Chapter 4

The Mappilas in Arms: The Early Resistance of the Muslims of Malabar, 1792-1856

The rebellion of the Muslim community of Malabar, popularly known as Mappilas\(^1\), in 1921-1922 is familiar to the scholars of Indian History and other Social Sciences. Nowhere in India have foreign trading and commercial and religious interests interacted within the indigenous socio-economic and political institutions more intimately than they have in Malabar.\(^2\) Due to its historiographic predominance, little attention was given to the Mappila uprisings in the 19\(^{th}\) century. From the beginning of the 19\(^{th}\) century, there were a number of Mappila outbreaks and disturbances in the interior of South Malabar against the English East India Company. In all these early uprisings, the East India Company rendered its support and help to the non-Muslim communities, particularly to the Namboodiris and Nairs of South Malabar, especially in the Eranad and Walluvanad taluks because these movements were anti-colonial insurrections directed against them.

The occupation of Malabar, by the English East India Company, by the treaty of Seringapatam on the 18 March 1792\(^3\), after the Third Anglo-Mysore war, created

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\(^1\) The term Mappila is a commonly used word to refer the Muslims of Malabar. Originally the term was used to describe the Jewish-Christian and Muslim residents of Kerala. The Jews concentrated in the erstwhile princely state of Cochin were known as Juta Mappilas and the Christians were called as Nazarani Mappilas and the Muslims were known as Jonakan Mappilas. In course of time, the term Mappilas was mainly used to refer only to the Muslims of Kerala, who share much of the history and cultural traits of the people of Kerala.


apprehension among the Muslim population of Malabar because under the reign of Hyder Ali Khan and Tipu Sultan, they obtained unequal opportunities for advancing their interests in diverse fields, at the cost of the Hindu janmis of Malabar. It led to a state of permanent unrest in Malabar during the early half of the 19th century by the Mappilas against the East India Company and its men.

The religion of Prophet Mohammed was familiar to the Malabar Coast from early days of its inception. The initial Islamization of Malabar was through the Arabs, who came as seaman, merchants, captains, port chiefs and traders. Many of the early Arab traders, who settled in Malabar, married with the women of the country, mostly Nair and Tiyyars (Tiyyas), built houses of their family and taught them the basic practice of their religion. The descendents of such unions were raised and brought up by their mothers and were called as Mappilas or Moplahs. Thereafter, the Mappila population increased steadily. The question arises here is that why these Arab merchants married to the local women? It is found that the Arab women seldom followed their husbands out of their country. Their men, usually, married the local women as the Arabs were great traders and traveled widely. Thus the Mappilas were the descendents of the Arab traders, born out of their local wedlock. This process of mixed marriage had not occurred in the Malabar Coast alone. It is found in the Konkan Coast, where the Arabs intermarried with the local Konkans. The Arabs who came to the Eastern Coast married the Tamil women on the Eastern Coast and settled down there. Thus a diaspora of Arab population can be seen in different parts of


India. The decline of the Roman Empire enabled the Arabs to dominate in the Indian Ocean and Malabar became one of the main centers of their trading activities. The Arab traders purchased large numbers of children from lower-caste Hindus and other subordinate groups in order to man their navies, a practice not only permitted but openly enjoined by the Zamorin Rajas of Calicut. Very often the Tiyya women, who violated the rigid sexual taboos, were sold to the Mappilas. The Muslims considered the proselyte as a welcome addition irrespective of the treatment of them as an outcaste by the upper caste Hindus in the Malabar society. The fact that arises here is that why the lower-caste people were converted to the fold of Islam? It is said that conversion had provided them an avenue of social mobility for the lower-caste people in Malabar, who were at the bottom of the caste ladder in the society and rashly exploited by the upper-castes.

However, the earliest inscriptive evidence for the very presence of Muslim population in Malabar Coast can be obtained from the Tarisappalli Copper Plate grant of 849 A. D, where the details of grants given to the Syrian Christian merchants by Sthanu Ravi Varma, the ruler of Quilon, was recorded. The witnesses of these grants were the Jews and Muslims. At the same, there are scholars, who argue that

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8 One of the Zamorin Rajas had ordered as it seems, that one child from each Mukkuvan (fisherman) family to convert to Islam and subsequently all the Mukkuvans of Malabar became Muslims. See for details. K. V. Krishna Ayyar, The Zamorins of Calicut, Calicut, 1938, pp, 70-73.


10 The Kottayam Syrian Christian Copper plates, popularly known as the Tarisappalli Copper plates, were deposited with the Portuguese at the beginning of 16th century by the Syrian Bishop of Angamalee. With the surrender of Cochin by the Portuguese to the Dutch and later by the Dutch to the English, they also changed hands. They were traced by Col. Macaulay, the British resident of Travancore and handed over to Kottayam seminary of Syrian Christians. During the dispute between the two sections of the Syrians only 4 out of 6 plates were produced in court.

there was no Muslim population in the Malabar Coast till the 19th century.\footnote{Some scholars like William Logan, argues that there was no Muslim population in Kerala before the 9th century. For a detailed discussion, see Ronald Miller, \textit{Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends}, Bombay, 1976, pp.42-46. See also P.A. Syed Muhammad, \textit{Kerala Muslim Charitram}, Thrissur, 1969, pp.46-73.}

Whatever be the arguments, we find that there existed a flourishing community of Muslim population in the Malabar Coast from the early days onwards. The rulers of Malabar liberally supported and patronized this community because the rulers of Kerala were much indebted to the income derived from the mercantile activities of these people.

By the time, when the Portuguese came to Kerala, several settlements, concentrating along the Malabar Coast, can be seen and they dominated the intercostals and overseas trade. The earliest settlements of the Muslims were at Ezhimala, Kozhikode, Kollam, Chalyam, Parappanangadi, Tanur Hayli, Kakkanad, Dharmapatnam, Ponnani, Thirurangadi and Kodungallur.\footnote{For a discussion on the early settlements of the Mappilas, see, Shayk Zainuddin, \textit{Tuhfat-al-Mujahidin}, translated by S. Muhammad Husayan Nainar, Calicut, 2007. Also see, Veelayudhan Pannikassery, \textit{Keralam Pathinancham Pathinarum Nottandukalil}, Kottayam, 1997, pp.67-68. This work is an original translation of the famous title Tuhfat-al-Mujahidin written by Shayk Zainuddin.}
The foreign travelers who visited Kerala during this period had noticed that there was considerable Muslim population in the Kerala coast. Durata Barbosa, who lived Malabar between 1500 and 1516 had noticed that the Muslims were so rooted in the soil throughout the Malabar, that it seems to me, that they are a fifth part of its people spread over all its kingdom and provinces.\footnote{Quoted in Ronald Miller, \textit{op.cit}, p.58.} Thus by the time of the Portuguese arrival, the Muslims were a major trading community in the Malabar region. The arrival of the Portuguese to the
Malabar Coast endangered the political influence and the monopoly of trade in Malabar. The Mappilas became mainly a rural community after the arrival of the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{15} It may be because of intermarriage, conversion and the immigrations of Mappilas from the urban centre to the rural areas. In the rural areas, they became agriculturists, often tenants and led a life of poverty. The possible reason for this immigration from the urban coast to the rural areas may be due to the increase in population. But the absence of a detailed demographic data of those periods, the explanation to this process was precluded. The emergence of these Portuguese as a rival to the commercial interests of the Mappilas might have compelled them to move to interior in search of new economic opportunities. Though it appears to be a better reason for the migration of Muslim population to the hinterland, the increase in the Muslim population, particularly due to the conversion of the lower-caste to Islam was a more reasonable explanation to this migration of them to the interior of Malabar. Again during the post 1500 period the Europeans, like the Dutch, English and the French, dominated trade in the Malabar Coast. The Muslims who collaborated with the Arabs in the trade in different ways were eliminated by the Europeans as they were the allies of the Arabs and so naturally their enemies. The Europeans naturally preferred the non-Muslims and this logically compelled the Muslim community to migrate to the rural areas.\textsuperscript{16} The forcible conversion of the local people to Islam during the interlude of the Mysore rulers was an obvious reason for their augmentation of Muslim population in the southern part of Malabar. The peculiar socio-economic circumstances prevailed in Malabar also enabled for the conversion of lower caste communities to Islam and thereby the increase in the Muslim

\textsuperscript{15} Stephen Frederic Dale, \textit{Islamic Society..}, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{16} K.M. Panikkar, \textit{Malabar and the Portuguese}, Bombay, 1929, p.181.
population in Malabar. Whatever be the condition, during the first half of 19th century there was a considerable increase in Muslim population in the Malabar region.

Thus as evident from the table given below, the Muslims were a rapidly increasing community. The total number of population of 1807 was 7, 07,556. Among these population there were 4017 were Namboodiri Brahmins and 12250 were Patter Brahmins. The number of the Nairs, Christians, Tiyyas, Mappilas, the slaves and the fishermen were 1,64,626, 6044, 1,27,884, 1,70113, 94,786 and 12,361 respectively.

Table 4:1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mappilas</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>1,70,113</td>
<td>5,37,4443</td>
<td>7,07,556</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>2,69,624</td>
<td>8,43,873</td>
<td>11,13,497</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>3,82,330</td>
<td>11,32,579</td>
<td>15,14,909</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>4,37,492</td>
<td>12,71,589</td>
<td>17,09,081</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: K. N. Panikkar, Against Lord and State, p.52

This growth of the Muslim population may be, to some extent due to the natural causes, though they are not so prolific as Hindus, and to a large extent from conversion from the lower classes of Hindus to escape the exceptional disabilities imposed by the stricture of pollution. During the same period there was a precipitate decline in the number of the Cherumars, the Hindu lower caste in Malabar. The number of Cherumars in 1806-1807 was estimated at 96,386 and the number of them was given officially in 1837-1838 as 144,371. In 1856, when the Government had

18 Ibid. Para. 37.
taken detailed information regarding the traffic of the slaves, a careful enumeration reported 187,758 Cherumars and thus confirmed an ascending trend in the population of the Cherumars. But after 1856, a gradual decline of their population can be noted. This is evident from the census report of 1871, where the number of the Cherumar population was 99,009 and in 1881, it had fallen further to 64,725.\(^{20}\) What prompted the conversion of the lower caste Hindus, particularly the Cherumars, to the fold of Islam, especially after 1831? Conversion to Islam offered the Cherumars a chance to free themselves from the oppression of the higher caste Hindu *janmis*. Moreover, conversion to Muhammadanism raised their status distinctly in the social scale of the caste-ridden Malabar society. He is no longer a degraded *Pariah*\(^{21}\) whose approach disgusted and whose touch polluted the Hindu of caste, but belonging now to a different scale of being, contact with him does not require the same ablutions to purify it.\(^{22}\) Thus the Mappila religion raised an out-caste to a degree of respectability, which he never enjoyed for independently of his being admitted to all the privileges of that religion. The conversion naturally increased the collective strength of the Mappilas and at the same time it paralyzed the cultivation of the farms of the Hindu *janmis*. This naturally weakened the bargaining position of the *janmis* against the Mappila lease holders. Whatever be the situation, the Mappilas of Malabar constituted a major community in that region.

The Mappilas were unique in their religious and social behavior. The social groups among them were emerged due to the intermarriage with various local communities; migration to different regions; and also due to the conversion of locals


\(^{21}\) The *Pariah* was one of the lower caste communities in Malabar.

at various period of time. The Sayyids or the Thangals were common to the entire Malabar Coast while Keyis and the Koyas were the dominant groups in the coastal towns, particularly of Thalassery and Kozhikode. The Baramis and the Themims were the Hadhrami groups exclusive to the Kozhikode region. The Pusalars and the Ossans, who were the converts from the lower-caste, were common to the entire Malabar Coast.

The local rulers of Malabar assigned aristocratic lineage to, the Arrakkals of Kannur, the Keyis of Thalassery and the Koyas of Kozhikode by granting land and wholesale trading rights in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Arrakkals were an aristocratic family in Kannur and later became a ruling to royal family of Kannur region. The Keyis were wealthy merchants and traders. They posed extensive properties in Thalassery. The Koyas were also an economically dominant class in Malabar. The Sayyids, who were respectfully addressed as Thangals, were a category of learned theologians of Muslim religion. As spiritual leaders they wielded their influence all over Malabar and were present in Malabar from the eighth century onwards. The Thanglas also functioned as the quadis (religious Judge) in the mosques of Malabar in the earlier periods. The Thanglas played a vital role in the expansion of Islam to the interior of Malabar and for their unity and consolidation.

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24 Ibid.


The *Baramis* and the *Themims* were the migrants from Hadhramant to Malabar, more particularly to Kozhikkode, during the eighth century\(^27\). The *Baramis*, were traditional shipbuilders, and had carved out an economic niche in the commercial port of Beypore. They also flourished as timber merchants in the Malabar Coast.\(^28\) The *Themims* were small group whose hereditary occupation was to serve as commission agents for the cargoes exported to the Persian Gulf.\(^29\) The *Pusalars* were the fishermen, found along the Malabar Coast. The *Ossans* were a group of barbers and their women were hired as singers for the social functions like the marriage. Both the *Pusalars* and *Ossans* are endogamous groups.\(^30\) These two categories of people were regarded as inferior among the Muslim community owing to their menial occupations. In short, there was no homogeneity among the diverse sections of the Muslim Community that existed in the Malabar Coast.

The economic life of the Mappilas was mainly dependent upon agriculture and trade. In the Northern Malabar, particularly in Thalassery and Kannur, majority of the Mappilas were engaged in commercial pursuits. Apart from these in the North and in the South, there were the landholders and agriculturists. Forbes, when he wrote about the Mappilas of Malabar in the nineteenth century, he described them as,

\[\text{\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots the principal merchants both for foreign and home trade, many are}\]
\[\text{the proprietors of trading vessels navigated by Muhammadan commanders}\]

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\(^27\) *Ibid.* p.26

\(^28\) *Ibid.*

\(^29\) *Ibid.*

\(^30\) *Ibid.*
and seamen, in which they make an annual voyage to Persian and Arabian
Gulfs……

Francis Buchanan also observed a similar view about the Mappilas of Malabar and testified that they were great merchants. He observed thus:

………about fifty years ago, the Mappilas of this place were very rich and possessed vessels that sailed to Surat, Mocha, Madras and Bengal……

If this was the economic condition of the Mappilas coastal towns, it was a different story in the interior of Malabar. Most of the Muslim populations lived in the Eranad and Walluvanad region of South Malabar, where wet land cultivation was predominant. Most of the Muslims in this region were tenants, tenants-at-will or agricultural labourers mostly by under the Hindu janmis. These classes of people were often subject frequent eviction and rack renting. The janmis had the legal right for the eviction of the tenants. Corruption was rife among the revenue officials and they made common cause with the landlords and tampered with the deeds and contracts, so as to serve the interests of the landlords. The newly established law courts enabled the janmis to extort more renewal fees and rents from their lease holders and was always threatened them with eviction. This legal eviction can be effected directly through the court orders or by means of melcharth, a kind of second mortgage upon the leased lands on Kanam. With the establishment of English legal systems in Malabar the number of eviction suits filed in the courts increased. The following table will demonstrate the quantum of evictions in Malabar for a period of ten years from 1842 to 1852.

Table 4:2
Eviction suits in Malabar 1842-1852 (an yearly average of land litigation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenants</th>
<th>Suits</th>
<th>Evictions Decreed</th>
<th>Evictions Refused</th>
<th>Suits cancelled</th>
<th>Pending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus against Muslims</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu against Hindus</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims against Hindus</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims against Muslims</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total per year</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the eighteenth century onwards, the economic conditions of the Muslims of South Malabar were different from the Muslims of North Malabar. In North Malabar, with its greater concentration on dry crops reflected a predominance of mortgages and loans which were supported by the commercial economy while, in the South Malabar, it was predominated by the paddy growing and so had a number of simple leases. The north had wide stretches of waste and forest lands which allowed further expansion in the region. But the south was more densely populated and restricted the mobility of the population and it led to number of rigidities in the tenures. The majority of the Muslims in South Malabar were cultivating tenants, landless labourers, petty traders and fishermen. The numbers of Muslim *janmis* were very few in the South Malabar particularly in the Eranad and Walluvanad taluks.

Thomas Warden, the Collector of Malabar, summoned 103 *janmis* for a discussion on revenue matters and other details about the collection of it in 1803. Among these 103 *janmis*, there were only 8 Muslim *janmis* and all the others, except one Tiyya, were
higher caste Hindus. Similarly in 1881, there were only 12 Mappilas among the 829 janmis holding more than hundred pieces of land in an amsam. So the majority of the Muslim in South Malabar led a deplorable life. It was this economic insecurity among the Muslim peasants of South Malabar, due to the coercive social authority of the landed janmis became the root cause of the continuous tension and conflicts in the landlord tenant relationship. At the same time in the coastal regions of Kozhikode and North Malabar, the Muslims flourished with a mercantile economy and as a consequence, they possessed janmam lands. With their commercial enterprise they were in a better off position in the towns. This led to the social and economic security of the Muslims in the coastal region and in North Malabar; so there was not much insurrections occurred in these regions. At the same time, in the coastal areas there lived a Mappila population, who earned their living through fishing. Thus it was the economic insecurity of the rural Mappila population in South Malabar area led to the continuous outbreaks throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and culminating them in the twentieth century.

It was in the inland areas of the South Malabar, in Eranad and Walluvanad taluks, the poorest sections of the Mappilas dwelled and they expanded rapidly. Regarding the Mappilas of South Malabar, R.H. Hitchcock described them as having become:

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34 William Logan, *Report of the Malabar Special Commission*. 1881-1882, Madras 1882, Vol.1, p.lvi. Since Logan does not mention about the exact size or measurement of the holdings, it is assumed that a piece of land indicates either a cultivating garden or wet land: But it shows the nature of land ownership in Malabar in 1881. *Amsam* was the smallest revenue administrative unit in Malabar during the colonial days.


……entirely separate from those of the rest of Malabar….The low state of their intelligence, the subservience in which they had hitherto lived and the absence of any men of learning to instruct them in their new religion, even were they capable of understanding, all tended to provide a race which would prove as easy to fanaticism and lawlessness.37

Thus the majority of the Muslims lived in a wretched condition and most of them were uneducated. Even in 1911, the number of the Mappilas, who were literate in English, was 486 in contrast to 5,895 Nair’s and 2,897 Tiyyas.38 Thus the Muslims in South were economically poor and educationally backward and was prone towards any fanatic and rebellions ideas which naturally fed rebellious spirit in them. The educational backwardness of the Muslim community in the South Malabar served as an important cause for their fermentation against the British and the Hindu janmis in the subsequent years.

**Impact of Mysorean Conquest of Malabar**

The revenue settlements in Malabar were complicated by the absence of an identifiable pre-colonial state structure with a bureaucratic apparatus. The only known revenue settlement in the region was that of the Mysorean invaders.39 Therefore, the conquest of Malabar by Hyder Ali and his son and successor, Tipu Sultan, had a significant impact upon the history of Malabar. It was due to the Mysorean invasion that the agrarian structure of Malabar had been disturbed for the first time. The Mysorean occupation of Malabar, affected the relationship of the Mappilas with the


majority Hindu castes. The Mysorean rule did not try to demolish the prevailing social and economic status of the landed Hindus nor did it never attempted to establish the dominance of the Muslims in Malabar. The rulers of Mysore did not endeavor to meddle with the local usages which regulated the transfer of land. They did not grant the cultivated land to which they pleased. They did not arbitrarily move the occupants from their estate to another.  

The Mysorean rulers introduced a land tax, which encroached on the customary shares of the *janmis* and the *kanomdar*, who used to divide the *pattam* equally among them, and left the tenant, the *verumpattadar*, intact. It was this revolutionary act of introducing the land revenue system in the Malabar region led to the creation of new tensions in Malabar, as there was no systematic revenue collection in Malabar prior to the Mysorean conquest. The Mysorean assessment affected the relations between the Mappila tenants and Hindu *janmis* because during the Mysorean period many Mappilas managed to shift the entire burden of the newly introduced taxes to their *janmis*. In many areas, particularly where the Mappilas had overwhelming majority, the Hindu *janmis* were even afraid to appear before the revenue

Hindu *janmis*, particularly in 1788-1789, were compelled to relinquish everything that they possessed, in order to take refuge in Travancore, where a *Kshatriya* king maintained his independent rule. This led to the disturbance of the existing customary land rights of the various classes in Malabar. Therefore, it is

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40 Thomas Warden to the Board of Revenue, Madras, 12 September, 1815, p.39.


probable that most of the Hindu *janmis* lost control of officers and their assessments were fixed with the *Kanakkars* most of whom were Mappilas.\(^{43}\)

The successive invasions of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan led to a social turmoil in Malabar. The sporadic persecution of the Namboodiris and Nairs by Tipu Sultan reduced their social and political status in the Malabar region. Due to this conquest and persecution, the Malabar their tenants and estates, between 1788 and 1791, as large number of Namboodiris and Nairs fled, in fear of death or forced conversion, owing to Tipu’s conversion edict, to Travancore.\(^{44}\) The exodus of the Hindus had augmented the Mappilas of their formerly circumscribed land holders in the interior of South Malabar.\(^{45}\) Thus the Mysorean hegemony over Malabar had provided the Mappilas with a unique opportunity to advance in their interests at the cost of the high caste Hindus.

But the scholars like K. N. Panikkar argue that it is doubtful that the Mysorean rule marked the end of Hindu landlordism and insulated in large scale transfer of ownership of land to Mappila tenants.\(^{46}\) He argues that no substantial information is available about the nature of the Hindu exodus to Travancore or about the arrangements made after their flight. Therefore the advantage for those who came to possess the land was very limited, because the rent they had formerly paid to the

\(^{43}\) *Joint Commissioner’s Report*, Para. 174.


\(^{45}\) *Joint Commissioner’s Report*, Para, 163.

landlord was now extracted by the Government of the East India Company as land revenue.\textsuperscript{47}

It is found that only a few Mappilas\textsuperscript{48} who got the advantage of the Mysorean regime in Malabar and the vast majority of them remained in the same condition as they were before occupation of Malabar by the rulers of Mysore. In short the Mysorean interlude in Malabar was not a period Mappila regime or Mappila hegemony in Malabar.

The occupation of Malabar by the English East India Company, after the defeat Tipu Sultan in 1792, enabled the return of the fugitive Namboodiris and Nairs to Malabar. The problem faced by the Company officials in settling an already turbulent region were further compounded with the return of the fugitive Hindu Namboodiris and Nairs from Travancore.\textsuperscript{49} It added an element of confrontation to the tussle over the landed property between the Namboodiris and Nairs and the Mappilas of South Malabar. They were very eager to reclaim their lost landed properties and traditional prerogatives.\textsuperscript{50} They even acquired new power of coercion and eviction under the new rulers. The officials of the East India Company realized the Mappila menace and tried for the restoration of the dispossessed Brahmin and Nair land holders. The officials of the Company observed that the re-instatement would entail resistance as well as disaffection and even to open rebellion on the part of the Mappila Kanomdars in the interior of South Malabar because during the period of janmi

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} It was Athan Moyan Kurukkal, Elambulassery Unni Mutha Muppan and Chemban Pokker were the three Mappilas who made fortunes during the Mysorean interlude in Malabar. See for a discussion K.N. Panikkar, Against Lord and State. p. 55 ff. See also Stephen Frederic Dale, Islamic Society. p. 86 ff.

\textsuperscript{49} G. Arunima, There Comes the Papa, p.45.

\textsuperscript{50} Stephen Frederic Dale, Islamic Society. p. 93.
dispossession and exile, the Mappila tenants habituated themselves to the idea of independent tenure.\textsuperscript{51} They seized this opportunity to further their economic interests and numerical strength. The new Government of the East India Company in Malabar found it difficult to reconcile with the conflicting claims to land of the Nairs and Mappilas. However the Company officials decided to restore the Hindu \textit{janmis} to their rights and privileges they possessed prior to the Mysorean occupation of Malabar. The preservation of the landed class of people was vital to the British policy of securing allies, although the professed aim of the policy of restoration was stated to be the ‘the attainment of good Government and the future improvement of the people’.\textsuperscript{52} Thus the Hindu aristocrats, who were reinstated by the East India Company, aimed only at regaining of their landed possessions in the Mappila dominated areas.\textsuperscript{53}

Even though the Hindu \textit{janmis} were restored to their earlier positions in Malabar, the attitude of the East India Company towards the Mappilas was not of a reactionary one. It was not due to the inherent aggressive nature of the Mappilas that the Mappila outbreaks were attributed as often held by the authorities, but to the exploitation and oppression of the landlords and the rigorous collections of revenue from them by the Company. It was because of this attitude of the Company, they issued regulations to protect the Mappilas from Nair overlords and even steps were taken to protect their interests.\textsuperscript{54} Shortly after, the attitude of the British towards the Mappilas changed. It was because of the difficulties encountered by the Company

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}. Paras, 179-180.
\item \textsuperscript{52} D. N. Dhanagare, “Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics” p. 118.
\item \textsuperscript{53} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}. Para, 87.
\item \textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid}. Vol.1, p.119.
\end{itemize}
The exorbitant amount of revenue demanded by the Company and its agents, especially in South Malabar, prompted the Mappilas, not to remit the payment but compelled them even to protest against it. Thus it was the land revenue system introduced by the English East India Company in Malabar provoked the Mappila tenants to turn against them. It accounted for a number of Mappila uprisings in Malabar, particularly in South Malabar before 1857. All these minor and localized uprising culminated in the Mappila Revolt of 1921 in Malabar.

Uprisings of 1800-1802

The earliest instances of Mappila outbreaks can be traced back to the year 1800, when Elambulasserry Unni Mutha Muppan, Chemban Pokker and Athan Gurukkal heralded the flag of resistance against the East India Company in South Malabar. Under the Mysorean hegemony, these Mappilas exercised considerable power and influence, particularly in the taluks of Eranad and Walluvanad in South Malabar. These Mappilas tried to enhance their landholdings and influence in the Mappila dominated regions of Malabar. Unni Mutha Muppan, who maintained one-hundred armed personals under him, was employed under Tipu Sultan and had participated in the war against the East India Company in 1791. Even after the cession of Malabar by the East India Company in 1792, he maintained his armed forces and collected taxes from the people. He even wrote to the officials of the Company who tried to restrain his collection of taxes from Velatre.

……..For what reason, you, your Nairs, head of Chettis, other Chettis (a Hindu trading caste) and Custom people have put a stop to my Makama (a tax),… (unless the status quo is restored) I will take good care of you and your Chettis. Do not think I have much fear either of you, your Battalion people of guards…..

Athan Gurukkal was the darogah 58(police chief) in Cheranad and Chemban Pokker was the darogah in Eranad. They had acquired a good deal of landed property under the Mysorean rule, and later under the East India Company’s administration, by exploiting their official influence and power.59 The attempt on the part of the East India Company to establish law and order in Malabar after the treaty Seringapatam in 1792 impinged the prestige and independence of these Mappila Chiefs. Each of these ring leaders had their own personal grievances against the East India Company. In July 1799, the brother of Unni Mutha Muppan, who was charged off as an outlaw and for other heinous crimes by the Company, was executed after sentenced by a criminal court of the East India Company. In October 1799 he saw that his rice crop, arms and other effects were seized by the Company for the long standing revenue arrears made by him.60 Chemban Pokker, who was dismissed from service of the Company and was imprisoned in the Palghat fortress, after complaints received from the people of his oppressive behavior, including the plundering of their property, had escaped from

57 TNA, No 20231,Translation of an ola from Elambulasserry Unni Mutha Muppan to Mr. Melligechamp, the Officer for his personal conformation, received on 9 April 1798, Bombay Revenue Proceedings, 16 October, 1798,Vol.61, p.1590.

58 The darogah was the officer in charge of a circle of police (thana), under the Government of the East India Company in Malabar.


60 Ibid.
imprisonment.\textsuperscript{61} Athan Gurukkal turned against the Company because his brother-in-law was executed by the English and was also apprehensive about the punitive action against him by the East India Company. When their personal property and positions were thus threatened, they turned against their enemy and raised the banner of revolt against the Government of the Company, and called upon their co-religionists and others to join them to protect the interests of their community, which was not safe and secure under the regime of the English East India Company.\textsuperscript{62}

The defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1799 and the attempt made by the East India Company to assert their authority in the Mappila dominated regions naturally provoked the already dissatisfied and rebellious ring-leaders. So the three rebel chiefs, due to their personal grievances and also due to the policies of the East India Company in Malabar, formed a loose confederation in South Malabar. By 1800, this Mappila combination made an open defense against the British rule in Malabar and attempted to loot the properties of the Company’s Government in Malabar.\textsuperscript{63} The uprising lasted only for a brief period of two years. The rebels in this early uprising adopted and pursued a strategy of guerilla warfare.\textsuperscript{64} They adopted the guerilla strategy because the followers of these ring-leaders were limited and the terrain was more suited for such warfare. Moreover the strength and power of the Company was unknown to the rebels and so they wished to avoid any direct confrontation with the East India Company.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} K.N. Panikkar, \textit{Against Lord and State}, p. 57.


\textsuperscript{64} TNA, No 21471, \textit{Madras Revenue Proceedings}, 9 July 1802, Vol.423, p. 2365.
Even though the English were following a policy of neutrality and appeasement in Malabar, after 1792, the recalcitrant attitude and the periodical resistances made by the Mappilas of South Malabar, the Company could not overlook them. The Company, at this point of time was concerned about consolidating their position in Malabar and so they appointed a Joint Commission to inquire into the affairs of Malabar. But the continuous rebellious nature of the Mappilas in South Malabar compelled the Company to look into the matters and they began to develop a sort of animosity towards the Mappilas, as it is revealed from the statement made by the Collector of Velatre, Cheranad, Betutnad and Parappanad:

…throughout the Southern Division of Malabar the Namboodiris and Nairs and Thiyyar (a Hindu caste)… are the best and quietest subjects. I have never found any difficulty in managing these people; they are obedient and pay the dues to the Government without any trouble, which on the contrary the Mappilas are turbulent, prone to robbery and the revenue always more difficult to recover wherever they prevail.65

A similar statement was made by Alexander Walker, the army officer of the English East India Company in Malabar and a member of the Malabar Commission:

….. If you wish to keep it peaceable and quiet, prohibit that diabolical caste (Mappilas) from coming into it and by indirect means oblige those that may be there to leave it. This can easily be done by taxing them very heavily. Above all never give a public employment to any one of the caste. If permitted to settle in Canara, you will soon find them become numerous

and then stealing children, robberies and murders will follow. This caste of men is the curse of the regions of Velatre and Eranad.\textsuperscript{66}

Thus the English had changed their outlook over the Mappilas of Malabar and decided to squash the insurrections. This led to an open resistance against the Company’s Government by the Mappila confederacy. So, as a first step, the Company tried to rearrange the police establishments in riot worn areas. In the interior of South Malabar, the Mappilas had a dominant position in the police as the \textit{darogahs} and they utilized this opportunity to inflict corporal punishments to the disobedient ones.\textsuperscript{67} The Company employed the Nair corps under the English Commanders, to crush the insurgents and thus the movement was put down by the Company in 1802.

The East India Company suppressed the revolt of Athan Gurukkal, Unni Mutha Muppan and Chemban Pokker by 1802 itself. The Company immediately introduced certain administrative changes and reforms in the Mappila dominated regions of Malabar. It included a change in the policy of the recruitment to the subordinate posts in the revenue, judicial and police departments. The Mappilas had adequate representation in these positions before the revolt of 1800-1802. But now the Company doubted the loyalty of the Mappilas and the so it preferred the Hindus to these positions than the Mappilas in Malabar. After 1800 most of the appointments in the posts of \textit{adhikaris} (the village headmen) and \textit{menons} (the village accountants) were recruited from the Hindu land owning classes.\textsuperscript{68} Though the officials of the Company recommended for the posting of Muslims to these positions, the Company


\textsuperscript{67} TNA, No 20612,\textit{Madras Revenue Proceedings}, 20 February 1801, Vol.381,pp. 184-185.

\textsuperscript{68} K. N. Panikkar, \textit{Against Lord and State}, p 58.
never preferred or implemented it. Even in 1842 there was only 20 Mappilas among the 81 *adhikaris*, only 20 Mappilas out of 142 village peons and no Mappila village accountants in the Mappila dominated taluks of Eranad and Walluvanad. The rearrangement made by the Company in the police administration of Malabar enabled it to secure the foundation of Company’s authority in the Mappila dominated region of Malabar.

The immediate significance of this revolt was that it revealed the attitude of the Mappilas towards the defeat of the Tipu Sultan and the establishment of British power in Malabar. The British also realized that the Mappilas were a distinct community whose interests were severely injured by the defeat of Tipu Sultan, and due to the gradual reinstatement of the dominant Hindu castes and the imposition of British rule in Malabar after this insurrection. Again it is interesting to note that the three leaders of this revolt did not appeal to the Mappilas as Muslims to rise in defense of their religion nor did they try to establish a Muslim State in Malabar. Yet the prolongation of the revolt reveals that they had the tacit support of the community at large. After the revolt the leaders of the uprising were killed and their properties were confiscated by the authorities of the Company. The revolt further encouraged the Company officials to reinstate Namboodiris and Nair aristocrats in the Malabar region. All these did not reduce the rebellious spirit of the Mappilas in South Malabar. Even though, the Mappilas were condensed to the worst possible conditions in the rural Malabar, after the uprising of 1802 and their antagonism towards the English and

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the Company continued and this was evident from the subsequent uprisings that occurred in Malabar in the later years.

The period from 1802 to 1836 there were only a few Mappila out breaks in the region, but evidences shows that the period was a comparatively peaceful period. There is no evidence to show that these early incidents featured the elaborate preparatory rituals and climatic suicidal attacks which shared the same nature and character of the earlier and later outbreaks in Malabar. But as T.L. Strange traces, the beginning of the Mappila outbreaks to 1836, when a Hindu astrologer was stabbed to death and three others were wounded at Pandalur.

### Uprising Between 1836 and 1840

The period between 1836 and 1840 Malabar witnessed five Mappila uprisings. But there were no detailed official records or any local records available regarding these insurrections in the Malabar during this period. On 26 November, 1836 Kallingal Kunyolan of Pandalur desam of Eranad Taluk stabbed to death one Chakku Panikkar of the Kanisan (astrologer) caste. He also wounded three others and fled to Nenmini amsam in Walluvanad taluk. The police pursued him from place to place and finally shot him to death on 28 November, 1836. Another incident took place in Kalpeta desam of Eranad taluk on 15 April, 1837. Here one Ali Kutti, inflicted numerous severe wounds to a Brahmin janmi, Chirukaranimana Narayana Moozad and himself took a firm stand in his own shop. He was chased and attacked by the

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Another event of insurgency took place on 5 April, 1839 at Pallipuram amsam of Walluwanad taluk. Here the rebel Thorayamolakal Athan and one of his followers killed Kelil Caman. After the murder, he set fire to a Hindu temple and took his position in another temple. The tahsildar and his peons assaulted the rebels and finally they were shot to death. Again on 6 April, 1839 Mambadatodi Kuttiathan severely wounded the Kotkat Paru Tarakan. The Police captured him. He was tried by the Court of the English India Company and sentenced him to transportation for life. On 19 April 1840 in the Irumbuli amsam of Eranad taluk, Paratodiyil Ali Kutti severely wounded one Odyath Kunhnni Nair and another Hindu of the locality. He then set fire to the temple at Kidangali and took position in his house. When he was attacked by the police, he rushed out and was shot dead on 20 April, 1840.

In these five uprisings between 1836 and 1840 only few insurgents were involved and the numbers of Hindus who were either wounded or killed were only six. Among these six, two of them were janmis, one was a village peon (a government employee), one was a Kanisan (astrologer) and the remaining two were Nairs. In all these five outbreaks, the rebels attacked or killed the Hindu and set fire to their temples. In the insurrections that took place during this period all the rebels were killed by the men or forces of the Company. But the question that arises here is that


75 Ibid.

76 Ibid. pp. 554-555.

77 Ibid. p.555.
what was the motive behind these outbreaks against the Company by these people and what prompted them to do so? It is very difficult to establish or identify the motive that guided them. It was not the religious sentiments that provoked them to turn against the English and their agents in this region, but the political or economical policies that the Company pursued in Malabar was an alluring reason for them to rebel against the Company. Also the desire of the undefeated Mappilas to become *sahids* cannot be neglected when we look into the motive and provocation behind these uprising and attacks.\(^78\) It is to be noted that when the *janmi*, backed by the police, the law courts and the revenue officials, stiffened their control on the lower classes, the Mappila peasantry in its turn initiated rebellion against its coercion in the Malabar region during this period. The socio-economic displacement of the Mappilas owing to the occupation of Malabar by the east India Company played a key factor for the outbreaks during this period.

**Uprising of 1841**

The various uprisings that took place till 1841 were limited in nature and character and the number of people who participated in it. But after 1841, the nature and character of these uprising changed and they took the massive character. The events occurred in the Pallipuram village of Walluvanad taluk on 5 April, 1841 and in the Mannur village of Eranad taluk on 14 November, 1841 clearly demonstrates it. On the 5 April, 1841, Tumba Mannil Kunholan, assisted by his two sons and six other Mappilas of his neighborhood, attacked and killed his landlord Perumbali Namboodiri.\(^79\) The reason for this outbreak was comparatively trivial and ignorable.

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The landlord who received a sum of rupees 16 from Kunholan, and was deprived of his land for cultivation through *melcharth* (over lease). The landlord refused to return the amount and so Kunholan became revengeful to the Namboodiri landlord.\(^8^0\) The exasperated Kunholan induced others to accompany him on the assurance that they would become martyrs and would be entitled to paradise, if they fell in consequence of an act which they represented, would be pleasing to God.\(^8^1\) The rebels set fire to the residence of the victim and four other houses that belonged to the dependents of the victim, and the owners of these houses died due to the injuries received during the insurgency.\(^8^2\) The Mappilas then took their position in the house of the Namboodiri and they defied the Government authorities and its regulations openly. The forces of the Company attacked them and killed them on the 9 April, 1841.\(^8^3\) The question arises here is that what was the force behind the six neighbours of Kunholan to move against the landlord and kill him? Since the records keep silence on these aspects we do not know anything about their motive. But it is clear that the agrarian issues and the land tenure policy prevailed in the region was the provocative factor for them to turn against their oppressive and corrupted overlords.

After the Pallippuram outbreak, another event occurred in the Mannur village in Eranad taluk on the 14 November 1841. Here the rebels under Kaidotti Padi Moidin Kutti killed Thottacherry Kelu Panikkar and a peon.\(^8^4\) The reason for the


81 *Ibid*.


outbreak was on the issue of constructing a mud wall around the mosque at the Mannur village.85 The rebels had written a warola (a written note), at the gate of the disputed mosque in the Mannur village, on 14 November, 1841 addressed to the tahasildar of Eranad. Pathyl Valia Kunholan, one of the eleven insurgents who participated in this uprising described the developments of the events as following:

........In the year 994 M. E.(1818-1819) the Kundachenekkal Parambu86 was taken on kanam from Thottacherry Kelu Panikkar. In 997M. E. (1820-1821) a kolam (water tank) and a shop was erected in the said parambu there on and sirkar nigudhee (tax to the Government) due to the Government was paid. In 1821-22 a well was also dug in the said parambu. In 998M. E. (1822-1823) the janmam right was purchased from the said Panikkar. In 1008 M. E. (1832-1833) a mosque was constructed in the above said parambu and in Thulam 1017 M. E. (1841) when a mud wall was raised around the mosque, Thottacherry Panikkar went and made a false representation at the taluk cutchery. You (the tehsildar) then without any consideration of the state of things sent a choodan (peon) with four or five others with the direction to seize and drag the nine of us (insurgents) to the taluk cutchery. Accordingly the said choodan came to the mosque at half a nazhika before the sunset of the 28 day of our fast, abused us and called us out of the mosque. We requested him that we would go with him after we shall have broken the fast and taken our kanji (rice gruel), on which the said kolkar (peon) and the Panikkar laid hold of

85 K. Madhvan Nair, Malabar Kalapam, pp. 37-38
86 It is the name of the disputed coconut plantation in the Mannur village in Eranad taluk.
the right hand of the Moideen Ikkakkaa, the owner of the mosque, and
dragged him near to the well and when himself and the Panikkar were
tying him up, the remaining eight of us assaulted the Panikkar, with the
weapon kept already for him, on his return from the taluk cutchery, did
what had been done……87

Thus, after killing the Panikkar and the peon, the rebels took post in the
mosque for three days in defiance of the police and other authorities. A party of 40
sepoys under Lieutenant Shakespeare arrived at the scene and suppressed the rebels.
On the 17 November, Mappilas numbering around 2,000 set at in defiance of the
police party on guard over the spot where the eleven rebels had been buried, and
forcibly carried off their bodies and interred them with honors at a mosque.88 Though
the rebellion was easily put down by the Company, the vigor and spirit of the
Mappilas were not set aside at all. Thus the repressive measures taken by the
Government, instead of preventing the recurrence of such events, only inflamed the
ferociousness of the Mappilas further.

Uprising of 1843

The enthusiasm of the Mappila rebels was further revealed in the outburst at
Tirurangadi village in the Eranad taluk on 19 October, 1843. In this event Kunnacheri
Ali Athan and five other Mappilas attacked and killed Kaprat Krishna Panikkar, the
adhikari of Tirurangadi.89 The cause for the outbreak of this rebellion was that the
adhikari had thrown great dishonor upon them by forcing a Hindu women of a lower

87 TNA, No 2310, Judicial Consultations, December, 1841, p 15, Enclosure A.
89 TNA, 2311, Judicial Consultations, January 1844, pp. 142-146
caste to apostatize from Islam.\textsuperscript{90} The rebels after killing the \textit{adhikari} of the Thirurangadi village, they proceeded to the house of a Nair in Cherur and posted themselves in that house. Once they were posted safely in that house, they announced publically about the murder of Kaprat Krishna Panikkar and declared their determination to fight until death. The Company despatched a detachment of sixty \textit{sepoys} under Captain Leader to the spot where the insurgents were camping. As the soldiers attacked the Mappilas, they rushed out of the house and turned towards forces of the Company and the panic stricken \textit{sepoys} took to flight.\textsuperscript{91} This retaliation of the infuriated insurgents resulted in the death of one \textit{subedar} and three \textit{sepoys}; and they inflicted severe injuries to five \textit{sepoys}, seven peons and Captain Leader in the engagement between them.\textsuperscript{92} However the fanatic rebels were put down by the peons and seven of the insurgents were killed. These courageous acts of the Mappilas were a stimulus to other Mappilas of the region to follow their example. It was this attitude of the rebels and their followers really engineered the outrages in the succeeding years.

In all the uprising of 1843, it is noted that only a limited number of Mappilas participated in the outbreaks. In the uprising of Pallippuram it was only eight Mappilas who took part in the revolt and in the uprising at Mannur, there were only eleven rebels. In the rebellion at Tirurangadi there were only seven rebels who participated in it. In all these uprisings we find that most of the rebels were drawn from the poorer sections of Mappila community. Most of them were peasants, who lost their land which they had tilled so far. Again it is found that in all these rebellions their target was the British officials and the landlords and their dependents, who

\begin{footnotes}
\item[90] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[91] \textit{Ibid.}

\item[92] K. Madhavan Nair, \textit{Malabar Kalapam}, p. 38.
\end{footnotes}
naturally exploited them. Religion and religious spirit also played an important role in the rebellions occurred during this period. They attempted to destroy the temples of the region and many of them were set to fire by the rebels. These peculiar characteristics of the rebels were common throughout the period of uprisings in Malabar. But the problem with these outbreaks was that they were sporadic, scattered and numerous. The reports about them were brief and so not much informative and they are merely the narratives of the incidents. And even if any report survives, they were of partial and incomplete. It provides only a distorted picture of the event.

Since the outbreaks in Malabar by the Mappilas became a continuous and steady one, it became an administrative concern for the East India Company in Malabar. So the authorities of the Company began to inquire into the causes of these uprisings and a detailed report of the uprisings occurred after 1849 was made. However, it is difficult to identify what were the real intentions and motives of these outbreaks from these reports of the Company. All these incidents involved a complexity of events and characteristics and hence it is difficult to locate them.

Uprising of 1849

One of the important Mappila uprising that occurred before the Revolt of 1857 was the uprising at Manjeri in August 1849. It was the second largest Mappila outbreaks in the nineteenth century and was unique in that it included a Mappila assailant’s own interpretation about the events of the outrages.\(^\text{93}\) The insurrection was ignited by the agrarian grievances of the Mappila tenants of Majreri. The leaders of this uprising were Athan Moyan Gurukkal and Kunhi Koya Thangal, the son of Sayyid Hassan Thangal of Mamburam. Athan Gurukkal a descendant of the collateral

branch of Mappila family had a long tradition of revolt against the ruling authority. They had revolted against Tipu Sultan in 1784-1785 and against the English East India Company in 1800-1802. They also battled against the Manjeri Karnopad, the Raja of Manjeri, in 1785. Traditionally the occupation of the family was imparting instructions in ballistics and Athan Gurukkal also continued the same profession.

In his capacity of an instructor of ballistics, he travelled throughout the district, with a band of armed followers often defending the Mappila interests with the threat of force and supporting them by running a protection racket. He acted as an arbiter of disputes, posed as a savior, almost in *Robin Hood* fashion, of the rural poor who were unjustly treated by the Government officials and janmis. Athan Gurukkal was thus, very popular among the labourers and peasants. But the Government regarded the activities of Athan Gurukkal as an open challenge to its authority and it decided to curb his powers. In May 1849, the local authorities issued an order forbidding him from maintaining and moving with his armed attendants. Though it had curtailed his source of livelihood, he complied to the orders of the local authorities with a reluctant mind. He now understood that he would be convicted to more humiliations and so decided to defy the Company’s authority. Yet, he was not sure of himself. It was at this juncture, he was joined by Kunhi Koya Thangal. Kunhi Koya was an unusually devout individual, who supported himself on alms, as he moved throughout the

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96 *Ibid*.


district, teaching and performing religious ceremonies. He had visited the Athan Gurukkal frequently and very often stayed with him for days.

By August 1849 itself Gurukkal initiated a miniature form of the revolt. He sent out his agents to recruit the Mappila supporters and recruited fifteen Mappilas to his band.99 On 25 August 1849, Tarangal Unniyan killed one Ezhava called Paditodi Teyunni, who had been falsely accused of some four years back on Unniyan of theft.100 The next day the rebels moved to Manjeri through Pandikkad. They moved through Pandikkad because they have targeted one of the Namboodiri at Pandikkad, the illam of Marat Namboodiri, a wealthy landlord and moneylender of the region. A member of the rebel group, Nelangara Ali, had certain land tenurial issues with the Namboodiri of Marat. Nellangara Ali’s, father failed to remit the kanam tenures to the Namboodiri and so he filed an eviction suit in the court. Later an agreement was reached upon between them, by which the Namboodiri permitted Ali’s father to possess the land as a tenant-at-will, with fifty per cent enhancement of rent. Being a tenant-at-will, Ali had to renew the rent every year and there was every possibility for increasing the rent at every annual renewal.101 It was this insecurity of tenure and the threat of eviction from the land where he was cultivating, like any other Mappila tenants, prompted Neelangara Ali to attack the Marat Namboodiri and his illam. The Namboodiri who anticipated such a move from the part of the Mappilas, left his illam much before the arrival of the rebels. No other member of family was hurt except a servant who had offered resistance to the rebels.102 On their way to Pandikkad they


also killed a Nair cultivator who accidently encountered the rebels on the road. They killed the Nair because one of the Mappila rebel was in bad terms with him.103

Following the attack on the illam of Marat Namboodiri, the rebels moved from Pandikkad to Manjeri to seize the temple of the Manjeri Karnopad Raja. Athan Gurukkal had some personal grievances against the Manjeri Raja. In 1785, one of the ancestors of Gurukkal fought against the Raja and defeated him with the support of Tipu Sultan. He was taken into custody and was sent to Seringapatam, where he died in imprisonment.104 The Raja also appropriated the paddy fields attached to the family mosque of the Gurukkal.105 The Raja resorted to collect a year’s rent from the tenants of Manjeri towards the construction of a temple.106 The Raja had 311 Mappila tenants and 244 Hindu tenants under him.107 The exaction of rent from the Mappilas, at the point of eviction, was not only an economic burden, but also an irreligious act for the religious Mappilas to contribute funds for the reconstruction of a Hindu temple. The rebels reached Manjeri on 27 August and marched to the temple that was intended for reconstruction. At this time the Raja along with one-hundred Brahmins, were offering prayers in the temple. The rebels had fired in the air and asked everybody to decamp the temple without further trouble.108 All of them were allowed

103 Ibid. p. 75.
105 Ibid. p.50.
106 Ibid. p.51.
107 Ibid. pp. 75-76.
108 Ibid. p. 77.
to escape peacefully. The only causality was to a deaf Namboodiri, who out of the confusion, hesitated to move out of the temple and the rebels killed him.\textsuperscript{109}

The rebels camped in the temple for eight days and by this time fresh recruits of rebels joined with them. The rebels defeated the two companies of East India Company \textit{sepoys}. By now the number of the insurgents raised to sixty five and they evacuated the temple of Manjeri and moved to Bhagavati Kavu temple near Angadipuram, some twelve miles away from Manjeri.\textsuperscript{110} It is a perplexing question why the rebels moved to the temple of Angadipura from Manjeri? It was due to the reinforcement of fresh batches of soldiers of the East India Company from Kannur and Palaghat had arrived at Manjeri. So their position at Manjeri was threatened. Again the rebels found that Manjeri was not an apt location for fighting against the more powerful opponents. Moreover, the provisions kept for the use of Brahmins at Manjeri temple were exhausted and they learned that the temple at Angadipuram had well stored provisions. Anyhow after two days march the forces of the Company met with the rebels. By 4 September 1849, all the sixty four Mappilas of this rebellion were shot dead during the engagement and only one boy survived. With the death of the whole insurgents, revolt of 1849 at Manjeri came to an end.

Thus, this revolt was an explicit example to show that how the socio-economic subordination and depredation faced by the Mappilas in the rural areas of South Malabar provoked the people like Athan Gurukkal and Kunhi Koya Thangal to lead a revolt against the Company. Along with this, the personal motives and interests of the rebel leaders also prompted them to turn against the English. Thus in this uprising of

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}

1849, we notice the coincidence of social, economic and religious motives combined together to lead an agitation against the English East India Company. Also a mixture of excitement and the appeal of heroic martyrdom contributed the primary motive for this outbreak.

In this uprising it is found that the sixty four rebels were shot dead. It is interesting to note about the social origins of the rebels who were killed in this incident. Forty five of the rebels who were killed were below the age of twenty four, mostly unmarried, and were either unemployed or working as agricultural labourers on a seasonal basis.¹¹¹ The rich or well-to-do Mappila Kanomdars were never reported as having participated in the rebellious outbreaks or supported it. Most of the rebels who had partaken in this rebellion had some sort of family ties with their leader Athan Gurukkal. It was the agrarian discontent of the Mappilas and the several eviction decrees sought by the Hindu landlords had deprived the Mappila peasants of their livelihood and most them were on the verge of eviction. Therefore, it was the economic displacement along with the deprivation of their livelihood constituted the root for these underpinnings in Malabar. The rich and well-to-do Mappilas remained silent about these incidents and it was poor sections of this community joined the ranks of rebellion.

**Uprising of 1851**

One of the important uprising before the Revolt of 1857 in Malabar was the Kulathur uprising in August 1851. On 22 August 1851 six Mappilas killed the Kottuparambath Komu Menon and his servant on the high road between Manjeri and Angadipuram, while they were returning from the Mangada Kovilakam of the

Walluvanad Raja. Komu Menon was the *karyasthan* (principal servant) of the Walluvanad Raja. He was a rich land lord and had considerable influence and power in the society. He used his position and authority to amalgamate more wealth by evicting the tenants or acquisition of land against the loans advanced or through over leases. Many tenants had lost their land and were afraid that they will become mere labourers without any land. Added to this he always misbehaved to the tenants particularly, towards the Mappilas. So Komu Menon was notorious among his tenants and they were waiting for an opportunity to avenge their grievances. The rebels after killing Komu Menon, proceeded to his house, where they found that one of his brother was waiting for the rebels with a gun and a war knife and so realizing the danger involved in it, they left the place immediately.

Then the rebels proceeded to the house of Komu Menon’s brother, Ittunni Rama Menon, an *adhikari* of Mankada village. He was very rich and had considerable wealth. But he too like his brother was very unpopular among the people and was hated by the general public, particularly by the Mappilas of the Mankada village. He was extremely avaricious and lent money and grain to a large extent and often on most usurious interest rate and it was expected that his death will release many people of their caste from the heavy responsibility of repaying the loan amount to Ittunni Rama Menon.


When the Mappilas reached the Rama Menon’s house, the rebels found Kadakkottil Namboodiri, a land lord, who had just arrived there from the Mankada palace, on his way back to his *illam*, was sitting on the porch of the Rama Menon, the rebels attacked and killed him.\(^{116}\) Then the rebels turned to Rama Menon who was taking bath in the nearby tank. He tried to escape by running across the paddy field, but was overtaken by the rebels and got hold of him and severed him down.\(^{117}\) The assassins then proceeded to his house, looted all the property and possessions and set fire to it. Their next victim was Mundangara Rarichan Nair, a friend and companion of Komu Menon, who was also equally detested and despised by the Mappilas.\(^{118}\) On their further proceeding towards a safe and secure place, they also set fire to the house of Chengara Warier, who was a corrupted and obnoxious moneylender of that locality.\(^{119}\)

By now, the rebels realized that their immediate task was over and so they wanted to safeguard themselves in a place to stay in and procure more weapons and ammunitions to retaliate the forces of the Company. So on the morning of 23 August 1851, the rebels marched to the Kuruva village, some eight miles away from the house of Rama Menon.\(^{120}\) By now the number of the rebels rose to seventeen and they proceeded to Kulathur, with the target of attacking a very rich Warier at Kulathur. The Warier of Kulathur was detrimental with his Mappila tenants and he

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\(^{118}\) *Ibid*. p. 145.

\(^{119}\) *Ibid*. p. 190

was disparate with the erection of a mosque in that village.\textsuperscript{121} They then killed the two servants of the Warier and rushed into his house and killed the 79 year old Warier who alone remained in the house and destroyed all the property deeds and documents.\textsuperscript{122} After committing all these depredations they took their position in the house of the Warier itself. In the initial engagements the forces of the English faced a set back from the part of the rebel Mappilas. Then fresh reinforcements arrived for the rescue of the militia of the Company from Calicut under the command of Captain Rhodes and in the ensuing fighting that followed all the insurgent Mappilas were killed and thus the rebellion came to an end on 27 August, 1851.\textsuperscript{123}

It is found that in the Kulathur rebellion there was no organized leadership as we find in the Manjeri revolt of 1849. It was not an organized movement as it is evident from the fact they did not know what to do after the murder of Mundangara Rarichan Nair. In fact they were in a confusion and dilemma. So they moved to Kulathur for two purposes; first to gather weapons for waging war against the troops of the Company and secondly, to find a safe place to engage with the forces of the East India Company. Also in this rebellion the rebels never sought the blessings of a Thangal or Maulavi, as in the case of other out breaks, where the insurgents required the blessings of the Thangal or Maulavi before starting their course of action.\textsuperscript{124} It is also found that the rich Mappilas attempted to manipulate the rebellion to make advantages from the destructions, as it is evident from the murder of Kadakkottil Namboodiri, who happened to be in the house Ittunni Rama Menon, on his way back

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{122} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, M 31A, Correspondences on Mappila Outrages, Vol.1, p.169


\textsuperscript{124} K. N. Panikkar, Against Lord and State, p. 78.
to his *illam* and the murder of Kulathur Warier. The Murder of Kulathur Warier took place only after completing all their original objectives and tasks were accomplished.\(^{125}\) It is evident from the Kulathur uprising of 1851, that leadership was not a necessity for the rebels to turn against the company and its supporters. The rebels detested all the exploitations and ruthless extractions by the English East India Company, its adherents and supporters, mostly the landlords and their men. The murder of the rich landlords of the Kulathur region depicts it clearly. It was this antagonism and rivalry emerged out of the exploitation and land tenurial relationships provoked the Mappilas to turn against them.

**Uprising of 1852**

When the South Malabar was busily engaged with the early Mappila uprisings, there prevailed a comparative peace in North Malabar during early half of nineteenth century. It is found that all the Mappila uprising had occurred in South Malabar, and more particularly in the Eranad and Walluvanad taluks. The only one instance of Mappila insurgency that took place in North Malabar was at Mattannur in Kottayam taluk. The outbreak that occurred at Mattannur was an example of a well planned and well organized uprising by the Mappilas. It was the outcome of a feud between two families, Kallattil Kesavan, a wealthy and influential Hindu *janmi* of Mattannur and the Kattale family, a leading Mappila family of Mattannur.\(^{126}\) Kesavan was the principal *janmi*, pepper merchant and money lender of Mattannur, with about thirty Mappila tenants under him.\(^{127}\) He was very severe and unpopular among the tenants

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\(^{125}\) *Ibid*. pp. 78-79.


and was of exploitative in nature. Therefore two of his tenants from the Chooryoot family and Thayyil family, who was heavily indebted to him was threatened with eviction, and it served as the immediate provocation for the uprising against him in January 1852.128

The possession of landed property by the Hindu *janmis* was a source of contention for the wealthy Mappilas, especially to those of the Kattale family. The aspiration of the Kattale family to enhance their landed property was curbed by the Kallatil family through judicial proceedings.129 Since the Kattale family was the most influential Mappila family in Mattannur, most of the Mappila peasants looked upon this family as their savior to redeem them from the domineering and despoiled Hindu landlords of Mattannur. The Kattale family, which was waiting for an opportunity to revenge the family feud, made use of this occasion and exploited this situation, and emerged themselves at Mattannur.

The nine discontented Mappila tenants, who were looking for an opportunity to take revenge on the life of Kallatil Kesavan, went for a pilgrimage to the Mamburam mosque and the expenses of this pilgrimage was met by the Kattale family.130 The pilgrimage was undertaken for the mental and spiritual preparation of the rebels and to secure the blessings of the Mamburan Thangal. The pilgrimage of the rebels to Mamburam, some ninety miles away from Mattannur indicates that there was a definite planning behind the uprising. Once the pilgrims returned to Mattannur intense preparation for the revolt was started. They travelled widely and propagated


129 Ibid. p. 334.

130 Ibid. p. 306.
the rebellious ideas among the Mappilas and tried to recruit new members to their fold. After making an elaborate preparation for the insurgency and attack of Kesavan, the rebels went for the feast at the Pallot mosque on 4 January 1852, and after the prayers at the mosque, they proceeded to the house of Kallattil Kesavan. The rebels, fifteen in number, supported by a large mob estimated to be at 200 in number, demolished the compound wall and attacked the house of Kallattil Kesavan. The rebels ambushed into his house and butchered all the family members and all the servants resided in the house. In all, it is found that the rebels murdered eighteen Hindus in this outbreak. They even destroyed all the documents, papers and burned the house itself.

The rebels now proceeded further and killed the Kanambatt Brahmin, another rich landlord in Mattannur. He had some litigation with his Mappila tenants and this prompted the insurgents to turn against him. They murdered him and burned his house. After this the rebels moved to Pazhassi to take a safe and strong stand against the armed troops of the Company. On their way to Pazhassi, they defiled and damaged a Hindu temple. Meanwhile, the aggressive rebels were persuaded by Vallapilagath Hassan Kutty, a wealthy Mappila landlord of Irirkur village, to turn against Kuliat Anandan Nambiar, an influential and rich landlord of the same village. The personal vedanta of Hassam Kutty against the Nambiar, encouraged him to turn against the Nambiar and influenced the rebels against the Nambiar.

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by the instigation of Hassan Kutty the rebels attacked the house of the Nambiar on 8 January, 1852. The house which was safeguarded by three-hundred armed retainers of the Nambiar defended it and killed all the rebels.\textsuperscript{135} Thus it was the only incident where the Hindu defenders could overpower the Mappila rebels and root them. Once the insurgents were killed, the uprising also ended naturally.

After the uprising of January 1852, the Government adopted very strong and repressive measures to put down the outbreaks. This led to the prevalence of a comparative peace in Malabar between 1853 and 1856. The only major incident that took place during this period was the murder of Mr. H. V. Connolly, the Collector of Malabar on 11 September 1855.\textsuperscript{136} He was murdered by the four convicts, Valasseri Emalu, Puliakunat Tenu, Chemban Moidin Kutti and Vellattadayatta Parambil Moidin. The murder was to avenge the banishment of the famous Thangal of Tirurangadi, Sayid Fazal alias Pokoya, to Arabia on 18 August 1852, by Mr. Connolly, the Collector of Malabar.\textsuperscript{137} The assassins were captured and was publically hanged, burned their bodies and the ashes were collected and buried in the compound of the jail at Calicut.\textsuperscript{138}

In general, analysis of the early Mappila outbreaks in Malabar before the Revolt of 1857, demonstrates a uniform pattern of insurrection. Almost in all rebellions, it involved invariably a group of Mappila youths attacking a Namboodiri \textit{janmi}, or a Nair official or the servants of the \textit{janmi}. Very often, most these outbreaks

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid. pp. 279-280.


\textsuperscript{137} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, M 31A, Correspondence on Mappila Outrage s, vol. 1, pp. 279-280

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid. pp. 127-128.
involved the burning or the defilement of the temples and occasionally looting and burning the landlord’s houses. These rebels, in almost in all rebellions took refuge in a mosque or seized a Hindu temple for their final stand against the men and forces of the East India Company and who in the end would shoot them down. Thus almost all the insurgents who participated in these early uprising had lost their life. In all these early uprisings, the number of people who participated in the rebellion was very limited and most of the participants were illiterate Mappila tenants.

From the above analysis it is found that even after the revolt of Pazhassi Raja, Malabar continued its vigor and enthusiasm against the English till the Revolt of 1857, and it prolonged even after the Revolt. It is very much evident from the various Mappila uprising that took place in Malabar in the post Revolt period and shows that the tradition of uprising in Malabar continued in Malabar during the entire colonial period. The study found that all the Mappila uprising before 1857 occurred in South Malabar and more particularly in Eranad and Walluvanad taluks, except the Mattannur uprising of 1852. Even though all these uprising were limited in its scope and extent, the natural question arises here is that why all these uprisings occurred mostly in Eranad and Walluvanad taluks of South Malabar alone? It was basically because of the social structure prevailed in the South Malabar society. Demographically the Mappilas predominated in the Eranad and Wallunad taluks. These two taluks jointly housed 37 per cent of the Mappila population of the Malabar District. In Eranad 60 per cent and in Walluvanad 35 per cent of the population were Mappilas.\textsuperscript{139} The literacy rate of these two taluks, even in 1921 was the lowest in the Malabar District with 7.5 per cent in Eranad taluk and 11.4 per cent in Walluvanad

\textsuperscript{139} K. N. Panikkar, \textit{Against Lord and State}, p. 65.
The lack of literacy was a setback for their employment opportunities in the Government services and this compelled them to turn towards land and its appended occupations. The Mappilas who were engaged in agricultural occupations was 62 per cent in Malabar as a whole and in South Malabar it was still higher. Over 18 per cent of the total Mappila population was traders and merchants. It was this social and economic backwardness of the Mappilas led them to these out breaks in South Malabar. Most of the people who participated in these uprisings were poor and illiterate Mappilas. The role of literacy was a contributory factor for these uprisings. The vast majority who remained illiterate even in the twentieth century and this educational backwardness made them hostile to the English as well as the Hindu janmis of Malabar. They were poverty stricken labourers or tenants. Owing to the repressive exactions by the janmis and the revenue payment due by the Government regulations, the tenants in general found it difficult to keep themselves and their families from starvation. Their clothing’s were scanty and the habitations were menial and so the people were becoming poor and poorer.

In the study of the early Mappila uprisings in Malabar an attempt was made to see the role of religion in these revolts. These insurgencies were a mere response of the Mappilas to the changing socio-economic and political situations in Malabar. The Mappilas during this period identified a new role to the mosques and Thangals (Mappila priests). It is interesting to note that prior to 1830 very little was heard about the Thangals, but thereafter, they suddenly gained in prominence. In 1831, there were 637 mosques in Malabar; by 1851 the number of the mosques had increased to

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The Thangals in the changed circumstances of Malabar combined with themselves the ecclesiastical functions with the secular activities, especially in safeguarding the worldly interests of the community. They began to act as a quasi-political organization in the altered state of affairs in Malabar. The mosque was an ideal place for both mass meetings and religious congregations, and the distinction between the two tended to become more and more blurred as the source of livelihood of the Mappila tenant was increasingly threatened by the legal evictions of the English legal systems in Malabar. The various reports on land litigation and on the Mappila outbreaks in Malabar, particularly after 1830, demonstrate that several Mappila leaseholders surreptitiously erected mosques on the lands of their Hindu landlords. It was a defensive tactics adopted by them to prevent their eviction. In many cases these mosques were only shanty constructions. Once they had ‘defiled’ the sacred land of the *janmis*, the landlords required greater courage to institute legal proceedings for eviction, for such attempts were resisted by the entire Mappila community. Thus the new role of the Thangals and the mosques, though symbolic it may be, reinforced the religious identity, unity and morale of the Mappila population of Malabar.

The analysis further shows that it was the general agrarian discount prevailed in Malabar led to the continuous turmoil in the district, which continued even to the twentieth century. In Malabar, we find that the traditional customary law of *kana-janma-maryada* system was in practice and it functioned in its way without any social or economic inhibitions. But After the occupation of Malabar by the British, the *janmi* was constituted as the lord of the soil, and as such he began to exercise the power of

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evicting the tenants through the courts of justice. The tenants lost their permanency of
the possession of land and were liable to be ejected at any time by their landlords.
Moreover, their landlords attempted to extract the maximum from their tenants,
leading them to pursue a life of poverty and starvation. Again in Eranad and
Walluvanad taluks, the landed property was mostly owned by the Namboodiri
landlords and was the most tyrannical among the Malabar janmis. Thus the tenants,
always faced with the terror of eviction from the land they cultivated, led a life of
discontent and frustration, often leading to a number of major or minor outbreaks in
the region. These outbreaks at many times ended with the assault and murder of the
janmis and their dependents.

Whatever, be the reason behind all these popular insurgencies of the Mappilas,
the early Mappila outbreaks were anti-colonial movements against the British in
Malabar. The occupation of Malabar by the English, the defeat of Tipu Sultan and the
restoration of the Hindu janmis under the protection of the East India Company
provoked the Mappilas to turn against them. The insecurity of the tenure and the
threat of eviction, the Company’s policy of pauperizing the peasantry through
exorbitant revenue demands and the stagnation of wet land economy due to the high
demand for cash crops were the instigating factors for the Mappilas to turn against
British in Malabar. Moreover, the Mappilas as a trading class lost their predominance
in trade and commerce under the East India Company. All these made the Mappilas to
turn against the Company and its organs in Malabar. Yet, one can observe that it had
the elements of anti-feudalism and anti-religious sentiments. The land lords, majority
of them were Hindu Namboodiris and Nairs, were regarded as the agents of the East
India Company by the rebels as they were guarded and protected by the Company’s
official machinery.
The restoration of the fled janmis to their old possessions by the Company, after the occupation of Malabar in 1792, was a visible evidence for the Mappila population of Malabar that the Company was supporting the janmis and so an ardent reason to rebel against the English. Since most of the land lords in Malabar were Hindus, it became a communal movement. Even then the rebels targeted only the rich Hindu landlords and Government officials. They spared the poor Hindu tenants and labourers and even the members of the family of the landlords, as evidenced from the Manjeri and Kulathur uprisings. So the early Mappila uprising was not turned against the Hindus and it was not an anti-Hindu movement. In these uprisings fanaticism, thus, was not the motive force behind it. Even though they sought the blessings of the Thangal or the Maulavi, or participated in religious ceremonies in the mosque, they were not fanatic. But these religious activities and their religiosity had a definite influence in these uprisings. It helped them to unite the Mappilas against their common enemy, the English wherever it was required. The eschatological ideologies offered by the rebels enabled more people to participate in the uprising enthusiastically and voluntarily. These eschatological dreams and aspirations were further intensified by the ballads and folk songs sung during these periods. These ballads and folk songs romanticized the picture of the rebellion later and it played a vital role among the Mappila community to unite them and develop an anti-British, anti-janmi consciousness among them and it led to the rise of a militant tradition among them. Thus the early Mappila outbreaks were an anti-colonial movement against British in Malabar.

145 For details of the ballads and folk songs of the Mappilas, see, William Logan, Malabar Manual, pp. 102-104.