

The Political Life of Two Scions of Zamorins Family of Kozhikode During Eighteenth Century

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Abstract

In the late 1970's and 80's, particularly after the appearance of Carlo Ginzburg's 'The Cheese and the Worms' and Giovanni Levis' 'Inheriting Power', micro history shook the ground of established historiographical paradigms and practices. Macro history and Micro history are both subfields of the 'new history' that emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century and as such, it purports, to focus upon the real people in history. When writing micro history, the author more concentrates upon a single individual or community and through study and analysis attempts to reach understanding of wider issues. It also means 'the singularisation of history, which takes a resolute stance against 'grand narratives' singularisation of history, which takes a resolute stance against 'grand narratives'. This paper intends to provide trajectories of the political life of two scions of Zamorins family of Kozhikode. They are Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma. A biographical scale is attempted here to portray the facets of social confusions and mired power equations in the changing political atmosphere of the time. The study follows tools of micro history. As such, it refrains from the traditional historical method of 'grand historical narratives'. As such this is an intensive historical investigation of a well defined smaller unit. However, this can be distinguished from a simple case study in so far as micro history aspires to large questions in small places. By reducing the scale of observation the method tries to reveal the complicated function of individual relationship within each and every social setting and they stressed its difference from large norms. Kovilakam is the residence of the royal house hold. Zamorins ruling families are divided in to three kovilakams. They are Pandinjare Kovilakam, puthiya kovilakam and kizhakke kovilakam Both Valiya(elder) Ravi Varma and cheriya(younger) Ravivarma belong to padinjare kovilakam. Present study tries to place the life of these scions on the context of a declining royal family facing unprecedented political and social threats. While studying the life of them we can understand not only the external factors but also the internal factors that were responsible for the decline. This study also helps to understand the social circumstances and chaos present while they were striving to locate themselves in the emerging scheme of power.

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Introduction

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This paper intends to provide trajectories of the political life of two scions of Zamorins family of Kozhikode. They are Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma. A biographical scale is attempted here to portray the facets of social confusions and mired power equations in the changing political atmosphere of the time. The study follows tools of micro history. As such, it refrains from the traditional historical method of 'grand historical narratives'. As such this is an intensive historical investigation of a well defined smaller unit. However, this can be distinguished from a simple case study in so far as micro history aspires to large questions in small places. By reducing the scale of observation the method tries to reveal the complicated function of individual relationship within each and every social setting and they stressed its difference from large norms.

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Valia Ravivarma

There is no factual evidence on the birth of Valiya Ravivarma. But, it is clear that he had been directly adopted from the Neeleswaram Kovilakam .Neeleswaram was one of the important principal centre of the kingdom of Kolathunadu. There was a long term enemy existed between Zamorin and Kolathiri. It is believed that once a Tampuran¹ of kolathiri family lived in Zamorin's kovilakam in

disguise and subsequently got married to a Tampuratti¹ from zamorins kovilakam without his consent. The zamorin disinherited her and compelled the kolathiri to cede all his lands as far as panthalayini kollam and to settle the thampuratty at Neeleswaram with all sovereign rights. It was the connection between zamorin and Neeleswaram kovilakam. Valiya Ravivarma was adopted to the branch of Padinjare Kovilakam following the death of three Thampurans of Teepetta Thampuran of Aranmula, Thachusastramulla Thampuran, and Vidvan Thampuran took their last breath². After the death of these three thampurans, may be there was no male member in the family of padinjare kovilakam. Again there is no details regarding the day and date of adoption.

The above mentioned Thampurans were the uncles of Cheriya Ravivarma. It was on to their position that Valiya Ravivarma stepped in. He was aged between twenty five – thirty when he made his way to Kovilakam.³ As the then system was of the Marumakkathayam⁴, no information is available about his father expect he was a Brahmin. His mother belong to the Neeleswaram Kovilakam. One of his daughter was married to the Valiya Manavikrama Raja, the younger brother of Cheriya Ravivarma. Valiya Ravivarma's wife belong to the Talakkodi Madam⁵. He acquired training in *Kalari* and *Gurukula* education from childhood days itself. Still there is no details about his brothers, sister, uncles, etc., but he had close contact with Keralavarma Pazhassi Raja. He died in 1793 and was cremated at Kalladikkode⁶.

Cheriya Ravivarma

Cheriya Ravivarma was born in 1748 (Malayalam year 923). His mother was granddaughter of the Valiya Thampuratti, who joined the Padinjare Kovilakam via adoption in AD 1707, named Thazhathamma Thampuratti. He had three brothers and three sisters.

Aranmulayil Theepetta Thampuran, Thachusastramulla Thampuran, and Vidvan- Thampuran were the uncles of Cheriya Ravivarma. His mother Sisters were Ambadi Kovilakathe Thampuratti, and Kuttiyatti Thampuratti respectively⁷. He got knowledge in kalari from Dharmoth Panikkar and education in Sanskrit from Desahmangalam Variyer. At the time of invasion he was about 16 years old. No details are available about his father expect he was a Brahmin. We have no idea about his children and wife even. From Kovilakam records he is known to be as 'Karumanam Kurissiyil Teepetta Thampuran'. He was also a close friend of Keralavarma Pazhassi Raja. He was died in the temporary jail erected at Karumanam Kurissi. His cremation was done on the banks of Toothapuzha⁸.

During fifteenth century zamorins became emerged as most important powers in kerala. The naduvazhis of kerala at this period were engaged in mutual

conflicts. The main factor which facilitated the conquest was the lack of unity and co-operation among the rulers of Kerala. The expansionist policies pursued by the Zamorin of Calicut had sparked off a conflict between Calicut and the neighbouring principalities and it created political conditions favourable for the Mysorean intervention.

The invasion of Haider Ali marked the end of Zamorins' prowess. The invasion was concluded when the then Zamorin committed suicide by burning himself (in records Palayath Teepetta Thampuran) in the day of *Chaitra pournami*. He was the Thampuran who came to Kizhakke Kovilakam, during the first adoption from Neeleswaram Kovilakam. The Zamorin who came afterwards was an (adopted) Thampuran of Puthiyakovilakam.

Here follows a contemporary statement on the Haider's expedition to Calicut. "In the year 941 (AD 1765-1766) Zamorin conducted *Mamangam* in Thirunavaya. It was in that year Pardesi [Haider Ali] came to Kerala from the North. Zamorin has made discussions with Gopala pisharadi and Vella on war against Pardesi. Then the new Zamorin travelled to cherukode and took the amendments' for alliance. Then Zamorin and his family escaped to Venad. The king of Venad arranged the Kunnattoor Kovilakam for the Zamorin and his family. It was in this period that a Thampuran of Padinjare Kovilakam went from Kunnattoor to Kozhikkode and began to conflict with Haider Ali"⁹

The padinjare Kovilakam Thampuran mentioned here is Valiya Ravivarma . Cheriya Ravivarma too joined him. This was an action that goes against the tradition of Mooppu as political action usually originated from the elder ones in the household. The household power in Zamorins family distributed as in different ranks according to their seniority. They are samuthiri Tirumulpad, Ernad Elamkur Nambiyathiri Tirumulpad, Ernad Munamkur Nambiyathiri Tirumulpad, Edataranad Nambiyathiri Tirumulpad, and Nediyruppil Mootha Eradi Tirumulpad. The war situation was made use of by those who are at younger rungs of family hierarchy. This was probably an action born out of the conviction of the younger members of the family that the traditional system under the aged leadership had become outmoded to face the emerging situations. The determination of Ravivarmas is revealed in their decision to not to flee from Calicut in the wake of Haider's invasion. K.V Krishna Iyer says that when Calicut was finally occupied by the Mysoreans in AD 1774, the members of Zamorins family except the Ravivarmas, uncle and nephew took refuge in Travancore.¹⁰

In 1776 war broke out between Haider and the English. During this time

company forced the Zamorin and other local chiefs to enter into negotiations. In spite of the absence of Zamorin, the resistance to Haider Ali kept up by Valiya Ravivarma of Padinjare Kovilakam¹¹. Cheriya Ravivarma also supported Valiya Ramavarma in all his feats. It was a great ambition of both the rajas to take back the lost fortunes from the hands of Paradesi. In order to fulfil this, they made alliance with the British. The Nair military force of Zamorins came in full support with both the Tampurans which added up to the confidence and motivation of them. Cheriya Ravivarma along with his uncle fought bravely to drive away the Mysore army out of Malabar and to help Zamorin to get back his kingdom.

The period from 1766 to 1778 was one of comparative peace in Malabar. But in 1778 rebellions broke out against the authority of the Mysore ruler. Also in that year war broke out between the English and French following the recognition by France of American independence. The rulers of Calicut, Kadathanad and Kottayam at this time entered into an alliance to throw off the yoke of Mysore. The English East India Company encouraged these rulers because French were in alliance with Haider.¹²

Under these favourable conditions, the English troops under Major Abington took Calicut on February 13, 1782. At this time Palaghat was the only place left in Haider's hands. Advancement of English troops assisted by Nairs under the leadership of Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma (in records, only mentioned as Ravivarma) advanced towards Palaghat under the command of Col. Humberstone. They met Mysorean forces in a pitched battle at Tirurangadi on the banks of river Kadalundi on 8th April. Mysore lost Makhdum Ali, its General and a great part of his army in the battle. Haider then, sent his son Tipu to restore his authority in Malabar¹³.

Before any decisive engagement took place Haider Ali died on 7th December 1782 and Tipu was obliged to return home. At this time Valiya Ravivarma and the English were free to go ahead with their campaign. On 15th November 1783 an English force under, Col. Fullerton captured Palaghat and handed over it to the Zamorin. But the Zamorin soon abandoned Palaghat and Tipu forces re-occupied the fort. Tipu was able to establish his authority from Palaghat to Kotta river¹⁴.

It is to be noted that the alliance between Valiya Ravivarma and Tipu during 1784 and 1785. According to K.V. Krishna Iyer, "in 1785, the oppression of Tipu's revenue officers led to the rebellion of Goorukal, a Moplah chief of Manjeri. Unable to surpass him with the soldiers at his command, Arshed-Beg Khan sought Ravivarma's help. By messages and promises he prevailed on Ravivarma to join him, and their united forces were able to put down the rebels, partly as a reward for this Tipu settled upon

him a pension and a jaghir in 1786.”But again situations were worsened when Tipu made a proclamation.

“From the period of the conquest until this day, during twenty four years, you have been a turbulent and refractory people and in the wars waged during your rainy season, you have caused numbers of our Warriors to take the draught of martyrdom.. Hereafter you must be praised in an opposite manner, dwell quietly and pay your dues like good subjects and since it is the practice with you for one woman to associate with men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in the obscene practices and are thence all born in adultery, and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts in the fields: I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices and to be like the rest of mankind, and if you are disobedient to these commands, I have made repeated vows to honour the whole of you with Islam and to march all the chief persons to the seat of government”¹⁶.

Tipu’s proclamation created universal resentment and the whole country rose in rebellion. Cheriya Ravivarma took the lead. During this panic situation fearing forcible conversion around thirty thousand Brahmins took flight to Travancore. The Kottayam and Kadathanad Rajas sought the English East India company’s protection¹⁷.

At that time Valiya Ravivarma, whom Tipu uplifted Jaghidar and many Nairs along with a group of Muslims from Manjeri set out for a revolt against Tipu¹⁸. Valiya Ravivarma began to behave as he was the ruler of Kozhikode and reproaching Tipu. Cheriya Ravivarma was there in support of Valiya Ravivarma. He was an expert in Gureilla warfare¹⁹. Knowing this Tipu and Mon Lally (French men) along with the help of Mr. Azhar Ali Khan and six thousand knights and one twenty European knights attacked Kozhikode in 1788 February 11²⁰. But Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma were not ready to deviate from their decision. They moved to the forests and as Valiya Ravivarma had asked the Zamorin Raja he erected a kovilakam at Kalladikode. The Kovilakam was in the forest area in the beginning and later it became the place for the Thampurans to make conspiracy against their enemies²¹. 1790 Tipu invaded Travancore by himself. Diplomatically using these situation British invites Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma for discussion and agreeing to restore the power of zamorin. Accordingly Valiya Ravivarma meets General Meadow at Trichy and conducted negotiations.

William Logan explains in his records, that during the religious oppression of Tipu a young Thampuran called Ravivarma of the Padinjare Kovilkam, in the name of Krishnan Raja who was the heir for the kingship of Zamorin, collected a Tittooram (declaration) saying that he was appointed to look upon the revenue and to give the

company the then collected amount after the war, at Coimbatore from general Medows. Logan also says, this Ravivarma was renowned as the protector of Hindus²² With the help of Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma and their Nair forces, the Mysore armies were routed by the British in Malabar. With Mysore under simultaneous attack by the British, Tipu agrees for peace in 1792 and cedes Malabar to the British in compensation, Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma meantime busy with restoring order in Malabar.

The old zamorin is now more interested in celebrating his Ariyittuvazcha or coronation in Chavakkad possibly missed the significance of the British call for a meeting in Cannanore to discuss the rights. Assuming that the Zamorin was playing a delay tactic ,they leased a number of his lands to the Raja of other nadus. In this matter they got the secrete support of Swaminatha pattar,the manager of zamorin. As things turned out, the zamorin finally deputed his munalpad and Swaminatha Pattar for the meeting with the British. Thus the hard negotiations lasted for two months²³. But the British decided against reinstating the zamorin. Naturally, Valiya Ravivarma and Cheriya Ravivarma insisted British to restoring the kingdom of Zamorin and the agreement between the Zamorin and the commissioners was not accepted by them, especially Valiya Ravivarma. Valiya Ravivarma who also had been entrusted with the collection of revenue in Nedunganad by the Eralpad Krishnen Raja. On the strength of this he attempted to assert the independence of Zamorin²⁴.

During this period Valiya Ravivarma had close contact with Keralavarma Pazhassi Raja. Once he got a message from Pazhassi Raja. In the messege Pazhassi requested for help against British. But they could not fight together. Logan stated that if Thampurans of Pandinjare Kovilakam and Pazassi fought together British could not be so easy to rule over Malabar²⁵.

Valiya Ravivarma, who fortify their home in Kalladikode, Attappadi area. He was aided by the tribes and Chetty' s who had supported them in the previous wars. It became a meeting place of many dissatisfied Malabar Nobles, and leaders to prepare strategies against British . Pazhassi also in league with them²⁶.

Hearing these news the English preparing for another attack against Valiya Ravivarma and his followers. When Valiya Ravivarma was in Cherpulasseri, he got a warning letter from Assistant Collector Stevens, accusing him of conspiracy against the English East India Company and weakening the position of the reigning Zamorin. However he also said that more than everything the main English East India Company's grouse was the threat of body injury to Swaminathapattar. Accordingly they were ordered to pay Rs 1,00,000. But Valiya Ravivarma did not moved a bit

by this. He and his nephew continued their fighting. But Valiya Ravivarma did not live long. He diseased when he was attempted to move Kalladikode. And he was cremated at Kalladikode. Including Pazhassi Raja, Kadathanattu Thampuran, and many other kings from various places were came hearing about his death²⁷.

Cheriyaravivarma, who then continued the protest against the British. After the death of Valiya Ravivarma the collection of revenue of Nedunganad and other areas transplanted to the hands of him. During this time onwards again problems commenced. It ended up with the arrest of Cheriyaravivarma at Cherpulasseri by Captain Burchell as a convict. After one or two days he died in imprisonment. He was found with poison swallowed in his stomach. His brother and nephew (Valiya Manavikrama Raja and Cheriyamana Vickrama Raja) is also taken into custody by the British but released on receipt of a surety by Kizhekke Kovilakam Thampuran (Nalam Thampuran) after the payment of one lakh arrears due to the English East India Company²⁸. Valiya Manavikrama Raja and Cheriyaravivarma came to know that there was a hidden hands of Swaminathapattar on the death of Cheriyaravivarma. They were the brother and nephew of him. In Mankavu beside the Trishalakulam they sliced him to death²⁹. The Rani or Amma Thampuratti is deeply troubled by the terrible act committed on a Brahmin and orders that a special Pooja be conducted. The remains of Brahmarakshas, Trisshala Kulam, and Kalarithara, still survives in Mankavu Padinjare Kovilakam.

Soon, both of them rescued themselves to Anamala in Wayanad. At Wayanad they were joined by Unnimootha Moopan, some Coimbatore Poligars, Kunhi Achan, from Palakad, etc. The English East India Company offers a reward of 5000 for their capture. Captain Burchell pursues them through Anamalai's in Wayanad, but they escape to Travancore³⁰.

A connected report which the Bengal commission submitted in 1794 February 2, was on the quarrel or territorial means among the kings of Padinjare Kovilakam,. On account of this Governor ordered that 'either the kings of padinjare kovilakam be captured or if they did not surrender they can spend their rest of life by getting pension in the Tiruvidancore'³¹. The Padinjare Kovilakam kings referred here might be Valiya Manavikrama Raja and Cheriyamana Vikramaraja. It was Manavikramaraja who gave shelter to the nephews of Pazhassi Raja in Kalladikode. . After the death of Valiya Manavikrama Raja and Cheriyaravivarma the protest against the British rule were followed by none..

Zamorins reign overall completed with the annexation of Malabar to the Madras presidency by the British. After six years it was decided to give Malikahan

to the Zamorin. But before this the allowance that had given to the Padinjare Kovilakam had been ceased for giving shelter to the nephews of Pazhassiraja. After the death of these scions, Zamorin, who once reached the greatest position of emperor, well reputed and respected by all, started the life of coward with sans reputation, sans power and sans fame.

CONCLUSION

This study is about the two scions of zamorin household who lived in the milieu of the 18th century. Their birth and growth are very significant for the study of the whole history of kerala. it is during their time that the household of zamorins power economically and morally weakened. However the persons of padinjare Kovilakam tried their best to defend their homeland from the external forces by negotioating and at times supporting one another. But they failed to understand the conspiracy behind them. The very vital issue that restrict the activities of the Ravivarmas were the prevelant Marumakkathayam system. Marumakkathayam does not provide them the chance of attaining efficient place among Zamorins Household but only considered the seniority of the age. The epoche also witnessed many political and social chaos as well. It was during their time that mysorian invasion and British invasion had occurred in the land of the Malbar. The life of these two personality reveals Zamorins power during eighteenth century. The ascendancy of the senior most members had brought down efficiency of the Zamorins rule and therefore declaine power. Many forces were looking forward to eat into sphere of zamorins Power. Internally Nattuvydar sought all chances to get out of Zamorins control. This resulted in the decline in the support of nair milltia. At the same time Mysoreans as well as English east India Company was trying to dismember zamorins authority. All these break down the economic strength of Zamorin. Ravivarmas were very brilliant in the traditional fighting of guerrilla ware fare, but they pathetically defeated in front of the new modern technology. Though they knew about the modern technology they had no capacity to have it. Ravivarmas also got the help of nair military forces and some native people. But it was limited in number. And finally they acted as were free of Zamorins and moved like as were the rulers of Malabar Around 1793. But their life not last long. Their death was a symptom for the complete surrendering of Malabar to the British. Ravivarms pathways of life clearly show the attempt of two members of family to regain the lost strength of the household of zamorin with comparatively weak force. The ambivalence and changed alliances and allegiances in their political life clearly shows the just enthusiasm of two members of the declining ruling family does not match the requirements of the time.

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