



ANTIQUITY OF LEGENDS THROUGH THE EYES OF ARAKKAL ROYAL FAMILY IN CANNANORE

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Abstract

The study covers the period from sixteenth to seventeenth century. Arakkal kingdom was a former city - state on the Malabar Coast, ruled by a dynasty of the same name. The ruling king was called Ali Raja and the ruling queen was called Arakkal Beevi. Arakkal royal dynasty included little more than the Cannanore town and the southern Laccadive Islands, originally leased from the Kolathiri. The Arakkal Royal Family is said to be formerly a division of the Kolathiri, descended from a prince of that family who rehabilitated himself to Islam. They owed adherence to the Kolathiri rulers, whose ministers they had been at one time. The rulers followed a meticulous law of bequest admired among the Hindus of Malabar under which the series was always to the progeny of its female members only. As the only Muslim rulers in Malabar, they saw the rise of Hyder Ali as an occasion to increase their own power at the disbursement of Chirakkal, and invited him to invade Malabar. Ali Raja Kunhi Amsa II and his successor Arakkal Beevi Junuma II, were staunchest allies of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan during the Mysore occupation.

Introduction

The genesis of the renowned Muslim Royal family of Kerala Arakkal wears a veil of obscurity. The famous Keralolpathi maps out its origin from the Cheraman Perumal. Based on the coins issued by the Rajas, some writers have attributed the origin of the family to the 7th or 8th century A.D. But scholars are of the congruous view that the Arakkal Royal House was founded by a Nair by name Arayankulangara Nair. One of the ministers of Kolathiri, this Nair converted to Islam sometime in the 12th or 13th century. A Princess of the Kolathiri house is said to have been attracted to this Muslim Youth. The Kolathiri bestowed his permission to the matrimony and constituted a separate family for the pair with all regal impedimenta.

Methodology

The method of approach is a combination of historical, descriptive and analytical. The source materials are analysed on the basis of their content and value. Descriptive method is employed to trace out the information and historical importance of Arakkal dynasty in Kerala. Analytical method is used to evaluate various aspects of trade relations with Arakkal House and European countries. The description is chronological so that overlapping is avoided.

Sources

There is no scarcity of primary sources with the regard to the present topic. The Portuguese, English, Dutch and Arakkal Records, Malabar Commission Diary Reports, Diaries and Reports of Joint Commission, Report on Laccadive Islands by W. Robinson, Tellicherry Factory Consultation etc. were relevant to the study. The Arabic sources like Tuhfat-ul-mujahideen is a historical work by Zainuddin Makhdum on the struggle between the Mappila Muslims of Malabar and Portuguese colonial forces in the 16th century.

Objectives

- 1.To illustrate the tradition and significance of Arakkal Royal House.
- 2.To examine the historical importance of Arakkal Royal House among ruling powers of Kerala.

The elder most member of the Royal family is its head, be it male or female. The male person in command is known the Ali Raja and the female, the Arakkal Beevi. Whatever may be the custom, the relation, between the two families is proven by the practice of bringing the funeral shroud from the Kolathiri on the decease of the ruler of Arakkal Royal Family. The Ali Raja in due course emerged as the Lord of the Cannanore Bazaar and enjoyed the monopoly of the trade in spices of the North Malabar. He had a mighty navy in his command and as cited by one observation his very label was a variant of the word Azhi Raja or the Lord of the sea. The Jagir of Laccadive Islands attained by him from the Kolathiri boosted up the status of the house¹. In the epoch of the Mysorean occupation the political command of the Ali Raja increased further as he was bestowed a special status. Buchanan who visited the Arakkal palace on January 12, 1801 was entertained by the Beevi at a splendid dinner. He was very much stirred by her palace which he depicts as "by far more comfortable and in fact by much the best native house I have seen". The English East India Company, as they did with the other principalities gave retirement to the Arakkal ruler.



As in the case of other political families of Kerala, the origin of the Arakkal House has become intertwined in a number of legends and fables. As in the history of the Kolaswarupam, there were efforts to downsize the prominent political status achieved by the Arakkal Royal House from both Brahminical and regional perceptions. This involved several traditions connecting the Arakkal Royal House either to the Kolaswarupam or to the renowned Cheraman Perumal, depending on the perspective of the raconteur. Though some of these legends expound the origin of this family as a derivative of the Kolaswarupam, and in that way emphasizing its claim to share the political stateliness of the latter, the Arakkal Swarupam itself emphatically selected to trace its origin directly to Cheraman Perumal. However, the first legend appears to have been more accepted than the latter in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Voc officials points out that, "The Arakkal Royal Ali Raja trace their origin to a princess of Kolathiri who was got with child by a prominent moor or Arab and who then, being reconciled with the king, was granted the honorary title of princess with the Authority over the Muslim bazaar of Cannanore, the Laccadive Islands and many other favourable estates". The Dutch official Chief Adriaan Moens stated that the origin of Arakkal Royal House, "Ali Raja of Arakkal Royal family is of Kolathiri extraction. A certain princess of this Royal family, on account of having to do with a person of lower standing, had lost her caste or nobility and in the order to cover up the disgrace, she was given in weedlock to a rich Arabian moor on whom was conferred the title of Prince and the general name of Ady Rajan, in that country indicating that he was the head of the moors of that Kingdom". Whatever the genuineness of this anecdote is its infiltration into and entrenching in the society signifies that it managed a sort of historicity at least among a division of the people, letting them to come to terms with the prevailing presence of the Ali Raja in the political system of Kolathunadu.

The Brahminical observation expressed in the Keralolpathi legend tried to portrait the Ali Rajas as traders, untainted and straightforward, unembellished by any political or affinal relationships with the Kolaswarupam. This might be well thought-out as a premeditated ideological move by of the Brahmins to explicate the prevailing presence of the Arakkal Royal family in the Varna categorization in Kolathunad, in which, the Ali Rajas were accredited the rank of vaisyas. No matter what the ideological connotations of such an anecdote, the very reference of the Ali Rajas in this Brahminical account establishes the undeniable status the former had attained in the power configuration of Kolathunadu. Hypothetically, the Arakkal Royal Ali Raja drew their authority from the Kolathiri. In actual fact, at least by the seventeenth century, the allegation of the Kolathiri to political dominance over the Ali Rajas did not have any definite significance to the establishment of the power position of the latter in Kolathunadu. The attempts of the Dutch company to seize the interior functioning of the power relations in Cannanore often suffered insuperable difficulties and its officials had a tough time figuring out the dynamics of the local society. Van Rhee, who showed an unusual concern in understanding the Kerala body politic, did recognize the speciality of the imperial status enjoyed by the Arakkal Royal Family. In his endeavor to construe the political status of the Ali Rajas in Kolathunadu, he was to cope with the chore of explaining the designation 'Raja' attached to them. He observed that the title 'Ali Raja' does not delegate the individual concerned to exert an imperial or authoritative power over the other Muslims, as the Dutch had deliberated at the commencement of their establishment in Cannanore. Van Rhee authorized this title as an honorary appellation conferred on the Ali Raja by the real Raja, the Kolathiris. He thought the company had made a blunder when it had its initial trade dealings in Cannanore with the Ali Raja, after presuming the misinterpretation that he was an independent Lord of the Muslims. Nevertheless, irrefutably this new realisation of the actual political status of the Arakkal Royal Ali Rajas had to do more with the identification of this individual as the chief commercial challenger of the Company in Cannanore, whose power was entirely reliant on trade and shipping. In spite of this, Van Rhee's noteworthy surveillance disclosed the restricted scope of Rajaship in Kerala at least in the case of the Arakkal Ali Rajas. The Arakkal Royal Swarupam, as did the other Swarupams of Kerala, did not execute any type of territorial autonomy over a well defined Kingdom. Its political status and for this reason its authority were characterized by a set-up of personal relations going beyond spatial boundaries. The Arakkal Swarupam maintained control over a group of dependents, working as a part of a trading system which mutilated regional perceptions and social distinctiveness. The crux of this maritime Kingdom was situated in Cannanore from where the control procedure was wielded. Quintessentially, the Arakkal Swarupam was a 'House by the Sea' which established its regal status through maritime trade. The subtle squabbles among the various lords of Malabar who were trying to build new resource bases, in which maritime trade was very much significant, contrived a complex socio-political state of affairs in which unceasing disputes and constantly changing power relations became usual aspects². This evolution was evident in Kolathunadu, where the Kolaswarupam gradually had to relinquish its political entitlement to newly evolving power groups. In this milieu, it is worthy of mention that the ascend of the Arakkal Royal family to the status of an imperial lineage was attributable not just to its conventional liaison with the Kolaswarupam. The success of the Arakkal family in obtaining power lifted up its political status in Kolathunadu by which its position in the traditional power concept of the region was irrevocably validated.



Rama Varma Kulashekhara Perumal, the last ruler of the Chera Empire, is supposed to have been converted to Islam by Malik Bin Deenar, an Afghan Islam Missionary. Perumal along with Malik bin Deenar came from Mahodayapuram, ancient name of Kodungallur, the capital of Chera Empire, to Thalassery to visit Perumal's sister Sridevi and nephew Mabeli who were living in a place named Dharmadam, in the north of Thalassery, The remnants of their fort is sited in the vicinity of the Government Brennan College Thalassery. Mabeli embraced Islam and he took on the name Mohammed Ali who later became the first Arakkal Royal Ali Raja. It is considered that Cheraman Perumal went to Mecca from a one-time province named Poyanadu, administered by Feudal Governors named Randuthara Achanmar. The region includes Edakkad, Anjarakkandy, and Mavilayi in the present Cannanore district. Malik bin Deenar constructed a mosque in Madayi, north of Cannanore, which is the third oldest mosque in Kerala. Perumal's nephew Mabeli was an Arayankulangara Nair, therefore Nair matriarchal system is espoused in the Arakkal Royal Family. His wife was the daughter of Kolathiri and they later came to be identified as Arakkal Royal Beevi. Muhammad Ali remained in the service of the Kolathiris even after his conversion and his successors called as the Mammali Kidavus were the traditional padanairs (soldiers) of the Kolathiri³. By this time many Muslim merchant families turned out to be economically influential in the Malabar region. When the Arakkal Royal family acquired power of Laccadives, they attained next to royal status. The British military was especially fervent to make Dharmadam as their base and erect a fort there. This small island village was advantageously safer than any neighboring places as it is a hilly island, but it was ruled by Arakkal Royal Kingdom, being the first Ali Rajas home town. Arakkal Royal Kingdom was so influential at that time and as a friend of Sultanate of Mysore it even could confront the British. Arakkal Royal Kingdom did not consent to the idea of British East India Company to put up military garrison at Dharmadam. Hence they were obliged to construct their base in Thalassery where there was a prominent presence of French forces positioned a few kilometers away, in Mahe. A different legend is that the daughter of Chirakkal Raja began to drown while taking a bath in the Chirakkalkulam. Her friends cried and screamed but were not able to save her. Muhammed Ali on hearing the shouts jumped into the pool and saved the girl. The Chirakkal ruler gave his daughter in matrimony to Muhammad Ali who was also offered a part of the Kingdom.

The Ali Rajas of Cannanore were the sole Muslim rulers of Kerala. The Royal House alleges its descent from the last Chera ruler but there are no genuine documents or evidences to ascertain this allegation. However it kept going several Hindu customs as reminiscences of the past. The Royal House emerged into a significant principality by the possession of the Jagir of Laccadives. In the early period, the Royal House respected the authority of the Kolathiri. However, it was gradually denied and even the remission of tribute was refused. The Royal House even issued silver and gold coins. It could speak proudly over its bedecked and wood carved throne and great seal and Royal emblem. However it in no way owned a crown of any kind. Some practices continue even today which reveal the obligations of the Arakkal Royal House as vassals towards the Kolathiri. On the death of the ruler of the Arakkal house the funeral shroud is brought from the Kolathiri as a bequest. When coronation and other functions are commemorated by the principality the ornaments and elephants are also bestowed as a temporary loan by the Kolathiris. The Arakkal Royal House promoted the propagation of Islam. The Malabar Joint Commission reported as follows.

“The law of the Koran must be the prevalent one, excepting in commercial and similar cases, Arakkal Beevi's ministers or her son- in-law appointed Chief Justice assisted by three or four of the best informed of the profession to guide the better decision. The fee on the trial was very moderate not exceeding 2% equally divided between principal mosque and the Beevi and her officers” The legend says that a lamp used to be kept continually glowing in a chamber inside the dilapidated Arakkal Royal Palace, near the Cannanore town. The faith was that as long as the lamp continues burning the palace would prosper. The ‘Vilakku’ may or may not be still kept in the Arakkal Royal palace, once the seat of the Arakkal Royal family that had played a significant part in determining the political configuration of Cannanore. However the deteriorating palace structure, called the ‘Arakkal Kettu’, that comprises of residential constructions and mosques around a large open ground ‘Pandikasalas’ and a bell-tower at the doorway of the palace structure remain as relics of the magnificence of this small Muslim Principality, the political authority of which has become worn out from the time when the Arakkal Beevi, the then Royal head of the family, admitted defeat to the British General Abercromby in 1790 after a prolonged confrontation against the English East India Company in coalition with Tipu Sultan of Mysore.

There are various accounts, each unfolding some historical accounts on the origin of the Arakkal Royal family. As said by one, the Arakkal Royal family's past can be related to Cheraman Perumal's nephew, Muhammed Ali, who was supposed to have set up the principality in the first century of the Muslim Era. Another version relates it to a nuptial alliance between a princess of the powerful Kolathiri dynasty and a Muslim youth. There is yet another version which points out that it was established by Arayankulangara Nair, one of the ministers of the Kolathiri court. The Arakkal Royal family practised the



matrilineal tradition of descent and thus the eldermost member of the Royal family was its head and ruler, whether male or female.

The male rulers were known as Ali Rajas and the females identified as Arakkal Beevis. The trade relations which the family endorsed with the Arabian countries are described in the old records, maps and drawings of surveys and many other manuscripts preserved in the palace building.

The convalescence of the political and economic situations in west Asia in the ninth century and the emergence and outspread of Islam prompted incredible variation in the pattern of the Indian Ocean trade. The Islamic trade diaspora which had established itself at various port cities across the Indian Ocean world strengthened the trade relations between west Asia and India.

This growth of trade with time led to the surfacing of Islamic trade settlements in different parts of the Indian Ocean regions. The presence of Muslim traders along the shoreline of northern Kerala can almost certainly be traced back to the extent of the emergence of Islam in West Asia itself in the seventh century. Kerala had trade contacts with west Asia long before Islam came on the panorama therefore it is not all unanticipated that the religion newly sprouted out in the Arabia should have got an early footing on the Malabar coast. Earlier, the temporary matrimonies bonded with the native women by these Arab traders and the conversion of the lower strata of the Malabar society brought about an autonomous Muslim community along the shore, the Mappilas. Eventually, the increasing Islamic commercial presence kindled the promulgation of a number of new trading centres along the Malabar Coast. Indeed, during the period just before the Portuguese advent in Malabar they were so prevailing that "If the king of Portugal had not discovered India, Malabar would already have been in the hands of the moors". Even though the commercial influence of these muslim traders had somewhat shriveled by the later half of the sixteenth century, and their commerce was encroached on by the Portuguese effort to control the pepper trade in Malabar, the Mappila Muslims remained the motivating force behind the commercial affluence of Cannanore, even during the Dutch period. One of the most significant advancements in the account of the Muslim community in Kolathunadu in the seventeenth century was the emergence of the Arakkal Royal Family as one of the renowned taravadus (Swarupams) in the political economy of the region.

By virtue of the longest record in maritime trading, the Arakkal Ali Raja's enjoyed a special status in Malabar society. They were chief carriers of pepper, cardamam, timber, coconuts, coir, cowries and rice to outlying markets in India and abroad since the last part of the twelfth century. In addition to these exports from Malabar, Mysore and coastal Canara, they transhipped a whole range of goods that circulated in the Indian Ocean. These activities brought them unavoidably and constantly into clashes with the European trading companies which strived, since the early sixteenth century, to have power over the maritime trade of the region. The orb of authority of the Arakkal Ali Raja was established of the territory affluent in pepper, between the Nileswaram and Dharmapatanam rivers. It approximately comprised the northern half of what was later known as British Malabar and was ruled, though just in name, by the Kolathiri Raja before the establishment of British rules there in 1792. The administration of the Kolathiri province which extended up to the Kotta River in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was controlled by the different divisions of the Kolathiri house, led by independent Nair rulers and a Muslim chieftain, the Ali Raja of Cannanore. However, regardless of his Kolathiri lineage, the Ali Raja's status in the ruling chain of command was lower to that of the other Nair Raja. This incongruity was innate in the original deal between Arayan Kulangara and the Kolathiri sovereign. The Arakkal Ali Rajas had inherited from Arayan Kulangara, a prince of the Arakkal Royal Family in Kolathiri. Kulangara's concern in maritime trade and his imminence to the Muslim merchants from the Red Sea had brought him under the sway of Islam sometime in eleventh and twelfth century and in due course ended up in his conversion to this faith. After becoming a Muslim, he accepted the name of Mohammad Ali or Mammali. This name was held on to by the Arakkal Chieftains who later also assumed the label of Ali Raja, a translation of the expression Aazhi Raja (Ali Raja) or the Lord of the sea. The label was a sign of the Arakkal clan's unswerving concern in sea-trade. Owing to their conversion to Islam and their obsession with maritime trade, the Arakkal Royal Chieftains had been signified within the ladder of political influence in Malabar. But they were not, strongly enough, pushed out from it. This incongruity had far-reaching allusions on their consequent status in the hinterland, as Muslims, as merchants, and lastly as aristocrats. What is worth mentioning is that it was the Kolathiri Nairs who had made this argument concerning role. Later it was they who made it a bone of controversy with the Ali Raja. The fundamental inconsistency of the Arakkal Royal Chieftains engaging the dual role of merchant and aristocrat was both beneficial and also a persistent cause of dilemma for them. On one hand it gave them an edge over other maritime traders in the interior, on the other hand the dual role brought about severe hostility with the Nair princes on the matter of authority in the hinterland and these conflicts increased after the coming of the Europeans. The foreigners realized the fact that the Hindu aristocrats had no specific rules for coping with the Ali Rajas. The Europeans could thus draw attention to real and supposed acts of wrongdoings, committed by the Arakkal Royal Chieftains and to assault them and their Mappila supporters, in the pretext of defending the weak Nair rulers. Despite their equivocation



towards the Ali Rajas, the Nair aristocrats never regarded them as common traders. There was huge difference between the Arakkal clansmen who had inherited from a Kolathiri graham and the vast majority of Mappilas who owed their lineage to ordinary Malayali fisher women. These low-caste women had married Arab merchants sometime between the ninth and the fifteenth century. The Mappila progeny of these mixed matrimonyes were tutored Islam and concomitantly to maritime trading by their Arab fathers. Beyond question these steps had enhanced their financial status and supported them within the society but only marginally. Societal status and possessions were too closely associated to caste in Malabar to have permitted any radical transformation in the position of the one-time fisher folk. Generally speaking, the lack of social honorableness and resources precluded the Mappilas from becoming sovereign maritime merchants in considerable numbers consequently, when the Portuguese came to Malabar in 1498, the community, with distinguished exemptions like the Ali Rajas, mainly consisted of brokers, transporters and 'petty traders. The Arakkal Ali Rajas were an exception from the ordinary Mappilas. They were the chief maritime traders and suppliers of varied goods from Malabar and the neighboring regions before the 1780s. The Mappila merchants of Calicut, with their flamboyant way of life could in no way outshine them at least not on a persistent basis. They were impeded by their failure to be in possession of vast land properties and to put into effect the same measure of influence over strategic markets and trade routes like the Arakkal Royal Chieftains.

The Ali Raja had meticulously fabricated an exclusive sphere of influence out of an intricate mesh of mutual interests with the Nambudiri landowners and Nair rulers on one side, and with a swarm of maritime and inland merchants on the other. These relations had been conscientiously fostered for centuries. It was impractical for new contenders, particularly those with low-caste qualifications, to set up an area of preponderance as all-embracing or as well-established as theirs. The Arakkal Royal clansmen also facilitated the social segregation by not marrying the low caste Mappilas. Still the improbable occurred at the end of the eighteenth century. Despite his trivial history as a trader, Choucara Moosa, a Mappila merchant of Tellicherry was successful in making a match between his nephew and a grand niece of Kunhi Amsi. It was an indication of the changing times that his descendant Ali Beevi Junnumabe Valiya Tangal agreed to this proposal regardless of her hesitation. She in fact did not have much of an alternative. The Choucara family headed by Moosa had forged ahead of the Arakkal Royal clan both as far as maritime trade and control of the hinterland were concerned. There had even been times when Moosa had bailed a careworn Beevi out of difficulty. She had no courage not to decline this proposal and alienate Moosa for life. The phenomenal affluence of the Choucaras reflected the far-reaching changes that had followed the breakdown of the traditional hierarchies of power and the ascendance of the English East India Company in Malabar at the close of the eighteenth century.

The Arakkal Royal Ruling House with an indefinite origin had been accountable to a congregate political influence over Laccadive as well as in the maritime city of Cannanore. The Royal house gathered economic power and in a while developed into prominent ruling House in South India like in the maritime European cities of Venice, Antwerp and London. Their political farsightedness for self survival was the foundation upon which their association with the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English and other native powers like the Canares, Mysoreans and the Kolathiris was fabricated. The advent of the Portuguese and their monopolising the spice trade of the country instigated unavoidable clashes between the Portuguese and the Arakkal Royal Family of Canannanore. However with the support of the Kolathiri Raja the Portuguese got hold of the town and Bay of Cannanore and raised their first fort, St. Angelo, at Cannanore in 1507. But the wrangles between the Arakkal Royal House and the Portuguese went on. The Portuguese took away one of the ships owned by Mammali Marakkar the merchant Prince of Cannanore. The ship, even though it held a pass from the Portuguese Captain at Cannanore, was confiscated on the supplication that the pass was a fake one. They slayed the crew, sewed them up in a sail and sent the ship and the crew to the bottom. The sail tore and the remains were washed onto land. Muslims of Cannanore made a lot of uproar that the King of Cannanore, who was an ally of the Portuguese, was compelled to declare war against them. The Arakkal Royal House moreover must have preserved amiable friendship with Portuguese. The Portuguese fort was beleaguered. The siege severely protracted for four months that the besiege began to sense the pinch of need when at last Portuguese Chief succour arrived in August 1507 and resolved the matter. The political dominance of the Portuguese in Malabar was hindered by the arrival of the Dutch, their colonial foes. The Dutch also set up genial relations with the Arakkal Royal House. In effect they enjoyed a monopoly over the Pepper produce of Kolathunad by Formal Agreements. The Dutch went on with their trade at Cannanore for more than a century. The increasing power of the English and the internal political variations in Malabar at last forced the Dutch to sell their possession in Cannanore to the Ali Raja of Arakkal Royal House. When Hyder Ali overran the province of Malabar in 1766 his invasion brought chaos and converted Malabar into a sea of machinations, divergent interests and mutual covetousness. This situation was a great encumbrance to the Dutch trade at Cannanore. In August 1770, the expulsion of the Dutch power from St. Angelo was sanctioned. The Arakkal Royal Ali Raja who had been chosen governor of Kolattunad by Hyder Ali now haggled for the procurement of the Dutch fort. A price of Rs. One lakh was recommended by Senff, the Dutch Governor. The Arakkal Raja offered a portion of the capital and for the left behind portion he gave the Dutch a written promise that he would pay the remaining. But he never kept his word and the Dutch officials who approved the sale were fined by the Company. The association between the Arakkal Royal House and



the English East India Company was genial from the beginning and it continued to be thus until the Company rose in power on the west coast in consequence of which the Laccadive Islands were appropriated and the Royal House was denied its autonomy and was reduced to the status of an average land lord⁴. In the year 1771 the Arakkal Royal House bought from the Dutch the fort of Cannanore and land round about it disbursing huge amount of money, the occupancy of which augmented its income to an amount of nearly Rs. 5000 per annum. The fort of Canannore and the regions called Cantonment was formerly the property of the Arakkal Royal Family. During the invasion of Malabar by Tipu Sultan, on the notion that the Arakkal Royal Family was in understanding with Tipus aggression, the English East India Company obliterated the fort and occupied it for a short time, however when it was confirmed that the doubt was groundless the fort and areas around it were returned back to the Arakkal Royal Family and the house forfeited a sum of Rs. 260000/- to the English Company for the refurbishment of the fort and grounds around the fort and land known as Cantonment areas came into the full control of the Arakkal Royal House till they were occupied by the Government under military Cantonment Act. The clause 5 of the Treaty of the 8th January 1784 between the then Arakkal Beevi and the English Company is to be considered here.

Now this dilapidated “Arakkal Kettu” is to obtain a restoration as the state Government has allowed a Rs. 96 lakh project for their restoration and preservation with the intention of renovating it into a Royal palace of tourist importance and opening a museum that can speak its historical significance. The Cannanore DTPC that proposed the project envisions the development of a heritage museum at the Royal Palace open for the public even if the palace structures will continue in the ownership of the Arakkal Royal Family. The Arakkal Kettu is a group of degenerating buildings around the vast open ground being used as Idgah. Built of laterite and wood, the independent units, including the building that was once used as palace administrative office and four mosques, are in an abysmally dilapidated and so are the Pandikasalas, the former warehouses of the Arakkal Royal family. The DTPC officials are of the opinion that by promoting the legends and history of this lone Muslim principality, the Arakkal Kettu can be developed into a place of significant tourist attraction.

The Arakkal Royal House enjoyed preeminence over the seas and monopoly on spices trade. It upheld convivial relationship with Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan. Though it had cordial relations with the Dutch its dealings was not so genial with the Portuguese. The Archives Department is busy gathering a stock of records holding relevant informations concerning the Arakkal Kingdom. The rejuvenation project is designed and sorted out by the C-Earth Architects and planners. It recommends refurbishment of the palace structure to a secure condition and exploitation of the Pandikasalas and associated buildings for propping up trade, fishing and other activities⁵. According to C-Earth Architects and planners, the socio-cultural affiliation between the Arakkal Kettu and its nearby surroundings has to be taken care of while scheduling for an integrated maintenance agenda, because any preservation endeavor should be considered in the total perspective of the area. Even the promotion of employment and commercial opening is expected from the development of this area as a public place. In the opinion of the project report, one of the buildings situated by the side of the beach road that used to be office building for the palace administration is to be refurbished and used as a museum and information centre.

The buildings is in a appalling condition and the records, drawings and other papers are suffering damage, and the gracefully carved furniture articles are poorly taken care of. Each of these has to be renovated and put on display in the museum, the project report declares, the palace is not any more what it was centuries ago. A large bell in the dilapidated bell-tower, on the other hand, chimes the long-gone fame and influence of the Arakkal Royal Family.

Conclusion

The Ali Rajas of Cannanore played a considerable role in the history of South India owing to their commercial and maritime ventures in the Arabian Sea and in the impending politics of South India especially through 16th and 17th centuries. The Arakkal Royal House extended yeoman service for the propagation of Islam in Kerala. Islamic institutions prospered under the principality and still it provides its favors to those establishments. It upheld friendly association with the Ottoman Empire and in return the Caliph even endorsed its customary practice of matrilineal succession. To conclude, the spreading out of Islam in Northern Kerala can be well related with the bloom and growth of Arakkal Family.

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