Chapter 2
The Company and the Raja: The Gathering
Storm 1793-1797

The peculiar socio-economic and geographical conditions prevailed in Malabar, resulted in the emergence of a number of petty chieftains in the region. When Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore conquered Malabar, there were a multitude of chieftains ruling over different regions located on the either sides of the rivers of Malabar. The need of an artificial irrigation system and its control was one of the factors, which led to the emergence of a centralized power in any region in India.1 In Malabar, there were a number of natural streams2 and so there was no need for artificial irrigation systems. It may be due to this fact that a number of minor chieftains emerged in Malabar.3 The terrain, further, being hilly and covered with jungles in many parts, afforded protection from any external invasions. It was because of this geographical condition that no chieftain tried to, or could, assert his authority over the others.4 The limited size of Malabar, in terms of geographical terms and in its associated scope for action produced an impact on its economy,

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2 The important rivers of Malabar are the Nileswaram river, the Ezhimala ruler, Valapatanam river, the Taliparamba river, the Anjaracanti river, the Thalassery river, the Mahe river, the Kotta river, the Elathur river, the Kallai river, the Beypore river, the Kadalundi river, the Ponnani river, the Chetuwai river, which flows from the east to Arabian sea and the rivers of Kabani, Rampur and Bhavani, the three tributaries of river Cauary flow to the west. All these rivers are connected to the coast, lowlands and the Ghats, and made the trade between the coast and hinterland fairly easy. They were also used for the transportation during those days.


society, culture and religion. The intensity and range of power of the rulers were also evident in Malabar due to its ecological nature. The ecology of rule in the eighteenth century Malabar can be depicted thus: the range of ruler’s power was restricted to a relatively small area due to the geographical factors such as the Ghats and the course of rivers, but the intensity of his power was generally high within this area. The limited size and its relative isolation from other parts of region led to the emergence of the pre-colonial structures, both social and economic, well suited to the society and so well maintained in Malabar. This was the basic difference between the Malabar and the East Coast and North of India, where the large and fertile land supported the rulers with sizeable territory and resources. Thus in Malabar, during the pre-colonial days, the land was divided into small independent principalities like Iruvilanad, Randattara, Kurumbranad, Chirrackal, Kannur, Kottayam, Kadathunad and Kozhikkode.

The principality of Kottayam was one among the many principalities in Malabar, ruled by the Kottayam Rajas. The origin of the Kottayam royal family remains obscure. These rajas styled themselves as puranattu meaning ‘outside’ for their original family might have come from outside or because they ruled over Purainad meaning the land of the mountains. At our time, Kottayam might have been a part of Kolattunad, but it gradually acquired independent control over the territories lying in the interior of Tellicherry and extended its jurisdiction to the

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5 Margret Frenz, From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805, Delhi; 2003, pp. 10-11.
7 Kottayam is a central taluk in North Malabar and not the district of Kottayam in Central Kerala. Kottayam, included in the Tellicherry Division, is an area of forest clad hills, rich in pepper and other spices.
borders of Coorg. The tradition traces the origin of the family back to the well known Harichandra Perumal of Kottayam. He built a fort at Puralimala and resided there as the founder of Kottayam royal family. Their state was comprised of the former taluks of Wayanad, Kottayam and Guddalore, which were together called Puraikizhnad. The Tirunelli inscription of the twelfth century by Bhaskara Ravi Varma, the then Kulleshakkara ruler of Mahodayapuram, has given a reference to Puraikizhnad and its ruler as one Shankaran Kothe Varman. From this, it has to be assumed that Kottayam rulers were the contemporaries of the Kulashekkaras of Mahodayapuram.

The territories of this royal family consisted of the Tellicherry taluk, Wayanad including Guddalore of the present state of Tamil Nadu, the small nadu of Thamarasseri and some territories included in the erstwhile taluks of Kozhikode and Kurumbranad. In the North, it was bounded by the borders of the kingdom of Chirrackal Raja, in the East by the territories of Coorg and Wayanad; in the South by the kingdom of Kurumbranad and in the West by the Arabian Sea.

Usually, in Malabar, the tradition was that a single family (ruler) governed the territory of their respective family. But in Kottayam royal family the territory was divided into three Kovilagams or branches, viz. Kizhakke kovilagam (Eastern palace), Patinjare kovilakam (Western palace) and Thekke kovilagam (Southern palace) according to the position where their chief dwelling places were located in and around

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a big water tank at Kottayam. Kerala Varma belonged to the lineage of Pantinjare kovilagam, with its headquarters at Pazhassi. As he resided at Pazhassi, he came to be called as Pazhassi Raja.

The early life of Kerala Varma is shrouded in mystery. Pallippattu Kunjikrishna Menon argued that no definite date could be derived regarding the birth of Kerala Varma. It was during the Mysorean interlude in Malabar, we hear for the first time about the Raja. During the Mysorean invasion, many of the petty chieftains of Malabar were dissolved and their military forces were uprooted. It was in this circumstance that the Pazhassi Raja alias Kerala Varma came forefront. When the three eldest Rajas of Kottayam family fled, like the other Rajas of Malabar, in order to escape from the attacks of the Sultan, to Travancore, the fourth prince of the family, Pazhassi Raja, remained behind in defiance of the Mysore ruler. The senior Raja before his flight to Travancore summoned Kerala Varma and instructed him to protect the country and the people. In accordance with this instruction, he gathered the inhabitants, retired to the woods and helped them in the development of a new homeland. At times, the Raja being a Nair chieftain, himself led a band of determined Nairs, defied the authority of the Mysore Sultan and levied contributions from the

13 C. Gopalan Nair, Wyanad, Madras, 1911, p. 28.
14 Pazhassi (Palassi) is a place six kilometers south of Mattannore- Koothuparambu route in Kannur District.
15 Pallippattu Kunjikrishna Menon, Mahacharitha Samgraham, Kottayam 1975 (Malayalam), p. 465. But the authors like Kappana Krishna Menon in his work, Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja, a play in Malayalam and N. Gopinathan Nair in his work Mahacharithamala state that Pazhassi was born in 1755. But no convincing evidence has been traced by them in to establish their argument.
people. Thus, it is to be understood that Pazhassi started his career as a defender of his country and his men, against the Mysorean chief, Tipu Sultan, an invader and oppressor from outside.

The absence of a strong centralized power in Malabar led, as noted earlier, to the growth of many petty chieftains and rulers in the region. And so the control and administration of Malabar relapsed to multitude of small chieftains, who were often at war with other. The Mappila principality of Cannanore, which owed nominal allegiance to the Chirrackal Raja (Kolattunad) made an alliance with Hyder Ali and invited him to Malabar. Stephen Dale called it as a ‘natural combination’, since the Ali Raja of Kannur was constantly tending or actually fighting with his Kolathiri, the overlord and hence he utilized the opportunity to exploit the Mysore military power. Hyder Ali thus invaded Malabar in 1766 and succeeded in subduing the Malabar chiefs. But the success of Hyder Ali did not remain long. The Nairs of Malabar raised the banner of revolt against Hyder Ali and it became one of the battle grounds for the Mysore and the English forces during the Second Anglo-Mysore war.

The Rajas of Kozhikkode, Kadattunad and Kottayam with the help of Tellicherry Factors made an attempt to ward off Hyder Ali’s power from Malabar. Pazhassi Raja rendered valuable services in protecting the Factory at Tellicherry in the Second Anglo-Mysore war. He detached a troop of 2000 Nairs to Tellicherry.

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One division of this battalion captured the Mysorean out post at Muthanga in Wayanad. By the beginning of 1782, the threat of the Mysore forces was cleared, for the time being, from Malabar. But the resident at Tellicherry made a proposal to the Governor of Bombay in August 1792, for recovering the expenses of the late war by an annual tribute of Rs. 1,00,000, Rs.50,000 and Rs. 25,000 respectively from the Rajas of Kottayam, Kadattunad and Iruvilanad in consideration of the countenance and protection by the Company.

The possession of Malabar by the Company did not last long, for according to the treaty of 1784, Tipu Sultan regained the lost territories of Malabar. The control over the spice trade of Malabar was essential to him as it would enrich his coffers. And the Second Anglo-Mysore war taught him the strategic importance of Malabar and the possession of it as an essential one for the safety of Mysore and its richness owing to the enormous spice trade.

Besides, Tipu demanded a huge amount of money from the chieftains of Malabar in the form of revenue. From the Southern states of Malabar, Tipu levied 3,63,264 Hoons for the year 1783-1784. Tipu, also collected from Kottayam 25,920 Hoons, from Chirrackal 56,392 Hoons and from Cartinad 27,000 Hoons were collected for the year 1783-1784. Even from the state of Cochin, he demanded tribute. From Cochin Tipu levied 1,30,000 Pagodas as tribute. Thus, from

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25 Mohibbul Hassan, History of Tipu Sultan, p. 140.
26 Joint Commissioner’s Report, Paras, 37, 56, 57, and 58.
   The value of one Hoon = Rs.3.50.
Malabar Tipu acquired a huge amount of money as revenue and tribute from the local chieftains. So he did not let the Company to retain Malabar under the sway of the East India Company.

Tipu, while he was levying huge amount as revenue from Malabar, he tried to establish peace and prosperity in Malabar by providing good governance and thereby to obtain the support of the common people. But his over lordship in Malabar was not hospitable to the chieftains of Malabar, and to the local population. Tipu Sultan, as discussed earlier (in chapter 1) introduced several innovative measures and steps in the revenue administration of the newly acquired territory. The people, who had till then, paid a fixed proportion of their produce in kind to the landlord, found the payment of land revenue in cash, a novel and complicated idea to accept. Moreover, the actual revenue settlement, made by the representative of Tipu Sultan, Arshed Beg Khan, was so enormous that the cultivators found it difficult to pay the predetermined amount in time.

The *Verumpattadars*, the intermediary classes in Malabar, were thus, motivated to revolt against the new revenue system imposed upon them. In most of these revolts, the leadership was given by Pazhassi Raja himself. In North Malabar, the Rajas opposed the occupation of their territories by Tipu Sultan and many of them sought the support and protection of the English Factory at Tellicherry. Tipu, so, sent a formal request to the Factors at Tellicherry, for not giving any more protection to the Rajas of Malabar. The heavy burden of revenue drove, even, the Mappilas of Eranad and Walluvanad to rise in revolt against the Mysorean authorities in

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Malabar. Tipu’s governor, Arshed Beg Khan, found himself incapable of managing the affairs in Malabar and requested his master to come down to Malabar and put down the rebellion of the people and the Rajas against him.

In view of the ensuing rebellious circumstances in Malabar, Tipu Sultan in person came down to Calicut in the month of April 1788, by the way of Thamarassery pass, without any army or train of artillery. He decided to punish the disobedient and recalcitrant chiefs very severely. He issued orders stating that:

……...every being in the district without distinction should be honoured with Islam, that the houses of such as fled to avoid that honour should be burned, that they should be traced to their lurking places and that all means of truth and falsehood, force and fraud should be employed to effect their universal conversion.

Tipu, then left Calicut and proceeded to the south bank of river Beypore, where he laid the foundation of his new capital for the district of Malabar and named it Farokhabad or Farrookhia. Here he founded a new fort, as the fort at Calicut was no longer tenable. The new capital was at the covering point of the new roads and many people from Calicut were compelled to settle down there. But after the Third Anglo-Mysore War, the English occupied Calicut and hardly any trace of the new capital was left at the newly built place.

33 Mohibbul Hassan, *History of Tipu Sultan*, P. 141.
34 *Joint Commissioner’s Report*, Para. 37.
The proselytisation process of the Mysorean authorities forced a great number of Brahmins, Nairs and their families to seek refuge in the princely state of Travancore.\(^ {35} \) The Rajas of Malabar, threatened by the forces of Tipu Sultan, were compelled to seek asylum in Travancore. Among the many Rajas who sought refuge in Travancore, one of them was the prince of Pazhassi from Kottayam. Before his flight to Travancore, the senior Raja summoned the youngest prince of the royal family, Kerala Varma, and exhorted him to safeguard the property and interests of his people.\(^ {36} \) Accordingly, Kerala Varma assembled the inhabitants and led them to a secure place at a new home on the hills.\(^ {37} \) The persecution of the Brahmins and others compelled the Rajas of Kadathanad and Kottayam to request the support and protection of the English East India Company and their assistance against the Mysore Sultan. They wrote individual letters to the chief of Tellicherry. One such letter from Pazhassi Raja declared:

…. In hopes of being able to protect the Brahmans and the poor, I have always obeyed the orders of the Sultan, but from the disgrace lately put on the Brahmans, I can no longer trust him and see no method of protecting them in this country. For this reason, I am to request the Company to take the Brahmans, the poor and the whole kingdom under their protection.\(^ {38} \)

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The numerous letters on the same line by various rulers of Malabar and the persecutions of Tipu Sultan had depicted him as a fanatic and a religious bigot. It should be remembered here that Tipu was not a religious extremist. It was his political motives and ambitions that made him to make forcible conversions in the territories that he had conquered. But certain colonial historians, like Mark Wilks and P. E. Roberts had depicted him as a religious bigot and narrated the stories of proselytisation, mass circumcision, the destruction of temples and the confiscation of temple lands. On the other hand Tipu was not a religious bigot but was a very liberal and tolerant ruler. He even gave patronage to other religions and used his state power for social reforms, welfare and economic progress of the people.

The advance of Tipu Sultan to Malabar and the weak position of the Company in the ensuing Third Anglo-Mysore War, forced the British authorities to seek the help and support of men and material from the native chieftains. The Company assured them the rights and privileges of the local rulers through a proclamation from Tellicherry in 1790. The Tellicherry Factory granted a cowl to the Rajas of Malabar on 4 May 1790, stipulating that the Company would enter heartily into the war against Tipu Sultan. The Cowl promised every ruler that:

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…… the English East India Company will assist and protect him and do everything in their power to render him independent of Tipu Sultan and if he enters into alliance with the Company on the same basis of friendship that formerly subsisted between both parties, that in future treaty that might take place between the Company and Tipu Sultan, he shall be included and considered as Company’s ally.\textsuperscript{44}

The conditions in Malabar were not so peaceful when the war broke out in 1790. In the North Malabar, the people were subjected to the ruthless intolerance of the Sultan’s conquerors. Similarly in the South Malabar, the principal land holders had abandoned at once due to the insurrection and the cruelties committed to the remaining Hindus by the Mappilas, to secure their property and estates.\textsuperscript{45} In this attempt they were successful. It was in this situation Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General in council, gave instructions to the Government of Bombay to encourage the Nairs and others in Malabar to throw off their dependence on Tipu and to engage on the part of the Company on condition that:

If they will submit, to be directed by us (the Company) in carrying on the war against Tipu, we will help them in future entirely independent of him and at the conclusion of peace to retain them upon reasonable terms under the protection of the Company. In order to secure the obedience of the Malabar chiefs, we should be contented with their paying a very

\textsuperscript{44} Joint Commissioner’s Report, (M.S.), Para, 69, see also, Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No. 2620, The Narrative Circumstances of Pazhassi Rebellion, (M.S.), p. 5.

\textsuperscript{45} J. Spencer and others, A Report on the Administration of Malabar, (M.S.), Para, 26.
moderate tribute, provided they will give the Company the advantageous privileges of commerce, in the valuable productions of the country.\textsuperscript{46}

To corroborate this, Robert Taylor, the chief of the Tellicherry Factory, guaranteed the Company’s protection against Tipu, for those who supported the Company and a warning to those who held back would be treated as enemies of the Company.\textsuperscript{47} Taking these promises at face value, the Rajas of Chirrackal, Kottayam, Kodattunad and other chieftains of Malabar readily accepted the terms. Thus the princes were carried away by offers and promises from the British, assisted the English army against the Mysore Sultan.

It should be remembered that in making such offers and promises, the Company was seeking more to maintain and protect its commercial interests rather than to safeguard the numerous native rulers and their subjects. The Company, to obtain the valuable products of Malabar, made use of the emerging situation in Malabar. The promise offered by Lord Cornwallis to the native rulers and the chieftains makes it clear and explicit that the motive of the Company was trade and profit rather than the well being of the people.\textsuperscript{48} Again, at a later stage, when the Joint Commissioners made the settlement with the native rulers, the commercial interest of the Company predominated.\textsuperscript{49} In this agreement the Company very specifically mentioned that the Government’s share of pepper should be delivered to the Company at a price fixed in every December and the remaining pepper to be purchased

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{47} C. A Innes, \textit{Malabar}, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{48} J. Spencer and others, \textit{A Report on the Administration of Malabar}, (M.S.), Paras, 26 and 33.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}, (M.S.), Paras, 80, 83 and 136.
exclusively by the merchants appointed by the Company\textsuperscript{50}. Thus, through these agreements the Company openly asked the rulers of Malabar to supply a definite quantity of pepper and all other products of their respective country only to the English East India Company and their merchants.\textsuperscript{51} In doing so, the East India Company was trying to regulate the commercial policies of Malabar, and at large of India and thereby to monopolize the trade in Malabar. It naturally created resentment among the people of Malabar.

The cowl issued by the Company for Kottayam was received by Kerala Varma, as the elder Rajas fled to Travancore at the time of Mysore invasion. When the Company offered its help, he readily accepted it. He soon sent 1500 Nair soldiers to the aid and support of Company’s forces under Major Alexander Dow.\textsuperscript{52} Another troop under Pazhassi himself captured the Kuttiyadi fort of Tipu Sultan in Malabar and seized the armory of the Mysore forces at Kuttiyadi.\textsuperscript{53} Later, it is interesting to see that, this fort at Kuttiyadi became an important arena of Pazhassi’s revolt against the East India Company.

Thus, believing upon the promises of the English, Pazhassi and his Nair militia fought whole-heartedly in favour of the Company against the Mysore ruler. But for the help of the Malabar chieftains, the defeat of Tipu might not have been brought out. The natural question that arises here is that, why did Pazhassi Raja and other Rajas of Malabar supported the English East India Company in the war against the

\textsuperscript{50} William Logan, \textit{Treaties and Engagements}, 2, 4, 5 and 6, pp. 140-148.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}, (M.S.), Para, 80, 83 and 136

\textsuperscript{52} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, \textit{Tellichery Factory Diary and Consultations, 28 April, 1790}, No. 1518, (M.S.), p. 89

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid}, 17 May 1790, No. 1518, p. 129.
Mysore chieftain, Tipu Sultan? The reason for rendering the support to the Company was that the Rajas of Malabar, just like the other rulers of India did not understand the real character and nature of the British when they were trying to establish themselves in Malabar. The chieftains of Malabar regarded the English as just like any other rulers who ruled India. So the rulers of Malabar co-operated with the English and supported them in the war against Tipu Sultan. However, after the defeat of Tipu Sultan, the English failed to honour their commitment offered to the rulers and chieftains of Malabar before the war with Tipu Sultan. Under the treaty of Seringapatam in 1792, Mysore was forced to cede Malabar to the East India Company. Thus, the new treaty signed between the Company and Tipu heralded the English reign in Malabar. Therefore the treaty of Seringapatam stands out as a landmark in the history of Malabar and Kerala.

The treaty of Seringapatam was, of course, a gain for the English East India Company. The possession of Malabar was never an unmixed blessing for the Company. The occupation and management of Malabar was distressing to the English. The twenty five years of rule by the Mysore rulers in Malabar brought a number of changes in the Malabar society, particularly in the countryside. Many rulers and people had fled to Travancore in fear of the atrocities committed by the Mysore rulers. Those who remained often stayed back in the jungles for they were afraid of the persecution or forcible religions conversion to the religion of Islam. This naturally resulted in the abandonment of the countryside by the common people. The traditional pattern of life of the people was completely shattered by the conquest

and possession of Malabar by Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. The introduction of a new land revenue system and the centralization of administration in Malabar were few innovations to the people of Malabar were considered. The landlord – tenant squabbles and hostile encounters together with the opposition of recalcitrant princes and naduvazhis created a chaotic condition in Malabar. The English were forced to adopt vigorous methods to put an end to the animosities which prevailed among the Nairs and Mappilas of the respective regions. With all these, the task before the Company was a very hostile and difficult one. So in the fulfillment of the orders of Governor General, Bombay Governor, Jonathan Duncan appointed a Commission to enquire into the state of affairs of the Malabar chieftains and to make suitable agreements for the future governance of Malabar. The Commission it was further intended would put an end to all internal dissensions among the chiefs and secure all advantages of revenue and commerce, under the regular administration of justice.

To sum up, the appointment of a commission to Malabar was aimed at finding out how the maximum revenue could be extracted from the region, without causing much hazard and expenses to the Company. It also looked at for asserting its political interests in the region, so that the monopoly of trade may be established.

The question that worried the Commissioners was whether the Rajas should be retained or not. The Commissioners found it difficult to administer the whole province of Malabar by the Company itself. The Company was short of trained administrators and personals and was inadequately informed of the Province at that

59 *Joint Commissioner’s Report*, (M.S.), Para, 80.
time of occupation. Meanwhile Tipu’s power was not totally annihilated and so the English was not prepared to bear the exclusive charges for the defense of Malabar. So the Commissioners asserted that the Raja’s could rule the Provinces far better than the English could and thereby retained the Rajas, at least in title for some time.

Once the peace was restored in Malabar, the fugitive Rajas and the local people began to return from Travancore from their banishment. When they returned to their original home they thought of restoring their lost possessions and power. Moreover, they were determined to reassert their authority, prestige and lost position. The same issue became more crucial in the state of Kottayam. The senior Raja of Pazhassi, who entrusted Kerala Varma to protect the people and the country from the menace of Mysore rulers, was anxious to avoid any disturbances during the evening of his life, and so decided to stay back at Travancore in the remaining part of his life. The second prince of the family, Veera Varma, who hesitated and declined to protect the people, during the Mysorean maladministration, lost his position in the political hierarchy of Kottayam. But the Company in compliance with the request of the prince restored to him the districts of Thamarassery and Kurumbranad, on condition of only taking one-fifth of the revenue for their maintenance. Kerala Varma, rightly considered it as an offence; though he stood gallantly with his people,
he was denied of any reward, while the other Rajas who fled during the Mysorean interventions where the given their lost territory.

The Kadathunad Raja and the Chirrackal Raja were the first to enter into an accord with the Malabar Commissioners.\textsuperscript{66} Kadathunad Raja, after little hesitation signed an agreement with the Commissioners, which stipulated that:

Firstly, the Raja has to remain in the exercise of his entire rights, subject only to the control of the Company, in case of oppression of the inhabitants.

Secondly, a Resident or \textit{Diwan} should reside with him in the court to inquire into any complaints of oppression.

Thirdly, two persons on the part of the Company and as many as that of the Raja to make valuation of the revenues of each district,

Fourthly, the Company and the Raja should jointly ascertain the amount of revenue payable to each subject.

Fifthly, the amount of the tribute payable by the Raja to the Company would be settled in the month of October according to the appearance of the crop.

Sixthly, the share of pepper to the Government should be delivered to the Company as part of their tribute at a price to be fixed in the month of December.

Seventhly, the remaining pepper from the territories of the Raja will be purchased by the merchants appointed with inclusive privilege by the Company.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Joint Commissioner’s Report}, (M.S.), Para, 83.

\textsuperscript{67} J. Spencer and others, \textit{A Report on the Administration of Malabar}, (M.S.), Para, 42.
The Commissioners entered into similar treaties of agreement, with the same provisions agreed upon with the Kurumbranad Raja, was also signed with the Raja of Chirrackal and other major chieftains of Malabar.

The Commissioner discussed an agreement with Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam. He hesitated to sign the contract for he opposed the assumption of the real power by the Company in his territory. Under the agreement, the Raja would become a mere revenue collector, and the administrative rights were not granted to him. So he became, in the eyes of the English, the most intractable and unreasonable Raja of Malabar.68 He staunchly argued that he should not be asked to pay the revenue exceeding Rs. 17,000 nor surrender pepper produce above 100 kandis.69 However, at length, after much hesitation, he agreed for a temporary settlement with the Commissioners on 4 May 1792.70

The Joint Commissioners after a few months entered into a definite settlement with Kerala Varma on 29 October 1792 at Tellicherry. With the signing of their agreement, the Company became the rightful sovereign of Pazhassi, Kuttiyadi and Thamarasseri taluks, by virtue of the cessions of Tipu Sultan.71 Through this treaty, it was agreed that the pepper produced in the country should be collected for the Company and revenue of Rs. 20,000 for the said taluks would be paid in coins or its equal in pepper.72 In order to encourage the cultivation of pepper, the earlier custom of taking one half of the pepper production of the tillers by the East India Company

68 Joint Commissioner’s Report, (M.S.)’ Para, 136.
69 Ibid, 1 kandy = 640 lbs
70 William Logan, Treaties and Engagements, 2, 6, p. 148.
72 Ibid
was revoked. Instead the Company had to purchase the whole produce at the rate of Rs. 100 per Tellicherry *kanti*. The Raja was expected to collect the pepper from the people and deliver it to the Company at Tellicherry.\(^{73}\)

The agreement reached in 1792 was only an annual settlement. This was to ensure that it could be revised for the progressive improvement of the exploitative interests of the Company. This was the logic behind revoking of the various settlements engaged with various local chiefs in Malabar. Since the rates assessed in 1792 were very low, the Company itself enhanced the amount to Rs. 55,000 subsequently.\(^{74}\) Though this was a decent offer from Pazhassi Raja, the Company declined to enter into any permanent agreement with him. The making of permanent settlement will affect the income of the Company. Kapil Kumar, so argued that, if the Company entered into any permanent agreement with the local rulers in India, it would keep the East India Company’s income a static one.\(^{75}\) It was because of this fact that the Company did not make any permanent settlement with Pazhassi Raja. The absence of a permanent settlement with the Raja naturally provoked him to decline the British authority and to act independently in his domain. Further, the Raja requested the Company that he would directly collect the revenue and passes the same to the Company in the form of tribute. But the Company envisaged that it would collect the revenue directly from the peasants. This new mechanism for land revenue collection eliminated the functions which Kerala Varma had in Kottayam earlier as its

\(^{73}\) *Joint Commissioner’s Report*, (M.S.), Para. 147

\(^{74}\) *Ibid*., Para, 262.

legitimate ruler.\textsuperscript{76} So he discarded the agreements in the treaty and began act independently of the Company.

The ruler of Kurumbranad and the uncle of Pazhassi Raja, Veera Varma, became jealous upon the agreement signed between the Company and Pazhassi Raja. He claimed an ascendency over the country and offered an agreement for a rate higher than the one offered by Pazhassi Raja. Since the Company also got disgusted with Pazhassi Raja, found it as a golden opportunity to eliminate him from his authority over Kottayam. Veera Varma made a misrepresentation before the Malabar Commissioners that he was the \textit{de facto} sovereign of Kottayam, Parappanad and Kurumbranad. Due to this, the legal claim over these countries were ignored by the Commissioners, and in accordance with the claim of Veera Varma, revenue agreement was made with him for the seven taluks of Malabar.\textsuperscript{77} Thus the claims of Pazhassi Raja was scrapped by the Company and acknowledged the illegitimate claim of the Raja of Kurumbranad to collect the revenue from the domain of Pazhassi Raja. So pazhassi Raja wrote to the Superintendent of the Company, Christopher Piele that the country given by his predecessors to him will not be lost just because of an agreement made with the Kurumbranad Raja.\textsuperscript{78}

In making an agreement with Veera Varma of Kurumbranad, the Company found that he was the one who conformed to the ideas of the Company’s rule and was comparatively easier one to make an agreement. Though the Company was not convinced of the integrity and honesty of Veera Varma, it found this as an occasion to

\textsuperscript{76} Bonaventure Swai, “Notes on the Colonial State with Reference to Malabar in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} Centuries”, \textit{Social Scientist}, Vol.6, 1978, pp. 44-65.

\textsuperscript{77} William Logan, \textit{Treaties and Engagements}, 2, 7, pp. 149-150. The seven taluks were Kurumbranad, Payyanad, Kotekat, Payurmala, Ittyakumpuram, Periya and Warkepuram.

exact their influence over the internal politics of Malabar and extract the maximum from the people of Malabar. It was because of this character of Veera Varma, William Logan wrote:

Veera Varma appears to have been an intriguing sort of individual, always ready to grasp at for personal advantages ……They (the Commissioners from Bengal and Bombay) found him to be a very convenient stalking horse for bringing the Zamorin and the other Rajas of Malabar to terms for he was apparently willing to accept the management of any districts belonging to the people on any terms so long as these promised to be of advantage to himself personally.79

Whatever be the nature and character of Veera Varma, the Joint Commissioners found it comfortable to make a contract with him. He functioned in terms of the agreements made by the Company and assured repeatedly his dependability and obligation to the Company and calling upon the Company for assistance whenever a problem arose in his territory. He was concerned more about the economic advantages rather than the preservation of his political sovereignty, when the agreement was reached upon with the Company. He was not worried about the fate of the people under his jurisdiction. He was guided by his personal gain and interests rather than the welfare of the subjects.

It is interesting to note here that Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and Veera Varma of Kurumbranad were blood relatives and both of them faced the same problem in the face of the English East India Company. Yet there were certain discrepancies among these two rulers in the eyes of their subjects. During the

Mysorean invasion Veera Varma fled to Travancore while Kerala Varma remained in his kingdom and took care of his subjects and the territory. This gave Pazhassi Raja an added advantage and reputation in and outside his country and among the people of his country. Moreover Pazhassi Raja regarded the fulfillment of the religious duty as one of his major task and responsibility as a ruler and naturally the local population also felt the same that he had discharged it well. The people as well as the senior Raja of Kottayam, who still lived at Kottayam, wanted to see the religious festivals and religious practices, which were disrupted owing to the continuous conflicts, and the occupation of Kottayam by the Mysore rulers, had to be adhered to and practiced once again.  

So the senior Raja of Kottayam and the people of Malabar supported Pazhassi Raja rather than Veera Varma of Kurumbranad, ever since the occupation of Kottayam by the English East India Company.

The agreement that had been entered between the Company and the Kurumbranad Raja provoked Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam. He now began to oppose the Company openly. He brought to a standstill in the revenue collections of his district and caused disturbances in Kottayam and Wayanad districts, the territories of Pazhassi Raja. He even violated the terms of the agreement made with the Company. He began to mobilize the peasants and other people against the Company and the Raja of Kurumbranad and rebelled against them. He even forbade the renovation of a mosque destroyed by himself at Kutali. They started the construction of the mosque in defiance of the authority of their late chieftain Kerala Varma

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80 Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, pp. 113-114.

81 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541, *Narrative of the Occurrences Leading to the late Cotiote Rebellion*, (M.S.), Para.42. (Hereafter *Narrative of Cotiote Rebellion*).

Pazhassi Raja and thereby hesitated to give the Raja the traditional *kannikka* or gift deserving to him. It was a custom in Malabar to present the *kanikka* to the reigning Raja of the land before starting the construction of a temple or a mosque. In this context the Mappilas declined the payment of the traditional *kanikka* to Pazhassi Raja. So Pazhassi Raja sent his men under Kalliadan Emmen to bring the leader of the Mappilas, Talib Kutti Ali, before the Raja. Since the Rajas men tried to obstruct the construction of the mosque, it led to an engagement between the two parties. The leaders of both sides, Kalliadan Emmen and Talib Kutti Ali, along with six other Mappilas were killed in the engagement between the two sides. When the Company asked for an explanation for this incident, KeralaVarma ironically referred the matter to his ‘elder brother’, Veera Varma of Kurumbranad. He even threatened the Company that he will cut off all the pepper vines, if it fixes the revenue by counting the pepper vines. The East India Company reacted to these overtures of the Raja by despatching and stationing two troops at Kutali and Pazhashi. Thus from the very moment the Company began to ill-treat him, the Raja reacted to it by differing with them. He rejected the authority of the Company and acted as if he was the sole protector of all norms and regulations of Kottayam. Thus the disturbances brewed in the minds of Pazhassi Raja against Company and it ultimately led to the outbreaks between the two in course of time in Malabar. It is interesting to observe

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83 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541, *Narrative of the Occurrences Leading to the late Cotiote Rebellion*, (M.S.), Para, 9 and 10

84 *Ibid.* Para 10 and 11


here that in all these attempts of the Raja, the common people of Malabar rendered support to him.\textsuperscript{87}

The Company at this juncture was not prepared to provoke the Raja as it was not prepared for an immediate battle with the Raja. There was every possibility on the part of Kerala Varma to enter into an alliance with Tipu Sultan and to turn against the Company. Further, the Company was not prepared to face another resistance movement immediately after the war that had just concluded with the ruler of Mysore. This compelled the Company to make certain concessions to the Raja by entering into a new treaty regarding the collection of revenue in his territory.\textsuperscript{88} Besides this the Company, through another agreement certain concessions and grants were made in favour of the temples and for their expenses. But on account of these, the temple lands and its properties had to be deposited with the Company. Again a grant of one-fifth of revenue for his personal expenses and another one-fifth for his religious ceremonies and festivals were also sanctioned by the Company to the Raja.\textsuperscript{89} Thus, the Company tried its best to ameliorate the situation and thereby pacify all the ill feelings of the Raja and the people towards the Company.

It is in this context, it may be asked, why the Company had accorded to such liberal terms to Pazhassi Raja. The Company upheld that the Raja had supported them with men and arms, during their war against Tipu Sultan. Moreover, the Company did not want to displease and disturb the people of those localities on account of these issues, until the final settlement regarding these questions was


\textsuperscript{89} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2620, \textit{Narrative Circumstances of Pazhassi Rebellion}, (M.S.) Para, 10-12.
arrived at. The Company also felt that it was also their responsibility to look after the welfare of the people, so that they will get an uninterrupted supply of pepper and other products from the region. The Company believed that if the region continued in disturbances, it will adversely affect its interests in Malabar. All these prompted, rather compelled, the Company to make an agreement with Pazhassi Raja. Whatever be the case, these special considerations brought tranquility in North Malabar, at least for a short period of time.

Revoking of the settlements, entered with the native rulers, was one of the basic characteristics of colonial exploitation followed by the English East India Company in India. The Company after annulling the previous settlement and made a fresh one with the native rulers. When James Stevens Senior was appointed as the Supervisor of Malabar, he found that the terms of agreements with the Malabar chieftains as impolite and improper as well as opposed to the regulations framed by the Governor General on the Joint Commissioners’ Reports.  For He, therefore, revoked the annual settlement with the chieftains and concluded engagements for a term of five or ten years. Thus the Supervisor James Stevens Senior went ahead with the execution of quinquennial agreements with the Rajas and chiefs of North and South divisions of Malabar. These leases, after recapitulating the provisions of the Commissioners’ agreements of 1792 and 1793, prohibited the levy of all exactions recently abolished and allowed only the collection of land revenue and the charges for collection. It also permitted for the deductions for bringing up waste lands into cultivation. But in reality, the temple lands and private lands of the Rajas were left

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out of assessment in the new agreement reached upon between the Company and the Rajas.\textsuperscript{91}

The new agreement reached upon between them was for five years and fixed the revenue to be collected and payable to the Company by each Rajas or chieftains\textsuperscript{92}. A similar agreement was effected with the Rajas of Kottayam and Parappanad. For Kottayam, the quinquennial settlement was signed with Veera Varma of Kurumbranad; once again, repetition of the same old blunders committed by the Company earlier.\textsuperscript{93} In this agreement it included the district of Thamarassery and eleven \textit{desams} of Pulavayi as appendages of Kottayam. The signing of such a treaty once again with Veera Varma, was naturally a re-assertion of his authority over Kottayam and ignoring the personality of Pazhassi Raja. This brought in an impasse in the region and bore disastrous fruits immediately.

Kerala Varma, who was humiliated by the new arrangements, began to instigate similar other dishonoured chieftains of Malabar to violate the laws and regulations initiated by the Company. In Iruvilanad the Mappilas had killed one of the people of Narangoli Nambiar, a supporter and follower of Pazhassi Raja. The Nambiar retaliated to it with by killing three Mappilas.\textsuperscript{94} It was believed by the Company that the event was instigated by Pazhassi Raja, as the Nambiar fled and sought the protection of Pazhassi Raja. In spite of the Supervisor’s remonstrance, the

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{92} The gross revenue realizable was first estimated and from it 10 percent was deducted as charges of collection, 20 percent was fixed as allowances for the Raja or Chief and 3 ½ percent for temple lands and Rajas or chiefs private property.

\textsuperscript{93} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2620, \textit{Narrative Circumstances of Pazhassi Rebellion}, (M.S.), p. 17.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, pp. 15-16.
Raja protected the Nambiar and his people.\textsuperscript{95} The Company asked the Raja to seize the Nambiar and send his people for trial before the court of the English. But the Raja argued that he would seize him and take necessary penal actions against him.\textsuperscript{96} The Company, then, declared the Nambiar as a rebel and confiscated his land and property. These actions on the part of Kerala Varma demonstrate that he was asserting himself as the ruler of Kottayam. But the Company could not overlook these defiant actions of the Raja and so decided to teach him a lesson. It stationed detachments of troops in the central part of Kottayam to overawe the Raja and his adherents and also for realizing the whole of the collections of revenue from Kottayam.\textsuperscript{97}

Meanwhile, Veera Varma once again entered into another agreement with the Company for repaying the arrears of the Company for the year 1793-1794 amounting to 75,300 Viraraja fanam.\textsuperscript{98} Moreover the Company also assured him all the means of effectual support to realize the balances. This agreement created much discontent among the people. They felt it as an additional burden, because they had to pay the revenue for the year 1796 as well as for the year 1793-1794. It is interesting to observe here that Veera Varma was trying to assert his control and authority deeper and deeper in Kottayam. It may be because of this fact that he made repetitive agreements with the Company for Kottayam. The more he makes the agreement, the more he was opposed by Kerala Varma and his people.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid, pp. 16-17
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid, pp. 18-19
\textsuperscript{98} William Logan, \textit{Treaties and Engagements}, 2, 90, p. 231.
\textsuperscript{3 ½} Viraraya fanam = 1 Rupee.
The Company failed to realize anticipated amount of revenue collection from Kottayam, even after employing forces. Instead the arrears were mounting up. So the Company now understood that without checking the rebel chief and the collaborators of the rebels, it could not work effectively. So it was determined to oust Pazhassi Raja from Kottayam. For this a force was sent to capture the palace and the person of Pazhassi under a detachment led by James Gordon. The forces, consisting of 300 men marched from Tellicherry and surrounded the fortified house of Pazhassi at the day break. It raided the headquarters of Pazhassi but to the surprise of the English, the Raja had escaped to the jungles of Wayanad, four days before the arrival of the Company’s militia. The frustrated troops then took away the properties and the treasures worth Rs, 17,000 from the palace.

The Company regarded the murder of the Mappilas by Pazhassi Raja as an apt reason for their military action at the Pazhassi palace. But the Raja argued that he had not infringed the Company’s regulations on any occasion and so they had to return him the looted wealth. The Raja wrote that he was quiet anxious about the event and was hopeful the the honorable Company will do the necessary for the return of his wealth. The British now through a proclamation declared that they had come to protect the local people from the oppression of the Raja. By making such a proclamation, the Company hoped that they could gain the support of the people and there by turn away the people from the Raja to the Company. But the Company failed

100 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541, Narrative of Cotiote Rebellion, (M.S.), Para. 51.
102 Ibid.
103 Margret Frenz, From Contact to Conquest, p. 116.
miserably in this effort and the people continued their loyalty to the rebel prince of Kottayam.

The retreat of the Raja to the jungles of Wayanad, owing to security and safety of his person was a matter of worry for the English. The Company was very much apprehensive of the rebel Raja that he would be thrown into the hands of Tipu Sultan of Mysore. If the Raja made an alliance with the Mysore chief, the position of Company in Malabar would become precarious. The Company was very particular in averting such a possibility. Besides, the rebels were giving the least respect to the orders and proclamations of the Company and are acting upon by their will. They were stealing and carrying off the whole of cardamom and paddy collected by the revenue collectors of the East India Company. They even took away the whole amount of revenue collected by the officers of the Company.\textsuperscript{104} The rebels dispersed their people above and below the mountains, erected barriers and refused the payment of taxes, either to the Company or its allied princes and cut off all the sources of British communications in Malabar and the rebellion affected areas.\textsuperscript{105}

Thus, when the Company failed to put down the rebels through arms, it chose the other way and began to pacify them. It agreed to restore to Pazhassi Raja, his palace and property, after he had paid a visit to Colonel Dow. However, the Company obtained a security and surety from the Raja of Kurumbranad for the quiet and peaceful behavior, as well as for the subordination of Pazhassi Raja to the Company. The Company also obtained the same from four principal inhabitants of

\textsuperscript{104} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541,\textit{Narrative of Cotiote Rebellion}, (M.S.), Para. 147.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, Para, 151.
Kottayam.\textsuperscript{106} By this security, the Raja of Kurumbranad agreed that he will submit the rebel Raja to the decisions of the Company and compel the rebel Raja to obey the rules and agreements of the Company’s Government in Malabar. He also agreed to pay the Company a penal amount of Rs. 2,000 on demand, if Pazhassi Raja desisted from this agreement.\textsuperscript{107}

The flop of all these agreements was that they were entered with the Raja of Kurumbranad. None of these treaties were signed with the rebel chief, Pazhassi Raja. As the Raja found that his country and properties were not fully restored to him, he decided to stay back in the jungles. The Raja made a written complaint to the Northern Superintendent of Malabar, Mr. Christopher Peile to restore his palace and treasures.\textsuperscript{108} He also intimated Peile that it was impossible for his people to pay the over assessed amount of tax that the Company was demanding from the people.\textsuperscript{109} He wrote in October 1796 to Christopher Peile to make his stand more clear to the Company:

\begin{quote}
\ldots on arriving in Nittur, only a part of the wealth taken away from Pazhassi was brought back. That too, is with a third party. Besides this, people who believe and stick to me, are compelled to pay money over and above the normal taxes in the country. Some have already left the country because of this unbearable taxation.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{106} The four inhabitants were Payaveetil Chandoo, Ganavadiat Nambiar, Morongolatu Unniara Nair and Govinda Tanga; \textit{Narrative of Cotiote Rebellion}, (M.S.), Para, 57-58.


\textsuperscript{108} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541, \textit{Narrative of Cotiote Rebellion}, (M.S.), Paras, 84-85.

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{110}
Though the Company employed armed men to support the revenue collectors, it could not make considerable progress in the realization of revenue. On the other hand the Raja ordered the people not to pay any revenue to the English, but to himself from 14th and 15th of October 1796 onwards.111 Staying back in the impenetrable jungles, the rebel Raja wrote letters to various chieftains and revenue collectors of his kingdom from forbidding the collection revenue. He wrote to Appukutty, the revenue collector of Kalliat on the 12th October 1796:

……. in the office of Kalliat Etava, you must not receive money, rice or pepper henceforth. In need your attendance here.112

A similar letter was written to Rama of Kuttiyadi on the 17th October 1796:

……. don’t allow yourself to take any money from the inhabitants or else your blood will pay for it.113

To Arady Chandoo also the rebel chief wrote on the 18th October 1796:

……. the money to be collected by you as holding the office in Cudali, I desire, you will not receive it. Also you should not receive rice or pepper from the people.114

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111 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2620, *Narrative Circumstances of the Pazhassi Rebellion,* (M.S.), pp. 76-77.


The numerous letters written by the Raja asserts that he was the real ruler of his country and so no one is allowed to collect revenue from his domain. It also establishes the real character and authority of Pazhassi Raja in his territory. The negation of taxes and the forbidding of paying the assessments were seen in almost all peasant movements and rebellions. The imposition of taxes threatened the subsistence and violated their customary practices. The avoiding of tax claims, flight or evasions had threatened the sovereign privileges of the state. Thus the goal of all these peasant resistances is not to overthrow or transform a system of domination but to survive.\(^{115}\) Therefore the rights in law to taxes, rents and property that are consistently violated in practice by the rebels and these become customary or traditional violations in all the resistances. The core of any rebellion during the colonial days was the declaration of the prohibition of the collection of revenue from their respective regions by the rebels. It was due to the self interests of the Raja or the rebel chief who makes such a declaration.

Thus, whatever be the idea behind these letters, it had great impact upon the people of Kottayam. It enabled him to increase the number of his adherents. Besides, these, the letters of the Raja served had a dual function. On the one hand they were an exhortation to the people, not to pay the revenue to Company which was an alien one in the Malabar society. So, with these letters, the Raja was trying to assert his authority and power in his territory and indirectly declared that he was the sovereign of the land. On the other hand, these letters were instruments to mobilize the people to his side. The pronouncement of non-payment of taxes to an unfamiliar power made the people to support his cause with great joy and enthusiasm. Further they

asserted the fact that Kerala Varma was their real ruler and it was to him that the people should pay the revenue. In other words, the people of Kottayam would not accept the suzerainty of the Kurumbranad Raja and the Company but only the overlordship of Pazhassi Raja.

The immediate consequence of these pronouncements by the Raja was that the rebels blocked the traffic through the Kuttiady Ghats. They cut off all the communication belts of the Company’s forces between low country and the upper country.\textsuperscript{116} The rebels were concentrated in the upper country where they can easily attack the enemy and hide in the thick jungles. Further the Company’s regular forces found it difficult to move through the jungles and subdue them. Moreover, the Company was not receiving its due share of revenue from the people. So they desired to appease the Raja and the Commissioners were asked to settle the issue as early as possible in an amicable manner. Meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja wrote a penitential letter to Colonel Dow, by the end of June, in whom he had much confidence, alluding to his evil fate, which had compelled him to move away from his ancient abode to this strange habitation. He also agreed that he will comply to the regulations of the English authorities, if he is pardoned and his property be restored. It was because of the heavy rains during that time and the difficulty he faced in the jungles, prompted him to write such a letter to Colonel Dow. In pursuance of this, the Northern Superintendent under Colonel Dow’s orders, the property of Pazhassi Raja was restored to him except the treasures.\textsuperscript{117} In due time, the orders from Bombay and Supreme Government were received in approving the reinstatement of the Raja on


\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Ibid.}
account of the cowl granted to him by the Chief of Tellicherry. But these orders were not directly communicated to the Raja. They were sent through the Raja of Kurumbranad whose agents omitted to communicate them to the Raja and pay over him the money taken at the sack of his palace by the East India Company earlier.

Table 3.1

Table showing the details of the important supporters of Pazhassi Raja and the number of their followers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Value of their assets</th>
<th>No of followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Parappanad Raja</td>
<td>Parappanad</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kannoth Sekharan Nambiar</td>
<td>Kannoth</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Kaithery Ambu</td>
<td>Manathery</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Elumbalaya Kunjan</td>
<td>Maithhuri Munda</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Puthiyaveetil Rairo</td>
<td>Kathiroor</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Kaithry Kanmaran</td>
<td>Ermudi</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Kaithery Emmen</td>
<td>Hallayath</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Mena Koran</td>
<td>Purali Helabur</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sekhara Warrior</td>
<td>Parappanad</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Paithalottu Nair</td>
<td>Nettur / Kottayam</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Mailadan Kannachan Nambiar</td>
<td>Kathirur / Pookkott</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541. *Narrative of Cotiote Rebellion* (M.S.), Paragraph 171.

This insidious act on the part of the Company made the Raja more vindictive towards them. He felt himself betrayed and thought the treaty as trap to secure his person. This made him to stay back in the impenetrable jungles and to organize revolt against the Company. The Raja, so decided to stay back in the jungles and from there he led the revolt against the Company and their agents in Malabar. He tried to instigate as many chieftains as possible against the Company. By this time many landlords and chieftains of Malabar openly defied the authority of the English and


supported the rebel cause of Pazhassi Raja. Among them the Parappanad Raja, Kannoth Sekharan Nambiar, Kautheri Ambu, Elumbalaya Kunjan and Puthiya Veettil Rairo were prominent ones.120

From the jungles, in defiance of the authority of the Company, the Raja spread menacing and inflammatory olas121 (Palmyra leaves) throughout the country. These were intended for alarming the inhabitants against the Company as well as to impede the regular collections of revenue from Kotayam and Wayanad.122 We could see similar writings of letters instigating the people to revolt against the English in the Santhal uprisings and other related movements.123

So the writing of letters and propagating them among the common people were a frequent strategy adopted by the rebel leaders. It had of multiple objectives: Firstly, it enables the rebels to spread their messages and ideas secretly to their followers and supporters. Secondly, it could ensure the support of the people of his domain to the rebel leaders. Thirdly, the writing of letters was a common medium of communication during such rebellions. Finally, it was used to threaten the people when they were moving away from the rebel camp to the opposition. Thus the writing of letters (olas) by rebel leaders was a universal strategy adopted in similar resistance movements. It had the desired effect: the rebel influence spread openly as well as clandestinely. The inhabitants of Wayanad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad and Iruvilanad

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\begin{itemize}
\item[120] Ibid, Para. 171.
\item[121] It was palmyra leaves that were used during those days to write letters to intimate anything to others.
\item[122] William Logan, Treaties and Engagements, 2,130, pp. 268-269
\item[123] Ranajith Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, Delhi, 1986, p. 112.
\end{itemize}
joined their leaders in the exile.124 Thus the insurgents drew more strength and vigour against Company and its forces in their engagements.

At this juncture, the Company deployed more troops at Periya and other rebellion affected areas to protect the ingathering of the cardamom and other crops. The strategy of the Company could be as much to keep an eye on the rebel chief as to protect the ingathering of crops and thereby to obtain a steady supply of them to the men of Company. But this act of the English increased the suspicion in the minds of the Raja and his men. He now began to make overtures to the Mysore ruler, Tipu Sultan. The Coorg Raja, an ally of the Company, informed the English that Kerala Varma had met the Killader of Tipu Sultan at Karkankotta.125 Further the Pazhassi Raja and Parappanad Raja visited Tipu Sultan during the month of December 1796, when he visited Edai Kottai, and obtained permission from him to erect a fort at Kuniyatta for the stationing of the rebel troops.126 These preparations made by the Raja and his entering into an alliance with Tipu Sultan naturally augmented the anxiety of the Company and it became suspicious of the designs of Pazhassi.

The Company understood that attacking the rebels without proper preparation would not have the desired effect. So it decided to change its strategy, at least temporarily. The Company made a proclamation calling upon the rebel Raja’s followers to break off their allegiance to Pazhassi and his leadership. Through the proclamation the Company threatened the public that if they do not heed to the proclamation and did not return to their normal duties, they would be regarded as

126 Ibid.
irreconcilable enemies of the Company.\textsuperscript{127} The proclamation did not have the desired impact upon the rebels. They only moved further into the interior of the jungles and made more preparations against the Company. The Commissioners warned him that if he escaped to the jungles he would be hunted from jungle to jungle and condemned to lead a life of a vagabond.\textsuperscript{128}

Without caring for these warnings and proclamations, the rebels assembled in groups above and below the mountains of Wayanad and they erected obstacles to the forces of the Company. From the caverns of the mountains, they organized the people against the English and led the resistance against the Company. The rebels gained the support of the peasants and entered into alliance with numerous chieftains of Malabar. The Gounders of Coimbatore, who were annoyed by the vexatious restrictions on their commerce, with West Coast, allied themselves with the rebels of Malabar and supplied them with arms and ammunitions.\textsuperscript{129} The Mappilas, who remained restive, for a long time, on account of their sympathy for Tipu Sultan and due to the rule of the Company, began to support the rebels and supported them with money and other essential things required for them.\textsuperscript{130} The tribals of Wayanad, the Kurichyas and the Kurumbas, also actively supported the rebels and fought on the side of Pazhassi Raja.\textsuperscript{131} The often asked question that emerges here is that why the various categories of people render their support to the rebels in Malabar? It was because of their personal interest that they turned towards the rebels in Malabar. The trade motives of

\textsuperscript{127} William Logan, \textit{Treaties and Engagements}, 2,130, pp. 268-269.

\textsuperscript{128} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No R253, \textit{Report of the Malabar Committee Regarding the Cootioe Rebellion}, (M.S.), p.2. (Hereafter Malabar Committee Report)

\textsuperscript{129} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No R253, \textit{Malabar Committee Report}, (M.S.), pp. 130-135.

\textsuperscript{130} Margret Frenz, \textit{From Contact to Conquest}, p.119.

\textsuperscript{131} P. N. Chopra, et. all. \textit{History of South India}, Vol. 3,p. 121.
these people were the underlying current behind it. Also the continuous interference of the Company might have affected the peaceful cohesion of these people in Malabar. So they naturally supported the rebel prince, Pazhassi Raja.

The insurgents at this instant turned towards Tipu Sultan of Mysore for his assistance and support against the English in Malabar. Kerala Varma, accompanied by other chiefs of Malabar paid a visit to Tipu Sultan, when he arrived at Karkan Kotta. They accepted the allegiance of Tipu Sultan, who in return, agreed to supply 200 horses and stationed 6,000 Mysoreans at Karkankotta, on the Wayanad frontier, equipped to help Raja’s people in driving the Company’s troop down the Ghats and out of Wayanad and thereby to provide fresh stores to the rebel chief, in case of an emergency.

By January 1797, open hostility broke out between the rebels and the Company. The insurgents wiped out the British battalions posted at Pazhassi and took over the Company’s militia at Peria and Mananthawady. All the remote military posts in the country below the Ghats were in a state of siege and the convoys of provisions sent to them were attacked and looted by the rebels. The Bombay Government rushed in new reinforcements and appointed General Bowles to command the operations against Pazhassi Raja. After several skirmishes in Wayanad, the rebels were able to restore their control over Wayanad. But under the leadership of General Bowles, the armed forces of the Company overwhelmed a body of rebels led by Kaitheri Ambu near Kottangadi and occupied Todikalam. Yet, in many other engagements against

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132 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541, Narrative of Cootiote Rebellion (M.S.), Para 161.
134 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No R253, Malabar Committee Report, (M.S.), pp. 135-137.
the Company, in other places, the rebels were successful. They were undeterred by these reverses.

The rebels, under the capable leadership of Pazhassi Raja, were following the guerilla mode of warfare against the Company’s forces. Why the Raja did resort to the guerilla warfare? The Raja knew very well about the strength of the English and an open fight with them would definitely have ended in the failure of the rebels. Very often the peasants and the similar categories of discontented people in the society constituted the followers of the Raja. They lacked discipline and ample leadership qualities, which would be necessary, if the opposition, were of the organized sort. The peasantry was better suited for extended guerilla style campaigns of attrition which required little or no-coordination. In a number of engagements, that followed, the English army met with reverses. The Company’s forces found it difficult to move through the thick jungles of Wayanad as easily as that of the rebels. Their unfamiliarity with the terrain and the mountainous and jungle nature of the country contributed for the failure of the Company’s armed forces. The Company’s militia often found it difficult to secure provisions in the densely wooded terrain of Wayanad and its adjacent regions. Moreover the assistance from the Mysore Sultan to Pazhassi Raja and his people was another reason attributed for the set back of the English in Wayanad. So the Company was unprepared to face a prolonged guerilla war adopted by the rebels. All these compelled the English in Malabar to withdraw from the warfare, at least for time being to save its face.

The Company, at this time, feared, about a protracted threat from an alliance between Tipu Sultan and the French as the rivalry between France and England was

once again revived in Europe. Moreover, Tipu was attempting to make overtures with the French.\textsuperscript{136} It was also reported that Pazhassi Raja was also trying to make an alliance with Tipu Sultan.\textsuperscript{137} Also, the Mappilas, who had remained restive for a long period entered into secret alliance with the rebel leader under their leaders like Athan Gurukkal, Chempan Pokker and Unnimootha Mooza.\textsuperscript{138} Due to these precarious situation prevailed in Malabar, the position of the Company became shaky and was rendered alarmingly critical, by means of a prospect for an attack on British territory, by the Mysore Sultan, which was opened up to his territories. So the English in Malabar was bound to make a peace with Pazhassi Raja, in order to save their face in Malabar.

Meanwhile, Jonathan Duncan, the Bombay Governor and General Stuart arrived, in person, to Malabar, to investigate the state of affairs in the district.\textsuperscript{139} Duncan made negotiations with all concerned parties and finally decided to repeal the quinquennial lease entered with the Kurumbranad Raja for Kottayam, a repeated and untenable grievance put forward by Pazhassi Raja against the English East India Company. So a proclamation was made on 4 May 1797, vesting the management of Kottayam and its revenue affairs to the Northern Superintendent, after it was relinquished by Kurumbranad Raja.\textsuperscript{140} Thus the door was opened up for bringing the matters of dispute to an amicable settlement and the Company was prepared for negotiations.

\textsuperscript{136} P. N. Chopra, et.al, History of South India. p. 96.

\textsuperscript{137} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2541, Narrative of Cottiote Rebellion, (M.S.), Para. 179.

\textsuperscript{138} K. Rajuwan, South Indian Rebellion, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{139} C. A. Innes, Malabar, p. 174.

\textsuperscript{140} William Logan, Treaties and Engagements, 2, 137, pp.273-274.
The Company appointed the Raja of Chirrakkal as the mediator to make peace with the rebel Raja. In this intercession he was assisted by the adopted Raja of Parappanad, from the Kottayam family, and Dewar Bhandari, a Konkan and one of the chief pepper merchant of the Company. This led to the making of peace on 23 July 1797. The settlement provided for the transfer of tax collection of Kottayam to the senior Raja of the Kottayam family, hitherto a resident in Travancore.\textsuperscript{141} It was agreed by Pazhassi Raja and in return he was granted with an annual pension of Rs. 8,000, as a compensation for the plunder of his palace and he was granted a pardon for all that had been done towards the Company.\textsuperscript{142} The senior Raja now took control of the district. Thus the treaty brought temporary armistice in Kottayam and the rebellion ended temporarily.

In this context, it is useful to look into what actually prompted both parties to confer for a treaty. The Company, a very powerful one could have rooted the rebels very easily. But it failed to do so. On the other hand, the rebel Raja had wide support from the people of the region. Even then he agreed for a ceasefire with the Company. It was because the Raja and his men were tired due to the long sojourn in the jungles. The supplies of arms and other provisions to the rebels were dwindled by this time. It was also possible that he wanted to buy time to come out of the jungles and mobilize the whole masses against the English and thereby to make a more vigorous ambushment upon the Company. This is what he had asserted when he revolted against the English for a second time. At the same time the Company found itself on the verge of a failure. It too wanted some more time to make preparations for another fight against the rebels in Malabar. The possibility of a war with Mysore was also

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid. 2,140, p. 275.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid. 2, 150,151,152, pp. 285 – 286.
looming ahead of the English in India at that time. Therefore, the East India Company found it was better for them to retire for time being and counter it when a suitable occasion turns up. This was the reason, perhaps, both parties agreed upon for a peace settlement in 1797.

There were no large scale military engagements between Pazhassi Raja and the Company after the settlement of 1797. It had brought in peace in Malabar for some time. Even though there were provocations from both sides, the two parties remained controlled. In 1798 Tipu despatched a message to Kerala Varma directing him to send his trusted lieutenant, Emmen Nair, to Seringapatam, so that a force could be sent to assist the rebels in Malabar. Emmen Nair refused to go to Mysore and Malabar did not present any threat to the Company even when the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War was going on between the East India Company and Tipu Sultan of Mysore.\textsuperscript{143} In 1799, the Malabar Commissioners found that the situation in Malabar was still unstable and stressed the need for keeping Malabar under the strict surveillance of them. It was during this impasse, both parties were suspicious of each other and doubted the artificial silence prevailed between them. All these contributed for further provocations and insurrection in Malabar.

\textsuperscript{143} TNA, Political Consultations Emmen Nair, 1 November, 1800, Letter to Major Walker, Madras, Vol. 4, pp. 731-736.