

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ELAKUNNAPUZHA TEMPLE PAGODA; AN ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

Travancore and Cochin had some earlier relations and disputes over temple administration. The agreements and attacks changed the borders and powers of these states. In the 18th century Travancore and Cochin witnessed the dispute over the administration of Elakunnapuzha pagoda. The king of Cochin appointed Munnathu Moothathu, Manapilly Moothathu, Adyakel Moossathu and Kuriadeth Moossathu the Ooraimakars of the pagoda of Elakunnapuzha. The king having founded the pagoda at his own expense was the real Ooraimakaren. The appointments were made by *Titutums*<sup>i</sup> granted the Rajah of Cochin each which Ooramakara were enjoined to make account of the dignities conferred upon them, at the Vypin poverty Cutcherry. The rajah of Travancore accordingly sent a large army to the area of the Rajah of Cochin, who was thereby able to drive the enemy out of the greater portion of his territory, but before he could regain possession of the whole of his lost territory in accordance with the terms of the agreement the Travancore Rajah entered into a treaty with the Zamorin<sup>ii</sup> and withdrew his force. This however prevents Travancore claiming the whole of the reward stipulated for and taking possession of Alengad and Parur. Thus the temple administration is disputed with Travancore

## KEY WORDS

Desoms, Devasom, Koimas, Mel-Koima, Ooraimakars, porakoimas, Samoodayam,

## INTRODUCTION

Elakunnapuzha pagoda administration is a matter of quarrel between Travancore and Cochin during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>iii</sup>. To enable the pagoda to meet the expenses of its daily ceremonies and of Oolsawom<sup>iv</sup>. For the annual and extraordinary ceremonies, the Rajah of Cochin purchased property right in the following 5<sup>1/2</sup> Desoms or villages and presented it to the Devaswom<sup>v</sup>. The important desoms<sup>vi</sup> were Nedoogad, Ochunthooroothee, Munjanakad, Pukad, Wyraka Mecodingad and the half of Wullarpadom<sup>vii</sup>. The Nedoogad desom was purchased from Palliparutha Numpooripad, the Ochunthooroothee Desom from Poollinpulayil Kymal and Pulialathu Moothadom, the Manjanakad and Pukad desom from the wyhil and Moolikalathu Menons, the wysrakil Mundingad Desom from Pandaraparambil Menon and Oollattil Nair, and the half of Wallarpadom Desom from Ootareckel Karuthadathee and Wullarpadom Desoms on Karaima tenure and the lands of the other Desoms on Otty<sup>viii</sup> tenure to the tenants of the former Jemmies<sup>ix</sup>. Whenever the idol carried on of the Pagoda enclosure, the purakvins of Nedumgad and Palliparutha Numpooripad had to attend and the permission of the Vypin Karyakar, who represented the Sovereign, had to be obtained. On the last day of the festival when the idol was taken to the scene for the Aurat<sup>x</sup>, the Vypin Karyakar and the nobles accompanied with their followers for its the protection on the return of the procession to the pagoda the two porakoimas were paid 120 Poothens each by the chief Ooraimakars<sup>xi</sup>.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The framing of the article is mainly relay upon primary sources. The secondary sources are very less on this matter. The methods of writing the article are descriptive and analytical. The period of study is 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## IMPORTANT CERMONEIS AND INCOME

The Warom, Pokum and others dues to be paid by the tenants to the Devasom, the Koimas and others were also determined at the time. For the residence of the Oorimakarars and others the king also made over to the Devasom

28 gardens situated beyond the limits of the said villages<sup>xii</sup>. Besides the above villages and gardens and some land in the Moolaguakad prowerthy granted by king with a few others granted by private individuals as an offering or purchased by the Devasom itself, the Elamkunnapuzha pagoda possesses no other lands and all the above mentioned lands are situated in Cochin territory.

Pallipurath Numpooripad, from whom the Nedoongad area was purchased, was made the Samoodayam or agent and manager of that Desom<sup>xiii</sup>. He was also appointed Puttiny or fasting, Numooripad for the purpose of checking irregularities committed in the villages belonging to the Devasom. In those earlier times the fasting of the Numpooripad, a high caste Brahmin, in consequence of an injury done to the Devasom or an irregularity committed in the Devasom villages by any individual, however powerful he may be, was sufficient to compel that individual to make immediate reparation for the offence, the fasting of the Numpooripad being considered to have the effect otherwise of bringing down a curse upon such individual. This Numpooripad managed the affairs of the Nedoongad Desom up to the year<sup>xiv</sup>.

There are six principal ceremonies each year in connection with the pagoda, the sowing ceremony on the Malayalam month of 10<sup>th</sup> Edavom, the prohibition to pluck coconuts which takes place on the 10<sup>th</sup> Karkadagom, the reaping ceremony on the 10<sup>th</sup> Kanni the Kodiyate or commencement of Oolsawom on Uthradom in the month of Vrisolugon, the Makara Sunkranthi on the last makarom, the removal of the prohibition to pluck occanuts which falls on the 10<sup>th</sup> Coombhom south of the ceremonies take place within the pagoda are carried on by the Adienthara Yogum consisting of the Ooraimakaras and the Akakoima, and those which take place outside the pagoda are carried on through the Desakoimas or Porakoimas as they are called<sup>xv</sup>. On all extraordinary occasions the Rajah, who was the Mel-Koima or Sovereign of the country, was to be consulted and his orders obtained.

## THE ROYAL AGREEMENTS

. The Rajah of Travancore obtained a footing in the Ellankunnapuzha Pagoda by the agreement of 1761-62 the Akakoima Sthanom in the pagoda which formerly belonged in the Parur Rajah became vested in the Rajah of Travancore<sup>xvi</sup>. It is not very clear what right he had to the Desa Koima-Sthanom of Nedoongad: but it was claimed by the Travancore Rajah and was allowed by a subsequent agreement entered between the Sovereigns on 1765-66

In 983 M.E<sup>xvii</sup>, 1762-63 the Rajah of Travancore exercised the rights he had acquired of appointing the Akakoima in the Ellankunnapuzha pagoda by nominating one Wasudevan Annavy to the office. Soon after his appointment, Wasudevan Annavy insisted on Pallipurath Numpooripad rendering an account of the receipts and disbursements of the Nedoongad Desom. It will be recollected that although the Desom was, purchased from his ancestors and made over to the pagoda, he was appointed *Samudayaom* or agent and as such was in possession of the village<sup>xviii</sup>. He had to collect the revenue of the Desom and to meet certain specified expenses and was hitherto at liberty to appropriate the balance as a renovation for the office he held therein. The Akakoima's demand was therefore a novel one and the Numpooripad declined to comply with it. The Koima<sup>xix</sup>, however insisted on the accounts being rendered and ill-treated his servants: whereupon the Numpooripad left the village declining to have anything to do with the pagoda on the conditions newly imposed upon him<sup>xx</sup>. The adienthra yogum waited upon his Highness the Rajah of Cochin, who being unable to induce the Akakoima to withdraw his demand or the Numpooripad to comply with it, directed that a pattamaly should be appointed for the collection of the revenue of Pagoda from the village minute question and the *Yogum*<sup>xxi</sup> accordingly appointed one Iyn Putter as Pattamaly of Nedoongad. The expenses of the pagoda which the Numpooripad had to meet will be found enumerated in his Grandhavy, Document E, and the fact of the Numpooripad having been in possession, of the village till Travancore obtained a footing in the pagoda admitted in the Chattavariola Document K which Travancore alleged, but alleges erroneously, to have been drawn up with the consent of the Officers of the two Governments<sup>xxii</sup>.

## TRAVENCORE AND COCHIN DEMAND

Chittalethu Menon of Ellankunnapuzha having died without heirs, his property should have escheated to the Cochin Government, subject of course to the payment of the usual dues to the Devaswom or pagoda. The Rajah of Travancore, however, forcibly took possession of it and gave it as a Danom or Inam to Nakramanna Numpoory of Irinjalacooday on 1768-69 A.D. The Devaswom demanded the Varom of 1861 parras<sup>xxiii</sup> of paddy which the property used to pay to the pagoda and the Rajah was obliged to order the payment to the Devasom of 365 *Parras* of paddy out of the revenues of the Ezhickaray prowerthy for the milk and rice of the daily *panlpayasom* offering to the idol<sup>xxiv</sup>.

When the Parur Rajah, or the Rajah of Travancore since he came into possession of the territory of the former, wished to appoint any one as akakoima, the usual course was for the rajah to give notice of the intended

appointment to the Ooraimakars, who, with the permission of the Rajah of Cochin, proceeded to where the parur or Travancore Rajah, as, the case may be, resided. The Rajah received the Karandakom or measure from one of the Ooralers and handed it over to the person nominated, saying, at the same time, that he is appointed Koima of the Ellankunnappuzha pagoda<sup>xxv</sup>. The Ooralers then returned with the Koima, who having paid his respects to the Rajah of Cochin, entered upon the performance of his duties. This course was pursued when Wasudevan Annavy was appointed Koima in 1762-63 A.D and Theekaduth Thumpun in 1771-72 A.D

In 1798-99 A.D when Chankulath Numpoothiry was appointed Koima these formalities were dispensed with and the Numpoothiry was appointed without any previous intimation being given to the Ooraimakars On the 27<sup>th</sup> Meenon of that year, the Numpoothiry appeared at Ellankunnappuzha and said that he had brought Neet<sup>xxvi</sup> to the Yogum communicating his appointment as Koima.<sup>xxvii</sup> Only one, of the members of the Yogum was present at Ellankunnappuzha at the time, and he told the Numpoothiry that his appointment without any, previous communication with the Yogum was contrary to precedent, but that the, matter will be considered when the other members also arrived and the Numpoothiry left the place. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of the same month, three of the Ooraimakars, of the pagoda addressed a letter to the Rajah of Cochin, complaining of Chankulath Numpoory's appointment without any other previous notice being given either to the Ooraimakars ,or the Rajah of Cochin as usual on such occasion, and expressing their determination not to allow him to perform the duties of Koima<sup>xxviii</sup>.

## ANNUAL FEAST AND SETTLEMENT

The Oolsawom or great annual feast in the pagoda commenced on the 9<sup>th</sup> Vrichigom 975 M.E 1799-1800 A.D as no Koima was present till late at night the raising of the flag or the commencing ceremony was performed without him. Chankulath Numpoory arrived after many of the Ooraimakars had left the pagoda. The next day they received the Neet from His Highness the Rajah of Travancore and the communication from the Wallin Surwashikaryakar. After the end of the Oolsawom, during which it is not usual to attend to any other duty, the above communication were take into consideration, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> Dhanu a reply was sent to the king denying having applied for the appointment of a new Koima as shown in the Wallia Surwadhikarayar's letter, pointing out that the appointment of Chankulath Numpoory was ireegular and requesting that some other person may be appointed Koima with the consent of the Ooraimakars and of His Highness the rajah of Cochin, as was on former occasions. Document M is a copy of the reply sent by the Ooraimakars to the Rajah of Travancore, and Document N copy of a similar communication addressed by them to the Wallia Surwadhikaryakar on the same day<sup>xxix</sup>.

The Oolsawom in 976 M.E 1800-01 A.D, should have commenced on the 8<sup>th</sup> Vrichigom. On that day the Wallia Sunrvadhy Karyakar of the Western Division and the Survadhy Karyakar of the Alengad Division with a military force and an armed body of the Travancore inhabitants, marched into Ellankunnappuzha, placed guards at the four gates of the Pagoda, preventing all in agress and agrees and the Oolsawom to be put a stop to<sup>xxx</sup>. The Ooraimakars and others fled from the place fearing that they would be arrested and taken to parur. Adiyakad of the Ooraimakars, was brought down from Marathoorputtam and without the other OOraimakars and others who should attend ,on such an occasion, the Ooraimakars which should have been a performed in the month of Vrichikom was commenced on the 13<sup>th</sup> Makaram. After the Oolsawom, the Desom were plundered of their fruits, all the landed property was fore away from the tenants and made ,over to others, the military and others enclosed vase houses and robbed the families of what they possessed, and many other 'irregularities' were committed<sup>xxxi</sup>. The outrages appear to have been perpetrated to the Oracles having objected to Chankulath Numpoory a irregular appointment as Koima in the pagoda. From a Kychit or Document O, passed by the Yoga of Ellankunnappuzha before the Rajah of Cochin, it would appear also that they were charged with having insulated His Highness the Rajah of Travancore by returning his assets and the Wallia Surwadhy Karyakar's Sadhanom<sup>xxxii</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

In 981 M.E (1805 A.D) Velu Thumpy Dalawa and Palieth Atechen, the Ministers of Travancore and Cochin, with other officers met at Ernakulum to depose of several matters minor dispute between the two government, and agreement (document P) was entered into on the 20<sup>th</sup> Coombhom by which Wlavalld who used to conduct the Makara Sankranthy festival in the Ellankunnappuzh pagoda till the above disturbances took place, was allowed to perform the same as formerly. The Cochin Government used to give as an offering to the ,pagoda 450 Poothens on account of sugar, and on the plea of this amount not having been paid since the above mentioned disturbances the

Travancore Government had forcibly assured the Cochin tobacco monopoly of the Nedoongad Desom. Travancore now relinquished the monopoly and Cochin agreed to pay the said amount annually to the pagoda it was also agreed that all the ceremonies performed may Cochin prior to 975 M.E 1777-1800 A.D should henceforward be conducted by that Sircar. The problem settled by two states amicably.

## References

- <sup>i</sup> *Titutums*; Royal proclamations
- <sup>ii</sup> Zamorin; The king of Neighbouring state Kozhikode
- <sup>iii</sup> The records of Administration, Cochin *a State*. Part IV, Govt.press, Ernakulum, 1914 ,p. 23
- <sup>iv</sup> *Oolsawom* is annual festival or seasonal festival of the temple.
- <sup>v</sup> *Devaswom* : Temple property or Estate
- <sup>vi</sup> *Desoms* – A topographical subdivision of a country or a local administrative sub division, temple locality
- <sup>vii</sup> Document –III , Return Statement of the Diwan of Cochin as the disputes between Travancore and the villages the *Elamkunnapuzha Dewasam*, National Archives ,NewDelhi, p.230
- <sup>viii</sup> Otty; An agreement with peresons on the basis of land and other agricultural items.
- <sup>ix</sup> Cover file. No.284, Elamkunnapuzha Dewasam case, Regional Archives, Ernakulam p.35
- <sup>x</sup> Aurat; a special ceremony conducted
- <sup>xi</sup> *Ibid*.p.251
- <sup>xii</sup> Cover file. No.111, *Statement regarding J.C.Hannyngton Esqre* arbitrator in regard to the Ellankunnapuzha ,State Archives Trivandrum .p.6
- <sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid* .p.98
- <sup>xiv</sup> Cover file. No.123, Communication from Dewan of Travancore to the Dewan of Cochin, Regional Archives, Ernakulam, p.9
- <sup>xv</sup> *Ibid*.7
- <sup>xvi</sup> Cover file. No.125, Copy of letters, Memorandums etc., between Diwan of Cochin and others. State Archives, Trivandrum p.52
- <sup>xvii</sup> M. E – Malayalam Era started in 825 A D,used in kerala for recording events
- <sup>xviii</sup> Document No.242, Papers relating to the Thachudaya Kaimal Thanam in the Koodalmanikkam Dewasam Vol. From October 1880 to April 1907 , State Archives, Trivandrum ,p.252
- <sup>xix</sup> *Koima or Mel-Koima* – A Government officer for representative the interests of Government in the administration of temples managed by Ooranmakars

<sup>xx</sup> Ibid.253

<sup>xxi</sup> Yogam is an assembly or council in temples

<sup>xxii</sup> Cover file. No.127, Communication from Dewan of Travancore to the Dewan of Cochin, Central Archives, Trivandrum. P.93

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Parrahs* ;A mesurment system used in Travancore and Cochin

<sup>xxiv</sup> Ref No. 509,S/P 423, Dewan of Travancore to Dewan Peshkar of Kottayam, dated 17-12-1896, p.1

<sup>xxv</sup> Letter No. Ref. on C. 2037' 81.from the Diwan of Cochin,to the Resident in Travancore and Cochin,dated the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1898 p.2

<sup>xxvi</sup> Neet; It is a document generally palm leaf used in the pre colonial period to record important events through the earliest version of malayalam

<sup>xxvii</sup> Letter no.66, From J.C Hannington to Resident in Travancore and Cochin, dated, 27-7-1882

<sup>xxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.163

<sup>xxix</sup> Document No.4567, Boundary Travancore- Cochin Conjoint Mapping 1896-1914.State Archives. Trivandrum. P.22

<sup>xxx</sup> Document No.4553, Papers regarding certain Minor disputes on the Travancore – Cochin Boundary, State Archives. Trivandrum. P.23

<sup>xxxi</sup> Ibid.123

<sup>xxxii</sup> Document No.13, Return Statement of the Diwan of Cochin as the disputes between Travancore and the villages the Elamkunnappuzha Dewasam, Regional Archives Erunakualm, p.49

