

HISTORICAL PAPERS

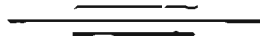
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1924

Codialbail Press, Mangalore.

The Political Condition of Malabar in the 17th and 18th centuries

(Contributed to *The Ernakulam College
Magazine*, October 1919)

INTRODUCTION

It is the object of this article to present to the student of the history of Malabar a picture of its political condition during the Portuguese and the Dutch periods as drawn by a contemporary Christian Missionary and Orientalist—Rev. Paulino A. S. Bartholomeo, C. D.¹ He was born at Hoff in Lower Austria on 25th of April, 1748, and died in Rome on the 7th of January 1806. Having entered the Carmelite Order, he was sent in 1774 as missionary to Malabar, and there he was appointed Vicar-General of his Order and Apostolic Visitor. Recalled in 1780 to Rome in order to give an account of the state of that Mission, he was charged with the edition of books for the use of missionaries. On

¹ The account of his life and works is taken from the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. XI, p. 587.

account of political troubles he stayed from 1798 to 1800 at Vienna. He returned to Rome as Prefect of Studies at the Propaganda College Rome. He is the author of several learned books on the East, which were highly valued in their day and have contributed much to the study and knowledge of Indian life. We are indebted to him for the *first printed Sanskrit grammar*. The following are some of his more important works—

- (1) “Systema brahmanicum liturgicum, mythologicum, civile, ex monumentis indicis musei Borgiani Velitris dissertationibus historico-criticis illustratum” (Rome, 1791), translated into German (Gotha, 1797);
- (2) “Examen historicocriticum codicum indicorum bibliothecae S. C. de Propaganda” (Rome, 1792);
- (3) “Musei Borgiani Velitris codices manuscripti avenses, Peguani, Siamici, Malabarici, Indostani.....illustrati” (Rome, 1793);
- (4) “Viaggio alle Indie orientali” (Rome, 1796); translated into German by Forster (Berlin, 1798);
- (5) “Sidharubam, seu Grammatica sanscritamica, cui accedit dissert. hist. crit. in linguam Sanscritamicam vulgo Samscret dictam,” (Rome, 1799), another edition of which appeared under the title “Vyakaranam” (Rome, 1804);
- (6) “India Orientalis Christiana” (“The Christian East

India") (Rome, 1794). It is from this last work which, along with the history of missions in India, gives an account of the political and geographical condition of Malabar, that we are taking the following picture of the political condition of Malabar. He divides South India into five political divisions—(1) Malabar, (2) Travancore, (3) Madura, (4) Maissur (Mysore) and (5) Tanjaur (Tanjore). Being thoroughly acquainted with only Malabar and Travancore, he gives a detailed description of the kings and their relations with regard to these two divisions, and only enumerates the names of the kings of the other South Indian Kingdoms during the period.

THE RAJAHS OF MALABAR

The division which he calls "Malabar" is at present occupied by the Indian State of Cochin and the British District of Malabar. The following is his description.² In the 9th century, Chera Perumal, the ruler of the whole of Malabar, divided his kingdom among his sons, grandsons, and favourites.³ The two principal Rajahs, classified by him as

² This is a literal translation of the Latin passages.

³ Francis Day, in his "Land of the Perumals," pp. 38—46, discusses the various theories regarding the rule of the Perumals in Kerala.

“the kings of the first order,” are the Valia Rajah Perumparambil of Cochin and Samuri (Zamorin) of Calicut, called “Tamulpada” or “Nediyiripu” Rajah. There were many petty Rajahs and Chiefs subjected to the power of the Rajah of Cochin, whose coalition and federation went by the name of “Panniurcarra”. “The Royal family of Perumparambil”, says Paulinus, “remains to the present day, and it had always its own kings. At present reigns *Virolan Tampuran*, a chief known to and acquainted with me, and with whom I had a friendly chat often times. The king resides at Terpunatra (Tripunitura), Ciovare (Chowera), and Mattincera (Mattancherry).”⁴

The second king of the first order was Samuri. To him were subjected all the towns, provinces and chiefs from the Mount Dilly⁵ as far as Cranganur; hence Calicut inclusively, which was the capital of the kingdom and the residence of the king. “This family had

⁴ It is interesting to note that Mattancherry was then the capital of the Cochin State, Chowera is still the summer residence of the Rajah, and Tripunithura is still his permanent residence.

⁵ Mt. Dilly is marked north of Cannanore in Paulinus' map, p. 235, and also in the map of Danvers in *Portuguese India*.

always its own kings who were reigning in an unbroken line. Even to-day there exists the rightful heir of his kingdom, which is devastated and raised to the ground by incessant wars". (Read about these kings and their provinces from the universal index prefixed to the Malayalam Dictionary of Rev. Fr. John Earnest Hanxleden,⁶ and from Mss. catalogue of the churches of Malabar by the Most Rev. Dr. Angel Francis of St. Theresa; Anquetil du Peron *Zend Avesta*, tom, 1, page 183; Barros, dec. 1, lib. 9, Chap. 1; Renauder, lib. cit. pp. 308—9).

The kings of the third order were:—Vettattu Rajah, king of Tannor; Vallurcolpada, once the king of "Amocor" (?); the Rajah of Codungallur (Cranganur)⁷; Parapanatile Rajah; the Raja of Ayrur; the Colastri (Kolatiri) Rajah; the Rajah of Edupully (Elankuna sorubam); the Raja of Cayamculam (Cheray sorubam); the Thekencara Rajah; the Vadakencara Rajah; the Alangatt Rajah; the Rajah of Angamali (Kishakencara) the

⁶ He is also a great Orientalist, and Mr. Ullur Parameswara Iyer calls him the greatest Malayalam scholar of XVIII century.

⁷ Cranganur was called Muziris by Greek writers and Karavur in Tamil literature. It was the seat of the Chera kings when the whole of the Malabar Coast constituted the *Keralaputra* kingdom.

Rajah of Parur; the Punetor (Punatacara) Rajah; the Pandalam Rajah; the Chieftains of Corretti, Pagletti; Codaceri; and the Rajah of Ciangaceri (Tangacherry) who was also the king of Collam (Quilon). The power and reign of these Rajahs lasted from the 9th century till the year 1761, when *Viramarthanda*, king of Travancore, with his general Marthandapulla, and afterwards his successor *Rama Varmen*, with his Dutch general Eustachio de Lanoy, routed all these chieftains and ruled the whole of Malabar as far as the fort of Cranganur. Henceforth some of the subjected possessions remained to the Rajah, Perumparambil of Cochin, and to Zamorin, who, driven out by Hyder Ali, fled to the mountains in 1773.

The Rajah Zamorin, the Chieftain of the Northern division, waged continual wars with the Rajah Perumparambil (Cochin), and under his military emblems all the Calicut Mahomedans were fighting. On the contrary, under the Rajah Perumparambil, the Christians of St. Thomas,⁸ in union with the Hindus

⁸ The two great military classes of (Mediaeval) Kerala were the Christians of St. Thomas or the Syrian Christians and the Nayars. This alliance of the Syrian Christians with the Rajah of Cochin in opposition to the Zamorin, explains the fact that the Syrian Christians are to be found in the Cochin and Travancore States in large

(Nayars), followed their captain, the second son of the Rajah Perumparambil, whose business it was to lead the army. The Portuguese and Dutch had to help him often times, as they were his allies, holding the town of Cochin, situated in his kingdom. Once his territory had extended from Cranganur to Alleppey, which is situated some 30 miles south of Cochin. The territory of both the kings was the most flourishing with towns and populations; and both were able to lead an army of 1,00,000 men easily to battle.

numbers at the present day while there are only few in the Ponnani Taluk, a territory formerly under the Zamorin.