CHAPTER II
EMERGENCE OF COLONIALISM IN MALABAR

PART I

2.1 EMERGENCE AND IMPACT OF THE PORTUGUESE DOMINATION IN MALABAR

Portugal is a tiny country situated in the western part of Iberian Peninsula in southwest Europe. They were the men of war and adventurism in the medieval history of the world. The Portuguese were the first European colonial power endeavoured in undertaking the task of founding a new maritime trade route to Asia in order to cheek the Arabs’ trade monopoly in the eastern waters. Above all, the mission of creating a powerful and an upright Catholic Christendom and the establishment of a permanent territorial domination were also included in their strategy in the eastern expedition.

2.1.1 THE ADVENT OF THE PORTUGUESE

From the time when the Portuguese anchored off Calicut was the beginning of the closing stages of Arab maritime trade monopoly in the south western seaboard of the Indian Peninsula. Even though they succeeded in creating stumbling-block to the advancement of the Arab trade as well as deteriorating the Zamorin’s supremacy over Malabar, the could not achieve something like to create an empire in Malabar or elsewhere in India. Sardar K.M.Panikkar, a well-known scholar of medieval history, points out that it is customary to speak about the “Portuguese Empire” or “Portuguese Power” in India as if it were something distantly alike, and predecessor to, the British Empire. This feeling is reflected in the writings of most of the European writers. The Portuguese, themselves, held that they were the “Lords of India”; and, European writers have, almost without exception, echoed this view. The Portuguese never had any “empire” in India. They had a few coastal towns, and their authority never extended beyond a few miles of their naval bases. The only territorial possession of any
considerable extent over which they ruled was Goa - and Goa was an easily defensible island. As against the rest of the European Powers they had a monopoly of Indian trade for about a century. But even this monopoly of trade, based as on naval supremacy, was accepted by Indian powers. The Sea power of the Zamorin of Calicut was effectively broken, with the capture of Kunjali’s\(^1\) fort in 1599. By that time the Dutch had already entered the arena and had become a serious rival on the sea. Thus, in no sense there is any justification for the facile statements commonly made about a “Portuguese Empire” in India or even an effective Portuguese Power as a factor in Indian politics.\(^2\)

So far as Malabar was concerned this was undoubtedly the case. The hundred year’s war with the Zamorins, which was essentially a bid for land power, failed miserably with the recapture, of the fortress at Chaliyam by the combined armed forces of the Zamorin. The Portuguese commercial monopoly and political authority did not have any influence on the area between Cannanore and Cranganore, and nowhere did it extend beyond the ports in which they had built fortresses of their own. Such fortresses existed at Cannanore in the land of the Kolathiri Rajah of Chirakkal, at Cranganore, at Cochin, at Porocaud and at Quilon. In these places, and especially at Cochin, something like political suzerainty was developed, but its extent was limited by the fact that the power of the Rajahs concerned did not extend beyond a few miles of territory.

The navigating activities of the 15\(^{th}\) century by the Portuguese were mainly conceived with the object of circumventing the Muslim control of the Red Sea. The desire for maritime exploration and discovery was given a great and lasting impetus in that country by the adventurous spirit and career of Dom Henry, Duke of Viscau, better known to the world as Prince Henry the Navigator. It was Prince Henry who conceived the idea of reaching India by rounding the southern point of Africa. The discovery of the se-route to India was a great event from the point of view of the results that followed from it. But as a feat of exploration, or even of nautical adventure, it was of no importance. The historical results that have flowed from the direct contact of European

\(^1\)Kunjalis were the native Muslim naval admirals of Zamorin, the King of Calicut.
Powers with India and the commerce and wealth the control of the Indian seas has given to Europe, have shed an exaggerated light on Vasco da Gama’s achievement as the foundation of a new sea route to India. He had in fact nothing to do with the conception or the planning of the project. It had already been planned by Dom Joao following the traditional policy of Dom Henry; and in this Dom Joao had at his disposal the expert advice of Abraham Ben Zakut. Even the instructions to Gama were drawn up in consultation with him. The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope by Diaz had partially fulfilled the dream of Dom Joao; and the plan itself was matured and its organization undertaken by Dom Manuel, on the basis of authentic information gathered by the Court during half a century of exploration. Moreover, India was in no sense a terra incognita. It was in close contact with Europe, through the Venetians and the Muslims. Besides, the sea-faring people on the Coast of Africa, consisting mainly of Arabian settlers, knew the routes and the winds, and da Gama had the help of competent Arab pilot\textsuperscript{3} supplied to him by the King of Melinda. He was not sailing in uncharted seas like Columbus or Magellan, but sailing along recognized routes to a country which was situated at a known distance from the African Coast.

The real importance of the new “discovery” lay in the fact that it broke the monopoly which the Venetians and the Egyptians had so long enjoyed in the trade with India. Before that time no European nation since Alexander’s time had come into direct contact with India. Egypt, by its position, had stood as the intermediary between India from Europe. Till then its intercourse with outside peoples was confined to those that lived on its north-west frontier. Indian rulers had not realized the possibilities of sea power and the political strength that it can bring. Vasco da Gama created for India a new frontier and with it new political and commercial problems.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{3}Vasco da Gama was guided by an Arab navigator and theorist of navigation of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century namely, Shihabuin Ahamad Ibn Majid al Najdi, because of his ‘scientific generosity and openness’ Gama reached Calicut. Popular book of Majid was \textit{Kitabul Fawaid fi Usulil Bahri wal Qwaid} in the field of Oceanography and navigational theory.

\textsuperscript{4}See for more details, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, \textit{The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama}, see also Wiliam Wilson Hunter. \textit{A History of British India}, pp. 93-84.
2.1.2. PORTUGUESE ENCOUNTER WITH MALABAR’S NAVAL POWER

An analytical study of the historical forces which shaped Portugal as a maritime power highlights that some of such forces were prevalent in the Kingdom of Calicut also. Kerala had a great maritime tradition from the time immemorial. This great maritime tradition was kept going during the medieval period. Among the rulers of medieval Kerala, the credit for having bestowed special attention on the maintenance of a navy goes to Zamorins, the rulers of Calicut. They organized one of the best fleets of the day and its command was entrusted to the Kunjali Marakkars who were known for their superb skill in navigation and proficiency in sea-warfare. In fact, the history of the Portuguese relations with Malabar in the 16th century is the history of Kunjali Marakkars who sacrificed their lives and property in defence of their land and the sovereign. When the Portuguese challenged the freedom of the Indian Seas and endangered the safety of the Malabar Coast by carrying fire and sword, the Marakkars rose as one man under the banner of Zamorin and inflicted many defeats on them. These brave seamen fought fearlessly and defeated the Portuguese and have left a distinct mark on India’s maritime history. The encounter lasted for a century when the Marakkars engaged themselves in a deadly grapple with the world’s greatest maritime power of the 16th century and reached the climax in the near disaster of the Portuguese in Malabar.5 Their lives reflect glory and honour on all Malabar people for their achievements against the naval domination of the Portuguese and form a great chapter in the history of this region. 6

During the 100 years of wars with Portuguese, the Marakkar family had produced a succession of four remarkable Admirals, but there were fifteen Zamorins in succession on the throne of Calicut. Frequency of death and succession brought to the Zamorins who were weak and wavering and ready to compromise. Besides, political exigencies arising from the long-continued war with Cochin entered Zamorin’s calculations in regulating his relations with the Portuguese. But during this period, the dynastic policy of the

6 As a befitting reward for the heroic role played by Kunjali the naval captain of Zamorin, one of the Indian Navy’s battle ships is named as ‘INS-Kunjali’.

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Marakkars remained steady and resolute. Kunjali III, the greatest of Calicut Admirals foresaw the danger and warned his King Zamorin when the latter allowed the Portuguese to build a fortress at Ponnani. So he established a fort at Puduppanam to counteract the danger to which Zamorin’s fatal concession had exposed the whole scheme of Calicut’s naval defence. His nephew, Kunjali IV defected and rebelled against the Zamorin and the Portuguese who were waiting for an opportunity took advantage of this defection to create a rift between him and Zamorin. The tragic end of Kunjali IV was a shameful incident marking the end of the power and prestige of the Zamorins. It is a blot on the Zamorin that he let down the most reliable servant and allowed him to be done to death by the Portuguese. It is stated that, “The end of Kunjali Marakkars is one of the tragic episodes in the history of Malabar and it is all the more so in view of the ignoble treachery of the Zamorin who was once his Lord and Master. It is an irony of history that the Marakars who had all along been the main support of Zamorin’s power and strength in his fight against the Portuguese had to be crushed by an unholy and opportunistic alliance between the Zamorin and his traditional enemy”.

The valour of the Kunjali Marakkars medieval period “could be equated to any one of the commodores of that period. However, the institutions of caste, hereditary occupational system, traditional ship-building, lack of capital formation etc. had arrested the growth of Calicut Kingdom as a maritime state”. Its ongoing grudge with Cochin and Kolathunad were well exploited by the Portuguese for their nationalist advantage in Asia. The maritime fortresses like fort St. Angelo and Chaliyum turned to be the daggers drawn against the Calicut Kingdom. These fortresses safeguarded the political and maritime interests of the Portuguese. This situation was well implicit by Kunjali Marakkar IV, who also strengthened the maritime fortress at Kottakkal at the river mouth of Puduppattanam. The Construction of a self-governing fortress which was absolutely necessary for keeping up the maritime interests; but it became an act of suspicion for the Zamorin. The Portuguese exploited this situation and alienated the Vassal from his overlord. As such

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the forces of history were taking a new dimension in Malabar which finally culminated in overthrowing the native ruler by the foreign intruders.  

A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, points out that the opposition of the Malabar seamen was in the long run unsuccessful. Though their opposition was courageous and inspiring, and it went a long way in weakening the Portuguese hold over coastal kingdoms of Kerala, their trade and naval strength did not revive, even after the decline of Portuguese power. The Portuguese monopoly was complete. By establishing forts at Malacca (1511) and Hormuz (1515), the Portuguese were able to cut off Malabar trade with the East and the West. The Muslim merchants were not permitted to trade in all merchandise except goods in which the Portuguese had little interest.

K.N. Chaudhuri, observes that the Portuguese knew many military reverses suffered in Africa, the Red Sea, India, and Indonesia that they were too weak on land to defend a determined enemy assault. He adds that by the first decade of the sixteenth century, the period of peaceful sailing was over in the Indian Ocean. Whoever controlled the sea was in a position of overwhelming commercial and political superiority. But such absolute power was never within the grasp of the Portuguese. Their naval victories in the Indian Ocean were due to the fact that the land-based Asian empires and strong political Kingdoms were not able to put to sea effective fighting ships.

2.1.3 THE POLICY OF PORTUGUESE TOWARDS VARIOUS RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF MALABAR

According to K.M. Panikar, the Portuguese policy towards the Indian communities in Malabar is of interest. From the social and political point of view it may be noted that converts to Christianity enjoyed all the privileges of the Portuguese citizens, and no distinction based on colour or race was recognized. The main and central fact of

9 Ibid., pp. 112-13.
their relations with Indian communities was the encouragement of inter-marriage. The Portuguese had no kind of racial prejudice, and from the very beginning their relations were socially cordial. Albuquerque\textsuperscript{12} started a policy of encouraging intermarriage, presiding at the functions himself and giving dowries to couples so married.

Towards the Muslims the attitude of the Portuguese was one of inveterate hostility. Their goal was to root out the trade of the Muslims so far as possible. This was not only due to commercial rivalry, but to a hostility which the Iberian Powers had inherited from their long-drawn out fight with the Muslims in Spain and Africa. Whenever a Muslim was captured the most barbarous tortures were inflicted on him and he was either killed or made a slave. The whole history of the Portuguese in India is nothing but a commentary on the statement of Barroes that the Muslims were the "Enemies of God".

Sheikh Zainuddeen, in his celebrated work, \textit{Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen}, while praising the Hindu King Zamorin for his service to Islam, exhorts Muslims to fight for the Zamorin against the Portuguese and recounts some of the wicked acts of which Portuguese is guilty. He narrates\textsuperscript{13}:

"I would have it understood, that the Mahommedans of Malabar formerly lived in great comfort and tranquillity, in consequence of their abstaining from exercising any oppression towards the people of the country; as well as from the consideration which they invariably evinced for the ancient usages of the population of Malabar, and from the unrestricted intercourse of kindness which they preserved with them. ............the people of Europe, the Franks, Christians by religion, who began to oppress the Mahommedans, and to bring the ruin amongst them; being guilty of actions the most diabolical and infamous, such indeed as are beyond the power of description: they having made the Mahommedans to be a jest and laughing-stock; displaying towards them the

\textsuperscript{12}Albuquerque was then the Portuguese Governor in Goa.
greatest contempt; employing them to draw water from the wells, and in other
menial employments; spitting in their faces and upon their persons; hindering
them on their journeys, particularly when proceeding on pilgrimages to Mecca;
destroying their property; burning their dwellings and Mosques; seizing their
ships; defacing and treading under foot their archives and writings; burning their
records……”

The Translator of the Work, Lieut. M.J. Rowlandson, endorses the work of the
author and comments that “…therefore (one on which he might have been expected to
exaggerate), the Sheikh appears to have been guilty of no exaggeration, it is not
unreasonable to suppose, that in general his account of the tyrannical and oppressive
conduct of the Portuguese whilst in Malabar, is not overdrawn.”

As Hindus had the dominance on the land of Malabar, the Portuguese enmity was
comparatively less to them. The Portuguese relations with Hindu elites and Rajahs in
Malabar were very cordial from a social point of view. “When friendly relations existed
between the Zamorin and the Portuguese, the scruples and superstitions of the Hindu
ruler were respected by the Portuguese”. Towards the warrior race, (the Nair community)
as a whole they dealt with great consideration. The policy of religious maltreatment
against the Hindus, “which was attempted in Goa”, was never operational in Malabar.

The conversion of the inhabitants of the lands so discovered was to be one of the
objects of Portuguese policy. In fact Dom Joao II, who was the real originator of the
expedition, had much of this evangelistic spirit in him. To the pious kings of medieval
Europe conversion of the heathens seemed to be an imperative duty. As opined by K.M.
Panikkar, neither King Manuel, who succeeded Dom Joao, nor Vasco da Gama, the
leader of the expedition, had any ambition in this direction. The Christians of the Syrian
Church had been treated generously by the native Hindu rulers who had allowed them to
live without any mistreat or interference. They lived in religious matters under their own

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Metrans and Bishops. And yet, though the Hindu Rulers had treated them like this, at the very first opportunity, they hastened to renounce their allegiance and to accept the sovereignty of the King of the Portugal. The native Christians of Malabar did not have any forethought as they were going to be trapped themselves in to a reign of religious terror and oppression by this change which was to culminate in the Synod of Diamper.

The Portuguese policy towards the native Christians developed with their increasing authority. The newly converted Christians in Cochin and Quilon were declared to be under the judicial protection of the Portuguese. Under Albuquerque a new policy was initiated of expelling non-Christians from within the walls of Portuguese fortresses. This order led to a number of conversions in Cochin and in Cranganore. In the time of Joao III, evangelization was taken up as a main object of policy. The King was particularly anxious about the spread of Christianity and wrote to the Viceroy Joao de Castro demanding that all the power of the Portuguese should be directed to this purpose. The policy of conversion was naturally unsuccessful in Malabar, where the population was under the rule of Hindu Rajahs. The narrow spirit of intolerance which animated the Portuguese was, therefore, felt more by the native Christians than by the Hindu population. The Portuguese Christians always looked upon the local Christians as heretics. Mr. Pius Malekandathil observed that “the Portuguese, who had come to India in search of “Christians and Spices”, found a new type of Christianity in this land,

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16Ibid., p. 183.
17The ‘Synod of Diamper’ of 1599 was taken place at Udayamperur of Kerala. In which the native Christians were converted through coercive methods into the supremacy and orders of Rome. For this purpose, Alexix de Meneses, arch bishop of Goa went church to church and made all possible methods to get the native Christians to the authority of Rome. Though a great synod was held in 1599, the Syrian Church refused to accept the decisions of the Synod and continued in its affiliations to Antioch. Subsequent to the Synod of Diamper, there originated two conflicting group in the land of Malabar. This was resulted into the ‘Coonan Cross Oath’ in 1653, it was a sectarian revolt in response to the Synod of Diamper. A Syrian priest namely, Ahatulla was sent to Malabar by the Arch bishop of Babylon on the way he was stopped by the Portuguese at Mylapore. At the same time a rumour was spread that Ahatulla was killed by the Portuguese. As a result of that incident thousands of Christians attacked the Portuguese at Cochin and demolished it. Then they moved towards the ancient church at Mattanchery and took an oath by putting their hands over the curved cross. They declared that they would not obey the Arch Bishop Gracia in the future. This incident was known as the Coonen Cross Oath. (For more details see, T. K. Gangadharan, Kerala History (Calicut: University of Calicut, 1998); see also William Wilson Hunter, A History of British India; K.M. Panikkar, Malabar and the Portuguese, 1929.)
18Ibid., pp.185-86; see also Pius Malekandathil, “The Portuguese and the St.Thomas Christians”, The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India, 1500-1800 (Fundacao Oriente, 2001). pp.121-143.
altogether different from what they had known and practiced. The Lusitanians did everything possible not only to protect them but also to understand them by learning their customs and habits. However, hasty generalizations based on misconceptions often undid what they actually wanted to do. Though the official Portuguese approach was to affect a rapport between these two ethnically divergent Christian communities, members of the native Christian community would by no means part with traditional customs and liturgical practices. We find in the relationship between the native Christians and the Portuguese a transition from the phase of co-operation to that of conflicts in the second half of the Sixteenth century. ....when we review the period from 1505 to 1570, one thing is certain: The Portuguese were not able to bring about socio-cultural changes among St. Thomas Christians in this period to the extent they wanted. Even where they succeeded, the changes were limited only to the upper strata, while the deep undercurrent kept up a silent protest against these changes."19

2.1.4 DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF THE PORTUGUESE DOMINATION

The Portuguese relations with Malabar lasted for over a period of 150 years. Politically, economically and socially, the adventures that followed Vasco da Gama represented a type different from those to which Malabar was accustomed.

i. Political

Politically the most important result of the Portuguese establishment in Malabar was that it checked the development of Malabar into a single confederacy under the Zamorins. The whole history of the 160 years, from the establishment of a factory by Cabral at Cochin to the capture of that fort by Van Goens, may be summarized from the point of view of Malabar as a successful attempt by the Rajah of Cochin, with the help of the Portuguese, to stem the tide of the expanding power of the Zamorin. Cochin was reduced to an absolute dependency of Portugal. But, while the Cochin Rajah grew powerless as against the Portuguese Captain who could at any moment reduce his palace to ashes, he became a powerful Ruler as against the princes and Chieftains of the interior.

19Pius Malekandathil (2001), pp.142-143.
From a local Chief of no importance, the Cochin Rajah, with the help of the Portuguese, rose to the position of a powerful prince, independent of the Zamorin and a rival to him in the claim of allegiance of the southern princes. The policy of the Portuguese was to deal directly with the small princes and Chiefs and to conciliate them by money gifts. By this method the Portuguese were able to safeguard their commercial interests; and at the same time see that no Malabar Ruler became powerful enough to drive them out of Cochin or Cannanore. The increased power of the smaller Chiefs was a direct result of the decisive check to the growth of the Zamorin's royal power. It put back the clock of Malabar history by 200 years, and perpetuated the division of the country into small principalities, each jealous of its neighbour and carrying on interminable feuds with others. It was this state of political disunion, which the Dutch took great care to foster, that made Malabar an easy prey for Haider Ali. 20

Sreedhara Menon observes that on the eve of Portuguese arrival the Zamorin of Calicut was making a bold bid for the political unification of Kerala under his hegemony. The arrival of the Portuguese reversed this process and accelerated the pace of the “Balkanisation” of the country. The political disunion of Kerala thus sedulously fostered by the Portuguese helped to sustain the political vacuum in the country and paved the way for its conquest by the Mysore rulers and the English in the later period. 21

So far as administration was concerned, the Portuguese in India developed nothing in the nature of an efficient system. From the earliest times, they showed themselves to be corrupt, inefficient and altogether unfit for the arts of government. The Portuguese soldiers were certainly brave and cared little for life. Some of their leaders were chivalrous and honourable men; but few are the names in Portuguese Indian history that could add to the military glory of Portugal. Duarte Pacheco and Alfonso de Albuquerque are the only two names who could bear comparison with men like Bussy or Dupleix, Clive or Goddard. 22

20 K.M. Panikkar (1929), op.cit., pp.204-06.
The connection of the Portuguese with India was mainly a question of trade. What Almeida and Albuquerque desired was to turn to Portugal the whole commercial wealth of India. It is characteristic, therefore, of the Portuguese relations with India that, while their political prestige diminished and their fortresses and factories were defenceless, the trade continued to increase. Till the very end of the Portuguese maritime supremacy the commercial value of the Indian connection kept on rising. But it is at the same time true that the administration itself was never properly solvent. From the very beginning, the Officers had no other object but private gain. Nepotism was another vice among the Portuguese authorities. The Governors and their officers brought out to India their sons and nephews and placed them in their career of peculation. It can be imagined what utter demoralization would characterize an administration based on these principles. There was no honesty in public services, no discipline in the army and no loyalty towards each other.

ii. Economic

By the entry of Portuguese, Malabar underwent even greater changes as far as economic contributions are concerned. The Portuguese introduced into Malabar a number of new products such as the Kishu tree-still (cashew-nut) known in Malabar as the Feringhee tree. They introduced tobacco and its cultivation and also introduced great changes in the cultivation of coconut. M.N. Pearson states that “In a material sense, we know that the Portuguese introduced from South America many crops which today are thoroughly adulterated in India. The list includes chilli peppers, pineapples, maize, cassava, cashew trees, cucumbers, avocados, guava and tobacco. But again we must be careful not to exaggerate the Portuguese achievement.” Whatever the case may be, all these products brought here from the South American countries, and so would have been carried from Europe to the Indian Ocean through the land routes.

23Ibid., p.199.
24Ibid., p.201.
Also, they created a world market for Malabar products. The direct exportation of pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, and other Malabar produce into Europe created a great demand for them. The Muslims had merely bought what had been produced in the country. The Portuguese were anxious to get as much as could be produced and even put pressure on Chiefs and Rulers to encourage pepper and ginger cultivation. The Portuguese had put a stop to the historic commercial connection between Malabar, Arabia and Egypt. The trade was more widespread, and the resulting prosperity was also not confined to ports or small communities but to the whole people. The construction of houses on European models became trendy.  

iii. Military

The influence of Portuguese also transformed the traditional methods of the warfare in Malabar. The old methods of Malabar warfare underwent great change. Firearms became common and helped to increase the power of the Chiefs and Rajahs. Fortifications were undertaken in a more systematic manner- both the Zamorin and the Rajah of Cannanore had trained artillery men in their service. The local rulers also initiated to transfigure the conventional seafaring methods with help of Kunjali Marakkars - the naval admirals of the Zamorin.

iv. Educational

Portuguese influence in the field of education is also worthy to note. The colleges founded at Angamali and Cochin for the education of Malabar Christians in the Roman Faith was useful in spreading the knowledge of Latin and Portuguese. The later Rajahs of Cochin conversed fluently in Portuguese, and often corresponded directly in that language. As a result Portuguese continued to be the diplomatic language of the Malabar Rulers till the establishment of British supremacy. The Portuguese were also forced to learn Malayalam for their own commercial and political purposes.

The Portuguese founded theological Seminaries and Colleges at Cochin, Cranganore, Angamali and Vaipincotta for the purpose of training Christian priests. The Portuguese period also marks the beginning of Indological studies and research by European scholars. Garcia da Orta’s work on the medicinal plants of India is one of the earliest studies on the subject. St. Francis Xavier translated the Catechism into Malayalam.27

v. Cultural

M.N. Pearson, points out that it is sometimes claimed that the Portuguese brought the fruits of Renaissance Europe to India. He observes that, this is a problematic claim. First, Portugal in fact did not share fully in the series of developments collected together as the Renaissance, especially as the Church, and the Counter Reformation, was too influential. The persecution of Portugal’s important Jewish population, which persisted after they had either converted or been expelled, also had long term effects on Portugal’s intellectual life.28

Also, a long-standing hundred and fifty year of Portuguese trade had seen the development of many new towns and the decay of old ones. Calicut continued to be the most important town on the West Coast; but Cochin, which had come into existence as a result of a great flood in 1341 and was only an unimportant village when Cabral arrived there, had risen to the position of a very important commercial centre. However the older towns of Quilon and Cranganore vanished a great deal of its significance.

2.1.5 IMPACT OF THE PORTUGUESE DOMINATION ON THE MAPPILAS

The end of the Portuguese hegemony in Malabar witnessed a new set up in the socio-economic life of the region. This change occurred mainly due to the attitude of the

28M.N. Pearson op.cit., p. 61.
Portuguese traders towards the local people and partly due to unrealistic and opportunistic policies of the regional rulers. The hundred years war against the foreigners till the end of the sixteenth century compelled the Mappilas to move towards inland from the coastal areas in search of new pastures. This process added to the land tenure position in Malabar which was already beset with problems related to land ownership. The commercial economy, which was controlled by the Muslim merchants, was shifted to the European hands. The long fight against the foreigners had made the Muslims weak and poor and most of them had become petty shopkeepers and landless peasants. Their migration to the inland made the rural situation more complex. The inland movement of the Muslims created a new atmosphere for the numerical growth of the community. The growth of inland trade brought Muslims from Tamilnadu to the border areas of Kerala. The influx of Labbias and Rawthers from across the Ghats was occasioned by these increasing trade facilities.29

The resistance movements organized by the Muslims affected their social and economic status. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, the Muslims were the leading business group in the land. The local rulers of the coastal region depended on them for financial help. There was nobody to question their monopoly of trade. But the resistance movement, which almost lasted for a century, impoverished them. Their position as the leaders of trade was also lost as they had to divert all the resources at their command to resist the enemy. As a result of the long fight against the foreigners the Muslims were reduced to a pitiable condition. They lost in the economic struggle because of their devoted loyalty to the country. 30

An influential school of history holds that the benefits, which India has received from the direct contact with Europe, are of such a nature that, in spite of all their faults, the Portuguese should be considered as the pioneers of civilization and as the forerunners of the British Empire. It may be permitted however, to question the correctness of the point of view, wrongly called historical, which thus tries to import retrospective values

into events of an earlier date. Even accepting that the connection with Europe has been beneficial to India, it is open to doubt whether a century and a half of barbarous outrages, of unscrupulous plunder and of barren aggression, is not too great a price to pay for the doubtful benefits of having the way opened for other European traders. India’s own direct trade was ruined, and, in its place, there established a monopoly by alien races, which had the effect of draining the wealth of India into Europe. The Portuguese could not even claim what the Muslim rulers of India could legitimately put forward in their justification, that they had a cultural contribution to make to the life of India, such as we may, even now, see in the magnificent architectural monuments at Agra, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Lahore, and many other places. The Portuguese of the 16th and the 17th centuries had nothing to teach the people of India except improved methods of killing people in war and the narrow feeling of bigotry in religion. The relations between Portugal and India were barren of cultural or political results, and there is in that history nothing which any civilized nation can be proud of.31

The Portuguese had mastery of the Indian seas, but never had they the mastery of any area in India outside the range of their ship’s guns. The battles they won were more mythical than actual; and the pompous descriptions of Portuguese historians should not make us forget that all their campaigns were nothing more than indecisive skirmishes against very minor local chieftains. It is indeed a fine picture which writers have drawn for us—a small heroic country draining itself of its best blood in a great attempt to conquer and hold in India! But the picture has not even a background of truth except in the vainglorious phraseology of the Portuguese Kings, who called their administrative representatives, the “Viceroy of India”, and the few square miles of territory at Goa, the “Estado da India”.32

32Ibid., p.213.
PART II

2.2 EMERGENCE AND IMPACT OF THE BRITISH COLONIALISM IN MALABAR

The Britain was the last colonial entrant in the land of Malabar. When they established their power in north India and the East India Company acquired over the control of Bengal in 1765, almost the same time the British got the foothold over there in Malabar as well. After the fall of Tippu Sultan, they became the ever powerful European colonial power in India. Following the establishment of its rule in Malabar how its administrative policies created wider rift between the two major native communities - the Hindus and the Muslims and their influence radically transformed the entire social setup, revenue system, and the treatment of peasant classes and the landed gentry and the local chieftains and finally, all these factors culminated into various revolts and rebellions in the entire Kerala region during the British rule.

2.2.1 THE ARRIVAL OF HAIDER ALI TO MALABAR

The internal conflicts the Malabar has been witnessing for years between the numerous kings and rulers facilitated the invasion of Mysoreans. Though the real conqueror of Malabar was Haider Ali it has far reaching consequences in the history of Kerala by minor invasions of Mysoreans even before the arrival of the Hider Ali. In addition to the appeal made by the famous ruler of Travancore, Marthanda Varma in 1754 and the invitation jointly made by Ali Raja of Cannanore a feudatory of the Kolattiri chief and Capu Thampan one of the scions of the Kolattiri who aimed at independence to conquer Malabar, there were some political reasons too for the invasion of Malabar. It was a common phenomenon that every ruler will seek help from one powerful ruler whenever there is a threat to their existence. Here the Palaghat Raja sought help from the Mysorean army against the Zamorin in 1757. The Zamorin was left with no

33 Kolattiri is a ruler, who reigned in Kolottunad, of north Malabar.
option but to buy off the Mysorean army promising to pay 12,00,000 rupees. Haider Ali has sent his brother in-law to collect it. But taking advantage of the dissention in the Mysore capital opened negotiation with Dev Raj, one of the ministers of the Mysore Raja and got sanction to pay the amount direct to the government instead of paying to Haider Ali. Thus Dev Raj asked his Rajput Chief Hari Singh to go and collect. Haider Ali called back his army. But on his way he got the sad news of the death of his patron and returns. Here the Zamorin calculated that the internal condition is not stable and he can evade payment. But Haider Ali has never relinquished this war subsidy and collecting this war indemnity was another aim of the coming of Haider Ali. He had also in mind the punishment of the Rajah of Travancore for evading payment of compensation on behalf of the military preparation he has made. It's generally accepted that 'the actual cause was to that Haider Ali wanted to enlarge his domain and to establish his sway over this resourceful country with many natural harbours that were centres of world contact.'

However the coming of Haider Ali to Malabar was not without any resistance. They have to face the gallant resistance from the Nair warriors of the Calicut ruler, the Zamorin but as he tendered his submission he managed to enter Calicut. Haider received him kindly, and settled his military contribution at four lacks. 'Fearing treachery he sends his army to occupy Calicut.' and as the Zamorin delayed the payment Haider Ali imprisoned the former with his ministers and tortured the latter. The Zamorin fearing the same disgrace set fire to the house in which he was confined; and perished in the flames. The chiefs of Cochin and Palaghat at once bowed their heads to the conqueror, and Haider, after strengthening the fort at Calicut proceeds to Coimbatore.

35 It's said that the reason behind these numerous provinces is that the region was originally called Kerala. It was under the control of Cheraman Perumal, deputy of the kings of the Chera Dynasty. The last one of these Viceroy believed to be converted to Islam and decided to go for a pilgrimage to Mecca. Prior to his departure he divided his possessions among his chiefs. To the Kolattiri, he gave his regalia and the northern part of his territory. The southern part was handed over to the Udayavar of Venad, who are the ancestors of the Travancore raja to the Perimpatappa chief Cochin and to the Zamorain his sword and as much country as the crowing of a cock could reach and be heard in this context we have to read all the episode of rivalry among these petty rulers and its eventual culmination in the invasion of the Mysoreans.

Tippu Sultan, the son of Haider Ali succeeded him and brought important revolutionary reforms with far reaching impact on the life of the people which can be appreciated only if we recall the medieval features of Kerala society. The great significance of the Mysorean occupation of Kerala for more than 25 years lies in the fact that it marked an era of transition from the Medieval to the Modern. All the medieval institutions with their peculiar characteristics received a rude shock with the coming of the Mysoreans and were soon toppled down. Thus the medieval feudal system of Malabar by which the country was parcelled out into petty but sovereign principalities which through mutual jealousies and wars kept the country in a constant state of anarchy came to an end with the Mysorean occupation. “the whole of Malabar”, writes Prof. P.K.K. Menon, “came to be organised under one political control, land revenue administration was thoroughly overhauled and modernised, a new variety of coinage appeared and the system of communications registered an improvement”. The far deeper consequences are summed up by K.M. Panikkar who speaks about the effects of Mysorean rule on the society of Kerala in these words, “the social set up that existed from time immemorial was destroyed by the Mysorean rule. From its ruins, sprang up a new middle class society”. Every aspect of the traditional life of Kerala underwent a radical change. Hence to say that this period marked the end of medievalism and opened an era of modern and progressive ideas is by no means an exaggeration.37

When we think about the great man of the world who has changed the course of history we can not denunciate this self made man as one officer in the East India Service testifies ‘he was certainly one of the greatest princes, as well as the greatest warriors that India ever produced. His mind was so vast and comprehensive, as at once to reach to and embrace all the parts of war and government. It seemed as if all the qualities necessary to the foundation and permanency of a great empire were the earliest seeds that sprang up in his mind

2.2.2 ADVENT OF THE BRITISH POWER TO MALABAR

Like the other Western powers, the English also came to Kerala for the purpose of trade. In 1615, Captain Keeling concluded a treaty with the Zamorin according to which the English were to assist Calicut in expelling the Portuguese from Cranganore and Cochin. In return, the Zamorin gave the English freedom of trade in his dominions. In 1664, the Zamorin gave the English permission to build a factory at Calicut for their trade purposes.

By the end of 18th century, the British established themselves as a major political power in Malabar. Malabar was ceded to the English East India Company by Tippu Sultan as per the Srirangapatnam Treaty signed on 18th March 1792. The new colonial rule not only transformed the traditional socio-economic and political systems of this geographical area, but also destroyed the basic equilibrium of the Muslim society in Malabar. However, according to Stephen Frederic Dale, the Muslims of Malabar did not feel this change as intensely as the displaced Muslim aristocracy and large ‘Ulama’ class in the North India. The British triumph especially damaged the interests of the rural Mappila population, for in first defeating Tippu Sultan and then imposing their own administration they not only destroyed the autonomy of the Mappilas in the Southern Taluqs, but also made it possible for the propertied Hindu castes to reassert their social and economic dominance of rural society. Those castes also acquired new powers of coercion and eviction over their tenants in the rulings which British officers and courts made to regulate Malabar land tenures. By the time that these rulings and related measures concerning local administration were passed in 1818 there were already signs that some Mappilas would not readily accept their renewed but more rigid subordination in rural Malabar. The first act of defiance was openly sanctioned by a member of the Mappila Ulama thereby providing the first hint of the dominant role that the Muslim religious class would assume in the social and economic protests of Malayali Muslims during the British period. The genesis of the Muslim revolt could be opened here after the

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39 Ibid., p. 93.
British defeated Tipu Sultan and also their triumph thoroughly damaged the interests of the rural Malabar population and destroyed their autonomy over their land. The Muslim ulamas’ discontent on these policies also resulted in designing the operations against the British administrative excess.

With its new acquisition the British East India Company had realized the ambition of every European trading nation—the control of the coveted Malabar spice trade. Until the world wide wars with France in the middle of the eighteenth century the Company, unlike its Portuguese and Dutch predecessors and competitors, generally eschewed the use of armed force as a means of securing its trade. Indeed, until 1766 the Company’s settlements in Kerala were small and its interests were strictly commercial. The transformation of its role between 1766 and 1792 was almost entirely the result of the altered political situation in the Carnatic and Haider Ali’s rise to power in Mysore.\footnote{Ibid, 94.} By 1791 the East India Company’s troops had gained control of most of Kerala north of Cochin, and they seized this unique opportunity to realize the long frustrated European dream of controlling the spice trade by simply annexing the area.

The growing British hostility towards the Mappilas increasingly tended to be focused on the revenue question. The inability of the Zamorin to fulfil his Zamindari role forced the British to temporarily assume direct control of his revenue collections in 1796 CE. The Mappilas posed the greatest obstacle to revenue collections. In January 1797 the British discovered that their own officer could not even complete a survey of the southern taluqs because of the Mappila resistance, and even after two years the situation was virtually unchanged. It was only when several Mappilas organised an open military challenge to their authority in January 1800 that officials finally turned to systematic military suppression of refractory Mappilas, and in the course of suppressing the revolt they finally destroyed the autonomy which some Muslims had enjoyed for almost a generation.
British officials had from the very first promoted the restoration of the predominantly Hindu, *jenmi* (land lords) class. Their policy was only tempered by the perceived necessity of conciliating the Mappilas. The eagerness of men such as Duncan to act upon “the general principles of justice” and restore the old landed class stemmed partly from the consideration of the British alliance with the Malayali rajahs against Tippu Sultan, but it was also founded on the belief that in Malabar they had discovered a system of landed property perhaps even “more perfect than that of England”. 41 Closely related to the policy of restoring the position of *jenmis*, and later also connected with the problem of the Mappila outbreaks, was the preference shown by British administrators for upper-caste Hindus as local government officials.

It was the Mappilas willingness to challenge the existing order, particularly when that challenge was mobilized by the *Ulamas* that had prompted William Macleod in 1802 to deprecate the continued conversion of large numbers of fishermen, boatsmen, and coolies to Islam, a process he could almost observe from the Collectorate Office in Calicut. That is, as Muslims these castes shared an ideology.

There were, though, obvious analogies between the Mappilas’ situation and that of other Indo-Muslim communities which were socially and economically subordinate to a landed Hindu class whose interests were enforced by the mechanisms of British law and administration. 42 Introduction of newer colonial laws, including the laws of property ownership, taxation systems, official attitudes towards the Muslim community, etc, created great discontentment among the Muslims of Malabar which resulted in the upheaval of this community against the lords and the state in the beginning of the 20th century. Following sections of the chapter would examine these changes and the impacts of these into the Muslim community of Malabar during the colonial regime of the British.

Compared to other religious communities, the Mappilas of Malabar were backward in the realms of political, social and economic conditions during the 19th 

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41 Ibid., p. 105.
42 Ibid.
century. The company officials rather considered these groups as the helpers of the Sultan of Mysore and were very hostile to this community from the very inception of their occupation. Even the joint Commissioners reported that all the Muslims in Malabar had helped the Mysoreans and illegally occupied the landed property of the Hindus. Due to this every action of the Company was acceptable to the Hindus. The Hindu landlords also exploited this attitude of the company authorities and revenged the Mappila peasants as much as they could.

The harmonious relationship of the Malayali Muslims with the native Hindu rulers and cast aristocrats, prevailed in Malabar until the advent of Portuguese. This harmony began to deteriorate with the British colonial rule. Even though the Muslims of Malabar spoke Malayalam, the local language of Kerala and followed many of the traditional customs, they kept themselves their own separate identity from the medieval period. However, their relationship with the local rulers and that of the Nair aristocrats was a sort of 'harmonious symbiosis', as stated by Ibn Battuta and Zayn al-Din. These relationships got a set back with the advent of the new European colonial powers in Malabar.

Before the advent of the Portuguese in Malabar, the Malayali Muslims had been staying in the port cities like Calicut due to the thriving trade activities in these centres. They made their livelihood as the assistants and helpers of the Arab traders in the port areas. With the Portuguese occupation of Malabar from the Arab traders, these Muslim communities migrated to the South Malabar regions and started agriculture and small scale trade. However, the Malayali Muslims continued to focus their trading activities in Calicut by the middle and end of eighteenth century, though they had to face some set back in some of the trading pockets due to the altered relationships with the ruling class.

Hyder Ali's invasion of Malabar is quoted as one of the reasons for these distorted relationships. During the Mysorean occupation of Malabar, most of the Hindu landlords fled to Travancore leaving their agrarian lands, and due to this, the Muslim community of Malabar started their agricultural activities in these lands and paid land revenue to the
Mysore Sultan. The customary land rights of the various classes had been disturbed during the short-lived Mysorean rule. During the British occupation of Malabar Coast, most of the Hindus who had earlier fled to Travancore came back to their respective lands and the British entrusted them to the revenue collection from the peasants. The extraction of high revenue from the Muslims peasants and the other brutalities on this community by the Hindu landlords and Caste aristocrats ultimately led to the impoverishment of relationship between these two religious communities.

Immediately after the occupation of Malabar Coast, the British appointed a joint commission to conduct a comprehensive enquiry about the existing condition in Malabar and formulate a plan for its rule in the future. On the basis of the detailed report submitted by the joint commission, they made separate agreements with the local chieftains and the landlords. As per the agreements these local chieftains were entrusted to the right of the revenue collection. However, the restoration of the Hindu chieftains naturally led to the repression and retaliation of the peasants, especially the Mappilas. The joint commissioners noted this situation as follows: “from the moment Tippu’s forces were in retreat, members of the Zamorin’s family thought only of attacking and subjugating of the Mappilas”\(^4\).

The chieftains and the landlords started the persecution of the Muslim peasants immediately after the restoration of power with right of revenue collection with the silent sanction from the company authorities. These persecutions ultimately led to the emergence of localised small scale revolts, but the company used the British army to suppress the rebellion. Company decided to take over the administration directly from the hands of the local chieftains as the rebellious peasants started refusing pay land revenue and due to the sporadic nature of rebellion. In 1801, the company officially taken charge of the administration and this resulted in the spreading of rebellion outside Malabar also. Many of the Hindu rulers from Cochin and Travancore, like Pazhassi Raja, Velu Thampi Dhalawa, etc., also started revolting against the British policies in their land. All are inter

connected and interrelated cutting across religion and regional differences in wide. The Mappilas' rivalry was the most powerful in the 15th century because of the Western European Christian-Turkish-Arab enmity where the Muslims particularly the Arabs were deprived off their global trade monopoly from the eastern waters.

2.2.3 ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN MALABAR

In the form of the East India Company, the British came to the Malabar Coast in the seventeenth century. By 1694 they had established an important trading post, factory, at Talassery in north Malabar. British commercial interests in India were a personification of merchant capital. Though Malabar came into the hands of the British according to the terms of the Treaty of Sreerangapatanam, as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, it was not considered expedient to take charge of the administration of the province straightaway. Rather, General Aber Cromby, governor of Bombay, was deputed to negotiate provisional agreements with local rulers in regard to the collection of revenue for the coming year and to recommend an interim arrangement for administration of the newly acquired territories in Malabar. On his recommendation two commissioners, Mr. Farmer and Major Dow, negotiated settlements for the collection of revenue with all the local powers including the Zamorin and the Raja of Chirakkal. Thus the first step they had taken was the action to ensure a fixed annual income to the company, as they had done elsewhere in India. Mr. Farmer and Major Dow were followed by Jonathan Duncan and Charles Beddam as the Commissioners. They evolved a new administrative system in Malabar. They allowed free trade of all goods in Malabar except that of pepper which was made the monopoly of the company.

In 1793 Malabar was divided into two separate administrative units as north Malabar and south Malabar. Special Superintendents were appointed with their centres at Thalassery and Cherpulassery. The Chief Magistrate at Calicut was to supervise the activities of the superintendents. In 1800 the Malabar province was taken out of the

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Bombay presidency and joined with the Madras presidency. Subsequently, the posts of commissioners were terminated. One principal collector and three subordinate collectors were appointed in 1801 in Malabar. The Judicial administration was done in the early period of the colonial occupation by the Superintendents of the northern and southern areas. As per the judicial reforms introduced by Cornwallis in 1802, the Judicial and executive powers were separated. As a result of this, district courts were started at Calicut and Thalassery and a provincial court at Thalassery. Separate district judges were also appointed.

Nowhere in India have foreign trading and commercial and religious interests interacted within the indigenous socio-economic and political institutions more intimately than they have in Malabar. Reforms were also introduced in the provincial administration also. As a part of the Madras Municipal Reforms Act of 1865, Calicut, Thalassery, Kannur and Palakkad were made municipalities. The Malabar compensation for tenants' improvement Act of 1887 was issued to give protection to the tenants from the forcible eviction of the landlords. However, this act when came into practice could not solve the problems of the tenants.

2.2.4 CHANGES IN AGRARIAN RELATIONS

Along with the petty trade, the Muslims of Kerala controlled the agricultural lands also from the early period. It is well known that some Muslims had already begun acquiring agricultural land in the sixteenth century, for Sheikh Zainuddin mentions that they were owners of both lands and gardens. The Hindu chieftains in the coastal regions needed the support of these wealthy and enterprising groups and granted them liberal concessions in their trade and other businesses. Most of the Mappilas settled in the coastal towns were employed as petty traders, but a large proportion of them in the interior had taken agriculture as their livelihood. They enjoyed both the monopoly in the spice trade as well the political powers before the advent of the Portuguese. Both these

powers of the Muslims started to deteriorate with the advent of the European powers in the Malabar Coast.

The British colonialist administration completely changed the land relationships in Malabar. According to tradition, Malabar land system consisted of three component parts: the Janmi, the Kanakkar (cultivating tenants) and the agricultural labourers. The Janmis had the hereditary right of the soil, who were partially Nambutiris and largely Nairs. Prior to 1792 the Kanakkar held the land virtually as a freehold, which was not redeemable by the Janmi at all, although the Kanakkar paid the renewal fees every twelve years and on the death of the holder, for the privilege of continuing to hold the land\textsuperscript{47}. The agricultural labourers had only certain privileges in the land. The Kanakkars could not be evicted, even for the failure to pay the pattam (tenancy).

However, during the Mysorean occupation the Nambutiri Brahmins fled in fear and sought asylum in the state of Travancore, while the Nair chiefs either followed suit, surrendered to the conqueror or took refuge in the Jungles to continue the struggle. Those who attempted to resist and recapture their territories were brutally suppressed by the Mysoreans\textsuperscript{48}. With the Mysorean occupation, the foundation of the relationship between the Mappilas and the Hindu Janmis got a great shake as the Mappilas managed to shift the entire burden of the new tax to their janmis\textsuperscript{49}. The Mappilas were especially successful in doing this in the areas which were directly administered by Mysore, which included those where the greatest concentration of the Muslims were located. The Nambutiri and Nair janmis were very much afraid to appear at the revenue offices in these areas, therefore their assessments were settled with the kanakkars,\textsuperscript{50} many of whom were Mappilas. It was the Mappilas’ success in shifting the burden of the tax which made them even more determined to resist the janmis’ attempt to recover control of their estates following Tippu Sultan’s withdrawal from Malabar in 1791.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} D.N Dhanagare (1977), op.cit., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{49} Stephen Frederic Dale (1980), op.cit., p. 84.
\textsuperscript{50} Kanakaran (sl) , kanamdar, kanakar (pl): one who holds land on kanam (land tenure based on mortgage or lease) tenure.
However, the British authorities were very much hostile to the Mappilas and considered them as the helpers of the Mysorean rulers. The Nairs and the Nambudiris were returning and re-establishing themselves, but during their absence many Mappilas had taken possession of the land they had previously held. The British restored the right of these chiefs immediately after the withdrawal of the Mysorean rulers which aggravated the problem of agrarian settlement of the country by acting "in their avidity to amass wealth, more as the scourge and plunderers than as the protectors on their respective little states". The Mappilas opposed vehemently on the restoration of the Hindu rajas and chiefs to their estates. The revenue assessment itself was unfair; the Mappila peasants had to pay higher rent than that of the Hindu peasants.

Thus, the new government had a difficult time reconciling the conflicting claims to land of the Nairs and the Mappilas, and particularly in checking the widespread Mappila banditry. The customary land rights of the various classes had been disturbed during the short-lived Mysorean rule, and the British administrators attempted to restore them in the course of their first land settlements by appointing the Hindu chiefs again. However, with the silent sanction of the Company administration and the courts, these chiefs implemented the chief forms of oppression like the eviction, on the peasants. These land policies of the British seriously affected the social structure of Malabar. All these policies ultimately resulted in the beginning of revolts against the oppression of the landlords. As one Mappila participant in the revolt of 1896 pointed out as the reason for the outbreak was that 'poor folks who have only two or three paras of land are ejected and put to trouble by the grant of melcharths (landed gentry) over their heads."

Most of the participants of these upsurges were the poor Mappila peasants as the rich did not directly come forward for these struggles, but had helped the rebels for their motives, and they exploited the religious beliefs of the poor illiterate Mappilas. Mappilas themselves began to question the actions that were threatening the whole community, and

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52 Para is a measuring unit of paddy prevalent in Kerala then and now.

some wealthier Mappilas began to exert pressures on the rebels. The aim of the rebels was the freedom from the cruel exploitation of the janmis and they fought against the British when the latter came to the help of the janmis. Regarding the land revenue, in the case of wet land, they had to give 42 per cent of the gross produce to the cultivator, 35 per cent to the government, and 23 per cent to the janmi, the rates fluctuating according to the type of land and the commutation method applied to the produce. The first outbreak occurred in 1836 and thereafter, between 1836 and 1854, twenty-two similar uprisings occurred of which two, one in 1841 and the other in 1849, were quite serious. In general the outbreaks followed a similar pattern: almost invariably the outbreak would involve a group of Mappila youths attacking a Brahmin janmi, a Nair official or janmis’ servants; sometimes it also involved the burning or defilement of temples, and occasionally the burning or looting of landlords’ houses.

One can agree to the observation that the roots of these agrarian problems in Malabar during the modern period could be traced back to the political settlement of Malabar under the East India Company in 1792. When Malabar was brought under the hegemony of the company a powerful landed class known as Janmi or Janmakkar was created in this region by the authorities. By the introduction of the new revenue settlement in Malabar after its acquisition on 1792, the authorities completely neglected the customary right of the intermediaries and made settlement with the new class of Janmis. Even the English courts provided the Janmis with absolute and unqualified right to the soil and approved that they could evict their tenants at their pleasure after the expiry of the contractual period of tenancy. According to Kurup this kind of agrarian system was not conducive for a prosperous agricultural life and it became one of the reasons for the backwardness of the region and frequent riots in the nineteenth century. EMS Namboothirippad, the first chief minister of Kerala and Miller also note that the

55 Ibid., p.116.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 A Malayalam term used to denote land lords.
problem of serfdom and poverty were the most frequently cited causes of these outbreaks.\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{2.2.5 MALABAR REBELLION}

Thirty-two Mappila outbreaks are known to have occurred in Malabar District between 1836 and the Mappila Rebellion of 1921-22, with more than half of them recorded in the first sixteen years of this period. The British themselves had little understanding of how intensely Malayali Muslims felt themselves to be "strangers in a strange land", and if they had understood it seems unlikely that they would have had much sympathy for such an emotion. Their own attempts to solve the problems of Mappila violence did not recognise that British presence in Malabar was itself a basic aspect of that problem. During the nineteenth century they found it difficult, first, to decide what exactly the outbreaks represented and, second, to formulate a coherent policy for dealing with this phenomenon. Some officials focused on the religious context of the attacks—or even on the religious objectives of some of the Shahids, whether in murdering apostates or simply pursuing martyrdom themselves. Others identified the problem as solely one of agrarian exploitation. Then by the end of the nineteenth century a few observers opted for explanations which stressed the interaction of social, economic, and religious factors, but sophisticated interpretations did not usually come complete with sufficiently simple remedies, and some individuals again began to have recourse to those great expectations of the gradual modernisation of society—roads, education and general economic advance—which echoed the aspirations of Jonathan Duncan and other eighteenth-century settlement officers. By the early twentieth century such expectations seemed to have been justified, for after 1898 there were only two attacks, in 1915 and 1919, one of the lowest rates for any twenty-year period since the dating of the first outbreak to 1836. However, in August 1921 all those hopes were suddenly shattered.

when the Mappila Rebellion began, an upheaval which overshadowed the earlier outbreaks and recalled the chaotic period of the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{60}

The outbreak of the Mappila Rebellion in August 1921 conclusively demonstrated that the British had failed to solve the Mappila problem. According to Dale "No one analysed the essence of the Mappila problem in the nineteenth century better than H.V. Conolly, who, after pointing out the parallels between Malayali situation and that in Ireland, concluded that as long as the land tenure system remained essentially unchanged, the outbreaks could be expected to reoccur. Of course, William Logan made the obvious suggestions in 1882, to radically amend the Malabar land tenure laws, but his proposals foundered on the rock of private property rights and the Government's reluctance to alienate the influential landed castes, predominantly Nambuthiri Brahmans and Nairs."\textsuperscript{61}

According to him "the depth of that hostility was to be amply demonstrated in the Mappila Rebellion, but it is difficult to know what measures would have sufficed to have prevented that upheaval, in which the range of violence far surpassed the nineteenth century outbreaks, whether predominantly agrarian or religious in tone. In fact, the rebellion was not just an unusually serious outbreak;

According to Dale's analysis "Historians of modern India have generally used the Mappila Rebellion as evidence to support their own theories about the nature and impact of colonial rule in South Asia. Just as the nineteenth century outbreaks have been perceived as the archetypical example of an oppressed peasantry rising to protest at the exactions of a newly imposed, imperially oriented market economy, so the rebellion has been interpreted, through both Marxist and nationalist influences, as the great Indian peasant revolt, the first modern popular uprising in twentieth century India. This habit of exploiting the Mappila Rebellion to support preconceived political or historiographical ideas is remarkably reminiscent of the treatment accorded that earlier upheaval, the Indian mutiny of 1857-58. This probably occurred because the Rebellion, like the Mutiny, did exhibit features which, when viewed from afar, seemed to reflect modern

\textsuperscript{60}Stephen Frederic Dale (1980), op.cit., p. 152.
\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., p.176.
social and political attitudes. The Mappilas did rebel against the British, they enjoyed widespread popular support among Muslims, and mass peasantry took part. The Rebellions, though, was not a nationalist uprising, a precursor of the 1942 Quit India Campaign, although it occurred in the context of a nationalist movement. The Rebellion was not a peasant revolt in the sense that peasants joined specifically to resolve their social and economic grievances as agriculturists. Finally, the Rebellion was emphatically not a modern political event, even though it occurred in the twentieth century. Quite the contrary, the Rebellion, like the Mutiny, was essentially an anarchic form of protest, as it offered no viable political alternative for the future. In this respect the closest nineteenth century analogy to the Mappila rebellion was not the Mutiny but rather the attempt which Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi and his Mujahideen made to establish an Islamic State in the Punjab in the late 1820s.\textsuperscript{62}

However, E.M.S Namboothiripad, the Communist leader and former Chief Minister of Kerala opined that, “it is the need of the hour that to expose the false propaganda that the 1921 Malabar Rebellion was just a Mappila Rebellion. British could propagate this false impression simply because the front warriors of the Rebellion were Mappilas.” According to him British could cleverly use this propaganda to create mistrust among Hindus and Muslims.\textsuperscript{63}

2.3 CONCLUSION

The Portuguese endeavour to discover a new trade route to India to avoid the intermediaries in coveted spice merchandise created a big challenge to the people of Malabar particularly to the Muslims merchants. They were greatly agitated by the arrival of the Iberian naval power. Their presence in the eastern trade affairs extended the Christian- Muslim ideological conflicts in the Europe and Africa as it was felt in the western coast of the Indian peninsula. In a closer and broader analyse it could be judged

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., p.217.
that the reasons for the Malabar rebellions were mainly based on the aspects of agrarian question and due to the alienation and frustration of disgruntled Muslims because of the British destroying of Tipu Sultan’s Mysore empire under whom Muslims enjoyed considerable benefits—they were liberated by Tipu from the feudal enslavement. The attempt to re-acquire the lands distributed by the Mysore Sultan from the possession and the autonomy enjoyed by the Malabar Muslims were taken over, was also resultant to major reasons for the rebellion.