KUNHALIS AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PORTUGUESE-CONSEQUENCES

Ammad Kunnath “The rise and growth of Ponnani from 1498 A.D. To 1792 A.D.” Thesis. Department of History, University of Calicut
Kunhalis and the struggle against the Portuguese Consequence
CHAPTER 4

KUNHALIS AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PORTUGUESE-CONSEQUENCES

The epoch of western domination over Asia began with the landing of Vasco da gama, the Portuguese navigator at Kappad, near Calicut in 1498. Opposition to “Western intrusion” is as old as this date. The European powers set out to subdue the world with holy reminiscence of the crusading spirit.¹ No wonder wherever they went they carried on a policy of persecution towards the Muslims. The imperialist policy of the westerners had often been stained with this historical and hereditary enmity.² So it was not accidental that the Muslims played an important role in driving away the colonial powers from India. The Portuguese, first

of the westerners to come to India had been cruel and arrogant towards the Mappila Muslims of Malabar. The Mappila tradition of militancy began with the advent of the Portuguese. Moreover the tide of fortune changed course with the arrival of the Portuguese, who carried with them the spirit of the crusaders and the rivalry in the Iberian Peninsula, besides of course greed for the valuable spices of Malabar which they wanted to monopolise. These were periods of long and bitter struggle for the Mappila muslims of Malabar. It marked the decline of the Muslims. From the very beginning

3. According to K.M. Panikker the hostility of the Portuguese to the Muslims was not only due to commercial rivalry, but a hostility which the Iberian powers had inherited from their long drawn-out fight with the Moors in Spain and Africa. So deep was the animosity of the Portuguese towards the Muslims that Afonso D'Alboquerque is reported to have expressed his jubilation at the massacre of 6000 Muslims on the occasion of the conquest of Goa in 1510 with the comment: “It was indeed a great deed and well carried out”.

the Portuguese tried to create a wedge between the Zamorin and the Muslims. Shaik Zain-ud-Din II states "they said to the amils (chieftains) of the zamorin, that it is fit that the Muslims be prevented from their trade and their voyages to Arabia. The advantages which would accrue to you from their trade would be far greater if you carry on trade with us." The heroic deeds of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar especially of the Kunhalis in the hundred years war against the Portuguese are still fresh in the minds of the Keralites irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Praise worthy is the sacrifice Mappilas made for the salvation of their country. The conflict that began with the attack of Calicut by Cabral continued till 1600 when Kunhali IV had been handed over to the Portuguese by the Zamorin. Even after 1600 guerilla warfare continued. So the duration of the hundred years war in Malabar


was from 1500 to 1663 like that of the hundred years war in Europe (1337-1453) which also was not confined to 100 years.

At the time of the arrival of Vasco da gama at Calicut (1498) the Zamorin was at Ponnani. But he gave instructions to his officials to welcome the new comers and to extend them every help. The Arabs of the town who had a premonition of the real intentions of the Portuguese tried to put all kinds of obstacles in their way and even to prevent an audience between Vasco da gama and the Zamorin. Though Gama was given a warm welcome he failed to settle the commercial deal. Zamorin insisted on payment of custom duty by

7. The hundred years war in Europe was a long struggle between England and France which lasted for more than a century from 1337 to 1453. It was not a continuous war but with intervals and with varying fortunes. The underlying cause was feudalistic. The hundred years war in Malabar was also not a continuous one. There were frequent intervals. It was mainly for trade monopoly.

the Portuguese in accordance with the law of the land.
Any how the resourceful Portuguese navigator succeeded in persuading the Zamorin to grant to the Portuguese permission to build a factory at Calicut. The fact that Gama carried off five natives with him as captives shows that there was some misunderstanding between the Zamorin and Vasco-da-gama. Kolathiri Raja invited him and offered to the Portuguese facilities for trade at Kannur. He got sufficient loading for his ships through the good office of its king who was a rival of the Zamorin. Gama returned to Lisbon on July 8, 1498 with a cargo that repaid sixty times the cost of his expedition. Poets and historians have surmounted the comparatively simple facts of this voyage with fictions, but stripped off its romance the story does not suffer interest. It stands as one of the epoch-making land marks in the world's history. Apart from

9. Vasco da Gama was honoured with the title of "Lord of the conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia and India" by the King of Portugal. He lost no time in trying to convert the conquest of India in to a reality.
its effects on the course of events, the first meeting since the days of Alexander, 1800 years before, of the civilization of the east and west must always retain its interest. Throughout the whole stay of the Portuguese, the Zamorin showed no signs of treachery on the other hand, da Gama’s conduct in carrying off the five men he had entrapped on board his ships is indefensible.\textsuperscript{10}

The next voyage led by Pedro Alvares Cabral with a fleet of thirteen ships openly precipitated the struggle that was to become the mark of the ensuing centuries. When Cabral found that the Muslim merchants had collected together all the pepper of the season he attacked the muslim ships in the port and confiscated their goods which resulted in a near riot in the Calicut town. The Muslims and Hindus united against the outrage and attacked the Portuguese factory. Several outrage and attacked the Portuguese factory. Several

\textsuperscript{10} Whiteway R.S, \textit{The Rise of Portuguese power in India}, West Minster (1899) P.82.
Portuguese were killed and the remaining escaped to their ships by swimming. Calbral took revenge and bombarded the town for the next two days. Later cabral reached Cochin, the traditional enemy of the Zamorin, where he received a warm welcome and loading for his ships. In this way a firm friendship was established between the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese, which added an additional factor in the already complicated situation in Kerala.11

At Cochin the Portuguese were permitted to establish a factory. The echoes of cabral’s in politic bombardment of Calicut reverberated for over a hundred years along the coast and on the Indian ocean.12 These developments went to strengthen the Zamorin’s faith in his counsellors, the Muslim merchants and made him a pronounced enemy of the Portuguese.


The Portuguese had struggled against the Muslims for trade domination. This hostility of the Portuguese was not only due to commercial rivalry but a hostility which the Iberian powers had inherited from their long drawn out fight with the Moors in Spain and Africa. Vasco da Gama who came a second time to India in 1502 inaugurated a policy of violence, which plunged Portuguese-Muslim relations into antagonism. Gama demanded from the Zamorin nothing less than the banishment of every Musalman in Calicut to which the Zamorin was not prepared to agree. Calicut was repeatedly bombarded and the Arab merchant fleet totally destroyed. The high handedness of the Portuguese and their unreasonable claims brought the Muslims and the Zamorin closer together.

It is about this time we begin to hear of the famous Kunhali Marakkars. Among the rulers of

medieval Kerala the credit for maintaining a navy and there by keeping up Kerala’s ancient maritime tradition goes to the Zamorins of Calicut. They maintained one of the best equipped fleets of the day and its command was entrusted to the Kunhali Marakkars who were famous for their superb skill in navigation and proficiency in sea warfare.\textsuperscript{15}

The origin of Kunhali Marakkars is a theme of controversy. William Logan is of the opinion that they hailed from Panthalayani Kollam. When Henrique de menezes destroyed the Muslim settlement at Pantalayani, the family moved to Tikkodi and from there again to Kottakkal at the mouth of the Kotta river.\textsuperscript{16} O.K. Nambiar is of the view that they descended from a mappila named Mohammed, originally a marine merchant of Cochin who was forced by the high

\textsuperscript{15} Sreedhara Menon.\textit{A Kerala History and its makers, Madras (1990).} P.104

handedness of the Portuguese to migrate to Ponnani where he settled with his family, carried on his trade and sought to repair his broken fortune.17 Some ascribe to the Kunhalis a foreign origin. It is suggested that they were the descendants of the Arab merchants who came to trade with Kerala in the 7th century A.D.

The name Kunhali Marakkar18 itself requires explanation. The term ‘Kunhali’ was an honorific title conferred on the admiral of his fleet by the Zamorin along with the special right to wear a silk turban. It was assumed by four successive persons who held this post. The term Marakkar means, according to one view, “the doer or follower of the law margam” - an appellation given to natives who professed foreign religions like Christianity or Islam. The term Marakkar may also


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mean a "Sailor". "Marakkalam" in Tamil means a ship made of wood. There is also the probability that it is an honorific plural of the term Marakkan, a common surname applied to the Hindu sea-going folk (Mukkuvans) of the Kerala coast. The term should have been used to describe the Muslims like the Kunhali Marakkars who followed the profession of maritime commerce. Their lives reflect glory and honour on all Malabar people for their achievements against the navel domination of Portuguese and form a great chapter in the history of this region.

A brave warrior and an experienced sea man Mohammed about whom we have already mentioned, watched with growing alarm the rapacity of the

Portuguese, their violation of agreements and their contempt of Islam and the many foul deeds they committed on sea and land. Mohammed and his brother Ibrahim went to Calicut and offered their swords, ships and services to the Zamorin in his war against the Portuguese. The Zamorin accepted their services and conferred on Mohammed the title of ‘Kunju Ali’, ‘the beloved’. He took to the sea and attacked Portuguese vessels whenever he met them.²² The word “Kunjali” is an honorific title which means “dear Ali” when, added to “Marakkar” it means “dear Ali”, the navigator of ship.²³ He built a fort at Ponnani Azhimukham. This was known as Marakkar Kotta. Gradually it became the naval head quarters of Zamorin. Often Portuguese forces attacked Ponnani.

They plundered and fired the town and mosques. Portuguese soldiers captured beautiful muslim young ladies and raped them. When their children grew up they turned against the Muslims. It is proper to say that open fights became an every-day affair between the Portuguese and muslims in Ponnani and some other parts of Malabar.

The Kunhali Marakkars were thus Mappila admirals of the Zamorins in their classic fight against the Portuguese attempt to dominate the commerce and politics of Malabar. The history of Portuguese contact with Malabar in the 16th century is the history of the Marakkars who sacrificed their lives and resources in defence of their country and sovereign.24 During the


Dr. Ibrahim Kunju pays tribute to the Kunhalis by remarking that: "the great sacrifices they had made in defence of their country and sovereign for over a century against the encroachments of the Portuguese form a glorious chapter in the annals of Kerala."
hundred years of war with the Portuguese, this family produced a succession of four remarkable sea captains whose prowess makes the name of "Malabar pirates" resound still in history. In initiative, courage, navigational skill and persistence they were comparisons with the great figures of naval warfare. Undoubtedly in the manner of the period, they were ruthless, cared little for the rights of others, but compared to their Portuguese opponents they were humane and civilized. They were never responsible for the kind of atrocities that Gama and his successors committed.25 There are four persons with the title 'Kunhali Marakkar'. They are Kunhali I, II, III & IV. Kunhali I who was appointed as Admiral in 1507 by the Zamorin is referred to by the contemporary historian Shaik Zain-un-Din as Kunhali Marakkar itself. Kunhali II was the son of Kutti Ali one of the

enterprising naval captains who served under Kunhali I. Kunhali III was the famous pattu Marakkar who helped the Zamorin in capturing the Portuguese fortress of Chaliyam. The most famous of the Kunhali Marakkars was Kunhali IV, nephew of Kunhali III who fought heroically against the Portuguese and the Zamorin himself and met with a tragic end in 1660.26

During the years 1500 - 1509 the Portuguese succeeded in gaining control over Indian ocean. They had established a base at Cochin in 1503. The next year Francisco de - Almeida came to Cochin as viceroy of Portuguese possessions in India. He felt that the resources of Portuguese should not be wasted in establishing a territorial empire in India and wanted that Portuguese should maintain supremacy on sea and confine their activities to purely commercial transactions. Alfonso-de-Albuquerque never followed

this policy. He was the successor of De Almeida who conquered Goa in 1510 and Malaca in 1511. Krishna Deva Raya, the ruler of Vijayanagar maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese and allowed them retain Goa.\(^{27}\) By 1505 the Portuguese under Almeida were able to build forts at Cochin and Cannanore. With the establishment of her domination in Cochin it was easy for the Portuguese to attack and plunder Ponnani. In 1507 and 1524 they looted Ponnani and destroyed the mosques and business centres of the Muslims.\(^{28}\)

When his repeated attempts to Chastise the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese failed the Zamorin thought of a grand alliance of powers that were adversely affected by the activities of the Portuguese in the east. In addition to his own extensive preparations, he had sought through the agency of his

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Muslim merchants, the collaboration of the Sultans of Egypt, Gujarat and Bijapur to drive out the Portuguese from the eastern waters.\textsuperscript{29} The Sultan of Egypt supported him with men and material. The Muslim powers of the South including Bijapur were fully aware of the danger and formed a confederacy and defeated the Portuguese fleet off Chaul.\textsuperscript{30}

Meanwhile the Zamorin had built up a large armada. He was fortunate to have as the Admiral Kunhali Marakkar I, first of the four Kunhalis whose chronology has not been worked out accurately. Kuhali I was a brilliant and brave commander who succeeded in organising the naval defence of Calicut on a sound basis. The statement that "he had been to the Zamorin in his fight with the Portuguese what Drake had been to Elizabeth of England in her fight with the spaniards",

\textsuperscript{29} Ibrahim Kunju. A.P 'Mappila Muslims of Kerala' Trivandrum (1989) P.33.

\textsuperscript{30} Shaik Zainud-Din - Thuhfat-ul-Mujahideen (trans) Rowlandson P.91-92.
is a testimony to his service to the Zamorin. When the Portuguese raids on the coastal areas increased in frequency and severity, Kunhali avoided pitched battles and resorted to guerilla tactics of warfare.\footnote{31} This was possible because the Zamorins armada now consisted of a large number of small but faster moving vessels. This fleet sailed from several ports of Ponnani, Calicut, Kappad, Pantalayini and Dharmadam using such vessels kutty Ali one of the ablest and bravest subordinates of Kunhali could strike terror in the minds of the Portuguese by his "hit and run" tactics. These vessels were more than a match for the bigger vessels of the Portuguese. Manned by 30 or 40 rowers the vessels or Paraos could move out in to the sea at the shortest notice, inflict heavy damage on the enemy's fleet and save themselves by sailing back quickly.

\footnote{31. Sreedhara Menon A. \textit{Kerala History and its makers} Madras (1987) P. 106. \textit{Kunhali Marakkar} Iwas the naval captain of the Zamorin who organised and developed the naval wing of the zamorins army on an efficient basis in order to fight the Portuguese on equal terms.}
The Portuguese who now found that their superiority at sea was seriously threatened made a determined effort to destroy the Zamorin’s naval power. Vasco da Gama, Henrique de Menezes and Lope Vazde sampaya spent all their time and energy in meeting this threat. In 1517 the Portuguese tried to kill the Zamorin by treachery. But he escaped and the new Zamorin who succeeded him in 1522 (1522-31) was less friendly with the Portuguese and this made the Kunhali and the naval captains more powerful. During 1523-24 there were several battles in the sea on the western coast. The Portuguese began to violate the terms of the treaty with Zamorin in the very same year that it was signed. There was scarcity of rice because the transportation of rice through the sea from Canara to Malabar was blocked by the Portuguese.


On February 25, 1525, the Portuguese again attacked Ponnani under cover of heavy fine and vessels were set on fire. Many Muslim soldiers were killed. Coconut trees on either banks of the river were cut and houses, shops and mosques were all destroyed. The naval head quarters and second capital city of Zamorin’s and the most important Muslim settlement, the town of Ponnani and vessels in the port were set on fire.\(^3^4\) In 1531 the Portuguese plundered some of the vessels of the Zamorin on their way to Gujarat and caught some of Kunhalis’ men like Ali Ibrahim and Kutty Ali as prisoners. Zamorin who was alarmed at this incident permitted the Portuguese to build a fort at Chaliyam inspite of Kunhali’s opposition. The construction of the fortress of Chaliyam was completed with in a short period of 26 days. The acquisition of Chaliyam was of great strategic importance to the Portuguese. It was like a dagger that was to divide the

Zamorins territory in two.\textsuperscript{35} Hostility arose between the Zamorin and the Portuguese as the latter was unwilling to share with the Zamorin the customs revenue derived from the trade at Chaliyam port. The Zamorin’s fleet under Kunhali attacked the Portuguese possessions in ceylon and the coromandel coast. For about seven years Kunhali demonstrated his superiority at sea and the Portuguese had to suffer a lot. In 1533 Kunhali rounded the Cape Comorin and raided the Portuguese settlement at Nagappatanam. But his plans were upset by the unexpected arrival of a Portuguese squadron. In the fight that ensued the Calicut fleet was defeated and Kunhali escaped over land disguised. But early next year Kunhali was able to organise another fleet with the help of which he could create


\textit{He says that the Portuguese demolished the mosque built by Malik-Ibn-Dinar and its stones were used for the construction of the Chaliyam fort.}
terror in the minds of the Portuguese. As usual he continued to avoid decisive pitched battles.

While the Zamorin was fighting against the Portuguese to destroy their hold on the Kerala coast Kuttipocker or Kunhali II was busy with his operations against the Portuguese in ceylon (1538) and Kayalpattanam. The Calicut fleet under Kutti Ali was also making much head way. He was able to capture one Portuguese ship in front of the Chaliyam fort. After the fight that continued far in to the night Martin Afonso retreated in the night on the pretext that the situation at Cochin required his urgent presence there.36 Kunhali's fleet now appeared in Cochin waters to divert Portuguese attention and compel their forces to withdraw. But with the help of the newly arrived reinforcements the Portuguese could defeat the Zamorin's forces both at sea and land. The much publicised arrival of an Egyptian fleet (1538)

under Sulaiman Pasha to help the Zamorin turned out only to be a demonstration. The fleet could do nothing worth while and it sailed back. The Zamorin was forced to sue for peace and treaty of Ponnani was signed on January 1, 1540 according to which he granted to the Portuguese the virtual monopoly of trade in pepper and ginger at Calicut. The treaty also bound them to neutrality even if he attacked their allies. In return he agreed to accept their passports for the Moorish vessels.\textsuperscript{37}

The treaty of Ponnani was only a temporary truce. Even after the conclusion of the treaty unofficial war between the Portuguese and the Malabar seamen continued. The Malabar fleet under Kunhali II had in

\begin{quote}
37. Krishna Ayyar. K.V. \textit{The Zamorins of Calicut}, Calicut (1999) P.192. Krishna Ayyar is of the opinion that the Zamorin lost nothing by the treaty of 1540. The Zamorin not only got the commercial advantages which he had obtained by the treaty of 1513 but also their neutrality in his war against the Cochin Raja.
\end{quote}
the mean time made it unsafe for the Portuguese ships
number of years Kunhali eluded the vigilance of the
Portuguese and preyed up on Portuguese shipping and trade. It was only in 1558 that Louis de mello was able to force an action off Cannanore. In a hard fought action, the flag ship of Kunhali was sunk and three more captured, but the rest retired unmolested since the Portuguese were unable to pursue them.\textsuperscript{38}

War between the Portuguese and the Zamorin was renewed in 1550. There were no decisive battles but both parties exhausted their resources. The Portuguese resorted to the worst atrocities during this period. They destroyed temples, mosques and houses and massacred the civilian population and continued the christianising policy by converting the peasantry both Hindu and Muslim.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibrahim Kunju. A.P. \textit{Mappila Muslims of Kerala} - Trivandrum (1989) P.53.
Mean while Pattu Marakkar\textsuperscript{39} had taken over the command of the Zamorins fleet with the title Kunhali Marakkar III. He was the greatest of the Kunhalis. A brilliant strategist and a born leader of men, he turned out to be an ill-omen to the Portuguese. He strengthened the Zamorins navy by securing the services of foreign experts to design new ships after the European model and to give training to his men in advanced methods of naval warfare. The ships, ammunitions and weapons of war needed by his navy were made at Calicut itself. Kunhali also set up observation posts in elevated spots all over the coast to watch and report on the movements of the Portuguese fleet. The entire coast was now free from the threat of Portuguese de pradation. The Chief legacy of Kunhali III was that he made the Zamorin accept

\textsuperscript{39}Pattu Marakkar who distinguished himself in the seige of Chaliyam and who in recognition of his services, was allowed to fortify his base of operations, Kottakkal, later became famous as Kunhali III.
the principle of self-reliance in the matter of organising naval defence. This policy of self-reliance was to yield rich dividends as future events would show.40

It was in 1569 that envoys came to the Zamorin from Adilshah of Bijapur seeking his assistance in a joint enterprise against the Portuguese on the western coast. It was agreed that Adilshah should attack Goa, Nizamshah should march on Chaul and Zamorin should proceed against Chaliyam. In pursuance of this treaty the Zamorin laid siege to Chaliyam. Large number of muslims from Ponnani and the neighbouring areas came to assist in the siege operation. The siege continued for four months and the Portuguese were compelled to surrender the fortress in November 1571. Kunhali Marakkar III and his navy played an important role in the siege. In recognition of the services rendered by Kunhali III the the Zamorin conferred on him several privileges and honours. He was permitted to erect a

fort and dockyards at Putuppattanam, the headquarters of the Marakkar at the mouth of Agalapuzha. A strong fort was erected at Kottakkal (1572-3).

The Chaliyam fortress had been a thorn in the Zamorin's side ever since its erection in 1531. Though he failed at first to see its strategic importance the Zamorin soon realised that it would be a constant source of trouble to him and its destruction would be indispensable to the peace and commercial prosperity of Calicut. That was why he razed the whole edifice to the ground leaving not one stone up on another. The hopes of the Portuguese for conquering the whole of Malabar were frustrated once for all by their expulsion from Chaliyam. The war with the Zamorin which began with the invasion of Calicut by Coutinho ended only in 1571. 41 During the Chaliyam war, Zamorin

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41. Raja P.K.S Medieval Kerala, Calicut (1966) P.132 Raja quotes K.M. Panicker to prove the importance of the fall of Chaliyam which was a decisive victory of the Ruler of Calicut.
was welcomed to Chaliyam by leaders of muslims. When Zamorin reached from Ponnani to Chaliyam the soldiers became enthralled and his appearance on scene of war was a great Fillip to soldiers. He observed the war from the hill-top near Chaliyam. After the capturing and demolishing of the Chaliyam fortress by the Zamorin some of the ships from Goa that had come to help the Portuguese had to return desperately. That was the will of god.

Shaik Zainud-Din's Comment that "the accursed Portuguese were in a fit of violent anger after the subjugation of their fort at Shaliyat" (Chaliyam) and that "they were waiting for an opportunity to destroy the towns of the Samuri and erect fortification either at Fannan or at Shaliyat..." pinpoints at the exasperation to which the Portuguese were subjected

43. Velayudhan Panikkasseri Kerala in the 15th and 16th centuries, (Malayalam), Kollam (1963) P.165.
to. The loss of Chaliyam was a great blow to the power and prestige of the Portuguese in India. They now decided to follow a policy of conciliation towards the Zamorin and to crush the power of the Kunhali with his support. The high handedness of the Portuguese brought them in to trouble at Cochin also. This together with the opposition of the Malabar seamen had completely dislocated Portuguese trade. They requested permission for the erection of a fort at Ponnani. Considering the strategic importance of Ponnani the Portuguese had for long been desirous of building a fort at Ponnani.\textsuperscript{44} The Zamorin protracted the issue but at last in 1585 he agreed to the erection of a Portuguese fort at Ponnani. A weak Zamorin had estranged the Mappilas by allowing the construction of a Portuguese fort at Ponnani.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44} Abdu Rahiman. K.V. \textit{Mappila Charithra Sakalangal}, Choondal (1998) P.104.

In 1595 Muhammed Kunhali, nephew of Pattu Marakkar, succeeded his uncle as Kunhali Marakkar IV. The permission given by the Zamorin to build a fort at Ponnani was resented by Kunhali and by the Muslim traders as well. His relations with the Zamorin became strained. Fore seeing that the Portuguese would seek his ruin he strengthened the fortifications at Kottakkal by building trenches and towers heavily armed with cannon. He began to show discourtesy to the Zamorin. He called himself “King of the Moors” and “Lord of the Indian seas”. He virtually threw of his allegiance to the ruler of Calicut.

Having made his position strong and secure Kunhali carried on his uncle’s design of fighting the Portuguese with far greater success. He captured many vessels and assisted the enemies of the Portuguese, including the Queen of Ullal, when she revolted.

These successes seem to have brought about misunderstanding between the Zamorin and his
lieutenant. The zamorin believed that Kunhali had become an over mighty subject and Kunjali felt that the Zamorin was not much interested in the welfare of his subjects. As the relations between the Zamorin and Kunhali got estranged the Portuguese found it easy to win the Zamorin to their side and isolate Kunhali.

In 1597 an agreement was reached between the Zamorin and the Portuguese according to which they were to proceed simultaneously against Kunhali's fortress, the Zamorin by land and the Portuguese by sea. The Kottakkal fort was blockaded from land by the Zamorins forces. But as the Portuguese failed to fulfil their mission of blockading the fort by sea the assault ended in a failure and resulted in heavy loss. This proved the greatest disgrace, the Portuguese received in Asia. Kunhali was elated by this success and he even assumed the pompous titles, "Defender of

Islam” and “Expeller of the Portuguese”. Kunhali was so complacent that he did neither make a reconciliation with his sovereign nor try to strengthen his position against a possible attack from the Portuguese. The Portuguese on the other hand mobilised their forces and entered in to a fresh agreement with the Zamorin according to which they would again launch simultaneous attacks on the Kottakkal fort and divide the spoils of war equally. The Zamorin was to retain the possession of the town and fortress of Kottakkal and if Kunhali Marakkar were to be captured alive, he was to be kept under honourable custody by the Portuguese.47 The assault was made in March 1600. It proved to be a swift and short affair. Finding his position untenable Kunhali “the hero of a hundred fighting”, “resouceful and skilled organiser” surrendered to the Zamorin. He surrendered his sword to his old lord and sovereign on promise of pardon.

Kunhali was handed over to the Portuguese for custody as per the secret agreement between the Zamorin and the Portuguese. The Zamorin took over the fort of Kottakkal. He should never have trusted the Portuguese who were notorious for their brutish and barbarous atrocities towards the Muslims of Malabar, to keep Kunhali under their honourable custody. So the culmination of the Hundred years war gives the picture of a heinous deception that has rare parallels in the entire history of mankind. The Portuguese who were thirsting for Kunhali's blood were not in a mood to forgive him. They took him to Goa along with his close lieutenants and after a mock trial executed all of


What the Zamorin had done was a heinous deception consequent on which the zamorin lost not only one of his ablest trust worthy admirals under whom his naval force had been defending Malabar against the on slaughts of the Portuguese but also banished the loyalty and friendship of the Muslims that date back to more than five centuries. Such incidents only helped to spoil the communal harmony that prevailed in Malabar.
them. Kunhali's body was cut in to four pieces and exhibited in four prominent places as a warning to the Muslims.\(^{49}\) When the Portuguese tried to take away Kunhali a tumult arose among the Nayar soldiers of the Zamorin which was suppressed with difficulty.

The tragic end of Muhammed Kunhali Marakkar invested his name with the halo of martyrdom.\(^{50}\) To quote K.M. Panikkar, there can be no doubt that the lives of these chiefs reflect glory and honour on all Malabar, for their achievements against the naval tyranny of the Portuguese form indeed a great chapter in the history of Malabar". The heroic defence of the country by the Kunhalis, the Marakkars or Navigators of Zamorins against the Portuguese for more than a century and a half is a thrilling episode in the freedom


struggle of Kerala.\textsuperscript{51} As a whole the Muslims of Malabar played a great role in the hundred years naval war fought between India and Portuguese in the 16th century.\textsuperscript{52} It was an irony of history that the Zamorin who had been the Kingpin of resistance against the Portuguese, became an ally of the foreigners and turned against his own vassal Kunhali Marakkar IV.\textsuperscript{53}

The death of Kunhali Marakkar IV and the fall of Kottakkal did not avail the Portuguese any respite from the constant struggle with the Malabar seamen. Malabar seamen began to harass Portuguese shipping and trade with vengeance. So great was the fear the Portuguese entertained of the Malabar seamen that they ventured out only in ‘cafilas’\textsuperscript{54}. The burning hatred

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54. Cafilas - Groups of ships with all preparations (convoy).
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which the Malabar seamen nurtured against the Portuguese did not die down so easily. The coming of the Dutch and English who were constantly at war with the Portuguese provided greater facilities for their work.\textsuperscript{55} The Portuguese remained the official rulers of north Kerala until the coming of the Dutch. Even before that their power had begun to decline. Out of Goa they never held sovereign rights over a large amount of territory where they could establish a firm base. Their revenues were absorbed by the costs of European wars, by the corruption of government officials and by the exorbitant expenditure for religious activities. The alienation of the native population, especially produced by religious intolerance weakened their hold.\textsuperscript{56}

During their so called supremacy in India the Portuguese failed to build a durable empire in this

\textsuperscript{55} Dr. Ibrahim Kunju A.P. \textit{“Mappila Muslim of Kerala”} Trivandrum (1989) P.45.

country. Except Goa, however, they held no other territorial possession of any considerable extent for any considerable time, and they were able to hold Goa because it was easily defensible. Even in the monopoly of trade the Portuguese could not be said to have established their supremacy in India. Except in two or three towns like Cochin, Purakkad and Quilon they were not able to establish their authority anywhere in Malabar. The bold stand of the Kerala Muslims against the Portuguese aggression is to be recorded in golden letters. This has resemblance to the role of salahudheen Ayyubi in the eighth crusade (1187). If the unarmed and peace loving Kerala muslims had not presented a united front, Malabar would have become the Portuguese province instead of Goa. The hundred years war fought by the Portuguese for their


political and commercial supremacy ended in a colossal failure with the capture of Chaliyam by the ruler of Calicut. It is proper to say that the Portuguese who came to Malabar with the “roar of a tiger” disappeared like the ‘tail of a snake’. The hundred years war and advent of the Dutch and the English gave momentum to the gradual decline of the Portuguese power.

Kerala was lacking a centralised government under one ruler. Dynastic wars, rivalry among the provincial chieftains and shifting hegemonies of external powers turned out to be the characteristics of Kerala. This political disunity was confirmed by the century and half of Portuguese contact and the hundred years war. The Portuguese followed a policy of supporting minor rulers keeping aloof the Zamorins of Calicut. The tradition of the existence of a united state under one ruler, who regularly controlled the area presently called Kerala is probably a myth.59

The coming of the Portuguese brought about some radical changes in the economic field. It stopped the age-long trade connection between Kerala and Arabia and Egypt on the one hand and on the other increasing trade contact had been established with Europe. Calicut, Ponnani and Cochin became centres of flourishing trade. Ornamental architecture from Portugal, European luxuries, foods and drinks became fashionable here. Roland E. Miller opines that the day of the discovery of the cape of good was an evil day for the Moplah Muslims who came out vanquished in the struggle for supremacy on the seas. The economic position of the Muslims began to deteriorate. The modest income from inland trade and small industry did not enable them to lead a comfortable life. So they began to migrate to the interior parts and sought employment in agriculture and smaller crafts. Large number of Muslims migrated from Ponnani town to the interior places like Thavanur, Edappal, Kuttippuram, vattamkulam, Marancherry etc. Even after the hundred
years war and the decline of the Portuguese power the muslims could not get economic salvation. The Portuguese yielded their power to another group of foreigners with similar aspirations and strength. “If the king of Portugal had not discovered India Malabar would already have been in the hands of the Moors.60 The Muslims merchants and soldiers became farmers who had to struggle hard against the feudal lords, their masters for better life. Majority of the Jenmis of Kerala61 were Hindu lords. The struggle between these lords and muslim serfs soon developed in to a rebellon the so called “Mappila outbreaks” of 19th century.

61. Janmi, The verbal meaning of ‘Janmi’ is ‘hereditary proprietor of land’ or ‘Land lord’. They enjoyed special rights of privilages as the land lords under the medieval feudalistic set up. The Janmis and the upper classes enjoyed all facilities to lead a life of ease and indolence and the law of the land gave them all protection that they needed. In Kerala the Janmi system continued till 1970 when it was abolished as per the Kerala Land Reform Act.
Before, during and after the hundred years war the arrogant and cruel Portuguese carried on a policy of persecution towards the Muslims of Malabar who were their bitter enemies. An important reason for the rapid growth of Muslim militancy was the forcible conversion of both the Hindus and Muslims into Christianity. It was against this that Shaik Zainud-Din called for a holy war (Jehad) against the Portuguese. The Tuhfatul-Mujahidin' is replete with references to the large scale conversion of Muslims to Christianity and destruction of mosques by the Portuguese.62 Francis Xavier, a friend of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order in Spain, came over to India as a Jesuit missionary and made a rich harvest of converts to Christianity. When Kunhali Marakkar and his 40 lieutenants were taken over to Goa as prisoners they were promised pardon if they were prepared to

embrace Christianity. But they opted death to conversion. So Marakkar and his subordinates were tortured to death mercilessly. The death of Kunhali was also the end of the naval greatness of India. It sounded the death knell of the fame and prestige of Kottakkal nay of Calicut. For a hundred years Calicut navy made successful onslaughts up on the enemy. There were reverses. To save the land they took up in to action again and again. Their blood added brilliance to the salty water of the sea. They kept away the Portuguese pirates ('Sea Dogs').