INTRODUCTION

The resistance of indigenous people to foreign dominance has been a sort of passion to scholars and researchers of Indian history during the contemporary time. Over the last four decades, a great number of researches and debates are going on about the anti-colonial movements in India, especially the revolts prior to 1857. The same process of debate and discussions continue in the case of Malabar also. The political conquest and the establishment of British dominance in Malabar was not an abrupt task. Their course to power met with a series of oppositions in this region as elsewhere in India. The revolt of Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam from 1792 to 1805, the revolt of the Mappilas from 1792 to 1856 and the revolt of the Kurichyas of Wayanad in 1812 are the important anti-colonial struggles in Malabar during the early phase of colonialism in the northern parts of the present state of Kerala.

Kerala is a long narrow territory bounded by the Arabian Sea in the west and the Western Ghats in the east. It is the central and the coastal regions of the state that formed the fundamental region of settlement in Kerala. Politically the State was divided into three regions during the British period, namely Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Malabar, situated in the Northern part of Kerala, played a prominent role in the history of Kerala and India. It was a part of the erstwhile Madras Presidency during the colonial days. Malabar was geographically separated from the rest of India by the Western Ghats. It was bounded by South Canara in the North; Coorg, Mysore, Nilgris and Coimbatore in the East; the princely state of Cochin in the South; and the Arabian Sea in the West.\(^1\) Since ancient times, the Malabar Coast, with its immense

wealth of spices and timber was the cradle of commerce with the western world. It had flourishing trade and commercial contacts with different parts of the world. Such a social situation was instrumental in framing the economic, social, cultural, and the political destiny of Malabar in the due course of its history.

Malabar, from antiquities was the gateway of spice trade with the western world. The main attraction of Malabar was its material wealth, especially pepper, popularly called as the ‘black gold’; and other spices like cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg; sandalwood, coconut and coir. Such an economic importance of these spices, prompted the Europeans to explore a new sea route to India. In fact Malabar maintained steady trade relations with the western world from the very early period. The demand for pepper and other spices of the east in the western world, proved advantageous for trade with Malabar. This trade was an important source of income for the merchants as well as the local chieftains of Malabar and to the rest of Kerala in the yester years. The trade with Malabar played a larger net work of commercial interaction in the Indian Ocean and Malabar played the pivotal role in these mercantile activities.

The trade relation between Malabar and the European powers was accelerated from the sixteenth century onwards. These contacts with the Europeans brought changes to the quality and intensity of Malabar’s external relations: enduring contacts

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2 In the pre Christian era the East-West trade was mainly carried out by the merchants of India, South Africa, and Egypt. When Egypt was conquered by the Romans, in 30 BC, the trade with the East was boomed as there was a great demand for luxurious goods like pepper, perfumes, pearls, and jewels in Rome and in the Roman Empire.


were created, replacing the trade contacts that had previously occurred only from time
to time.\footnote{Margret Frenz, From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805, New Delhi, 2003, p.62.} It was in the ‘age of discovery’, a sea route was discovered to India by the Portuguese navigators, who were in turn followed by the Dutch, the French and the English. Each of these nations tried to monopolize the trade through diverse ways and means; and in the course of trade, the rulers of Malabar Coast lost their sovereignty. But the traditional systems of Malabar were not seriously disturbed by the arrival of the Portuguese and the Dutch in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Later, the series of events, consequent to the invasions of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan brought significant changes in Malabar. They introduced roads, converted many people to Islam, implemented a new system of land taxation and changed the entire communication net work of the region.\footnote{Joan P. Mencher and K. Raman Unni, ‘Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala:Past5, Present and Future Directions’, in Burton Stein (Ed.), Essays on South India, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 124-125.}

The influence and importance of merchants and traders in trade and commerce had diminished due to the conquest of Malabar by Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan in the eighteenth century. Later the aggressive trade policies of the European merchants also contributed to the decline of native merchants.\footnote{Ibid. p. 66.} However, it is a matter of controversy and there are varied opinions in this regard. Many argue that it was not the European dominance and their use of force that led to the decline of indigenous merchants and traders,\footnote{For a discussion, see Sinnappah Araseratnam, “India and the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century”, in Ashin Das Gupta and Michael N. Pearson (Eds.) India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800, pp.94-130.} and authors like Margret Frenz are of the view that the necessary space was taken away from the Indian merchants by the seizure of different
ports and trading places by the Europeans; and they were no longer able to transact their business in the usual manner. Eventually, the Europeans dominated in the region and they reached a position to determine the structure of trade and the production in the rural areas.

The control of trade and production of products in the rural areas, gradually led to the political dominance of the English merchants in Malabar region. The political dominance gradually heralded opposition to the East India Company in Malabar as well as in different parts of India. The opposition to the East India Company was a common feature in India, particularly before the Great Revolt of 1857. These resistances were not confined within themselves, standing outside the history and society, but they closely reflected the social and economic intervention of the colonial state into the regional polity and society.

Very often historians and scholars ignore these movements and resistances as there was no politics in these early popular riots and movements. So the writers and historians are tempted to treat them as trivial or as a matter of meagre importance. Therefore, many of the popular riots, uprisings, resistances, and rebellions have not obtained due attention in the history of India and the national movement. The history of a nation to be complete and full should incorporate all the diverse movements and resistances that happened from time to time throughout the nation.

The recent researches and studies show that the *Pax Britannica* in India prior to the Great Revolt of 1857 has been largely a myth for at least a century after the battle of Plassey. This topic has invited much debates and discussions over the last

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9 Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*. p. 66.

four decades. The political conquest and the establishment of British dominance in India led to a series of uprisings, insurgencies and rebellions in different parts of India.

S. B. Chaudhuri has stated that there were forty major and twenty minor outbreaks in various regions of India between 1765 and 1857.\textsuperscript{11} The anthropologist Kathleen Gough has given a list of seventy seven uprisings, involving violence during the entire British period in India.\textsuperscript{12} Bipan Chandra also remarked that there was hardly a year without major armed uprising in one part of the country or the other during the British period.\textsuperscript{13} These various rebellions, revolts and movements which occurred in different parts of the country, due to many different factors, may essentially be characterized as mere Indian responses to the increasing political dominance and power of the English East India Company in India. The most massive and widespread uprising, that of the Revolt of 1857, has captured so much historiographic attention than those which occurred prior to 1857, tended till recently to be neglected if not all together ignored. Since these movements are sporadic and scattered, they went unnoticed from the consideration of scholars. Moreover the Revolt of 1857 has captured more academic attention and great deliberations were made on them, the uprisings before 1857 were sidelined - at least the various movements in the last three or four decades. So the question that arises in the context is whether the Revolt of 1857 and the various localized uprisings which preceded it have some generic connection and whether the uprising of 1857 can be seen as the culmination of all

\textsuperscript{11} For a useful discussion, see, S. B. Chaudhuri, \textit{Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India, 1765- 1857}, Calcutta, 1953.


\textsuperscript{13} See for more details, Bipan Chandra et. al., \textit{India’s Struggle for Independence}, Delhi 1989, p. 43.
these provincial and regional scattered movements. Underlying these questions is a larger, more important issue - the characterization of all these revolts and movements.

At the first sight, the different revolts appear to have been engendered by a variety of circumstances. For example the soldiers, displaced and demobilized after the battle of Plassey, rose in the Sannyasi Rebellion of 1763-1800, under the leadership of Hindu Sannyasis and Muslim Fakirs. Then there was the Chuar uprising which covered the five districts of Bengal and Bihar from 1766 to 1792 and again from 1795 to 1816. In the 1790’s the Raja of Vizianagaram rose up against the East India Company. The Poligars of Tamil Nadu led a heroic struggle against the English East India Company for a long period. In the far South, in the princely state of Travancore, Velu Thampi, the Chief Minister of the state, raised the standard of rebellion against the Company in 1809. The turbulences of Bilaspur in 1805, the Bundelas of Jabalpur in 1842 and of Khandesh in 1852 remain as striking examples of these resistance movements.


S.B. Chaudhuri, Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India.

Ibid.


S.B. Chaudhuri, Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India.
Equally important were the movements of the tribal communities, which also revoluted very often and sometimes far more violently, during this period. British rule and its accompanying commercialization strengthened the already present tendencies of penetration at the tribal economy by the outsiders like money lenders, traders, and land grabbers and created a revolutionary situation. The abrogation of the natural and legal rights of these forest communities may be the reason for them to turn against the European intruders. The Rampa rebellion of the nineteenth century which continued into the twentieth century is a remarkable example of a tribal community’s reaction to the political and economic changes introduced by the Company and its agents in India.\(^{21}\) In the 1820’s the Kols of Chota-Nagpur launched a similar heroic struggle against the Company.\(^{22}\) The Santhals, who witnessed a similar situation in nineteenth century, rose against the East India Company between 1855 and 1857, also carried the same characteristics of the other tribal uprisings.\(^{23}\)

Though they were different in their origins and character, nature and composition, all these outbursts, had one common factor: they all were directed against the East India Company. The inroads the Company made into local economies, its attempts to alter structures of power, its consorted efforts to maximize its expropriation of agrarian surpluses, its displacement of many traditional rulers and social systems etc. created a sense of unrest and discontent in the various strata of the Indian society. It is this discontent and dissatisfaction which, when sharply focused by the leadership of the deposed rulers or landlords, or their heirs, was transformed into a revolt. Because they were localized or isolated, such revolts could be, and were,


suppressed ultimately by the Company or by its agents. But so tenacious and enduring was the spirit of rebellion that the Company did not find it easy to quell the rebels and in many cases the rebellions thus lasted for decades.

The revolt of Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam lasting from 1792 to 1805, the numerous sporadic and scattered but vigorous uprising of the Mappilas from 1792 to 1856 and the tribal revolt of the Kurichiyas of Wayanad in 1812 were the major anti-colonial uprisings in the Malabar region from 1792 to 1856. No concerted effort was made, so far by any scholars, for the study of these three rebellions which occurred during the early phase of colonialism in Malabar. While almost all scholars took up compartmentalized studies of the above mentioned uprisings, the present study is an attempt to see whether these rebellions in Malabar from 1792 to 1856 have any generic connections. One cannot simply write off these movements as mere isolated movements against the English East India Company in Malabar. The economic and political inroads and policies of the rulers of Mysore and the Company had affected the people of the region intrinsically and strategically. Majority of studies on these revolts have not addressed this question.

The extant of historiographical attention on these uprisings has so far been centered on its political character and has often discarded the totality of the revolts. These works ignored the importance of local history and its significance in the wider context of the early colonial exploitation and the impact upon the people in the region. The study, therefore, addresses the historiographic lacuna, seeks the socio-economic connection of these revolts, and as to how these contributed to the building up of nationalism in Malabar in the subsequent years.
These rebellions which occurred before the Revolt of 1857 constitute the early chapters of anti-colonial struggles in the Malabar region in particular, and Kerala in general. So the analysis of these anti-colonial struggles in Malabar before the Revolt of 1857, have been undertaken with twin objectives. Firstly, to understand the factors that generated such conflicts between the East India Company and Indian communities. Secondly, to understand the nature of such movements, and to seek in particular to explore the social and economic basis of the revolts and the mechanism of mobilization used by these rebels in these rebellions. While studying such incidents, even though regional and isolated, one cannot think that they have nothing to do with the national history of the country. The revolts before 1857, being sporadic and scattered, constituted the background for the generation of a proto-nationalist sentiment among the people. So a history of the Indian national movement to be complete, it has to take into account the various incidents and events that occurred in different nook and corners of the nation, and how they contributed to the growth of anti-colonial sentiments in the minds of the people.

The time span chosen for the study starts from the conquest of Malabar by the English East India Company and ends with the eve of the taking over the administration of Malabar by the Crown. Therefore, the period is of great significance in understanding the formative stages in the history of colonialism in Malabar, which was often neglected in the academic discourses. Scholars have ignored the basic issues as to how colonization has affected the existing production and distribution system of a society functioning on a traditional customary relationship - *kana-janma-maryada* system\(^{24}\) - and as to what its role had been in engineering the various revolts that occurred in Malabar during the period under study. The study also attempts to

\(^{24}\) It is the traditional land tenurial system existed and practiced by the people in the Malabar society.
expose why there persisted a disposition towards revolt in Malabar for a prolonged period and what the basis of these movements was and what mechanism was devised by the rebels to mobilize people, particularly in a prolonged rebellion. The research also aims to identify whether the introduction of modern proprietary rights in land affected the various agrarian classes in Malabar. The thesis entitled ‘The Socio-Economic Milieu of Anti-Colonial Struggles in Malabar, 1792 – 1856’ emerges from the perspectives outlined above.

Based on archival data pertaining to the early British administrative control over Malabar like the Political Consultations, Military Consultations, Judicial Consultations, Revenue Consultations, Secret Despatches, Tellicherry Factory Diary and Consultations, Diary of the Collector of Cotiote, Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Rebellion, Report of the Malabar Committee Regarding the Cotiote Rebellion, and Correspondence on Mappila Outrages in Malabar, the study reconstructs the circumstances leading to the outbreaks of the revolt of Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam, the revolt of the Mappilas and the revolt of the Kurichyas of Wayanad. The models developed by Jim Scott, Eric Stokes, Christopher Bayly and Barrington Moore (Jr.) about the resistances and revolts are discussed and how these frameworks would be applicable to the study of anti-colonial struggles in Malabar. Jim Scott argues that these resistances are either active or passive resistances against the colonial powers, while Eric Stokes tries to distinguish the insurrections into different categories as the primary resistance, secondary resistance, post pacification revolt and the resistance of the locals. Christopher Bayly also brings out the different types of conflicts. In the uprisings occurred in Malabar during the period, one can notice a combination of the various categories of resistances as highlighted by the above scholars.
The resistances against the colonial powers can take place in a variety forms as we find in Malabar. It may assume the form of a passive resistance or an active resistance. James Scott argues that certain types of regulations provoke resistance among the opposed people, which may not be always visible within the social spheres of these people. He also brings out a sort of resistance from the shadows “a hidden transcript” in contrast to the public transcript; which presents the official version of rulers through their institution of governments. The combination of hidden and public transcripts would be confronted by a people who had a limited ability to act on their own account, but who knew how to use their private spheres. This attitude of James Scott was not found in the rebels of Malabar.

Again it is difficult to provide a clear definition to resistance. The dividing lines between the political opposition and resistance are blurred. Eric Stokes, so, tries to differentiate the resistances into different categories. Firstly, the primary resistance which is a hostile reaction of tribes to the invaders; secondly, the secondary resistance, a measured protest by mass movements, welfare organizations and others; thirdly, the post pacification revolt, which was an act of resistance broader in structure than the primary resistance; and fourthly, the emergence of modern political parties as a consequence of the resistance by the locals. But Margret Frenz argues that this categorization of Eric Stokes is applicable to certain historical events in India, but not suited to the analysis of the situations in the eighteenth century Malabar.

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27 Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, p.52

states that, it was because of the presence of foreigners in Malabar for a long period which led to a high level of cultural diversity in the Malabar society.\textsuperscript{30}

Christopher Bayly points out those three types of conflicts occurred in India after the battle of Plassey in 1757. Firstly, clashes between British and Indian forces which arose from the breakdown of the Mughal rule in India; secondly, the formation of state at the periphery; and thirdly, the very high demands from the part of the British by way of taxes, as well as the attempts by the British to control the local rulers and trade and the economic policies.\textsuperscript{31} The first type of conflict is not applicable to the Malabar society as it was not part of the Mughal Empire and so only applicable in the case of North India. The second and third types of conflicts have some relevance in the diverse uprisings that occurred in different parts of India. In the case of the rebellions of Malabar, the third type of categorization is most applicable. Here, one can notice that the English East India Company collected enormous amount of revenue from the people by introducing a number of economic reforms and regulations right from its inception to its power in Malabar. It was this excess demand from the part of the company provoked the people of Malabar against it.

The historiography of the Pazhassi rebellion is limited. The studies and researches that have been made on it are peripheral in nature and more importance is attributed to the political aspects rather than the social and economic aspects. The earliest work to make a reference to this revolt of Pazhassi Raja was S. B. Chaudhuri, in his \textit{Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India (1765-1857)} (Calcutta, 30

\textsuperscript{29} Margret Frenz, \textit{From Contact to Conquest}, p.52.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}

1955). This work gives a comprehensive survey of the various uprisings which occurred during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, in different parts of the country. It is this work, which very clearly demonstrated the very fact that Pax Britannica in India was only a relative peace and that there was plenty of opposition from substantial sections of the common people. Therefore, he tries to present a connected and systematic account of the many manifestations of unwillingness on the part of large bodies of Indian people to bear the burden of British rule or even to accept it, without a determined attempt to shake off the closing net of doom in the formative stages of European ascendancy in India. The author thus tries to bring out the fact that the sporadic and spasmodic insurrections during the early colonial periods were the initial steps towards the growth of nationalism in the country. Since these were local and regionalized ones, their importance was rejected by later historians.

The significance of the work of S. B. Chaudhuri, being a pioneer effort in this regard, cannot be relegated, as it gives a general picture of the numerous outbreaks in various parts of India during the period between 1767 and 1857. His effort was to bring out almost all the insurrections and rebellions during the period with an objective to establish the fact that the ascendancy of the British to power and the establishment of their rule in India was not a peaceful one. Therefore he dealt with the innumerable revolts and uprisings in a vague and peripheral manner, stressing more on political events. So it is in the same cast, emphasizing more on the political aspects, the author discussed with the revolt of Pazhassi Raja of Malabar in his work.

32 S.B Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances*. p. XIII.
33 *Ibid*, p. XXIII.
Another work that deals with the Pazhassi rebellion is K. Rajayyan’s *South Indian Rebellion: The First war of Independence, 1800 – 1801* (Mysore, 1971). In this work the author tries to depict in detail the insurrections of the Poligars of Tamil Nadu, Dhoondaji Waugh of Karnataka and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Malabar in 1800 – 1801. The major interest of the author was to trace out a relation between the various uprisings of the Poligars of Tamil Nadu, Dhoondaji Waugh of Karnataka and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Malabar. The rebel chiefs, he argues, formed a confederacy and the uprising that took place in 1800–1801, constituted a great uprising against the East India Company to gain independence from the devilish clutches of the English.\(^{34}\) It represented the struggle of the South against the alien forces which sought to the destruction of India’s cultural heritage and the imposition of strange orders.\(^{35}\) He further contents that it was the most widespread of all the liberation wars of the pre-Congress epoch and the first and last violent popular struggle of any formidable dimensions in the annals of British India.\(^{36}\) In this regard, it may be with over enthusiasm, he does not even hesitate to call it as the First War of Independence.

The major thrust of his study was about the revolt of the Poligars of Tamil Nadu and as such he gives only marginal importance to the revolt of Pazhassi Raja. Again, he fails to bring out any concert evidence regarding the connection with which he argues, between the various rebel leaders of South India revolting against the Company; which needs to be explored further. But his work tries to bring these rebellions to the national arena of history by arguing that there was some connection


\(^{35}\) *Ibid*, p. 18.

\(^{36}\) *Ibid*, p. 20.
between the three rebel leaders of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Malabar and depicts the fact that there existed a confederacy among these chieftains against the East India Company beyond the borders of language and ethnicity.

Yet another work authored by T. P. Sankarankutty Nair devotes a chapter to the Pazhassi rebellion in his work, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History* (Trivandrum 1971). The work tries to bring out an account of the revolt of Pazhassi Raja in the Malabar region. It is a political description of the events and so attempts to make a detailed analysis of the revolt. The major thrust of this work was to describe the uprisings which occurred in princely states of Travancore and Cochin, and in the Malabar region under the English East India Company. The author therefore tries to establish that anti-British sentiments were prevalent throughout Kerala during those days and the leadership of these movements was given by the regional leaders like Marthanda Varma of Travancore, Paliyath Achan of Cochin and Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam. Due to this perception of the author, he can not to give due importance to the revolt of Pazhassi Raja and so, gives only a general picture of the numerous events took place in Kerala during the period.

Dr. K. K. N. Kurupp has made an attempt to make a detailed study of the revolt of Pazhassi Raja, in his work *Pazhassi Samaranagal* in Malayalam (Trivandrum, 1988). It is one of the pioneering attempts on the revolt of Pazhassi Raja and his men against the Company. The relevance of the work cannot be ignored for he has made use of most of the primary sources available for narrating the story. He has made use of the important primary sources to bring out the events occurred in the course of the outbreak. These sources give various facts related to the outburst of Pazhassi Raja and the various factors prompted him to turn against the Company. The author makes an intensive examination of the causes of the revolt, including the socio-
economic aspects of the revolt. Since the importance is given to the political aspect of the events, the author succeeded partially only to analyze the role of various categories of people like the tribal population of Kurichiyas, the Muslim merchants and many other local people who supported the rebel prince.

More recently Margret Frenz has published a work entitled *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790 – 1805* (New Delhi, 2003), a revised version of her Doctoral Dissertation, mainly concerned with the establishment of British rule in North Malabar. The author attempts to analyze in depth the relationship between the East India Company and Pazhassi Raja. The book is concerned more on the personality of Pazhassi Raja and so depicts him as a ‘Little King’. In the course of the analysis, the socio-economic background of the revolt was ignored by the author. The author’s main thrust was not the revolt of Pazhassi Raja, but a general history of Malabar and how the Company established its power and authority in the region.

The historiography on the Mappila rebellion abounds in number and is too much. There are a number of works about Mappila and Mappila rebellion. But most of these writings deal with the Mappila rebellion of 1921. Researchers and Historians have confined more to the 1921 uprising and naturally remain silent on the early Mappila uprisings, particularly those of before 1856. The work of Rolland Miller, *The Mappila Muslim of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, Stephen Fredric Dale, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498 – 1922* and K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and the State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836 – 1921*, are a few works to be cited.
Rolland Miller, one of the pioneers in this area made a comprehensive study of the region and the community from a western perspective in the pre-colonial period through his work entitled *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, (Orient Longman, 1976). He makes a reference to the ‘unknown Muslims’ of the community which indicates his reluctance to engage with the Mappila studies. His contribution was mainly on the theoretical debate on the role of religion in the transformation a community and its tryst with modernity. It does not discuss about the early Mappila uprisings. But it provides a general history of the Mappilas and their settlements in Malabar region.

Stephen Fredric Dale, in his work, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498 – 1922* (Oxford 1980), deals with the history of the Mappila Muslims, one of the oldest Islamic community in the South Asian sub continent. It is a study basically of how the Muslims of the Malabar coast confronted with the Hindus in the light of European penetration at different stages of history and the evolving of an Islamic community, in a predominantly Hindu Kerala society, whose most cultural characteristics was religious militancy. The author argues that the militant character of the Mappilas was visible apparently during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the rural Mappilas occasionally murdered the members of the Hindu community. It is these occasional outbreaks during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which finally culminated as the Mappila Rebellion of 1921 – 1922. The author believes that this rebellion was the most serious outbreaks of violence to occur in British India between the mutiny of 1857 – 1858 and the tumult of independence and partition in 1947. So the main thrust of the work is to

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bring out the events of 1921 – 1922 as a great outbreak, so that the earlier ones are ignored. Again it is said that before the Revolt of 1857, there occurred a series of outbreaks against the East India Company. In order to understand the real nature of the latter outbreaks one has to go through its predecessors. In this respect a deep analysis of the earlier resistance of the Mappilas, particularly before 1857 has to be undertaken. The author is more interested in the Rebellion of 1921 – 1922 and so makes only passing references to the revolts prior to the Revolt of 1857.

The work *Against Lord and the State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836 – 1921*, (New Delhi 2001), by K. N. Panikar is a classical work on the Mappilas of Malabar. Here, the author makes a detailed study of the economic conditions of Malabar, particularly under the East India Company where the conditions of the peasantry were miserable. The burden of taxation fell upon the people. It has become a source of distress to the peasants of Malabar as there was inequality in assessment and disparity between the prevailing market price and rates adopted by the government for valuation of produce in monetary terms for the purpose of revenue collection. The primary concern of the work was to discuss the rebellion of 1921. Yet he devotes certain space for tracing the early history of Mappilas and the early uprising that occurred before 1857. He tries to identify most of the pre 1857 uprising and attempts to make an analysis on them by prefixing the economic factors. The thrust of his argument is that it is an anti-land lord and anti-British movement in Malabar.


The main thrust of the work was devoted to the rebellion of 1921 and so its predecessors are given only marginal importance. An in-depth study of the earlier uprising is necessary to build up the rebellion of 1921. The roots of the events of 1921 are laid in the earlier uprising. So the author, whose concern is more on the rebellion of 1921, did not spend much time on the uprisings that took place before 1857. But he gives more importance to the Mappila uprisings occurred after 1857. Therefore a detailed study of the initial uprising of the Mappila Muslims are required to construct the latter ones and a more understanding of them is required. Above all the interest of the author is on the agrarian relations and structure of Malabar.

The work of Conrad Wood, *The Moplah Rebellion and Its Genesis*, (Delhi, 1987) is another important work that deals with the Mappila uprisings in Malabar. The author in his work mainly deals with the rebellion of 1921. In this study, the author tries to bring out root causes of the rebellion. He argues that the Khilafat non-co-operation movement was the inspiration for the outbreaks. Again he tries to find out how the Eranad and Walluvanad Mappilas became more religious and fanatic than the Mappila Muslims of other regions in Malabar, and tries to find out how the national movement of the middle class ordinary people led to the Mappila insurgencies in a local region and to emerge as a movement. Therefore he goes back to earlier Mappila movements in Malabar. He analyses the social and economic charges in Malabar due to the political conquest of Malabar by the English East India Company in 1792. He studies about land relations and the agricultural situations in the region. In his analysis he argues that the English rule did not end the landlordism prevailed in the Malabar region and instead the Company encouraged them. This instigated the Mappilas to turn against them and it became an anti-British, anti-landlordism movement in Malabar. The religion of the Mappilas promoted them to act
readily. So in this study the author concentrates more on the 1921 rebellion and
denigrates the earlier events. He makes only a preliminary study of the insurgencies
before 1856, but makes a detailed analysis on land relations and social system of
Malabar from the occupation of Malabar by the Company.

Another work is of M. Gangadharan who wrote the *Malabar Rebellion*, in
Malayalam. He tries to trace out the history of Malabar right from the beginning of
the twentieth century and brings out the very nature and character of the national
movement in Malabar through this work. In the course of the analysis he makes a
description on the nature of land relations in Malabar and the system of agricultural
relations that prevailed in the region and how it influenced for the outbreak of the
movement. The author concentrates more on the land relations and tries to analyze the
*janmi* system which existed in the Malabar region in detail. This work does not look
into the early Mappila uprisings in Malabar and so fails to make any connection
between the early Mappila insurrections and the Mappila revolt of 1921. Moreover
the importance is given to the events of 1921 and so practically ignores the diverse
movements occurred prior to it.

Another work on the Mappila rebellion is that of E.M.S Namboodiripad who
wrote the famous *Malabar Kalapam* in Malayalam. It is an attempt to depict the
events particularly occurred in 1921. He attempts to evaluate the Khilafat movement,
the non co-operation movement and agrarian uprisings in the Malabar region. In the
course of the analysis he tries to compare and equates these events to the Punnapra –
Vayalar movement in the princely state of Travancore and to the Karivallur revolt of
the farmers in Northern Malabar. Since the author pre supposes a hypothesis of the
Malabar rebellion of 1921 in his book, i.e. to equalize the revolt of 1921 to that of
Punnapra - Vayalar movement or the Karivallur uprising, the main idea behind the
study had lost its importance. Again the author does not give any references to the earlier uprising and so he ignores them in his study. So the study does not have any relevance with the early Mappila insurrections in Malabar.

In short the study about the early Mappila rebellions before the Revolt of 1857 are scarce and often ignored as more preponderance was given to the latter uprisings, particularly of the rebellion of 1921. So the literature on the rebellion of 1921 abounds. It has altered a number of scholarships from within and outside the country. It is in this respect an investigation and study on the early Mappila uprisings were undertaken in this analysis.

The third aspect of the anti-colonial resistance in Malabar undertaken during the period of study is the uprising of the tribals, the Kurichya revolt of 1812 in Wayanad. The historiography of the revolt of the Kurichyas is scarce and little attention was paid to this particular area of study. The pioneering effort in this regard was made by T. K. Ravindran through his article ‘The Kurichya Rebellion of 1812’ in *Journal of Kerala Studies* (Vol. III, September – December, 1976, part III & IV). The article is descriptive in nature and was casted in the mould of political history. He argues that after the suppression of Pazhassi Rebellion in 1805, Wayanad was under the strict surveillance of the East India Company and the Kurichyas and Kurumbas who were the supporters of the Pazhassi Raja in his revolt against the Company were subject to untold miseries, abuses and privations. The political influence of the Company in Wayanad made their life miserable and so they were compelled to rebel against the Company and its men. The article being a descriptive and political in character, a detailed study of the same is required. Also one has to go through the

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revenue policies of the Company, introduced in the Wayanad region and it might have been the reason that prompted the tribal community to revolt against the British.

The article entitled *Kurichiyarude Cheruthunilpukal*, in Malayalam by Indiara D., constitutes another important study on the revolt of Kurichyas, and it comprises a part of the work entitled *Malabar: Paithruckavum Prathapavum*, by Dr. P. B. Salim *et al.* (Ed.), (Kozhikkode, 2011). The author tries to argue that Wayanad was the nerve centre of all popular movements and resistance against the colonial regime in the Malabar region.\(^{41}\) The author tries to divide the movements into two categories – one under Pazhassi Raja and the other under the Kurichyas after the death of Pazhassi Raja. Then the author goes on to argue that this movement, particularly the Kurichya rebellion was an anti-colonial movement against the exploitation and oppression of the tribals by the British. The article being brief and short one, was not able to cover the various aspects of the tribal community and failed to bring out what prompted them to revolt against the East India Company and also failed to assess how the sporadic and scattered forest settled people were mobilized against the English East India Company. It also failed to bring out the real motive of the people to rebel against the Company. Even though the rebellion lasted only for a short period of time, it failed to bring out the fact that whether there was any external support to this tribal uprising. All these require a new enquiry and study into the uprising of the Kurchiyas against the East India Company in 1812.

Another work where the historiography on the revolt of the Kurichyas can be found in the writings of O. K. Johny entitled *Wayanad Rekhakal*, in Malayalam (Kozhikode, 2007). In this book there is one chapter on Kurichya revolt entitled

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\(^{41}\) Dr. Indira D. “Kurichiyarude Cheruthunilpu”, in Dr. P.B. Salim *et al.* (Ed.), *Malabar Paithruckavum Prathapavum*, Kozhikode, 2011, p. 188.
In this work the author argues that the tribal, insurrection against the feudal lords and colonial intruders in Wayanad, was the continuation of the Pazhassi revolt. Yet in this revolt the leadership was with the tribal community. He further argues that this revolt was the expression of the desire of the Kurichyas and other tribal communities in Wayanad for their independence and it reveals the expressions of their self conscience.

The work is a general and descriptive one about the various aspects Wayanad and so it is not an in-depth study on the Kurichya uprising. Being the local history of Wayanad, it has not given any documentary evidences for the arguments raised by the author in this work. More than that the article is to highlight the role of Thalakkal Chandu in the revolt of Kurichyas and the prominence has given to him alone. Therefore the diverse aspects and reasons that led to the revolt were totally ignored by the author. So a detailed study of the revolt of the Kurichyas is required.

In general, all these accounts of the anti-colonial struggles in Malabar from 1792 to 1856 are merely descriptive and they are of general nature. None of the works have made any attempt to find out how the colonial penetration into the traditionally bounded society led to these uprisings. These works have not gone into the question why a good number of peasants supported the rebels. Again, had not the changing economic and revenue policies of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan and of the English East India Company resulted in discontent and disruption among the various classes of people? The extensive assessment and the role of land regulations and its impact on the economic and political development of Malabar were not properly looked into. Had not the novel introduction of ‘modern proprietary’ title deprived the peasants and the Mappilas of their essential property in the land and thereby transformed them into

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mere tenants or labourers of the landlord? An interesting feature of these studies is that none of the scholars had looked into the fact that these rebellions in Malabar have any generic connections. Can we find any relationship with these rebellions that broke out in Malabar from 1792 to 1856? These are, thus, some of the questions ignored by many of these scholars and, so they need to be answered, to get the total picture of the various revolts occurred in the Malabar region during the period under study.

Again we notice that in these revolts, particularly of the Pazhassi Raja, various categories of people, like the Mappilass, the coastal merchants, and even tribals like the Kurchiyas and Kurumbas, joined hands with the revolutionaries. What prompted them to lend their support to the rebels and their leaders? Again there arises the question of leadership. What were the bonds that tied the people of Malabar to the Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam, Unni Mutha Muppan, Chemban Poker, Attan Gurukkal and Mamburam Thangal? How did they retain the control of the movement through all its phases of revolutions? Thus a detailed and analytical study of the subject matter has to be undertaken. Also the role of religion in mobilizing the people in these rebellions has to be looked into. Along with these, it is also necessary to see how far the personal grievances of Pazhassi Raja and other rebel leaders had led to the revolt against the English East India Company in Malabar. It is also interesting to ask, in the case of Pazhassi Raja, if he was restored to his ancient glory and to his possessions, just like the other Rajas of Malabar, would have forestalled the Pazhassi revolt. The existing studies regarding the anti-colonial struggles in Malabar during the period 1792 to 1856 has ignored all these problems and therefore an attempt has been made in this study to understand the revolt of the Pazhassi Raja, the revolt of the Mappilas and the revolt of the Kurchiyas from all these perspectives.
In studying such incidents, regionalized and isolated ones, one should not imagine that it has nothing to do with the national arena of history. The revolts and rebellions prior to 1857, though they are sporadic and scattered; constitute the background for the generation of a proto-nationalist sentiment in the society. So, even the studies of local and regionalized movements claim a relevance to the history of the Indian national struggle for liberation. The history of the freedom struggle of India to be full and complete, one has to take into account the various incidents that had, occurred in different corners of the nation and how it contributed to the growth of an anti-colonial spirit in the country in the subsequent years.

There is a tendency among the social scientists to regard the evidence of open revolt of the peasantry in India as insignificant one, when compared to the experience of medieval Europe or that of the neighboring country, China.\textsuperscript{43} It may be because of the failure of the various isolated, regionalized and local insurrections in India. It is this fact that made Michal Adas to comment the peasant insurgency in India was a non starter, because there has never been a peasant revolt in India, which was anything more than local and brief.\textsuperscript{44} It may be true that the various peasants uprising which occurred in different parts of our country are localized ones and most of them did not last for a long time. But it is not just to discard them simply because of their local character and shortness of duration. Again Barrington Moore (Jr.) had opined that the Indian peasantry was docile and non revolutionary. They were motionless under the British rule. He argued that in India peasant rebellions were relatively rare and comparatively ineffective. He upholds this view by stating that it was due to the


peculiar structure of India, particularly due to the caste system and the apparent
docility of the Indian peasants.45

What Barrington Moore puts forward is partially true. The clutches of Indian
caste system had impeded the dynamic movement of the peasants to a great extent.
But it is difficult to accept his arguments fully. The pressures for lower rent, more
freedom and more control over the peasants own economy were characteristic of the
stable peasant communities which often confronted with the seigniorial power.46
These movements were sometimes violent pressures. They were often waged by
individual communities, more rarely on regional or national level.47 The recent studies
and researches have, also, exploded the view that Indian peasantry was docile, non
revolutionary and passive. They had risen up from their traditional bounds,
superstitions and conservatism to express their contempt against the East India
Company.48 Agrarian disturbances had occurred in many scales and forms, from local
riots to war like campaigns, spread over the various parts of the country. At a simple
count there were no fewer than one hundred and ten known instances of insurrections
in India for a short span of 117 years from 1783 to 1900.49 It may be because of this
fact that Ranajit Guha had pointed out that peasant’s insurgency had become the

45  For a discussion, see, Barrington Moore (Jr.), Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord
and Peasant in the Makings of the Modern World, Harmondsworth, 1977 pp. 332 -335 and 340 -
343.
48  S..K.Mital and Kapil Kumar, “Anti Feudal and Anti Colonial Struggles of Oudh Peasantry in Early
The period of Guha’s study is from the revolt against Deby Sinha in 1783 to the Brisaite uprising in
1900.
necessary antithesis of colonialism in India.\textsuperscript{50} It shows that the peasant agitation in India was chronic, even though, they were easily suppressed. But the problem in these incidents was that only in exceptional cases that one can obtain detailed data on the social composition of the membership of a particular rebellion or on the social origin of its leaders. It may be the administrative measures initiated by the Company from time to time have provoked such resistances and that they eventually gave rise to the local riots in different parts of India. They were also, may be the conservationists revolts in defense of the Indian forms of government and local cultural forms.\textsuperscript{51} One of the interesting features of these revolts was that the strongest resistance had come from the middling or aspiring groups in the society and not from the established oligarchy or upper bureaucrats, many of whom compromised with the British to retain their offices and prerequisites.\textsuperscript{52}

The historiography of colonial administration, indirect rule, imperial expansion and its rejection in the form of nationalism abounds. But all these pre-occupations revolve around the issue of colonial authority and power supply. The resistance of indigenous and subject people to foreign rule has been a fashionable topic for Indian historians in recent years.\textsuperscript{53} So the recent researches in nationalism have been more radicalized and encompass the various resistance movements and revolutions too. In India there are a number of such movements and a good amount of studies have been constituted on this point. Under the pioneering leadership of Ranajit Guha, a series of books have been brought out, dealing with the vivid aspects of

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid p.2.


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. pp. 54.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. pp. 238-239.
peasant insurgencies in colonial India. The works of A. R. Desai, D. N. Dhanagare, Sunil Sen, K. N. Panikkar and K. S. Singh also explores the different aspects of peasant movements during the British regime in India. Besides this, a series of articles that had been published by various scholars and researchers also added much to the literature. The question that arises in this context is that the resistance of the Indians to the English East India Company can be described well as anti-British, or ant-foreign rather than anti-colonial, as the Company at this time displayed none of the features of a mature colonial regime in India. The Indians regard the rule of the Company as totally new to the Indian society and they regarded their regime as an exploitative one by the Westerners. So the rule of the east India Company was basically different from all the regimes that had preceded it. Therefore Indian resistance, whether it rose from organized states, from peasants, weavers, or the tribal people of the forests and hills is properly described as anti-colonial. All these resistances were directed against the policy, systems and personnel of the colonial Government. Today these anti-colonial movements were regarded as ‘subaltern’ anti-colonialism and these protests reflected a coherent consciousness of opposition to


57 C .A. Bayly, Origins of Nationality, p.239.

58 Ibid. p .240.

59 K. S. Singh. Tribal Society in India, Delhi, 1985,p.117.
the invading other which was expressed in ballads, legends and oral histories and through the fashioning of symbols of revolt.60

The works and writings of these scholars clearly reject the view that Indian peasantry was docile, non-revolutionary and passive. But the failure of all these movements was perhaps due to the fact that they were localized and isolated. This may be because of the fact that the ‘pre-political people’ and pre-political population’ as Hobsbawm argues, did not have any political consciousness or organization and as such did not have any specific language of their own to express their aspirations about the world.61 Very often many of the peasant disturbances could occur enthusiastically in connection with such political factors like Governmental abuse, the incursion of a military unit or the levying of heavy tax, particularly at the time of a poor harvest. Again in this context, one should not be prevented from looking at the social consciousness of these uprisings of Pazhassi Raja, the Kurichiyas and the Mappilas. In all the discontented uprisings, one can readily observe the prevalence of a sort of social consciousness among them.62 But an individual’s personal relationship to a local group, which might be defined in terms of kinship ties or a long geographical or professional line appear to have come first and the social consciousness was definitely a poor second.63 So the question that needs to be asked in examining the revolt of Pazhassi Raja, the Kurichiyas and the Mappilas is that relating to the existence of such political and social consciousness among them. Were the rebels forged into a cohesive

60 Ranajith Guha, *Subaltern Studies*, p.2.


force only because of the fact that they were fighting against a common enemy or were there a common ideology or a sharing of anti-colonial sentiments among them?

It has been argued that most of the rebellions like the Pazhassi Raja, the Kurchiyas or of the Mappilas were often defensive in nature. The various categories of people could react vigorously to outside incursions, but rarely do they take the initiative. It may also be noted that if most of the uprising were defensive, rather than aggressive, a few were truly desperate action taken as a last recourse, as we observe in the case of Pazhassi revolt and the Kurchiya’s uprising. In almost all these uprisings, one can notice the elementary aspects of looting and plundering in the rebellions. The uncoordinated characters of rebels, their lack of preparations, deficient organization and lack of armaments and training, made the armies of Pazhassi Raja, the Mappilas and the Kurichiyas, no match for the Company’s forces. It may be because of these factors that rebels resorted to a sort of guerilla mode of warfare against the enemies.

The East India Company came to India as a mere merchant Company and they did not have a strip of territory in India. But gradually a warehouse was expanded into a province, and the province into an empire. When the Europeans came to India, the native rulers extended a cordial welcome to them as their friends. It was this friendship and the service rendered to the Company led to the growth of a mighty English Empire in India. When the Company began to occupy territories, they further extended their interest towards the native politics. It is believed that a great

64 Ibid. p.321.

territorial empire established in India was ruled by a private Company dedicated to make profit. The Company and its trade were the base upon which British power was established and extended in India. They gradually began to interfere with the local political, economical and religious affairs. It is because of this policy of the East India Company that provoked many native Rajas and chieftains to turn against them. This has been aptly pointed out by Velu Thampi, the hero of the revolt of Travancore state against the English, in his famous proclamation that:

….. believing in their loyalty and friendship, we fought against Tipu Sultan and made alliance with them. Subsequently, it was a danger to us. If resistance is not offered at this stage to what they are attempting, our people will be put to such suffering as cannot borne by human beings.

It is the same grievances and complaints that the people of Malabar too made against the East India Company. They found that:

…..if we compare the former times when the favour of Gods, Perumal and Bhagavathi and the Gracious countenance of our Raja (Royal) family and right sovereign, spread their happy influence over us, bewail the difference and say it is lamentable.

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When the rulers and chieftains came to understand the real colour of the East India Company, that the British are trying to make them completely subservient to them, their sense of honour and perhaps their sense of outrage compelled them to unfurl the banner of revolt. These revolts represented not only the narrow and personal interest of the chieftains and leaders, but also the interest and feeling of the common people. When the people found that they being greatly agitated at the political malady and the economic tragedy and languishing under the western heal of oppression and collusion of it with its supporters they rallied to the standard of resistance.\(^{71}\) Thus the popular bitterness grew in volume as well as in intensity and it became so acute and so serious that they manifested it through these popular resistance movements. It was due to this fact their revolts made them leaders of the movement, a movement in which the prince was united with the peasants and in which the soldier was not a mercenary but a real defender of the people’s hearth and homes.\(^{72}\)

Most of the information and evidence about these early resistances have come down to us in the form of official records of one type or the other. Very often they were the official extortion in connection with the land revenue collection, which constitute the most fertile and rich sources of such movements, as found in similar movements elsewhere. Naturally, all these sources may have the official character and an elitist origin and nature.\(^{73}\) We may find these sources in the form of police reports, military consultations or despatches, administrative reports, minutes, correspondences

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71 K.Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion*, p.69.


and soon. The reports were by and large written by those who had witnessed the rebellion. The purpose was to record the "moments of violence,"\textsuperscript{74} both during the uprising and also during the process of restoration of British power in India. Very often this account would be placed within the wider context of a description of the area, its people, and their past histories of resistance and so on. The military accounts also describe the immediate moments of uprising, the suppression of the rebellion and the restoration of British authority in the respective region. In such accounts the incidents of counter insurgencies were narrated with much fanfare, flaunting the achievements and glory of the colonial army: the actions of the people are, needless to say, lost substantially.\textsuperscript{75} The personal memoirs of English civil and military officials constitute yet another category of writings about these rebellions. They provide the details of the traumatic experiences of these officials, which often ran into months. The private correspondence between persons in authority also has an elitist character. They furnished valuable information to later historians and supplied the ingredients for numerous sensational romances and fictions. They have placed the rebellions of Malabar within the course of British imperial history in India. Therefore, these records picture them as rebels, insurgents, bandits, ring leaders and law breakers.\textsuperscript{76} These sources, of course, have stamped out the interests and out looks of the insurrectionists in Malabar. Therefore, most of these histories were attempts to reproduce the entire conflagration in its totality and to encapsulate every local uprising within a single narrative order.

\textsuperscript{74} Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defence of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today", \textit{Economic and Political Weekly}, Annual Number, 1991, pp. 559-572.


The non availability of the native records or correspondences regarding these upheavals is one of the serious barriers to the proper analysis of these revolts. We only get some letters seized from the rebels and their translations, which are found in the Company records. The possibility of getting any further country record is remote. But these letters seized from the rebels and incorporated in the Company’s official records give us some insight into the motives and aspirations of the rebels and their leaders. Despite the inherent limitations of these sources, an attempt has been made in this study to analyze the materials regarding the anti-colonial struggles in Malabar between 1792 and 1856 from a balanced perspective to find out what had happened in these movements by diverse categories of people in the Malabar society during the period of study.

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter ‘The Socio-Economic Milieu of Malabar’ is an analysis of the social and economic conditions that prevailed in Malabar in the pre-colonial days and the changes introduced by the East India Company in Malabar. Before analyzing the economic scenario in Malabar, a brief discussion has been undertaken on the political and social conditions prevalent in Malabar on the eve of the conquest by the English. The nature of the society and its functioning on a customary basis in a tradition-bound society is analyzed briefly. An attempt has been made on the diverse administrative changes introduced in Malabar and their implications on various fields. In order to understand the matrix of these uprisings, a review of the economic condition that existed in the pre-colonial Malabar society is undertaken. It is found that the economy and the economic life of the people of Malabar were determined by the customary tradition of kana-janma-maryada system during the pre-colonial days. The intrusion of Mysorean rulers shattered their customary relationship and new economic systems were introduced in the Malabar
society. These were further accelerated by the advent of the English East India Company to power in 1792. The English government’s new revenue system and assessment; its periodical revisions; the rigid exactions of revenue in terms of cash, instead of kind, by machineries of the government; the restoration of the erstwhile *janmis*, who fled to Travancore, as the lords of the land; the commercialization of agriculture; the penetration of money lenders and other agencies into the interior of Malabar; the monopolization of trade; and the decrease in the prices of the products created a sort of panic in the minds of the people. Thus the material appropriation by the East India Company and the indignation and frustration generated out of the domination of the Company overwhelmed a mood of resistance among the people.

The second chapter entitled ‘The Company and the Raja: The Gathering Storm, 1793-1797’ analyses the early outbreaks of the revolt of Pazhassi Raja in Malabar. Here, how the ecology and geography restricted the rulers of Malabar to a particular region is undertaken. The early career of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja was traced in this chapter. How Kerala Varma responded to the Mysorean invasions and what were the after effects are analyzed in this part of study. The capturing of power by Mysore rulers, their introduction of innovative measures in the economic and political field, their attempt at proselytization, and the interference in the life of the people had forced them to turn against the Mysorean ruler. The English exploited the chance and utilized the chieftains of Malabar against Tipu Sultan. It was in such a situation that Pazhassi Raja supported the English with the hope that the English would allow him to be an independent ruler. But by the treaty of Seringapatam in 1792, the Company occupied Malabar. Thus the occupation of Malabar by the English turned Pazhassi Raja against the English. Moreover, the attempt on the part of the
Company to ignore Pazassi Raja as the ruler of Kottayam and the recognition of Kurumbranad Raja as its ruler made Pazhassi to wage a war against the Company.

The third chapter entitled ‘Wayanad in Arms: The Revolt of Pazhassi Raja’, 1800-1805, analyses the attempt on the part of Pazhassi Raja to establish his sovereignty in Kottayam, when the English East India Company was asserting its dominance. Pazhassi Raja anticipated that the peace reached upon would be short-lived and that the English would dishonor the settlement. The Company pensioned off the senior Raja of Kottayam, who was appointed as the ruler of Kottayam, as per the treaty of 1797. Meanwhile, after the defeat of Tipu in the fourth Anglo-Mysore war, the Company took over Waynad. Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja argued that Wayanad belonged to Kottayam royal family hereditarily though it was not acceded by the Company. When the repeated attempts of Pazhassi Raja in this regard failed, he took up arms once again against the Company. The Company now followed pacificatory measures along with various suppressive measures. By preventing supplies to the rebels and chasing them one after the other by deploying the kolkars, the Company was able to suppress the rebellion. Many leaders of the rebellion like Thalackal Chandoo, Edachena Kungan and all other rebel leaders were either captured or deported and many of them were killed by the troops of the Company. Many rebels in order to save them from the capturing by the Company committed suicide. Finally on 30th November 1805, Captain Baber and his forces met Pazhassi Raja, and Pazhassi was killed. Thus with the death of Pazhassi Raja, the revolt came to an end.

‘The Mappilas in Arms: The Early Resistance of the Muslims of Malabar, 1792-1856’ constitutes the fourth chapter. It deals with the early uprisings of the Mappilas in Malabar against English East India Company. From the very accession of the Company in Malabar, the relation between the English and the Muslims was
strained. During the Mysorean interlude, the Mappilas enjoyed many privileges and concessions. But the defeat of Tipu Sultan and the occupation of Malabar by the Company marked the beginning of a shift in the stature of the Mappilas. The Company restored the Namboodiri and Nair land lords, who fled to Travancore during the Mysorean interlude, to their erstwhile positions. Their land and property were returned to them. Due to this policy, many Mappilas in South Malabar lost their land and property, and they were pushed to the status of tenants-at-will. Under the Company, the landlords used all measures for the eviction of the tenants either by court or by force. Added to the economic backwardness, the Mappilas were illiterate, and they were denied of any appointments in services under the Company. Above all, the religion also played an important role in mobilizing the illiterate Mappilas in these uprisings. Starting from the revolt of Unni Mutha Mooppan, Chemban Poker and Athan Gurukkal in 1800 to 1802, the Pandalur uprising of 1836, the uprising of 1837 at Kalpetta, the uprising of 1839 at Pallipuram, the uprising of 1849 at Irumbili, the uprising of 1849 at Manjeri, the Kulathur uprising of 1851 and the Mattannur uprising of 1852 are the predominant uprisings during the period under study. It is interesting to note that while all these rebellions took place in South Malabar, only one uprising, that of Mattannur, took place in North Malabar. Even though the uprisings were targeted against Hindu janmis and the temples, their motive was not religions, but they are seen as agents of the Company and the exploiters of the Mappila tenants.

‘The Tribals in Arms: The Kurichya Revolt of 1812’, is the fifth chapter of this study. The Kurichyas are one of the dominant tribal communities in Wayanad. They hail a tradition of resistance against the English East India Company from the days of Pazhassi rebellion onwards. They actively participated in the revolt of Pazhassi Raja with their traditional weapon of bow and arrow. The establishment of
the political dominance of the East India Company in Malabar affected their very existence. The colonial intrusion into the hillocks of Wayanad was a threat to their social and economic life. The commercialization of agriculture transformed their cultivable lands in the plains and hillocks into plantations. Thus the land which was owned and cultivated by the tribals was taken away from them and they were pushed into the interior. The British policy of collecting the revenue in cash instead of kind affected their daily life. The establishment of plantations in Wayanad led to infrastructural developments like roads and buildings. It was through these roads that the Company’s agents and institutions like revenue officials, police, moneylenders and other traders penetrated into their areas and virtually disturbed their peaceful life. The clearing of forests for the establishment of plantations and the Company’s forest policy adversely affected the life of the Kurichyas and other tribals of Wayanad. Thus the tribals, who were discontented and dissatisfied by the colonial economic and social policies, were ready to raise the flag of revolt against the Company.

The last part of the study the Conclusion brings out the major findings of the study. It is found that the rebellion of Pazhassi Raja, the rebellion of the Mappilas and the rebellion of the Kurichyas in Malabar constitute one of the important anti-colonial movements against the English East India Company in the history of South India. These movements were unique because they were not fought by Pazhassi Raja or the leaders alone, but by the different strata of people against the exploitative and corruptive socio-economic policies pursued by the East India Company in Malabar.

In order to analyze and study the socio-economic milieu of these anti-colonial struggles in Malabar, abundance of primary and secondary sources are available. The diverse primary sources in the form of Diaries, Consultations, Correspondences, Minutes and Reports, preserved in the regional archives at
Kozhikkode and in the Tamil Nadu State Archives at Madras helped a lot to gather the necessary data for the study. Though, they had an elitist origin and nature, and stamped out the real interest and outlook of the insurrectionists helped a lot to rebuild and reconstruct these early uprisings in Malabar. The non-availability of native records is one of the major hindrances for the study of these resistances. We only get some of the letters and correspondences seized from the rebels and their translation, found in the Company records. The translations of these letters are of elitist character as they were translated and maintained by the officials of the Company itself. The possibilities of getting further native records are remote. These letters seized from the rebels and incorporated in the Company’s official records give us some insight into the motives and aspirations of the insurgents.

Despite the inherent limitations of the sources an attempt has been made in this study to analyze the various materials regarding the Pazhassi rebellion, Mappila uprising and Kurichya revolt from a balanced perspective, with a view in particular, of eliciting information about the participation of different sections people in the Malabar society in these rebellions that occurred in Malabar during the period from 1792 to 1856.