

THE CHIRAKKAL DYNASTY: READINGS THROUGH HISTORY

Kolathunadu is regarded as one of the old political dynasties in India and was ruled by the Kolathiris. The *Mushaka vamsam* and the kings were regarded as the ancestors of the Kolathiris. It was mentioned in the Mooshika Vamsa (1980) that the boundary of *Mooshaka* kingdom was from the North of Mangalapuram – Puthupattanam to the Southern boundary of Korappuzha in Kerala. In the long Sanskrit historical poem *Mooshaka Vamsam*, the dynastic name of the chieftains of north Malabar (Puzhinad) used is *Mooshaka* (Aiyappan, 1982).

In the beginning of the fifth Century A.D., the kingdom of Ezhimala had risen to political prominence in north Kerala under Nannan... With the death of Nannan ended the most glorious period in the history of the Ezhimala Kingdom... a separate line of rulers known as the *Mooshaka* kings held sway over this area

(Kolathunad) with their capital near Mount Eli. It is not clear whether this line of rulers who are celebrated in the *Mooshaka vamsa* were subordinate to the Chera rulers of Mahodayapuram or whether they ruled as an independent line of kings on their own right (in Menon, 1972). The narration of the *Mooshaka* Kingdom up to the 12th Century A.D. is mentioned in the *Mooshaka vamsa*. This is a *kavya* (poem) composed by Atula, who was the court poet of the King Srikantha of *Mooshaka vamsa*.

By the 14th Century the old *Mooshaka* kingdom had come to be known as Kolathunad and a new line of rulers known as the Kolathiris (the 'Colastri' of European writers) had come into prominence in north Kerala. Perhaps, the Kolathiris were the descendants of the old *Mooshaka* kings, though there is no conclusive evidence in support to this view (in Menon, 1972).

It was pointed out in Menon (1972) that in 13th Century, the kingdom of the Kolathiri extended from Panthalayini Kollam (Kozhikode District) in the south to Mangalore (South Canara District) in the north. The Hosdurg-Kasaragod area was thus under the control of the Kolathiri. In course of time two local dynasties arose in this area, viz., those of Nileswar and Kumbala. Reference has already been made to the fact that the Nileswar royal house

originated from a matrimonial alliance between a princess of the Zamorin's family and a prince of Kolathunad. This event must have taken place in the latter half of the 14th Century or in the beginning of the 15th Century... Sometime after the conquest of the Tuluva country by the Vijayanagar Emperor, Narasimha Saluva (1480-91), the Kolathiri lost his supremacy over the territory lying to the north of Changragiri or Payaswini River. At one time the principalities of Kumbala, Neeleswaram, Kottayam and Kadaththunaat formed part of Kolaththunaat (Census of India, 1999).

⁴Cannanore is presently termed as Kannur.

organized an expedition to pillage the Hindu temples on the west coast. This policy brought them into conflict with the Kolathiri...The restoration of normal relations between the Kolathiri and the Portuguese was, however, only a temporary affair.

The successors for Joao De Castro followed a policy of religious persecution and forcible conversion. The Portuguese, therefore, came into clash with most of the native princes and chieftains of Kerala (in Menon, 1972). The enduring warfare negatively affected the trade interests of the Portuguese.

Vasco da Gama became the first European to find a route to India through sea and started a long time fight for the power in this region between the Portuguese, British, and Dutch. This fight marginalized the local powers (Bhatt and Bhargava, 2005).

In 1634-35 the English East India Company entered into a treaty with the Portuguese by which the English gained free access to Portuguese ports. In consequence of this, some Englishmen appear to have settled at Cochin, and in 1635 pepper were for the first time exported to England direct from Malabar. In 1636 bodies other than the English East India Company were empowered to trade with India, and the same was renewed in 1655 (in Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

About 1680 there had occurred a disruption in the Northern Kolathiri family. Hamilton, who visited the reigning Kolattiri in 1702, but who had been on the coast some years previously, thus describes the event:

“There were three princes of the blood royal who conspired to cut him” (the reigning Prince Unnithiri) “and his family off, to possess themselves of the government of callistree”(Kolattiri). Such family quarrels were not infrequent in the Kolattiri chief’s house, and the reasons therefore are in operation in all Malayali

families down to the present day, and more especially in north Malabar. The head of a Malayali house has two conflicting sets of interests to deal with- first, those of his legal heirs, the children of his female relatives of various degrees; and secondly, those of his natural heirs, his own wife and children. The latter have no legal claim on him, but natural affection comes into play, and to provide suitably for his own children and their mother a man not infrequently trenches upon the right of his legal heirs. Hence raise bitter quarrels and jealousies (in Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

Later on, the Kolathiri family's dominions had reduced by such provisions. For instance, when the Tellicherry factory was established (approximately about 1694-95), the Kadattunad Raja (one of the offshoots of the family) was in semi-independent possession of Kadattunad (lying between the Mahe and Kotta rivers) and another offshoot was lying to the north of the Kavayi river. In addition, Randattara was under the Achanmar, (fathers) four houses of the Nambiar caste; Kottayam was under the Puranat (foreign) Rajas, and Iruvalinad (including Kurangoth) was ruled by six houses of the Nambiar caste and by one house of the Nayar caste. Moreover the Ali Raja had secured a small slice of territory at and about Cannanore. Thus, the Kolathiri dominions were broken up into a large number of minor principalities at the

time of founding of the Tellicherry factory (in Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

By accepting the invitation of the Kolathiri, Cabral entered the port of Cannanore on 15 January 1501. Mathew has mentioned that the Royal officials of Kolathunad gave the Portuguese captain a grand reception and they supplied cinnamon and other cargo to his ships. Besides, the Kolathiri sent a representative of his kingdom to Lisbon with precious gifts for the king of Portugal. Regarding this, Genevieve Bouchon pointed out that, the Kolathiri wanted to establish political alliance and commercial relations with the Portuguese for two pivotal reasons: first, he wanted to assert his political independence in north Malabar, and second, to resist the growing domination of Muslim merchant community in Cannanore (in Varkey, 2006:119). Varkey (2006:120,125,128) has pointed out that the Muslim residents of Cannanore and neighbouring towns were terrified by the atrocities committed by Vasco da Gama, whereas the Kolathiri, who was eager to meet Gama at the port, treated the atrocity as a warning to the domineering status of the Muslim merchants and this event strained the relations between local Muslim merchants and the Kolathiri.

Thus, the strategies adopted by the Portuguese enabled them to make control over the trade relations in Cannanore in the 16th Century. Later on, the interventions of foreign powers such as, the Dutch, the English and rival powers created depletion in the relations and affairs between the Portuguese and native powers.

The advent of Portuguese in Kerala had been the significant turning point in changing the political make up of Kerala. In the political history of North Kerala, from the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, Arakkal, a Muslim royal family of Cannanore had played a major role. Arakkal family was a popular Muslim royal family of north Malabar, who enjoyed power in maritime and trade relations with other countries. There are various stories prevalent regarding the origin of the Arakkal family. The common notion among the people of north Malabar is that, the Ali Raja royal family originated out of the Kolathiri royal domicile. The story related to the pilgrimage of Cheraman Perumal to Mecca has got prominence in the story related to the origin of Arakkal Family. Like Chirakkal family, the Arakkal rulers also were matrilineal. But the main difference lies in the position of the ruler. The position of Valiya Raja usually adorned by the male members of the Chirakkal family, while based on seniority, both male and female members

can adorn the position of the ruler in Arakkal dynasty. Thus, the male ruler is termed as Ali Raja and the female ruler as Arakkal Beebi.

The family records suggest that the continuous existence of the dynasty starts from 12th Century AD. In the early years of its existence it was subordinate to the Kolathiri rulers and later Chirakkal rulers. But from 15th Century it became independent and powerful thanks to its maritime enterpriser. When the Portuguese came to Malabar they were helped by the Kolathiri and the Arakkal and they were permitted to have a Fort at Kannur, known as Fort. St: Angelo. But after the establishment of the Fort, the Portuguese over powered Arakkal and they were forced to compromise with the Portuguese power. When they were replaced by the Dutch in the middle of the 17th Century, Dutch had a peaceful trade relation with Arakkal.

At the dawn of the 18th Century, the Ali Raja became an independent ruler. The powerful ruler played a chief role in causing many quarrels and disturbances in the kingdom of Kolathunad. Ali Raja strengthened his position taking advantage of these quarrels. These quarrels reached their height in 1718. The trade of the Dutch East India Company was disrupted owing to the

hostility between the Nairs of Kolathiri and the Ali Rajah (Koshy, 2003).

It was mentioned in Visscher's (1862) note that the contending parties declared war in 1721. The English factors at Tellicherry supported Kolathiri in the war. Ali Rajah obtained arms and ammunitions from the Dutch factors at Cannanore (in Koshy, 2003).

According to Moens, while the war between the ruler of Kolathunad and Ali Rajah went on, the king of Canara invaded the kingdom with a large force in 1732 (in Koshy, 2003). The invasion caused great confusion in the kingdom. The combined armies of the English and Dutch East India Companies entered the field and defeated the Canarese (Tellicherry Consultations-Vol.VIII, 1933).

A memoir written in the year 1781 by Adriaan Moens points out that in 1763, Ali Rajah heard of the conquest of Bednore, the capital residency town of Canara by Hyder Ali. Ali Rajah went in person to meet Hyder Ali offering his support in return for the possession of Kolathunad, if not at least the administration of the kingdom. In 1766 Hyder Ali invaded the kingdom of Kolathunad. The ruler fled to Travancore with the whole royal family. The

kingdom fell into the hand of Hyder Ali and Ali Rajah obtained the management and administration of the kingdom (in Koshy, 2003).

In the museum inscriptions of Arakkal, it was mentioned that, after about one hundred years of friendly co-existence, the Dutch sold the Kannur Fort to the Arakkal family in 1770 (AD) for one lakh rupees. With the possession of the Kannur Fort and their alliance with the Mysore rulers, Arakkal became the most powerful rulers of the Malabar during the period. But this situation had been changed by the entry of the British power in this region that was against the Mysore rulers. After the first Mysore war of 1790, the British General Abercomby defeated the Arakkal army and took Kannur Fort. Soon the ruler of Arakkal offered peace and entered into an agreement with the English. The Arakkal family was forced to surrender the Kannur Fort and had to pay a huge amount as compensation. The English also claimed Laccadive Islands, which were possessed by the Arakkal dynasty from the 15th Century. The dispute lasted for more than 100 years. The final agreement was on 15th December 1908 by which the family was given an annual amount of Rs.23, 000 as Malikhan. The ruler was also given a title of respect as Sultan. However the rule of the dynasty finally came to a halt on 15th

August 1947. The same amount of Malikhan is still given to the Arakkal family annually.

After the Portuguese, the main foreign power that came was Dutch. The Dutch were opposed to the Portuguese. They established friendly dealings with the Ali Raja and helped the Dutch at Cannanore through whom the Dutch East India Company carried out trade of pepper in Malabar.

Fort St. Angelo was built in 1505 by Almeida, the first Portuguese Viceroy in India, but the present building is of later date (Innes, 1997). In 1663, the Dutch captured the Cannanore Fort or Fort St. Angelo from the Portuguese and the first treaty between the Kolathiri and the Dutch East India Company was concluded on March 20, 1663 immediately after the capture of Cannanore. The verbal undertaking given by the king was embodied in a written agreement signed on 21/22 July 1664. The main terms of the agreement were as follows:

The Kolathiri was to sell all the rest of the pepper produced in his kingdom to the Dutch Company at a reasonable price without any gain of it being sold to anybody else in the world.

The Kolathiri was to prevent any pepper, cinnamon or opium from being brought by land or sea into his kingdom by his

subjects or strangers. If any such importation took place, the matter was to be promptly reported to the Dutch commander for appropriate action. The Kolathiri was to render all necessary help and political assistance to the Dutch Company's servants sent into the interior in pursuit of trade and also to grant them places of residence from where they could carry on their normal trade activities without trouble (in Menon, 1972). The conditions of the treaty were consistently observed by the Kolathiri and gave no grounds for complaints from the Dutch side. The control of the pepper trade of Cannanore was thus gained by the Dutch. This resulted in an alteration in the power of the Kolathiri.

By 1683, within a period of two decades after the Dutch occupation of the Portuguese settlements in Malabar, the English East India Company also established its trading factory at Tellicherry...The Dutch in the 17th and 18th centuries faced grave danger from other European powers in Malabar regarding their political and commercial affairs (Kurup, 2000).

POWERS OF CANARA AND COORG

During the same period the invasion of Canarese was another crisis faced by the Prince Regent in their struggle with the Mappilas of Cannanore.

The Canarese came in large numbers in January 1732 and launched a fierce attack on the Prince. The Prince's army was routed and the Canarese advanced as far as Mount Dilly (Tellicherry Consultations, Vol V) and after fortifying Taliparamba the Canarese advanced towards Valarpattanam. Taking benefit of the Canarese invasion, the European powers began to interfere in Malabar politics by supporting one party against the other. There was an attempt by the English to form a coalition of country powers against the Canarese. The other foreign powers -French, Dutch and Portuguese- also joined the fray. But the English were anxious to improve their trade and therefore they finally came to an understanding with the Canarese (Letter Tellicherry to Bombay, July 19, Feb 22, 1733, Letters from Tellicherry, Vol.II). Thus, the possession of the Dharmapattanam Island became a matter of great importance to the factory to carry on their trade in Malabar. Efforts were accordingly made to obtain exclusive possession of it (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951). Thus, the rival powers worked and fought to maintain their monopoly interests in the land of Malabar.

The incursion of the Canarese had been disastrous to the Dutch trade at Cannanore as well as to the English, and on the 15th March the Dutch Chief at Cannanore, under orders from Cochin, took steps to stop the supply of food to the Canarese...Finally the

Canarese general, Gopalayya, had created dissensions in the Kolattiri family and tried to alienate the Company's privileges. He followed this up with an offer to negotiate terms of peace between Bednur and the Prince Regent....On 10th September 1736 the factors received news that the Dutch had come to a disagreement with the Prince Regent, and had threatened to refuse further aid against the Canarese (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

IKKERI OR BEDNORE NAYAKS

In 1511, Chowdappa Nayak built a palace at Ikkeri and the most important ruler of Ikkeri after Venkatappa Nayak (1645-1660) was Sivappa Nayak... As such he had been the de-facto ruler of Ikkeri for over three decades. During this period he had invaded the territory of the Kolathiri lying between Nilswar and Cannanore... During the invasion, the Raja of Coorg rendered help to the Kolathiri. In 1646, during Sivappa Nayak's period, the Ikkeri family moved its headquarters from Ikkeri to Bednore at the top of the Hossangadi Ghat leading into the Cundapur Taluk. Thus, the Ikkeri Nayaks came to known as the Bednore Nayaks.

The Coorg Raja again came into the picture when Somasekhara Nayak invaded the territories of the Kolathiri Raja to

the north of Cannanore after his conquest of Nileswar. Ravi Varma, the Kolathiri Raja, requested Doddavirappa, the ruler of Coorg, and a kinsman of Somasekhara Nayak, to intercede on his behalf to save his territory from conquest. Doddavirappa pleaded with Somasekhara Nayak to stop fighting and restore to the Kolathiri the territories conquered from him. Though reluctant at first to listen to such appeals, Somasekhara later agreed to evacuate the country on condition that the Kolathiri would pay him an indemnity of 18 lakhs of rupees. The Kolathiri promised to pay the amount and requested Doddavirappa to stand security. Though the Kolathiri Raja paid the first installment of 9 lakhs of rupees, he showed scant courtesy to the men sent by the Coorg Raja for the collection of the second and final installments. This led to open conflict between the forces of the Kolathiri and the coorg ruler (in Menon, 1972).

Not only the foreign powers, but the neighbouring local powers also contributed to the decline of the Kolathiri dynasty. The control and power of Kolathiris began to decline mainly from 16th Century onwards. The Portuguese were permitted to have a fort at Kannur and another area by the Ali Raja. The hampering of Ali Raja against Kolathiri was another major reason for the decline of Kolathiri.

Doddavirappa dispatched a force of 5,000 men under his general Boni Muthanna and demanded immediate payment of arrears by the Kolathiri. The Kolathiri now formulated his own plans to overpower and destroy the coorg forces. Doddavirappa was, however, warned of the evil designs of the Kolathiri by the Ali Raja of Cannanore and he sent prompt instructions to Muthanna to leave Chirakkal. Boni Muthanna marched direct to Cannanore and on the way, defeated the Kolathiri's troops who opposed his march. In the meantime, the Kolathiri blocked all passages to Coorg from his dominion by stationing troops at strategic places. The Coorg forces withdrew to Kumbala, a port in the Ikkeri Nayak's dominion and from there they returned to Coorg. It is said that the coorg Raja paid to Somasekhara Nayak not only the sum of 9 lakhs of rupees paid to him by the Kolathiri but also the balance of the same amount from his own treasury to keep his word of honour. Somasekhara Nayak now withdrew from the Kolathiri Raja's territory. He later confirmed the grant of nine villages near Sullia in south Canara which his father had made to Doddavirappa's father. This was done in appreciation of Doddavirappa's action in keeping his promise of paying money to him on behalf of Kolathiri Raja (in Menon, 1972).

The dissensions in the Kolathiri family had reflected out in such a way that the displeased princes welcomed the Somasekhara Nayak of Bednore to march into the kingdom. Thus, the Canarese invasion jeopardized the trade of the European powers in north Malabar. In addition the prince regent made a treaty with the Canarese.

According to the treaty, the prince regent would rule the country to the north of the Valarpattanam river as a tributary of Bednore while in the territory to its south which would be under his direct rule he would receive assistance from the Canarese against his rebellious subjects, particularly the Ali Raja and the Mappilas of Cannanore (in Menon, 1972). Valarpattanam (Beliapatam, called, it is said, after the Raja Valabham, who built it), situated five miles North West of Cannanore, is a small trading town (Logan1887 rpt 2004).

With the advent of British, a major political change happened in Kolathunadu. As part of this, in 1734, Udayavarman, the Prince Regent gave a grant to the Company of the whole island of Dharmapattanam (Logan, rpt 1998). Towards the end of the 17th Century through the acquiring of a site at Tellicherry for the erection of a fort and factory, the English East India Company

acquired its first footing in the area. The foreign powers and the native powers fought for their own interests and enhance profit out of it. The power of the Britishers in Northern Kerala began to enhance during this period.

Canter Visscher, the Dutch prelate, in one of the letters addressed by him to his friends at home during 1717-1723 gives the following analysis of the conditions in Kolathunad.

Visscher makes a pointed reference to the disintegration of the Kolathiris dominion in the latter half of the 17th Century and the beginning of the 18th Century, but his observations on the subject require some elucidation. North Kerala which had at one time been united under anarchy and political dissolution. Among the many disruptive forces at work the most important was the working of the *Marumakkathaya* or matrilineal system of inheritance. Over the years the Kolathiri dominion was getting shrunk in size by the generous provisions made by its chiefs for their natural heirs (in Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

Hamilton who visited the reigning Kolathiri in 1702 refers as follows to the dissensions caused in the royal family by the extensive surrenders of territory to the consorts of the ruling members. "There were three princes of blood royal who

conspired to cut him” (the reigning Prince Unnitiri) “and his family off, to possess themselves of the government of Callistree” (Kolathiri): “But being detected they were beheaded on altars built of stone. About two miles from Cannanore the altars were standing when I saw there. They were only square piles of hewn stone, about three yards high and four yards each side” (in Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

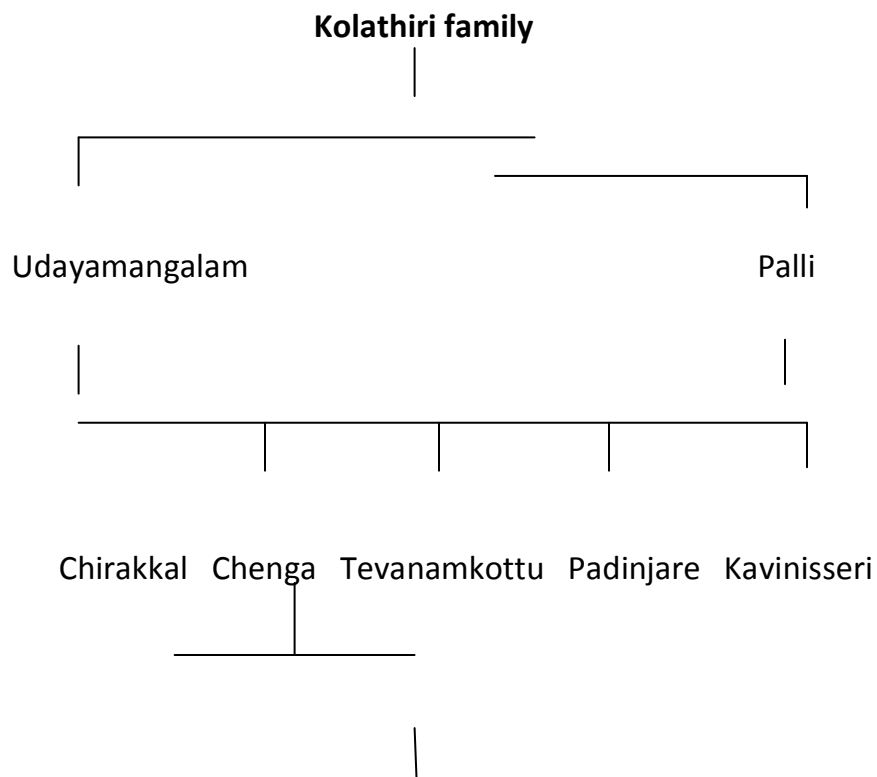
The logical outcome of the internal dissensions was that the different parts of the Kolathiri dominion emerged in course of time as independent principalities under separate royal chieftains. The Kadathanad Raja ruled over the territory lying between the Mahe and Kotta river and another branch was in similar semi-independent possession of the territory north of the Kavvayi river. The territory lying between the Kavvayi and Mahe rivers also came into the possession of several semi-independent chieftains who defied the authority of Kolathiri. Thus Randaltara (Randuthara), otherwise called Poyanad, i.e., the territory lying to the east of Dharmadom, was under the Achanmar (fathers) belonging to four houses of the Nambiar caste; Kottayam comprising the bulk of the present Tellicherry Taluk was under the Puranattu Rajas and Iruvazhinadu (including Kurangoth) was ruled by six houses of the Nambiar caste and one house of the Nair caste. The Muslim

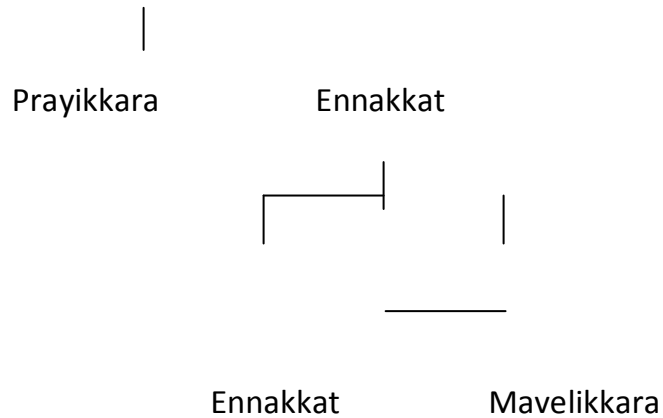
Chieftain, Ali Raja of Cannanore, held independent sway over a small slice of territory in and around Cannanore town. Only the modern Taluk of Taliparamba and parts of Cannanore Taluk remained directly under the Kolathiri's authority. It may thus be seen that the original Kolathiri dominion had broken up into a number of petty principalities and the territory which remained under the direct rule of the Kolathiri Raja had shrunk in size (in Menon, 1972). At the same time with the disintegration of the dominion of the Kolathiri, the Kolathiri royal family itself was under a process of breakdown.

The Kolathiri royal family thus came to have several branches and sub-branches such as those of Udayamangalam, Palli, Chirakkal etc. The peculiar system under which the executive power in the family was divided among its various branches only made confusion worse confounded and gave further fillip to the forces of disruption. As already stated elsewhere, the executive power in the Kolathiri family was sub-divided in theory among the five eldest male members, viz., Kolathiri, the Thekkelamkur, the Vadakkelamkur, the Nalamkur and the Anjamkur. Under this arrangement, the Kolathiri retained in his hands only the immediate executive charge of the middle portion of his dominion. The Thekkelamkur (The Southern Regent) had separate

charge in the southern part of the kingdom with its headquarters at Puthupattanam near the Kotta river. The Valakkelamkur (North Regent) has separate charge of the northern territories. The Nalamkur and Anjamkur remained in constant attendance on the Kolathiri himself in his court and rendered him assistance in times of need (in Menon, 1972). The senior most of these members became the Kolathiri Raja.

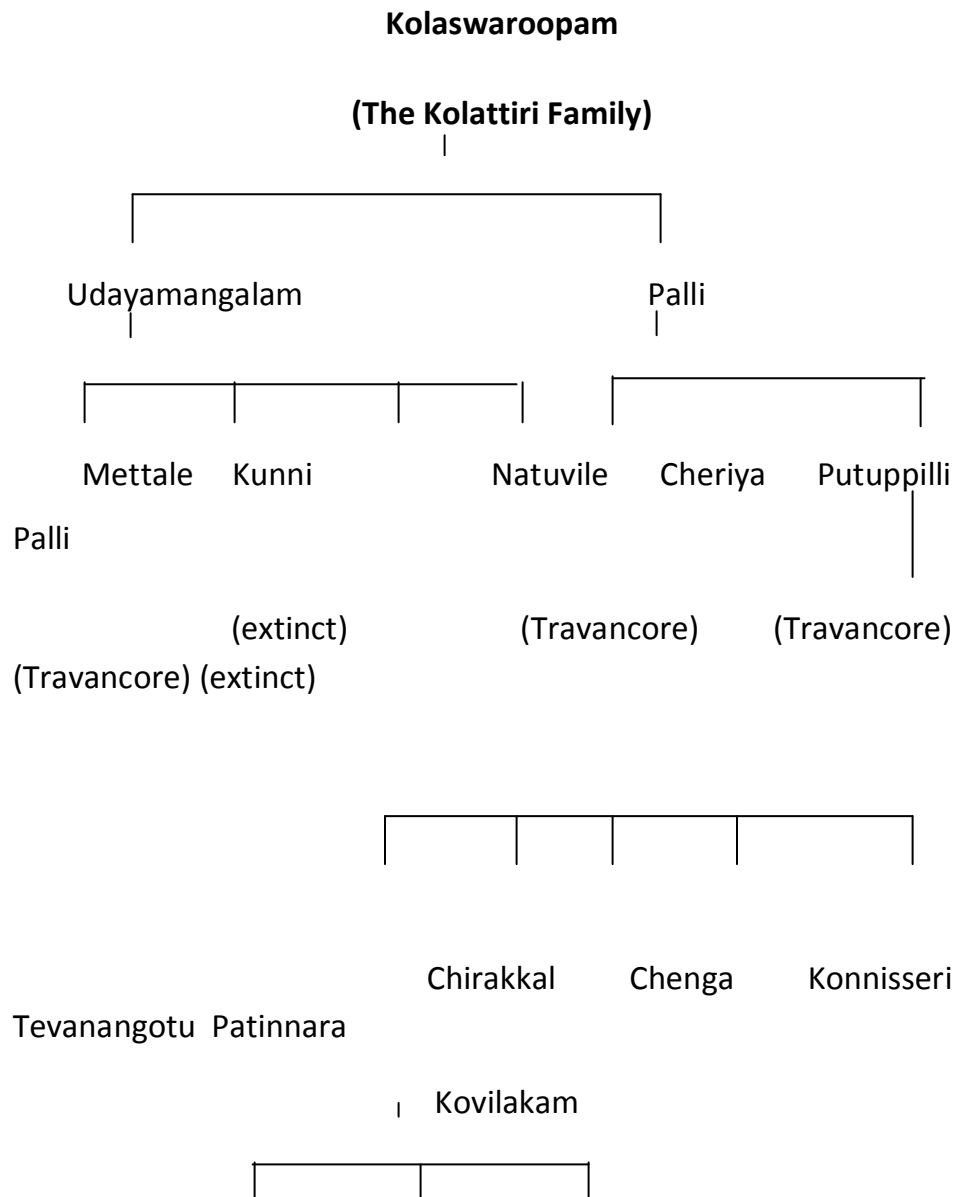
Logan (1887 rpt 1951) gives the following table to show the position of the Kolathiri family in 1886.





Very often the ruling princes made extensive grants of territory to their consorts and sowed the seeds of dissension among the members of the matrilineal family. Tradition says that it was by marriage with one of the Southern Regents that one of the Kadattanad Raja's female ancestors acquired the territory of that family. It was from a marriage with a Vadakkellamkur that the Nileswaram Rajas acquired the bulk of their territory in Hosdurg Taluk (in Menon, 1972). Without considering the pattern of inheritance in marumakkathayam system, some Kolathiris presented lands or areas of Kolathiri dynasty to their wives and children which resulted in the formation of several naduvazhi families (Gopalakrishnan, 1994).

According to the account given by late Raja Ravi Varma, M.A., B.L., (in Menon, 1993) the structure of the Kolathiri family is as follows:



Ennakkat	Prakkara	Mavelikkara
(Travancore)	(Travancore)	(Travancore)

According to C.K.Kerala Varma of Chirakkal Kovilakam, the Kolathiri royal family has later on divisioned into eleven royal houses. These are the following:

1. Mavelikkara *Rajavamsam* or *Kottaram* (Mavelikkara)
2. Prayikkara *Kottaram* (Mavelikkara)
3. Ennakkat (Chengannur)
4. Cherukunnu Kavinisseri *Kovilakam* (Kannur)
5. Cherukunnu Padinjare *Kovilakam* (Kannur)
6. Aduthila *Kovilakam* (Kannur)
7. Nedumbrath *Kottaram* (Thiruvalla)
8. Aaranmula *Kottaram* (Mavelikkara)
9. Karthikapalli *Kovilakam* (Travancore)
10. Mariapalli *Kottaram* (Kottayam)

During the invasion of Tippu, all the *Kovilakams* found shelter in Travancore. When peace was restored, all the Palli *Kovilakam* families except Chenga *Kovilakam* returned to their original homes (in Menon, 1993).

In North Kerala, especially in the Kolathiri dynasty, the invasion and rise of foreign powers was mainly for commercial and trade activities. The native powers also played their own role to acquire the dominance over the country. In addition to this, the dissensions among the members of the matrilineal family also played a role in the disintegration of the dynasty.

The trade conducted by these foreign powers was based on contracts and agreements with the local rulers and merchants (in Logan, rpt 1998). During the 16th and 17th Centuries feudal type of relationship existed in Northern Kerala. At the beginning of the 16th Century, Barbosa (in Dames, 1967) had recorded that “there are only three rulers” and the three major ruling authorities of Kerala during the medieval period were Kolathiri, Zamorin and Venattiri i.e., the rulers of Cannanore, Calicut and Venad respectively. Out of these powers, those belonged to the Malabar region were the Kolathiri and the Zamorin. According to the partition Register of the Chirakkal *Kovilakam*, it had possessed more than 32,082.67 acres of land. The Mysorean attacks shattered the feudal system prevailing in this region and introduced a new system of governance of landed properties (Census of India, 1999).

In addition to these two power holding dynasties, there were a number of local naduvazhis. “In Malabar, Miller found a small territorial unit, the *nad* comprising a number of villages (*desam*) and stated ‘For all the lower Castes the chiefdom (*nad*) was the limit of social relations within the Caste, while their relations with other Castes were largely confined to the village (in Dumont, 1998). It was recorded in Malabar Land Tenures Committee report (1887) that the village in Malabar is called the *desam*... and the headman was called the *desway* or the *jelmiwar*, according as he enjoyed the whole or only apart of the rights which were supposed necessary for the constituting the complete chief of the *desam*. Thus the country was divided into a number of *nads* or principalities all of which was under a chieftain called the *naduvazhi*.

In spite of the nominal supremacy of the *naduvazhi* in the kingdom, all real power lay in the hands of the Nair *Madampimar* or nobles. The latter supplied the chieftain with soldiers in times of war and for this purpose they maintained private armies of their own (Menon, 1972).

In the 16th Century Sheik Zainuddin wrote a contemporary historical narrative, The Tuhafatul-Mujahiddin, which gives an

account of the life and history of the people of Kerala, especially during 1498-1583. In Menon (1972) it was mentioned that according to Zainuddin's account the *marumakkathayam* or matrilineal system of inheritance was prevalent mainly among the Nairs and Muslims and the patrilineal or *makkathayam* (literally son's inheritance) system among the Brahmins, Kammalas, Thiyyas and Mukkuvas. Regarding this account, Menon gives a note that the Thiyyas of the District (Cannanore) seem to have become Marumakkathayas sometime after the 16th Century.

According to Evans and Innes (1908 rpt 1997), the crumble down in the Kolathiri family was because of the working of *marumakkathayam* law of inheritance through the sister's son, and the natural impulse of successive Kolathiris to make provision for their own children out of the family estates at the expense of their legal heirs.

Till a few decades back matrilineal system of inheritance was ubiquitous in north Malabar. But this was not a uniform pattern among all the communities of north Malabar. The main caste groups followed this system include Nairs, Kshatriyas, Thiyyas and Ambalavasis. In north Malabar, the Muslims also followed this system of inheritance. The Kolathiris followed

marumakkathayam system of inheritance till the legal abolition of the system of inheritance. The communities who have followed matriliney had changed to the patrilineal form of inheritance during the early phase of 20th Century. The Marumakkathayam Act of Malabar, 1933 gave the children of a man the right to inherit his self-acquired property. Disintegration of matriliney has taken place mainly because of the enactment of the Nayar Regulations and the Hindu Succession Act of 1956. The Hindu Succession Act and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, make the husband legally responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children (Govt. of India, 1969). During the same period of existence of *marumakkathayam*, *makkathayam* communities were also prevalent in north Malabar.

The Kolathiris have been the rulers of Chirakkal dynasty. They enjoyed the freedom of administration of the area. The disintegration of the dynasty happened with the advent of foreign powers. The Kshatriyas (Kolathiris belong to Kshatriya Caste) have been the dominant caste of the area till 19th Century. Srinivas (1987) used the term Dominant Caste to explain the distribution of power in the village of India. According to Srinivas, A Caste may be said to be 'dominant' when it preponderates numerically over the other castes, and when it also wields preponderant economic

and political power. A large and powerful caste group can be more easily dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low. He has pointed out four important elements to explain the concept. The elements he identified are numerical strength, economic and political power, ritual status and later added western education. To understand a village, according to him, it is essential to study “the locally dominant caste” and “the kind of dominance it enjoys”.

Under Chirakkal dynasty ritually, politically and economically the Kolathiri royal family enjoyed high status. But numerically the position was far behind compared to other communities. It could be asserted that the Kolathiri royal family had no control over the customs and practices of other communities of the area. The communities followed different inheritance patterns based on their social milieu and social structure. Though the power of the Chirakkal royal family has declined, their relevance in the ritual affairs of the village is still surviving.

Chirakkal is famous as being the residence of the Raja of Chirakkal, who has a *Kovilakam* or palace at this place on the south side of a fresh water reservoir of considerable dimensions, estimated to be 1,042 feet in length and 492 feet in breadth. Half

a mile on the west of the high road, a street is formed by weavers and other castes, and on a height S-W of the palace were to be seen the remains of a redoubt (Logan1887 rpt 2004).

In the ultimate years of the 17th Century the *Vadakkkelamkur* or Northern Regent was the de-facto ruler of Kolathunad. So the English East India Company approached him for the grant of the factory site at Tellicherry. The founding of the English factory at Tellicherry towards the end of the 17th Century was a major event in the rise of the British power in north Malabar.

At the time of the union of the English Companies in 1702 Tellicherry was along with Karwar, Calicut and Anjengo one of the affiliated factories of Bombay. It was administered by a Chief and a Council usually called Factors.

One of the rival Kolathiri princes of the Udayamangalam branch in alliance with the Nair Chief of Iruvazhinad (Kurangoth Nair) in 1704-05 entered the Company's warehouse one day and caused serious damage to English property. The Kurangoth Nair continued to harass and disturb the English factory whenever he got an opportunity to do so (Gopalakrishnan, 1994). The English factors reported the incident to the Vakakkellamkur and requested him to take precautionary measures to prevent such occurrences

in future. As a consequence the Prince Regent gave consent to the English to build a fort at Tellicherry and himself laid the foundation stone (in Menon, 1972).

It was this deliberate act that made him enter the warehouse and commit certain irregularities (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951). Thus, the English had deliberately provoked the Kurangoth Nayar. The English East India Company was, therefore, constrained to seek some site in north Malabar from where they could trade in greater freedom and security. They negotiated with the Vadakkellamkur or Northern Regent who was at that time the de facto ruler of Kolathunad and obtained from him a site in Tellicherry for the erection of a factory. Tellicherry was obtained in 1708 by a grant of Chirakkal Raja. At the time when the Company decided to settle at Tellicherry it was a place of no importance (in Menon, 1972).

The English were fortunately able at this time occasionally to interfere in native politics to their advantage. Such an occasion occurred in 1721, about the same time as the Dutch resolved to withdraw from their support of the Raja of Cochin (Innes, 1908 rpt 1997).

In the meantime the construction of the Tellicherry fort had been completed and on August 20, 1708 the Vadakkellamkur formally handed it over to the Company. In the concurrence the Vadakkellamkur declared: "The fort of Tellicherry has been built at the request and entreaties made me as a friend. To acknowledge the love and friendship which the company bears towards me and my palace, I give and make over the said fort with its limits to the Honorable company, where no person shall demand, collect or plant" (Logan, rpt 1998). Thus, the fort of Tellicherry was obtained by a grant from the Chirakkal Raja in 1708 (Malabar Joint Commissioners Report).

The Nayar submitted an agreement with the company on 29th September 1719, and agreed to give the company a monopoly of his pepper produce without any duty and to surrender "the Ramem hill" (Logan, rpt 1998). This facilitated the English to play a dominant role in Malabar politics.

In spite of the many difficulties it had to face in the initial stages the trade of the English East India Company prospered during this period. The English Company paid for their pepper full market prices and even granted temporary exemption to all manufactured goods from duty. By such a liberal trade policy they

attracted spinners, weavers and men of wealth to settle within their limits (in Menon, 1972: Innes, 1997).

In 1722, the Kolathiri himself granted the English Company “all the trades and farms from Canhorotte down to the river Pudupatnam.. and the English were authorised to carry on their commerce and “ if any other European or any other stranger come to this our country, the English Company can, in our name, punish, prevent and drive away”.... In 1730, the English Company stood in need of further guarantees against the admission of other European nations to commerce, and the Prince Regent gave a grant to protect the trade of the English Company.

During this period the emergence of supremacy of the French in north Malabar posed a prospective menace to the growing power of the Britishers.

Throughout the period of the Anglo-French war (1744-49) there was a change of succession in Kolathunad. Prince Udayavarman passed away on the 5th June 1746 and in his place Prince Kunhi Rama Varma assumed the reins of government. Under Udayavarman the trading privileges of the Britishers had taken root at Tellicherry smoothly (Gopalakrishnan, 1994). But the Company did not have smooth relations with the new prince,

Kunhi Rama Varma and the Britishers tried to appoint a prince favourable to them.

The policies of prince Kunhi Rama Varma created fresh complications for the company. The Prince Regent had married the sister of the Kadathanad Raja and had built a house for her at Iruvazhinad, the country of the Nambiars. As a result of this, in 1751 a joint attack was carried out by Kunhi Rama Varma, Kottayam Raja and Kadathanad Raja.

During the reign of Udayavarma (Prince Regent) the relationship with Ali Raja of Cannanore was very much strained and there were frequent quarrels. There was even an attempt on the life of the prince by Ali Rajas men (Tellicherry Consultations, Vol. IV).

In 1750, Thomas Dorril took over charge as the chief of the Tellicherry factory. He decided to interfere active in the affairs of the Kolathiri family to the detriment of British interests in North Kerala. He established direct contacts with the old Kolathiri Raja the nominal head of the house and formulated a proposal to appoint a junior and powerless prince by name Ambu Tamban as Prince Regent in supersession of the *de jure* Prince Regent and *de facto* ruler Kunhi Rama Varma. The action of Dorril only served to

worsen the dissensions in the Kolathiri family (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

The Kottayam Raja now assumed the role of a mediator and persuaded the Prince Regent to withdraw his force from within the limits of Tellicherry. He arranged an armistice on the 22nd May 1752 and on the following day the terms of peace were formally ratified by the Prince Regent. The company and the Kolathiri prince were hereafter not to interfere in each other's affairs and were also to give mutual assistance, if attacked. A sum of Rs.50, 000 was paid to the Prince Regent as compensation and Rs.10, 000 to the Kottayam Raja for his work as mediator (in Gopalakrishnan, 1994; Menon, 1972).

The old name of the dynasty, Kolattiri, had by this time become pretty well forgotten, and in the records the prince is invariably styled as of Chirakkal. There had been a split in the family at the time of the Bednur Raja's invasion (1733-40). At that time the Kolattiri had conferred beiship on "Odeormen of the Palace of Pally" (Treaties, &c., I XXXVIII), and ever since the princes of this Palli branch of the family had been recognized as having taken the place of the head of the family – Kolattiri. In fact the Utayamangalam branch had been shut out from the Kolattiri

sovereignty (conf. Treaties, &c., ii CCX) although, as matter of fact, one of that branch might still have claimed, if he was the eldest male of both branches, the empty title of Kolattiri. The title of Kolattiri thus fell into disuse, and the ruling family (Palli branch) gradually began to be known as that of Chirakkal from the Kovilagam of that name, which was the head quarter of their branch of the family. The Palli branch claimed “such part of the kingdom as had not been dismembered” by the Ikkeri (Bednur) Raja, and as the ruling family they obtained and still enjoy Rs.23, 500 out of the Rs.24, 000 Malikhana allowance from the British Government. The remaining Rs.500 is enjoyed by the Utayamangalam branch (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951; Logan, rpt 1998). According to the present Elaya Thampuran of Chirakkal family, the Valiya Thampuran enjoys only an amount of 12000/ annum as Malikhan from the Government.

In the second half of the 18th Century, the most vital event in the political record of North Kerala was the conquest of the Mysoreans. Haider saw the political situation in Malabar favourable to impede in Kerala’s internal affairs. This was mainly because of the fact that, on the one hand the European powers were engaged in carrying on political maneuverings with them to

further their trade interest, while the local chieftains and the princes were affianced in frequent contention.

According to Brown, “Malabar”, when Hyder invaded it, was divided into a number of petty Rajaships; the Government of which being perfectly feudal, neither laws, nor a system of revenue, were known amongst its inhabitants. Owing to the quarrels between the different Rajas, and the turbulent spirit of the Nair chiefs, who were frequently in arms against each other, the state of the country was little favourable to the introduction of order or good Government. Malabar, however, was then a country very rich in money (in Buchanan, 1870).

Hyder Ali became the Sultan of Mysore in 1763. The Ali Raja of Cannanore extended an invitation to him to invade Kerala and get in the way of the Kolathiri kingdom (Gopalakrishnan, 1994). According to Sinha, the disintegration of Kolathunad was already completed by the invasion of the Mysore army, which advanced anarchy and created ‘a sea of intrigues, conflicting interests and mutual jealousies’ (in Kurup, 002). Ali Raja was in close touch with Hyder and he sent emissaries to Mysore inviting Hyder to come to Malabar and to conquer the country for Islam (Tellicherry Factory Diary, Vol. XVIII). Thus, in 1766, Hyder was on way to Malabar, to

institute his power and conquered the kingdom of Kolathiri and Malabar tended under him up to 1782.

It was recorded in the Guides to the Records of the Malabar District (1936) that, the first recorded instance of the levy of land revenue in Malabar licensed in historical times was in 1731-32 A.D., when the Kolathiri Raja, hard pressed by the invasion of the Bednur Raja, imposed a tax of 20 per cent of the *pattam* on all rice and garden lands in Kolathanad. This levy was temporary and imposed to meet an emergency. It was Hyder Ali who, in 1776, first imposed a land tax on the whole province and established it as a permanent feature of the administration.

The Mysorean invasion made the Dutch trade at Cannanore in a dwindling stage and as part of this, the Dutch intended to dispose the fort St. Angelo. The possession of this strategic fort made him a “powerful chieftain of Malabar” (in Kurup, 2002). The Dutch sold the fort to the Ali Raja in 1772 (in Innes, 1997).

Haider sent his envoy Anant Rao to Tellicherry to request the help of the English factors, but they promised to be neutral (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951). Having ensured British neutrality Anant Rao turned his attention to the internal affairs of Kolathunad (Chirakkal). A part from the excuse offered by the invitation of the

Ali Raja, Anant Rao was in the internal dissensions in the Kolathiri's family a grand opportunity for his master's intervention. The Prince Regent, the de facto ruler of the kingdom of Chirakkal, was facing a challenge to his authority from a junior prince by name Kappu Thampan (Kerala Varma) who had the active support of the Muslim chief Ali Raja. The Ali Raja was persuaded by Anant Rao to commit aggression against the Kolathiri's territory in aid of this rebel prince. The Prince Regent sought the intervention of the British, but the Ali Raja opposed all their attempts at mediation...The Ali Raja met Haider at Mangalore and requested him to invade Malabar in aid of the rebel prince Thampan against the Prince Regent (in Menon, 1972).

In this situation, Haider in 1766 crossed the border to invade Kolathunad. From the year 1766 onwards the territory of Kolathunad or Chirakkal country was entrusted to the Ali Raja by Haider (in Kurup, 2002).

On March 23rd 1765, after a period of disturbance during which the management of the district was conducted by the Kolathiri, the Prince Regent finally ceded (Treaties LXXXI, LXXXII) the protection of Randattara to Honorable company, and from that year the Honorable company became the virtual (Treaties

LXXXIII, LXXXIV) sovereigns of that district and began to levy a regular land revenue from it. ... Hyder at first respected the Honorable Company's rights in the district (Logan, rpt 1998).

The first battle of Haider's campaign was fought at Baliapattam. The Mysore forces laid siege to Madayi fort and forced its coramandant to make an unconditional surrender. The Ali Raja and his men seized the Chirakkal palace where upon the members of the family and their attendants fled in panic and took refuge in the Thiruvangad temple within Tellicherry limits. On March 6, 1766 Haider set up camp at Chirakkal and from there he sent a strong protest to the Tellichery factors against their action in giving asylum to the refugees from the Chirakkal kingdom... In 1776 the Prince Regent of Chirakkal was restored to his ancestral domination and he was authorized to carry on the administration on behalf of Haider. It may be mentioned here that the Ali Raja's failure to pay the stipulated tribute to Haider precipitated this decision. The Prince Regent immediately set out to work vigorously for his master (in Menon, 1972). Meanwhile in north Malabar, in consequence of Ali Raja's failure to pay the stipulated tribute, the Prince Regent of Chirakkal (Kolattunad) has been restored to his dominions and a Mysorean officer had been sent to administer the revenue. On 25th April 1775 the Prince Regent,

backed by the Mysorean, forced the Kurangoth Nayar, backed by the French of Mahe, to come to terms, and on 5th May the French paid Rs.80, 000 and procured the withdrawal of the enemy. In June the Prince Regent proceeded to Kottayam to reduce various forts: all guns taken were sent to Hyder Ali. The Prince Regent however during all this time continues to supply the Tellicherry factory with pepper, and thereby the factors incurred the jealousy of the French Settlement at Mahe. M. Law de Lauriston wrote to Warren Hastings, complaining of the entire ruin of French trade on the coast through the factors' "new treaties" with the Prince Regent "for all the pepper and other productions of the country" (in Menon, 1972).

Haider passed away in December 1782 and his son ascended the throne. In 1783 the British attacked Cannanore and compelled Arakkal Bibi to enter into a treaty of friendship. In the next year the British signed a treaty with Tippu at Mangalore by which they gave up their supremacy over the rulers of Malabar. Tippu's forces continued their efforts to capture Tellicherry Fort but the British forces could withstand it under Robert Teylor. The Raajas of Chiraykkal, Kottayam, Kadaththanat and other local chieftains accepted the offer of protection of the British from the attacks of Tippu's forces. The treaties of Seringapattanam signed on

February 22 and March 18, 1792 formally ceded Malabar to the British (Census of India, 1999).

Shortly after this the Bibi of Cannanore again sought protection from the company and stated positively that Tippu was shortly coming to the coast with the whole of his force. The Bibi was probably at this time playing a deep game. The Mappillas of the coast generally recognized her as their head, and the Mappillas of the south were in open rebellion against Tippu's authority. Her reinstatement in possession of the country of her hereditary enemy, the Chirakkal prince, would doubtless have induced her to quiet the trouble in the south, and as events turned out this appears to have been her object all along. Meanwhile she again turned to the English alliance.

Tipu visited Cannanore and solemnized the preliminary ceremonies of a marriage between the Bibi's daughter and one of his sons, Abd-ul-khalic... There can be little doubt that the main object of his visit at this time to north Malabar was to appease the Cannanore chieftains. Having made friends with the Bibi by handing over to her a portion of the Chirakkal district, as well as by the projected marriage, the trouble from rebellious Mappillas in the south rapidly disappeared, and in the future this turbulent

race ranged themselves on the side of Tippu's troops (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

The local chieftains in Kerala looked up to the British to save them from the wrath of Tipu and consequently the British took control of the forts previously held by Tipu. After Tipu's first defeat by the British, the Seringpatnam Treaty brought all the captured parts of Kerala directly under the British and Travancore and Kochi became princely states under the British (Bhatt and Bhargava, 2005).

During 1765-1790 Malabar Rajas were reduced to vassals by the Mysorean powers Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. The Mysorean power itself was interested as a state trading agency in the procurement of pepper. In this political situation the English factory at Tellicherry was reduced into a residency. The decline of English trade in Malabar was one major reason for the third Anglo-Mysore war. The treaty of Seringapatam in 1792 surrendered the entire territory of Malabar in favour of the Bombay presidency of the English (Kurup, 2000).

The new Chirakkal Raja, who is styled as "Revi Varma, king of the house of Palliculam of the kingdom of Colastri", entered into an agreement with the company. According to the terms of the

treaty, the Chirakkal Raja would be “included and considered as an ally of the honourable company” in the war against Tipu (Tellicherry Factor Diary, Folio 1506). The main intend of the Dutch, the English and the French had been the colonial expansion.

Photograph 1.1 Chirakkal *Padinjare Kovilakam*



Immediately after the treaties of Seringapatam in February and March 1792 Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, instructed General Abercromby, the Governor of Bombay, to enquire into the conditions in Malabar and to establish a system for the future government of the province. The Bombay Governor was also directed to enter into agreement with all the Malabar chiefs for some specified revenue to be paid by each of them to the Company for the ensuing year (in Menon, 1972). Thus, by the treaty of Seringapatam in 1792 Malabar fell into the hands of the British power and was taken over from Tipu Sultan.

The British officials who were initially entrusted with the administration of the newly acquired territory drew guidance for revenue management from the system followed by Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan (Panikkar, 1992).

The Bombay Commissioners started their work with the Rajas of Chirakkal, Kottayam and Kadathanad. The first to sign an agreement with the Company was the Raja of Kadathanad. The agreement entered into by him on April. 25, 1792 contained the following provisions.

Agreement on the above lines was entered into with the Kottayam and Chirakkal Rajas also and steps were taken to obtain a valuation of these Districts. The Chirakkal Raja's revenue was subsequently fixed at Rs.50, 000, the Kadathanad Raja's at Rs.30, 000 and the Kottayam Raja's at Rs.25, 000 and all the three Rajas acknowledge the full sovereignty of the Company over their respective Districts (in Menon, 1972; Gopalakrishnan, 1994). In this way numberless petty chieftains arose, and the great families warred or wanted just according as they were able to attract to their following larger or fewer numbers of these petty chieftains. "No revenue" was in one sense levied from the petty chiefs who thus flocked round the standards of the great families, for the

petty chiefs themselves enjoyed the ancient land revenue assessment.

But in another sense land revenue was paid on every cultivated acre; the difficulty was to see and realise that this revenue was really what, in very other Indian province, has constituted the basis of there venues of the province... At the commencement of British rule, the *janmi* or landlord was entitled to no more than his proper share, viz, one-third of the net produce of the soil, and even that one-third was liable to diminution if he had received advances from those beneath him (Logan, 1887 rpt 1951).

Even as early as the 30 the March 1793 the province was divided into two administrative divisions, the Northern and the Southern, presided over by a Superintendent each at Tellicherry and Cherpulasseri, under the general control of the Supervisor and Chief Magistrate of the Province of Malabar who had his headquarters at Calicut. The Northern Division comprised Coorg and the whole area from Chirakkal to Kurumbranad and as such it included the bulk of the present Cannanore District (in Menon, 1972).

It is seen that the political history of north Malabar after 1792 was interwoven with the movements and struggles started against the British. Pazhassi Raja's contribution in this regard was remarkable for the freedom from the Britishers. The involvement of Kolathiri or Chirakkal Raja in freedom movement had not been reported.

Along with these changes, the colonial system of exploitation through a vigorous economic policy of land revenue was also introduced in the last decade of the eighteenth Century. The most adverse impact of the foreign government on Malabar was the immediate revenue policy enunciated by it (Kurup, 1988).

The internal dispute among the members of the family and recurring wars with foreign powers gradually led to the decline of the dynasty. More over, the split up of the country into a number of small principalities created unfavourable conditions for trade. *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance also not favoured the existence.

Being the sovereign power of Malabar, the English could command more quantity of pepper. The internal politics of Malabar along with frequent invasions by neighbouring powers also contributed to a political crisis and trade dislocation of

commerce and trade (Kurup, 2000). Towards the beginning of 1788, Tippu set up the Kolattiri, or as he came now be called the Chirakkal Raja, to put forward pecuniary claims against the Tellicherry factory (in Menon, 1993).

The partition of property of Chirakkal royal family started in 1956, when the Kerala Land Reforms Act passed, which also alienated the land holdings of the landlords. Apart from this, the land holdings and thirty nine temples which were under the royal house of Chirakkal *Kovilakam* have been taken over about fifty years back by the Government under

Photograph 1.2 Chirakkal *Chira* (Pond)



HR and CE (Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment⁵). The property which was kept undivided consists of Rajas High School, Rajas U.P School, temple pond (*Chira*), and the trusteeship of thirty nine temples. At present, the Chirakkal *Kovilakam* family possesses only 110 members (female members, their male and female children) and they are the inheritors of the joint property which was kept undivided.

⁵See Agarwala (1994: 401) Endowments are properties set apart or edicated by gift or devise for the worship of some particular deity or for the establishment or maintenance of a religious or charitable institution, or for the benefit of the public or some section of the public.