth century, as the *kolattiri* was becoming more and more a dependent on Ali Rajas for his own existence. This could be inferred well

²⁹ Ibid., p.146.

³⁰ Ibid., pp.164-65.

from the passage of Barbosa quoted earlier in this chapter that contains a direct reference to the patch up mission undertaken by *kolattiri* with a view to pacify the Moors of his country. Adrian Moens, also hints at this reversal of prominence when he wrote of Ali Raja. In his Memorandum, the Dutch Governor puts it clearly that “...this Moor Ruler has from the very beginning been placed in a high position and has always had a great influence on the affairs of the kingdom of Collastry. Add to this his extensive sea and land trade and it is not surprising that Ady Raja was always greatly respected and feared by his Suzerains, and not only became rich and powerful thereby, but has also caused the whole kingdom to flourish”³¹.

In 1608, referring to the absolute political authority enjoyed by the Cananore Moors Francois Pyrard of Laval, the French navigator has reported that:

The king of Cananor is a Malabar, [Moor/Mohammedan] and one of the kings of Malabar; in his territory, the Malabars are not subject to the Nairs, although there is a Nair king in the Cananor country. The latter, however, has no authority nowadays, and the Malabars of the whole coast, both merchants and corsairs, respect and honour this king. The people of the country have told me that it is not long since the Malabars of Cananor were in like condition with the rest of their race, and obeyed that Nair king, but that they became so strong that they made a king for themselves, and no longer recognized the Nair king nor paid him any tribute: he resided far in the interior, and

³¹ Adriaan Moens, *Memorandum on the Administration of the Coast of Malabar* in A. Galletti, J. van der Burg, and P. Groot (eds.), *The Dutch in Malabar: Selection from the Records of the Madras Government*, the Superintendent, Government Press, Madras, 1911, p.147.

is often at war with the king of Cananor. This king of Cananor is very rich and powerful, for he has plenty of men subject to him, besides the other Malabars of the whole coast, whom he calls upon in time of need. He is called *Aly Ragea* and is a Mahometan, like the other Malabars. He is powerful on the sea, has a large number of ships, trades all over India, and for this purpose has a number of factors at different places. The islands of Diuandurou³² belong to him, and the Maldives are at present held of him. He is very courteous, humane, and affable, and, more than any of the other kings is fond of the society of foreigners. The Portuguese are at peace with him, and by his permission hold a small fort in Cananor, containing a church and a Jesuits' college. Nevertheless, the other Indian kings call not this king of Cananor a king, saying that he is not so of right but only by force³³.

In 1623, Pietro Della Valle, a voyager from Rome, has reported that the Bazaar of Cananor is “governed by a famous *Malabar Moor* named *Aga Begel*,³⁴ whose House I saw, but not himself”³⁵. At least two of the European accounts of the early eighteenth century Malabar have also stand as testimonies to underline the independent status of the ‘Moorish kingdom’ of Cannanore. Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish privateer who visited Cannanore during the first decade of eighteenth century acknowledged Cannanore as a kingdom under a ‘Mahometan Malabar Prince’ that derives its revenue

³² Laccadive Islands

³³ *The Voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives the Moluccas and Brazil* (Translated to English from the third French Edition of 1619, by Albert Gray with the assistance of H.C.P Bell), Hakluyt Society, London, 1887, pp. 444-6.

³⁴ Corrupt form of the Turkish term *aga beg*, means noble governor.

³⁵ Edward Grey (Ed.) *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India Vol-II*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1892, p.383.

chiefly from merchandise³⁶.The account given by Jacob Canter Visscher, the Dutch friar at Cochin is even more accurate and comprehensive.

The most powerful of all the Moors, who may be regarded almost as an independent prince, resides at Cannanore. He is entitled Ali Rajah, king of the islands, being the lawful sovereign of all the Laccadives which were ceded to him by Colastri. ... Ali Rajah has a large and handsome bazaar, where most of the Moors in his dominions reside. This bazaar extends on one side nearly to the bay, and on the other is within reach of the Company's fort and cannon.... The Moorish Rajah carries on a considerable traffic with Mocha, Persia, Surat and other places and own several vessels. The East India Company trade with him at Cannanore in cardamom and turmeric. They indeed derived considerable benefit from his friendship on their first settlement in Malabar, when they were at war with Portuguese; and a treaty for mutual protection was entered into between them³⁷.

All the aforementioned sailors, travelers and officials from Europe who had begun frequenting the coasts of Malabar following the voyage of Vasco de Gama by the close of the fifteenth century, were actually endorsing the maritime legacy of Cannanore. Much before the mid 15th century, the indigenous Muslim community of North Malabar known as Mappilas (Cannanore Moors of the 16th century Portuguese chronicles) had well been established as a formidable group of maritime merchants of the south western littoral of the Arabian Sea. They maintained elaborate and active trade contacts with Red Sea region and South East Asia. The fact that Pero da

³⁶ Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies, Vol-1*, Edinburgh, 1727, p.292.

³⁷ Jacob Canter Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, Madras, 1862, Letter No. XIX, p.119.

Covilhan, the precursor to Vasco da Gama's expedition, had to seek the assistance of the 'Cannanore Moors' to accomplish the eastern mission assigned to him by the King of Portugal is enough to pinpoint the maritime prominence of the Mappila merchants of Cannanore who used to frequent the waters of Indian Ocean in their own vessels.

Another incident that could be cited as evidence to prove the preeminence of Cannanore's Islamic community of merchants is their organized efforts to prevent *kolattiri* from favouring the Portuguese with trade charters, of which a reference have already been made earlier in this chapter. Gasper Correa narrates that the Moors of Cannanore, upon getting information from their counterparts at Calicut that the *kolattiri* has made up his mind to welcome the Portuguese to the shores of Cannanore, has approached him and told him many 'lies' about the Portuguese, that they used violence and arrogance in Calicut. But the *kolattiri* was determined to welcome the Portuguese to his domain to the extent of warning the Moors that no one should tell him lies because he would order his head to be cut off for it. According to Correa, the adamancy of the King was because of his deepest faith in the prophecy of his soothsayers who convinced him that the Portuguese would always do much harm to Calicut, would destroy the Moors throughout India, would turn them out of India and they would never again possess the navigation which they now had. The soothsayers is also said to have assured the King that the Portuguese would be the masters of the sea and that no one would be able to navigate upon it unless they were friends of the Portuguese and that whoever were their enemies would be destroyed at sea and on the land³⁸. Although, this attempt by the Muslim merchants of Cannanore to provoke *kolattiri* against the Portuguese proved unsuccessful, it unambiguously reveals the level of their preeminence as a mercantile group

³⁸ *Lendas da India*, pp. 224-25.

who readily realized the possible damages to be caused from allowing into their domain, the presence of so formidable a rival as the Portuguese.

Simply speaking, it was this business rivalry that entangled ‘Cannanore Moors’ under the headship of *Mammale de Cananor* in a fight with the Portuguese in 16th century Malabar, discussed in great detail by Genevieve Bouchon³⁹. The frequent mentioning in 12th century Geniza records⁴⁰, of *Jurbattani* ships that were sailing to and fro Cannanore and the early 16th century accounts of Portuguese chroniclers detailing the stiffness of opposition raised by the ‘Moors of Cannanore’ against the *estado da India* are to be considered as ample evidences to prove the maritime legacy of Cannanore’s indigenous Muslim community of traders.

Timeframe of the Study

Temporal limits of present Study is the period of almost two centuries in between 1723 and 1907. The year 1723 is important in the history of the House of Arakkal as it denotes a stage of unprecedented political assertiveness of the House that had found frequent expressions in a series of violent outbursts targeting *kolattiri*’s *nair* militia. The fiercest of such outbreaks was in 1722, which ended in 1723, although after much bloodshed, with the mediation of Robert Adams, the English Chief at Tellicherry⁴¹. Adding to this was the fact that 1720’s was a period in which the EIC, with its factory firmly footed at Tellicherry had begun playing more actively and decisively in local politics. Another point is my intention to mould the study as a corollary to Binu John’s *Lords of the Sea* that discusses the events and activities up to 1723 relating to this illustrious house of maritime merchants

³⁹ Genevieve Bouchon, *Regent of the Sea’: Cannanore’s Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528*, (Translated from French by L. Shackley), Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988.

⁴⁰ S. D. Goitein and M.A Friedman, *op.cit.*, pp. 24, 56-57,148-49,622-24.

⁴¹ Jacob Canter Visscher, *op.cit.*, Letter No. XIX, p.119.

cum monarchs. The upper limit, 1907 coincides the waning of the political glory and maritime significance of the House as a logical consequence of the sequestration of Laccadives and Minicoy islands. Although, the treaty of sequestration was formally signed on 15th November 1908 by Adhi Raja Imbichi Beeby at Cannanore, the terms for the same was finalized a year before, during the reign of Muhammed Ali Raja, her predecessor.

Origin Stories

The origin of this dynasty is shrouded in obscurity as in the case of other late medieval principalities of Kerala or elsewhere in India. There exist several legends regarding the origin of these maritime monarchs which still holds a commendable sway in the local culture thanks to the prevalence of numerous folk traditions in this particular geopolitical entity termed North Malabar. The first occurrence of such legends can be traced in *keralolpathi*⁴², describing the traditional history regarding the origin of Kerala. As per the tradition revealed here, a *Jonaka*⁴³ male and a female were invited to Cannanore from *velapuram* or *Aryapuram* and the male was given the title, the *Azhi Raja* or the lord of the sea by the last Chera ruler⁴⁴. The Dutch sources points towards another version of the story which tries to depict the dynasty as an offshoot of *kolathiri swaroopam* in the following manner:

A certain princes of this dynasty, on account of having had to do with a person of lower standing, had lost her caste or nobility

⁴² *Keralolpathi* (literally 'Kerala's origin') is a Malayalam work that deals with the origin of the land of Kerala. Shankunny Menon ascribes the authorship of this work to Thunchathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, the poet of Malabar held in high esteem as the father of Malayalam language. It is mostly an expansion from *Kerala Mahatmayam*, an earlier Sanskrit work.

⁴³ The term *jonaka* etymologically refers to *yavanas* or the Greeks. In the context of Kerala, the term is used generally to refer the Muslim community, especially of the coastal belt. The usage of the term probably aims at highlighting the foreign character of the faith and the faithful.

⁴⁴ *Keralolpatti*, Basel Mission Press, Mangalore, 1868, p.47.

and in order to some extent to cover up the disgrace, she was given in wedlock to a rich Arabian Moor, on whom was conferred the title of prince and the general name of Adhy Raja meaning in that country as much as head of the Moors was conferred to them and were treated much as head of the Moors of that kingdom⁴⁵.

William Logan narrates a totally different story and attributes the origin of Arakkal Royal family to the conversion of *Arayankulangara Nair*, one of the ministers of *kolathiri*. Logan's narration of the legend goes like this.

The first chieftain of this house was one '*Arayan kulangara Nair*', one of the ministers of the *kolathiri* who lived about the eleventh or beginning of the 12th century AD and who embraced Islam and adopted the name Muhammad or Muhammed Ali⁴⁶.

The family records of the dynasty relate its origin to the legend constructed around the theme of conversion of *Cheraman Perumal* into Islam. As per this version, *Sreedevi*, the sister of the *Chera* Emperor residing at *Dharmapattanam* was asked to crown her son *Mahabali* after the emperor's conversion and departure to Mecca. This nephew of the *Perumal* was also converted to Islam and accepted a new name, Muhammed Ali. As the first Muslim ruler, he accepted the title of Adhi Raja meaning the earliest king⁴⁷.

There does exist certain other less popular versions of the story that are also seen embedded in the fables of romance and the resultant inter-caste marriage of a Muslim male with a Hindu women. The principal motive

⁴⁵ A. Galletti *et.al*, *op.cit.*, p.147.

⁴⁶ William Logon, *Malabar* Vol-1, Government Press, Madras,1951 p.351.

⁴⁷ KKN Kurup, *Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1975, Appendix II, pp. 99-100.

behind the coining of such stories is obviously, the enthusiasm for stressing the religious identity of the newly established regime. Myths regarding the origin of ruling dynasties are very common in all parts of India. Most of such myths, as has been established, were deliberately invented or used by respective dynasties for catering the needs of legitimacy and popular support. Similarly, the legend involving *Cheraman Perumal*, which owes its origin to the Kolathunadu version of *keralolpathi* seems to be a later invention, probably to suit the purpose of legitimacy by associating itself with the first notable ‘believer’ (of Islam) and the last prominent ruler of the region. Apparently, such a claim of linkage with the lineage of the last *Perumal* would have been aimed at fostering the twin pillars of their identity-religion and politics. Further, the linking of their origin with *Sreedevi*, the sister of *Cheraman Perumal* may presumably be a calculated attempt to find justification for the peculiar kind of matrilineal system of inheritance practiced by them. Genevieve Bouchon also suggests a manipulation of the *Cheraman* legend by the Ali Rajas and alleges that “by the end of the eighteenth century the Islamic community of Cannanore had succeeded in bending it [the legend] in its favour.”⁴⁸ On the other hand, the *kolathiris* also seems to have benefited from this particular version since depicting the *swaroopam* as merely an off shoot of Kolathunadu simply meant an attempt to sing its own praises at the expense of the newly established power block that surpassed them in terms of both men and money. In the fluid network of *swaroopam* states⁴⁹ of pre-colonial Malabar the role and potential of these

⁴⁸ Genevieve Bouchon, *op.cit.*, p.25.

⁴⁹ All the scholars who have attempted to trace the real nature of polity in pre-colonial Malabar are unanimous in highlighting its fluid nature. Margaret Frenz (From *Contact to Conquest*, 2003) terms it ‘little kingdom’ having a pyramidal state structure with a great king at the apex and many little kings in peripheries. Dilip M Menon (*Houses by the sea*, 1999) has also highlighted the decentralized nature of *swaroopams* in Malabar. Dr. Binu John is also seen upholding this loose configuration when he says; “the Kolaswarupam appears to have been nothing more than a complex form of *taravadu*,

sorts of myths as a tool to mobilize legitimacy and support was beyond all imagination.

In the context of pre-colonial north Malabar where territorial sovereignty is not the core of the state and fluid networks of personal relations are more important, the prowess attained from trading activity and the resultant accumulation of wealth would have turned instrumental in carving out the political identity of these maritime business magnets in the south west coast of India. Even though, we could not accept the verbatim content of the numerous legends and traditions associated with its origin, the central theme of the story that is seen woven around the twin concepts of conversion and inter-religious marriage positively carries some value as it points towards the real nature of spreading out of Mappila settlements in the coast of Malabar.

Review of Historiography

Among the works dealing with the history of this Mappila merchant community of North Malabar, the rarest of such groups to carve out a political entity of their own, *Regent of the Sea: Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528*⁵⁰ by Genevieve Bouchon, a French Indologist, is of pivotal significance. This work, by relying almost exclusively on Portuguese documents archived in *Torre do Tombo*, Lisbon, attempts to provide a vivid account of circumstances and events leading to the emergence and prominence of the Mamale of Cannanore in sixteenth century Malabar. What is more important is that this was done in an elaborate backdrop of the Eli Kingdom, and thereby preventing it from becoming yet another piece of maritime history. She explains, with utmost clarity, the rise of Cannanore as a prominent centre of seaborne trade of Malabar spices in the late 16th century,

having greater control over the landed properties and other sources of affluence” (The Lords of the Sea, 2012).

⁵⁰ Genevieve Bouchon, *op.cit.*

the vital role played by the local Mappila merchants in this rising and their intricate relations with the Portuguese over matters of trade. Another noteworthy aspect of the study is the in-depth analysis of the Cannanore's relationship with Maldives. She is particularly successful in narrating the instrumentality of Cannanore's Mappila ruling elite in placing and ousting sultans at the throne of Maldives. She rightly relates the shifting port order in North Malabar with the silting along the coast, often due to flood. In her view, the primary reason for Cannanore's maritime prominence was the presence of an open beach particularly suited to disembarkation of horses to be transported to Vijayanagar. However, her contention that the shift to Cannanore (from Madayi/Eli) must have taken place about the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean is hard to digest. From the account given by Pero da Covilhan, it is quite clear that the 'Moors of Cannanore' had begun frequenting the waters of Indian Ocean in their own vessels, much before Vasco da Gama's expedition. Moreover, the exclusive dependence on Portuguese documents seems to be the major limitation of this work which in turn forced the author to stop her narration rather abruptly at 1528.

On the other hand, Binu John in his *Lords of the Sea: The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663-1723)*⁵¹, bases his account exclusively on the Dutch sources and concentrates much on the pendulous relations of the House of Ali Rajas with the Dutch. The keen interest shown to examine the real nature of this medieval maritime state in the context of *nadus* and ritual sovereignty existed in early modern Malabar makes this work extremely significant. He somewhat successfully establishes the political reality that territorial sovereignty is not the essence of the state in Malabar where fluid networks of personal relations mattered more. The basic

⁵¹ Binu John Mailaparambil *Lords of the Sea- The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663-1723)*, Brill, Leiden, 2012.

unit of such relationships is the swaroopam-the extended family or household which produces rulers whose successions follow the principle of seniority within a matrilineal system. Another important aspect of the work is the attempt to relate dissemination of Islam in the coast of Malabar with religious conversions. Although, the author is neither the earliest nor the only historian to do so, his attempt to provide some useful insights to the question is particularly commendable. Although, the author is aware of the conceptual flaws involved in using the term 'conversion' to denote the large scale embracing of Islam in pre-modern Malabar, he fails to suggest any alternative term to refer it. Nevertheless, his attempts to link the emergence of Arakkal *Swaroopam* with the growth of Islamic networks across the Indian Ocean rim is really appreciable.

In his work, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, K.K.N Kurup attempts to give a brief account of the dynasty from its origin to the waning of their prominence by 1908, with the sequestration of Laccadives. The significance of this work, published in 1975, rests in the fact that it was the first exclusive monograph on the House of Arakkal. But, as the author himself claims in its preface, it is merely a by-product of his thesis on the history of the British Factory at Tellicherry. Naturally, he concentrates solely on British papers resulting almost total negligence of certain vital aspects of history of the Ali Rajas other than trade about which the British used to keep a general silence. More upsetting is the author's uncritical accepting of the stories narrated in Company consultations which very often lead him to make unhistorical conclusions. This was quite obvious from author's treatment of Anglo-Mysore wars involving the House of Arakkal. For instance, the author tries to explain Ali Raja's association with Haider Ali simply in terms of their religious affinity, without giving even the least consideration for other political and economic factors including Haider's intention to float a formidable fleet by utilising Ali Raja's proven expertness in that area. The

author describes almost all the versions of origin myths regarding the inception of this House of merchant turned monarchs; but desists from making any comment over it.

Apart from these three exclusive monographs on the House of Arakkal, there are also certain other scholarly works that too demands particular attention as vantage points for obtaining a clear cut picture of maritime world, matrilineal environment and the impact of foreign intervention, the three core themes to be dealt in this thesis. For the first, there is the corpus of literature coming uninterruptedly throughout past few decades, under the genre of Indian Ocean Studies which could broadly be classified into macro and micro histories. The most striking recent work of the first category is R. J. Barendse's *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century*⁵². First published in 1998 and twice revised (in 2002 & 2015), this was the first major attempt to treat the entire western Indian Ocean rim as a single and distinct socio-political unit. The book which relies heavily on both archival and secondary data has ten chapters, in addition to the brief but useful introduction. Among these, the second chapter, Ports and the Hinterland is particularly useful as far as the present study is concerned. Here, the author provides vivid and accurate descriptions of well known and little known ports of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea region and also the western coast of India with its linkages transcending boundaries of countries and cultures. He rightly identifies the significance of Ponnani and Cannanore, the 'ancient Islamic settlements of Kerala' as the 'transplantations of Hadramawti city-states to the tropics'. Pointing towards the enviable status accorded to Islam in the Indian Ocean rim, especially in legal matters, Barendse makes an interesting observation that "in a judicial sense the Arabian seas—even Hindu

⁵² R.J.Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: the Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century*, Routledge, New York,2015.

Kerala or animist Madagascar—were *dar al-Islam* while Western Europe was *dar al-harb*”. However, with regards to Arakkal, he has seen simply reproducing the popular version of origin myth woven around the marriage solemnized between a *thamburatty* or the princess of *kolaswaroopam* and a Muslim youngster of Arab origin and in that way ignores the socio-economic prowess acquired by Cannanore’s indigenous Mappila Muslim community of traders. Gloomier is his attempt to brand the Mappila sailors of Kotta near Vatakara as the ‘most notorious pirates’ for it only showcase the Eurocentric view of the author and his failure to address the element of ‘othering’ entwined in the usage of the terms ‘piracy’ and ‘pirate’ by Europeans in non-European context.

Sebastian R. Prange’s *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast*, is a near comprehensive account of Malabar’s indigenous Muslim community of traders. It could be cited as an exemplary piece of micro level history of Indian Ocean littoral. What makes this recent work really fascinating is the author’s keenness to base his findings on the vast array of multilingual primary sources ranging from the chronicles of Rasulid Yemen and *Tuhfath-ul Mujahidin* to *Mushakavamshakavya* and *Keralolpathi*. Dealing with the events and aspects between the 12th and 16th centuries, the work is as much about the unique ways of what he calls ‘Monsoon Islam’ as it is about social, political and economic history of Malabar Muslims. Prange, opines that the still existing contrasts between ‘Monsoon Islam’ and the so called normative Islam was the end result of the historical fact that in Indian Ocean rim Islam was spread principally through the agency of merchants rather than marauders. The book also contains a vivid account of the early arrival of Islam in the coast of Malabar by providing a full-length narration of the myth concerning Cheraman Perumal as narrated in *Qiṣṣat shakarwatī farmād* (Tale of the Great Ruler Cheraman

Perumal)⁵³, an undated Arabic text from Malabar. However, Prange concludes that the story of Cheraman Perumal's conversion to Islam is not of the eighth century, as is often believed, but belongs to a period between the early twelfth and early fourteenth centuries. Prange rightly relates the political prominence of the Ali Rajas in the sixteenth century to the profits realized from importing horses from West Asia. Recognizing the religious identity of Ali Rajas as a key-factor behind their political importance, Prange goes on to describe Cannanore as a thalassocracy of Muslims. He also acknowledges their attaining of independent status by the turn of seventeenth century as the power of Kolathunadu was diminished greatly by the Portuguese takeover of the horse trade. However, the undue emphasis given to apparently slight or superficial differences existing in between the native converts to Islam and the Arab immigrants (pardesi Moors of Barbosa) forms the chief drawback of the work as it has the unfortunate effect of separating Malabar from the wider world of Islam. Another problem is the over enthusiasm shown by the author to explain the Mappila resistance to European dominance as expressions of Jihadi sentiment. Needless to say, the logical corollary of such simplifications echoing the line of argument propounded by Stephen F Dale is the sheer neglect of the practical and material reasons for resisting the colonialists such as commercial interests and the right to own arable land.

To analyse the *modus operandi* of the matrilineal norms of succession prevailed in the house and its strength and weaknesses in Arakkal's Mappila environment, we have works of sociologists and anthropologists like Leela Dube, Kathleen Gough and J. Puthenkalam. Among these, *Matrilineal Kinship*⁵⁴ (Edited jointly by D.M. Schneider and Kathleen Gough, 1961) is of

⁵³ Yohanan Friedmann has translated this work under the title *Qiṣṣat Shakarwatī Farmāḍ: A Tradition Concerning the Introduction of Islam to Malabar*, Israel Oriental Studies5, Tel Aviv, 1975.

⁵⁴ David Schneider and Kathleen Gough, (Eds.), *Matrilineal Kinship*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1961.

utmost significance as it offers a panoramic view of major matrilineal systems all over the world including those of Malabar. This volume is actually, a collection of papers presented in the Summer Seminar of Social Science Research Council held at Harvard University in 1954. The first part of the work comprises, besides a brief introduction, nine articles, each one dedicated for the structural analysis of a separate and specific system of Matriliney. Among these nine systems, four – Nayar: Central Kerala, Nayar: North Kerala, Tiyyar: North Kerala, Mappila: North Malabar- is from Kerala. All these four articles are authored by Kathleen Gough, the co-editor of the volume. Gough links matriliney of Mappilas with the sailing profession of its men folk which always tended to take them away from home. With the men away from home, it was natural for woman to live in their natal houses under the protection of the *karanavar* or uncle, the head of their maternal kin group. Thus, matriliney and matrilocal residence pattern of the Mappilas are closely tied up with socio-economic and cultural factors. The work attempts to explore the structural as well as evolutionary aspects of matriliney through a three dimensional study. Firstly, it tries to analyse the structure of nine different matrilineal communities cutting across continents. Then, it goes on to examine the respective cultural ecology upon which the system has been fixed firmly. Finally, it inquires the implication of matrilineal descent for the evolution of kinship systems.

The book *Marriage and the Family in Kerala*⁵⁵ is the product of eight month long field work conducted by Fr. J. Puthenkalam among various matrilineal castes of Kerala. The core of the source materials used by the author includes over 400 responses to a questionnaire distributed throughout the state and a few in-depth interviews including the one with the head of the House of Arakkal. The book which has ten chapters, keeps the Nair matriliney

⁵⁵ J. Puthenkalam, *Marriage and Family in Kerala with Special Reference to Matrilineal Castes*, Department of Sociology, University of Calgary, Canada, 1977.

at its centre as the author regards them the typical representatives of ‘matrilineal culture-complex’ of Kerala. One notable plus point of the study is the attempted comparison of matrilineal norms of inheritance and marriage customs being practiced by various caste and community groups such as the *Nairs*, *Nambudiris* and the Muslims. For instance, the author treats the *mut’a* or temporary marriages practiced by Arabs in the coast of Malabar as something akin to *sambandham*⁵⁶ of the *Nambuthiris*. However, one cannot escape noting the inadequately brief treatment meted out to those small but conspicuous matrilineal groups of north Malabar such as the *thiyyas*, the *Mappilas* and the *Payyannur Nambudiris*. Although, the author recognizes Arakkal *swaroopam* as ‘the best example of Muslim matrilineage’, he fails to trace out the actual circumstances leading to the adoption of such a ‘heathen’ system by the Mappilas. The most likely reason for this adoption, according to the author, is the retention of pre-Islamic social customs by the first generation Mappilas who were ‘converted mainly from higher caste Hindus’. But, this contention lacks conviction when we consider the fact that the majority of earlier converts to Islam in the coast of Malabar were, as has been established, from the lower strata of the social hierarchy. Contradictingly, the author himself, at another place in the same monograph, is seen admitting the historical fact that most of the converts were from *mukkuva* community or the fisherfolk of Malabar who came into intimate contacts with the Arab sailors on account of their occupation in the sea and their settlement by the shore. What is missed in between this sort of inconsistency is the observable expediency of maritime profession that had ensued Mappila matriliney with its unrelenting insistence on matrilocal residence of wives. The chapter on matriliney in this thesis is a modest attempt from my part to address this apparent lacuna.

⁵⁶ An informal mode of marriage or consensual relationship between *Nambuthiri* men and *Nair* women.

Leela Dube's *Matriliny and Islam: Religion and Society in the Laccadives*⁵⁷ is also of some significance as it examines in detail, the working of matriliney in the socioeconomic context of Kalpeni, a tiny island of Laccadives, once a colony of the Ali Rajas. This monograph, prepared on the basis of ethnographic study conducted by Abdul Rahman Kutty focuses on the issues involved in accommodating Islam in a non-Islamic environment. The work is particularly useful in the present context as it helps to widen our understanding of the functioning of matrilineal norms in a traditionally Muslim environment. Deviating from the general path of the sociologists, Dube tries to analyse historically, the origin of matriliney in Kalpeni's Islamic environment and concludes reasonably that the matrilineal system with its emphasis on matrilocal residence pattern was introduced in the island of Kalpeni by the migrants from the coastal region of Kerala. An observable shortcoming of this interesting study is its brevity that prevents the reader from analyzing the problem in its proper ethnographic context.

Among the works that discusses the impact of European intervention in Asian trade in general, *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era*, the anthology of essays edited jointly by Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau is of pivotal significance, as it offer a panoramic view of the changing overtures of Europe's trade with Asia. When comes the case of Malabar, the works of Ashin Das Gupta (*Malabar in Asian Trade*) and Pamela Nightingale (*Trade and Empire in Western India: 1784-1806*) also demands particular examination. In addition to these, the articles and monographs authored by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (*Of Imarat and Tijarat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400to 1750* & *The Political Economy of Southern India, 1500-1650*), M.N Pearson (*The Indian Ocean*, 2003 & *The New Cambridge History of India Vol-I -The*

⁵⁷ Leela Dube, *Matriliny and Islam: Religion and Society in the Laccadive*, National Publishing House, Delhi, 1969.

Portuguese in India, 2004), K.N. Chaudhury (*Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean- An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750 & The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760*, 2006), Pius Malekandathil (*Maritime India: Trade, Religion and Politics in the Indian Ocean*, 2010) and Pedro Machado, (*Ocean of Trade South-Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1850*, 2014) are also to be reckoned with.

Pamela Nightingale's *Trade and Empire in Western India: 1784-1806*⁵⁸ analyses the interconnection between commercial interests and political activities in late eighteenth century Bombay Presidency. The work provides an account of various events and policy shifts of English East India Company which ultimately led to the establishment of direct rule by the British in Malabar and Gujarat. An interesting aspect of the study is the adequate attention given to the trading ventures of the so called privateers, of whom a good number was from the officialdom of the Company. The author rightly endorses the significance of the conclusion of third Mysore War and the subsequent cessation of Malabar to Company's trading interests, as it brought within the reach of Bombay Council, the chance of securing long-cherished monopoly of pepper trade. A visible defect of the work is its attempts to attribute the decline of indigenous trade to the 'inherent weaknesses' of India's trading communities. This treatment which explicitly reflects the colonial rationale is obvious in describing the reasons for the decline of trade in Gujarat. In Nightingale's view, this decline only reflects the inability of Indians to adapt to new requirements of trade. Another drawback was the excessive emphasis on political expediencies rather than matters directly related to trade.

⁵⁸ Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India: 1784-1806*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970.

Ashin Das Gupta's, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*⁵⁹ articulates, on the basis the rich array of archival document produced during the course of business transaction of both the Dutch and English East India Companies, the changing fortunes of maritime trade in eighteenth century Malabar. Importance of this work owes principally to its reputation as the first serious attempt to place the trade of Malabar into the larger domain of the economic history of early modern India which till then was preoccupied with the developments of Coromandel Coast and Bengal. The work is woven around three core themes of eighteenth century Malabar viz; the growth of Travancore under Marthandavarma as a formidable political as well as economic power, the failure of the Dutch aspiration of establishing trade monopoly in Malabar and the collapse of the indigenous merchant groups. Though, Das Gupta examines almost all the events and aspects leading to the establishment of the modern state of Travancore under Marthandavarma upon a strong economic footing, he fails to recognize the same sort of political assertion that Ali Raja had attempted to manifest through his intensified commercial activities in the northern segment of the same region. This work too is not free from the ramifications of Das Gupta's favourite theme, the decline of the indigenous merchant groups. Das Gupta is right in placing his contention that all the indigenous merchant groups of Travancore, the Hindus, Muslims and Jews had lost their commercial significance and were reduced to the status of officials chosen to implement pepper monopoly in favour of Marthandavarma. However, attributing same sort of decline with regards to the Mappila merchants of North Malabar seems particularly incorrect. We have plenty of evidences to show that throughout the eighteenth century, Ali Rajas, despite recurring wars they had to wage, had shown an unrelenting sense of resilience to keep their business alive. Similarly, by the second half

⁵⁹ Ashin Das Gupta, *India and the Indian Ocean World- Trade and Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004.

of eighteenth century, Keyis of Tellicherry has also emerged as a powerful group of merchants having connections in and outside the coast of Malabar.

There are a number of studies on Muslims of Kerala which also contains references to the House of Arakkal. This includes *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (Roland E. Miller, 1976), *Mappila Muslims of Kerala* (A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, 1989) etc. In addition to these, there are certain scholarly Malayalam works like *kerala muslim charitram*⁶⁰ of P. A. Saidumuhammad and *Muslimingalum Kerala samskaravum*⁶¹ of P.K.Kunhumammed that are also to be utilized to widen our understanding of the origin and development of this tiny ruling family of North Malabar. One common lacuna to be traced in most of these works is the obsessive keenness shown in reproducing mechanically, the same old story of interreligious marriage for explaining the fanciful origin of the dynasty. This may probably be the outcome of the eagerness of their respective authors to highlight the religious identity of the House.

Research Problem

Arakkal *swaroopam* was a household of merchants cum monarchs who spearheaded Malabar's trade with the outer world at least from the dawn of the 16th century. Though a number of works have been published on the history of this dynasty, most of them concentrate on their trading activities giving little or no room for other vital aspects of their historical existence such as their familial structures that apparently have social and political implications and their cultural role that defined the nuances of the life of their subjects. As such, the present study intends to deviate significantly from the trodden path of discourses on *swaroopams* and the history of Mappilas.

⁶⁰ Saidumuhammad P. A., *Kerala Muslim Charitram* (Mal.), Al Huda Book Stall, Kozhikode, 2007.

⁶¹ Muhammed Kunji P.K., *Muslingalum Kerala Samskaravum* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1982.

The core of the problem dealt in this study is emanating out of the oddness of this tiny ruling house of Malabar. Definitely, Arakkal offers many contrasts when judged from the trodden vantages of existing studies on *swaroopams* of Malabar that are centred consistently on the agrarian based and temple oriented life world. There are apparent differences between the functioning of *swaroopam* households which depend upon agrarian resources and that of the Arakkal Household derived out of the prowess attained through maritime business. Among the many ramifications of this perceptible dissimilarity were the differences in terms of religion, rituals, succession norms and sources of income. As such, the major problem to be confronted here is the question whether the House of Arakkal could be considered as a *swaroopam* or not. This pivotal problem should be answered in the larger contexts of autonomy and sovereignty in vogue in pre-modern Malabar. Such a comparison would inevitably lead us to undertake an analysis of the differences existing in the matrilineal systems practiced by the House of Arakkal and rest of the *swaroopams* in Malabar. Another point to be examined is one related to the income of the House. The extent to which land revenue had contributed to Arakkal's revenue is a problem to be studied in the proper context of Cannanore's thalassocracy and the income generated from maritime profession. Equally important is Arakkal's relationship with neighbouring *swaroopams*, more specifically, the Kolathunadu. Similarly, the role played by sea and oceanic connections in shaping Arakkal's political configuration also warrants thorough investigation.

Objectives

Major objectives of the study, therefore are;

1. To explore the *modus operandi* of the matriliney in the socio-economic context of Arakkal *swaroopam*.
2. To examine the status of women belonging to the ruling elite ensued by the matrilineal norms of succession prevalent in the dynasty.
3. To analyse the nature of the polity of the *swaroopam*.
4. To identify the transformation of the traditional maritime economy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
5. To look into those factors that shaped Arakkal's relations with the Mysorean rulers.
6. To analyse the complexity of Anglo-Cannanore relations in the backdrop of struggle for supremacy over trade.
7. To explore the long term strategy of British colonialism to effect the subjugation of Arakkal *swaroopam*.

A Note on Methodology and Sources

This is primarily an archival study which basically follows the historical method. The primary sources collected, organized and synthesized basing on the available secondary sources, keeping in view of the research questions. Among the primary sources, first to mention is the large collections of official documents pertaining to the House of Arakkal, archived in Regional Archives, Kozhikode (RAK) under the title Arakkal Papers which is subdivided into List I and List II. The collections include correspondence between the House of Arakkal and the British authorities, especially those dealing with the issue of sequestration of Laccadives. It also contains certain

petitions and original suits regarding disputes over *sthanam* (headship) as well as properties. Besides this, two series of documents of the erstwhile British Governments categorized as Malabar District (Collectorate) Records (MCR) and Malabar Collectorate Correspondence Files (MCCF) have also been consulted. I have also consulted certain bound volumes of Foreign Department Files archived in National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi as it contains some of the original correspondence between the House of Arakkal and the British authorities, especially those relating to the dispute erupted in 1862 in between male and female contenders for obtaining the headship of the House.

For describing events and aspects of eighteenth century Malabar, I have relied heavily on archival data kept in Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai. Among these records known variedly as Bombay Secretariat Records, Bombay Castle Records and Bombay Diaries, those relating to Malabar are now available for consultation in digital format at Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram (KSAT). I have accessed from there, the two sets of documents pertaining to the second half of eighteenth century, available under the titles Secret and Political Department Diaries (SPDD) and Public Department Diaries (PDD). My analysis of the eventful years of the first half of eighteenth century was done almost exclusively on the basis of archival documents of the English East India Company which are available under the title, Records of Fort St. George, Madras, of which the volumes subtitled Tellicherry Consultations (T.C), Letters sent from Tellicherry (LFT) and Letters to Tellicherry (LTT) are particularly useful. These volumes are accessed in digital format from Centre for Kerala Studies, Kerala University Library, Palayam, Thiruvananthapuram.

I have also used a large array of official documents of the English East India Company which are available in print. Among this, the volumes of

Selections from the Letters, Despatches, and other State Papers preserved in the Bombay Secretariat deserve particular mentioning. This voluminous collection of primary sources has been published from Government Central Press, Bombay under two separate series –Home and Mahratta. Another collection of archival papers in print is the *Selections from the State Papers of the Governors General of India* in two volumes, pertaining to the period of Warren Hastings which has been edited by G.W. Forrest in two volumes. Similarly, *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and Other State Papers Preserved in the Foreign Department of the Government of India*, especially its second Volume (SLDOSP Vol-2) published by the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta in 1890 has also been utilized. Volumes IX, X and XI of C.U Aitchison edited *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries* and *A Collection of Treaties Engagements and other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in Malabar* edited by William Logan are two other compilations of archival documents used in this research. The multi volume series, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* published by National Archives of India and William Kirkpatrick edited volume of *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan to various Public Functionaries* have also been utilized for the completion of this research. Other published collections of British archival documents include *Report on the Laccadive Islands* by William Robinson, *A Short Account of the Laccadive Islands and Minicoy* of R.H. Ellis, *the Joint Commissioners Report on Malabar 1792-93*, and *Selections from State Papers, Bombay regarding the East India Company's Connection with the Persian Gulf with a Summary of Events 1600-1800*, to name a few.

Among the records of the Dutch, Memorandums of their Commanders of Malabar, Julius Valentijn Stein Van Gollenesse (1743) and Adriaan Moens (1781) are of primary importance as both of them provide valuable information regarding the Dutch strategies in Malabar and also their

pendulous relations with the House of Arakkal. These memoirs, along with others, are available in print under the title *the Dutch in Malabar* (Madras, 1911). *Thalassery Rekhakal* (compiled and edited by Scaria Zacharia, 1996) containing the copies of letters received and sent by native chiefs of Malabar, is of immense use. *Thuhfath-ul Mujahidin* of Shaikh Zainuddin al-Makhdum and the anthologies of *vadakkan pattukal* (Northern Ballads) have been consulted. Besides, the travelogues and accounts of foreigners such as Ibn Battuta, Hernan Lopes de Castaneda, Gasper Correa, Ludovico di Varthema, Duarte Barbosa, Francois Pyrard of Laval, Pietro Della Valle, Alexander Hamilton and Jacob Canter Visscher have also been consulted.

Relevance of the study

The present study focuses on an area and theme that generally got scarce attention of historical scholarship in Kerala. As such, it might bring out a new set of facts and propositions into the existing realm of knowledge in the Kerala History. The study of a polity structured in the life world of the costal terrain of the region is a new area for the study of *swaroopams*. The current knowledge of Kerala history was predominantly reconstructed on the basis of the state forms that sprang up in the wetland regions of the land. On the contrary, this study tries to add up the human involvement in the oceanic world to the ambit of history and culture of the region. One of the core issues dealt in this thesis is the origin and development of the matrilineal norms of inheritance among the Mappilas of North Malabar with particular reference to the House of Arakkal. An inevitable outcome of such an analysis is the opening of certain new arenas of understanding the history of Mappilas which would, in turn, help to deconstruct the myth of monolithic Islam. This would naturally replenish the history of Muslim community of Malabar. This is because the histories written on the Muslims of Malabar generally keep the history of the royal house of Arakkal at bay to hurry on the politics of

resistance that have surfed against the European powers, the preferred contents of which are the movements led by the Muslim folks in south Malabar. Hence the present study might compensate the relative negligence that the history of this family and their respective regimes in north Malabar has been facing. Another significance of the study rests in the fact that it may contribute considerably to the now running debate over the transformation of Indian polity, economy and society in the 18th century. The very time frame of this study makes it extremely relevant and conducive as the period denotes the replacing of traditional maritime political economy with its colonial variant in the context of an 18th century native state.

Scheme of Presentation

The present study consists of seven chapters of which the first and the last are designed respectively as introduction and conclusion. The second chapter titled *Norms of Matriliny: Strengths and Weaknesses* is an attempt to trace out the circumstances leading to the evolution of matrilineal norms of succession among the Mappilas of north Malabar to which the House of Arakkal was not an exception. This was done by giving adequate recognition to the peculiar status enjoyed by the women strata of the house. The third chapter is titled *Arakkal swaroopam and the Eighteenth Century Political Mayhem in Malabar*. The emphasis in this chapter, designed to function as a backdrop for the study, is on the events and activities of eighteenth century north Malabar which coincided the tightening of the colonial clutches in Malabar on the one hand and Ali Rajas' wholehearted efforts to get rid of the *kolattiri* on the other. The fourth chapter, *the Mysoreans in North Malabar* is an earnest attempt to place in its proper socio-economic and political contexts, the much debated attempts for expanding to Malabar, the frontiers of the 'qudadhadi' of Mysore under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. The fifth chapter titled *Ali Rajas: the Merchant Monarchs of Malabar* discusses the political

economy and maritime significance of the House of Arakkal that proved instrumental in providing the house a political space of their own. The sixth chapter, *Possessions at Sea* is about Laccadives which was, for centuries, a colony of the Ali Rajas. This chapter aims to correlate the waning of Arakkal's maritime affluence with the loss of their political control over these tiny isles.

Chapter 2

Norms of Matriliney: Strengths and Weaknesses

Of all the characteristics of the *swaroopam*, most striking one is their distinctly unique version of matrilineal succession that does not deprive women from attaining the highest position in the ruling hierarchy. Although, all the *swaroopams* or ruling families of pre-modern Kerala had generally followed the matrilineal norms of inheritance, nowhere else have women seem to be considered for *muppumura* (seniority) that makes them eligible to attain the *sthanam* or position of the head of the house. In contrast to the general practice, in this family, the eldest member had been elevated to the highest *sthanam* irrespective of their gender. Hence, we could see male *Adhi Rajas* as well as female *Adhi Raja Beebis* as the heads of the household. However, this idiosyncratic form of matrilineal succession was not recognized and appreciated properly by historians. Although William Logan¹ and C.A. Innes² were very much vociferous in describing various forms of matrilineal succession that prevailed in the region, they have seen maintaining a conspicuous silence on this distinctiveness. Perhaps, they could not see anything special or noteworthy in it as they came from a land renowned for its magnificent queens like Elizabeth and Victoria. This omission is found to have been followed demurely by subsequent historians of Kerala including Dr. K.K.N Kurup who in 1975, wrote an exclusive monograph on the Ali Rajas of Cannanore³. Commenting on the matrilineal norms of succession which was in prevalence in the House, Kurup merely makes a broad statement that “the female succession was very common in this house”⁴. But he desists

¹ William Logan, *Malabar* Vol-1, Government Press, Madras, 1951.

² C.A Innes, *Malabar* (Madras District Gazetteer Series), Government Press, Madras, 1951.

³ K.K.N Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1975.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2.

from explaining further this uniqueness even in the new version of the monologue published in Malayalam in 2015⁵. *Regent of the Sea*⁶, another monograph on the family written by Genevieve Bouchon is also seen tightlipped on this particular aspect. But it is quite explicable as her account is rather exclusively on the sixteenth century maritime conflicts involving Moors of Cannanore and the Portuguese. In this struggle, Cannanore Mappilas were under the leadership of Mammali Marakkal known in Portuguese records as *Mamale de Cananor* and there were no evidences of the presence of any eminent woman in the family at this particular point of time. The only notable exception to this general lapse is Binu John Mailamparambil's *Lords of the Sea*⁷. In this work, the author eloquently brings out the distinctiveness of the Arakkal brand of matrilineal succession that provides enough room for the presence of female rulers in the *swaroopam*. In his own words, "one of the peculiar customs of this *Swarupam* which differentiated it from other *taravadus* was that women known as the 'Arakkal Beebis' were not excluded from *muppumura*, making them free to attain the highest position in the hierarchy"⁸. This striking peculiarity would naturally warrant a detailed analysis of the norms of succession prevailed in the House which would in turn bring out the futility of viewing Arakkal merely as one among the innumerable matrilineal households that had existed in pre and early modern Kerala.

To begin with, the matrilineal norms of succession that prevailed in *Arakkal swaroopam* is, in no way, a concession or prerogative awarded to these merchant kings. On the other hand, it is the common form of inheritance

⁵ K.K.N Kurup, *Arakkal Rajavamsham*, (Mal.), Poonkavanam Books, Kozhikode, 2015.

⁶ Genevieve Bouchon, *Regent of the Sea: Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528*, (Translated from French by Louise Shackley), Oxford University Press, New York, 1988.

⁷ Binu John Mailaparambil, *Lords of the Sea: The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663-1723)*, Brill, Leiden, 2012.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.46.

of the Mappilas of coastal Malabar. In fact, the south west coast of India could be described as a museum of matrilineal kinship groups with several communities like the Nairs, the Payyannur Namboodiris, the Mappilas and the Thiyyas following this particular system of inheritance. However, in quite contrast to the abundance of literature on Nair matrilineal system available in both fictional and non-fictional varieties, the matrilineal norms of inheritance of the Mappilas of North Malabar still remains relatively unexplored despite their overwhelming demographic concentration in the region. It is very interesting to see that Mappilas of North Malabar still follow matrilineal kinship norms in strict contrast to their own religious counterparts in the south as well as their matrilineal cousins, like the *Nairs* and Thiyyas in the north who have completely abandoned matrilineal system of inheritance by the dawn of modernity in Kerala. It is also to be noted that this persistency on matrilineal norms was achieved all through the forgone centuries surviving the stiff reservations and opposition from different corners. Sheikh Zainuddin al Makhdoom II, the great scholar of Sunni Islam, had criticized matriliney as a Hindu practice “crept into most families of the Muslim community in Kannur and the neighbouring places”. To him, it looks rather strange and surprising that the custom prevails among the Kannur Muslims, in spite of being well versed in Quran and religious learning⁹. Astonishingly, to Sheikh Zainuddin matriliney among Malabar Muslims was only an aberration confined to Kannur region and he was silent on the matrilineal norms of succession practiced by certain reputed Muslim *tharavadus* (joint families) at Ponnani, his own place of residence. This paradoxical statement of Sheikh Zainudheen calls for a serious enquiry on whether matrilineal system was weak in the coastal areas of South Malabar.

⁹ Sheikh Zainuddin, *Tuhfat ul Mujahideen (Tribute to Warriors)*, National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi, 2014, p.30.(Written originally in Arabic in 1583).

Discussing the origin of matriliney in Kalpeni Island, Leela Dube reasonably assumes that “...centuries ago a matrilineal system, with the residence pattern, was brought to the Laccadives by the migrants from the coastal region of Kerala’¹⁰. The presence of certain influential Mappila Muslim families in coastal towns of south Malabar such as Tirur and Parappananghadi also points towards the southward movement of matrilineal kinship pattern¹¹.

In the early decades of 20th century, *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam* which spearheaded the cause of Islamic reformism in Kerala was very much hostile towards the system of matriliney and had included it in the long list of evil innovations to be discarded, along with *shirk* (polytheism), considered as the biggest sin in Islam¹². In short, by 1920s, matriliney began to be referred as ‘un-Islamic’ in the discourses of the courts, reform movements, and Mappila youngsters who received Western education¹³. In spite of all these criticisms and also in the midst of the structural changes that occurred in the realm of familial relationships caused by the restructuring of economy through colonial intervention, the Mappilas of north Malabar are very much keen on keeping the system of matriliney intact, unabatedly till the present. Further, as mentioned above, they might have influenced other Islamic groups settled in nearby islands and coastal region with which they had maintained contacts, to

¹⁰ Leela Dube, *Matriliney and Islam: Religion and Society in the Laccadives*, National Publishing House, Delhi, 1969, p. 77.

¹¹ K.T. Ravi Varma, *Marumakkathayam: Gothra Marumakkathayavum vadakkan sampradhayanghalum*, (Mal.), Kerala Language Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, p. 325.

¹² Ashraf, K.K, *Reform and Revival among the Muslims of Kerala: A study of Muslim aikyasangam*, (Unpublished) MPhil thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi 1998, p.21.

¹³ Manaf Kottakunnummal, *Indigenous Customs and Colonial Law: Contestations in Religion, Gender and Family among Matrilineal Mappila Muslims in Colonial Malabar, Kerala, c.1910-1928*, Sage Open 4(1), January-March 2014; DOI:10.1177/2158244014525416.

embrace matrilineal norms by providing themselves, an example of being Islamic and matrilineal at once.

Matriliny with a Difference

The general tendency among scholars is to relate origin of matrilineal kinship pattern to polyandry and sexual anarchy. In two separate studies published in the second half of 19th century, Bachofen (1861)¹⁴, the Swiss scholar and John F McLennan, (1865)¹⁵ an American legal expert, attributes the origin of matrilineal families to a loose kind of morality and sexual anarchy manifested in the form of polyandry. Morgan¹⁶ and Engels are also seen echoing the same argument and have stretched it into another terrain. They theorized that matrilineal system was the common basis of inheritance and succession in the early stages of human history and patriarchal system evolved only at a later stage. In Engels' view, it was the origin of private property and the resultant male dominance in society that had necessitated the insistence on female chastity leading to the evolution of patrilineal system¹⁷.

In the same way, the travelogues written in the context of early modern Kerala try to relate Nair matriliney with polyandry. Many of the travelogues dealing with social life of the Nair kingdoms in medieval Kerala are filled with stories of apparently lucrative types of sexual relationships. Unsurprisingly, to the Catholic mindset of European travelers, these stories appeared to be horrible and provocative. Linschoten, a 17th century Dutch traveler describes Nairs as the most lecherous and unchaste group in which

¹⁴ J.J Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992.

¹⁵ J.F McLennan, *Primitive Marriage*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970.

¹⁶ Lewis H Morgan, *Ancient Society or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization*, Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1877.

¹⁷ Frederic Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. (First Published in German in 1884) Penguin, New York, 2010.

women had a series of lovers¹⁸. Linschoten was actually endorsing what Duarte Barbosa had said in the preceding century. Barbosa's portrayal of Nair women reads thus:

"[they] do no business, eat the bread of idleness, and only get their food to eat by means of their bodies: because besides each one having three or four men who provide for them, they do not refuse themselves to any braman or nayr who pays them. They are very clean and well dressed women and they hold it in great honour to know how to please men. They have a belief amongst them that the woman who dies a virgin does not go to paradise"¹⁹.

These references definitely point towards the existence of a loose kind of marital relationship marked by the presence of unlimited male companions and it seems quite logical to relate the same with the origin of Nair matriliney. This was precisely what Thevenot, the 18th century French traveler did when he explains:

“the Son Inherits not after his Father, because a Woman is allowed by the custom to live with several Men, so that it cannot be known who is the Father of the child she brings forth; and for Successions, the Child of the Sister is preferred , because there is no doubt of the Line by the female”²⁰.

¹⁸ A.C.Burnell (Ed.), *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies* Vol-1, Hakluyt Society, London, 1885, p.277.

¹⁹ Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*. (Tr. and edited by Henry E.J Stanley Dames, Hakluyt Society, London, 1921, p.133.

²⁰ *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, Being the Third Part of the Travels of M. de Thevenot into the Levant and the Third Part of a Voyage Round the World by Dr. John Francis Gemelli Careri*, compiled, edited and published in 1949 by National Archives of India, New Delhi, 1949, p.122.

But, the linking of matriliney with polyandry and sexual anarchy seems indigestible when it comes to its Mappila version for there is absolutely no room for polyandry in Islamic familial system. Although, the rules of marriage in Islam are very simple and liberal, and there do exist plenty of chances for somewhat easy divorce, remarriage and polygamy, it never permits or foresees a situation where a woman is engaged to more than one person as husband at a time. Such relationships are extremely forbidden as 'zina' (adultery), a grotesque sin within the framework of Islamic morality. There are absolutely no contemporary references to the existence of polyandry or a loose type of morality among the Mappilas of Malabar, neither in indigenous nor in foreign accounts. Even Sheikh Zainuddin, who is harshly critical of the practicing of matriliney by the Mappilas of Kannur, does not find fault with their moral standards. Instead, he actually vouches their piety and religious leaning. What baffled him most is the paradox that they are still practicing matriliney in spite of being religiously proficient and pious²¹.

The strict insistence upon the observance of 'iddah', the formal procedure prescribed for widows and divorced women as per Islamic jurisprudence, is also of particular relevance in this context. As per this custom, girls/women are required to go through a stipulated period of observation before remarriage, in order to ascertain whether she was conceived from her late / previous husband or not. The adherence on *iddah* simply reveals that Islamic jurisprudence is invariably keen on avoiding even the least possible chances of births with dubious fatherhood. As such, in quite contrast to the context of Nair polyandry, in Muslim familial system it is rather unlikely to have births with uncertain parentage compelling the tracing of inheritance through mothers' line. Thus, there is absolutely no point in

²¹ Sheikh Zainuddin, *op.cit.*, p.30.

linking Mappila matriline with polyandry leading to the birth of children with uncertain fatherhood.

Therefore, it is necessary to turn towards some other directions seeking a reasonable explanation for the emergence and continuity of matriline among the Mappilas of Malabar. Here, two major factors - of course interrelated, are to be considered seriously. First and foremost is the geographical peculiarity of the region that proved instrumental in carving out its own regional identity as one of the major trade hubs of Indian Ocean world. The second factor is the prolonged nature of maritime trade of which the Arabs were the key-players. All the scholars who have attempted an analysis of Mappila social formation have established that it owes greatly to the emergence of Islamic trade network across Indian Ocean world. These trade networks that had attained substantial momentum after 9th century owing to the rise and spread of Islam, led to the emergence of Muslim trading settlements in different parts of South and South East Asia. Malabar, a coastal belt in the south western part of India providing easy access to its spice producing surroundings is the most prominent among such trading hubs. It always remained as the major attraction of Arab traders. These contacts resulted in the emergence of a network of Islamic trading communities in South Asian harbor towns through the twin processes of religious conversions and cross-religious marriages. As Burjor Avari says;

“.....in the heyday of Arab/Muslim control of the Indian Ocean, a flourishing and sophisticated trade network developed in Malabar, the Keralan coast and Sri Lanka.The Muslims, both Arab and Persian, were also able to establish their respective coastal settlements. A large number of South Indian Muslims in particular trace their descent from the *Hadramauti* Arabs of south Arabia. The custom, popular among the Arabian

tribes there, of arranging ‘temporary marriages’, or the *mut’a*, facilitated the increase in the Muslim population in Malabar, because many of the Arab sailors married the women from the marginalized caste of Hindu fisher-folk. The offsprings, though brought up as Muslims, stayed with their mothers in conformity with the matriarchy of Keralan society²²”.

Certainly, marriages solemnized between Arab merchants and indigenous women were a social phenomenon commonly noticeable in coastal Malabar of the medieval times. Most of the scholars including R.E.Miller relate the genesis of *Mappila* community of Malabar with this sort of cross-religious marriages²³. Miller affirmatively upholds this view and depicts the Arabs as “the progenitors of the *Mappilas*” by quoting Hamid Ali²⁴. Comparatively liberal and affordably simple norms of marriage in Islam as well as the prolonged nature of maritime trading activities may naturally have accelerated the rate of such inter- religious marriages in the coast of Malabar. Islam always advised its followers to get into wedlock so as to keep themselves aloof from *Zina* or adultery, one among the big sins. Binu John has also pointed out *mut’a* or temporary marriages as a contributing factor behind the demographic concentration of the Mappila Muslims in the coast of Malabar²⁵. However, it is unwise to brand all these marriages as *mut’a* since it was the *Shiites*²⁶, whose influence in the Malabar Coast was negligibly minimal at every point of time, and were the known practitioners of such

²² Burjor Avari, *Islamic Civilization in South Asia- A History of Muslim Power and Presence in the Indian Subcontinent*, Routledge, New York, 2013, p.19.

²³ R.E.Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala, A study in Islamic Trends*, Orient Longman, Madras, 1976, p.42.

²⁴ Hamid Ali, *The Moplahs*, In *Indian Review*, Madras, June 1929, p.394.

²⁵ Binu John, *op.cit.*, p.44.

²⁶ Globally, Muslims are divided in to two rival fractions, *sunnis* and *shias*. The schism was originated immediately after the demise of 4th Caliph of Islam over the question of choosing his successor.

temporary marriages seeking pleasure. By all means, the marriages solemnized between Arab merchants and indigenous women in Malabar Coast were of semi-permanent nature if not fully permanent. The following excerpt taken from Barbosa's description of Malabar Coast would help to reveal the permanent character of these Indo-Arab wedlocks.

“There were other foreign Moors in Calicut, whom they call Pardesy. These are Arabs, Persians, Guzarates, Khorasanys, and Decanys: they are great merchants, and possess in this place wives and children, and ships for sailing to all parts with all kinds of goods. They have among them a Moorish governor who rules over and chastises them, without the king meddling with them. And before the King of Portugal discovered the country they were so numerous and powerful in the city of Calicut, that the gentiles [Nair Knights] did not venture to dispute with them”²⁷.

Presumably, the reference about *pardesy Moors* in the above passage is a clear indication of the presence and prominence of Arab Muslim communities like the *Baramis*, *Hadramis* and *Ba-alavis* in the region. Anyhow, it is obvious that this type of prominence is unimaginable for a group of foreigners, if they remained merely as pleasure seekers. For this Non-Resident Arab husbands, it was impossible to bring their partners into their distant homes in the desert or to provide them accommodation in this alien land. Naturally, they had left with no other options but to accept matrilocal residence pattern. Again, as the male members of the family had to abstain from home for larger intervals because of the very nature of their maritime profession, their women who remained in their own houses along with their children might have gradually begun taking charge of domestic

²⁷ Duarte Barbosa, *op.cit.*, p.133.

responsibilities. Thus, the matriliney among the Mappilas of north Malabar with its characteristic feature of matrilocal residence pattern must have evolved as a matter of practicality originated out of the marital relationship between West Asian traders and indigenous women in the context of maritime profession.

It is a known fact that the hue and cry over the very system of matrilineal succession itself was the product of modernist thought processes emerged as a corollary of European colonialism and it has more to do with material aspects rather than religious doctrines. It may be true that Syed Sanaula Makthi Thangal, the most ardent critic of Mappila matriliney, was driven by the tenets of Islam than anything else while raising his reservations on the system. But, almost all the later critics of Mappila matriliney who have been the products of western education were motivated fully by material aspects like the concerns of property loss and the eagerness to remodel their family as per western standards. The practice of using religion as a tool for getting material gains is more noticeable in Northern Mozambique where "..., some men with a similar [reformist] outlook but living in rural northern Mozambique and contesting for the positions of chiefs did try to eliminate matriliney or female leadership there. They were, however, unsuccessful due to African resistance and the Portuguese preoccupation with maintaining 'legitimate' chiefs in order to make the peasants produce what the metropolitan state needed"²⁸. The western antagonism towards matrilineal succession was well reflected in the writings of 19th century missionaries like

²⁸ Liazzat J.K. Bonate, *Islam and matriliney along the Indian Ocean rim: Revisiting the old 'paradox' by comparing the Minangkabau, Kerala and coastal northern Mozambique*, in the 'Journal of Southeast Asian Studies', 48(3), October 2017, National University of Singapore, pp 436–451. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27594374>, accessed on 14-01-2019.

Herman Gundert and there were all probabilities of educated youth being influenced by such prejudiced criticisms²⁹.

The theoretical criticism of matrilineal Islam is very often the result of untenability of the paradox it offers when judged from the perspective of normative Islam that generally follows the patrilineal kinship norms in matters of inheritance, succession and residence pattern. What the critics of Mappila matriliney often tend to miss is the reality that this system is not an exclusive characteristic of Mappilas of North Malabar. On the other hand, it is virtually omnipresent in Kerala with pockets of matrilineal families in certain important coastal towns of south Malabar like Kozhikode (Kuttichira) Parappanangadi, Tirur and Ponnani. It extends its hold as far south as Edava, in the suburb of Thiruvananthapuram, the southernmost district of Kerala. Looking globally, it is the common pattern of kinship norms in existence in the entire Indian Ocean rim including regions with significant demographic concentration of Muslims such as Western Sumatra in Indonesia, Malaysia, Northern Mozambique and Malabar and Lakshadweep in India. Though separated by long distances, all these places were the major points of Indian Ocean trade network. Before the onslaught of European colonialism started in the sixteenth century, Indian Ocean was at the centre of Islamic trade network stretching the continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. Between 8th and 15th centuries, all the aforesaid regions in the rim became major avenues of the processes of Islamisation to the extent that the ocean itself was came to be regarded as a 'Muslim Lake'³⁰. In *Venture of Islam*, Hodgson describes the gradual spread of islamdom in the Indian Ocean rim in following terms.

“Islamdom in the westerly coasts of the Indian Ocean formed a political and intellectual world of its own. ... Once the westerly

²⁹ M.R. Raghavawarrier, *Ammavazhikkeralam* (Mal.) Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur, 2006, pp.16-17.

³⁰ Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 95.

coasts were predominantly Muslim, it is perhaps not too surprising that, by the bandwagon principle, the commercial centres of the more easterly coasts should eventually be brought into the Islamicate system. ... Its [Islamicization's] greatest successes were in the Malaysian archipelago"³¹.

Thus created the Indian Ocean Islamdom that, by all means 'did not exist to separate and enclose but to facilitate exchange'³². For that reason, it would be unwise to use the term 'conversion' to describe this makeover. Instead, 'acceptance of Islam' seems more apt alternative since the latter, as pointed out by Michael Lambek in the context of Mayotte near Mozambique, would provide enough room to explain the 'co-existence of Islamic and pre-Islamic practices' throughout the Indian ocean rim covering South and South East Asia and East Africa³³. In fact the concurrent existence of both Islamic and pre-Islamic traits in everyday life could be viewed as testimonies to the vibrancy and liveliness of Islam rather than a deviation from its normative sacred path. Perhaps, that is why the system is being continued uninterruptedly even today in Malabar. To Sebastian Prange, it was the peculiarities of 'Monsoon Islam' that facilitated this vibrancy. By Monsoon Islam he means the particular variety of Islam that had been spread throughout the length and breadth of Indian Ocean rim using the agency of merchants. He further argues that this Monsoon Islam was driven by commercial imperatives and defined by the reality of Muslims living in pluralistic societies. In his own words:

³¹ Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam-Conscience and History in a World Civilization* Vol-2, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977, p.544.

³² Andre Wink, *Al-hind- The making of the Indo-Islamic world Volume ii- The slave kings And the Islamic conquest 11th-13th centuries*, Brill, Leiden,1997, p.267.

³³ Michael Lambek, *Localising Islamic Performances in Mayotte*, in David Parkin and Stephen Headley (Ed.) '*Islamic Prayer Across the Indian Ocean: Inside and Outside the Mosque*', Curzon, Richmond, 2000, p. 64.

“Muslims in the trading ports of monsoon Asia observed the principal acts of their faith, the so-called pillars of Islam (*arkān al-dīn*), in the same manner as Muslims everywhere: In other ways, however, they diverged. For example, they produced new interpretations of Islamic law designed to meet the specific needs of their heterogeneous communities; many prayed in buildings that looked like Hindu temples, and some worshipped saints outside of the Islamic tradition; some practiced matrilineality contrary to the otherwise staunchly agnatic Islamic tradition;...[However] Monsoon Islam is by no means a discrete school of Islamic philosophy: it is an etic category that does not represent a deliberate or coherent set of doctrines. Instead, it describes how Islam was *realized* by Muslims in the context of the trading world of the premodern Indian Ocean; not as abstract principles but in specific acts, attitudes, and ideas that responded to concrete historical situations and challenges”³⁴.

Matriliney in Arakkal Swaroopam

The emergence of Arakkal royal family was essentially the culmination of increasing supremacy of Mappilas, the indigenous Muslim trading community of the Malabar Coast. Naturally, the house might have chosen matrilineal norms of succession in conformity with the norms practiced by their brethren of the same faith residing in the region. Actually, the question of ‘choosing matrilineal norms by *Arakkal* family’ itself sounds absurd as it was the system to which they were born and brought up. Moreover, matrilineal inheritance was the norm prevalent in all other pre-modern principalities of the region including Kolathunadu, from which they

³⁴ Sebastian R. Prange *Monsoon Islam Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2018, pp.4-5.

had been parted off. Hence, accepting matriliney was the natural choice of the house in the context of their maritime profession and also in terms of their socio-religious milieu.

There exist many fascinating legends regarding the origin of the house. Notwithstanding the differences in details and particulars of its characters, the core of these fabulous fables is seen constantly embedded in two central themes namely, inter-religious marriage and conversion to Islam. Interestingly, a careful analysis of one of these legends would help to provide some clue towards understanding and explaining the adoption of matrilineal norms within the family. The family records of the House relate its origin to the legend constructed around the theme of conversion of *Cheraman Perumal* into Islam. As per this version, *Sreedevi*, the sister of the *Chera* Emperor residing at *Dharmapattanam* was asked to crown her son *Mahabali* after the emperor's conversion and departure to Mecca. This nephew of the *Perumal* was also converted to Islam and accepted a new name, Muhammed Ali. As the first Muslim ruler, he accepted the title of Adhi Raja meaning the earliest king³⁵.

The principal motive behind such stories is obviously, the enthusiasm for stressing the religious identity of the newly established regime. Myths regarding the origin of ruling dynasties are very common in all parts of India. Most of such myths, as has been established, were deliberately invented or used by respective dynasties to cater the needs of legitimacy and popular support. Apparently, the claim of linkage with the lineage of the last *perumal* had been definitely aimed at fostering the twin pillars of their identity-religion and politics. When judged from the matrilineal perspective, even more interesting is the attempt to link the origin of the dynasty with *Sreedevi*, the sister of *Cheraman Perumal* demonstrating the succession through female line. By all means, it may presumably be a calculated attempt to seek justification for the peculiar kind of matrilineal system of inheritance

³⁵ K.K.N Kurup, *op.cit.*, pp.99-100.

practiced by them. Genevieve Bouchon suggests a manipulation of the *Cheraman* legend by the Ali Rajas and alleges that “by the end of the eighteenth century the Islamic community of Cannanore had succeeded in bending it [the legend] in its favour”³⁶.

The ambiguity that is seen shrouded over the exact beginning of the reign of Ali Rajas has its reflection on the date of commencement of rule in female line too. As per the official genealogy of the *swaroopam*, the accession of the first female ruler-Arabichee Kadavoobee Adhi Raja *Beebi* was in the year 1728 CE. She was the 20th of the 29 rulers who held the title till 1907, the end point of present study. Out of these twenty nine rulers, six were women. Out of the total number of 39 *sthanis*³⁷ who have headed the house till 2019, seventeen were women. These figures are enough to pinpoint the exact extent of female predominance that prevailed in the *swaroopam* hierarchy. All the above figures are taken from the chart of genealogy placed in the family records (preserved in Regional Archives Kozhikode) which is the only available material of that sort. However, the uncritical acceptance of the above chart will lead us to an embarrassingly troublesome situation. The following is the list of rulers/heads of the House of Arakkal from the early years of its inception to the present.

Table 1- List of Rulers/ Heads of the House of Arakkal

Sl.No.	Name of Adhi Raja / Adhi Raja <i>Beebi</i>	Years of Reign (CE)
1	Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja	889
2	Hussain Ali Adhi Raja	-
3	Ali Moosa Adhi Raja	-
4	Kunhi Moosa Adhi Raja	-
5	Ali Moosa Adhi Raja	1184 – 1205
6	Ali Bappan Adhi Raja	1205 – 1284
7	Eesa Aboobacker Adhi Raja	1284 – 1365

³⁶ Genevieve Bouchon, *op.cit.*,p.25.

³⁷ One who attained *sthanam* or *musnad*, the highest position in ruling hierarchy.

8	Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja(Valiya Mammali)	1365 – 1452
9	PokkerAli Adhi Raja(Abbobacker Ali)	1452 – 1545
10	Kutti Ali Adhi Raja	1545 – 1591
11	Kunhi Pokku Adhi Raja	1591 – 1607
12	Cheriyā Kunhi Pokker Adhi Raja	1607 – 1610
13	Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja	1610 – 1647
14	Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja(Mammali Koya)	1647 – 1655
15	Kamal Adhi Raja (Karanavar)	1655 – 1656
16	Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja	1656 – 1691
17	Kutty Ali Adhi Raja	1691 – 1704
18	Kunhi Hamza Adhi Raja	1704 – 1720
19	Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja (Kunhi Mammali)	1720 – 1728
20	Adhi Raja Harabichi Kadavu Beebi (Kunhibi)	1728 – 1732
21	Adhi Raja Junumma Beebi	1732 – 1745
22	Kunhi Hamza Adhi Raja	1745 – 1777
23	Adhi Raja Junumma Beebi (valiya Beebi)	1777 – 1819
24	Adhi Raja Mariyumma Beebi	1819 – 1838
25	Adhi Raja Ayashabi Beebi	1838 – 1862
26	Abdurahiman Ali Adhi Raja	1862 – 1870
27	Moosa Ali Adhi Raja	1870 – 1899
28	Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja	1899 – 1907
29	Adhi Raja Imbichi Beebi	1907 – 1911
30	Ahammed Ali Adhi Raja	1911 – 1921
31	Adhi Raja Ayisha Beebi	1921 – 1931
32	Abdurahman Ali Adhi Raja	1931 – 1946
33	Adhi Raja Mariyumma Beebi	1946 – 1957
34	Adhi Raja Amina Beebi	1957 – 1980
35	Hamza Koyamma Adhi Raja	1980 – 1998
36	Adhi Raja Ayisha Muthu Beebi	1998 – 2006
37	Adhi Raja Zainaba Ayishabi Beebi	2006 – 2018
38	Adhi Raja Fathima Muthu Beebi	2018 – 2019
39	Adhi Raja Mariyumma Beebi	2019 - --

* Prepared on the basis of documents available in Regional Archives Kozhikode and the exhibits of Arakkal Museum, Kannur.

The most bothersome lacuna of the chart is its confusing silence on the regnal years of first four rulers of the dynasty. The chart gives Malayalam

(Kollam era) year 64 (889 CE) as the year of accession of Muhammed Ali Adhee Raja, the first ruler of the *swaroopam*. But it is dubiously silent on other essential details such as the date of his demise/ dethronement and the particulars pertaining to his three immediate successors. It is only from Alee Mussa Adhi Raja, the fifth ruler onwards, the chart attains the genuine standards of a dynastic line up with years of accession and demise are given properly. Apart from the aforesaid omissions there are certain easily visible disparities too in the list. The most striking one is the considerably longer time spans allotted to the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Adhi Rajas shown in the list. These rulers were quite shown ruled for 79, 81, 87 and 93 years respectively. In a dynasty where only the senior most members are entitled to get the monarchical position, these figures are not only unimaginable but also untenable. Presumably, these mismatches may be the end result of a latter-day attempt to configure a chart of genealogy merely from memory and hearsay. From the ambiguity shadowing the first part of the chart, one could also suspect a calculated move to stretch the antiquity of the dynasty far beyond its actual inception as an independent *swaroopam*.

As per this document, there was not a single woman in the long list of nineteen sultans who ruled from 889 to 1728 CE and suddenly in that year, a female ruler appears in the scene. Thence, we could see a good number of female rulers in the line. The question whether the peculiar version of matrilineal inheritance of the *swaroopam* that facilitates accession of female rulers had been there right from the beginning or was introduced at a later stage is very much difficult to answer. The absence of female rulers in the first part of the chart pertaining to a longer span comprising nine centuries may be either because of the absence of ladies who were elder to their male counterparts as required by the custom or due to the absence of said norm of succession that lawfully entails the accession of women to throne. However, nothing could be said categorically in this regard at this point, for the

unavailability of other documentary evidences neither to corroborate nor to contradict the aforesaid chart of lineage. Although, one could not ruled out the possibility of women taking the lead role in the household of these maritime chieftains, especially when their male counterparts were away from home with their maritime business, none of such women is seen attained historical visibility prior to eighteenth century. Perhaps, this may be primarily because of the absence of noteworthy historical narratives required to reconstitute the early history of the dynasty. What we have is only some accounts of European travelers and navigators that are quite invariably pertaining to the events and affairs of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Malabar. As the central theme of these European accounts is the military conflicts and maritime expeditions that are conventionally been considered manly, the name and fame of any of the matrilineal women were seldom mentioned.

Nevertheless, the absence of feminine names in Portuguese records pertaining to the early history of the *swaroopam* in no way authenticates the genealogical chart in question. If these sources are very much loquacious on Mamale de Cananor and silent on *Beebis*, it is simply because of significance of the former as a maritime chieftain who stiffly challenged their colonial designs. It was with whom they had direct dealings in both war and diplomacy. On the other hand, the Portuguese may not have come across any worth mentioning female member of the *swaroopam* during their sojourn in Malabar. In short, it is unwise to deny sweepingly, the possibility of having female heads of family in 16th and 17th centuries merely on the basis of the aforesaid chart of genealogy since the validity of that document is yet to be ascertained. It may be equally imprudent to argue the same on the basis of nonappearance of the names of female heads in Portuguese records because the period in question is one of conflicts, conquests and turmoil in which the men were destined to take the lead role.

To think otherwise, there are at least two, however vague, references that could be cited as evidences of having female heads even in 16th century. In 1571, narrating the information gathered from his voyage to Persia, Thomas Bannister, a British sailor wrote; “the Portugals have had great wars with the Queen of Malabar and other Princes of India for three years; the Queen forced to peace; her son killed going a pilgrimage to Mecca, where Mahomet lies”³⁸. Although, the passage is silent on the vital details of the conflict including the name of the queen, the very references of ‘Queen of Malabar’ and ‘pilgrimage to Mecca’ are adequate enough to conclude that the author of this letter is making a reference to the conflict erupted in between the Moors of Cannanore under the headship of a female ruler and the Portuguese for attaining maritime supremacy. Another one is related to the curious custom of *poochakkanamor* cat tax said to have introduced by a *Beebi* in 17th century. As per this, each fisherman had to give a fish each for maintaining the cats brought by *Beebi* from inlands to the harbour of Kadalayi near the main port of Cannanore. The cats were brought intentionally by the *Beebi* to check the growing number of rats that were destroying the cargo of the port. After 1700, the *Beebi* abandoned the custom of collecting fishes and started levying a tax for the purpose at the rate of two *pai* daily from a boat³⁹. Though, both the references are hinting the possibility of having female heads of the house in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nothing could be said categorically at this point as there is no corroborative evidence to substantiate these passing references. It may also to be noted that the second instance, the one related to *poochakkanam*, still remains merely as a piece of oral tradition popular in Cannanore and neighbouring places without any supporting documents.

³⁸ W. Noel Sainsbury (Ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series East Indies China and Japan 1513-1616*, Longman & Roberts, London, 1862,p.9.

³⁹ Chirakkal T Balakrishnan Nair, *Theranjedutha Prabhandangal*, Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur, 1996, p.105.

The lack of corroborative evidences in this regard tempts us to think that the year 1728 was the commencing point of rule in female lane. A careful analysis of the political situation that existed in the region as well as the internal strife that cropped up in the Arakkal *swaroopam* is warranting credibility here. During this period, the dynasty finds itself embroiled in a host of internal and external troubles. Tellicherry Factory Records vividly depicts the gravity of the external disturbances caused by the Prince of Kolathunadu with tactful assistance from the Factors⁴⁰ at Tellicherry. In February 1728, the Prince regent of Kolathunadu ransacked the Mappila Bazaar of Valapattanam killing over 600 men, women and children and burning the entire bazaar⁴¹. In June 1728, the combined forces of the Prince and Kottayam Raja literally ousted the men of Ali Raja from Dharmapatam to a nearby Island⁴². These setbacks might have forced the Ali Raja to sail to Jeddah for Haj⁴³. Further bad luck is yet to come in the form of internal dissensions. Firstly, as a result of the uncertainty and chaos precipitated by the assault on their bazaar, the Mappilas of Valapattanam, once a strong support base of the Ali Raja, turned en masse against him, presumably to safeguard their own business interests. Next one is the grimmest as it disclosed the real gravity of infighting within the inner circles of the family. It was in October 1728 that the Chief and factors at Tellicherry got the information from Bombay Castle that Ali Raja had been poisoned at Jeddah by one of his ministers⁴⁴. As pointed out by Ruchira Banerjee, “that the man should have been poisoned during his *haj* pilgrimage revealed the sharp division within

⁴⁰ Officials with administrative responsibilities of the Factories of EIC.

⁴¹ T.C 1727-28 Vol-3,p.63.

⁴² Ibid., p.64.

⁴³ William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol-1,p.359.

⁴⁴ Ibid.,

the Arakkal clan”⁴⁵.The murdered Ali Raja Kunhi Mammali was succeeded by Adhi Raja Harabichi Kadavu *Beebi* (Kunhibi),the first female ruler of the *swaroopam*. The circumstances leading to her accession to *musnad* in 1728 would provide enough room to think of her as a compromise candidate and to presume that the rule in female line was introduced only at this stage as a matter of consensus.

Whatever may be the reason and circumstances, the appearance of female rulers by the beginning of 18th century seems significant in another respect. By that time the domination of the Portuguese invaders which was marked by brutal acts of fanaticism and cruelty was replaced by that of comparatively kind and gentle Dutch and English East India Companies. This changeover has brought a visible modification in the attitudes and activities of colonial masters. Now, the European mercantile powers began to stress more on the effectiveness of trade negotiations and diplomatic discourse rather than hasty acts of violence and revenge. This naturally may have resulted in providing the female heads an ideal atmosphere in which they could intervene and mediate things more easily and to discharge their royal duties.

More pertinent is the question how the *Beebi*'s rule was accepted by its stakeholders, especially when there were absolutely no known precedents of rule in female lane neither in religion nor in the region. Just like matrilineal norms of succession, this too may have been accepted unopposedly by its stake holders as could be presumed from the lack of instances of dissent in contemporary records. In fact, the apprehensions about religious validity of such systems as matriliney and matriarchy within the fold of Islam only shows

⁴⁵ Ruchira Banerjee, *Wedding Feast or Political Arena?:Commercial Rivalry between the Ali Rajas and the English Factory in Northern Malabar in the Eighteenth Century* in Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Lakshmi Subramanian (Ed.) '*Politics and Trade in the Indian Ocean World; Essays in Honour of Ashin Das Gupta*', Oxford University Press, 2003, New Delhi, p.97.

the inability to conceptualize the ways and measures of everyday or lived Islam as distinct from doctrinal Islam.

Coming to matriarchy⁴⁶ of the *Beebis*, it seems absolutely strange, especially to those who have largely been predisposed by the idioms of normative Islam, to see that the Mappilas of North Malabar had hardly shown any reluctance to accept the rule of women in the *swaroopam* in spite of their adherence to the norms and mandates of Islam. The gravity of this oddity may increase considerably given the known antagonism of Islam towards the very concept of women taking the leadership either in mundane or in spiritual spheres. In spite of the known opposition from the part of Islamic jurists to women taking the lead, throughout the annals of history one could see a good number of Muslim women being incarnated as rulers in different parts of the world. They were known in dissimilar names such as *Sultana, Malika, Khatoun and al-Hurrah*. Fathima Mernissi has given a long list of 15 forgotten queens of Islam who ruled from India, Indonesia, Yemen, Egypt and Turkey. Among these, the four Indonesian queens of Sumatra who ruled one after another from 1641 to 1699, needs particular mentioning in the present context since they were concurrently matrilineal and Islamic. Notwithstanding the religious opposition which, on the basis of an adverse *fatwa* issued from Mecca, challenged their right to rule, these four monopolized power until the beginning of the eighteenth century⁴⁷. Thus, there existed a curious mixture of animosity and affability towards the rule by women in almost all parts of Islamdom to which Malabar was not an exception.

⁴⁶ The problem whether it is possible to call the female rulers of the *swaroopam* as matriarchs or not is one that deserves detailed scrutiny. Here, the term is used, in the absence of any other appropriate terms, just to denote the rule in female line and not in its theoretical sense.

⁴⁷ Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, USA 2006.

Discussing the religious validity of rule in female line itself seems ridiculous as the very concept of hereditary kingship is alien to normative Islam. It was nothing but an aberration initiated by Umayyad rule. Ibn Khaldun, with his sagacious wisdom, rightly distinguishes the Caliphate or *imamate* from *mulk* or Royal Authority. The former, “in reality substitute for the Law giver [Muhammad] in as much as it serves, like him, to protect the religion and to exercise [political] leadership of the world”⁴⁸. But royal authority has only the worldly connotations and it was “a necessary consequence of group feeling [of the Arabs] and with it came superiority and force”⁴⁹. Khaldun then goes on to explain the religious functions of the Caliph such as leading prayer, discharging duties of *mufti*⁵⁰ and judge etc that earns him the title ‘Commander of the faithful’⁵¹. As per Khaldunian standards of classification, Cannanore *Beebis* are to be included in the second category of royal authorities since they had never got an opportunity to lead prayers. But all of them discharged the duties of *mutawalli*⁵² and had appointed religious officials such as *qadis*⁵³ and *imams* of mosques under their jurisdiction. Their name was extolled in Friday sermons. They struck coins of their own. They were always very much eager to assert the titles of queen, *Beebi* and the sovereign of Cannanore and Laccadives, in most cases Queen Beebee of Cannanore. Even today, at a small nucleus of Cannanore city the arrival of two major Muslim festivals, *Eid al Fithr* and *Eid al Az’ha* are announced by the *Beebi* as and when the phases of moon changed. They themselves seem to have preferred the title *Sultan*, implying their apparent subordination to Caliph of Islam with his head quarters at Constantinople in Turkey. In 1780,

⁴⁸ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah-An Introduction to History, Vol-1* (Translated by Franz Rosenthal), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1958, pp.387-8.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.385

⁵⁰ One who issues *fatwa* or religious decrees

⁵¹ Ibn Khaldun, *op.cit.*, p.465.

⁵² Mutawalli (Ar.) is the person who takes care of Wakf property

⁵³ judge

the then ruler Junumma alias valiya *Beebi* had even sent two of her ambassadors –Aboobacker and Hajee Ali – to Constantinople. The publicized objective of this diplomatic mission was to obtain a letter from the Caliph authenticating the system of matriliney through which the *Beebi* came to power. However, there exists a probability of having a hidden agenda of ensuring Turkish support or at least their neutrality in the ongoing conflict in Malabar Coast involving the British and princes of Malabar on one side and the combination of Ali Raja, Tipu Sultan and the French on the other. Yet, the mission was met with only a partial success as the Emperor, in his reply, cautiously abstained from making any open remarks in support of the system of matriliney. Instead, the letter only offered a casual statement; “your having succeeded him [the demised Raja] according to the custom of your country”. This is, by all means an evading reply⁵⁴. Even so, the family circles always used to highlight this letter as the legal sanction for their particular custom of inheritance received from the Caliph of Islam.

Men,Women and Matriliney

The distinctiveness of having female rulers in the *swaroopam* would help to presume a general postulation that some sort of gender equity had existed within the power structure of the dynasty. Nevertheless, a close analysis of customs and practices of the house would reveal that the particularly unique status accorded to women strata of the house was neither absolute nor unchallenged. During the second half of 19th century, the House witnessed a protracted dispute between the male and female contenders to the throne in which the British authorities were invited to play the role of an arbitrator. The details of this particular episode of conflict would be of

⁵⁴ Letter dated 1stShavval, 1194 (30th September 1780) from the Emperor Abdul Hameed of Constantinople addressed to Adhi Raja Junumma Beebi, S.R-218, RAK.

immense use in providing an insightful analysis of the exact nature of power relations existed in the matrilineal setting of these maritime monarchs.

The episode of conflict formally began in 1862 when on 6th September, Abdurahiman Ali Adhi Raja, refused to hand over the key of the apartment containing certain utensils required for conducting an important religious ceremony, to Adhi Raja Beebi, the reigning queen of the house. Adhi Raja opposed her accession to the throne made in the same year following the demise of his mother Ayishabi Adhi Raja *Beebi* who ruled for a period of 24 years from 1838 to 1862. This rebellious act on the part of Adhi Raja who was an influential claimant for the prestigious post of Raja, though denied eventually, attained alarming proportions and the Joint Magistrate of Cannanore invited G.A.Ballard, Collector of Malabar to intervene in the matter so as to find an amicable solution for the problem. It is Ballard's letter dated 9th September 1862 addressed to Pycroft, the chief secretary to Madras Government that provides detailed information regarding this explicit conflict between Raja and Beebi for attaining power. His description of events goes like this:

“I should mention that Ali Raja claimed as a right to be a principal actor in the ceremony of the evening in the *Beebi*'s palace.....and on several others of the same character shortly to follow. The *Beebi* refused altogether to bear him at her palace; and considering how aggravating his conduct has been to her, this is not to be wondered at.

On arrival at Cannanore, I immediately wrote to the *Beebi* and Ali Raja warning them that I should hold them responsible if there were any breach of the peace. I told Ali Raja that he was on no account to interfere with the ceremony at the *Bibi*'s unless

with her full consent. They both disclaimed any wish to disturb the peace, and all passed off perfectly quietly.

I called a meeting yesterday of the principal Mahommedan inhabitants at which I requested the Agents of the Bibi; and Ali Raja himself to be present.....as it was very necessary to make a distinct settlement for the time, I told Ali Raja and the people present that the recognition of the Bibi as head of house was distinct; that she must manage affairs through whom she pleased as long as she did so in orderly manner; that Ali Rajah would be treated with courtesy as a Native gentleman as long as he conducted himself quietly, but that he had no official position nor right to interfere in affairs of State (so to speak) unless at the Bibi's desire,..."⁵⁵.

As could be ascertained from the above excerpt, initial response from British officials in the wake of emerging power conflict involving the two, was definitely one favouring Beebi over Ali Raja. It seems that the British authorities were overwhelmed by the fact that ever since the British Government had connection with the family of Cannanore, the succession to *musnad*⁵⁶ was in the female line, or in other words all who reigned since were Beebis. When the East India Company first entered into a treaty with the house in 1796 the *musnad* was adorned by *Valia Beebi* and she was followed only by female successors uninterruptedly up to 1862. In the letter dated 10th September 1863 addressed to the Chief Secretary, Fort Saint George, Madras, G.A. Ballard, the Collector of Malabar has openly confessed that he perhaps mistook the opinions expressed by his predecessors and was certainly unduly influenced by the fact that their original treaty had been entered into with a *Beebi* and *Beebis* only had succeeded since. The Collector also tried to explain

⁵⁵ Proceedings dated 23rd September 1862 of the Madras Government, APL-1/8586, RAK.

⁵⁶ *musnud* is a Persian term that means 'authority'. Here, it refers to the highest monarchical position

his failure in realizing the situation on the ground that he was then new to Malabar and had found the present *Beebi* installed. Further, they might have mistaken the peculiar version of *marumakkathayam* prevalent in the house as some kind of female dominance. The initial acceptance of *Beebi* as the legal heir apparent of the highest *sthanam* (position) was duly upheld and ratified as “judicious and proper “by the Chief Secretary, Madras Government⁵⁷.

But things soon turned upside down and the British eventually took a U-turn favouring Ali Raja. The settlement upholding the claim put forwarded by Ali Raja was the ultimate outcome of a series of correspondence involving he *Beebi*, the Raja and the British. After a thorough enquiry and examination of the precedents and customs prevalent in the family, conducted in response to the memorandum submitted by Ali Raja, the British finally decided to resolve the dispute in following terms:

“.....the Governor in Council is of the opinion that Ali Rajah should be recognized as Rajah of Cannanore and should be placed in possession of the properties belonging to the House of Cannanore both in the Laccadives and on the Continent of India”. This final order was issued on the ground that there is nothing whatever to show that the succession of females since the British connection with Cannanore was due to the absence of senior male members and that on the late *Beebi*’s death there were no grounds as far as any established rule of succession in the family is concerned, to set aside Ali Rajah and declare the present *Beebi* head of the House of Cannanore⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Madras Government Proceedings No. 382 dated 23rd September 1862, APL-1/8586, RAK.

⁵⁸ Order No 311 dated 12th October 1863, Foreign (Genl.A) Department File No.44/48, NAI.

This change of position was neither strange nor inexplicable considering the soundness of arguments put forward by Ali Rajah defending his claim over the throne. By all means, the earlier stand of the British Government upholding the claim of *Beebi* seems to have been derived out of a misconception regarding the norms of inheritance of the House, caused out of the installation of *Beebi*, probably as the end result of an intrigue, immediately following the demise of Ayishabi Adhi Raja *Beebi* in 1862. It was this mistake that they had put right in the very next chance. In fact, the British had left with no other choice but to rectify the erroneous decision taken earlier and to reinstate Ali Rajah who was the eldest of both male and female members of the family and was senior to *Beebi*, his rival by many years. As an arbitrator the British authorities thoroughly examined the claims and arguments of both parties involved in the dispute. The British finalized their ultimate verdict fully accepting all the grounds pointed out by Ali Raja in his memorial dated 16th December 1862 addressed to the Governor of Madras. His main arguments could be summarized as follows:

Ever since the demise of the preceding ruler Adhi Raja Ayisha Beebi that had occurred in 1862, the succession to *musnad* is in dispute. The memorialist is her son and the eldest member of the family, and the one now recognized as the successor of memorialist's mother is the great granddaughter of her niece and is his junior by many years. The peculiar custom of *marumakkathayam* as applicable to all the Muslim families of North Malabar does not deprive a male of the right of succession. There exists no evidence or an instance to show that there is any peculiar custom in the family so as to exclude male members altogether from the line of heirs. The fact that the succession to the *musnad* had been in female line since the *Balia Beebi*⁵⁹ who in 1796 had entered into a treaty with English East India

⁵⁹ Literally, the Great Queen; refers to Adhi Raja Joonumma Beebi who ruled for a longer period of 42 years from 1777 to 1819.

Company is merely accidental; having arisen from the circumstances that during the preceding 67 years succession fell to the females only because there were no male senior to them at the time of accession. Ali Raja also submitted a list containing the names of all the previous rulers of the family to prove that there were many male rulers and even the founder of the House was a male. In the light of all these grounds that appear to be sound and solid, there is no room for getting surprised over the decision taken by the British. What they did is the bestowing of the throne of Cannanore to its legitimate heir. Thus, the dispute for power was ended amicably for a while with the timely diplomatic intervention of the British.

The course and events of the conflict kept aside, it is the arguments and counter arguments of the male and female contenders to the post that makes the entire episode truly captivating. Their claims and counter claims definitely warrant some serious reservations about the exact nature of status enjoyed by the women of this ruling family in spite of the presence of a good number of female monarchs in the line. Going through the revelations made by Ali Raja, reiterating his claim over the post one could easily realise the basic fact that women rulers of the family never enjoyed absolute parity with their male counterparts. The following extract from the memorial of Ali Raja would put it in unambiguous terms:

“The inscription on the great seal of the State is in honor of this individual’s (founder of the dynasty) “Sultan Ali Rajah,” and the old coins issued from the Mint of the Cannanore Rajahs’ have all the same inscription on them. These coins may be found all over the country. But this is not all, - all the peon’s badges bear the above inscription and all the title deeds of

properties are under the signatures of the male members of the family”⁶⁰.

Moreover, the lack of absolute parity had also been endorsed by a statement of Ayishabi Adhi Raja who ruled the kingdom from 1838 to 1862. In 1847, in a letter addressed to Chatfield, the Joint Magistrate of Malabar, she puts it plainly that “the senior member of the family was always recognized as the head or reigning Rajah, and if the senior be a female the affairs are managed by the next junior male, though she is recognized as the *Beebi* Rajah; but if the senior be a male, he is recognized as the Sultan Ali Rajah and manages the affairs of the State without the interference of anyone”⁶¹. The reference here, about “next junior male” is definitely pointing towards the major constraints of the female monarchs of the house that they were invariably lacking visibility and mobility. It clearly shows that the assistance of a ‘next junior male’ was inevitable to discharge their duties effectively, even in matrilineal settings. It is true that there does have some ground for condoning these limitations-the problems of visibility and mobility- in the overall context of Muslim women of the 19th century Malabar. However, the omission of the names of *Beebis* from the Royal Seal and coins and the denial of the privilege of signing title deeds are extremely difficult to explain.

The *Beebis* were rarely seen putting their presence in public space and they usually remained inside their palace, if not in the harems. During the course of Anglo-Mysore war, Tipu Sultan wrote repeatedly to *Beebi*, his ally in war, inviting her to Srirangapattanam for discussions. In one of his letters, dated 19th December 1785, Tipu could not hide his disappointment and

⁶⁰ Memorandum dated 16th December 1862 submitted by Ali Raja quoted in the Madras Government (Political Department) Proceedings No.30 dated 28th January 1863. APL-1/8586,RAK

⁶¹ SR-219,p.6,RAK.

lamented that “we have repeatedly written to you, desiring you to repair to the presence; but, instead of coming to us, you have excused yourself upon different pretences”⁶². However, *Beebi* never changed her mind and keep on to evade all such invitations. But the *Beebishad* participated in discussions and had signed treaties, with a high level of enthusiasm, if they were held in their premises. One such meeting was held at Kannur in 1788 during the course of Tipu’s visit to Kannur. In Arakkal Records there is a witness account given in 1913 by V.C Mayan, the head *karyasthan* in the course of a civil dispute. In this account, the *karyasthan* makes an occasional reference to the practicing of *hijab* by the *Beebis*. It goes like this; [*Beebi*] “was not *gosha*⁶³ towards me as she was an elderly lady. She was not also a *gosha* towards her own and the *pandaram karyasthans* who were Mohammedans”⁶⁴. In November 1908, immediately after the signing of the treaty of sequestration of Laccadive Islands Adhi Raja Ahammed Ali Raja who was junior only to the reigning lady Adhi Raja Imbichi Beebi, submitted a petition to the Secretary to Government, Madras. This petition which is more like a charge sheet against the head of the house who signed the treaty sacrificing the interests of her house, also contains some appealing references hinting the practicing of *hijab* by *Beebis*. It describes the *Beebi* as an ‘ignorant, illiterate old *gosha* lady’, influenced by ‘her avaricious menials’. The petition goes on to blame the *Beebi* as one who ‘had been all in her life inured to *purdah*’and as a person ‘just emerged from the seclusion’⁶⁵. All the above reference undoubtedly hints the practicing of *hijab* by the *Beebis* even during the course their political functions and in that respect, they seem to have identified themselves with the fellow Mappila women of the locality.

⁶² Letter No. 184 in *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan to Various Public Functionaries* (Arranged & Translated by William Kirkpatrick) Black, Parry, and Kingsbury for English East India Company, London, 1812, pp.219-20.

⁶³ *gosha* is a Malayalam word that denote the custom of female seclusion

⁶⁴ APL-2/5271, RAK.

⁶⁵ APL-2/6182, RAK.

Now comes the more significant question whether the ‘rule by *Beebis*’ was beneficial or useful to the *swaroopam* or not. A comparative analysis of the nature of power relations existed in Arakkaland Kolathunadu *swaroopams* will provide certain clues to answer this. The unabated continuance of the system of the rule by female in strict contrast to the custom followed in Kolathunadu, and other neighbouring *swaroopams* whole through the forgone centuries starting from 1728 is enough to presuppose that the system was a success. More amazing is the fact that this continuance was marked by the absence of any signs of protest both from inside and outside the family. The protest that was seen raised by one of the male Rajas in 1862 was not against the system of *Beebi*’s rule as such, but he was only seeking the rectification of a foul committed upon him by the *Beebi*. The petition against the reigning *Beebi* submitted in 1908 by the senior male member of the house, to which a reference has already been made, is also not targeting the system of rule by *Beebi* as such. Instead, it only exemplifies the anger towards the doings of that particular *Beebi* which, in petitioner’s view were highly detrimental to the interests of the house. As discussed already, the sudden appearance of a female ruler in the *swaroopam* line in 1728 may conceivably be the result of an attempt to resolve a crisis similar to quarrel between heirs. Whatever may be the reason, the presence of a motherly female face at the helm will definitely have contributed much to the stability of the rule. It would be more so in matrilineal households where one is inescapably tied to his/her mother as has been illustrated by Jeffrey Hadler in the context of *Minang kabau* matriliney. According to him, “Men marry into an extended family, but remain attached to their mothers’ houses. ... *Minang kabau* culture has been termed matrifocal because, although men can be part of the lives of their wives and children, it is mother-centeredness that grounds the family”⁶⁶. In such a

⁶⁶ Jeffrey Hadler, *Muslims and Matriarchs: Cultural Resilience in Indonesia through Jihad and Colonialism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 2008, p.6.

matrilineal setting, the presence of a motherly *sthani* could definitely ensure more acceptability and can act as a unifying as well as pacifying force. No one could ignore the primacy of such a protective maternal figure in the power structure existed in the *swaroopams* of pre-modern Kerala especially when the sharing of power in between different *thavazhis* or branches of the same *tharavadu* (extended family) is involved. To exemplify this qualitative difference, one has to go through the not so infrequent and at times bloody, conflicts over the question of succession held between various princes belonging to different branches of Kolathunadu *swaroopam* in the context of their peculiar custom of power sharing known as *kuruvazhcha*. In the long annals of the history of Arakkal *swaroopam*, there is no such instance of succession wars as those held in between the *thekkilamkur*⁶⁷ and *vadakkilamkur*⁶⁸ of the *kolaswaroopam*⁶⁹.

Obviously, the peculiar mode of inheritance prevailed in the family always treated their women exceptionally well in contrast to the norms that existed in other *swaroopam* polities of the region where women were never treated eligible to attain the highest position in the ruling hierarchy. In Islamic environments also the presence of women rulers were not always treated as desirable as could be understood from the opposition to Razia Sultana adorning the throne of Delhi and the *fatwa* against the ‘Sumatran queens’. Given this scenario of general aversion to ‘rule by women’, Arakkal family offers a brighter picture of matrilineal women in sharp contrast to what is to be expected from the backdrop of the Kerala version of pre-modern Islam being bashed consistently for its mannish proportions. Thus, the presence of female monarchs in this Muslim Royal House is definitely appreciable while

⁶⁷ Southern Regent

⁶⁸ Northern Regent

⁶⁹ Manjusha R Varma, *The Kolaswaroopam in Historical Perspective: Political and Cultural Formations under the Kolathiris of North Malabar*, (unpublished) PhD Thesis, Kannur University, 2012, p.87.

analyzing from a gender perspective. Nevertheless, attributing standards of gender equality in the power relations that existed in this tiny *swaroopam* seems unwarranted and unworkable. As has been exposed by the dispute elaborated above, the female monarchs of the house had never been treated absolutely on par with their male counterparts. The predominance ascribed to women of the family seems more ritualistic or ceremonial rather than exerting full and independent control over statecraft.

Chapter 3

Arakkal Swaroopam and the Eighteenth Century Political Mayhem in Malabar

During the early decades of eighteenth century, North Malabar was politically in a state of absolute mayhem. Kolaswaroopam, that once enjoyed complete sovereignty over a vast tract of land stretching from Kotta river to Nileshwaram, was now confined to the area which constituted the later British taluk of Chirakkal. Even within this narrow limit, the *kolattiri* could not boast of unconditional authority. The Ali Rajas of Cannanore has made decisive inroads to many prime centres of Kolathunadu including the port town of Cannanore and the highly prosperous Mappila settlements of Dharmatam and Baliapatam. Randattara *Achanmar* were the chieftains of the *amsoms* southward of Kannur such as Anjarakkandy, Edakkad, Chembilod, Iriveri, Makreri, Mavilayi and Muzhappilangadu. They now began to rule this pepper-rich territory as more or less independent rulers. The Kadathanattu Raja of Kuttippuram kovilakam, an offshoot of kolaswaroopam ruled the Kadathanadu kingdom lying in between Mahe and Kotta rivers. The head of *Alladathu swaroopam*, yet another kolathunadu offshoot, ruled territories north of Kavvayi from their headquarters at Nileshwaram. The sway of the area later included in the British taluk of Kottayam (Malabar) was enjoyed partly by Iruvalinad Nambiars, and partly by Puranad or Kottayam Rajas. Although, these princes were all, theoretically, the feudatories of *kolattiri*, they seldom acknowledged the latter as their overlord. The authority of the family was further destabilized by internal dissensions that stemmed out from the peculiar custom known as *kuruvazhcha* or 'rule by partners'. This was an arrangement aimed to ensure a practical division of power between various offshoots of the *swaroopam*. The custom, evidently dating from the time when their dominions were wider, provisioned the division of executive

power in theory between the five eldest males of each branch of the extended *swaroopam*- the *kolattiri*, the *thekkilamkur* (Southern Regent), the *vadakkilamkur* (Northorn Regent), the *nalamkur* (Fourth Regent) and the *anjamkur* (Fifth Regent). But what usually happened was that the strongest of them always attempted to attain the paramount position in the ruling hierarchy either by force or through consensus. They were not ready to set aside their differences even in the face of so grave a calamity like the invasion of the Malabar Coast by the Canarese in 1730's. Pointing to the mutual jealousies and mistrust that had existed between the chieftains of North Malabar, Stephen Law, the Chief of Tellicherry factory remarked that these people are so jealous of each other, that Boyanore [of Vatakara] will not trust Cotata [Kottayam], nor Cotata him, nor the Prince [of Chirakkal] either of them.¹ At times, this had led to constant intrigues and fierce struggles for power as exemplified in the following incident of an attempted coup narrated by Francis Hamilton who had paid a visit to Kolattunadu in 1703.

About the year 1680, there were three Princes of the Blood royal, who conspired to cut him and his family off, to possess themselves of the Government of Callistree [*kolattiri*]; but being detected, they were beheaded on Altars built of stone. About two Miles from Cannanore the Altars were standing when I was there².

Added to this was the competition among different European countries aiming to bolster their own mercantile interests. By the dawn of eighteenth century, following the footsteps of Portuguese, all the three major European companies – the Dutch, the English and the French - had fixed their foots firmly in the soil of North Malabar. All the three had established their own

¹ Letter dated 18th April 1735 from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT- 1734-36 Vol-IV, p.10

² Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies, Vol-1*, Edinburgh, 1727,p.295.

settlements respectively at Cannanore³, Tellicherry⁴ and Mahe⁵ and have started meddling with local chieftains, though in varying degrees. With the ascendancy of Robert Adams as the Chief of English settlement at Tellicherry the English East India Company have begun interfering vigorously in native politics by converting the Prince Regent of *kolaswaroopam* virtually a dependent of them. The fact that the grant of the site of the Tellicherry factory was secured, not from the *Kolattiri*, but from the prince (*vadakkilamkoor*), who was the *defacto* ruler at that time, amply testifies this. The French at Mahe always functioned in close association with the *vazhunnavar*, the feudatory of Vatakara who ensured a ready supply of pepper to them. Similarly, the Dutch had maintained a friendly relationship with Ali Raja of Cannanore who ruled the harbor town from the palace adjacent to the fortress of the former. Since all these native rulers were usually at loggerheads, the active assistance and support given by each of the foreign powers to their native collaborators always invited troubles and acted as a catalyst in the ongoing conflict for political and commercial supremacy. The competition for trade monopoly and mutual jealousies among European Companies and their territorial ambitions in the coast very often led to the strained relations so continuously displayed in their mutual dealings.

³ Dutch Captured the Portuguese fortress of Cannanore in February 1663 immediately after the fall of Cochin in their hands.

⁴ The date of inception of Tellicherry Factory is a matter of controversy. William Logan dates it back to 1694-95. Sir George Birdwood, the author of *Report on the Old Records of the India Office* and John Bruce, the official historian of the Company suggests 1683 as the year of its inception. Whatever be the exact year of beginning, it was with the advent of Robert Adams as the Chief, somewhere in the beginning of eighteenth century that the Tellicherry Factory began to play a decisive role in both political as well as commercial arenas of Malabar.

⁵ Mayyazhi, renamed in 1725 as Mahe in honour of Mahe de Laboudnnais, the young Captain of the French was the centre of their colonial administration and commercial activities in the Malabar Coast. Like other European powers, French too realized the importance of political influence as a prerequisite for establishing commercial monopoly.

However, as all the three were very much cautious on avoiding any sort of direct confrontation between them, they always tried to use native powers as a ploy to foster their own business motives and political interests. So, the Europeans always used to support their native allies with men and money in their mutual conflicts. The logic behind waging this sort of proxy war was that it was “cheaper than [actual] war”⁶. Though, generally it was the European settlers who made use of their native allies against each other, at times the procedure was reversed when the native chiefs were in want of money. One of such incident was happened in 1728, when the Prince Regent being in great need of money and supplies, was at first refused by the English factors. He thereon applied to the Dutch, and offered them the Island of Dharmapattanam, where the English had a warehouse. As possession of the island was necessary to the conduct of the Tellicherry trade, the English were obliged to comply with the demand of the Prince⁷. In short, “North Malabar was at that time in a state of anarchy, a sea of intrigues, conflicting interests and mutual jealousies”⁸.

***Arakkal swaroopam* in the Early Decades of 18th Century**

Despite the assertive claims of the *swaroopam* aiming to stretch its antiquity to such remote past as the 9th century CE, the path breaking study of Genevive Bouchone has unequivocally established that the family got political prominence only by the mid sixteenth century. She rightly relates the roots of their economic and political prominence with the rejuvenated maritime business of the so called ‘Portuguese epoch’ in the history of Indian Ocean trade. But, this does not in any way mean that the Mappilas of North Malabar was not a force to reckon prior to establishing themselves firmly as a

⁶ William Logan, *Malabar Vol-1*, Government Press, Madras, 1951,p.356.

⁷ Alexr Rea, *Monumental Remains of the Dutch East India Company in the Presidency of Madras*,Government Press, Madras, 1897, p.22.

⁸ N.K Sinha, *Haidar Ali*, A.Mukherjee & Co. Pvt.Ltd.Calcutta,1941.pp.252-3

political power at Cannanore. As has been elaborated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, almost all the travelogues written by European sojourners in this part of the coast were very much vociferous of the political role and significance of 'Moors of Cannanaore'. However, from the dawn of eighteenth century onwards one could locate an attempt from their part to assert their prominence as a political entity completely independent of Kolaswaroopam. Naturally, this assertion of political predominance had led them into open conflict with the *kolattiri* who was the *de jure* sovereign of Kolathunadu, comprising the whole of North Malabar including the port town of Cannanore and its bazaar.

In the beginning of eighteenth century Jacob Canter Visscher, the Dutch Chaplain at Cochin wrote; "the most powerful of all the Moors, who may be regarded almost as an independent prince, resides at Cannanore. He is entitled Ali Rajah, king of the islands, being the lawful sovereign of all the Laccadives which were ceded to him by Colastri"⁹. Alexander Hamilton describes Cannanore as a town under the government of Mahometans or Malabar Moors. His portrayal of the town and the Rajah of Cannanore goes like this;

"Pretty large Town built in the Bottom of the Bay, that is independent of the Dutch, and that Town, with some circumjacent Country, is under the Government of Adda Rajah, a mahometan Malabar Prince, who upon Occasion, can bring near 20000 Men into the field. His Government is not absolute, nor it is hereditary; and instead of giving him the Trust of the Treasury which comes by Taxes and Merchandize, they have Chests made on Purpose, with Holes made in their Lids, and their Coin being all Gold, Whatever is received by the

⁹ Jacob Canter Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, Madras, 1862, Letter No. XIX, p.119.

Treasurer, is put into those Chests by these holes; and each Chest has four Locks and their Keys are put in the Hands of the Rajah, the Commissioner of Trade, the chief Judge and the Treasurer; and, when there is Occasion for Money, none can be taken out without all these four be present, or their Deputies”¹⁰.

Hamilton’s account detailed above explicitly reveals the fact that by the beginning of eighteenth century, Ali Rajas had effectively surpassed *kolattiri* in terms of men and money. Naturally, with the affluence acquired abundantly from their maritime profession mostly with Red Sea region and from the one-way traffic of revenue from their Laccadive possessions, the family now wanted to assert themselves as the unquestionable masters of the region. The political prowess obtained from playing crucial roles in placing and ousting kings in the throne of Maldives may obviously have boosted their eagerness to achieve political sovereignty. More importantly, the bond of religious identity, apart from providing a deep sense of unity among them, seemed to have helped them gaining considerable support from their coreligionists outside Cannanore. They, however, had to face a major obstacle in their strife for finding out a political space of their own as their case was definitely an odd one when compared to the innumerable *swaroopams* of the region. Because of their distinct religious identity, they were always treated as outsiders or usurpers as per the dominant discourses of kingship and statecraft of the time which was overwhelmingly influenced by wetland based political economy. The *nair* political elites of Malabar also commonly shared an explicit sense of apathy towards them. This bitterness was sufficiently reflected in the remarks of Francois Pyrard of Laval, the French navigator who toured extensively in Malabar at the dawn of seventeenth century. In

¹⁰ Alexander Hamilton, *op.cit.*, p.292.

1608, he observed that “nevertheless, the other Indian kings calls not this king of Cananor a king, saying that he is not so of right but only by force”¹¹.

The advent of European merchants and their establishment on firm footing at various points in Malabar seems to have helped Ali Rajas considerably in shaping a political clout of their own. Firstly, the ever-increasing interferences of Europeans in local politics had placed the Ali Rajas in an ideal situation where they could justify their own political pretensions by pointing towards any of these Europeans who were also outsiders without stakes in politics herein as per the traditional norms and stipulations extant in Malabar. Secondly, the presence of European merchants in their domain also placed the Ali Rajas in a rewarding terrain as thence they were left with chances of utilizing these Europeans either as political allies or business collaborators.

Relations with the Dutch

From the very beginning, the operations of the Dutch East India Company in Malabar was conducted in close association with the Ali Rajas in whose vicinity stood Fort St. Angelo, the Dutch headquarters at Cannanore. In the conflicts between Ali Raja and the *kolattiri* princes, the Dutch had supported the former, though inconsistently. There were historical as well as economic reasons for a fostered friendship between the two. Historically, the Dutch and the Cannanore Mappilas alike were sharing a common antagonism towards the Portuguese. “The chief aim of the Portuguese—who were ousted by the Dutch—had been the destruction of the Moorish commerce. In their efforts in this direction, they succeeded in permanently injuring the town of Calicut as a seaport, and diverting its trade to other ports. The Dutch adopted other methods, took the Moors under their protection, and used them for the

¹¹ Francois Pyard, *The Voyage of Francois Pyard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil, Vol-1*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1887, pp.445-46.

furtherance of their own trade”¹². The Dutch always viewed Ali Rajas as their principal supplier of pepper and cardamom because of his enormous capacity to procure spices from hinterlands.

Dutch East India Company was the first among the Europeans to sign a treaty with Ali Rajas and thereby to assign some sort of legitimacy to them as the chieftain of Cannanore. The preamble of the first treaty signed on 11th February 1664 between the Ali Raja and Jacob Hustaart, Governor and Director of the Island Ceylon and the Conquests on the Malabar Coast, accepts and acknowledge the former as the ‘lord and the supreme ruler of the moors in the country of the King Kolathiri’. The very first article of this treaty signed immediately after the capture of fort St. Angelo from the Portuguese in 1663, romanticizes the peace and friendship between the two as one destined to last ‘so long the sun and moon last’. Then it goes on to warn, presumably the *kolattiri*, that ‘the Company will not tolerate the Ali Raja being oppressed by anyone against justice’¹³. The remaining twenty two articles of this treaty are almost exclusively related to trade and allied aspects such as provisioning of spices and issuance of passes for overseas voyages. Many of these could be interpreted as harmful to the mercantile prospects of the Ali Rajas as it imposes over them, several restrictions. Yet, the significance of this particular treaty cannot be minimized or overlooked as it is the first available document that treated the Ali Raja in par with other native princes, clearly a deviation from the practice hitherto in existence. More importantly, the treaty accorded them the status, the *supremo of the Mappilas* that have formed the crust of their identity in the centuries to come. Interestingly, this treaty enabled Ali Raja to supply pepper to the Dutch at market price obviously in contrast to

¹² Alexr. Rea, *op.cit.*, p.21.

¹³ *Corpus Diplomaticum*, II, 263-6 as translated and extracted by Binu John Mailamparambil, in *Lords of the Sea: the Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663-1723)*, Appendix 4, pp.232-233.

their usual practice of grabbing spices at a price much below the market rate, a privilege they always demanded from native chieftains for being the suppliers of arms.

In their quarrels with *kolattiri* kingdom, the Ali Rajas were assisted by the Dutch through their servants at Cannanore and it was quite natural as the English were very much keen on supporting the *kolattiri* consistently with arms, money and men. In June 1727, Ali Raja, probably with the backing of the Dutch, captured from the hands of *kolattiri*, the fort at Kadalayi hill, a place of pivotal importance being in the boundary of the pepper-rich province of Randettara. The English also had an eye on this place and had wrote their superiors at Bombay Castle that unless something should be done to hoist our colours there, they are in apparent danger of losing all the pepper trade in favour of the Dutch through Ali Raja's intervention¹⁴. In 1732-33 Malabar was invaded by the Canarese under the Naiks of Bedanur. This has caused much disturbance to the commercial endeavours of both the English and the Dutch. At this point also, the relations ship between the Dutch and the *Arakkal* was fairly amicable and the former somewhat effectively tried to prevent the latter from providing any assistance to Canarese¹⁵. However it would be unwise to presume that the affiliation between the two was always cordial. As were quite natural in the existing scenario of political chaos and fluctuating business fortunes there certainly had existed enough chances to get their relations stained.

By entering in to a treaty with Arakkal Dutch only want to capitalize the prowess of Ali Raja as a maritime chief with considerable capacity to procure pepper from the hinterlands. As the Dutch also tried to maintain a friendly relation with the *kolattiri*, the arch rival of Ali Raja, their relationship

¹⁴ Consultation dated 12th June 1727, T.C-1726-27, Vol-II, p.114.

¹⁵ Letter dated 16th March 1736 from Commander of the Dutch at Cochin to Stephen Law, the English Chief at Tellicherry as extracted in T.C.1735-36,p.83.

with the latter naturally began worsening. On their side, the Ali Rajas, being merchants to the core, also endeavoured to better their mercantile interests through some deals with the English East India Company at Tellicherry. This had invited bitter antagonism of the Dutch Company since they always viewed the English as their principal competitor. The feeling of suspicion and hostility between the two has become more evident by mid-eighteenth century especially with the reign of Kunhi Hamsa Ali Raja who ruled for a considerably longer span of thirty six years from 1742 to 1778. This Ali Raja who later turned to be one of the most remarkable rulers of the *swaroopam*¹⁶ had been the target of verbal attack of the Dutch officials in Malabar right from his accession in 1742. Just before leaving the Coast of Malabar, the Dutch Commander Julius Valentijn Stein van Gollenesse has described Kunhi Hamsa Ali Raja as ‘a profligate young whelp, wholly devoted to the French’. According to Gollenesse, this man always ‘displays great dislike and contempt for the Honb'le Company, though owing to our serious threats he has been somewhat quieter of late; possibly he may become wiser in time as he grows in year. However if a war should break out between our state and France and he should commit himself too far with that nation or allow it entrance to the bazaar, it will not be amiss to show him that he is within range of the cannon of our fortress and then he will draw in his horns’¹⁷. All these abusive words that had been showered upon a king who is barely a year old in his throne, only shows the antagonism of a frustrated commander over supposed acts of mischief by an ally turned ‘traitor’.

¹⁶ To know more about him please go through the article *Wedding Feast or Political Arena?: Commercial Rivalry between the Ali Rajas and the English Factory in Northern Malabar in the Eighteenth Century* by Ruchira Banerjee in Rudrangshu Mukherjee & Lakshmi Subramanian (Ed.) *Politics and Trade in the Indian Ocean World- Essays in Honour of Ashin Das Gupta*, OUP, New Delhi, 2003, pp.83-112.

¹⁷ *Memorandum* composed in 1743 by Julius Valentijn Stein van Gollenesse, the outgoing Commander of Malabar in A Galletti (Ed.) *the Dutch in Malabar*, Government Press, Madras, 1911, p.67.

The reason for Gollennesse's acrimonious uttering was given forty years later by Adriaan Moens who commanded the Dutch activities in the coast of Malabar from March 1769 to April 1781. In 1781 he wrote in his 'Memorandum' that Ali Raja [Kunhi Hamsa] had been "as unfaithful as all the other native princes and always knew how to put down the small pepper supply to one cause or another, but usually he laid the blame on the disturbed state of the country, because it was notorious. The real cause however was that he secretly sold his produce to others, who offered him more than the Company had stipulated for"¹⁸. For such acts he was treated as a 'nuisance' and in the year 1745 the Company resolved to refuse passes for his vessels. This seems to have forced Kunhi Hamsa to come into terms with the Dutch and to renew their old friendship. In the year 1750 he assured the Dutch that all the cardamom growing in his territory should be supplied to them. Two years later he also made a new pepper contract with the Dutch Chief at Cannanore and remained neutral in the disputes between the English and the princes of Collastry¹⁹.

In 1753, with the timely intervention and mediation of the Dutch, another rupture between the princes of Collastry and Adhy Raja was prevented. As a reward, the Dutch got signed two pepper contracts in the year 1754; one with the princes of Collastry for 300 candies, and another with Adhy Raja for 200 candies. In the very next year the Dutch made another contract with Ali Raja in which he promised to supply up to 400 candies of pepper annually at Rs.831/3 a candy and also 10 candies of cardamom at market rate. For both these consignments Ali Raja was entitled to get an advance payment of rupees 12,000/- every year. All these treaties of trade may tend to create an impression that the volume of spices procured from

¹⁸ *Memorandum of Adriaan Moens in A Galletti (Ed.) the Dutch in Malabar*, Government Press, Madras, 1911, p.147.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.147-148

North Malabar by the Dutch throughout the period of their stay here was escalating consistently. But most of these ‘treaties although solemnly entered upon, were from the very beginning badly carried out’²⁰. Because of this and several other reasons, Cannanore settlement was not really profitable and there was much hue and cry for its termination right from the last quarter of seventeenth century, especially from the high circles at Batavia. But, as pointed out by Binu John “this claim was counterbalanced by its supporters who pointed out its strategic importance to the control of the spice trade in Malabar. In the end, it was the strategic significance of the location which tipped the scales in the debate. Even Hendrik van Reede, a Malabar commander who favoured a less aggressive, more laissez-faire policy than that of his predecessor and rival Rijckloff van Goens, feared that the abandonment of the fort would undermine Dutch control along the western coast, because a withdrawal could provide ample opportunities for the local Mappila traders, especially the Ali Rajas, to supply spices to other parties”²¹. However, by the mid eighteenth century, the Dutch in the Coast of Malabar has to face stiff competition from two of their principal rivals- the English at Tellicherry and the French at Mahe, making it impossible for them to carry on their usual practice of procuring spices at a price much below the market rate. On the other hand, the higher level of diplomacy and tactfulness of the British almost consistently helped them to win the native princes²² and certain

²⁰ Ibid., p.143.

²¹ Binu John Mailaparambil *Lords of the Sea- The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663-1723)*, Brill, Leiden, 2012,p.84.

²² A well known example of such diplomatic efficiency was registered in 1760. In a grant dated 9th September 1760, Badacalamcur, the Northern Regent of Colastri, besides confirming all the grants previously made to the English EIC, is also seen incorporating provisions to exclude the Dutch from Cannanore trade. In the second article of the said treaty, it is stated: “We now in order the more firmly to establish this privilege unto them, and especially to prevent the Dutch or anyone else purchasing the pepper of Randatera, further consent to the company placing their people, both by land and sea, and in any part they may judge proper to frustrate it”. (William Logan, *A Collection of Treaties Engagements and other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in*

principal merchants like Chattoo of Agar over to their side and thereby ensuring an uninterrupted supply of pepper and cardamom at negotiated rates.

The alarmingly escalating price of pepper in north Malabar owing mainly to the competition from the English and the French and partly due to the 'clandestine' deals of *vazhunnavar* of Vatakara, the Ali Rajas and the presence of a host of European privateers has also contributed its share in turning Cannanore settlement of the Dutch economically unviable²³. Besides this economic reason there were also other factors that may also have prompted the abandonment of the settlement at Cannanore. Among these, the sale in 1754 of the fort of Mount Deli, (*Ezhimala*) once occupied by the Dutch as an outwork of Cannanore, to the French by the Cherakal Raja and the 1755 embargo imposed by Bednur Raja on the supply of grain that had placed the Dutch at Cannanore in a state of comparative famine are of extreme importance. Hyder Ali's conquest of Malabar and his subjugation in 1766 of *kolattiri* kingdom situated very close to their settlement at Cannanore may also have placed the Dutch in an embarrassing situation that in turn might have accelerated their plan to leave northern Malabar. Of course, this seems rather strange, given in the friendly or at least neutral relationship that the Dutch tried to maintain in their dealings with Hyder Ali. But, Adriaan Moens, who commanded the Dutch from Cochin during these crucial years, lists it among the two principal reasons for abandoning the fort and settlement at Cannanore, other being the nonprofitability owing to competition²⁴.

Finally, in 1770, the Government at Cochin under Moens decided to propose their superiors at Batavia, their plan to rid themselves of Cannanore

Malabar, (Hereafter, *Treaties*) Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.63.)

²³ Both Gollennesse and Moens were criticizing the English and the French who used to pay such a high price for pepper. For details please see their respective *Memorandums* in A Galetti (Ed.) *The Dutch in Malabar*, Government Press, Madras, 1911.

²⁴ Moens, *op.cit.*, p.204.

and to dispose the fortress to someone or the other for a certain sum of money. For this, they had cited a variety of reasons such as the insignificant amount of produce being collected, the small demand for merchandise at Cannanore, and the constantly troublesome situation of northern Malabar. Accordingly, the Batavia Government had issued the sanction required to execute the plan through a Special Letter dated 3rd August 1770 and the fortress of Cannanore was disposed for a sum of Rs. 1, 00,000/- to Ali Raja Kunhi Hamsa of Cannanore. Thus, their sway in the northern coast of Malabar started as early as in 1663 ended rather ingloriously by the year 1771. Although the retreat of the Dutch from the Coast of northern Malabar could be related largely to 'their own blunders', the transfer of fortress have convincingly established the solidness of the financial status of the Ali Raja who alone could raise such a huge amount of liquid cash at that point of time in Malabar.

Arakkal swaroopam and English East India Company

The acquaintance of the English East India Company in the northern coast of Malabar had commenced as early as in 1669 with the formal establishment of a factory at Kottakkunnu near Baliapatam (Valapattanam) in the vicinity of *kolattiri*'s palace. Till then, Company's operations in Malabar was carried out mainly from its Calicut factory where, the free conduct of business have turned nonviable by the year 1667 owing to local disturbances²⁵. Since then, the Company was discussing seriously of opening up a new outlet either at Ponnani or Cannanore. The opening of the Baliapatam factory was materialized only after several sessions of prolonged discussions held by Grigby and John Petit, the English Factors at Calicut, with Prince Regent of *kolattiri* whom the factory records describes 'the archest

²⁵ Fawcette in his *English Factories in India* is making a direct reference to the 'murderous riot of 1668' by the Moplas and the defenselessness of Zamorinin controlling such rioters.

Malabar sophister that we have hither to met with'. This Prince happens to be the *ruler defacto* at that time as the reigning *kolattiri* was too old to discharge any administrative functions. The company succeeded in attaining formal consent and vigorous support of the Prince in their favour by offering in return a customs duty of 2.5 percent on all goods bought and sold and in addition, an annual subsidy of 200 sequins²⁶.

But, very soon the English realized that by moving to Cannanore, they were actually going from bad to worse as they find themselves embroiled in the obdurate competition for trade involving the French at Dharmatam and the Dutch at Cannanore. Apart from these European companies, the English also had to face the more scrupulous challenge from the Ali Rajas, the local competitor with global connectedness. By then he had established himself as the *defacto sovereign* of the port town of Cannanore wielding considerable support from the Mappilas even of the hinterlands and had started expanding their horizons of trade, often in association with the Dutch. The first serious challenge to the Baliapatam factory was the insistence of Mappila merchants of the bazaar to weigh the pepper procured by the former in the bazaar itself. The Company preferred to receive pepper at their factory premise. The aim of the Company was to evade remitting *Masjid Tax*, a customary duty to be levied for transactions in the Bazaar, sanctioned by *kolattiri* to meet the expenses related to the mosque at Baliapatam. However, the real threat was the internal dissensions in *kolattiri swaroopam* which got intensified after the death in August 1673, allegedly by poisoning, of the Prince Regent, a firm friend of the factory. Then, a rebel Prince of the *swaroopam* who was opposing the factory since its very inception, started machinations against them with the support of the Dutch and Ali Raja aiming its closure. Finally, in 1675, Surat Council sanctioned the shutting down of Baliapatam factory

²⁶ Charles Fawcett, *The English Factories in India, Vol.I* (Hereafter, EFI Vol-1)(*New Series*), *The Western Presidency 1670-1677*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1936,pp.288-89.

owing to bad governance in Kolathunadu, machinations of the Dutch in association with Ali Raja and above all, the financially inappropriate state of affairs²⁷.

After losing ground at Baliapatam, the English has decided to restart their business operations from Dharmapatam, at a distance of four kilometers north of Tellicherry by December 1675. However, they were discouraged by the Young Prince of Kolathunadu, their ally, because, in his view, Mappilas there ‘were not in absolute subjection to him but were headstrong and self willed’²⁸. But the circumstances forced the English to think of Dharmapatam as “a better place for the factory, as it would be less expensive and they would be among Mohammedans, from whom they got more respect than they did from the Nairs at Baliapatam”²⁹. This seems pretty strange given in the persistently abusive tone of contemporary company records describing the deeds and attitudes of Cannanore Mappilas in general and that of Ali Raja in particular. Perhaps, the English, weary of the ill consequences of their dealings with the Nair chieftains at Baliapatam, might have thought of trying the other way around for furthering their mercantile interests in this part of the coast by establishing a good rapport with the Ali Raja through the Mappilas of Dharmapatam. Whatever it may be, the Company had to abandon midway the project of establishing a factory at Dharmapatam in 1677 owing to an unexpected turn of events appeared in the form of some ‘piratical deeds of the people of Kotta’(Kottakkal near Vatakara) inflicting severe damages to the Company. As usual the Company suspected that this gross affront was instigated and supported by Ali Raja and an order was issued from the Surat Council to cease all further commerce and communication with the town of Dharmapatam and Ali Raja. After these developments Company abandoned

²⁷ EFI Vol-1,p.341

²⁸ Ibid., p.342.

²⁹ Ibid., p.334.

their scheme for setting up a factory at Dharmapatam or elsewhere in Kolathunadu. They had also turned down the plea made by 'Young Prince' to reopen the factory at Baliapatam on the ground of insecurity prevailing in ports coming under his territorial control. For a few years they had confined their transactions to Calicut and Tanur³⁰.

However, as the company could not altogether ignore the mercantile importance of north Malabar, they were waiting eagerly for an opportunity to reaffirm their stake therein. That chance came at last in their favour in 1682, when the officials of the French Factory at Tellicherry 'fled with bag and baggage' on account of its unpromising state of affairs. Chase and Mitchell, the Englishmen at Dharmapatam, promptly occupied the site and structure deserted by the French and founded there the Tellicherry Factory of the English which later became the nerve centre of the trade and administration of the British in Malabar. Though, the occupation of the company had invited incessant protests from the French authorities at Surat, the English ultimately got it ratified by the Prince of Kolathunadu on condition of paying customs duty at the rate of one Sequin (rupees 4/-) per candy on cardamom and half a Sequin per candy on pepper³¹. The Dutch at Cannanore naturally were having some resentment over the occupation of Factory by the English and they gave rich presents to the Prince soliciting refusal of the factory to the English. The Prince replied that "he could not go back on his word, and he would not take it from the English, even if the Dutch gave him 'his greatest enemy', Ali Raja"³². On his part, Ali Raja had shown a gesture of friendship with the English at this point and denied the claim of the French over the place. Now, the English shifted their headquarters from Calicut to Tellicherry factory on

³⁰ Ibid, p.358

³¹ Calicut Letter dated 28, August 1692, quoted by Sir Charles Fawcett, in *The English Factories in India, Vol, III*, (Hereafter EFI Vol-3) *Bombay, Surat, and Malabar, Coast, 1678- 1684*, Oxford,1954,p.395.

³² EFI Vol-3,p.395

account of its closeness to the hinterlands in north Malabar that have produced the finest quality of pepper and cardamom.

It was with the advent of Robert Adams as the Chief, somewhere in the opening years of eighteenth century³³, the English factory at Tellicherry began playing more decisive role in native politics of North Malabar, of course, with the intention of furthering their business interests. It should be noted that as early as in 1676, the factors at Calicut were proposing to utilize their force as the ‘only effective remedy’ to tackle the gross affronts of ‘powerful tyrants’ of Malabar like Ali Raja and Sheikh Marakkar of Calicut. Petit and Smith, the two Calicut Factors were of the opinion that because of the intimidation of the aforesaid Mappila elites and in the absence of any authority from whom they could get justice, their fate will soon be so desperate that the Dutch need not trouble to turn them out, for the natives would effect this by their persistent tricks and abuses³⁴. Endorsing this view, the Council at Surat went on to add that “unless some severe and rigorous course was taken with the Malabar Princes, their impositions would grow insufferable and the Company would be forced to quit its trade on the coast. They recommended the Company to authorize the use of open force, when necessary, to recover or preserve its rights and privileges, saying they would be very cautious about using it. ...the name of the Honourable Company and the English nation, through our long patient sufferings of wrong, is become slighted; our complaints, remonstrance, paper protests and threatening, are laughed at; ...in violent distempers violent cures are only successful ...the times now require you to manage your general commerce with your sword in your

³³ The Company records are conspicuously silent on the year of accession of Robert Adams, as the Chief. However, the available records show that he was in charge of the factory since 1702 and have taken the lead role that year in countering the difficulties raised by the French at Punnol, some three kilometers southward of Tellicherry.

³⁴ EFI Vol-1, p.352.

hand”³⁵. Unambiguously, these lines had embodied the future plan of action of the Company in Malabar. It was almost like a political manifesto or a blueprint that openly reflects a policy shift in Company’s dealings with native chieftains. Carrying weapons and resorting to violence was not a new phenomenon in colonial tactics. Using arms in pretext of retaliation was an age-old colonial practice right from the days of Vasco da Gama. Although, it is difficult to spot the ferociousness of the Portuguese in the dealings of the English East India Company in this coast, they were not altogether devoid of using arms. The only thing is that they were not capable of carrying out such violent schemes in the preceding century forcefully and effectively as they are struggling to accommodate themselves in this newly found land. Their primary concern was to find out measures for tackling the menaces mounted by the French and the Dutch, the fellow contenders in spice trade of Malabar. Now, the Company, firmly footed in Tellicherry under the enthusiastic leadership of Robert Adams and also favoured by the steady support of the Prince Regent of Kolathunadu, got the momentum required for expanding their mercantile and political interests in Malabar.

As regards the exact nature of Company’s relations with *Arakkal swaroopam*, nothing could be said categorically as it was pendulous all the time. In fact, there is something in their mutual relationship that could be described as enigmatic. Company records, more specifically, the Tellicherry Consultations are filled almost perpetually with remarks hallmarked with an unconcealed feeling of animosity towards Ali Rajas. Of course, there may also be certain rare and occasional references displaying the warmth and affability of cordial relationship between the two. In November 1725, John Braddyll, the Commissary of Tellicherry Factory wrote Ali Raja a short letter which starts with high sounding words of praise. But, the remaining portion of

³⁵ Ibid., p.353.

the letter clearly revealed that it was actually offered as a polite prelude of a business query regarding the stock of pepper and cowries available for sale³⁶. It is irrefutable that the general tone of description of their mutual dealings, from its very beginning remained more or less acrimonious. In sharp contrast, the Prince Regent Kunhi Koman (Cunhi Homa of Company Records), the principal adversary of Ali Raja has frequently been described in the folios of Consultation as ‘our Prince’ with an extreme level of cordiality and fondness to be extended to a native prince. It seems quite normal for the British to be apathetic towards this particular *swaroopam* which was, in many respects, at odd with the pattern of politics around.

At the time of the arrival of British in Cannanore, the Dutch East India Company, their formidable rival, has well been established in this part of the coast with active support and assistance of the Ali Rajas. Joining hands with *kolattiri*, the pungent foe of Ali Rajas, then was the only available choice for the English. The ruling elite in Kolathunadu were sharing a bitter sense of hostility towards the Ali Rajas as it was into their domain the latter was making inroads. Unsurprisingly, the English also viewed Ali Raja as a usurper perfectly in tune with the prevailing notions of power and legitimacy as conceived by the Nair Chiefs of *Kolattiri* kingdom, their principal ally and also a bitter foe of Ali Rajas. In the quarrels between Cannanore Mappilas and *Kolattiri's Nairs* which was a common phenomenon throughout the first quarter of eighteenth century, the *Nairs* were backed by the English while the Dutch extended their support to the Mappilas. In helping *kolattiri* against the Mappilas under Ali Raja, the English might also have cherished a hidden agenda of expelling the Dutch from their fortress and the Ali Rajas from their bazaar at Cannanore. Referring to the English assistance to *kolattiri's Nairs* in the fiercest of their encounters with Ali Raja's men occurred in 1722, Canter

³⁶ T.C 1725,p.9

Visscher says that “the English always supporting the party of Colastri, and furnishing them with all necessaries of war, on condition, it is said, that if the bazaar was conquered and the Moors expelled, the English should have a factory there”³⁷. The English should have enough reason to think that the Dutch could not survive in Cannanore if the Ali Raja is expelled from the bazaar for once. Apart from this, the innately prejudiced way of looking into the ‘moors’ and their culture by the English may also have cast its share in making them unfriendly towards the Ali Raja and the Mappilas. As observed by Francis Robinson “the British came to the Muslim world with attitudes formed by the rhetoric of Europe's long encounter with Islam. There was the Christian polemic against Islam with its accusations that Muhammad was an impostor, that his faith was spread by violence, that it endorsed sexual freedom on earth and promised sensual bliss in heaven”³⁸. However, the Company was forced to make and execute trade agreements with Ali Raja as it was really impossible for them to overlook his mercantile prominence in the coast of Malabar. Generally speaking, the attitude of EIC towards the *swaroopam* was inimical and were often seen judged in Tellicherry Consultations as a group of “most base and treacherous people”³⁹.

Kolathunadu princes were at their best in transmitting to the Company circles their antipathy towards Cannanore Mappilas and the family of Ali Rajas. As has already been referred, they were depicted in their representations addressed to the Company as ‘headstrong and self-willed’ and as a group of people very fond of creating troubles and using violence. Presumably, their plan was to settle their own accounts with the Ali Rajas at the expense of the English. At the Prince’s desire, “the English had to keep a

³⁷ Jacob Canter Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, Madras, 1862, p.119.

³⁸ Francis Robinson, *The British Empire and the Muslim World* in Louise, R & Brown, J (Ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol-4*, pp.398-420, Oxford University Press, London, 2001.

³⁹ Consultation dated 12th August 1736, T.C 1736-37, p.6.

great many Nairs to guard the factory [Tellicherry] against possible attacks by Ali Raja and other enemies who wanted to get them out of the place”⁴⁰. Obviously, the expenses of the Company in this regard were extraordinarily high. To the worse, the English also had to find means to meet the expenses related to frequent borrowings by the Prince and also on account of customary and occasional gifts to be presented to him and other princes. Due to the intensification of conflicts involving *kolattiri* and Ali Raja in the early decades of eighteenth century, the Company’s expenditure in the form of loans and arms delivered to Prince had rose to an ever time high. In a consultation, Robert Adams who was known for his unconcealed inclination towards the Prince, had to admit that the Prince was not having the habit of giving any *ola*⁴¹ for said debts which actually meant that he was getting money and arms from the factory even without submitting proper requests in writing, by making full use of the Company’s apprehensions about the ‘evil designs of Ali Raja’ and also due to their optimism that a plausible outcome of prince’s victory in the quarrel will be the expulsion of the Dutch from Cannanore.

Upon surveying the accounts in May 1727, it is found that till then, the Prince owed the Company an amount of eighty one thousand six hundred eighty one Fanams. Therefore, the Chief and Factors at Tellicherry had to report the Bombay Council that “ever since the commencement of these disputes [between the Prince and Ali Raja] he has been constantly pressing us for money and stores” and “it has been with great difficulty we have been able to continue the former [Prince] in your Hon^{rs} interest”⁴². Though the Prince was habituated to ask for money and assistance from the Company in the

⁴⁰ Surat Series, (India Office Records) Vol-109, page 202, quoted in EFI Vol-3, p.415.

⁴¹ A letter or declaration in writing, usually in palm leaf.

⁴² Letter dated 7th Feb 1731 from Tellicherry to President and Council, Bombay, LFT 1729-31, p.56.

pretext of meeting the threats of Ali Raja, he evaded its repayment by citing as excuse, the holding of many of his former divisions by Ali Raja causing him considerable loss of revenue⁴³. This has forced the President and Council at Bombay to instruct their men at Tellicherry “not to lend [him] any money without [obtaining their] previous license”⁴⁴.

However, the Company could not stick on to this stand any longer as the Ali Raja has intensified his attacks in certain strategic points of Prince’s domain. In May 1727, he fired at one of Prince’s forts at Pallikkunnu without ‘any reason or cause’. Deeply distressed, the Prince again approached the Company for assistance and demanded the supply of “100 Bales Rice, 4 Chests Gunpowder & Lead...as well as 25 musketeers...”In the Consultation followed, the Chief and factors at Tellicherry resolved unanimously not to entertain his demands this time as the Prince had owed already a huge amount to the Company and also they could not act contrary to the orders conveyed by their superiors from Bombay. Nevertheless, after prolonged discussions, the Chief was authorized to issue rice, gunpowder and lead as demanded by the Prince in his own account. This was only to prevent any possible ill consequences of not helping their best friend ‘in so small a matter in the time of his extraordinary necessity’⁴⁵.

But, Company’s assistance to the Prince was proved insufficient to prevent Ali Raja from creating further trouble. The firing at Pallikkunnu was soon followed by the capturing on 5th June 1727 of the fort at Kadalayi erected by the prince as a barrier to a “Large Country which produces a great Quantity of pepper [Randettara] ...which we [the Company] have hitherto had”⁴⁶. It was a calculated move by Ali Raja to control the flow of pepper

⁴³ Consultation dated 9th May 1727, T.C 1726-27, p.103.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.105.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.,p.112.

from Randettara. This attack was really annoying for EIC as they, enticed by its overwhelming mercantile significance and also being aware of the strong desire of the Dutch to capture it with a view to control the pepper trade in those parts, were long hankering for its seizure. The seizure of Kadalayi not only made Ali Raja ‘the master of the country thereabouts’ but also offered him a chance to ‘control the trade therein.’ Apart from the possible loss of trade, Company was also anxious of the safety and security of Chatoo Chetty, their most trusted principal merchant who resides in and operates from Agar, a seaside village near Edakkad adjacent to Kadalayi. So, the Company wrote Ali Raja repeatedly asking him not to harm Chatoo Chetty and his people. To this, Ali Raja responded positively and assured the Chief that since he esteems, “what belongs to you as if my own and mine as yours...I shall not give him trouble”. However, he added, almost like a precondition to leave Chatoo Chetty unharmed, “when I may happen to stand in real need of your assistance I hope you will not deny it me”⁴⁷. This only shows that Ali Raja had expected some favour from the part of the Company or at least, their neutrality in his conflict with the Prince.

The capturing of the hill and fort at Kadalayi was indeed a remarkable victory for Ali Raja. It actually placed him in a better position especially with regard to his mercantile prospects. It was a clear sign of warning to all those including the EIC who were really excited to write him off foreseeing his imminent reduction by the Prince. For the Company, the attack was really an eye opening one as it prompted them to think of the futility of backing the Prince so unequivocally at the expense of hurting Ali Raja who certainly possessed more trading capabilities. EIC was well aware of the harms to their trading interests that Ali Raja could easily bring from Kadalayi in association with the Dutch. Their greatest fear was the Dutch taking possession of the fort

⁴⁷ Ali Raja’s letter to Chief dated 8th June 1727 as translated and quoted in T.C 1726-27, p.113.

at Kadalayi which they perceived as an impediment to be prevented at any coast. They were also aware of the fact that aggrieving and annoying Ali Raja further would place Chatoo Chetty, their principal merchant, in trouble as he resides very close to Kadalayi. Moreover, as explained already, the Company was very much worn-out of lending money, arms and ammunitions to the prince without even a farthest hope of repayment. Presumably, due to all the aforesaid reasons, at this point company began to play a double deal to which two separate letters sent from Tellicherry stands as ample evidence. On 7th June 1727 immediately following the capture of fort at Kadalayi, the Chief has sent an *ola* to Ali Raja expressing his gladness over the victory⁴⁸. In another letter written two days later the Chief is seen communicating the Prince “a great concern for the loss of his hill” and advising him “not to take it too much to the heart ... [since] it is common when the subjects are disobedient for a Prince to suffer”⁴⁹. Nevertheless this does not suppose a total abandonment of the Prince by the Company or a change of stand in favour of Ali Raja. Instead, it only exemplifies the political and mercantile compulsions of the time that had forced them to take a more cautious stand in this enduring conflict.

Although, the EIC cherished a deep sense of empathy towards Prince Cunhi Homa and his cause, they can't altogether disregard Ali Raja because of his mercantile prominence. Moreover, the English also wanted to prevent Ali Raja from jeopardizing their business interests either by inclining more towards the Dutch or by troubling Chatoo Chetty further. So, the same Company that used to justify their support to the Prince on the ground that he is the ‘king of the country we reside in’⁵⁰ is also seen turning down his plea for financial assistance on the ground that “it is Prince Cunhi Ommo’s business to

⁴⁸ Consultation dated. 8th June 1727, T.C 1726-27,p.113

⁴⁹ Ibid.,p.114

⁵⁰ Consultation dated 27th April 1728, T.C 1727-28,p.108.

protect his own Territories and our Trade therein as we pay him Customs”⁵¹. Accordingly, the President and Governor in Council of Bombay has advised the Chief and Factors at Tellicherry to “cultivate a good correspondence with him [Ali Raja] and not [to] interfere in the quarrel between him and our Prince, further than to supply the latter with such warlike stores for his defense as he shall request and pay ready money for”⁵². The letter also tried to console their men at Tellicherry who had communicated their fear of possible disturbances to pepper trade to be caused from Kadalayi by Ali Raja in following terms. “We are of opinion he will be very cautious of doing so, as he must be sensible we can take satisfaction on his trade afloat for what injuries he may do us ashore”⁵³. On another occasion also the Bombay Government has seen instructing Robert Adams, the Chief at Tellicherry to let “Ally Rajah know that if the Hon’ble Company should suffer any damage through the disturbances he has created with our Prince, we shall take satisfaction on his trade at sea”⁵⁴. The consistent use of such threats containing a direct reference to hampering maritime movement is well enough to emphasize the significance of the mightier fleet of EIC in executing their colonial designs in the coast of Malabar. On the other hand, the effectiveness of employing such threats as a ploy to bring them into terms also underlines the fundamental fact that the political prominence of the *swaroopam* was indebted almost exclusively to the affluence they gathered from maritime trade.

But Ali Raja soon proved inept to sustain his winning spirit any further. The Prince was confident that Ali Raja could be brought under him. So he was totally unwilling to lend ear to the call for mediation offered from

⁵¹ Consultation dated 11th December 1727, T.C 1727-28,p.37.

⁵² Letter dated 10th September 1727 from Bombay Castle to Tellicherry, LTT 1726-28, Vol-I, p.24.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.,p.29.

the part of EIC⁵⁵. By all respects, the year 1728 was not a good one for Ali Raja and his *swaroopam*. On 20th February that year, the Company was seen declaring joyously that “our Prince joined with the king of Cotata [Kottayam] landed on Durmapatam and took one of Ally Rajahs Forts” therein⁵⁶. Three days later, the Prince ransacked the bazaar of Baliapatam killing about 600 men women and children⁵⁷ simply because they have been allied with Ali Raja who defied his suzerainty. More sadly, the House was literally become leaderless at this hour of crisis as the reigning Raja has gone to Mecca for Haj and died there mysteriously some months later. With the attempt on Durmapatam and the ‘destruction of most of the people at Baliapatam’, Cannanore Mappilas were worsted so much that the ‘Heiress of Ali Raja’ approached the Company men at Tellicherry to arbitrate a truce and also to provide assistance in the form of some large guns and two elephants. The Chief now admonished them off at a point when they were desperately in need of assistance from EIC.

The Company rejected Ali Raja’s plea for arms on account of ‘the risk involved in the possibility of reaching those weapons at Nair’s hands at one time or other’. After ‘mature deliberations’ they resolved to advise Ali Rajah’s people to ensure their safety themselves by preferring a total surrender before the Prince after throwing “the Guns into the Sea or River, or burst them with Gunpowder”. Otherwise it was very probable that “they may speedily be placed against them at Cannanore”⁵⁸. The absolute denial of any sort of assistance and also the advise for total submission before the Prince delivered to Ali Raja’s people at the time of their greatest dismay could only be viewed as a calculated move to ensure their extinction at the hands of the

⁵⁵ Consultation dated 13th December 1727, T.C 1727-28, p.41.

⁵⁶ Consultation dated 20th February 1728, T.C 1727-28, p.61.

⁵⁷ Consultation dated 26th February 1728, T.C 1727-28, p.63.

⁵⁸ Consultation dated 28th February 1728, T.C 1727-28, pp.63-64.

Prince. The overtly excited tenor of consultations at Tellicherry while describing the sequence of defeats inflicted upon the ‘Moors’ by ‘our Prince’ is enough to show Company’s enthusiasm over the imminent collapse of Ali Rajas, the merchant magnets who always created troubles to British trading interests in association with the Dutch. The advice given to Ali Raja’s Heiress to effect the destruction of their arms enmass by throwing them either in the sea or river as the only available way out could be viewed as a ploy designed to disarm them in favour of the Prince. The Company’s denunciation of Arakkal’s plea for mediation was clearly an encouraging sign for the Prince to go ahead with his mission of bringing the ‘ Moors to their former state of obedience’.So, on 29th June, the combined forces of the Prince and the King of Cotata, took Ali Raja’s island of Dharmatam in their possession, burning and destroying houses, ships and vessels there. They also captured two elephants and several cannons belonging to Ali Raja. With this, EIC men at Tellicherry have started dreaming of “an attempt [by the Prince] on Cannanore as Moors are become vastly terrified”⁵⁹.

However, further advancement of the Prince to accomplish his intended task of expelling Ali Rajas from Cannanore which appeared imminent with the fall of Dharmatam and the ransacking at Baliapatam was curtailed due to certain unexpected turn of events. Firstly, to the greatest dismay of the Prince, Robert Adams had to quit from the helm of affairs at Tellicherry rather ingloriously owing to a rift among Factors. Adams, the long served chief of Tellicherry was rightly regarded as the real founder of the Tellicherry Factory because of his tactics and diplomacy that had guided it whole through a longer period of almost thirty years right from its infancy. The Prince always regarded him as a source of strength dependable in his conflicts with Ali Raja. In return, Adams viewed the Prince as the rightful

⁵⁹ Consultation dated 29th February 1728, T.C 1727-28, p.64.

ruler of the region and a loyal ally of the Company in this alien land. Adams was exceedingly generous in providing arms, ammunitions and financial assistance to the Prince even without the prior consent of Bombay government. Even before Adams' departure in April 1728, the Prince began complaining of inconveniences and delay in getting succours from Company and it got deteriorated further as John Braddyll who succeeded Adams, adamantly insisted on prior sanction by the Bombay authorities as a precondition for releasing any assistance. Another predicament was the rupture erupted in between the Prince and the Raja of Kottayam over the issue of partitioning Dhurmatam among them. The King of Kottayam, to whose assistance the Prince chiefly owed his former successes, now started threatening the withdrawal of his forces if he is not gratified immediately⁶⁰. Owing mostly to the lack of enthusiasm from the part of the Raja of Kottayam, the Prince failed miserably in two successive attacks intended to capture Cannanore⁶¹.

More unexpectedly, the Company also began to deviate a little from their declared policy of extending blatant support to the Prince, mainly due to the fear of Kottayam taking control of Dharmapatam. The Bombay Council had given strict instructions to the Factors at Tellicherry that "You must by all means endeavour to prevent the said king [of Kottayam] having any part of that Island [Dharmapatam]...since from such a situation he may have it in his power to stop the navigation of our river and give us further trouble..., if it remains in possession of the Prince or the Moors, we shall [also] have it in our power to keep them quiet".⁶² Besides, the English were tired of the protracted nature of the struggle between the two causing endless drain of Company's

⁶⁰ Para 19, of the letter dated 20th September 1728 from Bombay Castle to Tellicherry, LTT 1726-28,p.51

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, Para 20, p.51.

wealth and also the hampering of their trade interests. They were verily distressed with the attitude of the Prince who did nothing to lessen his debts despite the continuous advantage he 'has had over his enemies and the large booty fallen to his share'⁶³. Moreover, with the arrival in September 1728, of the news of Ali Raja's death in mysterious circumstances at Mecca, the Company now began to show a little leniency towards his family. When everyone expected the vigorous intensification of fight by the Prince against a 'leaderless house', the authorities at Bombay warned their men in Tellicherry to "act with the greater circumspection and maintain, if possible, exact neutrality between the contending parties"⁶⁴. They urged the Chief to "mediate a peace between him [Prince] and the Heir of Ally Rajah who ought not to suffer for the sins of his father"⁶⁵. It was not merely an act of sympathy but a deliberate attempt to evade a dangerous war so near their seat at Tellicherry. They also cherished an expectation that an armistice between the two must help to recover the 'long pending debts' of the family forthwith by capitalizing the change at the helm.⁶⁶ Now, it has become a general perception of the Company that an accommodation of all differences among the native princes should be attained at any cost so as to enable the repayment of their debts and to encourage trade in their territories⁶⁷.

The failure in acquiring from English, the support and assistance required to 'humble the Moors' as desired, made the Prince frustrated and to the greatest dismay of the Company, he even went to the extent of soliciting an alliance with the Dutch. The conceived plan was to get all the possible assistance from the Dutch Commander at Cochin through the mediation of the

⁶³ Ibid, Para 27, p.52

⁶⁴ Ibid, Para 18, p.51.

⁶⁵ Ibid.,

⁶⁶ Ibid, Para 21, p.51

⁶⁷ Ibid, Para 27, p.52

Raja of Cochin 'to reduce the Moors to their former obedience'. In return, Prince offered the Dutch his island of Dharmapatam⁶⁸. But the plan was not executed as conceived chiefly due to the lukewarm response of the Raja of Cochin who, though an ally of the Dutch, warned the Prince to be cautious before entering into any deals with the Dutch for they "would not fail to grasp at the whole dominion of [his] country, after having the least footing therein"⁶⁹. However, this attempted alliance is turned beneficial for the Prince as it earned him more succours from the British. The EIC wanted to prevent the Prince making an alliance with the Dutch "who have all along given proof of their intentions to deprive [them] from having any share of the trade of this coast"⁷⁰. Prince Regent reciprocated the English assistance this time by issuing on 2nd November 1730, a Royal Grant that made trade and traffic in his dominions including Randettara, Dharmapatam and Iravinadu, the exclusive privilege of EIC⁷¹.

Meanwhile, Arakkal *swaroopam* has made an all-out attempt to recapture their lost territories and prestige by seeking the assistance of Siddies, the dreadful sailors of West Coast of India well known for their 'piratical depredations'⁷². Apprehension of a frightful attack by the fleet of the Siddies on behalf of Arakkal was in the air for quite some time since August

⁶⁸ Consultation dated 21st August 1730, T.C 1730-31, Vol-IV, p.10.

⁶⁹ Consultation dated 1st November 1730, T.C 1730-31, Vol-IV, p.29.

⁷⁰ Consultation dated 19th August 1730, T.C 1730-31, Vol-IV, p.9.

⁷¹ William Logan, *Treaties*, No. XIX, p.18.

⁷² The Siddies are a unique tribal group of African ancestry found scattered in the coasts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnataka. Tellicherry Consultations simply mentions the name Siddies as the dreaded sailors who had come to Malabar as far south as Baliapatam in 1730 to assist Ali Rajas. But these archival records won't help us to get any other details regarding them including the name of port/town to which they belong. However, it seems reasonable to identify them with the Siddies of Jangira near Bombay for they had the habit of frequenting the coast of Malabar with their piratical deeds and also of acting as mercenaries. The reference in Consultations to the retreat of Siddies northward when repulsed by the Prince also suggests that they sailed Southward of Bombay to reach Baliapatam.

1730. It seems reasonable to imagine that EIC had used to communicate inflated versions of the stories of these mighty and cruel pirates so as to keep the panic ridden Prince totally subservient to them. At last, when the much awaited raiders came to wage an attack on Baliapatam on 1st January 1731, they were repulsed soon with great many losses by the Prince with the timely assistance of the Company. After their retreat northward in the second week of the same month causing considerable disappointment of the House of Arakkal who brought them here, the Company had to admit that the apprehensions regarding their strength proved to be greater than its actual proportions⁷³. As usual, the Prince made the maximum use of this opportunity to extract arms and assistance from the English. As he got succeeded in convincing the Company that something farther should be done from their part at this extraordinary occasion, he was given a loan of twenty thousand Fanams in two installments, some grenades, large quantities of powder, shots and plenty of rice to feed his soldiers⁷⁴.

Canarese in Malabar

With the repulsion of the Siddies, it seemed, the stage has been set for the ultimate subjugation of Cannanore by the Prince. But, rather unexpectedly at this point, another potential danger has emerged in the northern frontier of *kolattiri* kingdom in the form of a military campaign by the Canarese kingdom of Ikkeri⁷⁵. Sivappa Nayaka of Ikkeri started invading the frontiers of

⁷³ Chief's Letter dated 10th February 1731 to Bombay Castle, LFT 1729-31, p.60.

⁷⁴ Consultations dated 2nd and 13th January, 1731, T.C 1730-31, Vol-IV, pp.51,56.

⁷⁵ Ikkeri Kingdom (1499-1763) also known as the Nayakas of Keladi and Bednur Rajas was an early modern principality of South Canara. Initially, these *Lingayats* were the vassals of Vijayanagara Empire. The family attained independent status by mid sixteenth century with the fall of their suzerain. In their heydays they ruled a vast territory comprising almost the whole of coastal Karnataka and exerted control over the flourishing port towns of Honavar and Basrur. The history of this dynasty came to a close in 1763 with the annexation of Bednur by Nawab Hyder Ali Khan. To learn more about them, please refer *Keladi Polity* by K.N.Chitnis, Karnataka University, 1974.

Kolaswaroopam as early as in April 1730⁷⁶. Prince, finding it extremely difficult to contend with both domestic and foreign enemies simultaneously, was forced to enter into a truce with the House of Ali Rajas. As per the truce signed through the mediation of Kalliad Nambiar in June 1731, Arakkal has to pay the Prince an amount of 40,000 Fanams to enable him to carry on his wars against Canarese. However, the Company was skeptical of the longevity of the truce as the Prince himself has told them that it will last only 'till he may be able to put a stop to the pretensions of the Carnatic Raja'⁷⁷.

Encouraged by some of the displeased scions of the *Kolaswaroopam* who had continued their feud with the Prince Regent, Ragunath, the Canarese General has mobilised a huge army comprising some 30,000 men and reached as far south as Ezhimala almost unopposed in early 1732. Alarmed by the Canarese plan to seize the rich treasure of the Raja Rajeshwari temple of Taliparamba, Zamorine, one of the five Protectors of that temple joined the forces of Prince Regent with a view to repel the Canarese from assaulting it. The joined forces of Zamorine and the Prince Regent 'making in all a body of forty thousand men', met the Canarese army under Ragunath in January 1732 but were defeated 'without striking a blow' due to 'some mismanagement'. The unaccountably panicked forces of the Kings of Malabar left the Canarese at their will to pursue the conquest. Almost all the transportable valuables of this rich pagoda were shifted to the land belonging to King of Kottayam by employing elephants, oxen and a good number of men.⁷⁸

The defeat was so upsetting for the Prince that he found himself under the necessity of striking up a peace with the Canarese. Being deserted by

⁷⁶ Letter dated 19th July 1733 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, Vol-2, p.61.

⁷⁷ Letter dated 2nd August 1731, From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1729-31, p.70.

⁷⁸ Letter dated 19th July 1733, From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, Vol-2, p.61

several of his subjects, the Prince soon realised the futility of fighting the mighty Canarese with such a feeble and incompetent Nair militia. Moreover, at this critical juncture he seems to have considered it more beneficial for him to revive his old feud with Arakkal and to utilise the Canarese invasion as a golden opportunity to accomplish his much cherished target of reducing the Moors. Accordingly, on 28th October 1732, he crossed the Baliapatam river along with a band of fifteen hundred Nair soldiers and some of the principal subjects of his Country to meet Ragunath, the Canarese general encamped there. The Prince was given a cordial reception by him and a treaty was signed between the two. The treaty placed country northward of Baliapatam as far as Nileshwaram under the command of the Prince in return of a yearly acknowledgement to the King of Bednur as shall be thereafter agreed on. It also accorded Canarese the permission to construct three separate forts at Madacara, Kavayi and Neeleshwaram. More importantly, the treaty deprived Carnatic Raja any pretensions to the areas southward of Baliapatam but was only to serve the Prince with his force in order to oblige the rebels to submit to his 'Royal Will'. It also stipulated that in areas southward of Baliapatam, the Canaries army should be at the complete obedience and disposal of the Prince⁷⁹. These two provisions obviously indicate the determination of the Prince to reduce the Mappilas of Cannanore who offered the stiffest challenge to his sovereignty. In a bid to justify his opportunism, the Prince represented EIC authorities at Tellicherry that "he found himself abandoned by all, and none was inclinable to stand by him, he found himself in danger of losing his whole country; that therefore he preferred the peace he made, to so uncertain and unequal a contest"⁸⁰. The EIC at Tellicherry viewed this change of heart as a 'melancholy posture of affairs'⁸¹ as they had every reason to forecast a

⁷⁹ Consultation dated 23rd October 1732, T.C 1732-33vol-VI, p.6.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.5.

⁸¹ Letter dated 23rd October 1732, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, Vol-2, p.2

possible attack on their settlement after the reduction of Cannanore by the Canarese with active assistance of Prince regent, their long-time ally.

In 1733, the repeated attempts by Canarese in conjunction with Prince's army to besiege Cannanore were repelled by the Mappilas who had a numerous body of soldiers, a seeming resolution and many defensible places at their command⁸². In countering the Canarese, they were benefited greatly from their ascendancy at sea and also through the procuring of weapons from English. The constant cruising off Mount Dilly or Ezhimala of *munchuas* of Ali Rajas in conjunction with those of Cota Marakkars with a view to obstruct the supply of provisions to Canarese army had created much havoc among them⁸³. When the Heiress of Cannanore first made her request for the supply of a number of cannons and other weapons to extricate her from the present danger⁸⁴, the English rejected it outright on the ground that even the least listening of such pleas must infallibly render them liable to the displeasure of the Prince of Cherica, under whose protection they resides here⁸⁵. Shortly after this, realising the fact that Tellicherry will be the target of attack by Canarese next to the fall of Cannanore, they re-examined their stand and resolved to furnish the Moors for their money with such quantity of warlike stores as they can spare since 'Cannanore is the only barrier' among the innumerable country powers that can withstand the Canarese'. Rather than an act of camaraderie, this assistance in arms was a calculated move intended to enable the Cannanore Moors "to put a stop to the progress of these invaders [Canarese] and keep the danger for some time longer from our own doors"⁸⁶. However, the English preferred to keep the consignment of arms

⁸² LFT 1732-33 Vol-2, p.17.

⁸³ Letter dated 17th December 1732, From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, Vol-2, p.11.

⁸⁴ Consultation dated 6th November 1732, T.C 1732-33, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Consultation dated 15th May 1732, T.C 1731-32, p. 56.

made available through their ship 'Compton' a secret fearing Prince's wrath⁸⁷. The English wanted to hide this assistance from the eyes of Canarese as well since the later could obstruct at their will, the importation of rice from Mangalore without which it was impossible for the factory to subsist⁸⁸.

The determined efforts of the Canarese and the Prince to besiege the Bazaar of Cannanore and nearby forts were resisted effectively by Ali Raja with utmost bravery and enthusiasm. Referring to the gallantness of the Mappilas, the Chief of Tellicherry Factory wrote to his superiors in Bombay that "determined to die rather than submit" the 'Moors of Cannanore' somewhat succeeded in "defending so large a place with so few people"⁸⁹. On another occasion, the Chief reported that "Moors seem no ways dismayed having near 12000 men in the place including those arrived from remote places such as Calicut Ponnani and other places southward"⁹⁰. The conflicts erupted in between the Ali Rajas and the Nair Chieftains of *Kolaswaroopam* seems to have attained religious or communal overtones. The tension might have got infuriated with the murdering of a local Mappila cleric at Madakkara by Canarese without any provocation. Of course, this might have fumed the sentiments of the Mappilas as far south as Ponnani prompting many of them to flock in solidarity with their religious brethren of north Malabar⁹¹. At the same time, the overwhelming participation of southerners in this northern conflict also underlines the altitude of acceptance being enjoyed by Ali Rajas even outside their territorial domain and its influence in bringing the Southern Mappilas here.

⁸⁷ Consultation dated 8th January 1733, T.C 1732-33, p. 37.

⁸⁸ Lr. Dated 15th December 1732 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, Vol-2, p.17.

⁸⁹ Lr. Dated 24th Jan 1733, LFT 1732-33, p.27.

⁹⁰ Lr. Dated 22nd Feb 1733, LFT 1732-33, p.40.

⁹¹ Ibid.

The enduring conflict in North Malabar has forced EIC to endeavour a confederacy against the Canarese by incorporating to its fold all the Malabari Princes, the French and also the Dutch, if possible. The Company was greatly alarmed by the long continuance of war very close to their settlement at Tellicherry causing much disturbance to trade in that region. They were particularly worried of the prospects of their pepper trade as the Canarese encamped at Kadalayi has started molesting the men of Chattoo Chetty of Agar, their principal supplier of that commodity. They were extremely troubled by the twin fears of a possible stoppage of their pepper trade as well as the Canarese targeting of their settlement at Tellicherry consequent on the fall of Cannanore⁹². Above all, the Company has realised rightly that the success of Canarese in this conflict means the loss of all the privileges granted so far to them by the princes of Malabar which would render the region “free to all merchants whatever, as is their common maxim in the parts they possess”⁹³. They had every reason to assume that the Canarese “will be inclined to lay heavy duties and impositions on the trade to recompense the excessive expense the King of Canara has been at in this undertaking”⁹⁴.

The apprehension of enhanced taxing soon proved true as the Canarese started levying on pepper brought from river Baliapatam and Agar, the *Adlamy*⁹⁵ tax at the rate of two pagodas a candy⁹⁶. All these have convinced the Company that the Canarese must be expelled from Malabar at any cost lest the trade in the region should remain in a precarious state. The Ali Rajas were also offered a berth in the proposed confederacy on condition that they should

⁹² Letter dated 24th Jan 1733 from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, p. 27.

⁹³ Letter dated 13th Feb 1733 from Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1732-33, p. 37.

⁹⁴ Letter dated 23rd Feb 1734, from Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1733-34 Vol-III, p. 27.

⁹⁵ *Adlamy* is the excise duty prevalent in the Canara Kingdom.

⁹⁶ Letter dated 28th Sept 1734, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1733-34 Vol-III, p. 58.

accept the sovereignty of the Prince. It was a calculated move by the English to tame the Prince who was ‘exceedingly incensed against the Moors’⁹⁷. The projected plan was to drive the Canarese over the river Nileswaram and then put the Prince in possession of the fortresses he demands”⁹⁸. It was also agreed that the expenses relating to the conquest aiming the expulsion of the Canarese should be met jointly by all the stakeholders including the Heads of Taliparamba Temple. However, the confederacy, intended to execute some ‘consistent and conducive measures’ to prevent Canarese aggrandizement in Malabar has failed to materialize owing to the ‘deceitfulness’ of the French who started rising new demands and apprehensions about the scheme when everything was set for its execution⁹⁹. Opting out from the confederacy in eleventh hour by the French should be attributed mainly to the blatantly pro-Prince provisions of the articles upon which it was founded. The French had every reason to foresee a post-war scenario in Malabar where the English would find themselves comfortably placed to manipulate everything in their favour by virtue of their longstanding friendship with the Prince.

Meanwhile, in Feb 1734, the Canarese had intensified their siege on Cannanore and the House of Arakkal was obliged to sue for a Peace which they obtained on 11th February 1734 through the mediation of the Dutch. As per the truce, Arakkal has to pay the Canarese, rupees twenty thousand as war indemnity besides the surrendering of the fort at Kadalayi¹⁰⁰. Though, the Ali Rajas had to surrender the fort at Kadalayi to the Canarese, the treaty should be weighed as a major victory of the former as it demonstrated their capabilities as an independent contender in regional politics. The EIC was not

⁹⁷ Letter dated 22nd Feb 1733, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, p. 40.

⁹⁸ Letter dated 15th Sept 1733, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, p. 68.

⁹⁹ Letter dated 13th March 1733, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, pp. 45-6.

¹⁰⁰ Letter dated 27th Feb 1734, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1733-34 Vol-III, p. 31.

in favour of a bilateral truce between Canarese General and the Heiress as they were aware of the fact that any such treaties realized not through their mediation would invariably weaken their place in this coast¹⁰¹. The English was so infuriated by the act of Heiress concluding treaty with Canarese excluding themselves as well as the Prince that they sent Rose Galley and two other gallivants to cruise off Mount Dilly in search of Moorish vessels in order to let the Heiress know the ill consequences of her ‘betrayal’. Terrified by this attempted embargo at sea, the Heiress soon made an acknowledgement of her ‘untruthful’ attitude and wrote to Company in very submissive terms that she would send some of her principal people to Tellicherry to accept any reasonable terms of satisfaction¹⁰².

After capturing Kadalayi, Canarese advanced farther south and captured Koodali. Their aim was to capture Durmapatam with a view to convert that place the centre of their Malabar possessions. The French were also in favour of Canarese occupying the Island, as they were quite certain that such a situation would, at any rate be detrimental to trading fortunes of EIC. On the other hand, the English was very much keen on taking possession of the island due to the great influence it has exerted on the trade of the region¹⁰³. The Factory was well aware that “it is of such consequence by the influence it has over the trade of this [Tellicherry] settlement, and it’s falling into the hands of the Canarese or any Europe nation, may render this place of little benefit hereafter”¹⁰⁴. The major portion of Durmapatam at that time was held, though by virtue of his conquests, by the Prince Regent who was willing to hand it over to EIC owing to his disgust with its Mappila populace who generally maintained good relations with their coreligionists at Cannanore

¹⁰¹ Letter dated 14th Jan 1733, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1732-33, p. 21.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Consultation dated 1st Nov, 1734 in T.C 1734-35,pp.16-17

¹⁰⁴ Consultation dated 28th Nov, 1734 in T.C 1734-35,p.23.

barring certain occasional disputations. So, in May 1734, Prince Udayavarman of the 'Palace Palli' (*pallikovilakam*), heir of the King of Colastri has issued a Royal Writing to Stephen Law, the Chief of Tellicherry Factory which granted the English Company the right to possess Durmapatam¹⁰⁵. But, the Raja of Kottayam who also shared some rights over Durmapatam was not in favour of allowing the English a footing in Durmapatam. The English even feared that the Kottayam Raja might hand it over to the French to deprive them.

The situation was definitely alarming for the English as they could rightly foresee the possible damages of allowing Canarese or the French so near Tellicherry that too at a spot suited ideally for controlling the flow of pepper from hinterlands through the riverine routes. So, strenuous efforts were initiated by Stephen Law, who had succeeded John Braddyll as the Chief of Tellicherry Factory in December 1732, to place Durmapatam under the command of EIC. He made maximum use of the 'Canarese threat' as a pretext to place the Company in possession of Durmapatam. As a first step, in December 1734, Law with the instrumental interference of Domingo Rodrigues, the linguist of EIC at Tellicerry, was actually compelled the Heiress of the house of Adiraja of Cannanore to hand over the *Grove Island* lying off the Point of Darmapattanam to the Company¹⁰⁶. After this first victory, the English now had to deal with the Raja of Kottayam who for quite some time has resisted their proposals for surrendering his claim over Durmapatam upon one pretext or the other¹⁰⁷. At last, the crossing of Anjarakkandi river on 3rd February 1735 by some 5000 strong Canarese army and their encamping on the sandy flats at the east end of the island with a

¹⁰⁵ William Logan, *Treaties*, No. XXII, p.19.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, No. XXV, p.24.

¹⁰⁷ Consultation dated 23rd December 1734 in T.C 1734-35, p.34.

view to invade Kottayam¹⁰⁸, has put an end to his fickleness. It was believed that the Canarese were actually endeavoring to extend their conquest of Malabar country as far south as Kotta River¹⁰⁹. The frightened Raja immediately send an *ola* to the Chief at Tellicherry desiring the English taking possession of some places of the Island Durmapatam and their hoisting of English flag there. He also assured the Company all the assistance hereafter in their endeavor to dislodge the Canarese from their present situation¹¹⁰.

After securing a solid footing in Durmapatam through the much laboured processes of acquiring consent from the Prince Regent, the Heiress of Cannanore and the King of Cotata, the English now resorted to endeavor the more difficult task of forming an alliance of Malabari chieftains against the Canarese. The English rightly anticipated a possible Canarese attack on Durmapatam ‘at any point which may result in occasioning of an excessive expense in defending Tellicherry’. They also feared that “they could soon find the Canarese warmly introducing the French into trade¹¹¹. EIC was greatly in need of such confederacy as an inevitable precondition for bringing Canarese into their terms and also to ensure proper defraying of war expenses¹¹². Thus, a confederacy comprising the Prince Regent, the King of Kottayam and EIC was formed by the end of February 1736. Initially, the Heiress of Cannanore kept herself away from joining it. Though, she assured the English in writing that she is in no capacity to assist Canarese in the ongoing conflict, they were skeptical of her professed neutrality. Therefore, they engaged their frigate Victoria to examine all the vessels and boats that go in and come out of

¹⁰⁸ Consultation dated 3rd February 1735 in T.C 1734-35, p.43.

¹⁰⁹ Letter dated 11th January 1735, From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1733-34,p.73.

¹¹⁰ Consultation dated 7th February 1735 in T.C 1734-35, p.44.

¹¹¹ Consultation dated 17th February 1736 in T.C 1735-36, p.65.

¹¹² Consultation dated 29th September 1735 in T.C 1735-36,p.3.

Cannanore to prevent them from providing any sort of assistance to Canarese¹¹³. At last on 11th March 1736, the Heiress of Cannanore also had joined the confederacy and assured the Prince that she would not give the least assistance to Canarese and would assign all the force she could spare to join Prince's army and to do everything in her power to expel the enemy. However, she wanted to keep this assured assistance a secret as it would be imprudent for her to undertake since she lays exposed to the Canarese guns at Kadalayi¹¹⁴. Greatly satisfied at this gesture of assistance, the Prince assured Heiress in writing that "in case the Canarese are drove from Kadalayi neither him nor his heirs would continue that fortification but it should be totally razed since it had occasioned the loss of so much blood and confusion in the country and moreover that he would in future esteem the Moors his good subjects and behave them with particular civility, provided their deportment was suitable"¹¹⁵.

The first major victory of the confederacy was registered on 25th February 1736, when the Canarese were forced to evacuate the Island of Darmapatanam. On the 7th of March they were ousted from Madakkara at the mouth of Baliapatam river. Though the English desired the demolition of the fort therein, the Prince Regent insisted them to keep it for themselves fearing the possibility of Moors taking possession of said place in future. Pleased by the turn of events in his favour the Prince Regent, as a measure to check the possible Canarese invasions in future had decided to satisfy the English company with certain concessions. In March 1736, the Prince Regent through his royal writing allowed the company to erect another fortress "at the entrance of the river Biliapatam, on the spot called Maddacara, there to enjoy the sole traffic of pepper and cardamoms produced in those parts". The Prince

¹¹³ Consultation dated 3rd March 1736 in T.C 1735-36, p.77-78.

¹¹⁴ Consultation dated 11th March 1736 in T.C 1735-36, p.82.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Regent made clear his intention of allowing such privileges as something by which “they (EIC) do prevent the Canarese frequenting with their vessels for molesting me that way”. In addition to this, the treaty also provided permission to the Company to erect another fortress on the point of Edakkad for the better security of their trade carried on the district of Randettera¹¹⁶.

Next to fall was the Canarese stronghold at Kadalayi. Considering the significance of capturing that fortress in the overall context of the campaign, Stephen Law, the Chief, tried hard to persuade the Dutch to join the attack. Though, the Canarese presence in the region was proved detrimental to the trading fortunes of the Dutch, they, till then had kept them away from taking any active role in the campaign. This was primarily due to their fear of English taking possession of the Fortress of Kadalayi with the consent of the Prince Regent, after the expulsion of Canarese from there, as they had retained the fort at Madakkara. At last, on 21st March 1736, upon receiving from the Prince, a written assurance that he would, after ousting the Canarese demolish the fortress of Kadalayi, on condition that no one else should erect any other work there,¹¹⁷the Dutch also had extended their assistance in the campaign against the Canarese. On 30thMarch, they sent 300 men to assist the army of the confederacy in their attack against Canarese stationed at Kadalayi. The fort was stormed on 1st April with great carnage¹¹⁸forcing the sequential surrendering of other Canarese outposts southward of Nileshwaram such as Madayi¹¹⁹, Taliparambu¹²⁰, Matalay and Ayaconny¹²¹.

¹¹⁶ C.U Aitchison, (Ed.) *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Related to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol-X, Central Publication Branch, Government of India, Calcutta,1930, No.XXIII, Royal Writing of Prince Cunhamado of the Palli Palace to the Honourable English Company,1736 ,p.110.

¹¹⁷ Consultation dated 21st March 1736 in T.C 1735-36, p.89.

¹¹⁸ Consultation dated 1st April 1736 in T.C 1735-36, p.90.

¹¹⁹ Consultation dated 11th April 1736 in T.C 1735-36, p.94.

¹²⁰ Consultation dated 14th April 1736 in T.C 1735-36,p.94.

Although confined to Nileshwaram, the Canarese were not ready to give up their ambitions in Malabar. They made preparations for a second attack on Kolathunadu by October 1736. Before executing the avenging mission, Canarese sought the neutrality, if not the assistance of the English as they thought it indispensable to paralyze the Prince¹²². Upon receiving the information regarding the impending danger, the Prince Regent, as was his practice, approached the English for assistance and desired “the sparing of as many force as they can to act offensively and defensively against Canarese”¹²³. But, the English thought it prudent to keep themselves away from a war this time since their resources had been exhausted considerably during the previous encounter. Besides, the Company, from their experience, was well aware of the detriments to their trade to be caused by such a devastating war, more specifically in the highly competitive trading scenario of North Malabar. They were particularly apprehensive of the purposeful attempts of the Dutch and the French Companies to undermine the English dominance in north Malabar. At this point, the Company felt that the Prince was “much bent on siding with the Dutch and granting them the points they demand” like assigning them certain quantity of pepper annually at a limited price and “showing always a greater interest to their interests”¹²⁴. They also feared an active involvement of French Company in favour of Canarese in the looming war as a calculated effort to oust the English from Malabar trade¹²⁵.

Above all, as a result of Prince’s reluctance to effect the payment of his share of war expenses as promised by him even after the successful conclusion of war, has provoked EIC to develop a strong sense antipathy

¹²¹ Consultation dated 9th May 1736 in T.C 1735-36,p.108.

¹²² Consultation dated 8th October 1736 in T.C 1736-37, p.24.

¹²³ Ibid,, p.25.

¹²⁴ Consultation dated 30th December 1736 in T.C 1736-37, p.62.

¹²⁵ Consultation dated 28th September 1736 in T.C 1736-37, p.19.

towards him. A consultation at Tellicherry Factory put it plainly that “notwithstanding constant solicitations to the Prince for money he has so often promised, [the Company] could get from him nothing more than verbal assurances though the expenses are very high owing to the increase in military establishments”¹²⁶. The English also feared that the King of Cotata and the Moors of Cannanore who shared a sense of antagonism with the Company would not hesitate to fall on them in case a misfortune [from Canarese] had attended their small force here in Malabar¹²⁷. Further, the Company considered it impossible to impede the imperial designs of Canarese with the forces of Malabari princes who had “in so many plain instances showed an extreme cowardice”¹²⁸. Considering the above mentioned factors, the Board comprising the Chief and Factors at Tellicherry finally reached the conclusion that the conduct of the Prince is wholly directed for preserving his country at the expense of whomsoever and assist him further is nothing short of promoting the schemes of the Dutch in Malabar¹²⁹.

Accordingly, the Company had decided to accommodate with the Canarese exclusive of the Prince as there was a possibility of Canarese subduing Malabar¹³⁰. On 19th January 1737, the Board ultimately resolved that they have no other method left than to conclude a separate treaty with the Canarese. By doing so, the English reasonably expected that the Canarese will not violate their trade in areas southward of Baliapatam that includes all the pepper¹³¹. As expected, EIC has arranged a separate treaty with the King of Bednur in February 1737 that granted the Company several concessions to

¹²⁶ Consultation dated 24th May 1736 in T.C 1735-36, p.118.

¹²⁷ Letter dated 5th February 1737 From Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1736-37, p.43.

¹²⁸ Letter dated 26th January 1737, From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.38.

¹²⁹ Consultation dated 19th January 1737 in T.C 1736-37, p.75.

¹³⁰ Consultation dated 6th January 1737 in T.C 1736-37, p.64.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.66.

promote English trade in Malabar. These include the restoration in the event of Canarese subjugating Kolathunadu, of all the concessions and privileges previously granted to EIC by *kolattiri*, exclusive privilege to transport pepper and cardamom from the dominion of *kolattiri*, exemption from paying the Canarese duty known as *Adlamy* given to English vessels and *munchuas* exporting rice and other articles from the ports of Canara and the reopening of the English Factory at Onore (Honawar) etc.¹³²

Estranged by their long-term ally, the Prince Regent now turned towards the Dutch to carry on his fight with Canarese. Upon getting several concessions from the Prince including the assured supply of 1000 candies of pepper annually at the rate of rupees 56 per candy which was about half its market price, the Dutch in January 1737 agreed to assist the Prince in expelling the Canarese beyond the Chandragiri river and to bring the Moors and the Raja of Kottayam to his obedience¹³³. The plan conceived by the Dutch was to force the Canarese to accommodate with Prince without resorting to war since they felt it unwise to fight the mighty Canarese with such an inconsiderable army. With this intention, in March 1737, a brigantine (large two-masted vessel) and two sloops (sailing warships) belonging to the Dutch were anchored off Nileshwaram river¹³⁴. The Dutch had persuaded the Canarese General to accommodate with the Prince by restoring the territories captured from him. But this attempt proved unsuccessful as the proposal was totally unacceptable to Canarese. Finding it impractical to comply with the treaty obligations as both the parties were adamant on their respective stands, the Dutch, towards the end of April 1737 had decided to withdraw their fleet

¹³² William Logan, *Treaties*, No. XXXIII, p.31.

¹³³ Letter dated 5th February 1737 From Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1736-37, p.43.

¹³⁴ Letter dated 17th March 1737 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.56.

from Nileschwaram to Cochin¹³⁵. Perhaps, they, on a further consideration, might have realized the nonviability of such difficult and expensive task as the restoration of the Malabar country to the Prince.

Meanwhile, the Canarese had crossed the Nileschwaram river for the second time and had captured the fortress at Ayconny (Alikkunnu) in February 1737. They had continued their terrible depredations in Malabar without meeting any noteworthy opposition and by the end of April 1737 had reached as far south as Madayi¹³⁶. Distressed by the lukewarm response of the Dutch, defenseless Prince again approached EIC for assistance. On 13th April 1737, Prince Cunhi Homa held a long conference with the Chief of Tellicherry Factory who was greatly annoyed by the former seeking Dutch assistance against Canarese. In this meeting, the Prince explained that his siding with the Dutch was purely a matter of expediency just as the English did in reducing the fort at Kadalayi a year ago. He assured the Factors that he will in no wise permit the Dutch to interfere the trade of the English. He also added that his offering of a thousand candies of pepper to the Dutch for an under price is in no way to affect the English since the entire quantity of pepper promised in that deed is to be procured from regions now controlled by Canarese¹³⁷. In addition to the repeated assurances of loyalty, the Prince, 'as a strongest proof of his sincere attachment to *saib* English Company', has on 5th July 1737 issued a Royal Writing that unambiguously ruled out the possibility of his entering into any future intercourse with any other European nation without the 'consent and approval of those in the direction of Tellicherry'¹³⁸. The content of this *ola* exemplifies how such a prominent political house as the *Kolaswaroopam* was reduced to a position totally

¹³⁵ Letter dated 9th June 1737 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.77.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.,p.78.

¹³⁸ William Logan, *Treaties*, No. XXXV, p.33.

subservient to an alien power through calculated moves of the Company. The appearance in this Royal Writing of the term *sajib* (Sahib) meaning ‘the master’ as a prefix to English Company does carry wider connotations when judged from the stand point of colonial subjugation.

Though the Canarese had become the sole masters of areas southward of Nileshwaram up to Madayi, the Prince was not in a position to offer even a scruffy resistance since he did not had any forces together, any head to conduct or money to pay his soldiers¹³⁹. Several of Prince’s *nairs* deserted him. Some of them have joined the Canarese along with the fifth king or *anjankur* who openly revolted against his authority. In short, the Prince was trapped in a juncture where he could not defend himself nor rely on the fidelity of his *nair* militia. In their part, the Canarese also seemed to have lost their initial interest in the conquest since it, owing to their treaty obligations with the English, promised them nothing more than satisfying their revenge¹⁴⁰. Finally on 26th October 1737, the peace was concluded between Prince Regent and Raja of Bednur through the mediation of the English. As per this treaty, Canarese were entitled to hold the fort of Madayi and the places northward of it while the Prince Regent’s sway was confined to ‘what remains to the southward’ of Madayi¹⁴¹. Though the conflicts between Prince Regent and Canarese continued even after, occasionally up to 1740, the line of Baliapatam river was obstinately agreed as the line of control by both the parties. Thus, the office of the once powerful *kolattiri* was now reduced territorially to the village of Chirakkal and its surroundings.

¹³⁹ Letter dated 12th February 1737 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.48.

¹⁴⁰ Letter dated 9th June 1737 from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.79.

¹⁴¹ Letter dated 2nd November 1737 from Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1736-37, pp.89-90.

English East India Company and Durmapatam Island

EIC had exploited the turmoil of Malabar shrewdly in their favour with a view to fulfill their interests at any cost jeopardizing those of the native rulers of Malabar. The way by which EIC had appropriated the possession of Durmapatam Island stands as an example of this sort of colonial subterfuge. The Company from the very beginning of their acquaintance with Malabar was eagerly cherishing a desire to bring the island in their possession due to its proximity to both riverine and sea routes and also the spice-rich provinces of Randettara, Anjarakkandi and Kottayam. When they were forced to abandon the Kottakkunnu Factory of Baliapatam in 1675, they actually preferred Durmapatam as the site of their proposed factory and it was then Prince of Kolattunadu who diverted them to Tellicherry of which a reference has been made earlier in this chapter.

The account of Alexander Hamilton puts it unambiguously that near Tellicherry, Adiraja has a harbor called Durmapatam¹⁴². Robert Adams also admits that the Durmapatam was under the possession of Ali Rajas prior to its taking over in February 1728 by the combined forces of Prince Regent and the King of Cotata¹⁴³. After this conquest, the Factory, under the astute chieftaincy of Stephen Law, seems to have revived their eagerness to take the Island in their possession. However, they were forced to set aside this desire for a while as they were busy engaged in checking the Canarese who by then had reached very close to their settlement at Tellicherry putting the very existence of Tellicherry Factory in danger. Though, the Prince Regent was very much eager to hand over the Island to EIC as the easiest way to prevent its possible recapturing by the Moors, the King of Cotata who also shared a

¹⁴² Alexander Hamilton, *op.cit.*,p.295

¹⁴³ Para 36, Sundry Paragraphs of the Court of Directors & their Commands to Bombay relating to Tellicherry Factory, Quoted in LTT 1736-38 Vol-2,p.34.

right over it due to his association in expelling Ali Raja's men from there, for some reasons was apathetic to its transfer in favour of English.

In a meeting with the Prince Regent held in November 1730, the Chief formally requested His Highness "to give him his Royal Grant in writing excluding the Dutch from any share of the trade of Randuttara and from having any pretensions to the Island Durmapatam, empowering us likewise that in case they should attempt to possess themselves by force, of either of the said places to hoist our flag either upon Terentapatam [Anjarakkandi adjacent to Durmapatam] or elsewhere, where we judge most convenient and defend the same against all European Nations whatsoever"¹⁴⁴. Although, the Prince Regent readily accepted the proposal, the English could not get the Island in their possession for want of approval from the Raja of Cotata who refrained from giving his consent for the transfer upon one pretext or the other. Though, the English records obviously relate this reluctance to his secret design to grant the Island to the French, concluding that way at this point seems imprudent in the absence any other corroborative evidences. The Company was more afraid of the King of Cotata exerting his control over any part of Durmapatam since from such a situation he may have the power to stop the navigation through the river Terentapatam to cause further trouble, where as if it remains in possession of the Prince or the Moors "we shall have it in our power to keep them quiet"¹⁴⁵.

Finding it extremely difficult to persuade the Raja of Kottayam to relinquish his claim over the Island in their favour, the Company now resolved to take possession of the Grove Island at the point of Durmapatam with the consent of the Heiress of Cannanore. The Company preferred taking possession of this tiny island as a stepping stone towards their larger design of

¹⁴⁴ Consultation dated 1st November 1730, T.C 1730-31, p.30.

¹⁴⁵ Letter dated 20th September 1728 From Bombay Council to Tellicherry, LTT 1726-28, p.51.

occupying the whole of Durmapatam in near future, since it is naturally strong and could render secure by arranging a garrison of a few men and through minor fortification work at a small expense¹⁴⁶. Accordingly, through the mediation of Domingo Rodrigues, the linguist of the Company, Heiress of Cannanore was induced to give her consent for the admittance of twenty five Company men on Grove Island to garrison it in conjunction with her people until both of them are freed from the apprehensions of its possible fall into the hands of other powers¹⁴⁷. To procure this permission, Rodrigues took advantage of the apprehension of a ‘secret design’ of the King of Kottayam to place the French Company in possession of the Island. In this task, Kunhi Sou, a Mappila merchant of Kottayam seems to have played a decisive role. This man, a frequenter at Tellicherry Factory in his capacity as the Company’s principal supplier of Cardamom was well known for his allegiance to the Company and at times had acted as its informer. Prior to her meeting with Rodrigues, the Heiress, has been informed convincingly by Kunhi Sou that the King of Cotata had by writing resigned the Island to the French for their possessing it whenever they might judge proper¹⁴⁸. This disclosure presented as an eye witness account by Kunhi Sou, ‘a person she must confide in’, made things easier for Rodrigues to get the helpless lady readily agreeing to the contrivance of the Company.

Kunhi Sou’s visit to disclose the Heiress, of the ‘secret deal’, resembles a skillfully staged charade intended to ‘sensitize’ the Heiress of an imminent threat from the French to her possessions at Durmapatam. Kunhi Sou’s intimacy with the Company and his hasty visit from as far a place as Kottayam to meet the Heiress at Cannanore merely to disclose this matter, that too just before the proposed meeting between herself and the Company’s

¹⁴⁶ Consultation dated 15th September 1734, T.C 1734-35, p.3.

¹⁴⁷ Consultation dated 28th September 1734, T.C 1734-35, p.6

¹⁴⁸ Consultation dated 15th September 1734, T.C 1734-35, p.4.

linguist on the future course of action to be taken on Durmapatam are factors that prompt us to think so. Moreover, it seems absolutely unreasonable to imagine such a secret deal between the French and the Raja of Kottayam which, if carried out successfully, would put EIC in deep peril, will be concluded in the third party presence of an ambitious merchant distinguished for his acquaintance with and allegiance to the Chief and Factors at Tellicherry. Later on, in one of their Consultations Company has described Kunhi Sou as “a person of distinction in this Country and one who can be very serviceable to the Hon’ble Company on several occasions”¹⁴⁹. Perhaps, this timely intervention of Kunhi Sou, that more than anything else have helped to induce the Heiress to resign the Grove Island to the Company, might be one among that ‘several occasions’. Years later, adding further weight to the possibility of a foul play, the Company is seen accusing the Heiress that she, upon suspicion that her *karyasthan* Mussan was bribed by the Company to effect the relinquishment of the Island through a ‘false Grant’, had punished him with death sentence¹⁵⁰.

Given a footing on Grove Island by the Heiress, EIC now started preparations for taking the entire Durmapatam into their possession. With this ultimate end in mind, they made the clever use of existing political turmoil in order to turn thing in their favour. As elaborated already, they made use of the apprehensions of a French design to possess Durmapatam so as to win from the Heiress, a footing on Grove Island. At the same time, they wrote to the French Company at Mahe that their possession of Grove Island was to prevent the Canarese settling on Durmapatam¹⁵¹. In November 1734, the Heiress, ‘on the pressing instance’ of the linguist consented that she will not oppose the

¹⁴⁹ Consultation dated 21st November 1742, T.C 1742-43, p.43.

¹⁵⁰ Letter dated 4th December 1736 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.26.

¹⁵¹ Letter dated 15th October 1734 from Stephen Law to Tremisot, the French Chief at Mahe, T.C 1734-35, p.14.

Prince Regent resigning Durmapatam to EIC¹⁵². She also admitted to give over all her claim to the Island provided the King of Cotata puts the English in possession of it¹⁵³. At last, on 3rd December 1734, the Heiress of Adiraja had issued a letter to the EIC relinquishing all her claims on the Island of Durmapatam as it does not appear convenient for her to take it since it would invite displeasure of the Company as well as the Canarese. She concluded this letter advising the English to take possession of it as her family was not in a position to hold it no longer¹⁵⁴. With this total relinquishment by the Heiress, the King of Cotata who hitherto has been keen on keeping his fickleness on the subject was left with no other option but to concede. Accordingly, on 7th February 1735, the Raja of Kottayam, without settling on any terms gave his permission in writing to hold the Island of Durmapatam and hoisting their colours thereon¹⁵⁵.

Paradoxically, the Royal Writing of the Prince Regent considered as the de jure sovereign of Durmapatam was obtained much later by the Company with some difficulty despite the extraordinarily cordial relationship existed in between the two. To issue an absolute grant of the Island, the Prince demanded either whole or a share of the produce of the grounds. The English was unwilling to yield any such demands on the ground that in their view, their possessing the Island was not for any monitory benefit but to secure their trade from the encroachment of other European companies. Further, in holding the Island in their possession the Company shall be subject to a considerable annual expense in maintaining the garrison and in making and repairing its fortification. Prince Regent readily accepted this explanation and on 26th February 1735, issued an *ola* bestowing entire Island of Durmapatam

¹⁵² Consultation dated 29th November 1734, T.C 1734-35, p.25.

¹⁵³ Consultation dated 5th December 1734, T.C 1734-35, p.27.

¹⁵⁴ William Logan, *Treaties*, No.XXV,p.24.

¹⁵⁵ Consultation dated 7th February 1735, T.C 1734-35, pp.44-45.

to the Company in lieu of a meager tract of land granted to a temple situated in its suburb¹⁵⁶. This writ was issued with a back date (May 1734) as requested by the Company. It was a deliberate attempt from their part to deceive the Canarese and the French by creating a wrong impression that the Island was already granted to them by its rightful ruler much before the relinquishment of rights over it by Kottayam Raja¹⁵⁷. Strangely, to secure so conspicuous a grant of Durmapatam, the Company had to spend only a meager amount of five hundred and twelve rupees only in the form of gifts given to the Prince and his associates¹⁵⁸.

The Debt Trap and its Violent Aftermath

Robert Adams, rightly credited as the real founder of the Tellicherry Factory was a pragmatist among the early officials of the Factory. He had developed 'Debt Trap' as a political policy with a view to pressurize and control the native elite so as to keep them subservient to the Company forever. His practice of lending money to the Prince Regent generously and unconditionally notwithstanding the restrictions imposed by the Bombay Council had made him so unpopular in Company circles that finally led to his expulsion from Malabar in March 1728¹⁵⁹. In May 1727, Chief intimated the Board that at the time of deceased Ali Raja, the family owed the Company a debt amounting to 64964.14 Calicut Fanams.

According to Adams, said debt was very long lasting and have thought irrecoverable and therefore wrote off from the Book. Having noticed of this debt much later, the Chief wrote his superiors at Bombay for a copy of the accounts for conformation. After receiving the confirmation from Bombay, he

¹⁵⁶ Consultation dated 26th February 1735, T.C 1734-35, p.56.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Letter dated 26th February 1728 From Bombay Council to Tellicherry, LTT 1726-28, p.33.

again kept it in abeyance for sometime as there were troubles in the country between the Prince regent and the Ali Rajas as well as the Company's own problems. As now, there was 'a seeming quietness in the country', the Chief thought it proper time to demand its repayment¹⁶⁰. Accordingly, on 21st September 1727, three of the Factors, John Johnson, Stephen Law and Hugh Howard have met Ali Raja in person to demand the repayment of his debts. Ali Raja denied any debts as outstanding and to validate this, produced a discharge signed in November 1676 that acknowledged the receipt of the full balance of his accounts from the karanavar of the *swaroopam*¹⁶¹.

The Chief and Factors at Tellicherry were not ready to accept this discharge and endeavoured continuously for the next three decades, although with occasional intermissions, to effect its repayment. The Ali Rajas on their part were also adamant in their stand that they cannot, upon searching their accounts, find any dealings with the Company unfinished. Although, the Council of Bombay did not rightly apprehend how the said debts were struck off the Books, they also desired its repayment "since the Chief and the linguist are satisfied in the justness of them, and as there seems not room for their being disputed"¹⁶². Later on, the Council also added that the said debt was written off the Book since there was no particular account of them and no one here knew how they were transacted¹⁶³. At times, the Company used to change the modest tone of their requests for settling the accounts to harsher threats such as one they made in January 1728. Upon receiving information that the Ali Raja is intending to visit Mecca to perform Hajj, Company again pressed him for the repayment of long pending debts "to prevent the prejudice

¹⁶⁰ Consultation dated 11th May 1727, T.C 1726-27, p.104.

¹⁶¹ Consultation dated 21st September 1727, T.C 1727-28, p.12.

¹⁶² Consultation dated 11th December 1727, T.C 1727-28, p.38.

¹⁶³ Consultation dated 13th December 1727, T.C 1727-28, p.41.

which otherwise may attend it”¹⁶⁴. Replying to this, Ali Raja denied the existence of any such debts on the ground that the Factors who first met him with a demand to effect the repayment of said debt were satisfied with the discharge he produced before them. He also added that these accounts are near fifty or sixty years standing and never spoke to his ancestors and also he himself had several dealings with the Company, yet this was never mentioned. To put sufficient weight to his argument, he added that he has turned over all his old accounts already but can find no explanation of it, and a further examination “is not now possible in so short a time”¹⁶⁵. Strangely, Roberts Adams, who actually invented these debts in 1727, was seen maintaining a silence over it in his letter addressed to John Braddyll, his successor, just before leaving Malabar. In this farewell letter, there was absolutely no reference about any unsettled debts of the family of Ali Raja, although he makes a reference to the debts defaulted by Prince Cunhi Homa¹⁶⁶.

Whatever may be the genuineness of the debt, Company continued their practice of demanding its repayment all through the reigns of two successive Heiresses of the *swaroopam* who came to throne after the death of reigning Raja in 1728 at Mecca. To such repeated please, the Heiresses had quiet consistently used to pass the reply that they ‘know of none depending between them and the Company’¹⁶⁷. Then, for few years starting from 1732, Company was not in a position to raise the demand further as both the parties were preoccupied with checking the Canarese menace. Meanwhile, the relations between Arakkal *swaroopam* and EIC got worsened further with the former demanding the restoration of Grove Island back to their possession.

¹⁶⁴ Consultation dated 15th January 1728, T.C 1727-28, p.49.

¹⁶⁵ Consultation dated 17th January 1728, T.C 1727-28, p.52.

¹⁶⁶ Letter dated 12th April 1728 from Robert Adams to John Braddyll, LTT 1726-28 Vol-I, pp.39-40.

¹⁶⁷ Consultation dated 21st September 1731, T.C 1731-32, p.10.

While persuading Heiress to cede the Island voluntarily to them, Company has presented it as only a temporary measure to prevent its falling in the hands of Canarese or the French. They also had assured the Heiress through their linguist that it can be taken back at any point if “God help in time, to clear these clouds [the threat of Canarese and the French] which overhang it”¹⁶⁸. However, when the Heiress put before the Company, her demand for restoring the Island back to her possession, they were totally reluctant to go by their promise. Instead, they perceived the demand as a villainous act undertaken by “that turbulent woman with a diabolic disposition”¹⁶⁹. There was nothing surprising in this furious reaction considering the significance of this tiny Island in the larger context of English trade in Malabar. In fact, the taking Grove Island into their possession was, as hinted already, only the first step towards their greater design of shifting their settlement from Tellicherry to Durmapatam. The portrayal of the resigning of Island as a temporary measure intended to prevent others from taking possession of it was only a pretence invented to induce the Heiress. Domingo Rodrigues, the linguist of EIC who masterminded the ceding himself has made it clear that the “offering of the place [back] to her was only an ostensible, and not our real intention”¹⁷⁰.

By August 1736, the Factors at Tellicherry were convinced that the Heiress is resolutely bent on gaining the Grove Island back from the English and for that purpose she was ready to set on foot all the mischief she can in prejudice of their settlement¹⁷¹. Observably, they had feared the Heiress forming an alliance with the King of Kottayam who also shared some pretensions over Durmapatam and the possibility of the Dutch and the French

¹⁶⁸ William Logan, *Treaties*, No.XXIV,p. 23.

¹⁶⁹ Letter dated. 4th December 1736 from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.26.

¹⁷⁰ William Logan, *Treaties*,p.23.

¹⁷¹ Consultation dated 30th August 1736, T.C 1736-37, p.8

companies assisting that combination¹⁷². The Company wanted to attract more and more people to settle in Durmapatam so as to generate more revenue from there. But, this mission proved a failure supposedly due to the intervention of Heiress who told her Moors not to settle in Durmapatam¹⁷³. To add fuel to the fire, Kunhi Sou, the most trusted cardamom merchant of Kottayam has informed the Company that the Heiress has induced the King of Kottayam to forbid any cardamoms being brought from his country to the English¹⁷⁴. Observing these intended troubles, the Chief and Factors at Tellicherry has reached the conclusion that “eastern people in general are so villainously disposed, that we ought to expect from them at all times, the greatest baseness and for guarding against which no other remedies will take place but mere force”¹⁷⁵. Finding the Heiress ‘so persistently engaged in disturbing the Company’, the Chief, on 8th October 1736 has written a letter warning her of the ill consequences of such ‘base practices’. The letter puts it plainly that “You and your people are endeavouring with greatest earnestness to prejudice the Honorable Company. ...Though we are sensible of the fact that it is of very little efficacy... I was willing to attribute it to the weakness of your sex. Yet in future you continue in the same evil practices I shall no longer make these favourable allowances, but proceed for compelling you to desist”¹⁷⁶.

As the English cannot think of resigning the Island back to the Heiress, they waited for an opportunity to use their force in order to bring the Moors to their terms. Accordingly, in November 1736, as an effectual method to curb that ‘insolent and vile woman’ the Company had denied her a pass for her

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Letter dated 4th December 1736 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.26.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.,p.29.

¹⁷⁵ Letter dated 22nd November 1736 From Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1736-37, p.16.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in T.C 1736-37, pp.25-26.

ship intended to sail to Surat and resolved to do the same continuously “until she is brought to a just sense of her illegal pretensions to Durmapatam”¹⁷⁷. Again, in December 1736 when the Heiress has sent a *munchua* laden with about 90 candies of pepper to Colatchel and Manapar without obtaining a pass from EIC, the Board, conceiving the sailing without their pass as ‘a presumption not hitherto practiced’ wrote their men at Anjengo to detain that *munchua*¹⁷⁸. They did exactly the same to induce the Heiress to treat the Company with fairness¹⁷⁹.

It was a regular practice of the Company to use the threat ‘making satisfaction on their trade at sea’ as a ploy to bring the Ali Rajas into their terms. As noticed already, right from the chieftaincy of Robert Adams, the Company was making effective use of this expression implying the possible disturbance to seaborne trade of the Ali Rajas. Well aware of the fact that the Ali Rajas could not withstand any impediments to their overseas trade, the English rightly realized that denying passes and detaining ships will be the most suitable expedient to bring her into obedience. At this instance also the Company seems to have resorted to the same tactic with the approbation of their superiors at Bombay Castle. In January 1737, the Bombay Council issued their men at Tellicherry the permission to “distress her by any means in your power” including denying of passes and deploying cruisers to seize her vessels, if she “continues in her present disposition” with the expectation that such acts would help to “humble her insolent pride and bring her to reason”¹⁸⁰. Shut away from their lucrative maritime business, the helpless Heiress was forced to approach the Company in March 1737 for a

¹⁷⁷ Letter dated 4th December 1736 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.29.

¹⁷⁸ Consultation dated 6th December 1736, T.C 1736-37, p.50.

¹⁷⁹ Letter dated 12th February 1737 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p.47.

¹⁸⁰ Letter dated 21st January 1737 From Bombay Council to Tellicherry, LTT 1736-38, p.19.

compromise through her husband who had promised a becoming regard in their dealing with the Company¹⁸¹. Accordingly, on 8th April 1737, Kunhi Pokker, a principal councilor of the *swaroopam* took an oath at the prime mosque of Cannanore in the presence of a number of influential persons of the community that nothing prejudicing the interests of the Company will be undertaken from their part in future¹⁸². Satisfied at this, the Factory has immediately arranged the restoring of the *munchua* detained by them and requested their superiors in Bombay to abstain from causing further impediments to her seaborne trade and recommended issuing passes to her voyages¹⁸³. Since then, for quiet few years there did prevailed a cordial relation between the Company and the family of Ali Rajas.

But, peace and friendship between the two once again proved momentary as in February 1742 the Company was seen alleging the Heiress of clandestinely exporting pepper to Calicut and the parts adjacent. The Company people at Tellicherry have readily arranged the patrolling of suitable number of round boats to prevent ‘so pernicious a practice’¹⁸⁴. Then the Company had gone to the extent of denying a pass to the Mocha bound ship of the Heiress considering “her conduct towards the Honourable Company for several years past and especially this season in exporting pepper as we have good reason to believe, as likewise her sending a quantity in this ship to Mocha”¹⁸⁵. Meanwhile, the Heiress who died in April 1742 was succeeded by her fifteen year old son Kunhi Hamsa Adhiraja. In June 1742, the newly crowned Raja has received a letter from the Chief of Tellicherry Factory demanding the repayment of the debt defaulted by his predecessors.

¹⁸¹ Letter dated 11th May 1737 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p. 74.

¹⁸² Consultation dated 8^h April 1737, T.C 1736-37, p.127.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Consultation dated 17th February 1742, T.C 1741-42 Vol-XIII, p.87.

¹⁸⁵ Consultation dated 10th March 1742, T.C 1741-42 Vol-XIII, p.100.

The letter accused the deceased Heiress of clandestinely exporting pepper to Calicut and other places causing considerable sufferings to the Company. It also contained a warning that he must be very sensible to accept the privileges, exclusive of all others, granted by the Prince of Kolathunadu to the Company for exporting pepper, cardamoms, sandal wood etc¹⁸⁶. To this, the young Ali Raja sent a reply that he was unacquainted with any such debts of his family, but he assured the Company that as soon as the time of his mourning is over, he will enquire into it¹⁸⁷. In October 1742, the Company has sent another letter to Ali Raja desiring the repayment of ‘some debts by his predecessors’¹⁸⁸. To this, Ali Raja replied that “though his predecessors had formerly large dealings with the Honourable Company, but on perusing the accounts relating thereto, he does not find they have any demands upon them”¹⁸⁹. The nonpayment of debts and the reluctance to supply pepper to the Company despite repeated pleas has greatly infuriated the English that in March 1743 they again denied Ali Raja a pass to his ship set to sail for Mocha¹⁹⁰. The distressed Raja soon sent a second plea to the Company but was again rejected on the ground that he is still “very shy of acknowledging any demands on him from the Honourable Company”¹⁹¹. What happened in a year immediately following this is untraceable at present for there is a gap in Tellicherry Consultations pertaining to the period from August 1744 to July 1745.

In August 1745, finding the debt of Ali Rajas still unsettled, Tellicherry Factory under the chieftaincy of John Geekie decided to effect its repayment by force. On 21st August, the Company, considering that Ali Raja

¹⁸⁶ Consultation dated 22nd June 1742, T.C 1741-42 Vol-XIII, p.143.

¹⁸⁷ Consultation dated 26th June 1742, T.C 1741-42 Vol-XIII, p.144..

¹⁸⁸ Consultation dated 16th October 1742, T.C 1742-43 Vol-XIV, p. 25.

¹⁸⁹ Consultation dated 19th October 1742, T.C 1742-43 Vol-XIV, p.26.

¹⁹⁰ Consultation dated 1st March 1743, T.C 1742-43 Vol-XIV, p.92.

¹⁹¹ Consultation dated 4th March 1743, T.C 1742-43 Vol-XIV, p.95.

owns large tracts of land yielding paddy, coconuts and other crops at Mattamy (Mattool) north of Baliapatam, sent their troops there when the paddy was ripe for cutting, with a view to obstruct its harvesting. They claimed that as per the custom of the Country, it is permissible to impede the harvesting of fields belonging to defaulters until they discharge their debts¹⁹². Though, the Company had acquainted the Prince their designs well in advance, he, instead of complying with it, openly opposed the Company's move to impede Ali Raja from harvesting¹⁹³. The Company has tried to relate this defection by the Prince to the generous gifts including an elephant offered to him by Ali Raja¹⁹⁴. On the other hand, according to the Prince his opposition to such impediments is footed in the simple logic that "to do this in his country is not right"¹⁹⁵. Whatever it may be, Company's move to impede harvesting at Mattamy to compel Ali Raja to discharge his debts caused grave resentments among the Mappilas that inevitably led to a series of armed conflicts. The English, anticipating that Ali Raja's men would attempt to reap their fields by force, sent their Ensigns Bilderbeck and Wardman to Mattamy with a body of about 250 men. They had three smart encounters with some two thousand Mappilas assembled there. In these encounters the Mappilas were the losers and the English went on to destroy and burn the paddy fields ready for reaping¹⁹⁶. This has provoked the Mappilas of north Malabar in general and as a result, there were many armed insurrections against the Company people and against those who are known to be loyal to the English in different pockets of the region such as Urbelly, Madakkara, Irinav, Azhikkode, Agar,

¹⁹² Consultation dated 21st August 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI, p.3.

¹⁹³ Letter dated 6th December 1745 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1745-46, p.9.

¹⁹⁴ Consultation dated 23rd August 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI,p.4.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in the Consultation dated 26th August 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI, p.5.

¹⁹⁶ Letter dated 6th December 1745 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1745-46, p.9.

Mammakkunnu, Melur etc¹⁹⁷. The severest of such encounters was occurred on 26th September 1745 at Urbelly in which Ali Raja has lost five of his men including a chief officer¹⁹⁸.

In addition to assaults inland, Company also attempted the distressing of Ali Raja at sea. The Factory men at Tellicherry requested their superiors at Bombay to send vessels for distressing Ali Raja at sea. The Council of Bombay has rejected the plea as they could not spare one for the time being, but allowed them to carry on the same by using armed *munchuas*¹⁹⁹. Accordingly, on 11th September 1745, the Company had sent out two large *munchuas* with a detachment of 40 men under Ensign Wardman to cruise off Cannanore with orders to seize anything belonging to Ali Raja that falls on their way²⁰⁰. In the last week of the same month, they had gone to the extent of confiscating a *bombara*²⁰¹ belonging to Ali Raja and had sold the Laccadive coir and coconuts stored therein through a public auction held on 4th January 1746²⁰². For the successful implementation of these impediments at sea, Factory got the timely assistance of the Dutch. Though, the Dutchmen at Cannanore had initially made some assistance to Ali Raja to reduce the ill effects of embargo imposed on them by the English, they later decided to keep Ali Raja at bay without permitting him 'to cruise anymore'. This could be seen as a victory of English diplomacy that had succeeded in instigating the Dutch Command at Cochin to instruct their men at Cannanore to cooperate with the impediments being raised against Ali Raja²⁰³.

¹⁹⁷ T.C.1745-46 Vol-XVI, pp.18-20.

¹⁹⁸ Consultation dated 27th September 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI,p.20.

¹⁹⁹ Consultation dated 4th September 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI,p.8.

²⁰⁰ Consultation dated 11th September 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI,p.12.

²⁰¹ *Bombara* is a peculiar type of vessel with two or more sails.

²⁰² Consultation dated 4th January 1746, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI, p.93.

²⁰³ Letter dated 6th December 1745 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1745-46, p.8.

Ali Raja's efforts to gain some succour from the French Company also ended in dismay as the latter insisted that they could supply the money, rice and arms as requested by Ali Raja only if the *vazhunnavar* of Vadakara is ready to offer himself as surety for the same²⁰⁴. Though, the Prince Regent seems to be a close ally of Ali Raja this time, he was not in a position to assist the later either financially or militarily. If we could believe the Factory records, the support offered to Ali Raja by the Prince itself looks like only a pretense for "the Prince's main drift was at first, as we [EIC] are credibly informed, to ruin the Moors, and his scheme to do it was to engage them, if possible, in an irreconcilable quarrel with the Hon'ble Company, and when he has drained them of all he can get...and then drop them and join with us and destroy them and this, we judge, has been the reason of his having always flown off and refused a meeting to accommodate matters on our showing a readiness for it"²⁰⁵. Whether this was the exact strategy of the Prince or merely an allegation of the Company is a question difficult to answer at present. But from his gestures this time, it was quite clear that he was actually interested in ensuring Ali Raja's support in his fight against the Northern Regent rather than fighting the English along with Mappilas²⁰⁶. In a conversation, the Prince is reported to have told Ali Raja that he will never go against the British, and if he (Ali Raja) is intending to fight the British he will have to do it alone²⁰⁷.

Thus, fully devoid of any assistance from both the foreign and native allies to get rid of the impediments at sea, Ali Raja was forced to approach the English for peace. In June 1747, he has sent a special messenger to Tellicherry

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.10.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Letter dated 12th April 1746 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1745-46, p.30

²⁰⁷ Consultation dated 31st August 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI, p.7.

Factory to sue for a peace. The envoy communicated the Chief that Ali Rajah was very sorry for differences and disputes that had happened between them and desired to see an account of his debt which, so far as his low circumstances would permit him, he was willing to discharge. He also begged some clemency from Company's side to forgive "his past follies" and also some assistance to raise his family who had greatly suffered by the unhappy war²⁰⁸. Weary of war, the English reciprocated this peace initiative and a treaty was concluded between them on 10th July 1747²⁰⁹. By this treaty concluded after much deliberation and bargaining, Ali Raja has to pay the English an amount of Rs. 15,000 thousand in three equal installments towards the debt owed to the Company by his family²¹⁰. Thus, the dispute over debts of Ali Rajas allegedly pending since 1681 but reinvented by Robert Adams in 1727, years after its write off, presumably to pressurize that family of 'insolent Moors' was ended amicably after two decades of prolonged conflict. It is really ironical to note that the original debt of 64964.14 Company Fanams was settled finally for rupees fifteen thousand that too after much bloodshed and also spending a much higher sum (Fanams 180627) towards war charges²¹¹.

A careful analysis of the extremely complex political scenario of north Malabar during the first half of eighteenth century would provide some understanding of the trajectories of colonialism in this coast. Of course, it would be unwise to relate the disintegration of *Kolaswaroopam* solely to internal dissensions of that extended family of political elite. Along with this inherent limitation, the role played by the company of English merchants who

²⁰⁸ Consultation dated 4th June 1747, T.C 1746-47 Vol-XVII, p.243.

²⁰⁹ Consultation dated 10th July 1747, T.C 1746-47 Vol-XVII, pp.258-59.

²¹⁰ Consultation dated 10th June 1747, T.C 1746-47 Vol-XVII, p.246.

²¹¹ Consultation dated 4th June 1747, T.C 1746-47 Vol-XVII, p.244.

came victorious in the prolonged conflict involving native chieftains and the Canarese for attaining political supremacy in North Malabar should also be considered. The EIC was able to manipulate the chaotic affairs in Malabar in their favour so well that at the end, while Canarese had to go back and *Kolaswaroopam* had lost its former splendor, only the Company was able to better their position. By the end of the first half of eighteenth century, EIC surpassed all their European rivals in terms of both commercial and political predominance. This predominance was well reflected in their gaining several privileges and exclusive rights for trading as well as in establishing territorial authority over places like Tellicherry, Madakkara, Darmapatanam, Mount Deli and Randathara.

The endurance showed by Ali Rajas in the course of these political conflicts is also worthy of some mentioning in this context. Of course, it was not Ali Rajas who emerged victorious after these conflicts and chaos. Instead, during the course of this tussle for power they had to suffer a lot and had to face many setbacks like the mysterious death of their head at Mecca in 1728 leading to the weaker regimes of two successive heiresses up to 1742, the loss of Durmapatam first to the Prince and then to the English forever and the effective impeding of their seaborne trade by the English etc. Some of these setbacks were seemingly the instances of internal rifts that erupted into this extended family of Mappila merchants. The worst of such instances of rift was occurred in April 1746. Presumably at the instigation of the EIC, some prominent subjects of Ali Raja killed two of his own ministers. The apparent reason was that, it was these ministers who were responsible for inducing Ali Raja to fight the British²¹². In spite of all these setbacks, the *swaroopam*, as a result of their enduring presence in this longtime conflict went far ahead of other native rulers and had established themselves as a formidable contestant

²¹² Letter dated 18th April 1746 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1745-46, p.29

for regional political supremacy and a force to be reckoned with. The Chief of Tellicherry Factory was actually acknowledging this predominance when he described Ali Raja Kunhi Hamsa as “our open and declared enemy” in a letter addressed to the Prince of Chirakkal²¹³.

To get a proper idea of this prominence, one has to review it in comparison with the fast fading eminence of the princes of *kolaswaroopam* who were reduced to such low status that they had to wait for the monthly allowance issued from Company to meet their subsistence. The following extract from Tellicherry Consultations would help to reveal the magnitude of this ever fading prominence of *kolaswaroopam*. “Our linguist informs us of the death of the old king of Colastria who had a monthly allowance from the Honourable Company of 100 Fanams. The late king of Colastria was very ancient but declined being crowned till very lately, when preparations were making for that Ceremony, which was to have been performed in a few days if he had lived, when he might have taken the Government upon himself, which as he would not have done, his coronation could not have caused any alteration therein, neither will his death”²¹⁴. On the other hand, even after going through such perennial conflicts, wars and calamities, the financial base of the Family of Ali Rajas remained very solid. This is evident from their purchase of the Fort of Cannanore from the Dutch in 1771 for a massive sum of one lakh rupees.

²¹³ Consultation dated 25th September 1747, T.C 1747-48,p.29.

²¹⁴ Consultation dated 25th July 1742, T.C 1741-42 Vol-XIII, p.150.

Chapter 4

The Mysoreans in North Malabar

As has been elaborated in the previous chapter, the first half of the eighteenth century in north Malabar was marked by unprecedented chaos and political turmoil which proved beneficial to the interests of EIC. As a result, the English was able to register some crucial diplomatic successes manifested in the form of treaties which are designed to ensure them the monopoly of spice trade and the acquisition of more and more territories and forts into their possession. Through this, EIC has elevated to the position of an indisputable mercantile power in north Malabar. As regards to Arakkal, the decades long struggle with *kolaswaroopam* for gaining political supremacy, the gallantry showed against Canarese and also the tussle with EIC over the question of debts unpaid proved rewarding as all the three have helped to render them capable of playing a decisive role in regional politics. While, *kolattiri* had to surrender his territories north of Madayi due to the invasion by Canarese, Arakkal had not suffered any such territorial losses, though they were also defeated in their battle with Canarese. At the end of skirmishes occurred in 1740's over the question of debts, the *swaroopam* was forced to surrender before the Company unconditionally by promising to pay rupees fifteen thousand towards the repayment of debts. But, at this instance of surrender too, they were well placed to dictate in their favour, some of the articles of Peace to be concluded in between them. Though, the Company at first demanded a huge sum amounting to Fanams 3, 10, 556 - 12 by adding the principal and interest of debt due from 1727 together with the war charges, Ali Raja successfully managed to reduce it to a scanty sum of rupees fifteen thousand, that too in three equal instalments¹. Even in his hour of surrender, Ali Raja has refused to sign the Peace Pact prepared by the Company since he

¹ Consultation dated 4th June 1747, T.C 1746-47, p.244.

felt some of its provisions “would greatly lessen him in the eyes of the Country Powers and therefore hoped the Chief would not insist on it”². Ali Raja Kunhi Hamsa had exploited the ‘Debt War’ inflicted upon them by the Company to the maximum so as to widen their support base far beyond their dominion at Cannanore, especially into Mappila strongholds like Mattool, Madayi, Madakkara and Mammakkunnu. On the other hand, pomp and prestige of the princes of *kolaswaroopam* was fading like anything to the extent that some of them had to wait for the monthly allowance from EIC to meet their subsistence. However, as the English were conspicuously successful in establishing their direct political control and the indirect appropriation of resources in North Malabar by making full use of the weakening of the power of *kolattiri*, Ali Rajas were not in a position to reassert their political will beyond the port and bazaar of Cannanore. As such, they, under the leadership of extremely ambitious Kunhi Hamsa Adhiraja, were waiting for an opportunity to endorse their political clout in the region. This opportunity arrived finally in 1766 when Nawab Haider Ali Khan (1721-1881) of Mysore decided to invade Malabar.

Haider Ali was a petty soldier under the Wodayar Rajas of Mysore who came to prominence after the disintegration of the Vijayanagara Empire. In 1609 Raja of Wodayar has established his independent rule in Mysore with Serangapatam (Srirangapattanam) as his capital. The rise of Haider Ali from the rank of a minor soldier to virtual sovereign of Mysore can be attributed largely to his dynamic leadership and partly to his exceptional military expertise and political sharpness. Haider’s acquaintance with Malabar politics had begun as early as in 1751 when he was serving as an officer in Mysore army. In that year, Marthandavarma, the Raja of Travancore had solicited Hyder’s assistance to suppress the unruly Nair nobles. Though, the Nawab

² Consultation dated 10th July 1747, T.C 1746-47, p.258.

made necessary preparations for an expedition to quell the revolt of Nair nobility, he had to stop it midway as the frightened nobles agreed to submit unconditionally to the King. The first appearance of Haider's forces in Malabar was happened in the year 1757. Responding to the invitation made by Raja of Palakkad, Haider sent an army consisting of 2,000 horses, 5,000 infantry, and 5 guns to Calicut under his brother-in-law Mukhdum Sahib to assist the Raja in resisting the expansionist designs of Zamorin³. Zamorin was forced to buy peace for a war indemnity of 12 lakhs of rupees. In 1761, Hyder had become the sovereign of Mysore by overthrowing Krishna Raya of the Wodayar dynasty. After this, he annexed Bednur to his dominion by invading it in 1763. This annexation had brought him to share common boundary with north Malabar. Consequent on his annexation of Bednur, Haider demanded from *kolattiri*, the payment of two lakhs of *pagodas* being the tribute due to the defeated Raja of Bednur. He also demanded all his elephants, two thousand troops and an annual tribute of 25,000 pagodas from *kolattiri*. It was also demanded that the *kolattiri* should lead the troops in his Malabar campaign⁴. Besides this, Haider also insisted that Nileswaram Raja should restore him all the forts which were previously occupied by Bednur. Needless to say, all these demands were absolutely unaffordable to *kolattiri* who by then had reduced to a position almost subservient to EIC.

In February 1766, Haider Ali invaded and occupied Kunhimangalam, Madayi and Baliapatam one by one with the support of Ali Raja and Kappu Tamban, the rebel prince of *kolaswaroopam*. Finding himself incapable to resist the ravage, the reigning Prince, *thekkilamkur* (Southern Regent) with the whole royal family took to flight. They were given shelter at the Brass

³ William Logan, *Malabar Vol-1*, Government Press, Madras, 1951, p.402.

⁴ Diary and Consultations of the Tellicherry Factory dated 21st Feb 1766, M.S.S Serial No.1476 p.255; quoted in K.K.N Kurup, *History of the Tellicherry Factory*, Sandhya Publications, Calicut, 1985, p.142.

Pagoda attached to Tellicherry Factory and from thence sailed to Travancore in March 1766 seeking an asylum there. The conquered territory of *kolattunadu* was handed over to Ali Raja to run the administration on behalf of Haider. Then, he subdued the kingdom of Zamorin and went as far south as Ponnani without much opposition. However, he was forced to abandon his proposed 'visit' to Travancore for the time being and returned from Malabar in May 1766 due to the advent of rainy season. Haider's departure from Malabar tempted the vanquished Nair Chieftains to come out of their hideouts to organize a revolt against his authority. The rebellion commenced in the third week of June was led by the Nairs of Chirakkal and Kadathanadu. But it was suppressed soon by the Mysoreans under the efficient commandership of Raza Saheb. M.M.D.L.T, the undisclosed author of *The History of Hyder Shah Alias Hyder Ali Khan Bahadur and of His Son Tippoo Sultaun* attributes Haider's victory to his cavalry which as a body of troops was "absolutely unknown to the Nayres"⁵. K.M. Panikkar has also related the victory of Mysore army to the panic caused by the very sight of their cavalry since it was totally unknown to the Nair militia⁶. However, as observed by C.K. Kareem⁷, the conclusion that cavalry as a body of troops was unknown to the rulers of Malabar prior to Haider Ali is not correct. There is ample evidence

⁵ M.M.D.L.T, *The History of Hyder Shah Alias Hyder Ali Khan Bahadur and of His Son TippooSultaun*, W. Thacker & Co., London,1855,p.68.

(The name of the author is seen given in abbreviated form in the title page of the work as M.M.D.L.T with a description that he was a General in the Army of the Mughal Empire. The title page also claims that it was revised and corrected by Prince Gholam Mohammed, the only surviving son of Tippu. The first two letters of this abbreviation (M.M) may be the short form of the first name of the author and remaining part (D.L.T) is generally considered as the shortened form French surname De La Tour meaning 'of the tower'. The content and the style of narration of the book prompt us to think that it was written by someone having close connections with the inner circles of the East India Company, most probably a high ranking officer of the Company. Hereafter the book will be cited simply as MMDLT)

⁶ K. M. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala*, Annamalai University, 1960, p.334.

⁷ Dr. C.K. Kareem, *Kerala under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, Kerala History Association, Cochin,1973, P.30.

to believe that Marthandavarma of Travancore had employed cavalry in his wars fought in the first half of eighteenth century. Nevertheless, it is irrefutable that the use of cavalry was not so common in North Malabar at that time and the Mysoreans were greatly benefitted from its timely and effective use. N.K Sinha has placed the complete disunion prevailed among Nairs at the root of their defeat in “Hyder’s most arduous feat of arms”⁸.

In 1771, Haider Ali once again entered the Malabar country and reached as far as Kottayam very near to Tellicherry. A couple of years before, ‘the Prince of Cherrika’ (chirakkal) had returned from his exile at Travancore and started staying at Brass Pagoda at Tellicherry under the protection of EIC. Tired of an inactive life there, virtually as a prisoner of the Company and also without any hopes of assistance from the English to redress the damages inflicted on him by Haider, the Prince decided to come into terms with Nawab by forgetting all their previous hostilities. He was welcomed by the Nawab and was given the Country of Kottayam upon paying a ready sum and on promising to pay a yearly tribute. This deal was finalized under the personal surety of Domingo Rodrigues, the linguist of EIC at Tellicherry who played the role of a mediator in between the Nawab and the Prince⁹. Encouraged by this success and being desirous of recovering his kingdom, the Prince went to Sriraganapattanam in the year 1776 and, again through the mediation of Domingo Rodrigues, found means to obtain his kingdom back from the Nawab upon paying a sum as ready money and offering to pay an annual tribute.

The cited reason for taking back Kolathunadu from the viceroyalty of Ali Raja and its restoring in the hands of the Prince was that the former had

⁸ N.K Sinha, *Haidar Ali*, A. Mukherjee & Co. Pvt. Ltd, Calcutta, 1941, p.145.

⁹ SPDD No.22/1780, p.288,KSAT.

defaulted payment of tribute due to Mysore¹⁰. This only shows that due to ever increasing expenses related to continual wars to be fought by him, Haider was acutely in need of money and finding means to garner it was his primary concern. This made him to forget all other considerations including the religious affinity and friendship he had shared with Ali Raja. The Prince also had his own reasons to shift from Company's camp to join hands with Nawab. His major distress was that the Company, despite their treaty obligation, did nothing to protect him in his gravest hours of need. He was further aggrieved by Company's decision in 1776 to cut down their civil and military expenditure at Tellicherry. This made the Prince believe that the Company was going to stop their operations at Tellicherry and as such, there is no point in expecting any assistance from them in future¹¹. The Company men at Tellicherry were of the view that Prince's decision to desert them was due to his great expectation that the abandonment of the Factory by the English would put him at the command of the riches of that place which would in turn enable him to fulfil his engagements with the Nawab¹².

Interestingly, EIC was not at all inimical towards Haider Ali in the initial years of his conquest. Unaware of Nawab's real intentions and also due to the fear of ill consequences of annoying a dreadful fighter like him, the English, despite their treaty obligations with the chieftains of Malabar, decided to follow a policy of neutrality towards him. Company took it as advantageous the Nawab's move against Marathas as the latter formed a source of constant threat to the imperial designs of the British in Deccan at that point of time. In March 1763, the Council at Bombay Castle observed that from the tenor of Haider Ali Khan's letter addressed to them, "it would appear as if he was very desirous of being upon friendly terms with us, and as

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p.298

¹² Ibid.

from his being now in possession of the whole Cannarie dominions, it may be of the greatest consequence of our Hon'ble Masters affairs on this coast to improve a friendly correspondence with him"¹³. They resolved to pursue all suitable means for this purpose, especially because of their fear that if they failed in cultivating a friendly relationship with him, he would very probably throw himself into the arms of the French, which would be very prejudicial to their affairs here. Accordingly they have instructed their men at Onore (Honawar) in South Canara and Tellicherry to cultivate a good relation with the Nawab¹⁴. In compliance of this, John Stracey, the Resident at Onore, met Nawab in 1763 with a request to supply them pepper which he readily agreed. In reply to Nawab's request to issue him good quality muskets either for ready money or pepper¹⁵, on 25th Oct 1763 the Council resolved to spare for his service, four hundred stands of arms as Mr. John Stracey has very strenuously set forth the advantages which will accrue from supplying him therewith¹⁶. Stracey was of the view that complying in some measure with Haider's request for small arms will be most likely the means of inducing him to grant them some favours or concessions. Though the Company was always averse of supplying arms to ambitious and unpredictable military chiefs like Haider, Stracey recommended issuing arms to him on the expectation that by doing so they could keep the Nawab in good terms. The Council at Bombay Castle also shared an apprehension that disgusting Haider with an absolute denial would invite his wrath which would put the Company in danger. They had foreseen it wisely that if they failed to gratify him in his request, he would receive supplies from any other European powers that would be glad to

¹³ Consultation at Bombay Castle dated 22nd March 1763; *Selections from the Letters, Despatches, and other State Papers preserved in the Bombay Secretariat, Home series* (Hereafter BSHS- Bombay Secretariat Home Series) Vol-2, Edited by George W. Forrest, Government Central Press, Bombay, 1887, p.124.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.125

¹⁶ Ibid.

cultivate friendship with Haider¹⁷. The friendship between these two had attained such a height that the English even permitted Haider to use their marine yard at Bombay to construct fighting vessels on the hope that his marine force would be an effective check on the Marathas, Malvans and other freebooters on the coast¹⁸.

The amity with Haider Ali was attained not merely through the initiative of the Bombay Government but as per the directions of the Court of Directors. From 1766 onwards, the Court of Directors had put before their men in India that the most prudent system they could pursue to ensure the permanent security of their possessions would be to incline to those few chiefs of Hindustan who yet preserve an independence of the Mahratta power and are in a condition to struggle with them¹⁹. They were particularly in need of avoiding any wars with Haider Ali as they assumed that in such wars, they have “everything to lose and nothing to gain”²⁰. Haider Ali also was very much keen on maintaining a friendly relation with the English as he found them vehemently engaged in checking the Maratha menace. Immediately after his conquest of Malabar, he confirmed all the grants and privileges acquired by the Bombay Government in the province²¹. In a letter dated 28th September 1766, the Nawab, as a probable gesture of appeasement, declared that his conquest of Malabar was to see the Honourable Company supplied plentifully with pepper and sandalwood in a most advantageous

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.,126

¹⁹ General Letter dated 30th June 1769 from Court of Directors to the Bengal Government quoted in *Authentic Memoirs of Tippoo Sultaun*, (Hereafter AMTS) the Mirror Press, Calcutta, 1819, p.9.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ C.U Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Volume IX, Superintendent, Government Printing, Calcutta, 1909, Treaty No. XXXVI, pp.195-96.

manner²². Accordingly, in November 1766, he prepared and signed an agreement granting several privileges and concessions to English trade in the coast of Malabar. These include the permission to enjoy all the grants and privileges sanctioned during the time of the late Rajahs, an uninterrupted supply of commodities like pepper and sandalwood and the freedom to export rice from the port of Mangalore at their will²³. During his Malabar conquest Haider totally desisted himself from harming the English at Tellicherry. This was evident from the fact that his campaign crossed Vatakara southward of Tellicherry leaving the English settlement therein untouched. During this campaign, in order to cultivate a friendly relation with the Company people at Tellicherry, Nawab sent them valuable gifts including jewels and horses²⁴. He had also presented the English Chief a purse of rupees forty thousand as ready money in the hope that it would foster the friendship between the two²⁵.

But, the gestures of friendship extended by Haider was proved insufficient to impress the Company people at Tellicherry who still continued supporting the displaced Nair nobility of Malabar against Haider and found pleasure in rejecting his repeated pleas for the supply of arms²⁶. Another obstruction in the path of cementing the friendship between Haider Ali and EIC was the former's enmity towards Muhammed Ali the Nawab of Carnatic, a long-time ally of the Company. Although, in 1763, the Council at Bombay had instructed their subordinates at Madras that they may be able to accommodate the dispute between Nawab Haider Ali and Nawab Mohammed Ali²⁷, it failed to yield any results due to the known influence of the latter over the presidency of Madras. The gentlemen at Fort St. George with their

²² BSHS Vol-2,p.130.

²³ Ibid,p.131.

²⁴ Haider Ali's letter dated 28th September 1766 to Bombay Castle, BSHS Vol-2, p.129.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., pp.129-30.

²⁷ Ibid.,p.125.

infatuated penchant towards the Nawab of Arcot, desired to instate him over the *subahdary* of Deccan. They also wanted to reinstate the royal family of Wodayars ousted by Haider, at the throne of Mysore²⁸. As early as in 1768, the President of the Council at Madras had made it clear that it was necessary for the peace and quiet of mankind that the punishment of Hyder Naik should be effected and the management of Mysore countries in his possession is to be restored to those who would distribute justice to all²⁹. They discarded Haider's overtures for peace as a gambit employed to amuse them till he could procure some assistance from the Marathas³⁰. The unfriendliness shared by Company men at Madras and Tellicherry soon prevailed over the gestures of goodwill extended by Bombay Council. In a letter dated the 1st February 1768, the Council intimated William Hornby, the Chief of Tellicherry that they, in consequence of the situation of affairs in the Carnatic have resolved to set on foot an expedition against Haider Ali's fleet and possessions upon the coast of Malabar³¹. The relationship between the two got worsened further in the succeeding years that by the end of 1780, the defeat of Haider has become the 'grand national object' of the Company³² which some months before had resolved to protect their commercial and political interests in Malabar by means of Haider's authority³³. Their obstinate desire to fight Haider at Carnatic was evident from the following statement of Warren

²⁸ AMTS, pp.10-11.

²⁹ Letter from the President of Madras to the *peshwa* regarding the war in the Carnatic, BSHS Vol-2, p.149.

³⁰ Letter dated 3rd December 1768 from Fort St. George to Bombay Castle, BSHS Vol-2, p.159.

³¹ BSHS Vol-2, p.134

³² G.W Forrest (Ed.), *Selections from the State Papers of the Governors General of India Volume 1 - Warren Hastings*, Oxford, London, 1910, (Hereafter *Hastings' Papers Vol-1*) p.256

³³ Consultation at Bombay Council dated, 21st February 1780, as excerpted in *Selections from the Letters, Despatches, and other State Papers preserved in the Bombay Secretariat, Mahratta Series* (Hereafter BSMS- Bombay Secretariat Mahratta Series) Vol-2, Edited by George W. Forrest, Government Central Press, Bombay, 1885 p.397

Hastings. Responding to the voice of dissent raised by one of his colleagues at Fort William, the Governor General remarked. "While I have a soldier, or a rupee, I will never abandon the Carnatic; for if we do not fight Hyder Ally in that country, we shall have to fight him here"³⁴. Accordingly, Hastings had deputed David Anderson, his most trusted subordinate, to mediate an offensive and defensive treaty of peace and alliance with Marathas against Nawab Haider Ali Khan, their common enemy³⁵. His instruction to Anderson was very clear and straightforward. "We want nothing from the Mahrattas but their alliance against Hyder Ali Cawn"³⁶.

Arakkal swaroopam and the Second Anglo Mysore War (1780-84)

The principal cause for the outbreak of Second Anglo Mysore War was the mutual distrust between the EIC and Haider Ali. The Nawab accused that by refusing to assist Mysore when they were attacked by the Marathas in 1771, the English had violated the clauses of the treaty concluded between them on the 4th of April 1769. The said treaty has only two main provisions; a mutual restitution of conquests and secondly, mutual aid and alliance in defensive wars. Furthermore, Haider Ali was assisted by the French in meeting his military demands. This was a matter of great annoyance for the English as at that time Anglo-French relations has got worsened further due to some unexpected turn of events in the international front. The French assistance to American war of independence had made them bitter enemies of the English who wanted to sustain the American colonies under their permanent yoke. These developments made Warren Hastings extremely

³⁴ Minutes of Fort William Consultations as quoted in John Nicholls, *Recollections and Reflections-Personal and Political as Connected with Public Affairs During the Reign of George III, Vol.1*, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1822, p.264

³⁵ *Hastings' Papers Vol-i*, p.252

³⁶ Letter to David Anderson dated 4th November 1781, in G.W. Forrest (Ed.) *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and Other State Papers Preserved in the Foreign Department of the Government of India Volume-2*, (Hereafter, SLDOSP Vol-2) Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1890, p.823.

suspicious of Haider Ali's relations with the French. In one of his minutes, he declared that he has got authentic information of 'a great naval and military armament prepared by France with a determination to co-operate with Haider Ali³⁷. The British capturing of Mahe, a French settlement in Malabar which was within Haider's protection has infuriated him greatly. In a letter addressed to the Governor General he declared. "In my country there are factories belonging to the English, Dutch, Portuguese, Danes and French, and besides them, there are many merchants here who are considered as my subjects; if anyone entertains designs against those traders, I will do, without doubt, the best and most considerate method to give them assistance"³⁸. In 1779, Haider Ali formed an alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marathas against the English.

The second Anglo Mysore War began in July 1780, when Haider attacked the Carnatic and captured Arcot by defeating an English army under Colonel Baillie. Meanwhile the English detached the Marathas and Nizam from Haider's side. Being deserted by his allies, Haider was defeated at Porto Novo in 1781. This exceptional soldier died next year, leaving the task unfinished for his son, Tipu, who continued the war with English for another one year. The war ended with the Treaty of Mangalore (March 1784). As per this, mutual restitution of each other's territories was agreed.

Reduction of Cannanore

Arakkal *swaroopam* was the worst affected among the native allies of Mysore during the course of second Anglo-Mysore war. In August 1783, Norman Macleod, the Brigadier General of EIC had an interview with Tipu Sultan which reared hopes of an impending ceasefire between EIC and Mysore. However, all such hopes of peace soon found hindering over the

³⁷ Minute of Governor General dated 25th Sept 1780 in SLDOSP Vol-2,p.718.

³⁸ SLDOSP Vol-2,p.668

question of releasing two separate groups of English fleet being taken as prisoners by Tipu Sultan at Mangalore and Adhi Raja Beebi of Arakkal at Cannanore. These Englishmen were sent from Carwar to Tellicherry to reinforce the detachment of Macleod stationed there. Unfortunately, they were caught in a terrible storm near *Ezhimala* and were forced to end their sail abruptly. Some of them were taken as prisoners at Mangalore by Tipu's force. Another group went on shore at Cannanore where they were seized and detained by Beebi's men. As the repeated pleas for their release went in vain General Macleod gathered together a force 'to obtain by force' his 'just demands'³⁹. His declared aim was to force the Beebi to release the detained Englishmen and to punish her for the outrage. On 10th December 1783, the English force under Macleod reached in front of the bastion of the Beebi at Cannanore. On the morning of 13th December, the fort was captured by storm. Immediately after this, the bazaar of Cannanore was also taken by the English. The reduction of Cannanore was marked by a total pillage of Arakkal palace. Tipu Sultan wrote to the General to express his remonstrance over the capture of Cannanore because the Beebi was his ally⁴⁰. To this, Macleod replied that he never knew she was his ally till after he had taken the place, and if he had known he would still have taken the place because it was not him but the Queen had begun the war⁴¹.

In a letter delivered to the Presidency of Bombay General Macleod is seen labouring hard to justify his attack on Cannanore as a rescuing mission designed to save the lives of shipwrecked Englishmen detained by Beebi⁴². Yet, by all means it might not be the sole reason. In another letter addressed to the Governor of Madras, the same General has seen reporting that he

³⁹ Letter dated 28th December 1783 from Norman Macleod to Bombay Castle, BSHS, Vol-2,p.295.

⁴⁰ Letter from Tipu Sultan to General Macleod, BSHS Vol-2,p.298.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Letter dated 16th December 1783,SPDD No.29/1783, p.924,KSAT.

decided to “use the opportunity of reducing the Mopla settlement which has been a most inveterate enemy with Tellicherry” because of two reasons. Firstly, he found his army at leisure. Secondly and more importantly, he was well aware of the strategically important pose of Cannanore and its fort. To Macleod, Cannanore that houses the strongest fort he had seen in India excepting Calcutta is one of the finest settlements in India. He viewed its acquisition a thing of great value to Bombay, even more important than acquiring the possession of Mangalore, “because no enemy can step between it and the sea”⁴³. Unable to find any possible means to end the siege of Mangalore put up by Tipu and also alarmed of its possible reduction by his forces, the Company was badly in need of certain strategic positions in the coast of Malabar and Cannanore as a port-hub definitely ranked atop among such places of strategic significance. Besides, the possession of Cannanore was very much crucial in ensuring free supply of rice required to feed the Englishmen stationed at Tellicherry. Major Fullarton who, as the Aide- de Camp to the Commander in Chief of the English forces, was positioned to keep a close watch of the course and strategies of war, has described the English attack on Tipu’s possessions at Palghatcherry as an attack designed to weaken the position of Tipu by offering a diversion in favour of Mangalore⁴⁴. This explanation stands even more warranting in the case of Cannanore because of its proximity to Mangalore and also in the light of possible harms at the sea that the Beeby could inflict upon the English. During the siege of Mangalore by Tipu, the Presidency of Bombay has ordered General Macleod stationed at Tellicherry that he must use every possible effort to save the

⁴³ Letter from Macleod to Macartney dated 17th Jan, 1784, Madras Records, Sundry Book, Vol. 61, pp. 766-767, quoted by K.K.N Kurup in *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1975, pp.42,45.

⁴⁴ William Fullarton, *A View of the English Interests in India and a View of the Military Operations in the Southern Parts of the Peninsula during the Campaigns of 1782, 1783 and 1784*, T. Cadell, London, 1787, p.296.

fortress of Mangalore⁴⁵. Naturally, this might have induced Macleod to think of conquering Cannanore as an essential prerequisite for achieving such hazardous and decisive a task. There is also good reason to assume that while attempting to reduce Cannanore, General Macleod was driven equally by the probability of making certain personal gains in the form of money and wealth. In addition to the booty derived through the pillage of the palace and the bazaar carried out with an extraordinary enthusiasm, General Macleod has managed to procure from the hapless Beebi a set of valuable gifts that included a gold gilt sword mounted with precious stones and valuable ornaments like pearl necklaces and diamond rings⁴⁶.

Whatever may be the real motive behind Macleod's ransacking of Cannanore, the Beeby was left with no other option but to sign a treaty with the English. So, on 8th January 1784, the Beeby, along with her husband, has signed a treaty with Macleod. As per this, Beeby has to pay an amount of 1.5 lakhs Bombay rupees as indemnity and another one lakh as annual tribute to the Presidency of Bombay in order to establish a firm peace and friendship between the two. In return, the Presidency offered their protection to Beeby against the Nairs, her natural enemies. The treaty also contained provisions to place all the forts of Cannanore in possession and at the disposal of the Company and to ensure them a ready supply of pepper⁴⁷. However, on 12th January 1784, the Select Committee of the Bombay Government resolved to disavow and annul this Treaty as having been concluded without authority⁴⁸. But, on the 2nd February, they confirmed the same as a temporary measure

⁴⁵ Ibid.,p.300.

⁴⁶ Quoted from Arakkal Records by K.K.N Kurup in *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum,1975, p.57.

⁴⁷ C.U Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Volume X*, Central Publication Branch, Government of India, Calcutta, 1930,Treaty No.XXXIV,p.124.

⁴⁸ Consultation dated 12th January 1784, SPDD No.30/1784,p.47,KSAT.

during the armistice with Tipu or until a peace should be concluded⁴⁹. Finally on 11th March 1784, a Treaty was signed at Mangalore in between Nawab Tipu Sultan and the Company which contained provisions to evacuate and restore the Fort of Cannanore to Ali Raja Beeby, the ‘queen of that country’ in the presence of anyone without troops whom Tipu Sultan may appoint for that purpose⁵⁰. It is true that in the wake of intensified attack on his Malabar possessions from the land and the assault from the sea carried out jointly by the English in conjunction with the Marathas, Tipu Sultan was left with no options other than suing peace with the English⁵¹. Interestingly, Governor General Warren Hastings has counted the reduction of Cannanore by General Macleod as one among the two principal factors that had forced Tipu to negotiate the Treaty of Mangalore, the other being Tipu’s want of success against the Company⁵².

More dramatic was the turn of events after the signing of the treaty which adds further weight to the allegations of a foul play by General Macleod. In two separate petitions submitted to the Governments of Madras and Bombay, the Beeby has alleged that she was forced by General Macleod to pay a sum of Rs.2 lakhs and 60 thousand as indemnity for her release, although only Rs.1.5 lakhs was shown in the treaty⁵³. The matter was referred to M/S. Pamer and Page, the commissioners appointed to Malabar and the enquiry thereon was prolonged up to 1795. During the course of this enquiry, on 14th April 1795 the Beeby has sworn before A. V. Handley, the

⁴⁹ Malabar Commissioner’s Diary dated 7th Dec, 1792, quoted in William Logan, *Treaties*, p.81.

⁵⁰ C.U Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Volume IX*, Superintendent, Government Printing, Calcutta, 1909, Article IV, Treaty No.XL,p.209.

⁵¹ G. J. Bryant, *The Emergence of British Power in India 1600 –1784: A Grand Strategic Interpretation*(Worlds of the East India Company Series, Volume 9), The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK,2013,p.283.

⁵² *Hastings’ Papers Vol-i*, p.287.

⁵³ PDD No.112/1795, pp.246-47,KSAT.

superintendent and joint Magistrate, that she had paid Rs. 2 lakhs and 60 thousand to Macleod as ransom. Although the Beeby has produced a copy of her original letter to substantiate her claim⁵⁴, justice was denied to her and nothing concrete has emerged out of it. The disapproval of the treaty chalked-out by Macleod and the complaint of extortion, though filed after a lapse of almost a decade, are enough as evidences to suspect a foul play. Though, the reason cited for annulling the treaty concluded by General Macleod was his 'lack of authority', it may also be due to Bombay Governments suspicions over the financial swindle conceived by him. It has to be noted that immediately after the reduction of Cannanore, the Bombay Council has sought an explanation from General Macleod regarding the booty taken from Cannanore, especially the reason for denying EIC a share of it. To this, Macleod has given an elusive reply that the booty was only meager and hence was distributed among the troops⁵⁵. The Council at Bombay found this explanation far from satisfactory and ordered him to forward a detailed report of the booty⁵⁶. Still, Macleod has reiterated the stand taken previously by him that the booty taken from Cannanore was so meager that it should be considered as prize money due to the soldiers⁵⁷.

Arakkal's involvement in the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1790-92)

The Third Anglo Mysore War was caused by an attack on Travancore by Tipu in 1790, because he had certain differences with the Raja of Travancore. The English declared war against Tipu supporting the ruler of Travancore who is in alliance with them. Even before the actual commencement of war, Beeby of Cannanore was determined to join the side of the British against Tipu Sultan. With this purpose in mind, she wrote two

⁵⁴ Roll No.4696, Vol.2629, Serial No.21141, Micro Film Record, KSAT

⁵⁵ PDD No.83/1784, pp.138-39, KSAT.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.142

⁵⁷ PDD No.84/1784, pp.861-62, KSAT.

letters to the Company. The following excerpt from her first letter dated 17th October 1788 addressed to the President of Bombay Castle puts her intention to side with the company in an unambiguous plain.

“I doubt not but you will readily afford me such assistance as may be in your power, having no reliance whatever on the Nabob or on any other Indian nation. I must entirely do the friendship of the English and depends on nobody but them and I hope you will consider my country as your own.... From the dispute between me and the Nabob I do not think that he will long allow me to remain in peace. I shall therefore, I am afraid, be early obliged to request for your aid and assistance in order to render his intentions ineffectual and I hope you will write to the chief of Tellicherry not to fail in assisting me when I may find it necessary to apply to him for that purpose”⁵⁸.

On 4th January 1789, the Beeby wrote another letter to the President of the Bombay Castle requesting assistance against the Nabob. It goes like this:

“Ever since General Macleod came to Cannanore, I have considerably been persecuted by the tyrannical and arbitrary behaviour of the Nabob; I have frequently represented his conduct to the Governor General of Bengal and the late Governor of Bombay....A firm alliance of friendship having been established these five years between the King of England, the Hon’ble Company and myself...and shall ever continue to preserve the happy intercourse between us...I have lately received three letters from the Nabob, requesting my assistance against the Nayers, but I do not mean to attend to them. This in

⁵⁸ SPDD No. 39/1789, pp.59-60, KSAT.

all probability will provoke him to treat me with still greater violence and unless I should meet with the protection of the company, I don't know what may be the result"⁵⁹

In spite of these repeated pleas, the Company was reluctant to show any sign of favour towards the Beeby. This was primarily because of the antagonism of the Chief and Factors at Tellicherry. This was not a new phenomenon. As early as in March 1768, the Bombay Government is seen blaming their men at Tellicherry of being unwantedly hostile towards Cannanore. Referring to a skirmish in which the Englishmen at Tellicherry had attempted a violent attack on Cannanore in favour of Nair chieftains, the Bombay Council had to issue a severe warning that they will not tolerate any such "precipitate and ill-judged conduct" and what is expected from them is to act as "auxiliaries to the Mallabars against Hyder Ali"⁶⁰.

Perhaps, the Factory people might have preferred the cosmopolitanism of Tellicherry over the unpredictable and more cunning intermediacy of the Cannanore's Mappila traders under the headship of Ali Raja. Tellicherry Consultations of the East India Company contains frequent references about the untrustworthy and troublesome character of 'Cannanore Moplas'. However, the Company tried to play a hide and seek game without giving a concrete reply to the Beeby. The cited reason for this evasiveness is the fear that any attempt to assist Beeby might invite a hostile retaliation from the part of Tipu since they were treaty bound to assist each other. Besides, there also prevailed confusion over "how much so ever a connection with her might be considered desirable in a commercial point of view from the contiguity of

⁵⁹ Ibid.,p.60.

⁶⁰ Letter from Bombay Council to the President and Governor, Fort St. George, Madras, BSHS,vol-2,p.140.

Cannanore to Tellicherry”⁶¹. At the same time the company wanted to prevent at any cost, a situation in which the Beeby is thrown into the camp of Tipu Sultan. Accordingly, the Council advised President to reply Beeby “in general terms to make a tender of his good office, but to give her no encouragement to hope for assistance from Tellicherry or that we shall in any shape interfere in her disputes with the Nabob”⁶². Consequently, a neutral reply was sent to Beeby on 24th February 1789. It pointed out Company’s helplessness as they are bound by treaty not to interfere in the differences between other parties and its subjects. However, he offered her and her family an asylum at Tellicherry in the event of a possible attack from Tipu Sultan⁶³.

Reading between the lines of Bombay Diaries, one could easily locate the real and exact reasons for this declared distaste of the Company to come into terms with Beeby of Cannanore. It looks rather strange that the palpable rejection of Beeby’s repeated pleas for alliance came exactly at the time when the Company was busy engaged in bringing all the chieftains and principalities of Malabar to their side in order to register an emphatic victory over Tipu Sultan. The Company, it seemed, was rather baffled over the exact intentions of the Beeby. They viewed her as hesitant to join their side owing to “the dread of Tipu’s force and the pursuance of her husband who secretly inclined towards Tippoo from the very high idea he entertains of his power”⁶⁴. Most probably, their plan was to pull out Cannanore from the rest of Malabar Rajas so as to fulfil their ulterior business motives and political aspirations. The British offering an asylum at Tellicherry to Beeby and her family simply

⁶¹ Resolution dated 3rd February 1789 of the Board at Tellicherry, SPDD No.39/1789,p.61,KSAT.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.,p.89.

⁶⁴ Letter dated 8th May 1790 from Robert Taylor, the Chief of Tellicherry to Bombay Council, SPDD No.40/1790, p.229, KSAT.

meant that the Company is conceiving a plausible attack on and an imminent uprooting of her power.

The letter dated 28th June 1790 written by Robert Taylor, the Chief at Tellicherry to Robert Abercromby, the Governor in Council, Bombay is of greater significance as it reveals certain vital information regarding Company's calculated handling of the 'Cannanore question'. This letter places the Beeby in bad taste and concludes that "her conduct has a most pernicious effect on the behaviour of the Moplas in general"⁶⁵. On the other hand, the same letter admirably admits that the Nairs "to a man are our friends"⁶⁶. This letter also proposes the reduction of Cannanore since it "would prove very beneficial by securing the Company a considerable quantity of pepper annually exported by Bibi in vessels of her own and sold at different ports in India on her own account"⁶⁷. The remaining part of the letter reveals the course of action to be taken against the Beeby which testifies the irrevocably inimical attitude of the Company and their determination to wipe out her authority. As a blue print of the course of action to be undertaken to solve the 'Cannanore question', Taylor adds the following.

"From the general tenor of the Bibi's conduct and that of her predecessor who is accused of having first invited Hyder Ally to invade the Malabar Country, it is plain that she never will be cordially our friend, and that even should she enter into any terms with the English she would take the first favourable opportunity of breaking them. One motive that very probably weighs with her against coming over to us is that she has by Tippoo's assistance usurped the Cheral Raja's territory, which

⁶⁵ SPDD No.40/1790, p.364,KSAT.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.,p.365

she may be unwilling to restore. Should you determine to attack Cannanore on the opening of the season we shall be glad to be favored with the earliest intelligence. The fleet will probably be upon this coast very early and could most effectually assist our operations, so that with a force from Bombay joined to our own garrison there would be very little doubt of success. Or should Tippoo by withholding his troops from the Travancore country enable Colonel Hartley to join us the purpose would be equally answered and the Bibi might be sent to her possessions in the Lacadives or kept at Bombay, ...”⁶⁸.

Above extract not only reflects the longstanding British prejudice against Arakkal *swaroopam* but also discloses the ultimate outcome of the Company’s thought process aiming total disintegration of that tiny principality. It seems really ironic that when Beeby was repeatedly making pleas for treating her as a respectable ally of the Company, they on their part were planning her evacuation from Cannanore, either as a refugee at Tellicherry or a deportee to Lacadive. What prompted the Company to take such a stiff stand was their realization that in the eighteenth century scenario of trade and turmoil, it was only the Ali Rajas who could offer anything like a challenge to the Company’s interests in Malabar. While the British could easily win the rest of Malabar Rajas to their side through the processes of giving gifts and prizes, the Ali Rajas and Beebys with their shrewdness in trading activities and highly refined court culture, always remained as a firm obstacle in the path of Company’s plans in Malabar. So, they might have thought it necessary to remove that impediment and the third Anglo-Mysore War had provided an ideal setting required to implement their scheme of alienation.

⁶⁸ Ibid.,p.366.

So, in June 1790, expressing his concern over the Beeby's hostile attitude, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General has concluded that "in the present situation of public affairs we cannot, if we have sufficient strength to reduce her, allow her to remain in an open state of hostility to our interests, nor even to maintain a neutrality on the sincerity of which we could on her past conduct place no sort of reliance. ... it will become an object of considerable importance for the success of our affairs on the coast of Malabar to obtain possession of her fort and Country by force"⁶⁹. Soon the English had reached the conclusion that the Beeby has changed her stand again in favour of Tipu as she, upon the instigation of her husband, thought it safer than siding with the British⁷⁰. They, therefore decided to consider Beeby, 'the wavering tributary'⁷¹ as a 'declared enemy' owing to her 'equivocal, if not treacherous conduct'⁷². In October 1790, Robert Taylor, the Chief at Tellicherry has suggested an attack on Cannanore to punish Beeby for her 'perfidy' and to keep their 'consequences in the eyes of the country powers'. He argued that if they failed to teach Beeby a lesson now, it would be impossible for them to prosecute the cause they have undertaken; i.e the reduction of Tipu Sultan by allying all the country powers to their side⁷³.

Accordingly, the English army under the command of Colonel Robert Abercromby has started the attack on Cannanore on 14th December 1790 and within the course of three days took the forts of Avera and Katalayi adjacent to the fort and town of Cannanore. Frightened by this lightning victory of the English and having lost her husband in the battle front, the Beeby started negotiating a truce. She send her prime minister together with her nine year

⁶⁹ SPDD No.40/1790,pp.461-62, KSAT.

⁷⁰ Ibid.,p.535.

⁷¹ Ibid.,p.540.

⁷² Ibid.,p.536.

⁷³ Letter Dated 25th October 1790 from Robert Taylor, the Chief of Tellicherry to Bombay Castle, SPDD No.40/1790,p.534, KSAT.

old son as hostages to the English Camp and expressed her willingness to surrender her fort and territory on nearly unconditional terms. She also submitted at length to the protection of the English East India Company. Five thousand of the Tipu's troops finding all possibility of a retreat obviated laid down their arms and colours. They were allowed the indulgence of returning to their native country with the whole of their private property, but only upon swearing in most solemn manner that they will not directly or indirectly serve against the Company again during the present war⁷⁴.

The preliminaries being settled, Captain Wiseman with two flank companies of his battalion marched into Cannanore and took possession of the fort "where the English colours were immediately hoisted and the customary salute fired in honour of this great and rapid success"⁷⁵. Thus, as observed by William Logan, "Cannanore, the first place in India to welcome Europeans to Indian shores, was the last of the important places in Malabar to pass into the conquering hands of the British"⁷⁶. The fall of Cannanore and Colonel Hartely's acquisition of Farookabad southward of Calicut put the English under complete possession of the lower parts of the coast of Malabar. In a letter addressed to William Medows, the President and Governor of Fort St. George, General Abercromby is seen appreciating the importance of Cannanore in the remainder of their war with Tipu Sultan as "it was a pretty good port and requires but a small garrison to keep it"⁷⁷. Through another letter sent to Fort William, Abercromby informed Lord Cornwallis that Colonel Hartley's 'brilliant success' southward of Calicut and the 'good fortunes of the little detachment' under his command have not only opened the Ponnani river but completely cleared the Malabar Coast which "left them

⁷⁴ Letter dated 18th December 1790 from Robert Taylor, the Chief of Tellicherry to Bombay Castle, SPDD No.40/1790,p.644, KSAT.

⁷⁵ Ibid,p.645.

⁷⁶ William Logan, *Malabar*, Government Press Madras,1951,p.471.

⁷⁷ Letter dated 18th December 1790, SPDD No.41A/1791,p.5,KSAT.

at liberty for any further operations that may be thought necessary”⁷⁸.The Governor General has described the fall of Cannanore as a “greater success” by which “the whole of Malabar from north to south which was groaning under the heel of Tipu came under the possession of the English”⁷⁹.General Abercromby, the Commander-in-Chief of the English forces, assured protection for the whole of the inhabitants of Cannanore on the condition that all military and naval stores and merchandize of every kind should be surrendered to the Company. Beeby was permitted “to exercise justice to the inhabitants agreeable to their customs in all cases” without the interference of the English. Third Anglo-Mysore war officially came to an end by the treaty of Seringapatam signed on 18th March 1792.

As regards to the expansion of British colonialism in south India, Anglo-Mysore wars with its multiple battle fronts are of pivotal significance. This series of wars which lasted for an extended timeframe comprising the last three decades of the eighteenth century, ultimately resulted in the triumph of the English East India Company. These wars, especially the third Anglo-Mysore War (1790-92) which ended with the decisive Treaty of Seringapatam (1792) eventually paved way for the expansion and consolidation of British colonial regime in South India including Malabar. Although, there do exist a flood of studies centering this particular theme, the major chunk of them is quite consistently trying to explore its causes, course and consequences by focusing on the roles taken by its principal contenders- the Mysoreans under Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan and the British. These studies are generally inclined towards highlighting the Pan-Indian character of the struggle involving the Mysoreans, the Marathas and the Nizam in the backdrop of the global conflict involving Great Britain and France over the question of

⁷⁸ Letter dated 22nd December 1790, SPDD No.41A/1791,pp.6-7, KSAT.

⁷⁹ Governor General’s letter to Nizam Mushirul Mulk dated 10th January 1791, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence Vol-IX*, National Archives of India, New Delhi,1949, p.207.

attaining commercial and political primacy in the eastern world. Obviously, these sorts of analysis often tend to ignore or underestimate the role played by quite a few of its lesser contestants like Ali Rajas of Arakkal.

Historians of every ilk-the colonial, the nationalist and even the so called Marxist- tend to explain Haider Ali's invasion of Malabar and his alliance with Ali Raja in terms of their religious affinity. The colonial narratives on the relationship between Arakkal and the Mysoreans generally tend to pinpoint religious brotherhood as the sole motive behind the alliance between the two. This very mindset is constantly seen reflected in all the colonial descriptions involving these two early modern kingdoms of South India as has been manifested in the following annotative comment made by Kirkpatrick on one of the letters of Tipu Sultan addressing Adhi Raja Beeby. He writes; "Ali Rajah Beeby was a Mahommedan; and on this account, perhaps, was treated by the Sultan with somewhat more distinction and lenity, than he was accustomed to show to his other tributaries in Malabar"⁸⁰. William Logan was also seen shackled in this colonial prejudice while narrating the course of Anglo- Mysore wars in Malabar. When examining the motive behind Ali Raja's alliance with Hyder Ali, he observes; "in the successes [in Canara]of a Muhammadan like Haider Ali, the Ali Raja of Cannanore saw hopes of future aggrandisement and of settling the long score he had to repay the *kolattiris*"⁸¹. What Logan tend to ignore here is the fact that invasion from north was not a new phenomenon in Malabar. Regarding the attack of early 1730's on Malabar by the Canarese, the same Logan has observed earlier that "it seems to have been on the invitation of one or more of his [Prince Regent of *Kolaswaroopam*] discontented relatives that Somasekhara Nayaka, the thirteenth of this line of Bednur Rajas, pushed his

⁸⁰ William Kirkpatrick, (Ed.) *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan to Various Public Functionaries*, London 1811,p.160.

⁸¹ William Logan, *Malabar Vol-1*, Government Press, Madras,1951,p.400.

forces across the Malayali frontier”⁸². But, wisely enough, this time he has refrained from making any reference to the identical religious affinity of both the invader and the inviter.

To substantiate his theory of ‘religious brotherhood’ as the principal factor behind the collaboration between Haider Ali and Ali Raja, Logan makes extensive use of the mid eighteenth century tension in North Malabar that placed *kolattiri* and the Ali Rajas in conflicting positions. So, excessive stress has been given to minor incidents such as Ali Raja “putting a golden spire on the top of one of his mosques, it being contrary to their established rules to have a spire of gold on any edifice throughout the coast except on the principal [Hindu] pagodas; and only those of Taliparamba, Turukacoonotu in Kottayam, and Urupyachy Cauvil at Agar were entitled to the distinction”⁸³. However, it should be admitted that Logan does not fail to relate Hyder’s Malabar expedition to his ambitious plan for establishing a formidable fleet in collaboration with Ali Raja. Immediately after the aforementioned comment hinting religious prejudice, knowingly or unknowingly Logan goes further to describe that “prior to this [Haider’s invasion of Malabar in 1766], Hyder Ali had been directing his attention to the formation of a fleet, and Ali Raja of Cannanore, who already had a number of well-equipped vessels at sea, was appointed High Admiral,...”⁸⁴.

Joining the bandwagon, Adriaan Moens, the Dutch Commander at Cochin also laid emphasis to religious side of the conflict between the two and goes on to describe the act of setting up a golden knob on top of mosque in the bazaar as a rock of offence erected deliberately by Ali Raja to show his

⁸² Ibid., p.360.

⁸³ Ibid., p.400.

⁸⁴ Ibid.,p.405.

contempt for the worship of the heathens⁸⁵. Sardar K.M. Panikkar, the hardcore nationalist is also seen endeavouring to place the element of religious animosity between Ali Raja and Nairs under *kolattiri* at the root of the conflict. In his view, the rebellion against Haider's authority in Malabar raised by the displaced nobility in June 1766 was a 'national resistance' by the Nairs. To him, the principal cause of the revolt was "the appointment of 'despised Ali Raja of Cannanore as the Civil Governor of Chirakkal that made everyone realize what was in store for them if the Mysore troops were allowed to remain and this inflamed their patriotic ardour"⁸⁶. K.K.N Kurup, a proclaimed Marxist also tries to describe the events leading to Ali Raja's solicitation of Haider's assistance in terms of religious animosity through the undue importance given to the erection of golden spire by Ali Raja 'against all conventions'⁸⁷. Commenting on the motive behind Ali Raja's alliance with Tipu sultan Kurup opined; "the Mappila community in Malabar as a whole had the greatest ambition to participate in the administration of political power. When they were under the Mysorean government, they had sympathy towards it to a certain account of economic interests and common religion"⁸⁸. He even goes to the extent of vindicating retaliatory measures initiated against Mappilas by the Company after the fall of Cannanore before the army of General Abercromby. The rigid and terrifying acts of post war repression imposed on Mappilas aiming their total disarmament were, in Kurup's view, only natural since the Mappilas in general had shared a sympathy towards the Mysorean regime due to economic and religious interests⁸⁹.

⁸⁵ *Memorandum of Adriaan Moens in A Galletti (Ed.) the Dutch in Malabar*, Government Press, Madras, 1911, p.146.

⁸⁶ K. M. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala*, Annamalai University, 1960, p.339.

⁸⁷ K.K.N Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1975, p.33.

⁸⁸ K.K.N Kurup, *History of the Tellicherry Factory*, Sandhya Publications, Calicut, 1985, p.204.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

In fact, as elaborated in the preceding chapter, the rivalry between Kolathunadu and Arakkal was purely political. Even the skirmishes with noticeable religious or communal tenor involving the two were, in essence, only the expressions of tension emanating out of Ali Rajas' wholehearted efforts to assert their political entity independent of *kolattiri*. By this time, owing to the increasing presence of European mercantile endeavours and ensuing competition for achieving larger share from intermediacy, the rivalry between these two matrilineal cousins have attained alarming proportions of violent clashes. Weary of prolonged wars with *kolattiris*, Canarese and the English, fought all along the first half of eighteenth century, Arakkal *swaroopam* under the ambitious headship of Kunhi Hamsa Ali Raja was waiting eagerly for an opportunity to better their political clout in the region at any cost. In the raise of Haider they saw an ideal partner to push their political cause further ahead in Malabar by outwitting the hostile designs of *kolattiris*. Haider too was motivated by priorities of political expediencies in collaborating with Ali Rajas. It is true that Ali Raja had met the Nawab at Mangalore in 1763 and honoured him with valuable presents and in return received promises of assistance. But, Haider's delaying of attack on Malabar till 1766 itself shows that he had his own interests and designs to execute here. Foremost among these is definitely his limitless imperial designs to carve out a domain of his own by subjugating all the principalities surrounding Mysore. The life story of this soldier, who had risen from being the head of a body of troops to the stature of an irresistible political force dare enough to put the mighty British on the verge of ruin, would vouch for it. With the fall of Mysore (1763), Bednur(1763-65) and Soonda (1764), the conquest of Malabar was actually a matter of time for Haider. Even if Ali Raja does not have extended his invitation, Haider, being a daring freebooter, should attack Malabar since it shares a common boundary with Canara at Nileshwaram. The tribute defaulted by *kolattiri* has only acted as an ideal

pretext required for going ahead with his ambitious designs of territorial expansion.

More important was the naval designs of Haider Ali. He was among the very few Indian rulers who, in the eighteenth century context of colonial expansion have been wise enough to recognize the great efficacy that a formidable fleet and maritime affluence could ensure in countering European endeavours for attaining commercial as well as political supremacy. To achieve this, he readily realized the necessity of bringing the coastal Malabar with its several ports and trade hubs under his control⁹⁰. Naturally, he found in Ali Raja an ideal partner to accomplish his naval designs. This would explain why he appointed Ali Raja as his admiral to lead an expedition to Maldives⁹¹. Haider's acceptance in 1766 of the invitation placed by Ali Raja in 1763 to invade Malabar should be viewed in this larger political and economic milieu. It was sheer pragmatism rather than any deep seated commitment to rigid objectives that determined Mysore's initial policies⁹². That was why Haider had Hindu ruling elites like Ambu Thamban, a scion of *kolaswaroopam* as his allies and Muslim rulers like the Nawab of Carnatic and the Naizam of Hyderabad as his opponents.

What has been ignored in this bizarre process of adding communal flavour to the narration of historical events is the basic fact that in most part of their sway Ali Rajas were more constantly in alliance with the British than the Mysore rulers. In fact, it was the East India Company's blatant refusal of

⁹⁰ For details of Haider's highly ambitious naval project please see *Hyder Ali's Fleet* in S.N. Sen (Ed.), *Studies in Indian History*, Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1930, pp. 46-154.

⁹¹ MMDLT,p.63.

⁹² Vartavarian, Mesrob, *An Open Military Economy: The British Conquest of South India Reconsidered, 1780-1799* , *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (2014), pp.486-510, www.jstor.org/stable/43303601, accessed on 22/06/2020.

the repeated appeals for alliance put forwarded by the Beeby that had made her mind in favour of Tipu Sultan during the third Anglo-Mysore War. It is really interesting to note that barely a year before Beeby's decision to join hands with Tipu in the 3rd Anglo-Mysore War, her army had actually fought against the Mysorean force and wounded four hundred of sultan's men in a bid to assist the British. In retaliation, Tipu's army had attacked Beeby's forces leaving several people on both the sides wounded. Six of the Beeby's men taken as prisoners were actually blown up from a gun. All these shows the extent of animosity existed in between the two who are brethrens in religion.

By now, it has been established that the Mysore rulers were wise enough to keep a comfortable distance between religion and state craft. Haider Ali's ready acceptance of the *Angrias* as Mysore's naval partner, Tipu's well known animosity towards the Nizam, the Nawab of Arcot and the *Mahdavis*⁹³ irrespective of their allegiance to Islam, the appointment of Brahmins as higher officials and the generous gifts to temples and religious persons- all stands as sufficient testimonies to substantiate this basic fact. On matters of statecraft, Haider Ali took decisions purely in terms of political feasibility without any bias or softness. After the invasion of Chirakkal in 1766, the territory was handed over to Ali Raja on the condition that he must pay an annual tribute to Nawab. But, in 1776, when he realized that Ali Raja was not so prompt in paying the tribute, Haider Ali took the country back from him and bestowed it to the Prince of Chirakkal⁹⁴. This single instance is enough to testify that Haider Ali's primary concern was the priorities of state than everything else. Tipu Sultan was also unwilling to extend towards Beeby

⁹³ *Mahdavis* is a sect within the fold of Islam whose followers were expelled from Seringapatam by Tipu Sultan in 1797.

⁹⁴ SPDD No.22/1780, p.86-87,KSAT.

any exgratia favouritism as a coreligionist. This was evident from one of his letters addressed to Adhi Raja Beeby requesting her presence at Srirangapattanam. Here, the Sultan is seen making an impatient complaint against the Beeby that although he had requested her repeatedly to repair to his presence, she was continuously putting down such requests by placing certain evasions and excuses. Then he goes on to ask her to judge herself by pointing towards the example set by Ravi Varma Raja of Chirakkal who upon visiting the Sultan at Seringapatam has been favoured with grant of a farm in the Taluk of Chirakkal besides other gifts⁹⁵. This only shows that in matters of politics he made no distinction in terms of religion. It seems really ironical that the alliance with Mysore which the Ali Rajas had utilized to the maximum to assert their political entity independent of *kolattiri* in the middle years of eighteenth century has also proved detrimental to their very sovereignty by the end of the same century.

⁹⁵ Letter No. CLXXXI in *Select Letters of Tipu Sultan to Various Public Functionaries including his Principal Military Commanders, Governors of Forts and Provinces Diplomatic and Commercial Agents together with some Addressed to the Tributary Chieftains of Shanoor, Kurnool and Cannanore and Sundry other Persons*, Arranged and Translated by William Kirkpatrick, East India Company, London, 1811, pp.216-17

Chapter 5

Ali Rajas: the Merchant Monarchs of Malabar

“In the small sea port of Cannanore on the Malabar Coast six to eight Arab vessels from 100 to 250 tons, may be found anchored at once, and chiefly consigned to one Black Merchant”¹. These are the remarks made in the beginning of 19th century by Charles Maclean, an officer of English East India Company, known for his ardent campaigning in favour of free trade in British colonies. The reference to ‘Black Merchant’ here undoubtedly indicates indigenous roots of a native trader of great prominence as distinguishable from the Arabs and other west Asians, more precisely, the Ali Raja. Of course, Maclean was not alone in acclaiming the maritime significance of the Mappila merchants of Cannanore. Almost all the European travelers, from Pero da Covilho to Francis Buchanan are also seen endorsing the prominence of Cannanore under its Mappila trading community in the oceanic trade network right from 15th to 19th centuries. As have been elaborated in the introduction, the geographical setting of the harbour town of Cannanore gifted with a fine bay at the mouth and two navigable rivers on either wing was the key behind its preeminence as a flourishing hub of maritime business. Add to this, there were the unrelenting entrepreneurialism and an innate inclination towards seaborne trade that the Mappilas had inherited from their Arab progenitors. Much before the advent of the Portuguese in the coast of Malabar by the dawn of sixteenth century, the Mappilas had well been established at Cannanore as a prominent group of merchants with their own lucrative networks of trade comprising Laccadives, Maldives, Gujarat, Malacca and the Red Sea ports. What is attempted in this

¹ The third letter on the East India Company by Charles Maclean, M.D (date not known), originally published in the *Glasgow Chronicle*, republished as appendix to Charles Maclean, M.D, *A view of the Consequences of Laying Open the Trade to India to Private Ships*, J. Mawman, London, 1813, p.119.

chapter is an overall analysis of Arakkal's business endeavours in the context of ever increasing persuasions of the European trading companies, especially the EIC, in the coast of Malabar. Although, Arakkal's monopolistic trade with Laccadives constitute an important segment of their maritime business, it has been left untouched here as it forms the core of discussion attempted in the next chapter.

Europe's Trade with Cannanore

Although, the Portuguese in the beginning, tried to disparage the resistance by Mappila trading community of Cannanore as acts of piracy they were soon forced to come in to terms with them and began to issue *cartaz* or passes to their ships sailing from Cannanore. In the seventeenth century, with the weakening of the Portuguese *estado*, Malabar merchants recovered their maritime profession to a greater extent and the western coast of India saw a revival of some of its former levels of exchange and consumption. As in the past, much of the restored commerce was in the hands of Mappilas of Cannanore. Here, two developments, the resentment of Cannanore's Mappila traders to the forced diversion of the trade in horses and ginger from their port to Goa and their near total control in the affairs of Maldives deserves particular mentioning. By taking advantage from a palace revolution there, Mammale of Cannanore had started claiming administrative rights in Maldives and began collecting duties from ships calling thereto. The importance of this development lay in the fact that the Gujarati and other ships carrying pepper and other goods from Southeast Asia to the ports of Red Sea could now call at the Maldives to evade the Portuguese on the Malabar Coast². The beneficiaries of this deviated route includes the Marakkayar Muslims of the Coromandel coast who were engaged in the trafficking of

² Om Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-colonial India*, (The New Cambridge History of India II.5), Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.67.

Ceylonese cinnamon and the Mappila merchants of Calicut and Cannanore who used to trade Malabari pepper and cardamom.

Later, when Dutch tried to monopolize the trade of Malabari pepper, they also proved as unsuccessful as the Portuguese. As elaborated in the third chapter of this thesis, the operations of the Dutch East India Company in Malabar, from the very beginning, were conducted in close association with Ali Rajas. The Dutch always viewed Ali Rajas as their principal supplier of pepper and cardamom because of his enormous capacity to procure spices from hinterlands. But, Ali Rajas almost constantly failed to supply the Dutch, required quantity of pepper, despite their treaty obligations. The reasons for this deliberate lapse from the part of Ali Rajas and the reaction of the Dutch thereto have already been discussed in the chapter dealing with the eighteenth century political bedlam in Malabar.

In the same way, English East India Company which had started business operations in 1669 from their base at Valapattanam was also seen maintaining an ambivalent relationship with Ali Rajas. At one hand, they were looking eagerly towards Ali Rajas hoping to ensure a ready supply of commodities, more specifically pepper and marine products like ambergris³. On the other, they were consistently making complaints about the 'depredatory activities' and 'treacherous attitude' of the Mappilas of Cannanore under the headship of Ali Raja⁴. The cardinal reason for this protracted bitterness was, of course, the machinations of *kolattiri* who offered the English a footing in north Malabar⁵. Reflecting this ambivalence, the

³ T.C 1725,p.9.

⁴ EFI, Vol-1,p.358.

⁵ Reasons for the known apathy the British had maintained towards the Ali Rajas have been dealt in the 3rd chapter of this thesis. Although, it is easier to locate the roots of this bitterness in certain events and aspects of European history, no one could ignore the instigations and inducements from the part of nair aristocracy of Kolattunadu, who, it seems, to have decided to quell their enemy, the 'headstrong and self-willed' Mappilas

Company men from Bombay once instructed their people at Surat that it will be highly necessary for the benefit and honour of the Company that Ali Raja and the pirates be made sensible of their affronts. They also suggested the deployment of their fighting vessels, 'Revenge' and 'Hunter' to bring Ali Raja to their terms. In their view, to ensure a free and honourable trade in the coast of Malabar they should take the sword in one hand and an olive branch on the other⁶. These developments would testify the fact that English too were slowly coming to the views expressed by Francisco Almeida, the First Viceroy of the Portuguese in India. In one of his letters addressed to the King of Portugal, Almeida has wrote; "Let it be known for certain that as long as you may be powerful at sea, you will hold India as yours; and if you do not possess this power, little will avail you a fortress onshore"⁷. Adding further proof to the mutual distaste between the two there is also an interesting account of a friendly visit to Ali Raja's palace at Cannanore, made by Company's linguist immediately following the commencement of British mercantile operations from Tellicherry in 1682. As per linguist's description, although, Ali Raja received him in a friendly manner with an occasional smile and had congratulated them on having such a convenient residence in the heart of the pepper country, his face was at times sour, as he knew they would influence trade in those parts to his prejudice⁸.

Besides the customary complaints of under supply of spices, the English were also apprehensive of Ali Raja's practice of delaying payments

at the expense of English. In 1673, the Raja of Kolathunadu has informed the Company that he could not protect the Factory at Baliapatam any longer unless the Company used force to stop the machinations of Ali Raja (Letter from Baliapatam to Surat Presidency dated 9th April 1673, quoted in EFI Vol-1, p.321.)

⁶ Letter dated 27th June 1677, Bombay Secretariat Home Series (BSHS), Vol-1, p.132.

⁷ *Lendas da India*, pp. LXVI- LLXVII.

⁸ Factory Records, Surat Series, Vol-108, p.148; quoted in EFI, Vol-III, p.395.

unnecessarily and of raising unreasonable demands⁹. The issue of debts unpaid had become, as detailed in the third chapter of this thesis, a major bone of contention between the two throughout the first half of eighteenth century that ultimately led to a ferocious and prolonged war. Further, the English always suspected the involvement of Ali Raja in every piratical deed surfaced in the waters of Malabar especially those targeting British vessels. Another complaint was about the supplying of goods of inferior quality¹⁰. They also accused Ali Rajas of preventing other traders from supplying the English with pepper, cardamom and other spices¹¹ and of clandestine deals designed to harm the interests of the Company¹². As an antidote to this sorts of ‘malpractices’, the Company had always resorted to raise the threat that they will, by utilising their advantages as a sea power, retaliate by causing hurdles in the maritime trade of Ali Rajas. So, they made the effective use of denying passes to and confiscating of trading vessels and *munchuas* to bring these ‘insolent’ Rajas into terms agreeable¹³. The Company in 1751 has launched *The Protector*, a specifically designed ‘commodore ship’ with the declared objective of defending English trade in the waters of Malabar. Well before making the warship available for sailing, the Company made it clear that

⁹ Factory Records, Original Correspondence from India, p.4151; quoted in EFI Vol-I, p.342.

¹⁰ The Consultation dated 21st October 1748 alleges that the Ambergris offered by Ali Raja is of little or no value. T.C 1748-49 Vol-XVII, p.33.

¹¹ There were references to many such instances in Tellicherry Consultations. Most notably, in 1732 Kunhi Sou, their principal supplier of cardamom has informed the company that he could not comply with his promise of supplying the entire crop of cardamom to the Company since he was engaged by the Heiress of Cannanore to supply the same to the Dutch.(Consultation dated 15th December 1732, T.C 1732-33,p.22)

¹² In 1742 the Company people at Tellicherry had arranged patrolling boats to prevent the clandestine export of pepper to Calicut by the Heiress of Cannanore (T.C 1741-42 Vol-XIII, p.87). Similarly, the consultation of 21st March 1743 speaks of sandalwood being carried clandestinely from Irikkur to Cannanore through Kakkad (T.C. 1742-43, p.106).

¹³ The frequent and effective use of such threats has already been discussed in the 2nd Chapter dealing with politics.

under no circumstances she is allowed to take goods of any sort, so as to ensure its ready availability for action¹⁴.

The Dutch also raised similar allegations of unfriendliness and treachery in the business deals of Ali Raja, in spite of the mutual association between the two. They too have viewed Ali Raja as unfaithful as all the other native princes who always knew how to put down the small pepper supply to one cause or another so as to sell it secretly to others for a higher price. Because of this and 'other nuisance', the Dutch Company in 1745 was resolved to refuse passes to vessels belonging to Moorish chieftain of Cannanore¹⁵. Here, it seems noteworthy that it was the Dutch who had started seizing vessels belonging to Cannanore much before the English were attempting to do so¹⁶.

It is true that the House of Ali Rajas was never so generous in their dealings with European companies. That was why the Company has observed in 1740 that the family of Ali Rajas which formerly supplied large quantities of pepper, "for several years past have sold us any pepper"¹⁷. Despite repeated pleas, the total quantity of pepper supplied to EIC by the House of Arakkal during the calendar year 1741 was less than one percent of the Company's total procurement¹⁸. But, the failure in supplying pepper to European companies was not because of any sort of hatred or animosity towards any of these companies. To find out a reasonable explanation for the unenthusiastic response of Ali Rajas towards the bids of trade raised by European mercantile

¹⁴ *Calendar of the Madras Despatches 1744-45*, Government Press, Madras, 1920, p.162.

¹⁵ *Memorandum of Adriaan Moens in A Galletti (Ed.) the Dutch in Malabar*, Government Press, Madras, 1911, p.147

¹⁶ William Foster, *The English Factories in India 1618-1621: A Calendar of Documents in the India Office, British Museum and Public Record Office*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1906, pp.324-5

¹⁷ Consultation dated 18th January 1740, T.C 1739-40, Vol-XI, p.83.

¹⁸ T.C, 1741-42, Vol-XIII.

companies one should turn towards the exact and real nature of the identity of the *swaroopam* which was built on the twin pillars of religion and trade. To them, mercantile endeavouring was an entity so inseparable from statecraft. Being merchants to the core, they were absolutely unwilling to be contented with the meagre amount received as tollage from the port under their control as the *kolattiri* has done. The European, more specifically the Dutch practice of procuring spices at a price much below the market rate was totally unacceptable to them. Gifted with a well executed network of hinterland production centres capable of procuring spices in bulk quantities, an ever-widening connectivity in the ports of western India, South East Asia and Red Sea region, and also being in possession of a good number of vessels and a group of steadfast sailors, Ali Rajas were naturally inclined towards more profitable maritime business especially with the port cities of Red Sea region, Maldives and Laccadives rather than accepting the reduced status of intermediaries supplying pepper to European companies. As they could easily get 14 to 15 sequins for a candy of pepper sold at Gulf, Ali Rajas were not at all interested in providing that commodity here for a restricted price¹⁹. This should explain their reluctance to supply pepper and other commodities neither to the Dutch nor the English. However, they made occasional and sundry dealings with both the companies out of pressure or as a gesture of goodwill. Being aware of the insufficient price to be received in return, they might have thought it justifiable to supply the Europeans, goods of inferior quality. Acts of piracy and clandestine deals allegedly carried out by Ali Rajas were nothing more than tactics invented to evade the impediments raised by Dutch and English east India companies.

The English East India Company always tried to relate Ali Rajas' reluctance to supply them pepper and other commodities with the presence of

¹⁹ EFI Vol-III, p.376.

the Dutch at Cannanore. In their view, Arakkal's lackadaisical response to English commercial bids was part of a deliberately conceived plan aimed to assist the Dutch and was carried out at their instigation. At times, the English has also accused the French stationed at Mahe of assisting *Arakkal* underhandedly²⁰. On their part, the Dutch observed that though the Ali Rajas have made exclusive trade contracts with them, they were not at all keen on adhering to its provisions as they were 'wholly devoted to the French'²¹. These sorts of allegations and counter allegations were the product of vigorous competition for achieving largest share in the spice trade of Malabar. So, harsh was this competition that the price of pepper was seen fluctuating constantly in accordance with the norms of demand and supply. The price of pepper procured by the French at Mahe and by the English at Tellicherry lying some 5 kilometers apart, varied considerably owing to this competition. Moreover, as could be inferred from the following table pertaining to May 1737, the English used to buy pepper from different sellers at dissimilar rates²².

Table – 2. Varied Rates of pepper procured by EIC in 1737 at Tellicherry

Name of Merchant	Quantity supplied in Candies (approximate)	Rate per Candy (in Company rupees)
Kunhi Sou of Kottayam	117	78
Bademalla Putter	503	77
Shabari Putter	217	76
Chathu Chetty	752	74

²⁰ Letter dated 22nd November 1736 from Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1736-37, p.16.

²¹ *Memorandum of Stein van Gollenesse* in A Galletti (Ed.) *the Dutch in Malabar*, Government Press, Madras, 1911, p.67.

²² Letter dated 9th June 1737 from Tellicherry to Bombay Castle, LFT 1736-37, p.75.

In this crazy competition, even the news of anchoring of French ships at Mahe for procuring pepper caused havoc at Tellicherry as it would invariably cause a considerable hike in the price of pepper and a resultant reluctance from the part of Company's merchants to supply pepper as per their contracts²³. It has become customary for the English to blame the French for the constant hike in the price of pepper they had experienced at Tellicherry²⁴. During the second quarter of eighteenth century, both the English and the French companies were aiming to get as much quantity of pepper as they can from the coast of Malabar. The Court of Directors of the Company has kept instructing their men at Tellicherry through the Council at Bombay that a double stock of pepper should always be in store to meet the ever increasing demand of that precious commodity in European markets²⁵. So intense was the demand for pepper at this time that in a single instance in August 1749, Company authorities from Bombay Castle has instructed the Chief of Tellicherry Factory to procure as much pepper as they can for they are decided to send to the coast of Malabar, six ships, each to carry 100 to 150 tonnage of that single commodity²⁶. At the same time, the French Company at Mahe, on their part has also intensified their procuring of pepper, offering the English a stiffest competition. In addition to the guaranteed supply from the bazaar merchants of Mahe, Panoor, Palloor, Chokli and Peringathur, they had also collected bulk quantities of pepper and cardamom from both Vatakara and Kottayam owing largely to their political and mercantile arrangements with the rulers of these respective regions. The French had even started procuring pepper from regions as far distant as Ponnani and Calicut to meet

²³ Letter dated 31st August 1733 from Tellicherry to Anjengo, LFT 1732-33, p.65.

²⁴ Letter dated 8th November 1742 from William Wake, the outgoing Chief to William Jeynson, the incoming Chief, T.C 1742-43, p.35; Letter dated 7th April 1749 from Tellicherry to Bombay Castle, LFT 1749, Vol-VII, p.18.

²⁵ Sundry Paragraph No.29 of Commands dated 22nd December 1736 sent from Court of Directors to Bombay Castle relating to Tellicherry Factory, LFT 1736-38 Vol-II, p. 34.

²⁶ Consultation dated 8th August 1749, T.C 1749-50, Vol-XIX, p.3.

the increasing demand²⁷. Prior to this, to the greatest dismay of the English, the French had shown so daring a posture by collecting pepper from Agar and neighbouring countries²⁸ included in the pepper rich province of Randethara, the right to trade with which was given exclusively to EIC by the *kolattiri* through one of his charters²⁹. Presumably, in carrying out this intrepidity, the French might have received the needful support from the House of Arakkal as such an attempt would provide the latter an opportunity to inflict a deadly blow on Chathu Chetty, the principal pepper supplier of the Company who was operating from Agar (Ezhara), the seaside village lying in the vicinity of Cannanore.

The English strategy was to collect spices and other articles in bulk quantities by engaging separate principal merchants for different articles such as pepper, cardamom and sandalwood. The viability and advantages of maintaining such a system has been detailed in following manner by Stephen Law, the Chief of Tellicherry Factory in a letter addressed to Court of Directors.

If we deal with many they cannot avoid interfering with one another, and thereby the Price is raised, whereas by keeping to one so well versed in the Country he is always capable of managing in some measure the Market, and we duly take care to be informed of the Price in the neighbouring Bazaars, before we close any bargain with him, and so well have we conducted ourselves therein, that we are persuaded he seldom makes more than a trifling profit;...Our occupying any of your Servants in procuring Pepper in the inland Parts would not only prove

²⁷ Consultation dated 15th January 1750, T.C 1749-50 Vol-XIX, p.110.

²⁸ Consultation dated 15th December 1732, T.C 1732-33 Vol-VI, p.22.

²⁹ William Logan, *Treaties*, No.VIII, p.6.

hazardous in respect to their safety, but infallibly enhance the Price; [since] this Country not being in any manner under your influence as is that about Bencoolen [Bengkulu, Sumatra], where the method your Honours propose [direct collection of commodities through Company's servants] is practiced with success³⁰.

So, in the first half of 18th century, they had kept Cahthu Chetty of Agar as their most trusted supplier of pepper and Kunhi Sou, the Mappila merchant of Kottayam as their principal cardamom dealer. For sandalwood, they relied heavily on Valappil Kutty Hassan of Irikkur. Throughout the second half of the same century, the place of principal merchant, both in spices and timber has been enjoyed overpoweringly by Chovvakkaran Mussa, the industrious head of Keyis of Tellicherry³¹. Nevertheless, this does not, in any way imply the total neglecting of others, the lesser merchants of Tellicherry and other bazaars in Company's collection processes. As even the bulk quantities of pepper and cardamom being supplied by the principal merchants always fall in short of what is actually required for markets abroad, the Company also made simultaneous arrangements with a host of native merchants of Tellicherry and neighbouring bazaars to supply them pepper and other commodities. As could be expected in a thoroughly competitive native market characterized by an overpowering foreign demand, the custom of depending on too many traders invited troubles and short supply of contracted items became a regular nuisance for the Factors at Tellicherry. The presence of the French at Mahe and their practice of procuring pepper at a relatively higher rate have aggravated the trouble and in 1748, EIC even had to put

³⁰ Letter dated 22nd Nov 1736 from Tellicherry to Court of Directors, LFT 1736-37 Vol-V, p.17

³¹ Keyi is a powerful family of Mappila Muslim merchants of Tellicherry.

Banibathu Kunhippi, a merchant of Tellicherry bazaar behind the bars for his failure in complying with the contract for supplying pepper³².

Notwithstanding the competition between the two, the English and French companies used to conduct negotiations before the commencement of each pepper season with a view to ensure a ready supply of pepper to both the companies at reasonable rates³³. But the stipulations thus formulated were seldom followed and it has become customary for both the companies to accuse each other of causing an extravagant hike in the price of pepper. The English always complained that the French at Mahe has been persistent on violating all the preconceived stipulations by offering their pepper suppliers a price much higher than that of Tellicherry³⁴. The French Company not only denied all such allegations but also countercharged the English at Tellicherry of causing an extraordinary hike in the price of pepper. The English used to discard all such allegations as the handiwork of “moors being hired to propagate ridiculous reports in respect to the price of pepper”³⁵.

Meanwhile, by 1750, the price of pepper in Malabar has rose to an ever time high of one hundred and twenty rupees a candy³⁶ which prompted EIC to desist temporarily from purchasing pepper³⁷. As usual, the EIC attributed this hike to the trafficking of pepper from their bazaars to Mahe by native merchants enticed by the chance of getting a higher price there. To curtail the southward movement of pepper, the English has introduced a levy on all French boats passing through Durmapatam. But, to evade this levy, the

³² Consultation dated 15th April 1748, T.C 1747-48 Vol-XVII, p.99

³³ This was provisioned by a clause of the pact for ensuring ‘common benefit’ signed by both the Companies in January 1742; T.C 1741-42 Vol-XIII, pp.60-61.

³⁴ Letter dated 21st June 1740 from the Chief of Tellicherry Factory to the French Governor at Pondicherry, T.C 1739-40 Vol-XI, pp.168-69

³⁵ Letter dated 25th December 1740 from Tellicherry Factory to the Chief of French Council at Mahe, T.C 1740-41 Vol-XII, p.66.

³⁶ Consultation dated 2nd February 1750, T.C 1749-50, Vol-XIX p.128

³⁷ Consultation dated 25th April 1751, T.C 1750-51, Vol-XX p.133.

French has started hiring native *munchuas* for the purpose³⁸. At the same time, due to the chances of getting comparatively higher price at Calicut, native traders has seen busily engaged in transporting bulk quantities of pepper Southward of Mahe. Since the resultant hike in pepper price was equally disturbing for both the Companies, they decided to act jointly to prevent such ‘clandestine exports’ and as directed by the English Chief, the French at Mahe has arranged patrolling of round boats to prevent any such deals³⁹. Further, to meet the English allegation of the extraordinarily higher price of pepper prevailing in the bazaars coming under French control (Panoor, Peringathur etc.), they even issued a proclamation prohibiting any one giving more than 80 rupees a candy for pepper⁴⁰. EIC, in their bid to prevent Tellicherry merchants from procuring pepper at a rate higher than the stipulated one, has ordered the seizure all the pepper procured in that manner⁴¹. However, there is nothing to prove the effective implementation of these sorts of stringent measures invented to curb the price of pepper in the coast of Malabar. What we are certain is the fact that the price of pepper was escalating consistently in both the colonial bazaars leaving the French and the English free to continue their blame game unabatedly.

Arakkal’s role and manipulations in the eighteenth century trade of Malabar should be analysed in this overall context of extremely complicated competition in between the European companies for attaining the larger share of spice trade. To understand it clearly one should have to recognize the basic difference that would peculiarize Ali Rajas from rest of the native chieftains

³⁸ Consultation dated 12th October 1750, T.C 1750-51, Vol-XX p.44.

³⁹ Letter dated 28th January 1751 from Monsieur Louet, the Director of Mahe to the Chief of Tellicherry Factory, T.C 1750-51, Vol-XX, p.87.

⁴⁰ Consultation dated 23rd January 1751, T.C 1750-51, Vol-XX p.90.

⁴¹ Letter dated 18th January 1751 from the Chief of Tellicherry Factory to Monsieur Louet, the Director of Mahe, T.C 1750-51, Vol-XX, p.88.

of Malabar. As has been mentioned already, maritime trade being the core of their identity, Ali Rajas were not at all ready to be contented with the reduced status of a mere intermediary supplier of goods to European companies. To this industrious house of chieftains, an earning from trade was more desirable than the pittance received as tollage or taxes. Like the Dutch, the English and the French, Ali Rajas too regarded themselves a major stakeholder in Malabari trade and there lies the roots of their unfriendliness shown to European powers. Adds to this was the eighteenth century political turmoil in north Malabar which was marked with a series of violent outbursts such as the struggle between the house of Arakkal and *kolattiri* for asserting political sovereignty, the invasion of the Canarese and the Mysorean interlude. It was by recognizing the mercantile role of Ali Rajas, *cartaz* or passes were issued to them by the successive colonial powers right from the Portuguese. Although, the EIC was known for their apparent reluctance to approve the political clout of the House of Ali Rajas⁴², they truly considered the house as a major competitor in the trade of Malabar. In one of their consultations, the Company has made it clear that “We have ... carried on our trade on a level with the Moor, French or Dutch, only with this difference that they pay him no duties and we have faithfully [pays it] ...”⁴³.

House of Arakkal and their Role in Eighteenth Century Malabar Trade

In the beginning of eighteenth century, the House of Arakkal had continued their highly prosperous trading endeavour of the preceding centuries. Their ships laden with Malabari products used to frequent the ports of Gujarat, East Asia and the Red Sea Region. The Red Sea or Mocha trade was particularly lucrative for Ali Rajas as all such trips were often made after a stopover at Maldives where the House of Ali Rajas have enjoyed

⁴² The causes and manifestations of this reluctance have already been discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

⁴³ Consultation dated 11th January 1737, T.C 1736-37, Vol-IX p.68.

considerable grip, at least up to the early decades of eighteenth century. The last decade of the seventeenth century witnessed a remarkable growth of Gujarati trade as a result of which Surat had emerged as the principal commercial hub of Mughal India⁴⁴. Ali Rajas seems to have utilized this shift of focus effectively by intensifying their supply of spices and other articles of Malabar to the merchants of Surat who played a major role in the channel of maritime traffic connecting the Red Sea to Gujarat, principally between Mocha and Surat. They were also seen engaged lucratively in the transshipment of non Malabari products such as Canarese rice to Laccadives and Maldives. The coir and cowries, the return cargo shipped by Ali Rajas from aforesaid islands were commodities greatly demanded in the ports of Bengal, Gujarat and Malabar. The repeated but rarely attended pleas of the EIC for supplying articles such as pepper, cardamom, ginger, sandalwood, coir and cowries is a clear indication of Arakkal's efficacy in procuring articles of trade, both from the interiors of Malabar as well as from their possessions in the Arabian Sea.

The following incident narrated by Jacob Canter Visscher in one of his letters is enough to pinpoint Arakkal's preeminence as a maritime power in the early decades of eighteenth century. In 1720, the Portuguese has captured a ship belonging to Ali Raja which was conveying horses and money from Mocha to Cannanore. The cited reason for this gross affront was the Portuguese diktat that they alone have the right to transport horses to Malabar. Upon receiving the news, the Ali Raja has sent a fleet comprising twenty well manned ships to recapture his treasure forcefully. Frightened by this, Portuguese approached the Dutch Company for mediation and the issue was solved without a scuffle as the Portuguese, although after much delay and

⁴⁴ Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1850* Cambridge University Press, UK, 2014, p.20.

amidst high drama, has agreed to restore the ship and her merchandize⁴⁵. This single incident is definitely pointing towards the maritime significance of Ali Rajas at least in two respects. At on hand, it demonstrates the unrelenting strength of Ali Rajas as a maritime power capable of repaying the belligerent Portuguese in their own coin. On the other, it could also be cited as a convincing evidence to show that the efforts of the Portuguese to deprive the Moorish merchants of Cannanore from trading west Asian horses were never a complete success.

Another incident occurred in the Red Sea port of Jidda in 1727 is also of greater significance as it highlights Arakkal's influence as a maritime power and the links it maintained with the ruling elite of the Red Sea region. It was in June 1727 that the *supra cargoes* of two English ships, the *Margaret* belonging to Robert Adams⁴⁶ and the *Prince George* from Bengal were attacked and murdered by a mob of natives at Jidda. The provocation for this violent reaction was the killing on board of two lascars belonging to one of these ships anchored at the bay of Jidda. Upon seeing the bodies of those unfortunate lascars floating in the sea, the Governor of Jidda summoned the Captains of the ships in order to conduct an enquiry of that brutal act of violence. But this summons issued as part of ensuring natural justice was turned down by the European sailors on the silly ground that they are 'at the dinner'. It was this slighting that had enraged the mob to go on a rampage which ended in the murdering of European sailors. This tragic incident was definitely alarming for the English Company as there is all the probability of putting its Red Sea trade at risk. The Company solicited the interference of Muhammed Ali Adhi Raja of Arakkal who was at Mecca during that time for

⁴⁵ Jacob Canter Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, Madras, 1862, Letter No. XIX, pp.120-21.

⁴⁶ Robert Adams, the influential Chief of Tellicherry Factory was also known for conducting his 'own business' privately.

his Hajj, to mediate things in a manner favourable to them. He has conducted prolonged discussions with the ruling elite of Mecca and finally the *sheriff* has consented to release the ships to its owners⁴⁷. The ship and its effects were restored to the EIC by Ali Raja's men in early 1728⁴⁸.

However, the House of Arakkal failed to keep this maritime tempo beyond the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Both the House of Arakkal and EIC are seen endorsing this reality in unambiguous terms. Pointing towards the sorry state of affairs prevailed in his family in mid eighteenth century, Ali Raja has this much to say. Although, a great trade was carried on during the time of his ancestors by employing many ships and vessels from whence there arose great profit, but since his uncle went to Mocha⁴⁹, commerce has been declined greatly as there were wars, devastations and charges which are notorious⁵⁰. Attesting this deplorableness, Thomas Byfield of the Tellicherry Factory, after paying a visit to Cannanore has remarked that there is no prospect of Ali Raja repaying his debt immediately as his family being greatly reduced⁵¹. It is obvious that war and chaos of every nature should invariably cast its shadow upon the business prospects of a region and eighteenth century Malabar was not an exception to this general rule. Even, EIC which was fast expanding its trading horizons in the coast of Malabar was not unaffected by this eclipse as one could grasp easily from the Company records of the time. In 1732, expressing his anguish over the messy

⁴⁷ Consultation dated 11th & 14th September 1727, T.C 1727-28, Vol-III pp.9-10.

⁴⁸ Letter dated 1st December 1727 from Bombay Castle to Tellicherry, LTT 1726-28 Vol-I, p.30.

⁴⁹ Here, the reference is to inglorious exit of reigning Raja in 1728, probably out of his frustration over the setbacks received from the Prince of *Kolathunadu*, and his mysterious demise at Mecca soon after.

⁵⁰ Consultation dated 6th June 1747, T.C 1746-47 Vol-XVII p.245.

⁵¹ Consultation dated 2nd Oct 1748, T.C 1748-49 Vol-XVIII p.33.

state of affairs in Malabar, the Chief of Tellicherry Factory has reported to Bombay Council that in all likelihood, its trade must cease soon⁵².

This pitiful state of affairs is to be attributed to a variety of factors. Firstly, since 1720's, the House was embroiled in successive battles with the Prince of Chirakkal, the Canarese and the English East India Company. The circumstances leading to these battles have already been discussed in the third chapter of this study. The war with the Prince of Kolathunadu cost the House of Arakkal much men and money putting their very existence as a house of merchants greatly in question. At one point, they had to surrender their prestigious and rewarding possessions at Durmapatam and Kadalayi and were forced to confine themselves, virtually as prisoners in a tiny land mass situated in the Durmapatam river. Immediately after these setbacks, the reigning Raja who has gone to Mecca for Hajj died there mysteriously leaving the House literally leaderless. Then, for the next one decade, the house was placed under the lukewarm regimes of two consecutive *Beebys* who were too weak and incapable to make prompt and serious decisions. Among their wars, the one fought against EIC during 1745-47 was particularly detrimental to the trading interests of the House as the English has been so determined to impede Arakkal's maritime traffic as part of their war strategy. Many a times, EIC is seen threatening Ali Rajas that they will not hesitate to 'make satisfaction on their trade at sea', if they continue their unwillingness to come into Company's terms⁵³. They also tried hard to implement this threat by denying passes to Ali Raja's vessels and by arranging cruisers to take all boats or vessels belonging to him that may fall in their way⁵⁴. Still, they were very much aware of the fact that putting maritime prospects of the family at

⁵² Letter dated 8th October 1732 from Tellicherry to Bombay Castle, LFT 1732-33 Vol-II, p.2.

⁵³ Letter dated 10th Sept 1727 from Bombay Castle to Tellicherry, LTT 1726-28, Vol-I, p.24.

⁵⁴ Consultation dated 19th October 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI p.37.

risk is not an easy task as there were other European powers ready to cooperate with them⁵⁵. Another setback was the sequestration of Durmapatam to the English which was accomplished through hook and crook by the Company in 1734. In addition to the considerable loss of revenue to be realized in the form of duty from *munchuas* crossing Durmapatam river, it also restricted their movement southward of Cannanore, especially to the hinterland production centres like Anjarakkandy and Irikkur.

Although, the House has shown signs of some improvements in their mercantile prospects by mid eighteenth century, more specifically after concluding a truce with EIC in July 1747, affairs once again went wrong with the advent of the Mysoreans in 1766 as it led to a shifting of focus from maritime trade to wartime priorities. The alliance with the Nawabs of Mysore proved detrimental to the business interests of the House as it invited hostilities of other native chieftains as well as the EIC. It is true that at the beginning, their alliance with Nawab has kept the hopes of commercial growth alive for it placed them at the helm of affairs in entire Malabar enabling a free passage throughout its territories stretching from Calicut to Canara. But, these great expectations soon turned a farce as the rulers of Mysore were interested only in promoting their own political and commercial interests. To them, Malabar was only a district of their empire called *khudadadi*. Haider Ali, causing much harm to the trading prospects of Ali Rajas was extremely generous in granting trade charters to EIC in Malabar, at least in the initial stage of his Malabar campaign. Perhaps, he might have considered it best possible means to ensure Company's neutrality, for he knew that they could not afford to break with him since they needed the

⁵⁵ Consultation dated 30th August 1736, T.C 1736-37 Vol- IX p.8.

products of his Malabar dominions⁵⁶. Tipu Sultan's policy of monopolistic trade and his practice of procuring pepper directly from peasants through the warehouses established at certain important commercial centres of Malabar such as Vatakara, Mahe and Cannanore⁵⁷ were equally harmful for the interests of the House as it denied them the fruits of intermediation. Beeby's friendship with Mysore during the course of second and third Anglo-Mysore wars has cost her considerable wealth and fame as she was defeated by the British in both the occasions.

For the unfortunate House of Arakkal, further worse was yet to come in the last quarter of eighteenth century in the form of handing over to Tipu Sultan of four of their Laccadive possessions known as Amindivi group of Islands or Northern Islands. These isles, Ameni, Kilthan, Chethlath and the uninhabited Kadamath rose in revolt under the leadership of Ameni in 1784 against Beebi's rigorous attempts to monopolize coir trade. In that year, the entire population of Ameni rose in revolt attacking and imprisoning Beebi's men including Abdul Khader, her *karyakar*. Then, a group of principal inhabitants went to Mangalore and offered their allegiance to Tipu Sultan. Sultan has accepted the offer, after granting the House of Arakkal as compensation, a *jaghir* from the confiscated kingdom of Chirakkal. Both Robinson⁵⁸ and Ellis⁵⁹ are seen endorsing Tipu Sultan's reluctance to take these isles in possessions and his attempts to persuade the islanders to return to their former state of allegiance. Whatever it may be, even after a long lapse of two decades, the Adhi Raja Junumma Beebi is seen lamenting over the

⁵⁶ B. Sheik Ali, *British Relations with Haider Ali (1760-1782)*, Rao & Raghavan Publishers, Mysore, 1963, p.8.

⁵⁷ Dr.C.K Kareem, *Kerala under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan*, Kerala History Association, Cochin, 1973,p. 223.

⁵⁸ William Robinson, *Report on the Laccadive Islands*, Government Press, Madras, 1874, (Hereafter WRRL) Para, 46, p.13.

⁵⁹ R.H. Ellis, *A Short Account of the Laccadive Islands and Minicoy*, Government Press Madras, 1924, p. 18.

surrender of these best and most money-spinning isles as an unwanted act undertaken under the forceful instigation of the Sultan⁶⁰. This transfer in exchange of not so profitable villages of *kolattiri*'s domain that too destined to lose in the near future, caused the Beeby a heavy loss of revenue to be generated from the trade of coir, coconuts and certain marine products. As per an account provided to the Joint Commissioners of Malabar by Laferniz, the linguist of the Tellicherry Factory in 1793, before its ceding, these principal islands were capable of earning a profit of about 60,000 Rupees from its coir trade alone⁶¹. K.K.N Kurup has tried to explain Tipu Sultan's reluctance to restore these islands to Beeby, in terms of its strategic significance⁶².

During the last quarter of eighteenth century, causing considerable loss of wealth and fame, Cannanore had been ransacked twice by the forces of EIC. The first reduction inflicted by Colonel Macleod in 1784 had cost the House a huge sum as ransom obliging Beeby to mortgage all the coir of her islands which constituted the principal source of her revenue, to Chovvakkaran Moosa of Tellicherry⁶³. This had placed the House in a perpetual state of debt and financial deficit that ultimately led to the sequestration of their prestigious and highly rewarding Laccadive possessions. More fatal was the blow inflicted by Abercrombie in 1790 by which the Beeby was forced to surrender her sovereignty to the superior authority of the English unconditionally⁶⁴. Soon after this, the Beeby had to admit a free and uninterrupted trade to the English East India Company with her port and country, and to supply the Company at a favourable price with

⁶⁰ Letter wrote in 1803 by Beebi to Board of Revenue, Madras, MCR-4052, Vol-II, p.345, RAK.

⁶¹ *The Joint Commissioners Report on Malabar 1792-93*, (Hereafter JCRM) Kerala State Archives Department, Government of Kerala, 2010, Para 239, p.228.

⁶² K.K.N Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1975, p.47.

⁶³ JCRM, Para.137, p.142.

⁶⁴ SPDD No. 40/1790, pp.643-45, KSAT.

such an annual quantity of pepper and other articles her country may produce or she be able to procure⁶⁵. Although, this agreement also contained an assurance that the Beeby will be treated independent of Tipu Sultan and in treaty of peace that may hereafter take place, her interests will be protected by considering her as an ally of the Company⁶⁶, these promises were never fulfilled. Then, in 1792 came the Treaty of Seringapatam by which the entire province of Malabar was came under the possession of EIC causing further impediments to the trading prospects of the House. Shortly after this, contrary to the promises made, the Company has forced the Beeby to pay to their exchequer as moiety, the half of Cannanore's total revenue including the profit generated from their trade⁶⁷. In Company's view, such an act of duplicity towards Beeby was justifiable considering "the peculiarity of her situation as a conquered enemy"⁶⁸.

In spite of all these hurdles and misfortune, the family never lost its resilience and was always seen struggling hard to make their presence felt in Malabar's maritime environment in one way or the other. Even in their gravest hours of crisis, they somehow managed to continue their maritime profession albeit occasional interruptions. When the Portuguese tried to impede their horse trade in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, they successfully get out of it by combining their naval strength with the diplomacy of the Dutch. They effectively surpassed the English impediments to their maritime traffic by sending vessels with Dutch or French colours or at

⁶⁵ William Logan, *Treaties*, No. XCVI, Para III, p. 86.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Agreement with Beeby of Cannanore dated 11th April 1795 in C.U Aitchison, (Ed.) *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Related to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol-X, Central Publication Branch, Government of India, Calcutta, 1930, No.XLII,p.138.

⁶⁸ JCRM, Para 246, p.233.

times, even without a pass⁶⁹. Sometimes, they had seen sending *munchuas* to Surat without a pass, presumably to enable the transshipment of its cargo to Mocha⁷⁰. Often, they had used false names to get passes issued to their vessels⁷¹. Another strategy invented to evade the English impediments to their maritime movement was the increased concentration given to short distance trade. Thus, in the second quarter of eighteenth century, they had successfully defied successive denial of passes by EIC through their practice of engaging freely and frequently in short distance trade by sending consignments to nearby ports like Mangalore, Calicut⁷², Manapar and Kulachal⁷³. Although, branded as clandestine by the English, these deals were extremely profitable for the House owing to the relatively lesser level of expense involved in it. When they found these tactics of evasion insufficient to carry on their business, Ali Rajas unhesitatingly tried to come into terms with the English as they did in 1737⁷⁴ and 1747⁷⁵.

It was this resilience that helped the House of Arakkal to remain persistently in the realm of maritime trade throughout the troublesome century marked with consecutive wars, internal rivalries and the acts of impeding by European rivals especially the EIC. Unsurprisingly, the Joint Commissioner's Report of 1793 contains a direct reference to the brisk foreign trade carried on by the Beeby in her seven vessels which navigate and trade principally under her own flag from Bengal to the Gulfs in all the productions of the intermediate countries⁷⁶. It also speaks of her minting of gold and silver

⁶⁹ Letter dated 12th February 1737 from Tellicherry to Bombay Castle, LFT 1736-37 Vol-V, p.49.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Letter dated 6th December 1736 from Tellicherry to Anjengo, LFT 1736-37 Vol-V, p.30.

⁷² Consultation dated 17th February 1742, T.C 1741-42, Vol-XIII, p.87.

⁷³ Consultation dated. 6th December 1736, T.C 1736-37, Vol-IX, p.50.

⁷⁴ Letter dated 11th May 1737 From Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37, p. 74.

⁷⁵ Consultation dated 10th July 1747, T.C 1746-47 Vol-XVII, pp.258-59.

⁷⁶ JCRM, Para.413, pp.335 -36.

coins⁷⁷. On another occasion the Commissioners have also observed that “hardly any of the Natives had vessels of their own, excepting the Beeby of Cannanore and some opulent Mappilas such as Choacara Moosa⁷⁸. However, in strict contrast to Chovvakkaran family which always acted in close collaboration with the EIC, the Cannanore family had to strive hard with their European as well as native competitors to retain their maritime glory.

Nineteenth Century: Revival and fall

Notwithstanding these difficulties and impediments, the House of Arakkal had managed to continue their business, although with fluctuations. Buchanan has remarked that at the opening years of nineteenth century, Thalassery being deserted by company's commerce has been on the decline⁷⁹. At another place he adds that after the capture of Mahe by the British in 1793, native traders had began to play a much more significant role in the revived exporting of pepper from Malabar. As per his description, the largest share of these exports went to Bengal followed by Surat, Cutch, Sind and other ports of North Western India and a considerable quantity was exported to the ports of Muscat, Mocha, Aden, Al- Muallakha and Jiddah⁸⁰. As if to provide some clue towards understanding the immensity of pepper being exported to these destinations, Buchanan has also revealed that among these, the smallest quantity, amounting to about 500 candies a year was exported to Seringapatam⁸¹. By combining these statements, one could easily reach the conclusion that the major share of this highly prosperous overseas trade of pepper was carried out from Cannanore under the auspices of Ali

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Para.250, p.236.

⁷⁹ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, Performed under the Orders of the Most Noble the Marquis Wellesley, Governor General of India, Vol.ii*, Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1807, p.517.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 531.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Rajas. To substantiate this assumption, we have Charles Maclean's attestation given as the opening remarks of this chapter.

In 1801, observing the economic state of *Arakkal swaroopam* which suffered a lot owing to their defeat at the hands of the EIC in the third Anglo-Mysore War, Francis Buchanan has remarked; "with so poor a territory and such a [huge] tribute, the *Biby* could not support herself in the manner that she does, without the assistance of trade. She possesses several vessels that sail to Arabia, Bengal and Sumatra; and her commercial affairs are so well managed, that she will soon, it is said, recover the losses that she is alleged to have suffered from the rapacity of some British officers during the wars in Malabar"⁸². Needless to say, this sagacious statement of the learned Englishman was nothing short of an exemplary complement offered to that incredible house of merchants who were unwilling to abandon their interest in trading even in their gravest hours of crisis.

However, this opulent state of affairs was a short lived one. By mid nineteenth century, the trading fortunes of the House had to face a host of external as well as internal intricacies that ultimately ended in the collapse of their business endeavours permanently. The ill consequences of Beeby's alliance with Tipu Sultan in the Anglo-Mysore wars have already been discussed. The failure of Tipu Sultan and the subsequent accession of Malabar in their favour had placed the British in an advantageous position that enabled an easy sidelining of the House of Arakkal. As have been noted already, the provisions of the treaties signed in 1784 and 1790, had placed the House in an insolvable state of debt which ultimately led to the sequestration of their high yielding possessions at the Sea. The burdensome *peshcash* to be paid to the

⁸² Ibid., p.555.

English had put them in a perpetual state of financial insufficiency causing severe damages to their mercantile prospects.

After the surrendering of Malabar, the English had intensified their trading activities in the coast which invariably put Arakkal at the receiving end. Interestingly, the very first treaty signed with the House, immediately following their defeat at the hands of the English had contained provisions aimed to ensure a ready supply at reasonable rates, of pepper and other commodities from the House of Arakkal. Similarly, the falling of entire Malabar in their hands has been well utilized by the Company to expand their trade in to Arabia. A clear indication of this new found vigour was reflected in the agreement signed with the Imam of Muscat in 1800 C.E. Captain Malcom who envisaged this treaty on behalf of the English, has made effective use of British acquisition of Malabar to induce the Imam, till then an ally of France, to change his mind in favour of EIC⁸³. Malcom has made it clear that his actual intention in forging such a treaty was to reopen the interrupted trade between India and Arabia with the assistance of Imam who is without a rival among the Arab chiefs in that quarter⁸⁴. The collaboration with these newly found friends of Arabia was proved beneficial for EIC as it enabled them to revive and expand their trade with the ports of Red Sea region including Hedeeda (al-Hudaydah, Yemen) which till then was a port not frequented by English vessels and also Jidda known for its unfriendly attitude towards the Europeans⁸⁵. In the succeeding decades, Company has registered further gains in this direction through trade agreements signed with

⁸³ Letter dated 4th February 1800 from Captain John Malcolm to the Governor of Bombay, *Selections from State Papers, Bombay, regarding the East India Company's Connection with the Persian Gulf with a Summary of Events, 1600-1800*, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1908, p.378.

⁸⁴ Letter dated 1st February 1800 from Captain John Malcolm to the Governor General, Fort William, Calcutta, *Selections from State Papers, Bombay, regarding the East India Company's Connection with the Persian Gulf with a Summary of Events, 1600-1800*, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1908, p.377.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.417.

certain Imams and Governors of that region of which the most noteworthy are the agreement concluded with the Imam Mehdi of Sana (1821CE) and the trade treaty with Sharif Husain, the Governor of Mocha (1840 CE). If the former provided for the abolition of anchorage duty to be levied from EIC's vessels including warships and a reduction of export duty to 2 ½ percent⁸⁶, the latter allowed a free flow of British goods in their own ships or hired vessels both in the port town and interiors of Mocha⁸⁷. It seems reasonable to assume that these sorts of encroachments of the English into Arabian trade might have caused a setback to Arakkal, who were one among the key players of Red Sea trade till then.

Even then, there do existed chances for continuing Arakkal's commerce with Red Sea region by capitalizing their connections in that zone, as they did in the previous century. But, in the early years of nineteenth century, the Company was seen trying to limit Arakkal's maritime sphere by repeatedly turning down their intends for timber required to build vessels. Although, the revealed reason for this repeated refusal was the increasing demand for warships for His Majesty's use, there is good reason to perceive it as a deliberate attempt aiming the curtailing of maritime efficacy of the House. In 1820, the Beeby has informed the Company in a self-effacing manner that out of the total number of 23 vessels and several *odams* in her possession, seven vessels and five *odams* have been lost irrecoverably at various places due to storm and wrecks⁸⁸. She then requested the Company to sanction 1000 candies of teak timber for repairing and building vessels without which she cannot continue her trade as heretofore. She went further to

⁸⁶ *A collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Vol-XI*, Compiled by C.U. Aitchison, Articles V & VII of LXXVI, Delhi, 1933, pp.172-74.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Article III of LXXVII, p.175.

⁸⁸ Letter dated 4th August 1820 addressed to the Governor in Council Bombay, MCR-2432, p.114, RAK.

add that it was from her maritime trade, she finds means for discharging government dues and defraying the expenses attendant on her rank and situation in life⁸⁹. To this, the Company gave an evading advice that better she buy a ship rather than building a new one⁹⁰. Needless to say, this blatant refusal was nothing short of clipping the wings of a flying bird. The rise and expansion of the Keyi family may also have contributed its share in ensuring the decline of the House of Arakkal. Keyis was a powerful family of Mappila Muslim merchants who had operated from Tellicherry in close association with English East India Company⁹¹. Prior to their migration to Tellicherry somewhere in the beginning of eighteenth century, they were residing at Chovva, in the suburb of Cannanore. The migration to Tellicherry could be perceived as a calculated move undertaken by Aluppikkakka, first notable figure in that family. Perhaps, finding the Ali Rajas well established at Cannanore, he might have realized it better to move to Tellicherry, as the colonial town has offered rewarding opportunities of collaborating with Europeans in the blooming exchange of spices there. The family, under the industrious headship of Chovvakkaran Mussa has received extraordinary acceptance in Company circles for being unrelentingly loyal and on account of their instrumentality in procuring pepper, timber and other articles required for Company's trade. In 1786, they had unhesitatingly turned down the attractive offer placed by the Beeby of Cannanore to join her alliance against the Company and preferred to rely on EIC for protection⁹². The Company always viewed Mussa as their protégée and made everything in their capacity

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.114-15

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.116

⁹¹ For details, please see, A.P Ummerkutty, *Keyis of Malabar* (Mal), Tellicherry, 1916; &K.K.N Kurup and E.Ismail, *Thalasseriyle Keyimar: charithravum samkaravum*, (Mal.), The State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2014, 3.

⁹² SPDD No.33/1786, pp.68-9, KSAT.

to safeguard his interests⁹³. The political role of this illustrious trader was obvious from one of the consultations of the Bombay Council which contains the remark that during the course of Company's war with Mysore they have been receiving most authentic information from Chovvakkaran Mussa⁹⁴. At another instance also Company was seen appreciating Mussa's timely assistance to Company in ensuring their victory over Tipu Sultan⁹⁵.

As observed by Santhosh Abraham, the increasing role of Chovvakkaran Mussa in politics by virtue of being so close to the Company, naturally led to the erosion of a major chunk of Beeby's power⁹⁶. This was best reflected in the treaty concluded between the Beeby and EIC in 1784 of which a reference has been made already. Ironically, the Beeby, once the sovereign and the queen of Cannanore had to mortgage seven of her Laccadive Islands to Chovvakkaran Mussa, a merchant of Tellicherry, to clear her treaty obligations. The genuineness of this mortgage deed itself was a matter of controversy inviting examinations and cross examination from the part of Company's Malabar Commissioners in 1793⁹⁷. Whatever it may be, it was this treaty and subsequent financial liability of the Beeby that caused the beginning of financial bankruptcy of the House of Arakkal. In 1801, adding further weight to the waning of Arakkal's power in Malabar, Francis Buchanon has reported that the influence of Cannanore family has been entirely superseded by that of Chovvakkaran Mussa of Tellicherry, whose

⁹³ Letter dated 7th April 1799 sent from Tellicherry to the Raja of Nileshtar, in Scaria Zacharia, (ed.), *Thalassery Rekhakal*, DC Books, Kottayam, 1996, (Here after *Thalassery Rekhakal*) No.1147J, pp. 529–530.

⁹⁴ Bombay Consultation dated 16th April 1797, SPDD No.55/1797, p.179 KSAT.

⁹⁵ SPDD No.43/1792, p.296, KSAT.

⁹⁶ Santhosh Abraham, *The Keyi Mappila Muslim Merchants of Tellicherry and the Making of Coastal Cosmopolitanism on the Malabar Coast* in 'Asian Review of World Histories', 5 (2017) 145–162, Brill, Leiden.

⁹⁷ JCRM, Paras. 236 & 237, pp.225-27.

authority extends unrivalled over the Mappilas, all the way from Cavai (Kavvayi near Payyanur) to Mangalore⁹⁸.

Of course, it seems imprudent to relate the decline of the House of Arakkal directly to the rise of keyi family which too lost its prominence with the demise of Chovvakkaran Mussa in 1806, much before the actual collapse of the former. Yet, one could not deny the fact that mortgaging of Arakkal's islands to Mussa put that House in a perpetual state of financial deficit that ultimately led to the sequestration of Laccadives in favour of the English causing irrecoverable damage to the name and fame of the House. The message conveyed by Mussa's 'assistance' to the house of Arakkal in simpler terms was that the heyday of this illustrious house of merchant monarchs is fast nearing its end. Obviously, such a conclusion would have accelerated the voices of discontent against Beeby's dominance especially in Laccadives.

Then, since 1790, there were also other impediments which began to surface one after another consequent on the loss of sovereignty of the House. This included the remittance of port duty often at an exorbitant rate and the arrogance of certain officials of the Company in charge of realizing such duties. To the House of Arakkal who had been habituated in conducting trade in a privileged way by virtue of the sovereignty they had enjoyed at Cannanore, these restrictions were really irksome. Beeby was particularly worried over Company's insistence on unloading the articles shipped in her vessels, before the customs house to assess and realize the duty to be levied. Although, the Beeby, by citing the inconveniences involved, repeatedly requested the authorities to give her permission to unload the articles in front of her *pandikashala* which lay in the vicinity of the Customs house, as she did previously, the Company kept on rejecting the same without giving any

⁹⁸ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.564.

sensible explanation⁹⁹. Similarly, when Beeby approached the Company urging them to take appropriate steps to stop the smuggling of coir and other articles from her islands to ports under Company's control, they rejected it outright¹⁰⁰.

Another factor to be taken into account was the revolutionary changes that took place in the realm of world shipping since the opening of Suez Canal in 1869. This was coincided with the replacing in large numbers of sailing vessels with steamers. These two developments have helped the English immensely in ensuring their dominance in Asian trade. If the Canal had provided them a quicker passage to Britain's eastern dominions, thereby easing and expanding their trade with India and Arabia, the steamers has caused a considerable increase in tonnage as well as a significant shortening of distance. It has been observed that more than four fifth of the whole traffic passing through the Canal is carried under the Union Jack. In 1882, of the 3108 steamers passed between Suez and Port Said, 2565 were British ships¹⁰¹. Since, sailing through the Canal was considered dangerous, this newly found quicker route was absolutely dominated by British owned steamers. Out of the 5,236 ships passed through the canal during the period between 1st December 1869 and 1st April 1875, there were only 238 sailing vessels¹⁰². Needless to say, the House of Arakkal, who were struggling hard to gather even the timber required to build conventional vessels was not in a position to

⁹⁹ *Thalassery Rekhakal*, Letter Nos. 96, 98 & 105, pp. 43, 44, 47 & 48.

¹⁰⁰ SR- 48, pp.32-34, RAK.

¹⁰¹ Edward Dicey, *Why Not Purchase the Suez Canal?* First published in the journal *The Nineteenth Century*, 14, no.78 (august 1883), pp.189-205. Reprinted in Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (Ed.), 'Archives of the Empire, Volume I- From the East India Company to Suez Canal', Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2003, p.640.

¹⁰² *The Suez Canal and its Relations to Commerce*, Banker's Magazine, XXX (1875). Quoted in Max E. Fletcher, *The Suez Canal and World Shipping, 1869-1914* in 'The Journal of Economic History', December, 1958, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1958), pp. 556-573 Cambridge University Press, p. 558. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2114548>, accessed on 20/06/2020.

switch their trade over to steamers. Being deprived of vessels of new age shipping, it was hardly possible for them to carry on their overseas trade surpassing the competition from British steamers.

The final blow came from internal dissensions of the House. On several occasions previous to this, the House had demonstrated its potential to overcome situations which were far more anguishing than the intricacies mentioned in preceding paragraphs. But the dissensions which began to exhibit its revolting face in the inner circles of the family by mid nineteenth century were far more complex and intricate to tackle. Some of these infightings were over the question of succession, often, between male and female contenders for obtaining *sthanam* or *musnad*, which entitled the recipient to claim headship of the House. In 1862, a severe rift had occurred in the family over the question of succession which has been discussed at length in the chapter on matriliney. Prior to that, in 1847, the reigning Beeby was seen complaining the British that one Ussenkutty Elaya was instigating many disturbances to her rule with an intention of placing at the helm, his daughter styled as *cheriya beeby*¹⁰³. Although, on both the occasions the crisis was solved somewhat amicably through the arbitration of the English, the damages inflicted to the unison of the House by such acts of disruption were, not easily erasable, especially when there involved active lobbying by each of the claimants and subsequent joining by family members and influential inhabitants into the camps of their choice¹⁰⁴.

In 1873, Adhi Raja Beeby, a senior lady of the House who is next in succession to the Sultan Ali Raja has submitted a petition before the British Government at Madras. It contained her 'earnest prayer' that the sovereignty and the ruling power of the present Raja be immediately taken out of his

¹⁰³ Petition from Adhi Raja Beeby to R. Chatfield, Joint Magistrate of Malabar, SR-219, pp.5-7, RAK.

¹⁰⁴ Foreign (General A) Department File No.44/48, October 1862, p.73, NAI.

hand, and for the future prosperity of the House, it may be transferred to her at once, “as one of the interested members of the family of the House of Cannanore”. The petition describes Raja “as a weak man of intelligence and very injudicious in all his measures and thus becoming a source of great grievance to all. It went on alleging that owing to the misdeeds of the Raja and his practice of trusting all the affairs and management of *pandaram* in the hands of his unintelligent and reckless *kariasthan* Abdul Khader, the revenue from Laccadives had fallen considerably and this in turn had made the House incapable of remitting the annual ‘tribute’ in time¹⁰⁵. Replying to this, Government has informed the petitioner that the remedy for the mismanagement of the family must be sought in the courts of law. Further, expressing their displeasure over the phraseology adopted in the petition, Government has reminded the Beeby that the references such as “sovereignty and the ruling power of the House of Cannanore” are inconsistent with the present position of the family and hence, should be avoided¹⁰⁶. Later, the supreme government at Calcutta has also endorsed this stand and has informed the petitioner that “the matter is one in which His Excellency in Council declines to interfere”¹⁰⁷.

In addition to disputes regarding succession, there were also, petitions and suites filed against those at the helm, alleging mismanagement of *pandaram* property and demanding grants for sustenance. This sort of complaints and legal suites are of greater importance because of two reasons. Firstly, such petitions and suites invariably reflect the gravity of disunity prevailed in the family that included different *thavazhis* or branches in its

¹⁰⁵ Foreign (Political B) Department File No.94/98, April 1874, p.195, NAI.

¹⁰⁶ Order No.474 dated 10th December 1873 of the Madras Government Political Department, MCCF 159, p.104, RAK.

¹⁰⁷ Letter No.1667-Foreign Department (Political), dated 3rd August 1874 from C.U Aitchison, Secretary to the Government of India to D.F Carmichael, Acting Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, Madras, MCCF 159, p. 120, RAK.

fold. Secondly and more importantly, such memorandums can also be read as evidences to illustrate the extent of bankruptcy and wretchedness that are being erupted into this once powerful House of merchants, well known for their unparalleled affluence. In 1901, one such suit claiming a maintenance grant from Head of the House who manages the *pandaram* property was filed by Abdurahman Ali Raja, a junior member of the family¹⁰⁸. During the early years of preceding century, Ahamad Ali Raja, then a junior member of the house, had sued Muhammed Ali Raja, the head of the House at least twice, demanding maintenance from him¹⁰⁹. In 1905, Ahammed Ali Raja had filed a pauper suit petition to remove the Raja from the post of karanavar of the house¹¹⁰. Among the suits of this ilk, one filed in 1908 by Adhi Raja Imbichi Beeby against Adhi Raja Ahamed Ali Raja¹¹¹, her immediate junior is of greater significance as it reveals the gravity of infighting and hostilities existed in the inner circles of the House. The documents relating to this case would also provide certain valuable information on the structure and management of properties owned by the House.

The roots of dissensions of this sort were innately attached to the matrilineal joint family system of the House. To complicate things further, there were two distinct *thavazhis* or branches of this extended family of merchants- Mahal and Puthiarakkal. Mahal became extinct in 1899, with the demise of Mussa Ali Raja¹¹². There are three sets of estates belonging to the family, viz;*pandaram*, *puthia pandikashala* and *valia pandikashala*. *pandaram* estate was enjoyed by the head of the family. *Pudia pandikashala* belonged exclusively to the extinct Mahal *thavazhi* and puthiarakkal had no

¹⁰⁸ O.S.No.328/1901, Arakkal Records, Archives of the Department of History, University of Calicut.

¹⁰⁹ APL-2/ 6207, p.13, RAK.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.12.

¹¹¹ O.S No.24/1908, APL-2/ 6207, pp.7-16, RAK.

¹¹² Ibid., p.12.

right to it. With the demise of Mussa Ali Raja, it has become part of the *pandaram*. *Valia pandikashala* properties were managed exclusively by puthiarakkal and Mahal *thavazhi* had no right to it. However, at times, these divisions and stipulations were often violated, putting the unison of the House in danger. By later half of the nineteenth century, the open disobeying of Arakkal's monopolistic rights in Laccadives and subsequent fall in revenue had greatly intensified the infighting that in turn has led to a plethora of legal disputes for claiming *tharavadu* properties and for obtaining maintenance. So, grave was the infighting and mutual distress prevailed in the house that when in 1899, Muhammed Ali became the Raja, he preferred to live at his Chovva bungalow, abandoning his ancestral home at Arakkal. Till his death, this Raja was at enmity with all the other members of the family¹¹³. Although, he has managed all the three sets of estates by himself, Muhammed Ali Raja did not give maintenance to anyone other than Adhi Raja Imbichi Beeby, his immediate successor¹¹⁴. To make things further worse, there were also criminal complaints of theft and physical assaults which at times followed civil disputes regarding the right to manage properties or gaining maintenance¹¹⁵. In one of such complaints, Adhi Raja Ahamed Ali was convicted for assaulting Cheriya Maligammal Kunhi Elaya.¹¹⁶ The disputes between family members have induced a similar trend among the tenants of the House too, causing an unprecedented raise in civil suites in which tenants of the House were largely seen claiming jenmom rights of the properties taken under lease¹¹⁷.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 14

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ APL-2/ 5271, p.7, RAK.

¹¹⁶ APL-2/ 6207, p.14, RAK.

¹¹⁷ Witness account of V.C. Mayan, formerly a *Karyasthan* of the House, filed in O.S.No.4/1913, APL-II/ 5271, p.11, RAK.

As an inevitable consequence of these expensive and enduring litigations, the House naturally began to experience an irrecoverable waning of both the resources as well as the resilience required to continue their maritime business as they had done earlier. In addition to these internal problems, there were also certain indefensible external factors such as the speedy navigation of the European steamers through Suez Canal and the acts of impeding by the British. Needless to say, maritime business, especially when facing the stiffest kind of challenges from European steamers, was not an easy task to carry on with a House divided and an exchequer exhausted.

Chapter 6
Possessions at Sea

The Laccadive group of Islands or Lakshadweep is at present a Union Territory included in Indian Union. It is the northern most and the smallest of the three central Indian Ocean archipelagoes. Literally, one hundred thousand islands, it comprises twelve atolls, three reefs and six submerged banks. Among these atolls located in the Arabian Sea between 8° and 12° 30' north, and between 71° and 74° east, only ten are inhabited islands. They are, Agatti, Androth, Amini, Bitra, Chetlath, Kadamath, Kalpeni, Kavaratti, Kiltan and Minicoy. These islands, except Minicoy are clustered around Kavaratti, the present capital, which lays some 303 kilometers south-west of Kozhikode in the Coast of Malabar. Minicoy lies isolated to the south of the main group from which it is separated by the 183-kilometre-wide Nine Degree Channel. Although politically attached to the group, Minicoy has only a few things in common with the rest of its group and is culturally more akin to Maldives. Earlier, these islands were subdivided into three distinct groups as shown in the chart given below.

Table 3- Lakshadweep Islands

Name of the Group	Name of the islands included in each Group
Amindivi	Amini, Kadamath, Kiltan, Chetlat and Bitra (All inhabited)
Laccadive	Andrott, Kavaratti, Agatti and Kalpeni (Inhabited) Kalpetty, Bangaram, Tinnakkara, Parali, Tilakkam, Pitti, Cheriyam, Suheli, Valiyakara and Kodithala (Uninhabited)
Minicoy	Minicoy (Inhabited) Viringili (Uninhabited)

At least from the early phase of the sixteenth century to the last quarter of eighteenth century, the whole of this archipelago was under the political subjugation of the House of Cannanore. Owing to a revolt led by Ameni Islanders in 1784, the House had lost four of its Northern Islands (Ameni, Chetlath, Kilthan and Kadamath) to Tipu Sultan which subsequently fell into the hands of EIC with the collapse of Srirangapattanam in 1799. With this, these four northern islands or Amindivi Islands have been renamed as Canara Islands as it formed a part of South Canara district of the Presidency of Madras. The southern islands (Agatti, Androth, Bitra, Kalpeni, Kavaratti, and Minicoy) which remained under the sway of the House of Cannanore were together known as Cannanore group of islands.

Arakkal *swaroopam* and their Relations with Laccadives

Among the maritime activities of the House of Arakkal, their dealings with Laccadives deserve particular mentioning. The House always treated these coral islands as the goose that lays the golden eggs. It was through the trade of the products of these isles that the Ali Rajas had earned the major share of their maritime affluence. We have evidences of Cannanore's maritime contacts with Laccadive archipelago since mid sixteenth century¹. There is nothing surprising to imagine the existence of trade between the two even earlier than this, as the islanders who had only coconuts and fishes to eat were left with no other options but to expect cereals supplied by Ali Rajas, the much acclaimed champions of maritime business, of which the transshipment trade of both Canarese and Ponnani rice was a major component. It is already known that the predecessors of the House had maintained political and business relations with the Maldives at least from the fourteenth century². As

¹ Sheikh Zainuddin Al-Makhdoom, *Tuhfat ul Mujahideen*, National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi, 2014, p.53.

² According to H.C.P Bell, there existed a close connection between the Maldives and the flourishing and powerful Muslim settlements on the Malabar coast, notably Cannanore,

such, considering the two vital factors; Cannanore's proximity to Laccadives (to Cannanore, Laccadives is much closer than Maldives) and also its being situated right in the middle of their sea route to Red Sea region, it seems reasonable to assume that they might have maintained the same sort of ties even earlier, with Laccadives. As observed by Andre Wink, the geographical positioning that facilitated its functioning as important stopovers on much travelled sea routes, great ship building tradition of the islanders and the availability of marine products like cowries, ambergris and dried fish were the factors which added substantially to the the maritime significance of Laccadive group of islands³.

Arakkal's trade with Laccadives was basically a bartering of agricultural and marine products of the isles in lieu of food grains, salt and other essential commodities imported from Cannanore. As Arakkal was the only supplier of the staple required for their subsistence, the islanders were naturally put under the mercy of Ali Rajas who always wished to carry on the trade of their oceanic possessions, only on a monopolistic basis. Arguably, their trade with Arakkal, in almost all products and more specifically in coir, was conducted strictly on monopolistic terms. Besides their political authority over these isles, the unwillingness shown by other contenders of maritime profession to indulge in Laccadive trade which in no way was so lucrative at that time, could also be shown as a simple reason that facilitated a monopoly

as early as 14th and 15th centuries. (*The Maldive Islands: An Account of the Physical Features, Climate, History, Inhabitants, Productions and Trade*, Colombo, 1882, p.24).

Tha'rikh, a historical chronicle of Maldives covering the period between 1141 and 1821 CE contains direct reference to a palace revolution occurred in the second decade of sixteenth century. As per this, Kalu Muhammad, who was deposed twice from the throne of Maldives was restored with the assistance of Ali Raja of Cannanur. (Quoted by Andrew D.W. Forbes (1979) *Sources towards a history of the Laccadive Islands*, in 'South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies', 2:1-2, 130-150.

³ Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World-Vol- III, Indo-Islamic Society 14th-15th Centuries*, Brill, Leiden, 2004, p.207.

of this sort. Cannanore's fight with Portuguese who always preferred to carry on their eastern trade on monopolistic basis and their subsequent expulsion from the island by the middle of sixteenth century might also have contributed its share in the continuance of Arakkal's trade in Laccadives on monopolistic terms. Whatever it may be, this monopoly was later developed, of course with the stimulus received from the English, into a bone of contention between Arakkal and the islanders that ultimately ended in the sequestration of these isles in favour of the Raj. The English officials in general were vehemently critical of the trade monopoly enjoyed by Cannanore at Laccadives and were often seen using it as a placard to highlight Cannanore's 'misrule' there. As has been proved by later developments, such criticisms could be viewed as a calculated move aiming to effect the sequestration, in their favour, of these highly advantageous isles. Nevertheless, it seems extremely strange to note that a piece of most fervent justification of Arakkal's monopoly trade with Laccadives has also come from a prominent British official. In 1889, J. Twigg, Acting Sub Collector of Malabar, has observed that "the people everywhere cling tenaciously to the monopoly system and with good reason, for it gives them a certain market and they are really not in a position to be able to deal themselves with merchants on the mainland. The islands require a little protective care of this sort, but the system is perhaps capable of improvement"⁴.

Coconut palms are the commonest plant in Laccadives which could be seen from coast to coast. Even today, about about 68% of cultivable land in the islands is under coconut cultivation. With its multifaceted utilities, the tree and its seeds are closely associated with the everyday life of the people here. The economic value of coconut is incalculable. This single tree can provide almost every necessary of life such as milk, sugar, honey and wine in

⁴ Twigg's Report on Laccadives dated 27th April 1889, Revenue (Land Revenue) Proceedings No. 401 dated 11th June 1889, Para 71, p.21, MCCF-3,RAK.

abundance. The kernel or almond may be eaten as bread with viands of all kinds. Islanders used to depend on this for their survival especially during the days of famine. The wood and its leaves, husk and shell everything was used in preparing houses and various kinds of utensils and furniture. In industrial point of view, husk of the coconuts out of which the islanders produced a fine quality cable that were in great demand, chiefly for its use in shipbuilding, was of greater significance. The trade of this most wanted item had been the exclusive privilege of the house of Arakkal since 1765 which invited a strong resentment from the islanders that ultimately, of course, with the machinations of the English, has cost the House their precious possessions in the Arabian Sea. More importantly, the islanders had also used certain parts of coconut palms as materials to build their ships⁵. The following table prepared on the basis of data collected in 1844 will illustrate the predominance of coconut palms in the topography of Laccadives upon which the islanders relied almost exclusively for their subsistence.

Table-4 Details coconut palms in various islands

	Name of Island	Population	Number of Productive Palms	Number of Trees per head (Approximate)
Company's Islands	Ameny	2448	44669	18
	Chetlath& Kadamath	522	7464	14
	Kilthan	639	13282	21
	Total			53
Cannanore Islands	Androth	3000	90000	30
	Kalpeni	1600	80000	50
	Kawarathy	2500	75000	30
	Agathy	1700	39000	23
	Total			33

(Source: William Robinson's Report on Laccadive Islands, 1848)

⁵ George F Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Octagon Books, New York, 1975. p.71.

Being available in abundance, coconuts and its kernel in the form of copra and also the allied products like jaggery were always shipped from Laccadives to the mainland. Islanders had been very generous in their supply of coconuts to the Rajas of Arakkal. The Raja had ensured its bulk supply at the market rate prevailing in the coast by paying a portion of the price in advance⁶. Still, the trade was fabulously profitable for him as he used to ship these good quality coconuts directly to Bengal for a much higher margin⁷. However, this item too was subjected to the monopoly of Arakkal after 1825 and as a result the islanders have lost much of their enthusiasm to carry on this otherwise lucrative trade. As per an estimate given by William Robinson, after the introduction of monopoly, the number of coconuts exported from Androth, the largest among these islands, alone had fallen from five to eight lakhs to one to three lakhs a year⁸. He also observed that by mid nineteenth century, islanders were seen extensively engaged in the manufacture of jaggery in order to evade the pressure of the monopolies of coir and coconuts⁹. Besides this diversion, the islanders had also been seen to have engaged almost regularly, in sending their consignments clandestinely to the ports of Canara to evade the ill effects of monopoly trade¹⁰. Some of them who were more daring had even attempted the eluding of restrictions by transshipping their produce to the vessels belonging to certain unauthorised merchants from Malabar such as Mammali Haji and Ali Ammad Koya, from within the limits of high seas itself¹¹. William Robinson admits that “there has

⁶ *WRRL*, Para, 155, p.38.

⁷ Letter No.81 dated 3rd June 1858 from William Robinson, the Acting Collector of Malabar to G.S Forbes, Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Madras, MCCF -73, p.100, RAK,

⁸ *WRRL*, Para, 58, p.16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Para 90, p. 23.

¹⁰ Letter dated 3rd February 1870 from Sultan Ali Raja of Cannanore to A.M Webster, the Collector of Malabar, SR-235, p. 116, RAK.

¹¹ Letter dated 2nd November 1851 from Beeby of Cannanore to H.V.Conolly, the Collector of Malabar, SR-48, p. 132, RAK.

been, doubtless a considerable smuggling trade, of which the Company's islanders have been the careers"¹². He has also stated that even the inhabitants of Minicoy which was free from monopolistic restrictions were seen engaged in exporting coconuts clandestinely to Ceylon and elsewhere in large quantities making it impossible to fix the average annual exports of this 'naturally very fluctuating commodity'¹³.

Traditionally, Coir made from coconut husks formed the principal item exported from Laccadives. The ever growing demand for this principal commodity was directly related to boat making which was then a thriving industry in Indian Ocean rim. Notably, Alberuni was the first scholar to make a clear distinction between Laccadive and Maldives archipelagos which, till then were referred collectively as *dibayat* (Islands) in Arab sources¹⁴. As per this separation, both the archipelagos were given specific adjectives such as *Divakânbar* (Coir Islands, or Laccadives) and *Diva kudha* (Cowry Islands, or Maldives) on the basis of their principal products. Alberuni has also made it clear that the Laccadivians were using cords twisted from coconut fibre for fastening together the planks of the ships¹⁵. Needless to say, this reference itself is enough to pinpoint the significance of coir industry in the maritime world of Laccadives. Later, Gasper Correa has also observed that the planks of the ships made in the medieval and early modern Asia were threaded with coir since it was 'as secure as if they are nailed'¹⁶. Illustrating the importance of coir in shipbuilding industry, the sewn up boats, in certain places including

¹² *WRRL*, Para, 93, p.24.

¹³ *WRRL*, Para, 73, p.19.

¹⁴ For example we have the anonymous account of the travels of Sulaymân al-Tâjir (Tajir in Arabic means merchant) of Sîrâf, dated 851 CE; Andrew D.W Forbes, *Southern Arabia and the Islamicisation of the Central Indian Ocean Archipelagoes*, in 'Archipel', Volume, 21, 1981. pp. 55-92; p.65.

¹⁵ Dr. Edward C. Sachau (Ed.) *Alberuni's India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India about A.D. 1030*, Vol.I, Kegan Paul, Trunch, Trebner &Co. Ltd. London, 1910, p.210.

¹⁶ *Lendas da India*, p.240.

the Nile region and Dhofar were known by the name *qinbar* or *kunbar*¹⁷, which was the colloquial term used to denote coir or coconut fibre¹⁸. Pointing to its superior quality, Gasper Correa has made it clear that the coir made from coconut husk is so abundant, that in the whole of India they do not use any other thread for rigging and cables; they are soft and stretch, for which reason they are more serviceable than European cables, and in salt-water they are stronger¹⁹. Al-Masudi²⁰ and Ibn-jubayr²¹ has endorsed the prevalence of ships sewn up with ropes made out of coconut husks in the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean respectively²². By quoting ibn- Jubayr and ibn-Battutah, George Fadlo Hourani has observed that the sewing of boats were very common along the East African coast and also in Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Malabar and Coromandel coasts of India, the Maldives and Laccadive Islands. He also adds that it was the only method indigenous to the western half of the Indian Ocean before fifteenth century²³.

However, the fruits of the ever growing demand for coir were appropriated almost exclusively by the House of Arakkal through their intermediation in Laccadive trade. Right from the beginning of their association with Laccadives, the Rajas had introduced a kind of

¹⁷ Interestingly, the thick and stronger variety of coir is termed in Malayalam as *kamba*. This may be a possible derivation from the term *kunbar*, (coir/cable) familiarized in the coast through the contacts with Arab sailors.

¹⁸ Dionisius A. Agius, *Classic Ships of Islam from Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean*, Leiden, 2008, p. 268.

¹⁹ *Lendas da India*, pp.133-34.

²⁰ Abu al- Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Masudi, was 10th century Arab historian and geographer who visited India in 953 CE.

²¹ Ibn Jubayr was a 12th century Arab geographer, traveller and poet from al-Andalus. A detailed account of his travels is available under the title *Rihlat Ibn Jubayr* (translated and edited by W. Wright and rev. M. J. De Goeje, Brill, Leiden, 1907).

²² Moshe Gil, *Shipping in the Mediterranean in the Eleventh Century A.D. as Reflected in Documents from the Cairo Geniza* in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* , Vol. 67, No. 4 (October 2008), pp. 247-292, The University of Chicago Press, Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/596098>, accessed on 12th June 2020.

²³ George F Hourani, *op.cit.*, p.93.

sungam(chunkam/Excise Duty) on the coir produced by islanders. Subsequently, a like duty on the rice imported from mainland was also imposed which ensued a correlation between the principal product and principal foodstuff of the islanders. The rate of duty extracted from islanders usually varied from six to ten percent of the article exchanged²⁴. The introduction of coir monopoly by the House of Arakkal occurred only at a later stage, between 1761 and 1765 causing much resentment among the islanders²⁵. The restrictions were imposed during the reign of Kunhi Hamsa Adhi Raja (1738-1778) who was determined to reassert the political sovereignty of the House at any cost. To accomplish this task, the Raja had to engage in expensive wars with the *kolattiri* and EIC. Besides, he also wanted to repair the damages caused by lukewarm regimes of two consecutive heiresses who preceded him. The reign of both these Heiresses, as has been noted already, were equally notorious for its wars, chaos and subsequent weakening of the business fortunes of the House.

It seems realistic to relate the introduction of coir monopoly with the deeply deteriorated financial state of the House, for they were badly in need of such an extreme measure at that particular point of time to keep their business as well as political fortunes alive. The stringent implementation of this trade restriction carried out under the stewardship of *vazir* Kunhi Pakki and the association with the Nawab of Mysore had proved instrumental in raising the power and prestige of the House considerably during the second half of the eighteenth century. Although, the Ali Raja had to face a setback in the form restoration of *kolattiri* to the throne of Kolattunadu, undertaken by Haider Ali in 1767, he was totally successful in placing the compulsory system of trade in full operation in all the islands²⁶. But, after his death, the

²⁴ *WRRL*, Para 36, p.11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Para 41,p.12.

²⁶ *WRRL*, Para 43, p.12.

resentment of the inhabitants of the Ameny island over the imposition of trade restrictions eventually cost the House four of their Laccadive possessions in favour of Tipu Sultan.

The monopoly price of coir was fixed at an inadequate rate of 30 to 35 rupees per candy, which was usually paid in rice after deducting 20% (10% each for exporting coir and importing rice) as duty²⁷. This placed the islanders at the receiving end as the market value of coir was then between sixty and seventy rupees per candy²⁸. To get themselves out of this agonising situation, the islanders were seen resorting to a twofold strategy of smuggling and of pursuing a general abstention from coir making. To effect the latter, they diverted their attention from coir making to coconut trade by allowing the nuts to ripe fully, since the coir usually is made from the husk of the coconut which is cut before the nut is quite ripe. Similarly, when coconuts too were subjected to monopolistic restrictions in 1825, the islanders had very soon shifted to jaggery production, even though it is harmful to the trees in the long run. Both Robinson and Logan have pointed out how the coir monopoly tempted the islanders to let their coconuts ripen (whereby a higher pain is attained for the nut, but the husk is unfit for the manufacture of coir) or to manufacture jaggery at seasons when it injures the tree to drain it of its juice²⁹. Sacrificing coir and coconuts for the sake of jaggery production was particularly harmful to the economy of the islands as jaggery was only meant for the coarse use of islanders. Nevertheless, this sort of misdirection has been intensified since 1826 owing to a sudden and continuous reduction in the price of coir which first surfaced in that year³⁰.

²⁷ *WRRL*, Para 132, p.32.

²⁸ *WRRL*, Para 133, p.32.

²⁹ Report of Winterbotham(Acting Special Assistant to the Collector and Magistrate of Malabar) on Laccadive Islands, 1886, Para 45, pp. 68-69, SR-15, RAK.

³⁰ *WRRL*, Para 91, p.24.

William Robinson is trying to relate this sudden fall to the extended use of chain cables in ships and also to the circumstances affecting the supply³¹. However, it seems unwise to underestimate the influence of other factors such as widespread use of nails, instead of coir, to join the planks of vessels and a consistent fall in the quality of coir manufactured from Laccadives that might also have cast its share in reducing the demand of coir imported from Laccadives. William Robinson, who is well known for his antipathy towards the House of Arakkal, is seen explaining the poor and inferior quality of Laccadive coir as “the natural consequence of unremunerative prices and a system of monopoly”³². A more sensible and balanced explanation for this disturbing decrease in quality was given by J.Twigg, the Acting Sub collector of Malabar who had visited four of the Laccadive islands in 1888-89. According to him, it is not the monopoly system or payment by weight and not by length that is responsible for the badness of Laccadive coir, but the fact that consignments of coir in the same boat are not kept separate, so that if a man takes the trouble to make first class coir, he does not reap the benefit himself³³.

Similar restrictions were imposed subsequently in the trade of other products being procured from isles. The cowries, found in considerable quantities on the shoals of Laccadives had long been a commodity of extreme financial significance primarily due to its use as coins. In terms of the total quantity of cowries procured, Cannanore Islands, especially Agatty was far ahead of the Canara group of Islands which came under the possession of EIC in 1799 consequent on the fall of Seringapatam. As per an estimate given by Robinson, annually, Agatty had produced twelve to fifteen candies of cowries

³¹ *WRRL*, Para 142, p.35.

³² *WRRL*, Para 150, p.37.

³³ Twigg’s Report on Laccadives dated 27th April 1889, Board of Revenue (Land Revenue) Proceedings No. 401 dated 11th June 1889, Para 70, p.21, MCCF-3, RAK.

worth rupees 700 or 800. But, by mid nineteenth century, restrictions were imposed in the trade of this article too causing considerable decrease in the quantity supplied. Another source of revenue for the House was the trade of tortoise shells. It was the Hawksbill Turtle which is rare and does not grow much in size as the Green Turtle that was caught for this scarce but lucrative business. Morinda Citron³⁴ which was primarily used for preparing a valuable dye is found in abundance at Kalpeni and Androth. The trade of this article had also been monopolized at ¼ of its actual value. Limes which were cultivated very largely in Ameni and Kavarathi and was used to prepare pickles to be exported had also been monopolized. So was the case of ambergris, a rare but precious product received from sea. Robinson has observed that the restrictions and unremunerative prices had quite invariably caused a sharp fall in the supply of cowries³⁵ and tortoise shell³⁶. So was the salt and tobacco imported from the mainland. However, while the islands were under management of the English, these restrictions were lifted in 1859 as per the recommendations of William Robinson³⁷. But, the monopolies upon tortoise-shell, ambergris, and cowries were continued further in the Cannanore islands. It was found that the tortoise-shell and ambergris monopolies which realized nothing in most years has only encouraged smuggling, especially in the case of tortoise-shell which was not a monopoly upon the South Canara islands³⁸.

The English officials were almost consistently critical of the trade restrictions imposed by Ali Rajas in the islands under their control. They always tried to relate the fall in supply and rise in the volume of clandestine

³⁴ Morinda Citron, also known as Citrus Medica is a fragrant citrus fruit with a thick rind.

³⁵ *WRRL*, Para 17, p.8.

³⁶ *WRRL*, Para 172, p.42.

³⁷ R. H. Ellis, *A Short Account of the Laccadive Islands and Minicoy*, Government Press, Madras, 1924, p.26.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.61

deals in Laccadives to the monopolistic trade practiced by the House of Cannanore. Whatever it may be, one cannot deny the basic fact that as in the case of all other monopolies, the restrictions imposed by Cannanore Rajas, at least provided the islanders a readily available market for their products. Moreover, the English does not have the moral authority to raise their voice against trade monopolies as a visible sign of misrule of the Ali Rajas, since they too had commanded their Asian trade almost exclusively on monopolistic terms till the early years of nineteenth century. It is really interesting to note that the EIC had continued the trade with the Northern Islands under their command on monopolistic footing, even while extending lip service to the inhabitants of Cannanore islands for being victimized under the ‘severest restrictions’ imposed by the House of Arakkal. In 1847, the Court of Directors had put it categorically that “the retention of the monopoly” is “the most suitable and popular form of realizing a revenue from the [Company’s] islands”³⁹.

Loss of Amindivi Group of Islands

To have a clearer understanding of the colonial trajectory aiming the subjugation of such a tiny principality like Cannanore and depriving it from holding such lucrative a province like Laccadives, one has to start from the reduction of Cannanore effected in 1790, by the British force headed by General Abercrombie. After the treaty of Seringapatam (1792) which ended the third Anglo-Mysore War, the Company in April 1793 has signed an agreement with the Beeby of Cannanore. This agreement, among other things, has provisioned the remittance to the Company as moiety, half of the total profit of rupees 20,000 that Beeby has claimed as her income from Laccadive trade. Although, the Company was doubtful of the accuracy of the account

³⁹ No.26 dated 10th May 1847, Honourable Court of Directors, quoted in H.S Thomas’ Report on Laccadives dated, 12th August 1873, (Note to Para 14), MCCF-159, p. 61, RAK.

furnished by Beeby, it was accepted provisionally in 1793. Later on, Joint Commissioners of Malabar has estimated that from the monopolistic trade of coir alone, Beeby might have generated a profit of rupees 60,000 a year⁴⁰. To solve this mismatch, Lieutenant Bentley was deputed to visit the islands in 1795 with an instruction to prepare an accurate estimate of Beeby's income from her possessions at sea⁴¹. As per the estimate prepared by Bentley, Beeby's probable revenue from Laccadives would amount to rupees 117699, a sum nearly six times greater than the amount proclaimed by Beeby⁴². In the same year, Murdock Brown⁴³ has reported that from the monopoly trade of coir alone, Beeby could generate an annual profit of 65000 to 75000 rupees⁴⁴. Accordingly, the moiety to be paid annually to the Company on account of the *jumma* on the houses and *purrams* situated at and near Cannanore, the profit from Beeby's Laccadive trade and on account of her *jenmom* property in the islands has been enhanced to rupees fifteen thousand⁴⁵. In 1799, Beeby's demand for restoring four of her Amindivi Islands has complicated the issue further⁴⁶.

As stated already, Beeby had lost these islands to Tipu Sultan in 1785-86 owing to a rebellion led by the inhabitants of Ameni. In exchange of these islands, Sultan had bestowed the Beeby, *jaghir* of six *tarrahs* or districts viz; Chalathal, Thalapp, Koyyode, Kannotheemchal, Maundayath and Kanathoor, belonging to the then conquered territory of Kolathunadu⁴⁷. With the defeat

⁴⁰ JCRM Para 239, p.228.

⁴¹ PDD No.112/1795, pp. 128-30, KSAT.

⁴² Para 12 of the Report of the Commissioners to the Northern Superintendent, 1797 appended to WRRL, p. 117.

⁴³ Murdoch Brown (1750-1828) was a Scottish adventurer and Privateer who also served English East India Company in Malabar under various capacities.

⁴⁴ WRRL, Para 134, p. 33.

⁴⁵ Beeby's Agreement dated 28th October 1796, APL-1 /6741, RAK.

⁴⁶ SPDD No.74/1799, pp.1195-97, KSAT.

⁴⁷ William Logan, *Treaties*, No.CLI, p.128.

of Cannanore, in 1791 the Raja of Chirakkal, with the whole hearted assistance of EIC, has resumed their rule in the above mentioned *tarrahs* given as *jaghir* to Beeby. Similarly, after the fall of Tipu Sultan (1799), the Ameni islands became part of Company's South Canara district. In short, Beeby was left devoid of any rights on neither the Ameni Group of Islands which was her ancestral property nor the villages given to her as *jaghir* by the Sultan.

Even though, the Beeby was entitled to get either of these territories into her possession by all standards of natural justice, the Company denied her both. Finding the British reluctant to take any action on her plea made in 1799, the Beeby again approached the Company in 1803 urging them to restore the islands back to her or to sanction some compensation instead⁴⁸. However, EIC was totally unwilling to accept any such claims raised by Beeby. For this, the Company had cited a strange reason that the islands in question have been obtained by them by way of conquest from Tipu Sultan with whom Beeby was, at that time, in alliance⁴⁹. Nevertheless, the Beeby keep on sending petitions to the Government at various levels. These repeated pleas were rejected by the Company Governments in India on the ground that their attainment of these islands through conquest is enough to preclude the rights of Beeby over it, if there is any. Moving a step further, 'His Lordship in Council' has put it plainly that they deem it to be inexpedient to vest the authority of Beeby over these islands as there is a declared aversion among islanders to her government⁵⁰.

However, the Court of Directors took a different stand. The following passage from their letter dated 6th December 1805 exemplifies not only their

⁴⁸ MCR- 4052, p.229, RAK.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.229-30.

⁵⁰ Appendix A, *WRR*, p.127.

accurate understanding of the problem but also the higher level of circumspection with which they used to take decisions.

Although, it is true that the Beebee of Cannanore has in strictness no legal claim upon these islands, we think her case as it now stands rather a hard one. The first exchange by which the three islands were taken from her does not appear to have been sought by her, but was an act of power on the part of Tippoo ...[as we have assisted the Rajah of Chirakkal to take back his villages given to Beebee as *jaghir*] we should probably have thought it right to restore them to her.... We, therefore, are of opinion that though from the aversion of the inhabitants to the government of the Beebee it may not be advisable to restore the possession of those islands to her, some consideration in money should be allowed her on account of them⁵¹.

Despite this confession, the matter remained unsettled until 1822. The Board of Revenue has ascribed the ‘great delay’ that had occurred in ascertaining and defining the nature and bearings of the claim preferred by Beeby, to an erroneous opinion that has been entertained on the subject⁵². Finally, on 18th March 1823, the Madras Government has communicated their decision to sanction the remission of 1500 Star pagodas⁵³ amounting to rupees 5250, to Beeby as compensation for the loss of the Amindivi Islands⁵⁴. They also made it clear that this leniency was entirely due

⁵¹ Paras 123 & 124, letter from Court of Directors dated 6th December 1805, excerpted in *WRRL*, p.127.

⁵² Para 2 of the Letter dated 3rd October 1822 from the Board of Revenue to the Chief Secretary, Madras, MCR-4052, p.226, RAK.

⁵³ Star pagoda is a Gold coin of British India. A pagoda is worth company rupees three and a half.

⁵⁴ Letter dated 18th March 1823 from Government Secretary, Madras to Board of Revenue, Madras, quoted in *WRRL*, p.132.

to the liberal disposition evinced towards her by the Court of Directors and in no degree to be founded on right⁵⁵. The hapless Beeby was left with no other option but to accept the arbitrary decision of the Madras Government. Even for this nominal compensation the Beeby had to file a declaration relinquishing all her title and claims to the Amindivi group of islands⁵⁶.

The Gimmick of ‘Misrule’ and the Sequestration of Cannanore Group of Islands

Although, the relationship between the two was fairly peaceful during the couple of decades that immediately followed the relinquishing by Beeby of all her rights over Ameni group of islands, it again got worsened by mid nineteenth century owing to a series of intimidations by the British. The fact that the Company had kept an eye on Beeby’s money spinning islands is evident as early as in 1793, from the wordings of the very first *muchilika*⁵⁷ that the English had obtained from the Beeby of Cannanore. In this agreement, Beeby, states that she was aware of the Company’s plan to send a gentleman soon to Laccadives to sequester them for the advantage of the Company’s government and to appropriate, for the use of them, all the produce thereof. Then, indisputably as instructed by the Company people, Beeby goes on to suggest that she will not oppose or object any such move to be undertaken from the part of the Company⁵⁸. To achieve their ulterior objective, the English was seen resorting to the crooked means of mixing Beeby’s failure in paying the *kisth* with the allegations of misrule in the islands governed by her. With this intention in mind, the English always tried

⁵⁵ *WRRL*, pp.131-32.

⁵⁶ Beeby’s declaration dated 15th March 1824, MCR 4052, pp.294-95, RAK.

⁵⁷ *muchilika* is a written obligation or agreement, a bond or a deed.

⁵⁸ Agreement No.XLII dated 11th April 1793 signed and submitted by Beeby, in C.U Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Volume X*, Superintendent, Government Printing, Calcutta, 1930, p.138.

to highlight Beeby's efforts to impose monopoly trade in her islands as signs of her oppressive administration.

It is interesting to note that the very first report on Beeby's islands prepared by a Company servant has suggested its sequestration. In his report submitted in 1795, the first in the series of such reports to be prepared by Company's officials, Lieutenant Bentley went to the extent of suggesting sequestration on the ground that the islanders in general are desirous of British taking over of the islands to end Beeby's oppressive rule⁵⁹. What makes this remark strange and unwarranted is the fact that the mission ascribed to him was not to examine the feasibility of the sequestration but merely to assess Beeby's income from Laccadives so as to fix the amount of *kisth* to be levied. In forwarding Bentley's report to the Governor in Council, Bombay, the Supervisor of the Ceded District of Malabar has also suggested the sequestration of Cannanore Islands after sanctioning 'some compensation' to Beeby 'for the loss of the most lucrative branch of her commerce'⁶⁰. Replying to this, the Governor of Bombay has made it clear that "he is of opinion that the inhabitants of the islands ought to be relieved from the oppression of the Beeby of Cannanore and allowed the same freedom of trade as the subjects in the province of Malabar enjoy"⁶¹. Upon examining these recommendations, the Governor General, in July 1795 has expressed his desire that the monopoly of trade of the islands dependent on Cannanore 'be immediately abolished'. However, he restrained from endorsing the sequestration of Beeby's islands as suggested by his subordinates on the ground that 'the abolition of the present monopoly of their trade' and the

⁵⁹ Bentley's Report on Laccadives dated 12th April 1795, quoted in *WRRL*, p.95.

⁶⁰ Supervisor to Governor in Council, Bombay dated 15th April 1795, quoted in *WRRL*, p.95.

⁶¹ Letter dated 30th May 1795 from Bombay Council to the Governor General, quoted in *WRRL*, p.96.

correction of all the ‘oppressive abuses of the authority on the islands’ should precede such an extreme action⁶².

Although, it took another hundred years or so to complete the sequestration as intended by the British, it is fairly clear from the musings cited above, that they were determined to sequester the islands from the control of Beeby, even from such an early date when there was absolutely no question of the pendency of *kisth*. The actual motivation for this long cherished project came neither from their sympathy towards the islanders nor from the amount of *kisth* defaulted, but from sheer interests of commerce and strategic concerns. The fact that EIC too used to conduct their trade in Amindivi group of islands on monopolistic terms renders their outcry over the miserable plight of the inhabitants of Beeby’s islands a farce. In a letter addressed to E.C.G Thomas, the Special Assistant Magistrate of Malabar, William Robinson, the Acting Collector of Malabar and also the real architect of the entire scheme of sequestration, has put it plainly that “the main consideration in this matter is not the realization of the arrear due by the Beeby of Cannanore which is safe enough from other sources”⁶³. Even before this, the Board of Revenue, Madras has also made it clear that "the realization of the arrears due to Government has been a secondary consideration in attaching the Beebee's property”⁶⁴.

The Hurricane of 1847 and its aftermath

The possession of Amindivi Group of Islands made the English fully convinced of the advantages of Laccadive trade. Although, they were very much determined to annex the more lucrative Cannanore Islands to their

⁶² Letter from Fort William, Calcutta dated 27th July 1795, quoted in *WRRL*, p.96.

⁶³ Letter dated 3rd November 1857 from William Robinson to E.C.G Thomas, MCCF-7747,p.461 RAK.

⁶⁴ Minutes of Consultation dated 18th June 1857, MCCF-7747, p.382, RAK.

dominion, it got delayed considerably since the Beeby was very prompt in discharging her dues. So, they had to wait for something which could be used as a pretext for effecting the sequestration without damaging their ‘liberal disposition’. Finally, they got this ideal pretext in the form of a natural calamity which destroyed Androth and Kalpeni islands completely. The hurricane which visited these two islands owned by Beeby in April 1847 has caused considerable loss of men and property which was, by all means, unprecedented. The gale broke upon Kalpeni at 8:00 p.m. on the 15th of April and passed on to Androth in the early hours of the next day. Although, the storm had also reached Kiltan, one among the Company’s islands, the devastation it effected in two islands owned by Beeby was the severest⁶⁵. In Kalpeni, the first to experience the fury of hurricane, 250 souls out of the total population of 1600 were drowned or washed away during the storm. Another 100 to 150 lives were perished in the ensuing five months from famine or from the diseases triggered by unwholesome or insufficient food⁶⁶. Out of the total number of 1, 05000 fully grown coconut trees, only 768 have survived the storm⁶⁷. Entire buildings of the Island including 29 mosques were damaged either completely or partially⁶⁸. In Androth, the largest of the group, the loss was equally deplorable. Upon his visit in 1848, William Robinson found it in a deserted condition with only 900 left of a population of 2,500. The death toll here has been estimated as somewhere between 200 and 300⁶⁹. Out of the approximate total of 1, 00000 full-grown coconut trees, only eight percent have survived the storm. This has led to an acute shortage of palm

⁶⁵ Extract from the Proceedings No.349 of the Board of Revenue, dated 2nd August 1849, Para 2, appended to *WRRL*, p.153.

⁶⁶ Para 76, *WRRL*, p.20.

⁶⁷ Extract from the Proceedings No.349 of the Board of Revenue, dated 2nd August 1849, Para 10, appended to *WRRL*, p.155.

⁶⁸ Extract from the Proceedings No.349 of the Board of Revenue, dated 2nd August 1849, Para 8, appended to *WRRL*, p.155.

⁶⁹ Para 62, *WRRL*, p.16.

leaves which in turn caused the ruination of houses and mosques for want of thatch⁷⁰.

As per Beeby's estimate, the devastating gale has inflicted on her an annual revenue loss of rupees thirteen thousand. The value of trees given up by her on Agatty and uninhabited Suhely for the support of the settlers from the two ruined islands was rated as rupees three thousand a year. In addition to this, the Beeby had spent another seven thousand for the distribution of grain, cloth and other essentials for the use of storm sufferers⁷¹. To add the burden, there were also the dues to be paid to EIC on account of essentials distributed for the use of inhabitants of the storm hit islands. In the absence of a steamer capable of riding through the rough and stormy sea, the Beeby has approached the Collector of Malabar for providing the service of a steam vessel to carry 700 *maunds* of rice to Androth. Viewing it "a heaven-sent chance to fish in muddy waters and to bring the remaining islands too under the Union Jack", the English had imported, besides rice, many other items which are not required for immediate use⁷². They demanded from Beeby, an amount of rupees nine thousand three hundred towards the price, including freight charges, of the articles supplied. In undertaking such an unwarranted act of capitalizing the calamity, the English, as has been proved by later developments, had the ulterior motive of overburdening the already punctured exchequer of the House of Cannanore⁷³. It was this overburdening that made the Beeby, whose trade was already in the decline, incapable of discharging her dues in time which ultimately resulted in the sequestration of her Laccadive possessions.

⁷⁰ Para 63, *WRRL*, p.17.

⁷¹ Beeby's memorial dated 12th January 1849, quoted in *WRRL*, p. 175.

⁷² T.J. Joseph Mathew, *Lakshadweep in the Maritime History of India: A Study of the Original Correspondence between the British and the Arakkal Family of Malabar*, Department of History, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, 1992, p. 38.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Naturally, in such a troubling situation, Adhi Raja Ayisha Beeby of Arakkal was forced to approach the British authorities for a remission “for the next fifteen years, of one half the *peshcush* of rupees fifteen thousand payable by her on her possessions in the islands and on the coast upon the grounds of the losses which she has sustained, and the expenses to which she has been subjected in consequence of the ravages made by the hurricane in the islands of Kalpeni and Androt”⁷⁴. As, William Robinson⁷⁵ and the Board of Revenue⁷⁶ were equally convinced of the loss of revenue of the House of Arakkal, on 19th October 1849, the Governor in Council, Fort St. George, has recommended an annual remission for a period of ten years, of rupees 33331/3 from the *peshcush* to be remitted by beeby⁷⁷. What prompted the English to take such a decision was not their sympathy towards the Beeby who suffered miserably in the hurricane, but their realization that financially, the acquisition of southern islands in that particular point would ultimately be disadvantageous to the Company, since the calamities which have fallen upon the two of the chief islands must render them unproductive for many years to come⁷⁸.

But, the Company made this remission conditional by directing Beeby to introduce certain fiscal and administrative reforms in the islands under her sway. These include a thorough reform of the coir monopoly, the adoption of fair prices for the produce of islanders and the ‘abolition of many unjust and

⁷⁴ Beeby’s memorial dated 12th January 1849, quoted in *WRRL*, p. 175.

⁷⁵ Para 77, *WRRL*, p.20.

⁷⁶ Extract from the Proceedings No.349 of the Board of Revenue, dated 2nd August 1849, Para 23, appended to *WRRL*, p.169.

⁷⁷ Letter dated 19th October 1849 from Secretary to Madras Government to the Secretary of the Government of India, Calcutta, appended to *WRRL*, pp.182-83.

⁷⁸ Extract from the Proceedings No.349 of the Board of Revenue, dated 2nd August 1849, Para 44, appended to *WRRL*, p.174.

vexatious practices’ of Beeby’s administration⁷⁹. These conditions were unacceptable to the Beeby as she viewed it an unwanted act aiming the violation of her sovereignty rights over the islands⁸⁰. In her petition addressed to the Court of Directors, she maintained that all the allegations of her ‘misrule’ and harassing the islanders through monopoly were only the fabrications of certain misguided miscreants among the islanders who were acting as per the commands of Chirakkal Raja, her arch rival⁸¹. Then, she went on to argue that she rules the southern islands in the same manner the English is running the administration of the northern islands under their control⁸². Nevertheless, all her petitions and arguments proved unsuccessful and in October 1853, the Court of Directors has directed their subordinates at Madras to take measures for enforcing their claim upon the Beeby to realize the arrears of tributes in respect of Laccadives, since the “indulgences and consideration” shown to her “had proved to be entirely misplaced”⁸³.

Accordingly, the Cannanore Islands were attached by the Company for a period of ten years (1854-1864) for arrears of tributes defaulted by the House of Arakkal⁸⁴. Although, the order for the attachment of these islands was issued on 7th September 1854, there was some delay in carrying it into effect and the administration of the four islands namely, Androth, Kalpeni, Kavaratty and Agatty were taken over by the Company in November 1854. The attachment of Minicoy, where the inhabitants were unbendable, was

⁷⁹ Extract from the Proceedings No.349 of the Board of Revenue, dated 2nd August 1849, Para 46, appended to *WRRL*, p.175.

⁸⁰ Beeby’s letter dated 6th February 1853 addressed to the Collector of Malabar, MCCF-7746, p.4, RAK.

⁸¹ Para7, Petition dated 10th January 1851 from Beeby of Cannanore to Court of Directors, SR-48, p.98, RAK.

⁸² *Ibid.*,

⁸³ Despatch from Court of Directors dated 26th October 1853, quoted in Extract from the Minutes of Consultation No.713 dated 20th June 1854, MCCF-7746, p.99, RAK.

⁸⁴ R. H. Ellis, *op.cit.*, p.26.

attempted as late as on 22nd March 1855⁸⁵. The actual taking over of Minicoy was again delayed up to 1858 due to violent resistance of the natives who were very much obstinate in their allegiance to the House of Arakkal⁸⁶. However, this sequestration proved a short-lived one. In January 1861, on liquidation of the arrears, the Secretary of State for India has taken the decision to restore the islands to the House of Cannanore, although with a warning that Government will not hesitate to place the islands again under sequestration if they fail in implementing good governance⁸⁷. Apart from clearance of the arrears by Beeby and the resistance offered by islanders, the revolt of 1857 and the subsequent substitution of the Company Government with the Crown might also have influenced this sudden revoking of the sequestration⁸⁸. But, after the sequestration, affairs in the islands never regained its former order, as the defying of Beeby's control through the open violation of trade monopoly became very common and frequent. This has rendered Musa Ali Raja (1870-1899), then reigning head of the House, incapable to clear his dues which in turn caused the accumulation of arrears of *peshkash*. Taking this as an opportunity, the southern islands were once again brought under sequestration in April 1875, "partly to clear these arrears, but more particularly, in order to introduce a better revenue system"⁸⁹.

This attachment remained in force till the final surrendering by Sultan Adhi Raja Imbichi Beeby (1907-1911) of all her claims over the Laccadive Islands and Minicoy which was formalized by an agreement signed on

⁸⁵ Extract from the Minutes of Consultation No.1093 dated 27thSeptember 1855, MCCF-7746, p.180, RAK.

⁸⁶ Murkot Ramunni, *India's Coral Islands in the Arabian Sea-Lakshadweep*, Lakshadweep Socio- Cultural Research Commission, Kavaratti, 1999, p.62.

⁸⁷ T.J. Joseph Mathew, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

⁸⁸ K.K.N Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1975, p.78.

⁸⁹ R. H. Ellis, *op.cit.*, p.47.

15thNovember 1908⁹⁰. Yet, this does not mean that things were so easy for the English. During the period in between the first sequestration of 1854 and the final sequestration of 1908, there prevailed constant chaos and anarchy in Cannanore Islands which deprived both the House of Arakkal and the English from exerting their absolute control over the islanders. Throughout this troublesome period stretching over half a century or more, those who stood at the helm of the House of Arakkal has shown a matchless resilience in resisting the British plans for effecting the sequestration. They consistently wrote to the British authorities at various levels, from the Assistant Collector of Malabar to the Court of Directors, as they were fully aware of the importance of these coral reefs in preserving the vestiges of their sovereignty. But, the English, by this time, had made up their mind to effect the sequestration at any cost considering the strategic as well as the economic significance of the coral isles of the Arabian Sea. This determination was evident in the utterances of the British officials who by then had become vociferous campaigners of good governance in Laccadives deterring their earlier insistence on the clearing of arrears of *peshkash* defaulted by the House of Arakkal. The reason for this shift in priority was, obviously, their fear that in case, the House has somehow managed to clear the dues as they did in the previous occasion, it will definitely render them armless in executing their much cherished desire of sequestration.

In 1889, commenting on the recommendation for putting the islands under permanent sequestration, placed before them by the Collector of Malabar, the Madras Government has made it clear that in the changed circumstances, “it will be probably a matter for regret if the islands are ever

⁹⁰ Agreement No.LXI dated 15thNovember 1908, in C.U Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Volume X*, Superintendent, Government Printing, Calcutta, 1930, pp.179-82.

handed over to the Rajah”⁹¹. In July 1897, Sultan Musa Ali Raja has submitted a memorandum to the Madras Government in which he has demanded a thorough auditing of the accounts as the net results after meeting the *peshkash* demand on account of his property on the mainland as well as the tribute for the islands is, as per his calculation, a surplus and not a deficit as made out by the Government. He also argued that an improved system of administration has been in force now in these islands for the past twenty years. Upon these grounds, he demanded the speedy transfer of islands back to his control⁹². Replying to this claim which was duly substantiated by a detailed statement of accounts, the English contended that though the accounts pertaining to islands shows a surplus of rupees 37379-2-8, the Rajah still owe them rupees 82517-10-5 on account of the *peshkash* in respect of his mainland possessions⁹³. From this, it was quite clear that the English authorities were determined to expand the sequestration under one pretext or the other.

Instead of scrutinizing or auditing accounts of tribute and *peshkash* as demanded by Musa Ali Raja, the English in 1900 has started parleying with his successor Muhammed Ali Raja (1899-1907) to induce him to surrender his claims of sovereignty over Laccadives. Their strategy was to persuade Raja to abandon his precious possessions in the Arabian Sea by making him convinced of the futility of claiming a sovereignty which ‘he could never hope to exercise’⁹⁴. Nevertheless, the Raja was quite consistent on resisting such persuasions as he was well aware that such a surrendering would definitely be detrimental to the prestige and interests of his ancient House. But, the English was not ready to give up. Voicing their resolve to annex

⁹¹ Board of Revenue Proceedings No. 401 dated 11th June 1889, MCCF-3, p.157, RAK.

⁹² Board of Revenue Proceedings No. 3358 dated 08th September 1897, APL/1-8635, p.37, RAK.

⁹³ Ibid., p.38.

⁹⁴ R. H. Ellis, *op.cit.*, p.22.

entire Laccadives to their dominion, the Collector of Malabar has written to his assistant in July 1900; "Please make him [Raja of Arakkal] understand that there is no question about his being eaten. He is only to be consulted as to the sauce with which he should be eaten"⁹⁵.

In such an intimidating situation and also being caught in between financial difficulties owing to a sharp decline in the volume of revenue from Laccadives and the continuously troublesome rifts within their matrilineal household⁹⁶, the Raja, finally had to yield to the pressure mounted by the British. So arbitrary was the position adopted by the English at this critical juncture that they turned down with vehemence, even the moderate plea of the Raja to favour his family with some more concessions in the event of sequestration. Responding to Raja's request for revising the scheme of compensation originally placed before him in October 1900 by Mr. Murphy, the Acting Sub Collector of Malabar⁹⁷, the government has issued the following ultimatum.

Government of India decline to entertain any suggestion for the introduction of new terms and have no intention of modifying in any way, whatever the offer which they made in 1900..., if Ali Raja does not accept that offer within six months from the date of receipt of these orders the Governor General in Council will take steps to resume the islands, and will consider the question

⁹⁵ Letter dated 18th August 1900 from the Collector of Malabar to the Assistant Collector of Malabar, quoted in K.K.N Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.79.

⁹⁶ A reference to such discords erupted in the family has already been made in preceding chapter. The closing decades of nineteenth century is marked with an unprecedented increase in the number of legal disputes involving the members of the House of Arakkal, chiefly, for obtaining grants for maintenance.

⁹⁷ Letter dated 24th September 1901 from Muhammed Ali Raja to the Chief Secretary to Government, Madras, APL-1/8635, p.65, RAK.

of compensation as one to be decided on the meeting of the case without any reference to Ali Raja⁹⁸.

However, shortly after issuing this ultimatum, the Government has decided to show some leniency towards the Raja of Arakkal with a view to solve the knotty point of sequestering from the House, their Laccadive possessions forever. Accordingly, in 1905, the Government of India has made slight modifications in the offer placed earlier so as to make it acceptable to Muhammed Ali Raja. The proposal was to effect the surrendering by the Raja of Arakkal on behalf of himself and his heirs and successors, all the claims and rights whatsoever, whether as sovereign or *jenmi*, in and over the Laccadive Islands and Minicoy on the basis of following conditions⁹⁹.

- i. All arrears of *peshkash* due by him would be settled.
- ii. The payment of Amindivi compensation would cease.
- iii. The Government would pay to him and to his heirs and successors a *malikhana* of rupees 23, 000/- per annum.
- iv. He and his heirs and successors would be allowed to hold free of all *peshkash* or assessment, those lands on the mainland at Cannanore then held under the *karar*(Agreement) of 1796.
- v. The title of *sultan* would be conferred on him and his heirs and successors as hereditary distinction.
- vi. He and his heirs and successors would be exempted from personal attendance in civil courts.

Though, Muhammed Ali Raja had made up his mind to accept this offer¹⁰⁰, due to his demise on 5th September 1907¹⁰¹, the task of handing over

⁹⁸ Govt. of India (Foreign Dept.), I.A.2288/18th June 1904, Vide G.O. Madras 370/Political/14th July 1904, quoted in K.K.N Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.79.

⁹⁹ Murkot Ramunni, *op.cit.*, p.65.

¹⁰⁰ Letter dated 17th November 1905 from Adhi Raja Muhammed Ali to the Collector of Malabar, quoted in C.U Aitchison, *op.cit.*, p.179.

the islands to the English fell on the shoulders of his successor Adhi Raja Imbichi Beeby (1907-1911), who, to borrow the wordings of her immediate successor, was “an ignorant, illiterate old *gosha*¹⁰² lady”¹⁰³. Initially, the Beeby’s response towards the British plan for sequestration was more or less tepid. But, finally, when certain members of her royal family too have made up their mind in favour of sequestration, she had to succumb to the pressure of the British government¹⁰⁴. Thus, an agreement by which the British have enforced the sequestration of Cannanore’s Laccadive possessions including Minicoy, was signed on the 15th November 1908 at Cannanore by the Beeby. This treaty signed in the presence of W. Francis, the Assistant Collector of Malabar, was ratified by the Governor-General on 5th February 1909¹⁰⁵.

This treaty marked the end of the glorious days of the House of Arakkal as their authority that too, without the halo of sovereignty, was now confined to a meager tract of land measuring only 1419.50 acres in and around the historic bazaar of Cannanore. It simply meant their irrecoverable fall from much esteemed status of a sovereign or sultan to the level of an ordinary *zamindar*. As has been observed, the tap root of Arakkal family’s status was the possession of these coral islands. When it was chopped, ‘the Lady and Princess of Cannanore and Laccadives’ became ‘the Lord of Cannanore Bazaar’¹⁰⁶. A careful observation of the course of events leading to sequestration which was apparently seen interwoven with the twin aspects of Beeby’s failure in discharging her dues as well as the allegations of misrule in

¹⁰¹ APL-2/6202, p.4, RAK.

¹⁰² *ghosha* is a Malayalam term used to denote the custom of female seclusion

¹⁰³ Petition dated 30th November 1908 submitted to the Chief Secretary, Madras by Ahammed Ali Raja who was then second in rank of the family. APL-2/6182, p.1, RAK.

¹⁰⁴ Petition dated 24th February 1913 submitted to the Secretary of the Government of India, Foreign Department, Delhi, by a group of individuals belonging to the House of Arakkal, APL-1/6741, p.6, RAK.

¹⁰⁵ C.U Aitchison, *op.cit.*, p.181.

¹⁰⁶ T.J. Joseph Mathew, *op.cit.*, p.40.

her islands, would prompt us to think of them as part of a larger conspiracy aimed to deprive Beeby from possessing the remainder of the Laccadive isles known as Cannanore group of islands.

K.K.N Kurup has rightly observed that the British clamouring for good government in islands was to substantiate its imperial policy of territorial aggrandizement¹⁰⁷. Nevertheless, he too was seen echoing the other part of the colonial argument that it was “when the payment of tribute fell in arrears or became irregular, the English adopted the policy of sequestration”¹⁰⁸. There are at least two important factors that would render this argument null and void. Firstly, as noted earlier in this chapter, the colonial officials were dreaming of freeing islanders from the ‘clutches’ of Beeby as early as in 1795, when there was absolutely no question of arrears of tribute. Secondly, we have already seen that whenever the Beeby/ Rajah of the House of Arakkal has expressed her/his willingness to discharge the dues, or when they are about to remit the arrears of *peshkash*, it was customary for the English to change their stand that the question of ‘good governance’ is more important than the clearing of arrears, as they are capable of realizing the latter from other sources. More sadly, the English also knew that it was the disastrous hurricane of 1847, the subsequent fall in her revenue from the islands and the unjust charging by the Company of an extraordinarily large sum towards supplying ‘essentials’ that made Beeby incapable to clear her dues in time. It is worthy to note that the House not even applied for a temporary remission in the *peshkash*, until the catastrophic storm of 1847¹⁰⁹. Above all, one cannot overlook the basic fact that Arakkal’s failure in discharging dues was the direct outcome of the impediments raised by the English in the path of

¹⁰⁷ K.K.N Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.81.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ William Logan’s Report on Laccadives 1870, Para 42, p.18, SR-163, RAK.

business endeavours of the House, among which, their practice of encouraging clandestine deals of the Beeby's islanders deserve particular mentioning.

Now, let us examine the allegation of 'misrule' of the House of Arakkal. Right from 1795, when they first appointed Lieutenant Bentley to submit his report on the income of the House of Cannanore, the Company was always seen clamouring for the sequestration of Beeby's islands on the ground that the inhabitants of these islands as a whole, are in favour of their taking over by the British as they viewed it the easiest way to get rid of Beeby's 'tyranny'. This 'emancipatory role' has been best reflected in the report by William Robinson (1848) which later turned out to be the blueprint of sequestration. In the view of the English, a major sin being committed by the House of Arakkal in the islands under their control was their insistence on conducting Laccadive trade especially that of coir, on monopolistic terms for its impacts on the islanders was adverse. As a reference to the circumstances leading to Cannanore's monopoly in Laccadive trade and the pros and cons of such a system has already been made in the first part of this chapter, here, I would like to examine some of the observations made by William Logan on Laccadive monopoly with a view to substantiate the argument that the English outcry over the monopoly trade of the House of Arakkal was nothing but a farce.

Upon the question of coir monopoly, Logan has made his stand clear that "there is no country, not even Great Britain in which free trade is more required than in these islands", since "the coir yarn is to the Islanders, their food and clothing"¹¹⁰. Logan's reviewing of the Laccadive monopoly was unilateral as was the case with many of his predecessors. Even though, Logan was seen arraying certain valid arguments against restricted trade, he does not

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Para. 40, p.17.

finds fault with the British system of levying a fixed amount as *peshkash*, without considering fluctuations which are likely to occur in the volume of revenue generated from Cannanore's Laccadive possessions. Logan was well aware of the fact that it was the British custom of demanding a fixed amount as *peshkash* that had compelled the House of Arakkal to procure coir at such insufficient price. Further, it was on the basis of relatively higher monopoly price of coir, the existing rate of *peshkash* has been fixed and as such, consequent on the continuous fall in the price of coir since 1826, it has become a moral obligation of the Government to revise the amount of *peshkash* to be realised. Although, Logan was aware of all these facts, he does not find fault with the Government practice of not allowing any reduction in *peshkash* in bad years. In his opinion, the House of Arakkal must have shown some justice to the islanders by reducing the monopoly price of coir in bad years, for they had enjoyed the fruits of highly profitable monopoly price prior to 1826¹¹¹. What William Logan fails to recognize here is one simple fact that by every standards of natural justice, the House of Arakkal too was entitled to get the same sort of fair treatment in such trying times. More importantly, Logan has also noted that in an interview, the Rajah of Arakkal has expressed his willingness to abolish the monopoly altogether, provided the *karar* is not endangered¹¹². It actually meant that if the British really wanted to abolish the coir monopoly of the House of Cannanore, they could have gained it easily by giving Raja an assurance in this regard.

Even after a lapse of nine years, Logan was seen continuing his criticism of the monopoly rights of the House of Arakkal in Laccadives, with more adamancy and ardency. In a letter addressed to J. Sturrock, Acting Secretary, Board of Revenue Madras, he had summed up his argument against the monopoly trade of Arakkal in the following way.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Para. 42, pp.18-19.

¹¹² Ibid., Para. 75, p.34.

It is admitted from our own experiences in the Canara Islands that the monopoly does not always pay. That does not so much matter when the monopolist is a Government like ours, for we have plenty of resources, and the loss of one year will be made up by the gain of another; we can afford to lose occasionally- and there is where our position differs from that of the Cannanore family. In a losing year they cannot afford to lose; for they have still the same *peishcush* to pay to Government, and the history of their administration shows that they adopted, as might have been expected of them, the short-sighted policy of making the monopoly pay in the bad years by squeezing the deficit out of the people¹¹³.

In Logan's view, the English made a mistake by allowing the continuance of Arakkal's monopoly trade in Laccadives and now, it will be another mistake from their part, if they fail to abolish it altogether¹¹⁴. So he recommended the immediate abolition of Cannanore's trade monopoly in Laccadives in lieu of an excise tax to be levied either in kind or in cash. Although, this view has been endorsed by two other important officials who were in charge of the affairs of Malabar -Macgregor and Winterbotham, Board of Revenue has decided to continue the present system by considering the practical difficulties involved in levying and collecting something from the islanders as excise duty. As early as in 1871, the Government had made it clear that considering the unsuitableness of a land or poll tax, the proposed plan for Cannanore Islands should be most in accordance with the local custom that may recognize the holding by Raja a share of the coir produced in

¹¹³ Letter dated 12th March 1879 from William Logan, the Collector of Malabar to J. Sturrock Acting Secretary, Board of Revenue Madras, SR-151, p.299, RAK.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

the islands¹¹⁵. Years later, in 1880 also, the Board of Revenue, as per the recommendation of the Collector of Malabar, has resolved to continue the coir monopoly at all events, so long as the present depressed state of the coir market continues¹¹⁶. Then one cannot escape asking a simple question; if it is so, why the hue and cry over the monopoly of coir trade?

Besides coir monopoly, there were also other allegations of Cannanore's highhandedness in the islands. This may include complaints such as indefinite delaying of weighing and buying of coir at Cannanore forcing the islanders to stay there for long intervals, the practice of drying and beating coir for days before weighing with a view to reduce its weight, gifts extracted by the *karyakkars* and the Rajah and so on. But, about these, which were for William Robinson, great atrocities, Logan states that he cannot find in them much to account for the strong feeling against the Rajah's administration and opposition¹¹⁷. Here, it seems interesting to note a comment made by H.S. Thomas, the Collector of Malabar. In 1873, pointing to the habitually complaining character of the islanders, he remarked that "islanders are all too ready to complain; in fact they are in many ways very children to deal with"¹¹⁸. Leaving sufficient room to suspect that the opposition to Beeby's rule in the islands was masterminded by the British officials like William Robinson, Logan goes on to add that "the people of Kalpeni who have the greatest reason to complain on other grounds, have been the most obedient and submissive of all. The form of Government is despotic, no doubt, but, that is not a grievance in itself; it is a form of Government to

¹¹⁵ Proceedings No.405 dated 20th December 1871 of the Government (Political Department), Madras SR-151, p.358, RAK.

¹¹⁶ Board of Revenue (Land Revenue) Proceedings No.401 dated 11th June 1889, MCCF-3, p.143, RAK.

¹¹⁷ William Logan's Report on Laccadives 1870, Para.39, p.16, RAK.

¹¹⁸ MCCF-159,p.64, RAK.

which the people are accustomed, and seems adapted to their habits and ways of thinking”¹¹⁹.

There are also other evidences to suggest that many of the stories of atrocities committed in Laccadives by Cannanore regime were either false or much disproportionately overblown. Firstly, sufficient attention has to be accorded to the fact that, even during the second half of the nineteenth century, the period in which the resentment of the islanders was said to be at its peak, the Beeby/ Raja had enjoyed considerable ground support among the islanders. So, ardent was the support base of Adhi Raja Ayisha Beeby (1838-1862) that the English had to seek her assistance to pacify the islanders who revolted against the British move to sequester her isles. Though, the Company records are trying to hide the exact reason for the unexplainable delay in executing the first sequestration attempted in September 1854, obviously, it was due to the stiffest kind of opposition from the islanders. As the opposition had attained violent propositions in Minicoy, the Company was forced to urge Beeby to issue a statement that ‘it was her sincere wish that for the present, they [the islanders] should consider themselves subject to the circar’¹²⁰. If the Beeby had been as unpopular as claimed by the Company, they will not seek her interference in the matter, for it is quite sure that such a pacifying mission by a detested ruler would only end in producing an adverse impact. In 1878, H.M Winterbotham, the Assistant Collector of Malabar had openly lamented that the English “have no hold over the chief men [of the islands] at the present”¹²¹.

¹¹⁹ William Logan’s Report on Laccadives 1870, p.16, RAK.

¹²⁰ Letter No.132 dated 29th September 1857, from William Robinson, Acting Collector of Malabar to E.Maltby, Acting Chief Secretary to Government, Madras, Para,2, MCCF-7747, p.440, RAK.

¹²¹ Winterbotham’s Report on Androth, Kavaratty and Agatty, dated 15th April 1878, Para.13, SR-151, p.345, RAK.

This does not mean everything was right in Laccadives under the House of Cannanore. Definitely, there were problems of mismanagement and bad governance. But it was not entirely the fault of those who ruled these isles from Cannanore. Take the case of *kavarcha*¹²² or gang robbery conducting of which formed a major accusation against the House of Arakkal. It was a social custom of Laccadive islands in which the entire property of a person who is accused of committing so grave a crime, usually against the state or the society as a whole, was subjected to wholesale confiscation. The violent manner in which it had been executed, often involving the entire population of the island, makes it really barbarous. William Robinson in his report of 1848 has attempted a graphic description of this heinous crime so as to showcase it as a sample of tyrannical rule of the House of Cannanore¹²³. However, what Robinson is trying to skip here at his convenience is the basic fact that it was not a system of punishment newly introduced by the House of Arakkal, but a rarely attempted and long prevailed custom of the islands.

Moreover, the severest kind of social stratification which had existed in Laccadives also had contributed its share in denying the islanders the actual price of their sweat. In each of these islands, society was sharply divided into three distinct segments which were hierarchically placed. At the top, there were *koyas* (*koyamar* in Malayalam), who, being the land owning class, have enjoyed all the privileges of the elite. Second to them were the *malmis* who were engaged in seafaring activities. They were the tenants of the *koyas* and hence the relationship between the two was, definitely, feudalistic in structure. Although, some of the *malmis* also owned land, the scale of such holdings was very minimal when compared to the land tracts owned by the *koyas*. At the bottom, there were the *melacheris* who are petty tenants and servants of the other two classes, mostly engaged in coconut climbing to

¹²² Malayalam term to denote robbery.

¹²³ *WRRL*, Para, 210, p.53.

gather nuts and the sweet toddy known locally as *meera*¹²⁴. As the local custom does not permit the possession of *odams*¹²⁵ by *melacheri* people, all their products including coir were entrusted for sale to either the *koyas* or the *malmis*, who owned *odams*. The abstaining of actual owner from accompanying his commodities provided ample scope for exploitation as the tenant who entrusted these articles to his landlord cum *odam* owner did not have a clear idea of the weight of the articles to be sold at so distant a market. The scope for fraudulent weighing has increased further as there were measurable differences in the weights being at use in the island and the mainland. There were also instances of confiscation of fully laden *odams* by brokers for debts due to them from *jenmi/ odam* owners. It was the poor *kudiyans* (tenant) who had to suffer the loss in all such cases¹²⁶. These malpractices only show that the unevenly placed social relations of the Laccadive Islands have also played its role in ensuring the exploitation of the voiceless inhabitants of the islands.

The coir monopoly, notwithstanding its openly exploitative nature, has at least one plus point; it always ensured the islanders an ever available market for their principal product. One could even argue that monopoly as a system of trade was best suited to Laccadives. To suggest this, we have the experience of Minicoy where the House of Arakkal never claimed monopoly except for cowries. The trade of this island, where the inhabitants were predominantly sailors, was soon became the monopoly of Dom Malikkan, a native trader who owned several vessels¹²⁷. Similarly, the short distance trade in between islands had been the monopoly of the *karanavars* or heads of

¹²⁴ *WRRL*, Para.27 & 28, pp.9-10; R. H. Ellis, *op.cit.*, p.70; T.J. Joseph Mathew, *op.cit.*, pp.22-23.

¹²⁵ *Odam* is a large country boat.

¹²⁶ T.J. Joseph Mathew, *op.cit.*, p.27.

¹²⁷ Report dated 27th April 1889 on Laccadives by J.Twigg, Acting Sub-Collector of Malabar, Para. 41, p.147, MCCF-3, RAK.

certain principal *tharavadus*. To justify this monopoly, these *karanavars* were seen resorting to a story. As per this, all the lands held by the *malmis* and the *melacheris* were originally granted to them by the ancestors of these *karanavars* on condition either that all the produce should be exported in their (the *karanavar*'s) boats or on condition of services such as manning boats, tilling *thottams* (Garden lands) etc¹²⁸. Add to this was the coir monopoly practiced by EIC in the Ameni group of islands.

Those who were criticizing the House of Arakkal for the fall in the price of coir were actually ignoring the consecutively falling demand of coir chiefly because of the extended use of chains and cables in shipping industry. The problem related to such fall in coir prices was usually doubled with a rise in the price of rice since there was an unavoidable linkage of the prices of these two principal commodities¹²⁹. Nevertheless, the consistent reluctance of the House of Arakkal to introduce any periodical revision in the monopoly price of coir was, no doubt, a blunder. Procuring a commodity like coir at similar rate in good and bad years alike was definitely an offense, if one has to consider the miserable plight of the islanders. As observed by William Logan, the House of Arakkal failed to discharge the moral responsibility of a monopolist by reducing the price in bad season. For this lapse, they were forced to pay a heavy price in the form of sovereignty of the Laccadive group of islands including Minicoy.

The sequestration of the Laccadive Islands in favour of the English in 1908 was the final outcome of a protracted process that could be cited as a classic example of the tightening of the clutches of British colonialism. The appropriation by the British, of the six isles known as Cannanore Islands has cast a devastating impact upon the destiny of Arakkal as it proved virtually

¹²⁸ William Logan's Report on Laccadives 1870, Para.16,p.8,RAK.

¹²⁹ William Logan's letter to J. Sturrock, Acting Secretary, Board of Revenue, Madras, SR-151, p.20, RAK.

impossible for them to recover the loss and damage caused from such grave a disaster with far reaching economic consequences. To achieve the sequestration, the English has resorted to a very shrewd and calculated strategy of intermixing two apparently distinct things, the payment of *peshkash* defaulted and Beeby's 'misrule' in her island possessions¹³⁰. The sequestration of Laccadives has caused a severe depletion of Arakkal's treasury which in turn has made them incapable of continuing maritime business as they did previously.

¹³⁰ KKN Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.79.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Although, a number of monographs have been published already on the history of this powerful house of merchant magnates with an incontrovertible political clout, there still exist several missing links in their recorded history. This is primarily due to the overwhelming concentration on maritime activities ignoring all other vital aspects that are, in no way, less significant. The most pertinent problem to be confronted is one relating to the nature of its political form. Generally, there is a reluctance to acknowledge Arakkal's power as a *swaroopam*, the normal form of political structure in pre modern Malabar. The existing historiographic predilections tend to associate *swaroopam* polities with the affluence gathered from paddy cultivation of the wetlands and the legitimization of authority through the agencies of temples, family deities and Brahmins. A historian of Kerala has discarded the direct involvement of *swaroopams* in the process of trade apart from collecting *ayam* (toll) from the goods transported¹. A sad consequence of this disappearance of the tree for the forest is the failure in addressing the importance of revenue generated from sources other than agriculture. These views contradict the observations made on the House of Arakkal by seventeenth and eighteenth century travelers like Francois Pyrard, Pietro Della Valle, and Alexander Hamilton. The 'Arakkal Papers' consist of a number of documents in which the House is styled vehemently as a *swaroopam*. The term is equally justifiable when viewed from the perspective of definition of *swaroopams* as the extended joint families that wielded political authority².

¹ K.N.Ganesh, *Reflections on Pre-modern Kerala*, Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2016, p.131.

² M.R Raghava Varier, *State as Svarupam: An Introductory Essay* in R.Champakalakshmy, Kesavan Veluthat & T.R Venugopalan (Ed.) *State and Society in*

Some two decades ago, Dilip M. Menon had put it emphatically that “Malabar was a region whose history devolved on the ocean. Political institutions that emerged were dependent on the volatile profits of commerce. Kingship, such as it was, consisted of kings perched on the seaface looking out to sea, dependent almost entirely on the duties and imposts of trade. Kings did not have sufficient penetration into the hinterland to collect any form of land tax, and their sway in the interior was dependent on the reluctant allegiance of landowning households that engaged in production for the market”³. This was particularly so in the case of Ali Rajas and the Zamorins who depended the income from ocean the most⁴. Even earlier, M.N Pearson and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have also noticed the relationship between external commerce and political participation in the south-west coast of India. According to Pearson, the ethos of the North Indian Muslim elite was oriented towards the land as they were the descendants of people who came from interior Asia. As such, their aim was to control more land in order to access more resources by utilizing the advantages of a heroic cavalry⁵. In contrast, the crucial part of revenue of the seaboard states of south west coast of India like Cochin, Calicut and Cannanore was derived from seaborne trade⁶. In Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s view, the strong and cohesive bonds within Mappila community were one among the key factors that facilitated the emergence of

Pre-modern South India Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2002 pp.120-130; Prof. K.N. Ganesh, *Reflections on Pre-modern Kerala*, Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2016, p.49; Binu John Mailaparambil *Lords of the Sea- The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663-1723)*, Brill, Leiden, 2012, p.29.

³ Dilip M Menon, ‘*Houses by the Sea: State Experimentation on the Southwest Coast of India- 1760-1800*’, in Neera Chandhoke (ed.), *Mapping Histories: Essays presented to Ravinder Kumar*, Tulika, New Delhi, 2000, p.163.

⁴ *Ibid.*,p.165.

⁵ M.N. Pearson, *The New Cambridge History of India Vol-1- Part I,The Portuguese in India*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987, p.27.

⁶ *Ibid.*,p.28

the Ali Raja lineage as dominant over the *kolatiiris*⁷. Bonaventure Swai too acknowledges Ali Raja as the merchant prince of Cannanore who could afford to organize trading expeditions to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf⁸. It was this overwhelming dependence of the Ali Rajas on the income generated directly from maritime trade that had prompted the Joint Commissioners of Malabar to call them the ‘mercantile sovereign’⁹.

Although, Dilip M. Menon recognizes the centrality of oceanic trade in forming and reshaping political edifices in Malabar, he too, failed to differentiate the direct involvement of Ali Rajas in seaborne trade from Zamorin’s passive collaboration in maritime business conducted through the port of Calicut. But, this differentiation is easily discernable from the accounts of seventeenth and early eighteenth century European travellers and officials like Francois Pyrard, Pietro Della Valle, Alexander Hamilton and Jacob Canter Visscher. All of them have underlined the centrality of income generated from the direct and active participation of the House of Arakkal in the oceanic trade and its influence in structuring their political edifice. Although, at present we have no evidences to assess the exact volume of land revenue collected by the House, the tininess of the kingdom devoid of any considerable tracts of paddy fields and garden lands would induce us to think that the income from land, if any of those sorts have ever existed, was definitely insignificant in Arakkal’s maritime context. In the case of Laccadives which greatly surpassed the mainland possessions of the House, the Board of Revenue, Madras has made it clear that no trace of any taxation

⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500-1650*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1990 p.342.

⁸ Bonaventure Swai, ‘*East India Company and Moplah Merchants of Tellicherry: 1694-1800*’ in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Aug., 1979), pp. 58-70, Stable URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3520242>, accessed on 04-03-2018.

⁹ JCRM, Para.239, p.228.

has been discovered¹⁰. In fact, income from land never constituted a significant portion of Malabar's revenue till the advent of the Nawab Haider Ali of Mysore in 1766. Graeme's Report on the Revenue Administration of Malabar (1822) had put it plainly that although, the Hindu law authorizes the collection of a portion of crop as tax, Malabar Province was extraordinarily exempted from it and it was the invasion of the Ikkeri or Bednore Raja occurred in 1736-37 that compelled some of the Rajas of Malabar to impose a land tax here¹¹.

The house of Arakkal is often described as the kings of the sea. William Logan was the first among modern historians to note that Ally Raja (as he used to spell it) is the corrupt form of the actual term Ali Raja which means the sea king¹². It is obvious that here, by the term *Ali*, Logan actually meant *azhi*, the Malayalam word to denote Sea. Shamsulla Qadiri is seen ascribing the title *sultan-ul-Bahar* (Sea king) to Ali Rajas in his work 'Malaibar' first published in 1929¹³. KKN Kurup has also conferred the epithet 'lords of the deep sea' to the rulers of Arakkal, although without citing any authority¹⁴. M.P.Kumaran has opined that by the end of the 16th century, *Kolattiri* was forced to surrender all of his powers before the Ali Rajas who were known by the title *azhi rajakkanmar* meaning kings of the sea¹⁵. The same sense has been articulated by Genevive Bouchon and Binu John who titled their works on the House of Ali Rajas as *Regent of the Sea* and *Lords of*

¹⁰ Proceedings No. 349 of the Board of Revenue dated 2nd August 1849, Para, 22, appended to *WRRL*, p.164.

¹¹ Graeme's Report on the Revenue Administration of Malabar 1822, Kerala State Archives, Government of Kerala, 2010, Para 78, p.87.

¹² William Logan, *Malabar Vol-1*, Government Press, Madras, 1951, p.357.

¹³ Shamsulla Qadiri, *Malibaar* (Ur.), Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, p.34.

¹⁴ K.K.N Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1975, p.6.

¹⁵ M.P.Kumaran, *oru Muslim rajavamshathinte piravi*, (First published in 1998) in N.M.Namboothiri & P.K.Sivadas (Ed.), *keralacharithrathinte nattuvazhikal*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2009, p.363.

the Sea respectively. Nonetheless, using such glowing appellations by the Ali Rajas seems implausible because nowhere in the vast array of official records of the House, they are seen styled as kings of the sea or *sulthan ul Bahar*. Instead, they always preferred to call themselves as *aswaroopam*. Lack of wetlands under the house which caused a comparative absence of the documents related to land and its transactions is possibly the reason for them not being considered as a *swaroopam*.

More troublesome is the argument that Ali Raja is the corrupt form of the term *azhi raja*. It is true that *azhi* in Malayalam means sea. Yet, as per the rules of elision in Malayalam, there is not even a distant possibility of *azhi* to be elided as *ali*. By all means, the corrupt form of *azhi* is not *ali* but *ayi* as could be inferred from the names of two beaches lying in the northern and southern sides of Arakkal Palace at the old city of Cannanore. The names of the present beaches Kadalayi and Ayikkara are believed to be elided from *Kadalazhi* (*kadal+ azhi*) and *Aazhikkara* (*aazhi+kara*) respectively¹⁶. The Ali in Ali Raja actually owes its origin to great Mammale (Muhammed Ali) who has been rightly regarded as the progenitor of the House of Ali Rajas. Adding sufficient weight to this argument, only the male rulers of the House are seen referred as Ali Raja, whereas, the female rulers are known by the title Adhi Raja Beeby. *Adhi* which literally means ‘the foremost’ is only an honorific, being used commonly by both the male and female rulers of the House.

Since, there was absolutely nothing to be shown as evidence for the use of the title *sultan-ul Bahar*, within the family circle, it may presumably be a later creation by those who sought to distinguish this House of maritime monarchs from the rest of Malabar Rajas who relatively kept themselves aloof from maritime business. To reveal the inappropriateness of such titles and

¹⁶ *azhi*, *kadal* and *kara* are Malayalam terms used to denote estuary, sea and seaside respectively.

also to prove the futility of taking them seriously, we have before us the case of *samuthiri* (Zamorins) of Calicut. In popular perception the term is continued to be viewed as the combination of the terms *samudra* and *thiri* which, when put together, would mean ‘lord of the sea’. However, in the light of the known fact that Zamorins never exercised control over the sea directly, but relied wholly on Mappilas for maritime activities and naval expeditions, this explanation, is certainly inconclusive¹⁷. In fact, the very notion of exerting any sort of authority over the sea was alien to the region. Till the advent of the Portuguese in 1498, oceanic spaces were considered common to all¹⁸ and as such there was hardly any question of sovereignty over seas. It is also to be borne in mind that the Islamic jurists of all the four *mad’habs* (Schools of Jurisprudence) had made it clear that every individuals, groups and states could claim an intrinsic right to navigate freely through the seas and to use its resources¹⁹.

This will induce questions on the role and influence of religion in Arakkal’s maritime environment. Binu John has rightly pointed out the ‘unproductiveness’ of analyzing the events in Kolathunadu, in terms of the religious frontier that divides Mappilas from the ‘more indigenous’ ‘Hindu local society’²⁰. Although, he is referring to the events occurred in between 1663 and 1723, the EIC documents that I have examined has proved it beyond

¹⁷ Janet L. Abu Lughod says that *Zamorin* is the distorted form of *Samudri* which meant the king of the sea (*Before European Hegemony- The World System A.D 1250-1350*, New York, 1989, p. 273). K.V.Krishna Ayyar holds that the term is derived from Sanskrit word *swami* which means the emperor (*The Zamorins of Calicut*, Calicut, 1936, p.14). M.G.S Narayanan (*Perumals of Kerala*, 2013, Kozhikode, p.133.) opines that it may be the Arabised form of any old Malayalam word used to refer a lord. For details please see Dr. V.V. Haridas, *Samoodiriperuma*, (Mal.), Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur, 2012, pp.29-30.

¹⁸ K.N.Chaudhuri, *Trade and civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge University Press, U.K, 1985.p.14.

¹⁹ Hassan S. Khalilieh, *Islamic Law of the Sea-Freedom of Navigation and Passage Rights in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2019,pp.12-13.

²⁰ Binu John Mailaparambil, *op.cit.*,p.173.

any doubt that the things remained more or less the same also for the next hundred years or so. Since, the very notion of a 'Hindu' identity is yet to be evolved, imagining such a frontier clash at that point of time itself sounds absurd. In almost all the contemporary documents, people of Malabar are generally seen identified in terms of their respective caste names such as *nairs*, *thiyer*, *muccuas* etc. In these documents, very rarely one could find a reference to religious identity other than Christian and Islamic.

It is clear that the house of Arakkal used the language of religion to legitimize their authority in various ways. Ali Rajas had shown a particular keenness to express their religious identity for which the attempt in family records to link their origin to *cheraman perumal*'s conversion to Islam stands as a classic example. Ali Raja's act of putting a golden spire atop his mosque at Cannanore defying the existing norm that only three principal Hindu temples of the region possess the right to do so which is said to have triggered the tension between Kolathunadu and Cannanore may also be considered as a calculated step in this direction.

Further, Ali Rajas had also seen upholding an enthusiastic fervor to acclaim themselves as an integral part of larger Islamic community or *al-ummah*. This fervor was amply reflected in their effort to maintain a linkage with the Ottoman Empire through correspondence often seeking assistance from the Caliph of Islam in their fight against infidels²¹. In a letter wrote by Beeby in 1853, the 'Sublime Porte'²² has been referred affectionately as her 'ancient friend and protector'²³. This could be compared with the political

²¹ AzmiOzcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924*, Brill, Leiden, 1997, p.11; S.Saifudheen Kunju, *Usmaniya Khilafath: Kerala Muslimkalude Rashtriya Idapedalukal*, in Dr. Jameel Ahamed (Ed.), Kerala Muslim History Conference Proceedings, Islamic Publishing House, Kozhikode, 2015, pp.254-7.

²² Sublime Porte is the metonym for the Central Government of the Ottoman Empire.

²³ Beeby's memorial dated 6th November 1853 addressed to H.E Pottinger, the Governor of Madras, MCCF 7746, Para 5, p.41, RAK.

behavior of sultans who strived to acquire recognitions from the Caliph of Turkey. As early as 1570, they were depicted by Sheikh Zainuddin as seeking the support of Ali Adhil Shah of Bijapur to save the weaker Muslims from the calamity caused by Portuguese dictator²⁴. Among Arakkal's correspondence with the Ottoman Empire, one received from Constantinople in 1780, deserves particular mentioning. The significance of this letter lies in the fact that it was sent as a reply to Beeby's request for legitimizing her accession to the throne of Cannanore executed under matrilineal system of succession thought to be incompatible with Islamic jurisprudence. Most probably, this may be the single most incident in which a female ruler is seen asking the Caliph of Islam to sanction a space for herself within the extended body of Islamic ruling elite²⁵. More importantly, Friday sermons in the principal mosque at Cannanore usually mentioned the name of reigning head of the House²⁶. More striking is the fact that woman rulers were not at all excluded from this formal mention in Friday sermon though women were not entertained for *juma*. This practice was continued even up to the middle of 1970's, decades after the loss of sovereignty of the House.

On many occasions, Ali Rajas were seen styled as the custodians of the interests of the entire community of Mappilas. For example, the only condition that the Heiress of the House of Arakkal has placed before the EIC in 1734 to effect the surrendering of Dhurmapatam was an assurance of kind treatment of her Muhammedan subjects by the Company²⁷. This care and concern was duly recognized and reciprocated by the Mappilas of Malabar in general and that of Cannanore and neighbouring pockets in particular. As

²⁴ Sheikh Zainuddin Al-Makhdoom-II, *Tuhfat ul Mujahideen (Tribute to Warriors)*, National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi, 2014, p.57.

²⁵ SR-218, pp. 4-5, RAK.

²⁶ Interview dated 22/09/2019 with M. Muhammad aged 79 years, a native of Kannur.

²⁷ Letter dated 17th August 1734 from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1733-34 Vol-III, p.50.

pointed out already, Arakkal's support base in places like Valapattanam and Dhurmapattanam were elaborate and ever dependable. In their fight with the *kolattiri* Prince in 1730's, they got assistance from Mappilas as far south as Ponnani²⁸. Similarly, in their fight against the British during 1745-47, the Ali Rajas were backed actively by Mappilas, even of such remote areas like, Madayi, Kalliassery and Taliparamba²⁹. So ardent and absolute was the support extended by the Mappilas of Mammakkunnu to Ali Raja that the place was referred in Tellicherry Consultations as the 'Nest of Rogues'³⁰. The Mappilas of this tiny village lying in between Cannanore and Dhurmapattanam, despite being territorially attached to Achanmar of Randettara, one among the vassals of *kolattiri*, were very much active in supporting the House of Arakkal in their bid to regain the possession of Dhurmapattanam. They even planned a physical attack on Dhurmapattanam by crossing Melur hills with the intention of winning it back to Arakkal. To sabotage this act of solidarity, the Company, sent its army consisting two hundred and fifty soldiers with an open instruction to "destroy everything belonging to the Moors at Mammakkunnu"³¹.

Endorsing the warmth of support that the Head of the House could garner from her coreligionists, the chief of Tellicherry Factory had once made the remark that the Mappilas in general considers the Beeby 'as the head of their caste'³². Being aware of the actual gravity of this support and also due to the veneration the Beeby receives from 'all the Malabar Mopillas as the Chief of their tribe'³³, the Company has decided to treat her with all the lenity in the

²⁸ Letter dated 22nd Feb 1733, LFT 1732-33,p.40.

²⁹ Consultation dated 12th September 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI, p.13.

³⁰ Consultation dated 8th November 1745, T.C 1745-46 Vol-XVI, p.50.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Letter dated 28th June 1790, from Tellicherry to Bombay Council,SPDD No.40/1790, p.363, KSAT.

³³ JCRM 1792-93, Para, 246, p.234.

event of her surrendering of Cannanore in 1790³⁴. Again, by acknowledging the identical religious affiliation of both the Beeby and her subjects, the Company allowed the prevalence of Quran in legal matters excepting commercial disputes³⁵. Thus a kind of strengthening of religious identifications is seemingly being structured during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries around the house of Arakkal.

Discursive and non-discursive practices of European powers in the region might have led to the formations of religious identities to some extent. It is interesting here to note that from the second half of fifteenth century the progenitors of the House of Arakkal were seen constantly referred by the name 'Cannanore Moors' in contemporary Portuguese sources, from Covilha to Gaspar Correa. Later, the Dutch and the English also continued the practice of identifying them with their faith. English perceptions deployed through their documents shows apparent overtones of the same. It was by ascribing the role and influence of Islam in their everyday life, the English had once compelled the Beeby to take an oath of good conduct towards the Company at the principal mosque at Cannanore³⁶. A study of the role of representations of the House of Arakkal by the European powers in detail may bring out a clearer picture in this regard.

As regards the discussion on matrilineal succession prevailed in the house, two contradictions are to be addressed. Firstly, it should be analysed in the overall context of circumstances leading to the genesis and prevalence of such a system among the Mappilas of the northern segment of Malabar in strict contrast to the norms of inheritance and residence pattern practiced by Muslims elsewhere. Secondly, a comparison of the norms of inheritance of

³⁴ Report of the Military Secretary to the Government, SPDD No.41A/1791, p.8, SAT.

³⁵ JCRM 1792-93, Para, 247, p.235.

³⁶ Letter dated 11th May 1737 from Tellicherry to Bombay Council, LFT 1736-37 Vol-V, p.74.

the House with the rest of the matrilineal *swaroopams* of Malabar has been attempted with a view to discern the distinctiveness of the former. Regarding the first, the present study attempted an analysis of the nature of Mappila social formation in coastal Malabar which was invariably linked to the twin phenomena of cross religious marriage and conversions. Here, the emphasis is on the semi-permanent marriage solemnized between Arab Muslim traders and indigenous women, known as *mut'a* as per the vocabulary of Islam and the expediencies of maritime profession. A major objective of the present study was to highlight the exceptionality of Arakkal's matrilineal norms of succession which never deprived women from attaining the highest position (*sthanam* or *musnad*) in the ruling hierarchy. However, as could be observed from a document preserved among Arakkal Papers, the custom of female primacy was started only at a later stage, presumably, to solve a crisis erupted in the family.

An attempt was also made to examine the exact state of power relations that existed between men and women within the matrilineal environment of this house of maritime merchants. The backdrop of this analysis is the conflict erupted in 1862, involving male and female contenders for obtaining the headship of the House. Contrary to the prevailing notions of female primacy and gender equality said to have existed in the house³⁷ the petitions and counter petitions exchanged as part of this conflict would suggest an unequal, if not deprived, status accorded to the female heads of the House. The female members of the House also had to face the same constraints in terms visibility and mobility as did their Mappila women subjects. That was why *valiyaBeeby* has repeatedly turned down the requests made by Tipu Sultan to hold discussions with him at Srirangapattanam. In the

³⁷ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, Vol.II*, Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1807, p.554; Bindu Malieckal, *Muslims, Matriliney and A Midsummer Night's Dream: European Encounters with the Mappilas of Malabar, India* in 'The Muslim World', Vol-95, April 2005, pp.297-316.

succeeding century, another Beeby was seen soliciting a benevolent treatment from the part of EIC on the ground that she is a woman³⁸. At the same time, we cannot ignore the advantages offered by the matrilineal joint family system which functioned almost like a corporate house, in running the maritime business and administrative functions of the House of Arakkal simultaneously till mid-nineteenth century³⁹. It was the cracks and the resultant discord within the family which started appearing in the matrilineal familial structure of Arakkal by the closing decades of nineteenth century that proved detrimental for the house as it culminated in ending its maritime glory as well as the political significance. However, whether it was the campaign against matrilineality spearheaded by the exponents of reformist Islam or any other external pressure that actually caused these discords stands a difficult question to answer, at this moment.

The advent of Mysore Nawabs in North Malabar and the ways in which it affected the destinies of the House of Arakkal constitute an important facet of its history. The advent of Haider Ali in Malabar in 1766 leading to the subsequent expanding of the *khudadadhi* of Mysore is generally labeled as the prime reason for the political prominence achieved by Arakkal during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Almost all the major historians of Kerala including William Logan, K.M. Panikkar and K.K.N Kurup has tried to explain the 'Mysorean interlude' and their cooperation with the Ali Raja as merely an expression of the religious solidarity they shared in common. Obviously, such simplifications do not hold well when we consider those eighteenth century events in the light of known priorities of the Nawabs of Mysore and their perception of politics and statecraft. Similarly, the

³⁸ Petition dated 13th July 1752 sent by Beeby to the Collector of Malabar, MCCF-7745, pp.159-62, RAK.

³⁹ To get an idea of the rise of corporations from merchant families of India, please refer C.A.Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars- North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*, OUP, New Delhi,1998.

unrelentingly ambitious and forceful pretensions of Kunhi Hamsa Ali Raja and his determination to capitalize the troublesome atmosphere in North Malabar are also to be taken into account⁴⁰. Whatever it may be, the Cannanore Mysore relations which are seen hailed as the single most event that facilitated the rise of Arakkal into prominence, also proved disastrous for them as the friendship between the two has provided the EIC, an ideal pretext required to implement their conceived plan aiming the seizure of the sovereignty of the House. Reading between the lines of Company Consultations, one could easily get an idea of the business as well as political motives involved in the colonial trajectory aiming the subjugation of this tiny kingdom of North Malabar. To vouch this, there is the pillage of Cannanore undertaken by General Norman Macleod in December 1783 and the bloody take-over of the fortress of Cannanore by Robert Abercromby seven years later⁴¹. These two victories were followed respectively by a ‘mock treaty’⁴² and an inglorious *karar* (agreement) signed in between the Company and the House of Arakkal. Both the treaties contained provisions that finally ended in placing the House in a state of bankruptcy. While the financial liabilities enforced by the first treaty forced the house to mortgage their prestigious and rewarding Laccadive possessions to Chovvakkaran Mussa, the second one ultimately ended in the sequestration of the same.

⁴⁰ For an useful account of Kunhi Hamsa Ali Raja’s role in asserting Arakkal’s sovereignty, please see the article *Wedding Feast or Political Arena?: Commercial Rivalry between the Ali Rajas and the English Factory in Northern Malabar in the Eighteenth Century* by Ruchira Banerjee in Rudrangshu Mukherjee & Lakshmi Subramanian (Ed.) ‘*Politics and Trade in the Indian Ocean World- Essays in Honour of Ashin Das Gupta*’, OUP, New Delhi, 2003, pp.83-112.

⁴¹ Buchanon has criticized these attacks as examples of rapaciousness of British officials in Malabar. Francis Buchanon, op.cit, p.555.

⁴² In a letter addressed to the Governor of Madras Sultan Adhi Raja Ayisha Beeby (1838-1862) was seen describing the agreement signed by her predecessor as a ‘Mock Treaty’ because of its mischievous provisions; MCCF- 7746,p.42, RAK.

The study has also attempted an analysis of the political economy and maritime significance of the House of Arakkal with a view to identify the twin roles they had played in history - maritime merchants and matrilineal monarchs. Undoubtedly, it was the affluence gathered from maritime trade that formed the foundation upon which they erected their political edifice. As have been identified rightly by Genevieve Bouchon, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and many others, it was the rivalry erupted in mid-sixteenth century between the Mappila trading community of Cannanore and the Portuguese *estado da India* over issues of trade that had prepared the way for the Ali Rajas to carve out a political destiny of their own⁴³. The increasing involvement of the Mappilas in maritime trade may be attributed to the origin and spread of Islamic trade networks throughout the Indian Ocean rim which got wider momentum since 12th century CE. The principal factors behind the rise of Mappilas of Cannanore as a group of formidable businessmen was their well utilized connections with the spice producing hinterlands of Malabar as well as their innate inclination towards maritime activities.

To have a better idea of Arakkal's maritime legacy, we have to analyse it in the light of changing perceptions of the historiography of trade in South Asia during the colonial era. Writing in early years of twentieth century, W. H. Moreland⁴⁴ has articulated a European dominance in the Asian trade since sixteenth century following the advent of Portuguese in Asian waters. This explicitly Eurocentric view soon became the prevailing trend in the historiography of trade in India in the succeeding decades as could be inferred

⁴³ Genevieve Bouchon, *Regent of the Sea': Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528*, (Translated from French by L. Shackley), Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Of Imarat and Tijarat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400 to 1750* in 'Comparative Studies in Society and History', Vol. 37, No.4, Oct., 1995, pp.750-780, Cambridge University Press, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/179208>, accessed on 04-03-2018.

⁴⁴ W.H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, 1962. *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study in Indian Economic History*, Oriental Book Reprint Corporation, New Delhi, 1992.

from the course of narration adopted in *Asia and Western Dominance*, written some forty years later⁴⁵. But, the notions of European supremacy in eastern trade jeopardizing the interests of Asian traders soon began to be criticized, although, in the context of South East Asia, by scholars like J.C. van Leur. Through his work first published 1955, van Leur argued that the Portuguese attempts at controlling the trade of Asian spices in their favour was a failure and even in the sixteenth century, Asian Maritime trade had retained its vitality⁴⁶. 'Van Leur thesis' has received wider acceptance in the historiography of Indian Ocean trade and there emerged many historians who began emphasizing the marginality of European activities in the Indian Ocean on the ground that there was no dramatic increase in the volume of spices transported to Europe during the sixteenth century⁴⁷. In the context of Western India, M.N Pearson has demonstrated that the Portuguese attempt to monopolize pepper trade was relatively unsuccessful and even in Malabar, where the Portuguese policy was fairly effective, huge amounts of pepper were transported outside their *cartaz* system, chiefly by Mappila traders⁴⁸. Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau have articulated that "there was more competition than collaboration between the Companies and Asian merchants, though the relations at times were fluid depending on the circumstances at a particular place. Hence it was perhaps, more an 'Age of Competition' than an 'Age of Partnership'"⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, Somaiya Publications, Mumbai, 1999.

⁴⁶ J.C van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, W. van Hoeve, The Hague, 1955.

⁴⁷ Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth century: the East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974.

⁴⁸ M.N. Pearson, *India and the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century*, in Ashin Das Gupta and M. N. Pearson (Eds.), *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1987, p. 89.

⁴⁹ Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau (Ed.) *Merchants, Companies and Trade-Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999, p.9.

This change in perception would help to comprehend Arakkal's turbulent relations with the European traders. It is fairly clear that the Ali Rajas have shown a consistent reluctance in cooperating and collaborating with the European contenders of Malabari trade. Through their lukewarm responses, the Ali Rajas were actually proclaiming their unwillingness to collaborate with European mercantile corporations merely as a supplier of spices or as a junior partner. Being in possession of a good number of vessels, a well maintained network capable of procuring bulk quantities of spices from the hinterlands and a readily available string of buyers across the Gulf, the House of Arakkal always wanted to carry on their business independent of Europeans. Precisely, it was this eagerness to stand on their own feet that has placed the House of Arakkal at odds with the European competitors of Asian trade, especially the EIC. The House had always tried to maintain the spirit of competition alive and have exhibited an insistent resilience to overcome the impediments raised in their path by the European companies. This resilience have attained varying forms such as the acceptance of a diverted trade route to surpass the Portuguese, conducting of trade, although infrequently, in ships carrying Dutch colours, and an open confrontation with EIC. The resilience shown by the Ali Rajas to outdo the stiffening competition from the part of European companies would remind us of the buoyancy of the Kutchi traders of Gujarat embodied in the works of Chhaya Goswami⁵⁰.

However, by the concluding decades of the nineteenth century, growing sense of resentment among the inhabitants of some of the Laccadive isles over the question of monopoly trade and its timely appropriation by EIC to effect the sequestration of the Cannanore's islands, the House finally began

⁵⁰ Chhaya Goswami, *The Call of the Sea: Kachchhi Traders in Muscat and Zanzibar, c.1800-1880*, Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, 2011; *Globalization Before its Time: The Gujarati Merchants from Kachchh*, Penguin Books India, 2016.

to lose its entrepreneurialism. This in turn caused a heavy loss of revenue that ultimately led to the waning of Arakkal's prominence both as merchants as well as monarchs. The nature of Arakkal's Laccadive trade and circumstances leading to the sequestration of the islands deserves thorough investigation, at least in two respects. On the one hand, such an analysis would reveal the real gravity of Arakkal's failure in comprehending the changing attitudes of their subjects residing in the islands. On the other, it would also provide certain clues for understanding the trajectories of colonialism in south west coast of India. Although, the very notion of trade monopoly would sound offensive at the present, we should realize the basic fact that at the commencement of Arakkal's transactions with Laccadives, monopoly was not a tabooed form of trade. Besides Arakkal's political authority over the islands, the reluctance of other local contenders to engage in Laccadive trade, presumably due to its unprofitability, may also have caused the inception of Cannanore's monopolistic trade with Laccadives. In fact, the islanders were actually benefited from the monopolistic trade with Arakkal as it ensured them the ready supply of grains and a readily available market for their products.

However, as observed by William Logan, the House of Arakkal failed to discharge the moral responsibility of a monopolist by reducing the price in bad season. Rather than lending an ear to the reasonable plea of islanders to effect a moderate hike in the price of coir, the Beeby took an inflexible stand and went on to blame her own subjects for being 'bold and enterprising'⁵¹. For this irrational adamancy, the House was forced to pay a heavy price in the form of sovereignty of the Laccadive group of islands including Minicoy. Beeby's failure in introducing some sensible modifications in the monopoly price made things easy for the English who were looking for a workable ploy to execute their ulterior plan of sequestering the islands in their favour. The

⁵¹ Letter dated 2nd November 1851 from Beeby to the Collector of Malabar, MCCF-7745, p. 107, RAK.

loss of highly lucrative possessions of the Arabian Sea actually meant the depletion of Arakkal's coffers which in turn made them incapable of running the maritime business. In addition to financial difficulties there were also a host of other impeding factors such as the cracks in the matrilineal household and the dramatic developments occurred in the realm of maritime trade during the latter half of nineteenth century like the opening of Suez Canal in 1869 and the spread of steam navigation. The vigorous expanding of Great Britain's mercantile operations to peninsular Arabia during the nineteenth century has also impacted Arakkal adversely as it was to their domain the English was making encroachments by collaborating with the emerging ruling elite of Arabia like the Imam of Muscat. In short, the economic and political ruining of Arakkal swaroopam was the direct outcome of the sequestration of the Laccadive group of islands and with this the House was reduced to the status of a mere landlord who depends heavily upon the rent to be derived from their landed property existing in various parts of North Malabar.

Glossary

<i>Achanmar</i>	: Title used by the feudatories of Randettara, near Cannanore
<i>Adhiraja</i>	: Honorific used by the male rulers of Arakkal <i>swaroopam</i>
<i>Adlamy</i>	: A kind of excise duty prevalent in Canara Kingdom
<i>Amsom</i>	: A unit of revenue administration
<i>Angrias</i>	: A sea power of the Maratha /Kongan region often depicted as pirates in European accounts
<i>anjamkur</i>	: the fifth regent in the line of seniority as per the custom of sharing power known as <i>kuruvazhcha</i>
<i>arkān al- dīn</i>	: Five cardinal tenets (5 pillars) of Islam
<i>azhi</i>	: Sea
<i>bale</i>	: A unit of weight
<i>beeby/beebi</i>	: Title of the female rulers of the House of Arakkal
<i>Bombara</i>	: A peculiar type of large vessel with two or more sails
<i>Boyanore</i>	: <i>Vazhunnavar</i> -Feudatory of Vadakara
<i>Buduftan</i>	: Valapattanam/ Baliapatam
<i>Caliphate</i>	: the rule or reign of a <i>Caliph</i>
<i>Candy</i>	: A unit of weight
<i>Cartaz</i>	: Passport or passes for vessels
<i>Cavai</i>	: <i>Kavvayi</i> , a place near Payyanur, North Malabar

<i>Colastry</i>	: Anglicized form of <i>kolattiri</i>
<i>Dahfatan</i>	: Dhurmapatam/ Dhurmapattanam/Dharmatam
<i>dar al-harb</i>	: Territory ruled by non-believers
<i>dar al-Islam</i>	: Territory where Muslims are free to practice their religion
<i>desham</i>	: Village or the smallest revenue unit
<i>Eid al Az'ha</i>	: A principal Islamic festival connected to Hajj
<i>Eid al Fithr</i>	: Festival that marks the end of holy month of Ramadan
<i>elaya</i>	: Husband of beeby or any male married to Arakkal family
<i>Fanam</i>	: A silver coin of Malabar
<i>Geniza</i>	: the storage area attached to Jewish synagogue
<i>Ghoshha</i>	: the custom of female seclusion
<i>Hajj</i>	: Annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>Hijab</i>	: Veil worn by Muslim women
<i>Iddah</i>	: the waiting period that a Muslim woman observes after the death of her husband
<i>Imamate</i>	: the office of an imam (leader) or a state ruled by him
<i>Jaghir</i>	: Assignment of land
<i>Jenmom</i>	: A form of absolute right over landed property
<i>Juma /Jumu'a</i>	: Congregational prayer on Fridays
<i>Jumma</i>	: the total assessment of land revenue

<i>Jarfattan,</i>	: Older name of Cannanore (In medieval Arab sources)
<i>Kadal</i>	: sea
<i>Kara</i>	: seaside
Karanavar	: Head of matrilineal family
<i>Karar</i>	: Agreement or deed
<i>Karyakar</i>	: Manager or an executive agent
<i>Karyasthan</i>	: Steward
kavarcha	: Social robbery-a peculiar custom of Laccadives
<i>Kisth</i>	: An instalment of rent or tribute
<i>Kolaswaroopam</i>	: Short form of Kolathunadu <i>swaroopam</i>
<i>Kolathunadu</i>	: A prominent swaroopam of pre-modern Malabar
<i>Kolattiri</i>	: Title of the ruler of Kolathunadu
<i>Koya / koyamar</i>	: the land owning class of Lakshadweep
<i>Kudiyar</i>	: Tenant
<i>Kuruwazhcha</i>	: Rule by partners- custom of sharing of power in <i>swaroopam</i>
<i>Mad'hab</i>	: Schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam
<i>Mahal</i>	: A <i>thavazhi</i> or branch of Arakkal <i>swaroopam</i>
<i>Mahdawis</i>	: A sect within the fold of Islam
<i>Malikhana</i>	Pertaining to the <i>malik</i> or proprietor as his right or due

<i>Malmi</i>	: A class of people in Lakshadweep engaged in seafaring
<i>Marumakkathayam</i>	: Matrilineal system of inheritance
<i>Masjid</i>	: Place of worship in Islam
<i>Meera</i>	: Sweet toddy, a popular product of Lakshadweep
<i>Melacheri</i>	: Petty tenants and servile class of Lakshadweep mostly engaged in coconut climbing
<i>Moor</i>	: A term used by Europeans to refer the Muslims, often in a derogatory sense
<i>Mount</i>	: A unit of measuring weight
<i>Muchilika</i>	: Written obligation or agreement, a bond or a deed
<i>Mufti</i>	: One who issues <i>fatwa</i> or religious decree
<i>Mukkuva</i>	: the caste of fishermen
<i>Mulk</i>	: Political authority
<i>Munchua</i>	: A country boat
<i>Muppumura</i>	: Order of seniority
<i>Musnad</i>	: A Persian term that means ‘authority’; used to denote the highest monarchical position
<i>Mut’a</i>	: Temporary marriage permissible in Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Mutawalli</i>	: the person who takes care of Wakf property
<i>Nambuthiris</i>	: Malayali Brahmins
<i>Naura</i>	: A port town mentioned in the account of Periplus; identified although unconvincingly, as Cannanore
<i>Odam</i>	: Large country boat

<i>Ola</i>	: Letter or declaration in writing, usually in palm leaf
<i>Pallikovilakam</i>	: Palace Palli, a branch of Kolaswaroopam
<i>Pandaram</i>	: Government Treasury or property
<i>Pandikashala</i>	: Warehouse
<i>Peshkash</i>	: A Government demand of revenue or tribute
<i>Poochakkanam</i>	: Cat tax, said to have introduced by a Beeby in 17 th Century for maintaining the cats brought to the harbour of Kadalayi, to check the growing number of rats that were destroying the cargo of the port
<i>Purdah</i>	: A veil worn by Muslim women
<i>Puthiarakkal</i>	: A <i>thavazhi</i> or branch of Arakkal <i>swaroopam</i>
<i>Puzha</i>	: River
<i>Qadi/Khazi</i>	: A Judge, a religious functionary
<i>Sambandham</i>	: An informal mode of marriage or consensual relationship between <i>Nambudiri</i> men and <i>Nair</i> women
<i>Sequin</i>	: An old gold coin of Europe
<i>Shirk</i>	: Sin of polytheism in Islam
<i>Siddies</i>	: A community of sailors of African ethnicity who resides at various points in Western Coast of India
<i>Star pagoda</i>	: A Gold coin of British India, worth company rupees 3.5
<i>Sthanam</i>	: Position of the head in a matrilineal household
<i>Sthani</i>	: the person who got the <i>sthanam</i> (Headship)
<i>Subahdary</i>	: the office or jurisdiction of a subahdar

Sublime Porte	: Metonym of the Ottoman Empire
<i>sungam/ chunkam</i>	: Excise or customs duty
<i>Swaroopam</i>	: Literally one's own shape. An extended family that wield political power
<i>Tarrah</i>	: A village, same as the <i>desom</i>
<i>Tharavadu</i>	: An extended joint family
<i>Thavazhi</i>	: A branch of matrilineal family
<i>thekkilamkur</i>	: Southern Regent, <i>Kolaswaroopam</i>
<i>thiyya</i>	: A caste name in Northern Kerala; same as Ezhavas
<i>Vadakkilamkur</i>	: Northern Regent, <i>Kolaswaroopam</i>
<i>Vazir</i>	: Minister
<i>Zamorine</i>	: Title of the Raja of Kozhikode
<i>Zina</i>	: Adultery, a big sin in Islam

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T.C 1750-51

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- 2) Kuttu, P.V., Thalassery, (Local Historian), aged 84 years, interviewed on 22/09/2019.
- 3) Muhammad, M., Kannur, (Retired Librarian) aged 79 years, interviewed on 22/05/2019.

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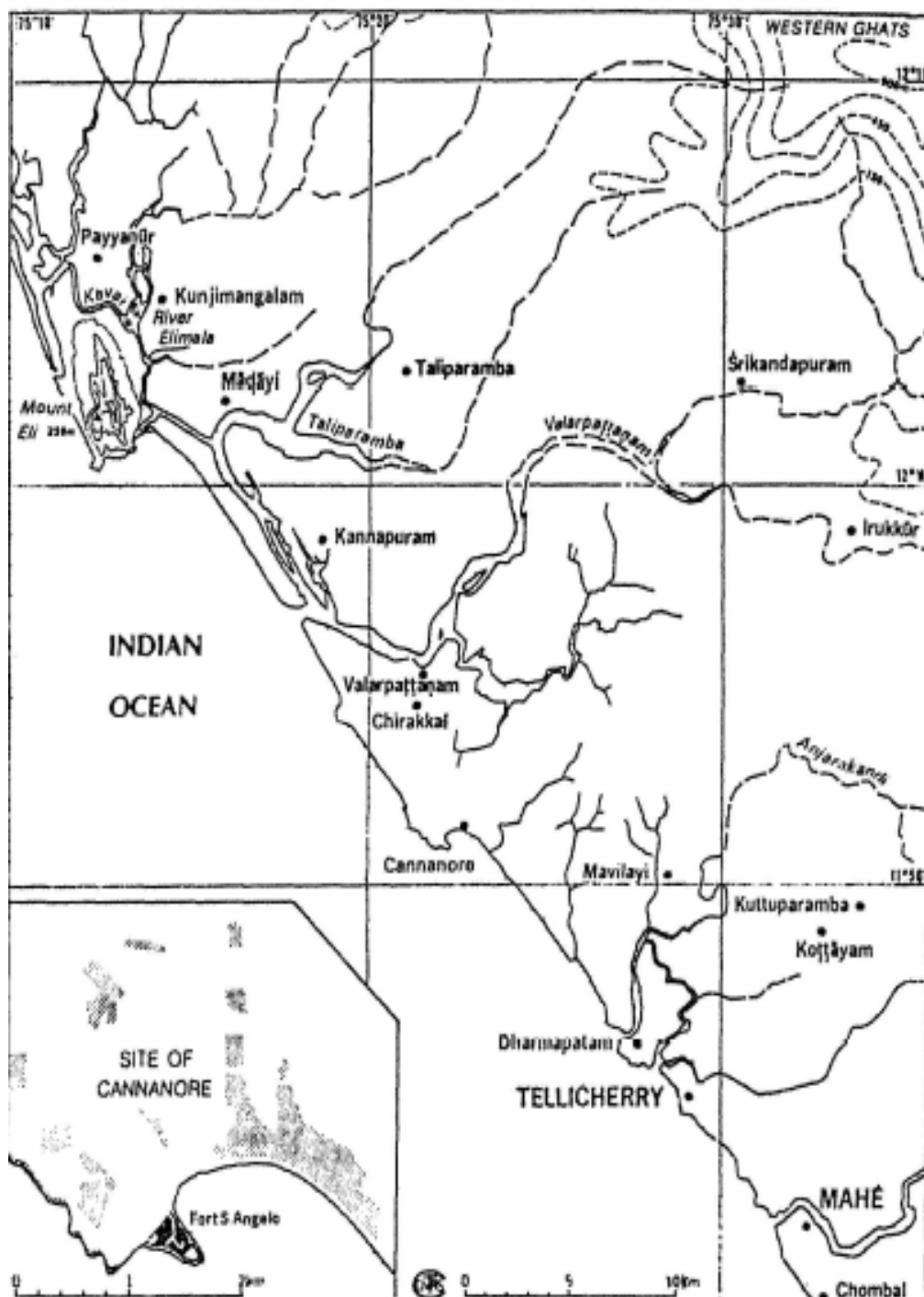
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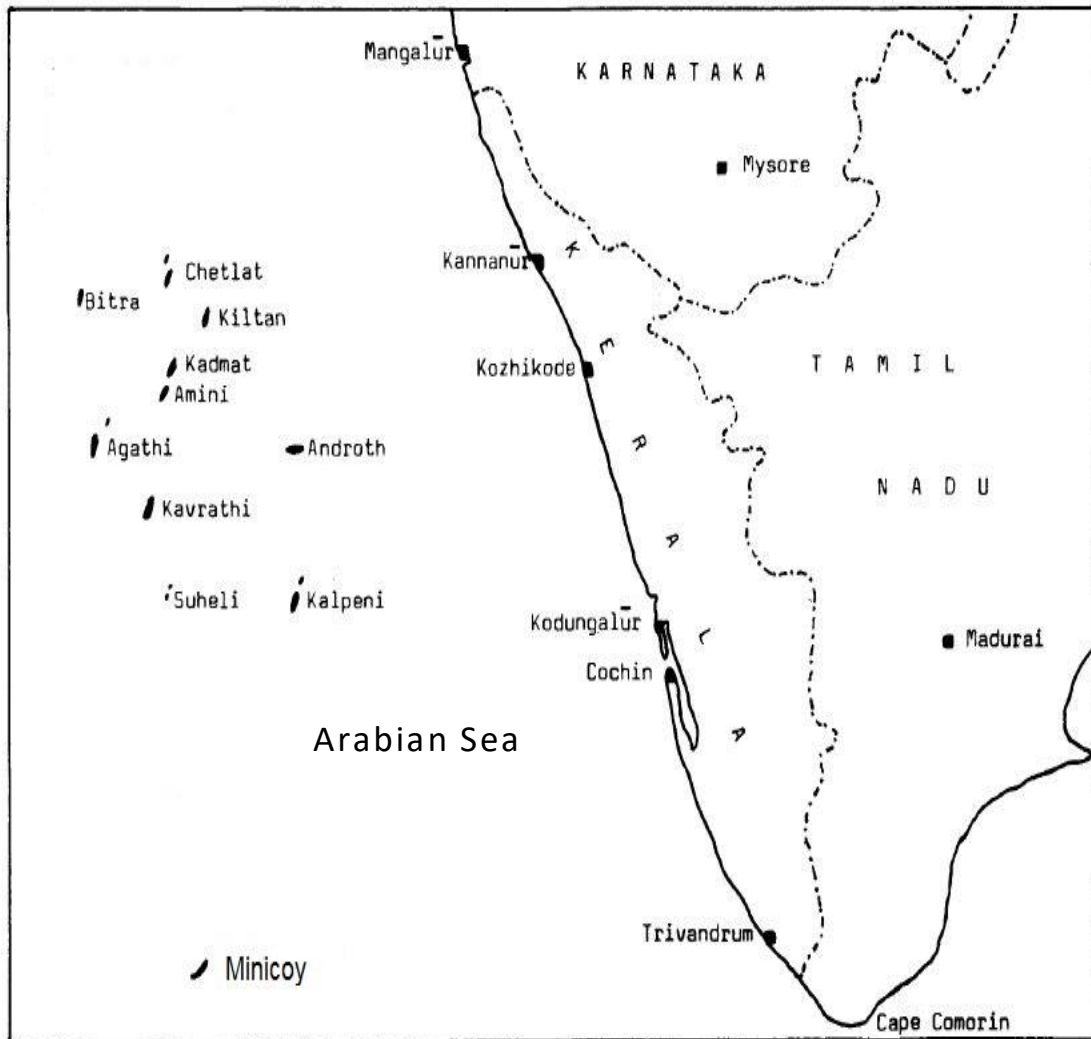
Appendix -I



Map - 1. Kingdoms of Arakkal and Kolathunadu

(Courtesy: Genevieve Bouchon, Regent of the Sea, 1988)

Appendix -II



Map-2. Laccadive and Minicoy Group of Islands

Appendix - III

English Translation of the Arabic Letter dated 1stShavval, 1194 (30th September 1780) Sent by the Ottoman Emperor, Sultan Abdul Hameed to Adhi Raja Junumma Beebi.

In the name of the most merciful God

Praise to the Almighty, who made us an asylum to the kings to the earth, defender of the laws of his chosen prophet by whom he proclaimed the title of monarchy by this verse of the Quran; "*Inna Jaalnakka Khalifattan fil Arzi*" and spread the shadow of our justice over the world from latitude to longitude.

May the blessing of God be upon his chosen friend who has been created for dispensing mercy to the universe as well as on his descendants and companions who have illumined the surface of the world by the splendour of their swords and removed there from the darkness of paganism.

We commence this our condescending letter with royal compliments showing kindness and courtesy towards one who has covered herself with the sheet modesty, who is adorned with the ornaments of truth and justice, venerated in pedigree, viz Bebee Sultan the Queen of Malabar. May God preserve her in her country to defend the pillars of faith and Islamism.

When the Almighty opened the doors of our kingdom on the face of Muslims, and turned the blackness of the shadow of our victorious colours condensed into frightful clouds upon the heads of the infidels, it became incumbent upon us to protect the faith of Islam and take care of the Muslims who are far off from us, and escort our outmost power on face of the earth for tranquility of the people who may be submissive to us or opposed to our rule. We have received your letter from your two envoys who have surpassed their predecessors in all respects; and venerated amongst contemporaries viz Sheik Raja Aboo Bakar, brother of your Vizier, and the second, his companion, Hajee Ally Jasoss, honoured and revered by us opened it and imparted us the knowledge of the demise of your uncle the Sultan of Malabar viz, Ally Raja who was steady in the way of God; may preserve him in paradise and of succeeded him according to the custom of your country by the co-operation of the inhabitants thereof and of your country towards our delightful threshold and having requesting your powerful assistance of yourself as well as for your subjects through kindness and civility. Accordingly we informed Consul, the English ambassador who is present in the capital, of your regarded and being revered by us and the necessity of your assisting yourself and your subjects in consequence of which it was requested to the King of England that orders

ought to be forwarded to the authorities in India directing them to treat you favourably. The Ambassador being satisfied pledged his word of promise and the aforesaid envoys being favourably received by us, have started hence by our permission.

I conclude this letter for yourself amongst your and shall never fail to protect Muslims either by word or deed possible.

Dated the 1st Shavval, al-Hijra, 1194, Constantinople.

(S.R-218, Regional Archives Kozhikode)

Appendix-IV

Letters sent by Tipu Sultan to the Beeby of Cannanore

1

What you have written, relative to your having paid twenty thousand rupees to Meer Zynul Aabideen, the Foujddr of Zuferabad, is understood, and meets our approbation. You must, in like manner, discharge the remaining balance due by you. Upon your arrival at the Presence, we will personally state all matters to you. Tellicherry is situated near the Taaluk of that refuge of chastity. You will, therefore, regularly transmit to us whatever intelligence you may [from time to time] be able to procure from thence.

(Letter dated 18th September 1784, No. CXXIV, *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan*, p.160)

2

We have received your letter by Fukhruddeen, who has also expatiated to us upon your situation. The custom of the world is this. Servants and dependants hold themselves [at all times] prepared for the performance of services; the execution of orders; obedience and fidelity. Many times have we written to that lady of chaste degree on the subject of repairing to our Presence; in reply to which you have continually brought forward evasions and excuses, and still continue to do the same. In this case, what is to be done? Be yourself the judge.

Ravi Varma Raj, who presented himself before us, was honored with a grant of the farm of the Taaluk of Cherkul, and with other gifts. 'If you [in like manner] had come [to us], agreeably to our orders, you [also] would assuredly have experienced our bounteous favour. You will learn the remaining [or further] particulars from the letter of Fukhruddeen

(Letter dated 16th December 1784, No. CLXXXI, *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan*, pp.216-17.)

The humble address you sent to us has passed under our view, and the particulars set forth in it are become duly apparent.

You write, " that the villages of Matmail [Mattool], & c. have, from days of " yore, appertained to you, and been [actually] in your possession; " but that now the revenues of the said villages have been sequestered, " on account of our Sircar". It is revealed; and, in consequence, we enclose a letter to Urshud Baig Khan, the Foujdar of Calicut, in which we have given him strict orders to relinquish the villages in question, and the revenues thereof. Forward the same to him.

We have repeatedly written to you, desiring you to repair to the Presence; but, instead of coming to us, you have excused yourself upon different pretences. For this reason, and in conformity with the policy of the moment, the settlement of the Taaluk of Cherkul, and the appointment of a separate Aumil, on our behalf, to the charge of the same, has appeared expedient to us.

Our consideration for the situation of that refuge of chastity, such as it is [i. e. such as we have always manifested it to be], has suffered no diminution. You will remain [therefore] with collected mind; and if any of our Taalukdars should be guilty of oppression, or proceed vexatiously toward your Taaluk, let us know his name, and we will send him strict orders to desist therefrom.

(Letter dated 19th December 1784, No. CLXXXIV, *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan*, pp. 219-20.)

Courtesy : *Select Letters of Tipu Sultan to Various Public Functionaries*, Edited, Translated and Arranged by William Kirkpatrick, East India Company, London, 1811.

Appendix - V



Picture-1

The Bell Tower at the Entrance of Arakkal Palace, Kannur City



Picture-2: Principal mosque in front of Arakkal Palace
(understood to have constructed in the early eighteenth century under the initiative of the House of Arakkal. Renovated to the present form in 1931.)